



The Alde & Ore Association

Newsletter 45 – Spring 2016

The Association is 25 Years old – How Time flies!



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The Trustees' Message

First things first – let's bring you all up to date with the winter's activities.

There are two main matters that the Association is involved with at the moment; working closely with the Alde & Ore Estuary Partnership (AOEP) on the improvement of flood defences and ensuring that we are properly set up for the next generations and the next 25 years.



Working with the Alde & Ore Estuary Partnership (AOEP)

The Association is one of the twelve voting members on the Partnership and is closely involved in supporting its work, both technically and financially. Our Chairman represents the Association and all river users, and takes a leading role in the work of the Partnership.

The Estuary Plan

Finalising and gaining approval for the Estuary Plan – mainly drafted and prepared by our Chairman, Alison Andrews, and Amanda Bettinson who is Chair of the River Defence Committee and Partnership Secretary of the AOEP – has been the overriding concern over the past eighteen months.

Thank you to all of you who attended the public consultation on the draft Estuary Plan. Three public sessions were held in Aldeburgh, Orford and Snape, and over 130 comments were received online. As a result, several changes were made.

On 22nd March, Suffolk County Council unanimously voted to endorse the Estuary Plan, the first hurdle in the endorsement process. It will also have to be endorsed by the Environment Agency and Suffolk Coastal District Council before being finally agreed in early May.

What does the Estuary Plan say?

The Plan sets out to maintain the shape and landscape of the estuary and to upgrade the river walls to a safe height and standard for the next fifty years. We all know that the walls are in variable condition so the work is prioritised with the worst sections receiving early attention. The aim is to make the walls resilient to overtopping in the worst surge tide conditions rather than being high enough to resist the maximum tides. The costs are estimated at £7–10 million and the Plan identifies how the money will be found.

The AOEP expects about £2–3 million to come from enabling development, where the additional profit achieved by allowing residential development in locations that otherwise would not normally be acceptable on condition that all of the uplift in value be donated for flood defence work.

A further £2–3 million is expected from Government funding. The Plan also accepts that other public and private sources of finance will be required. Appeals, donations and applications to relevant charities and statutory sources will be necessary to make up the shortfall. The Alde and Ore Estuary Trust has been set up for this purpose and enables donors to take advantage of tax reliefs available where gifts are made to a charity.

Writing the Plan was the easy bit. Raising the money and reaching agreement with local communities regarding enabling development will be much more complicated, but it is good to know that the majority of parish councils support the initiative. The Association will need to play a major part in supporting this effort.

The Trustees remain indebted to David Andren, our late Chairman, who has so generously donated a very large sum to the Association to fund the flood defences in the Orford flood cell.



Photo: Tony Pick

Although the final amount cannot be calculated until his estate is finally wound up, the Trustees have agreed to pledge the funds to the Alde and Ore Estuary Trust and are currently arranging a leaflet to encourage further donations, as was David's wish.

Shoreline Management Plan

The Plan also identifies a weakness and need for improvement in the Suffolk Coastal District Council's Shoreline Management Plan in which from 2025, in only ten years time, the strategy changes just south of the Aldeburgh Martello Tower from '*Hold the Line*' to '*No Active Intervention*'. We know that many of you have been alarmed by the conditions during some of the recent strong easterly winds – at high water the waves hit the sea wall hard and the sea and spray very quickly degrade the shingle bank behind. The strong comments received during the public consultation made it very clear that this was a major concern and the AOEP Estuary Plan was altered to take account of this. This is a particularly vulnerable spot in our sea defence and we doubt that a policy of '*No Active Intervention*' will be sufficient to keep the sea from breaking through at some time. Such an event could be catastrophic for the estuary as we know it.

We hope that by the time you read this, the temporary work to the rock armour protection at Slaughden will have started. The activity is due to start in late March with the rock being delivered by barge in early April as sea conditions allow. Let's hope this work is completed without mishap as it provides an important strengthening to the estuary at its most vulnerable spot. The Crown Estate is still considering the feasibility of a 'Shingle Engine' (as discussed in the last newsletter), which would potentially solve the problem for several decades – as long as funding of several million can be found for the project.

Work on a scheme for both the north and south walls at Snape is progressing well and will be discussed shortly with the local community.

There is also a possible scheme to redo the poor maintenance work on the Aldeburgh Marshes river wall. The Environment Agency have provided £400,000 for this repair work, and it is hoped to also find funding for additional enhancement work to the marsh habitat. As it will be necessary to dig clay from the marsh area to repair the walls, there will be an opportunity to create scrapes and ponds for wintering wildlife while still allowing summer grazing.

The Trustees' Message continued...

Coastal Access...

... Is something we are all going to hear more about. Natural England is in charge of bringing this about and over the next two or three years they will be implementing the plan in our region. This will give wider access for the public to the coast with additional public footpaths which may bring more people to the Alde & Ore estuary to enjoy its unique environment. It should also bring more people to the Butley Ferry which continues to grow in popularity year after year.

The next 25 Years

Whilst we are delighted to be celebrating our 25th birthday we know that to remain effective and flourish for a further 25 years we need to change with the times. As with many things in life, this means welcoming new and younger people with different ideas and other approaches to problem solving. We need to learn how to engage with younger people. We have to get them involved in our activities and harness their enthusiasm for our rivers. We have started a process of review with a few small focus groups and one of our younger members has contributed an article on what the estuary means to her (see page 10) – so we have the raw material. Hopefully this will be a developing story with more chapters to be published as we continue to change and grow.

One point that emerged from the feedback of a recent informal survey amongst some of our members is that there is confusion about the relationship between the Alde & Ore Association and the Alde & Ore Estuary Partnership. For clarification, see pages 6 and 7.

So, where does it leave the Association? With over 2,000 members we remain the active voice of the public regarding the estuary. We

are the body that ensures that your voice is heard. The Association will be in the forefront of supporting the Estuary Plan and it will assist where it can with its resources. We have an important role to play.

At the same time of course, we continue with our programme of walks and other activities that make our Association relevant to a wider group of the local community.

As we celebrate 25 years, it is clear that the next 25 years are going to be busy. However, looking back, Colin Chamberlain's detailed article on pages 11 to 21 reviews our first 25 years through the looking glass of our newsletters. He explains how we arrived where we are today.

Finally, we will not achieve our plans without additional volunteers. Hopefully, this newsletter will help you to see that there is a lot more, rather than less, to be done.

We need more of you to become involved with our work. We need the entire range of skills, attributes and knowledge that people can bring – professional expertise, marketing experience, enthusiasm, organisation, publishing skills, local connections and plenty of help for small jobs and events.

You will find one example of a day of volunteer involvement on page 23. One day of fun in good company and fresh winter air can make a visible difference to the estuary in the long term!

Please, if you share our enthusiasm – and we know you do – be active and get involved. We need you!

Don't wait to be asked – please contact us at info@aldeandore.org. We will be delighted to chat with you and find out where in the Alde & Ore Association you can help us.

Support our bold vision of guiding the development of the estuary – for another 25 years and for the generations to come.

Dates for your Diary: Walks and the Barbecue

For 2016, the Association has planned three walks, visiting different parts of our estuary.

Friday, 13th May: Stanny Farm Field Centre

Our first walk is to re-visit the Field Centre which Paul and Louise Cooke have created at Stanny Farm, Iken. Last September – when we made our first visit – there was so much to see that we only achieved half of the planned route. All who took part asked for a completion of the tour in 2016. The habitats which we will explore this year are very different to the marsh and shoreline which we saw last autumn. Depending on the weather, we hope to start with a bird ringing session. The other half of the farm has sandy crag based soils plus a crag pit which has been designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). We will walk through a small area of alder carr as well. The walk will be guided by Rodney West, Manager of the Field Centre and Mervyn Miller, a member of the Stanny Environment Group. They will point out the various habitats and the wildlife that make up this beautiful part of the Suffolk coast. The walk will last about two to two and a half hours but with plenty of stops to observe the flora and fauna. Walking boots are advised and we regret no dogs. After the walk there will be a ham and salad lunch, included in the price, in the Field Centre at Low Barn; coffee and biscuits are kindly being provided by the Centre.

Friday, 15th July: Boyton and Hollesley Marshes

Our second walk in 2016 will introduce us to the RSPB reserves at Boyton and Hollesley Marshes. There will be a guided tour of both reserves showing the wildlife and the work done to encourage it. We will start at Boyton Marshes, before walking the 4km along the river wall to Hollesley. Boyton Marshes and the land recently purchased by the RSPB is a potential site for a flood relief sill, dependant on funding and consents, which

would allow these marshes to be flooded in the event of a tidal surge.

Having finished at Hollesley, there will be a sandwich lunch (included in the walk price) at the café of the nearby Suffolk Punch Trust visitor centre. Dogs are welcome, but please keep them on leads in the reserves.

Sunday, 21st August: Annual Barbecue

Our annual barbecue will be at the crag pit at the top of the Butley River by kind permission of the Watson family. Access is by boat up the Butley River, by car, or via the footpath from Chillesford. This is a wonderful occasion for old and young to meet up with other members.

Friday, 2nd September: Aldeburgh Golf Course, Little Japan and the Hosking Hide

The last walk starts at the Aldeburgh Golf Club and follows the footpath across the golf course towards Knodishall. The route then turns South to join the river at Little Japan, passing through Blackheath Estate by kind permission of Sir Michael and Lady Hopkins. This lets us visit the Hosking Hide and see the effects of the 2013 surge damage on Hazlewood Marshes. The exact route will be decided on the day, and is dependant on the grazing livestock in Blackheath and the accessibility of the Suffolk Wildlife Trust's new track to the hide. We will finish with sandwiches at the golf club (included in the walk price). Dogs are welcome but should be kept on leads across the golf course and in the Blackheath Estate and are not allowed on the Suffolk Wildlife Trust's land (a diversion will be in place for dog owners).

Booking forms for all these events are included in the mailing for the Annual General Meeting. The forms are also available for download on www.aldeandore.org

John Grayburn, Events Co-ordinator

The Alde & Ore Association and The Alde & Ore Estuary Partnership

Competitors or Allies in the Defence of our Rivers and Estuary?

A recent informal survey of a selection of our members showed that there is still confusion over the relationship between the Alde & Ore Association and the Alde & Ore Estuary partnership (AOEP) and their relative roles. The question has been raised, "If we now have the AOEP, why do we need the Association?"

The Alde and Ore Association was founded 25 years ago this year. Its aims as defined in its Constitution and as registered with the Charities Commission are:-

The Association exists to preserve for the public benefit the Alde, Ore and Butley rivers and their banks from Shingle Street to their tidal limits and such of the land adjoining them or upstream as may be considered to affect them, together with the features of beauty and or historic or public interest in that area.

Although wordy, dry and legalistic, these lines do sum up our purpose very well. We are concerned with anything and everything which might affect the rivers and our enjoyment of them. The Association is your voice to protect the estuary.

Protecting the Estuary

The Association takes an interest in all issues regarding the rivers, planning and developments, footpaths and access, leisure, wildlife in the estuary and surrounding land.

A vital part of its work is to do with the river defences. Until 2012 this was accomplished by using the influence of the Association's large local membership to challenge the more radical ideas being imposed from outside (remember the plan to make a breach at Slaughden?) and to campaign for action and funding from Government to keep the river defences properly maintained.





Digger on Snape wall; photo: John Grayburn.

But increasingly it became apparent that the Government had very limited funds and was not likely to have much money in the foreseeable future. A new approach was needed.

A new Approach – the Alde & Ore Estuary Partnership (AOEP)

With this in mind the Association, with others, helped to form the Alde & Ore Estuary Partnership in 2012, a radical new approach, joining local interests and external bodies to work together to tackle the problem.

The AOEP is a ground-breaking partnership with local interests, landowners, businesses, residents, parish councils and wildlife charities as Partners on one hand and external bodies, the Environment Agency, Suffolk Coastal District Council and Suffolk County Council acting as advisors on the other. All working together for the protection and flood defences of our estuary.

The Partnership has developed an estuary wide Plan for the defences. Once this has been endorsed by the relevant statutory bodies the AOEP will start to raise funds locally for the work which needs to be done. Locally raised funds will help to leverage further central funds.

A vital Role

The Association plays a vital role in the Partnership. As one of the twelve voting members, our Chairman represents the Association and all river users. With the Partnership Secretary, another Trustee of the Association, the two have played a leading role in the drafting of the Estuary Plan.

The Association is also able to help by using its financial reserves to commission research to support the AOEP. The Economic Study showing the importance of the area and the technical reports by Professor Pye on river flows in the upper estuary and the consequences of a breach at Slaughden are recent examples.

At the Heart of Decision Making

The Association's work to protect all aspects of the estuary continues unabated.

On the question of river defences, we are now at the heart of decision making. As our Chairman said at the 2015 AGM, instead of lobbying from the outside, the Association is now closely involved in the inside. We are in a stronger position than ever to make our voice heard. In supporting the Association you are helping to protect the rivers that we all love. We are your voice for your estuary.

John Grayburn, Trustee

Suffolk Coast Against Retreat (SCAR)

Suffolk Coast Against Retreat (SCAR) is a strategic partnership of organisations and individuals of all political persuasions along the Suffolk coast. The aim of SCAR is to preserve and protect, for future generations, the Suffolk coastline, tidal rivers and surrounding land area.

SCAR is supported by Suffolk County Council, Suffolk Coastal and Waveney District Councils, parish and town councils, the three estuary groups for the Blyth, Alde & Ore and Deben, the Walberswick Sea Defence Group, the Minsmere Levels Stakeholder Group, the Suffolk Preservation Society, the Country Landowners Association and many others. SCAR's Patron is Lord Deben.

I sit on the SCAR executive which meets about four times a year. It is not an executive body but it does take action to co-ordinate and share information between the constituent local action groups. It also lends weight to local campaigns and plans.

We are all aware of the fragility of the Suffolk coast with its soft crumbling cliffs and long river estuaries. Much has been lost over the centuries but for the last 100 years there has been relatively little change. Our legacy of sea and river walls and other defences has served us well.

However, with predictions of climate change and sea level rise, together with winter storms and tidal surges, there are clearly challenges ahead and local action and support will be required if we are to survive the next 100 years with relatively little change.

The issues and actions are local and the Association's focus is clearly on our own estuary, but up and down the Suffolk coast similar battles are being fought and all are subject to the same central and local government policies and funding capability. We clearly do better to work closely together and present a strong and united front.

To give you a feel for the current issues on people's minds elsewhere along the Suffolk coast, this brief outline shows that we are not alone with our concerns for our estuary.

Kessingland

The Benacre Sluice is being exposed to heavy sea action as Benacre Ness moves to the north. Rock defences have been installed in the expectation that this will last ten to fifteen years. Longer term plans are being prepared but will probably involve some form of roll back. The Benacre Estate is losing roughly 20 acres per year at current rates. This is a very soft spot on the coast with relatively little natural protection for several miles inland.

Easton Bavents

There has been little change or erosion for over three years. Supporting policies for local home owners have been agreed (land value subsidy) but not yet been implemented. One attempt to relocate en masse to a site near Reydon failed due to local opposition.

Southwold and Walberswick

There are major issues with the harbour entrance. A scheme is being developed to improve the Reydon Marsh wall.

Minsmere and Sizewell

The Stakeholder Group is engaging with EDF regarding the Sizewell C proposals and seeking assurances regarding the proposed jetty and the effect on coastal processes.

Thorpeness

Recent geotextile beach supports are not weathering as well as predicted, although beach shingle levels are currently high and there is good protection at the moment. Bournemouth

University has installed X band radar to record wave heights and wave direction over time to research the relationship between wave action and sediment movements. This may prove to be a tool for forecasting sediment movement. A recent residential development is an innovative Swedish kit house designed to be capable of being moved if the circumstances should change for the worse.

Slaughden

Proposed works installing rock defences of sea wall are shortly (hopefully) to be completed. There are concerns about the Shoreline Management Plan which indicates a change from 'Hold the Line' to 'No Active Intervention' in 2025 for the vulnerable area just south of the Aldeburgh Martello Tower. The Crown Estate is researching the possibility of a shingle engine off Slaughden (see online: www.greensuffolk.org/assets/Greenest-County/Water-Coast/General-Information/Cowling-Suffolk-CF-22-January-2015.pdf).

River wall works are being carried out at Snape and Aldeburgh.

Shingle Street and Bawdsey

This is another particularly vulnerable spot. The East Lane emergency defences need continual extension and further support. Detailed options are being investigated.

Bawdsey Manor

There are fresh concerns about the status of sheet piling and the caisson protecting the Manor Cliff. The beach is largely being stripped away and piling exposed. Options for repair are being prepared. The public footpath on the beach, which was part of the Suffolk Coast Path, has been closed. The Suffolk Coast Path has been diverted to a safe route inland.

River Deben

Saltmarsh repair and regeneration is being implemented in various locations. The Deben Estuary Plan has been endorsed by Suffolk County Council and Suffolk Coastal District Council.



SCAR has an online presence with further information, news, and membership details on www.SuffolkCoastAgainstRetreat.co.uk

So, up and down the coast, the various local communities are putting together their plans to protect their most vulnerable spots. We know that central government funds will be insufficient and that success will depend on local energy, enthusiasm, action – and money. Enabling development will become part of the solution but other local sources of funds will be required. Suffolk is pioneering enabling development as a means to finance flood defence with East Lane being the trailblazing scheme. We can all look forward to difficult negotiations and tricky compromises as we feel our joint way to practical solutions.

If we want the Suffolk coast to remain as it has been for the last 100 years it will be up to us to generate the local political will and community support to get this to happen. That is the challenge.

Keith Martin, Trustee

What the Estuary means to Me

I owe a lot to the river. My childhood was dominated by escaping on it – or capsizing in it – and by the close friends made through shared local interests. Even now, the river remains a central character running through our lives, uniting us each summer year after year.

I used to think the Association had a gender imbalance where the men had all the fun like rowing the Butley Ferry and the women prepared the annual BBQ. I do not consider myself a combative feminist but I used to think we were capable of more than preparing potato salad. Today that has changed – the Chairman, Treasurer and Secretary are all women and there are now women rowing for the Ferry team.

There remains an age imbalance. It reminds me of the crisis facing the National Health Service – it is struggling to deal with our ageing population and the threat of collapse only grows. The Association faces this same age crisis. It is perhaps a comfort to know that the Church and the National Trust are also endeavouring to attract young people in order to survive. The Association is not alone.

I think we need family fun, on and off the water: activities, picnics, talks, cruises and new challenges for the young and old. Young people should be as excited to be a member of the Alde & Ore Association as they are of a tennis or sailing club. This excitement will come from the parents and parents want activities.

The Association would have a greater appeal to me if its message and values were to preserve, through flood defence, Suffolk as a magical place for children. Defence means building walls and saltings and, while this is essential, the Association's image needs to ensure family engagement.

Florence Barrow, Member

Trustees' comment: We would gladly welcome younger volunteers to help on an entertainments working group. Please let us know at info@aldeandore.org, if you would like to help.

The past 25 Years of the Association

As revealed in the Pages of the Newsletters

For twenty five years, members of The Alde & Ore Association have been submitting their prose, poems and photographs for publication in the Newsletter which tells us a lot about who the members are and what they are interested in.

In the main, they have not written about farming, pets, shooting, country pursuits, country house interiors, sailing, golf, or county events, as if the Newsletter were a mini Country Life magazine – only wildfowling of the country pursuits has received much attention (Newsletters 31 and 32) although sailing might now receive more attention with the addition of many members of Aldeburgh Yacht Club and similarly angling after the recent association of the Angling Club.

In the main the articles which members have written for the Newsletters have been very personal and have celebrated the beauty, history and topography of our still largely unspoiled estuary or preserved memories of some of its rugged personalities.

The Association now has over 2000 members split fairly evenly between those with homes in Aldeburgh and Orford, those living in the surrounding towns and countryside and those living elsewhere in Britain. The farmers, businessmen and fishermen who have lived and worked in the area all their lives are underrepresented. Our members are more often

people who are making or have made their careers elsewhere but see the Estuary as a very special place to be cherished and enjoyed and have frequently been most enthusiastic about giving their time and support to the Association.

It is not that those who have always lived and worked in the area are in any way unwelcome as members, far from it, indeed some have been pillars of the Association such as Brian Upson and Richard Pipe, but it is probably true to say that those who have made careers elsewhere are the more enthusiastic champions of the Association's causes. It is no surprise that all seven of the Association's present and past Chairmen have pursued successful careers elsewhere before making their mark here.

Early Origins

So how did this very special Association come about? It was first mooted at an open meeting in February 1991 and then officially launched with elections to the Committee and the adoption of a Constitution at a large inaugural meeting of 160 participants in the Concert Hall restaurant at Snape Maltings on the evening of Friday 17th May 1991. The Association was the brainchild of the Chairman of Iken Parish Council, Lavinia Sheridan, who approached the indefatigable Rachel Bridges, and another Orford resident, Jessica Penfold, who became the first Treasurer.

It had the support of Suffolk County Council and Charles Beardall of the Suffolk Wildlife Trust, and other enthusiastic individuals such as Colin Lister, who became the first Secretary, Lorraine Lloyd and Richard Roberts who became its first Chairman. Other bodies which gave support included English Nature, The National Trust, Suffolk Coastal District Council and the Suffolk Preservation Society as well as the then local MP, John Gummer (now Lord Deben).



The past 25 Years continued...

At the launch, a constitution drafted by the local solicitor, Richard Keane, was adopted, with the objective to “*protect for the public benefit*” the area comprising the Alde, Ore and Butley rivers and surrounding lands, objects which are pursued to this day. In the elections held at the inaugural meeting, a Committee of eleven was elected, including George Gooderham, the owner of Snape Maltings, Edward Greenwell, the current Chairman of the Alde & Ore Estuary Partnership, John Pryor, who for a number of years produced the invaluable *Guidelines to the Mouth of the River* used by sailors, John Partridge, the RSPB Warden on Havergate Island, and Brian Upson, owner of the Slaughden boatyard.

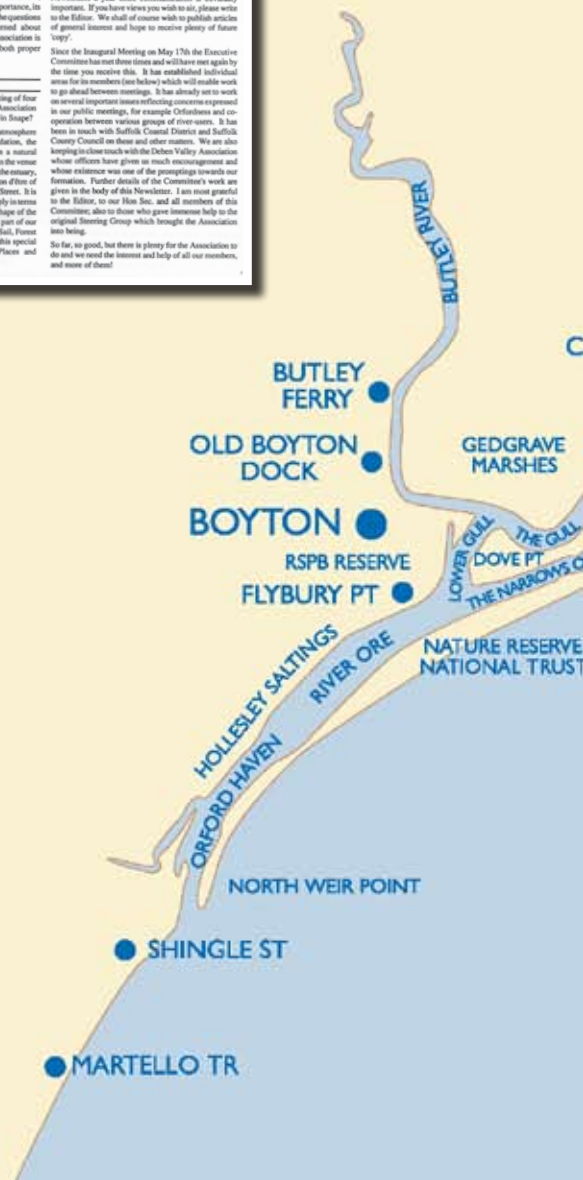
In August 1991, the Association issued Newsletter No. 1, four pages long and edited by Rachel Bridges. Some five years later, on stepping down as editor, Rachel was to explain that the initial purpose of the Association was to establish “*some mechanism for bringing together the several interests concerned with this unique but fragile jewel that is our river estuary and the lands around it*” (Newsletter 10).

Richard Roberts, writing in the same issue, added “*As I see it the Association is not there primarily to make things happen, still less to prevent things happening. Its purpose is to assist, to facilitate, to be a focus for opinion and consultation.*” From the very start, the Association wished to be a voice in the community expressing its views on the challenges facing the estuary.

Early Activist Campaigns

The Association's first brushes with environmental activism involved Iken. First, there was a proposal by Anglian Water to construct two sewage sludge lagoons at Yarn Hill and fill them with sewage brought in by the water company in tankers from around Suffolk and later spread all over local fields. The second problem was the unsightly dumping at Iken beach of large quantities of concrete and rubber tyres to stop erosion of the cliffs.

Alan Coombes, himself an Iken resident, who was later to succeed Richard Roberts as our second Chairman, took up the fight on both these issues, a task which apparently





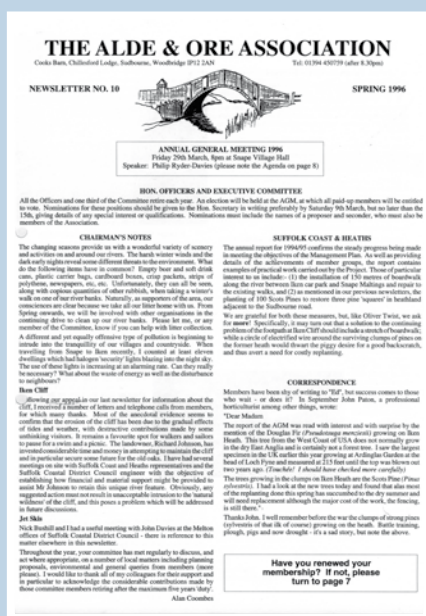
included attendance at an international waste disposal conference in Cambridge to learn in a “where there’s muck there’s brass” experience of the variety of uses to which this torrent of sewage might be put nationally over the next 20 years.

His report to the members noted it included the extraction of 10–15m tonnes of protein, 40–50 tonnes of gold not to speak of a possible 200–250 billion Kwh of electricity. Perhaps the Yarn sewage might have answered the prayers of the Association today by funding the upgrade of the river defences now so urgently needed! In the end, the sludge lagoons were never built but the concrete and tyres are still there where they were dumped at the foot of Iken cliffs although in time it came to be accepted as a successful method of stopping the erosion (the Association later handed the farmer a grant of £300).

No sooner had these first two issues been resolved before a third problem arose, yet again in Iken, relating to the damage caused by foraging pigs to the squares of Scots Pines on the former heathland between Iken and Sudbourne and the demand they should be fenced off.

With growing activist experience, other issues soon arose for the Association on other parts of the estuary: the use of jet skis, a noisy and dangerous intrusion in the estuary until they were banned to outside the estuary, the plan to develop a yacht marina at Slaughden which the Association considered wholly inappropriate for our unspoiled estuary, and the rising traffic congestion in Aldeburgh High Street particularly on bank holidays, described by the East Anglian Daily Times in one headline as a ‘Coastal Holiday Hell’.

Monitoring planning applications has been part of the Association’s remit and the Association was fortunate in having two members, Rachel Bridges and Brian Johnson, who were particularly beady eyed and took up offensive planning applications with energy and great skill.



The past 25 Years continued...

For the first ten years of the Association, members were so fired up with enthusiasm for improving the area that, armed with black rubbish bags, many took part in an annual cleanup of the Estuary shoreline, gathering up at the waters edge the multitude of old plastic containers found there at the end of each winter many of which judging by the labels had seemingly floated over from our North Sea neighbours. In 1997 this enthusiasm led to an award to the Association by the Tidy Britain Group of the National Spring Clean Certificate (Newsletter 13).

A Changing Area

These issues, whilst important, were parochial compared to the much broader issues with which the Association began to grapple. By 1993, the American military withdrawal from Bentwaters was complete and the British Ministry of Defence was looking for a buyer not just for the former airbase but also for much of Orford Ness as well, all part of the so-called 'peace dividend'. At the same time, the Sizewell B construction workers were leaving upon completion of the plant.

All these changes presaged a fundamental transformation of the estuary into a quieter, more tranquil tourist destination well positioned to offer bucolic country cottages, recreation, sailing and golf. Planners were being forced to respond to these changes by thinking how best to take advantage of the many tourist opportunities now presenting themselves.

The National Trust's negotiations for the purchase of Orford Ness took place over a period of two years and were followed very closely by the Committee with growing excitement at the

prospect of public access to an area which had been closed for over seventy years with its pagodas and nefarious past activities making it a mysterious and enticing site but, as Merlin Waterson, the National Trust's Regional Director warned in a talk at the Association's 1993 AGM, shortly after the deal was done, general public access could not be expected for some years given the scale of the clearing up to be done.

Nevertheless, with the Association's close relationship with the National Trust, a selected party of forty members were led around the site in an early preview visit, indeed only six months after acquisition, a special visit which the Newsletter described as an "exceptional opportunity" on "a rare and splendid summer afternoon", all under the watchful eye of the Warden, Chris Martin.

It was not for another two years, on 6th June 1995, a date intended to coincide with the National Trust's own centenary, that the Ness was finally declared open by its Chairman, Lord Chorley, and public access allowed although even then the number of access days and visitor numbers would be tightly controlled as indeed it still is (Newsletter 8).

Another development in 1993 which caused planners to think about the opening up of the area and its coastal paths was the rehabilitation of the landing stages for the 600 years old Butley Ferry crossing, available at any time of year upon request to the then owner and



operator Bryan Rogers but it fell back into disuse after a few years. The Association later revived it again with its stalwart group of volunteers to help link up the coastal path as far as possible (Newsletter 14).



Now only the River Alde at Ferry Point / Slaughden remains without a link although the Association has canvassed support for this only to be thwarted over the issue of rights of way (Newsletter 32).

Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB Management Plan

The first step towards a wider consultative role came in the summer of 1993 when the Association submitted a detailed paper on Management Practices on the Alde and Ore Estuary as a contribution to Suffolk County Council's proposed Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB Management Plan which was to form the basis on which tourism and recreation would be developed in the area. The Association consulted very widely with local conservation bodies, sports and leisure interests and other local organisations before putting forward its well thought out and detailed evidence.

Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB eventually launched its Management Plan on 27th January 1995 at a presentation in the Snape Maltings. Jeff Redgrave, manager of the project, subsequently attended the Association's AGM and presented the Management Plan to members of the Association. Involvement in the Management Plan had put the Association "on the map" as

the recognised body to be consulted on matters affecting the Estuary.

With growing numbers of members, 358 by 1997, up from 199 in 1992, the Association represented an important segment of active local opinion. Warming to the role of activist, Alan Coombes, in a valedictory message to mark his retirement as Chairman in April 1997, implored members to continue *"to be our eyes and ears"* and noted that many of the issues being taken up were *"as a result of members alerting us to potential or actual problems"* (Newsletter 12).

In the same year the Association, amended its constitution and in a further act of public recognition obtained unincorporated charitable status which enabled members' subscriptions to be paid under the gift aid scheme (incorporated charitable status was obtained on 1st January 2014).

Managed Retreat

Within a few months of his appointment as Chairman at the 1997 AGM, Nick Bushill was reporting how, on attending a Suffolk Preservation Society seminar in 1997 on coastal management, he had heard the words "managed retreat" uttered for the first time. This related to a coastal management scheme at Northey Island on the River Blackwater in Essex where sea was to be allowed to inundate some areas which were thought difficult to defend (Newsletter 14).



Two years later – in August 1999 – Newsletter 17, which was the first to contain colour photos, railed against a report prepared by Posford Duvivier for the Environment Agency. It gave six options about where the line might be held against

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flooding in the Alde and Ore Estuary and reproduced a colourful map showing which areas of the Alde and Ore Estuary might be left to become inundated by water in the future, or in the chilling phrase of the time, allowed to “make space for water”.

Bentwaters

However, before the Association turned its undivided attention to the Environment Agency's Estuarine Strategy, it first had to urgently respond to the threat posed by the proposed development of Bentwaters as a civil aviation airport. Suffolk Coastal District Council had signalled that it might allow some low key aviation at the former airbase but an application was suddenly lodged by an international consortium for something much larger, an international civil aviation airport along the lines of Manston in Kent, including the servicing of similar large but often poorly maintained planes from Eastern Europe.

The Committee quickly concluded that the “proposal went far beyond the low key aviation use that had been anticipated” and that it “potentially would have an adverse impact on the AONB in which the Estuary is situated” (Newsletter 15). The January 1999 Newsletter carried an appeal for funds in order to instruct a barrister to represent the Association and other interested bodies at the expected planning appeal. The Association set out its ten principal objections to the proposal which included aircraft noise, air quality, traffic congestion, existence of other airports, engine testing and the adverse impact on tourism and concluded that the proposal had no “economic benefit to the area” (Newsletter 16). The Association's

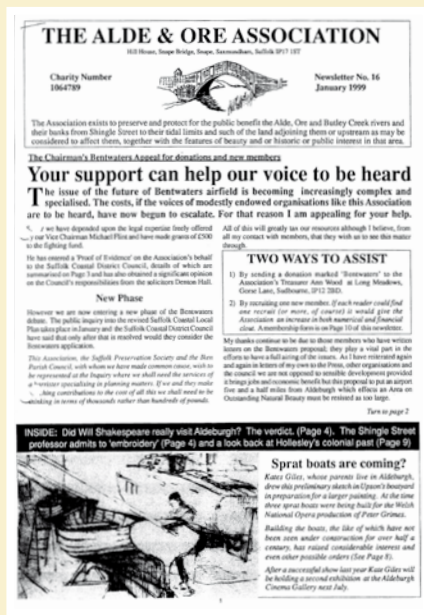
campaign against civil aviation at Bentwaters was skillfully led by the Vice Chairman, the former London solicitor Michael Flint, who later on the conclusion of the campaign succeeded as Chairman at the 2000 AGM.

A Government Inspector was appointed to investigate the proposal and he had concluded in late 1999 that civil aviation would be unacceptable whereupon the Association and its allies breathed a big sigh of relief. As Newsletter 18 noted, the Inspector had accepted all ten of the Association's objections before it went on to comment that the campaign “was a fine example of the way in which when local people are prepared to stand up and make their case their voice is indeed heard.” Turning its gaze back to estuarine issues, Newsletter 18 went on to add the hope that “the Estuarine Strategy Report isn't going to make us have to prove that [point] all over again”.

Estuarine Strategy

At the 2000 Annual General Meeting, the Environment Agency's senior engineer for strategy and planning, accompanied by Posford Duvivier's Project Manager, endured hostile criticism from members for their ideas of a managed retreat which involved the surrender

of Aldeburgh Marshes although they were forced to accept that if there was a retreat it would be necessary to put in place a “robust new wall” at a considerable expense (Newsletter 19). The Environment Agency was fast learning that there was a not inconsiderable expertise amongst the members about the rivers and estuaries and that any proposals it was to put forward in future needed to be well thought through before being put forward publicly. The Suffolk Estuarine Strategy was nevertheless approved by the Norfolk and Suffolk Defence Committee as a “management



framework for sustainable flood defence" despite all its flaws, many of which in relation to the River Alde and Ore, had been pointed out in the pages of the Newsletters. In particular, it was pointed out in Newsletter 20 that in drawing up its cost and benefit analyses of the land to be flooded, no account had been taken of the wider "economic effects of the flooding, such as the impact on tourism and recreation."

In Newsletter 21, the Association reported it was bringing together fifteen important local organisations in The Friends of the Rivers Alde

and Ore under the Chairmanship of Nick Bushill, the former Chairman of the Association, to focus specifically on issues affecting the rivers. Its first projects were pressing the Environment Agency to recharge the shingle sea defences below the Slaughden Martello Tower,

something which has now come to be a regular activity, and putting together an Economic Impact Study of the effects of tourism on the area which, it was felt, were simply not known and therefore were not generally taken into account by policymakers. Penny Kay was the project co-ordinator in the production of the Association's 200 page Report which was published in January 2004 – another updated report was later published by the Association in 2013. The 2004 report represented the first economic study of tourism on the estuary which, it estimated, had an annual value of £142m (Newsletter 26).

In Newsletter 22, the Chairman noted "suddenly all sorts of organisations seem to have an interest in the river", pointing to the Environment

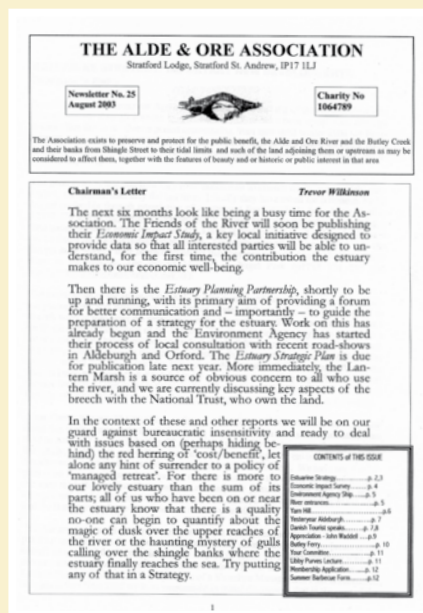
Agency and its Suffolk Estuarine Strategy, English Nature with its new Habitats Directive, the Birds Directive under which the Estuary was designated as a Special Area of Conservation and the Coastal Habitat Management Plan which provides that the loss of coastal habitats in one place on an estuary is compensated for by another elsewhere under the European Habitats Directive. There was also the appointment of the North America - UK Countryside Exchange to study the issue of sustainability in our Estuary and give "an outsiders view".

Nick Bushill was prompted in one newsletter to offer readers a "Plain Man's Guide to BAPs, CHaMPs and SPAs", indeed seventeen acronyms in all, which, as he said, "might be making life complicated for river lovers" (Newsletter 22). To these would now be added the MCZ which relates to smelt in the river, an issue Keith Martin has monitored on behalf of the Association.

By mid 2001, the Environment Agency had, in a series of road shows, announced the launching of the Suffolk Estuary Strategies Study. The Agency had taken on board the lesson it had learned in the earlier consultation exercise that it needed to

consult much more widely, as well as more clearly setting out the options when doing so. It announced that it planned to undertake detailed aerial studies and would build a computer model of the estuary on the basis of which a list of options, and

eventually a preferred option, would be identified which it very optimistically hoped would be by the end of 2004 (Newsletter 25).



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An Estuary Planning Partnership, comprising all public and private interests on the Estuary including the Association, had been recommended by the North America - UK Countryside Exchange in its Report in 2001 and the Estuary Planning Partnership was eventually formed in 2003 with the Association as a key founding member. It was set the task of providing a communications forum between the Environment Agency and all the private and public interests in the Estuary and it was hoped it would guide the Environment Agency in its identification of the options and eventually a preferred option.

Under Trevor Wilkinson, Chairman from April 2003, and David Andren, who succeeded him as Chairman in April 2006 until his retirement at the start of 2011, the Association found itself at the centre of ever greater consultation. It would be true to say that over these eight years, in which no preferred option was definitively identified, the 'do nothing' option was in effect winning out by default. The Association seemed ever to be waiting for a preferred option but none seemed forthcoming if only because there were insufficient government funds to do much more than maintain the river defences and certainly too little to carry out an upgrade.

In a talk to the Association in January 2004, an Environment Agency spokesman had confirmed that the Government's priority was to protect people and property but there was no announcement of new funding to achieve this. The Association criticised the Environment Agency's *"preoccupation with strategies for the whole 21st century... and the relative neglect of important short term issues"*. The Association questioned the underlying science promulgated by the Environment Agency and in 2005 began a long period of consultation with the leading expert Professor Pye which continues to this day.

Frustrated by the Environment Agency having spent in excess of £2m on *"reports by various*

over-priced consultancies on our river", Trevor Wilkinson robustly proclaimed in a typically mischievous valedictory message as Chairman, that the Association would issue its own report *"in one sentence"* which would read *"Look after the river as it is!"* Holding the line in the short term and waiting to see how much of the river could be preserved in the long term was a sentiment strongly shared by many amongst the membership (Newsletter 30). David Andren, an ex Treasury civil servant, who had been taking a great interest in flood defences, was determined to grip the many complex issues involved and represented the Association in almost incessant consultation with the statutory bodies, a commitment which added enormously to the prestige with which the Association is regarded today.

In 2009, the Estuary Management Strategy, with no preferred option in sight, was relaunched as the Aldeburgh Coast and Estuary Strategy (ACES), which took under its wing the Thorpeness to Hollesley Shoreline Management Plan and the Alde and Ore Futures Pilot Project. Another consultation initiative, Alde and Ore Futures, was launched at a conference in September 2009 and held an important conference in March 2010 with attendance by most bodies interested in the estuary (Newsletter 35) which led to the

publication of three important 'Conversation Documents' in the summer of 2011, the one which most interested the Association being *Managing the Coastal Environment*. This had identified



many of the factors which were important in evaluating the flood risks for each of the ten flood cells on the Estuary but still fell short of an actual plan. The Association called in its own advisers, Risk and Policy Analysts Limited, to expose the many unsupported assumptions and simplifications in the documents.

The Association has always been energetic in taking sensible initiatives which help those seeking to improve the river defences. Since 2007 it has sponsored the River Defence Committee, chaired originally by Richard Marson and latterly by Amanda Bettinson. Each spring the committee organises volunteers who walk the walls identifying problems which need to be fixed. They prepare an annual report which helps the Environment Agency to prioritise its maintenance work.

By the time Alde and Ore Futures had finished its 'big conversation' with the community, Stewart Ashurst, had taken over as Chairman, to be succeeded in April 2012 by our current Chairman, Alison Andrews. Stewart as a former chief executive of Essex County Council and Alison, a former senior civil servant, brought a new realism to the conversations. They both appreciated that the Environment Agency would need to forge a partnership with private interests to raise the necessary funds to be able to upgrade the walls to the standard of 1 in 200 in fifty years time, which was emerging as the consensus target.

Stewart was instrumental in the establishment of the Alde & Ore Estuary Partnership (AOEP) which is now the main focal group for plans to upgrade the river defences with an ambitious plan to raise some £7m to £10m to fund the work over a likely ten year time span. The AOEP has commissioned Andrew Hawes as their engineer, to prioritise

the work to be done on the walls and implement some of his ideas on the way the river defences can be strengthened, techniques adopted in the pilot project overhaul of the walls west of Orford carried out in 2011.

The AOEP plans to raise some of the funding through taking the planning gains on the development of new residential sites around the Estuary, an idea inspired by the method of funding at the East Lane Development, and applying these gains in upgrading the river defences. Following the traumatic tidal surge of December 2013 which broke the walls at Hazlewood Marshes, and flooded Snape village and Iken Marshes, the AOEP project now seems ever more urgent as its Estuary Plan, largely written by our Chairman Alison Andrews and Amanda Bettinson, is currently being considered for endorsement by Suffolk County and Coastal District Councils and the Environment Agency.

Activities and Preoccupations

The Newsletter may these days appear to be heavily focused on the Association's role in flood defences but this is far from the whole story either now or in the past. Over the years, the Association has each year organised two or three guided walks through some of the best landscapes in the area, normally now organised by John Grayburn. These walks have included many visits to the Orford Ness Lighthouse now owned by an Association member, Nick Gold, who has been fighting to prolong its life before it falls to the ravages of coastal erosion (Newsletter 40).



Other memorable walks written up in past Newsletters include those from the Martello Tower to Orford Quay, around Glemham Hall and along the coast from Shingle Street. One member, Angela Sydenham, has written two

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popular books of local walks, *Walk the Banks of the Alde and Ore* (Newsletter 33) and *Walk the Churches of the Alde and Ore Estuary* (Newsletter 41), both of which were published and are distributed by the Association.

The Summer Barbecues have been a very popular annual event for members since the very first one in June 1992 at Orford Sailing Club, showing the strong sailing connection in the choice of venue, all of them being chosen at locations which may be reached after an enjoyable sail. Over the years the most common locations have been, apart from Orford Sailing Club, the upper reaches of the Butley river, Round Hill House, Boyton Dock, Blackheath House as well as visits to Cowton House, Brick Dock and Cob House.

Newsletter 25 in the summer of 2003 reported the reopening of the Butley ferry which had been disused for several years but was brought back into commission after a lot of repairs of the staging and hard standing by Association member Graham Hussey. The ferry has gone from strength to strength as passenger numbers have risen from 400 in 2005 to 864 adults, 57 children and 350 bicycles in 2015. The Spring Newsletters has usually featured a picture of the ferrymen enjoying a cheery end of season lunch, a tradition introduced by Simon Barrow whilst in charge of the ferry, as also was the “practical and distinctive” large felt brimmed hat for the ferrymen similar to that worn by 16th century ferrymen (Newsletter 33).

The Newsletters have been filled with articles on the topography of our glorious estuary. Orford Ness was a favourite especially after its purchase by the National Trust. Other places that have been featured include Iken Wharf (Newsletter 13) and the Butley river (Newsletter 31).

However, Newsletter readers have been eager to experience their favourite places through historical events, tales of residents of long ago, literary references in novels and in poetry written by the readers. Newsletter 7 ran an article on Arnhem bound planes in wartime over the River Alde, Newsletter 11 ran an article on the wartime evacuation of Iken and Sudbourne and there were articles on the Garrett family in Snape (Newsletter 12), the coprolite boom which was the origin of Fisons (Newsletter 13), the various Roman and Anglo-Saxon finds in digs at Barbers Point, led by the very talented and one time Committee member, Richard Newman (Newsletters 24, 26, 30, and 33), the strange goings-on at Cobra Mist (Newsletter 15), the Aldeburgh WWI Air Station (Newsletter 15), Edwardian Life at Shingle Street (Newsletter 17), the vanished village of Hazlewood (Newsletter 18), Horse racing at Friston (Newsletter 19), the heyday of Blackheath House (Newsletter 22), the building of Orford Castle (Newsletter 24), the mysterious past of Yarn Hill (Newsletter 25) and the fortifications of Aldeburgh in WWI (Newsletter 41).



The Association's greatest contribution to the preservation of historical memories was in 2013 when the Association marked the 60th anniversary of the 1953 East Coast Floods with the production of a DVD and exhibitions curated by Hugh Pilkington in Orford Town Hall, Snape Maltings and in Aldeburgh (Newsletter 39).



In earlier Newsletters, numerous former 'olden times' characters in the Estuary have been recalled including the infamous Margaret Catchpole (Newsletter 6), Walter Mayhew, who worked in the Maltings and was a favourite of newsletters editors (Newsletter 15) and there were musings about old river pilots such as Jumbo and Spider.

Newsletters 12,13 and 14 explored literary references to places on the Estuary – Ald Lit as it was described – from Alan Hunter (Gently Between the Tides), Ann Quinton (A Fatal End), Colin Forbes (Cross of Fire), Reg Gadney (The Achilles Heel), Pat Barker (Regeneration) and Hilaire Belloc (On Sailing the Sea). It is some time since the last poem written by a member on some local theme was published. John Waddell the son of a local journalist and himself an erstwhile William Hickey, whilst editor of the Newsletter, seems to have encouraged their production. William K Ward wrote the last of them, typical of the type of poems published, ending with the lines:

*"Slaughden's Annual Regatta
A day of sport and fun,
Sailing, Rowing, Swimming races
Enjoyed by everyone."*

The Newsletter has also been a vehicle for the publication of the most glorious photographs of scenes of the Estuary which is something Derek Bingham particularly encouraged during his long and distinguished editorship.

Attributions of photographs have not generally been given but some of the most active of the Newsletter's photographers have included Derek Bingham, David Andren and more recently Birgitta Bostrom who is the present Treasurer.



The pages of the Newsletter over the past 25 years present a unique record of many of the prominent personalities who have lived and enjoyed this estuary and the changing face of the Estuary. It

is to be very much hoped that sufficient back copies of the Newsletters have survived that members will long be able to enjoy leafing through their fascinating pages.

Colin Chamberlain, Trustee

Editing the Newsletter, Issues 32 to 43

Edit the Alde & Ore Association's Newsletter? Of course! Not just a change from the daily diet of editing academic journals and correcting Heads of Schools' grammar and spelling: it would mean closer involvement with those activities close to the hearts of those of us lucky to live in this part of the world.

What could be more of a challenge than to produce a publication reflecting so many of these interests; to report on the Association's vital work as a ginger group, monitoring the well-being of the river; to thank those involved; to show that there are so many things to enjoy; to bring harmony, sweetness and light to a host of different and sometimes competing interests; to present the Association to a much wider audience – and hopefully shame those who are not members into joining.

I recalled the advice of a senior editor who once warned that unlike newspapers, which simply respond to events, magazines must be created. Each, he said, assumes a life of its own which is not always easy to control. (He was a very successful editor although a large sign in his office proclaimed 'We never promised you happiness').

I recalled his words when I started. Two issues a year? Twelve to sixteen pages each? The issues 33 and 34 exceeded thirty pages and issue 35 had sixty. Deadlines were observed usually by their non-observance, photographs by their variable quality and captions by their non-existence: identifying people could become difficult because they had their backs to the camera.

But there were so many positives. The Association's membership was packed with willing volunteers. Help with the annual BBQ? Watch the walls for signs of flood damage? Row the Butley Ferry? Discover new walks? Keep an eye on planning matters? Develop the website?

Look after the membership database? There never seemed to have been a shortage of help.

And there were experts in a host of fields, from archaeology to wildfowling, from churches to sailing to history, from landowners to drainage to wall building to conservation to hotel owners, all happy to contribute to the Association and to the Newsletter.



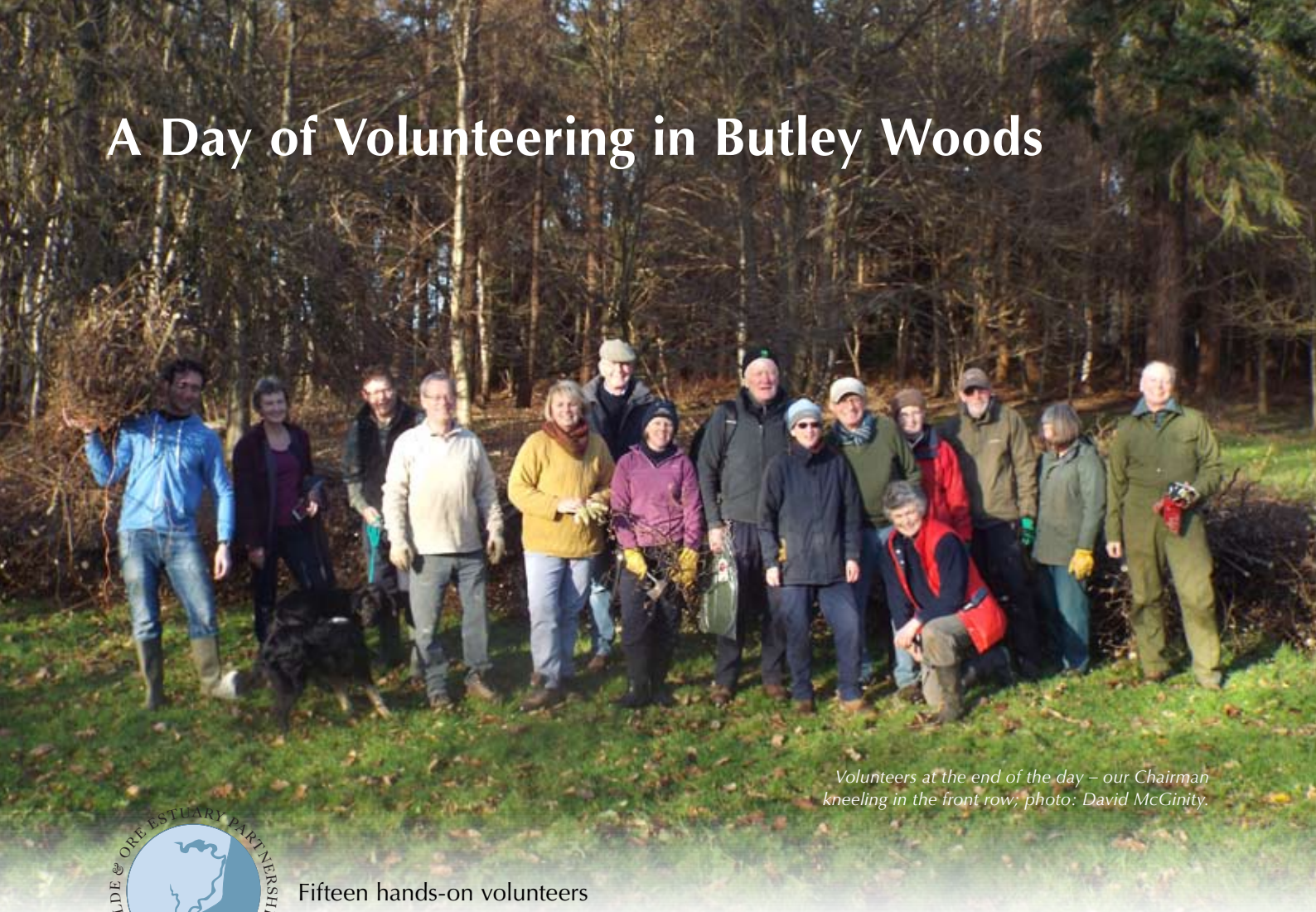
For much of my time as editor flood defences took centre stage. It was painstaking work. In successfully re-shaping the framework to which everyone now works (and which has now been taken over by the Alde & Ore Estuary Partnership of which the Association is an active member), we found extraordinary reserves of both, technical and financial expertise.

But this important work was not at the expense of other activities. The walks were frequently over-subscribed. The Butley Ferry continued to carry record numbers of passengers. There were always volunteers to help with important conservation work. There was vital research into what impact flooding might have on businesses and livelihoods. The Newsletter continued to draw together the many colourful threads in a rich tapestry, reflecting the Association's role of protecting and enjoying the river and its surrounds.

My senior editor once advised me not to edit a publication for more than about five years. Make the changes you think are necessary, he said, make sure they work, and don't stand in the way of a successor bringing something new to it. Membership continues to grow and, like all successful organisations, the Association continues to evolve, as does its Newsletter. Time to move on.

Derek Bingham
Editor of the Newsletter from 2007 to 2015

A Day of Volunteering in Butley Woods



Volunteers at the end of the day – our Chairman kneeling in the front row; photo: David McGinity.



Fifteen hands-on volunteers turned out on a wonderfully bright and sunny January day in Butley Woods to bundle faggots for the next saltings restoration project.

An astonishing seventy hazel bundles (faggots) were made on the day. They will be used in the construction of the hurdles at the toe of the walls, just below the high tide mark to encourage re-establishment of the saltings which help to protect the river walls.

We are very grateful to all the volunteers for their fantastic help. David McGinity, chairman of the Alde & Ore Estuary Partnership's Saltmarsh Group and Neil Lister, Countryside Officer for Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB, organised this successful volunteering day. In preparation for the day, they spent an enormous amount of time cutting branches too!

Branches for the faggots are usually cut in late winter. If that sounds like something that you would enjoy, join our team for a great day out

in the woods next year. Please contact David at david.mcginity@gmail.com. He would love to add more names to his list of volunteers.

Details of the saltings regeneration projects are published on the AOEP website at www.aoep.co.uk/index.php/projects/

Although it is early days, we are delighted to report that the project sites are showing very positive results. If you would have some spare time to help us on the monitoring programme which takes place annually, please contact David (as above) or Amanda Bettinson at amanda.bettinson@gmail.com for more information.

Enthusiastic volunteers with a little bit of time are always needed for a range of activities, both physical and technical. Please do not be shy in coming forward!

*Amanda Bettinson
Trustee and AOEP Secretary*

The Alde & Ore Association needs You!

The Association can only play its full role in the protection and enhancement of the estuary area if members help with the work which needs to be done.

Please consider if you can support us in one of the roles listed below.

Anyone with enthusiasm, a little bit of time and ideally some skills or expertise to support the future of the estuary, please contact us at info@aldeandore.org



Website Team Leaders

The website is currently being modernised to improve our communications with members. We need to build a team who can manage and monitor the website and emails.

Digital Photo Record-keeper

The Association needs someone with patience, good organisational skills and strong computer knowledge to develop and set up an archive of our digital photo collection. This role is very flexible, can be done from home and will support the future development of our website and our printed publicity.

Planning Advisor

A very important part of the Association's work is keeping an eye on planning applications – particularly those in sight of the estuary – and to identify those that might affect badly or harm the idyllic landscape in which we all live. The Planning Advisor would ideally be familiar with planning law and policies and would provide advice and draft comments for the Trustees on the approach the Association might take.

Please contact us at info@aldeandore.org for more detailed information regarding these roles.

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Editorial Team: Alison Andrews, Amanda Bettinson, John Grayburn. Design and Layout: Monika Koch.

Contributions are most welcome!

Please send your feedback, your stories about the estuary, any other text suggestions for future issues and your photos to the Editorial Team at info@aldeandore.org

Digital images should be submitted as jpg files and in a size of 1MB or more to guarantee good print quality.