

# The Alde & Ore Association

Newsletter 48 - Autumn 2017

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## The Chairman's note

All in all, it has been a wonderful summer for great skies, sunsets and much enjoyment for many in and around our wonderful estuary, even if winds greatly curtailed sailing in the autumn. But the estuary, being partly man-made as well as an amazing tapestry of many natural land forms and wild life, is part of our heritage and needs to be looked after.

At our Annual General Meeting in April, David Kemp of the Environment Agency gave a very vivid account

of how close the surge on 13/14 January 2017 was to causing serious damage. David took us through the complexities of forecasting a surge: the many factors that cause every tide to have a slightly different level.

These include distances between the moon, the sun and the earth, a constantly changing if regular pattern; and variations in temperature, pressure, wind direction and velocity which all act and interact with each other, compounding or reducing effects. Then, how, against that uncertainty, the need to make a judgement of the likelihood of flooding to give people time to prepare to move out of danger (none of which was possible at the time of the terrible 1953 floods).

Matters looked very grave on 13<sup>th</sup> January, with a Force 6-7 wind driving the water during the slightly lower high tide at midday. Fortunately, the wind did not turn westerly but died down in the evening. The surge arrived close to, but not totally coincident with, the high tide which peaked around midnight in the upper estuary. Very fortunately for us all, although it was touch and go, the high water came not over the top of the wall at Snape but to within less than half a metre from the top - it was a very near miss.

Surges are not infrequent and we have to be on our guard. As recently as 29<sup>th</sup> October, just before 8am new time, a surge reflecting days of winds from the north and arriving on the top of what



*Stephanie Knight and Sue Cooper enjoy the walk from Glemham, the first of three Association walks George Knight organised for members this year. Reports appear on page 4.*

Your Voice - Your Estuary

[www.aldeandore.org](http://www.aldeandore.org)

was fortunately a neap high tide, nevertheless managed to cover Slaughden Quay and the saltings right up to the base of the walls.

**All this goes to show, yet again, that we do need to get the walls to a good standard of resilience to be able to cope with overtopping but without breaching and so keep the estuary safe. And it can be done. The walls have existed for centuries - the earliest was built in the 12<sup>th</sup> century - but they need to be sustained.**

In working to secure the future of the estuary and our enjoyment of it, there have been two main streams of work continuing during the year. The Alde and Ore Estuary Partnership (AOEP) implementation group has been working on the detailed programme to restore the river walls to meet the AOEP's resilience standard. (Please see page 11).

Secondly, the fund-raising team, which works to the Alde and Ore Estuary Trust, is seeking to raise enough money to pay for the restoration. It has been rolling out the fund-raising plan in stages involving, first, the landowners and farmers, to get a substantial contribution towards the £10 million needed, apart from government monies. Now, it is time to go to the Alde and Ore communities for their contribution to keep the estuary going, just as our ancestors did. Judi Newman's article on page 8 explains all that is happening.

Members of the Alde and Ore Association will, I am sure, rise to the funding challenge to help keep the estuary for the coming generations. The Association exists to preserve and protect the rivers and all wonderful features on their banks. Getting a sound policy and programme to ensure the river walls, which are central to the existence of the estuary in which we work rest and visit, has long been a focus of the Association.

In 2012, resulting considerably from the Association's prompting, we saw the establishment of the Alde and Ore Estuary Partnership which involves everyone in the community, not just members: now we have an Estuary Plan. The AOEP, on which the Association is a member, is developing a Programme of works.

The Alde and Ore Estuary Trust is now there to be the Treasury for the estuary. And the Association continues to be concerned with all matters to do with the estuary's well being, including helping ensure the river defence plan stays on course.

## On other matters

Less action has occurred in relation to government proposals to designate the estuary as a Marine Conservation Zone. We made our comments known last year when the idea was raised again: we think we already have sufficient regulations to protect the special habitats of the estuary. We now await the government's proposals for full consultation – these were due in the summer.

That said, the AOA has been talking with a group of Orford organisations and we jointly plan to strengthen our response when the time comes if need be. There is also no news yet on the appeal to the Secretary of State by the developer at Brick Dock. The Association submitted its objections again to such an inappropriately large and visible proposed area of building.

This coming year will see the Natural England investigations and discussions on a possible Coastal Path and then proposals and consultation. If you want to be involved, please see page 7

But we also continue to enjoy and learn more about our estuary and its wildlife and seasons. I hope you enjoy Mike Swindell's article, which makes identifying our gulls easy. Just in case anyone thinks gulls just hang around the fishermen's huts, this summer some friends with a new powerful camera took a photo of the identifying leg ring on a Greater Black-backed gull. He has well earned his nickname of Alfred the Great - he was born in Norway in 2007 and has been seen here more than one summer, in Essex, and in the Netherlands.

The Association has a huge and important task to contribute to the continuation of the wonderful heritage of the Alde and Ore rivers and the estuary landscape. Please consider how you might contribute with money or legacies, with ideas or help with fund-raising, and helping the Association with its work whether on supporting the defences programme, planning, or responding to government consultations to ensure our voice is heard.

New Trustees would be welcome and all ideas and feedback, as well as volunteers for particular tasks, would all be very welcome, including a *Newsletter* leader. After all, the Association works as Your Voice, Your Estuary.

I wish you all a very good winter

Alison Andrews

## Wanted

### Newsletter help

Trustee to lead on the *Newsletter*. We need someone who loves the area and will enjoy gathering articles on matters of interest and sometimes writing them and putting the text and photos in good shape. If they wanted also to do the layout that would be good, but not essential.

### Planning expert

To keep an eye on planning applications so the Association can play a formative role in approval or otherwise of inappropriate or highly suitable buildings or developments to ensure the estuary and its banks retain their unique

features. We need a trustee with planning experience who can take on the role of monitoring applications and assessing ones the Association should act upon.

### Walk organisers and ideas

Is there anyone who would like to organise one or more of the Association's walks a year? We try to find walks that are in whole or in part not normally accessible to the public. We could try different formulas, such as bird watching, church visiting. Volunteers to help organise these would be great as would any ideas for walks.

Please write to [info@aldeandore.org](mailto:info@aldeandore.org) or telephone 01728 452660



# The 26th Annual Barbecue

The annual barbecue was held at Cowton House, Sudbourne, very kindly hosted by Simon and Sheena Barrow.

Members and guests enjoyed the panoramic views across the estuary, after wending their way up neat mown paths through the hillside meadow. Several members, covering three generations, also made their way by boat to the landing place below and came up the leafy track to join the party. With high tide at 1pm, the estuary was at its most expansive and the shining water, riffled by the strong breeze, was a wonderful sight.

This year we had a new musical venture with Nick Raison playing the keyboard and Sarah Gallop singing songs from every musical genre to the assembled throng. Not least should be mentioned Simon Barrow's adaptation of Woodie Guthrie's song *This land is your land* to rouse us to support our beloved estuary.

As always, there was an excellent barbecue with a mix of lamb, chicken and sausages to suit everyone and, not least, an amazing range of salads provided by some 20 volunteers. One member has been so inspired she plans to produce an Alde and Ore salad recipe book to raise funds for the estuary. Do send your favourite recipe to us.

Huge thanks must go to Paul Walkden, who has now 'retired' after five years of splendid organisation of the barbecues, and Elizabeth Boyd who brought together the salad-makers to all of whom we are very grateful for such a fantastic and delicious spread.

The Chairman gave a short update on recent issues affecting the estuary: it was very opportune, with the wonders of the estuary before everyone, to remind us all that to keep our estuary much as it is for the next generations, we have, as people have done over the centuries, to contribute to ensure the river walls, the backbone of our landscape, are brought to a good standard and kept in good repair.

All in all, it was again a wonderful and successful occasion giving much opportunity for chatting, catching up with friends and thoroughly enjoying an unusual and special view of the estuary.

*If anyone has ideas where the next barbecue might be – near to river to enable sailors to come and not on a public footpath but reasonably accessible for those who come by car - do let us know. [aldeandore@gmail.com](mailto:aldeandore@gmail.com)*



In harmony: Simon Barrow, Sarah Gallop, Nick Raison



# The Association's walks, as popular as ever

## A spring walk in the upper Alde

Our spring walk took us to the upper Alde valley, a lovely miniature rolling valley landscape in great contrast to the wide expanses of Shingle Street at the far end of the estuary

We began by walking through soft meadowland past the longest picnic table in the world watched by sheep with lambs at foot, tucking into the sweet meadow grass. Then we went up what must be the steepest hill in our part of the world to come out onto higher arable land, with huge ancient oaks and views over the river valley. Then round into a woodland with swathes of white, wild garlic, or ransoms as the plants are variously known.

Down into the valley bottom again and across the infant Alde by footbridge, emerging into a field with a young stand of wheat, through a gap and then a path rising upwards through shoulder-high oilseed rape into the fields at the top with spreads of deep ultramarine blue bluebells to be enjoyed.

We then turned back down along an ancient track and returned to White House Farm. There, sitting in the open barn with wonderful logs, huge plants and all sorts of rural history objects hanging from the beams, we had a wonderful lunch prepared by George Hutchison.

There were the most delicious and unusual salads and meats and cheeses to round off a wonderful stroll in what was for many a new aspect to the Alde, with memories of the brilliant colours, the green of spring grass, emerging leaves not yet darkened by the sun, huge spreads of white, yellow and blue flowers and little pockets of small purple, magenta and pink flowers – a real spring walk. Our huge thanks go to George Knight for organising and leading us around such a treasure, and to Jason Gathorne-Hardy for hosting us at White House Farm.

## To Orfordness, mid-summer

A richly interesting walk with huge variety, from the simply vast expanse of the shingle and sea to the details of the wild flowers, the several features in the landscape where man has made his mark, as well as the walking challenge along the more loose shingle stretches.

The group assembled at Martello Tower and heard about the defences, the current ones beginning post the 1953 floods: concrete wall and successions of huge boulders and regular shingle recycling and most recently boosted by 5000 tonnes of boulders in 2016. They walked down through the National Trust gate, not normally allowed as we needed special permission, looking at the Lantern Marshes.

These are now covered by salt marshes but some 20 years ago were rough grasslands, although the sheep grazing them from as far back as Cardinal Wolsey's time up to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century were long gone. Still, there seem to be

plenty of hares on the highest parts we heard.

The wild flowers were at their peak; John Grayburn could not have timed this walk better! It was as if we were seeing fields of yellow horned poppy and sculptural grey green sea kale clumps with their white flowers. Scattered along the walk were also vividly purple vipers bugloss, much pinky purple clover, yellow stonecrop, thistle, knapweed, delicate haresfoot trefoil, sea campion, red poppies, red sorrel and much more.

We met Mike Finney, Director of the Cobra Mist site and trustee of the Lighthouse Trust. He described what was being thought about in the plans for the Cobra Mist site. The sea defences had been repaired: the American wall which was breached in 2013 now consisted of a special sluice with a sill construction so that the huge area around the aerials could act as flood relief for the river and provide a better habitat for birds with water being allowed in and let out as needed.

There was more. A very interesting project is being considered. The extensive area around the aerials is low lying, and cannot be seen from the shore or land. As well as providing habitats for birds, animals and plants, it could provide a base for solar panels to harvest the massive supplies of sun from the open skies. Very importantly, use could be made of the massive Cobra Mist building that the Americans had constructed in the early '60s to withstand nuclear weapons.

The idea now is to use it to house batteries to store the electricity generated by the solar panels. In this way one of the big disadvantages of solar power, which is that power is only produced when the sun shines, could be overcome. It might be possible to supply the many villages around Orford with this power on a continuous basis.

More thinking is to be done but the site could work in many environmentally good ways, from flood alleviation for the estuary, to healthy vibrant habitats and to continuous power production using natural light and an otherwise unused but substantial building.

Then we moved on and were joined by Grant Lohoar, National Trust Countryside Manager for East Suffolk (six sites including managing Orfordness and advising on countryside at Sutton Hoo and Dunwich Heath). Grant showed us all the repair and rebuilding works to the flood defence walls, now completed to make good what was undone in the 2013 surge including along Stoney Ditch.

He also showed where every winter the sea throws shingle on to the long sea built areas of the ness requiring the track ways for maintenance work to be remoulded from the new shingle washes. The whole area south of Cobra Mist has a very complicated system of managing the sea water which comes over in the winter storms,









*The long road to the Lighthouse*

being contained in wall defences then being led carefully out through Pig Pail sluice to the river so as not to damage the river walls.

Finally, the walk was rounded off by the party having the freedom, with many thanks to the Lighthouse Trust, to roam around and climb to the top of the lighthouse for the amazing views – the stairs inside at one point seem rather vertiginous and are not great for some people but the light-housekeepers since 1792 must have been a sturdy and fearless lot.

We found places to have our sandwiches out of the wind, near the horned sea poppy field. After that we walked happily to the Orfordness jetty and so across the river to find our cars and get people back to the cars at the start of the walk and to home – another logistical problem perfectly managed by John Grayburn. Huge thanks to him for organising the walk, to Mike Finney and the Cobra Mist company and Lighthouse Trust and to Grant Lohoar and David Mason of the National Trust. Yet another excellent visit to the Ness.

### **Autumn, from Snape**

It might have been somewhat rainy but 19 stalwart Association walkers set out from Snape for an interesting three looped walk, in several contrasting landscapes: the river wall with marsh on one side, the headland into the estuary, the dry sandy upland, and the surrounding lower woods. Normally anyone of us might do one of them but the three loops provided a greater understanding of the network of paths and the tapestry of the landscape we so enjoy walking around.

First, walking along the river wall on the north side of the river, rebuilt after the 2013 surge when Snape was dreadfully flooded, with a lovely line of sight down the navigable channel. Looking at the luxuriant vegetation on the walls, it was hard to believe it had been a bare clay wall only two years ago and before that a broken down almost lost structure.

Then stepping up from the wall into the woody surround, we skirted the base of Snape Warren with the path at the edge of the marshes providing a watery challenge in



*Mike Finney, Catherine Howard-Dobson, Tony Morley.*

places, these marked by the unusually tall sea asters – it must have been good summer for them.

And so out to the promontory opposite Iken church, on the east side overlooking Church Reach and on the west providing a splendid viewing platform for the wildlife along the mid-tide mud and for the landscape up to the Maltings. The river walls beyond that have long failed, perhaps before or during WWII, so we retraced our tracks for a few hundred yards and then crossed in the upland of Snape Warren.

There the heather was really coming into its own with glowing folds of purple. Coming back through the wood with the interesting old tree trunks, we went up towards the back road into Snape and then went eastwards along the Sailors' Path. Eschewing a shortcut back for an earlier lunch, a unanimous decision, we went on for another half mile and were rewarded when we took a permissive path back to the right with yet more lovely heather spreads and another fresh open view, this time looking east along the entire Long Reach of the estuary, again not one many had seen.

Then back into Snape, passing through the woods completing a circular walk to the river wall. We finished our expedition with an excellent lunch at the Plough & Sail, the party swelled by those who would have liked to come but were happy to join the company.

Again, many thanks to George Knight for devising a fascinating route from what we all thought we know very well, we emerged with a much richer understanding of the patterns here.

# Coastal Path: Aldeburgh to Bawdsey

Consultation to identify a route just started, full consultation of a proposed route in 2018, route to be opened in 2020

Natural England (NE) have just started work identifying the part of the English coastal path that will run from Aldeburgh to Bawdsey. It is the last section to be done.

The entire project began in about 2013 and the aim is to have a complete path all around the English coast. This is not straightforward. Over the next six to eight months NE will be talking with landowners about possible routes along or close to our coast where suitable public rights of way do not exist already. If anyone wants to submit their views on the possible route they will be considered as well.

In designing the route, the NE Coastal Path team have to consult NE environmental experts about the various environmental and habitat designations and considerations that need to be taken into account. Those experts will either have to sign off the proposal as not being likely to cause significant environmental damage, or not likely to do so if certain mitigatory actions are taken, or the route will have to be reconsidered.

Around the summer of 2018, the proposed route will be put out for public consultation and also submitted to

the Secretary of State. After an eight-week consultation, all comments will be considered by an Inspector, a process that could take six months. The inspector will then either recommend the route to the Secretary of State or recommend further design and consultation on particular parts. The aim is to have the Coastal Path in place from 2020.

The Association will keep an eye on what is proposed; indeed we should be involved as we provide the Butley Ferry. We will let members have updates when appropriate. It seems likely that there will be a wide range of views among members from those wanting no change, those concerned for the rich wildlife and those where they think some opening up or joining up would be desirable. If you want to let us know your views, please do so that Trustees can assess whether the Association has a role to play.

If any one wants to submit ideas directly to the NE contact is [eastcoastalaccess@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:eastcoastalaccess@naturalengland.org.uk), and the website [www.gov.uk/englandcoastalpath](http://www.gov.uk/englandcoastalpath)

*'Over the next six to eight months Natural England will be talking with landowners about possible routes along or close to our coast where suitable public rights of way do not exist already. If anyone wants to submit their views on the possible route they will be considered as well.'*





## Update from the Alde and Ore Estuary Trust

# Save Our Suffolk Estuary campaign

A resume of how money is being raised to undertake the necessary work

With the help of many Association members, The Alde and Ore Estuary Trust has launched its community-led fundraising appeal to Save Our Suffolk Estuary. The campaign aims to raise £12m to carry out essential upgrades to the flood defences of the Alde and Ore estuary and encourages everyone who lives, works and visits in the area to contribute what they can to a shared charitable fund to help safeguard the local economy, homes, businesses, leisure and tourism activities from strong tidal surges.

Funds raised will be used to carry out the river defence works outlined in the Final Estuary Plan of the Alde and Ore Estuary Partnership. A group of local volunteers have been busy organising a series of events and opportunities to spread the word that we all share an interest in making sure our homes, businesses and beloved leisure activities are protected, and that we cannot rely on government sources to make this happen. It is up to us!

Donations of all sizes are most welcome, and many prefer to spread their gift with a regular Standing Order – the form is available on the [www.aoetrust.org](http://www.aoetrust.org) website. The Trust remains gratefully indebted to the late David Andren for his significant legacy that has started the campaign most generously.

Local landowners of the estuary have committed to raise £5m towards the £12m target, and applications will be made to unlock as much institutional/local authority funding as possible but it remains that, as a community, we will need to raise approximately £5m from local homeowners, businesses and visitors to the area to match the landowners' contribution. If 5,000 people were to donate £500, and each donation could be made over a few years, we would be half way there.

For details of how to make a donation, with Gift Aid if you are a UK taxpayer, please visit [www.aoetrust.org](http://www.aoetrust.org) and please join our shared endeavour to Save Our Suffolk Estuary.



Nick Robinson, pictured at this year's Orford Flower Show

### Launch events

Three launch events were held across the estuary area in October, showing a 20 minute screening of a newly commissioned film *Save Our Suffolk Estuary* directed by Angie Mason and presented by BBC's Nick Robinson. The film follows a drone camera journeying up the estuary to highlight the diversity of estuary life, interspersed with interviews with those who share a deep love and concern for the estuary, including Anthony Horowitz and Harry Young of Snape Maltings. You can see the seven-minute edition on the AOEP website: [www.aoep.co.uk](http://www.aoep.co.uk)

The Orford Town Hall event on 14<sup>th</sup> October was chaired by Libby Purves; Paul Heiney chaired the Snape Village Hall on 21<sup>st</sup> October and the Aldeburgh Cinema event on 28<sup>th</sup> October was chaired by Lord Deben. Posters for the events were distributed across the area, kindly sponsored by Thompson's Gallery of Aldeburgh.

Local school children from Snape, Orford



## “Who’s next?” The Four Ferries Bike Ride



*Tim Dudgeon, recently retired A&O Association trustee in charge of Butley ferry, welcomes participants in the Four Ferries Bike Ride, held to raise money for the AOET’s river defences fundraising campaign.*

*He developed the idea for the event following Muff Dudgeon and Vicki Bingham cycling the 46-mile course last year (see Newsletter no 46).*

*The four ferries, Harwich to Felixstowe, Felixstowe Boatyard to Bawdsey, Butley to Orford and Walberswick to Southwold, are all foot ferries using a variety of craft (the last two being rowing boats). Some operate only during the summer, others throughout the year albeit on a reduced service. All either gave generous discounts to the participants or waived their fees entirely.*

*On Saturday, 16<sup>th</sup> September, 23 cyclists set out. Among them were two very experienced cyclists from Ipswich, Ian Head and Graham Caiels, who covered 78 miles in all! Despite two punctures and some rain towards the end of the day, all the participants were most enthusiastic about the ride and pleaded for it to be held again next year. More than £700 was raised for the AOETs funds.*

and Aldeburgh Primary Schools were invited to enter a competition to draw or write what the estuary means to them – the Trust is very grateful to Maggi Hambling and Anthony Horowitz for judging the winning entries, which were displayed at the launch events, highlighting that the estuary is loved and appreciated by all ages.

### **Alde and Ore Inter-Estuary Pub Quiz**

Other events have included an Inter-Estuary Pub Quiz, ‘How well do you know Suffolk?’, on 23<sup>rd</sup> November, 2017. Seventeen pubs from Thorpeness to Orford took part, with a large number of teams of eight pitting their wits against each other within each pub and across all participating pubs simultaneously, each with a celebrity quiz master

### **Four Ferries Cycle Ride**

The Trust would like to say an enormous thank you to all the cyclists who took part in the Four Ferries Cycle Ride on 16<sup>th</sup> September, cycling the four foot ferries of Harwich, Bawdsey, Butley and Walberswick in aid of the

Alde and Ore Estuary Trust. The event highlighted the unique landscape that the estuary offers keen cyclists, and many of the hardy participants have asked if they can do it again next year! Many thanks to Tim Dudgeon and the volunteer committee who did a tremendous job in making the event happen, and to the ferrymen who worked so hard to keep the cyclists moving all day.

### **Social media**

If you use social media, please do like/follow/share/tweet our @SOSestuary posts and help spread the word. There are many people who love the estuary area but are not residents, and social media is a very effective way to reach many of them and encourage them to support the campaign too.

[www.facebook.com/sosestuary](http://www.facebook.com/sosestuary)

[www.twitter.com/sosestuary](http://www.twitter.com/sosestuary)

[www.instagram.com/sosestuary](http://www.instagram.com/sosestuary)

*Judi Newman, for the Fund raising team.*



View from the top: looking up river towards Snape at this years BBQ



## Alde & Ore Estuary Partnership

### Progress on the estuary walls

Since May the Partnership have agreed the modelling specification for the whole estuary and are now waiting for the final results. This will give us a good baseline model and it looks like the draft results are in line with the previous modelling undertaken and significantly underpins the Estuary Plan.

It shows the impacts on other flood cells and highlights properties that may need localised protection. It will be necessary to discuss with the Iken landowners exact designs for that flood compartment, which will possibly include retired walls to protect houses and other assets. The final report will be available in late November and we will communicate our thoughts and any cost implications as soon as we can.

You will be glad to hear Phase I of the Aldeburgh wall upgrade is complete. No further work can be started until we have the schemes designed, costed and relevant

consents from the Environment Agency which will be some time next year, but it is hoped to be able to start some mitigation work (removing rare species, water voles, adders *etc*) from the wall for upgrading work to start in earnest in 2019. We expect to spend £2-3m a year across the estuary in 2019 and each of the following four years.

### Enabling Development

A public forum was held at Tunstall Village Hall on 10<sup>th</sup> November chaired by Lord Deben to discuss concerns that the community had raised and to view the sketch plans for the currently proposed sites. Lord Deben discussed a number of concerns all of which are covered in the FAQs on the website. He hoped that if the community were unhappy about the proposed plans to raise funds through enabling development they might propose alternative ways to cover the significant funding required. We must all work together on this.

Following the meeting held with SCDC Planning Department and The Estuary Trust and the concerns from the community, it has been agreed there will be a pause to the enabling development programme for the next year. Not only will that allow us to further develop and cost our plans for flood defence work in the estuary, but we will also have had a year in which to raise funds from all other sources.



## Repair and restoration works around the estuary this summer

### Wall

You will all have seen the great works continuing on the middle section of the Aldeburgh wall this summer. The plan had been to finish it last year but, as with ancient walls, an unknown sluice and patch of slippery clay meant more needed to be done. It has now been completed and seeded over; providing we leave it to grow there should be a good surface to walk on next year.

The wall should now, apart from maintenance, be able to meet the resilience needed in 2050. Behind it there are new and wider ditches that will soon be repopulated with reeds and water voles, just to mention two key features. This shows how the AOEP and Environment Agency, with the IDB organising the work on the ground, can make real progress towards sustaining the estuary.

### Shingle

On the sea side of the river, the winter saw damage to the shingle wall and haul road on top of it just south of

the Martello. It is very good news that the Cobra Mist company has been liaising with the Environment Agency on the necessary remedial action. Cobra Mist has been recovering the over washed shingle to repair the wall and the Environment Agency has the resources nearby for further shingle recharge if it is needed.

### Saltings

The AOEP is working on restoring some of the saltings projects by replacing bundles of long brushwood where, even in the space of a few years, some have been broken down or washed away.

This has involved getting a licence but at last a fast track system for small projects has been invented (no doubt partly through pressure from AOEP and the Suffolk Saltings Group). The projects are being monitored so the slow build-up of silt can be properly measured and hopefully in a few years vegetation will start to take hold.

*Top: The new Aldeburgh wall.*

*Below: 29th October 2017: An hour before this picture was taken, when the tide was at its height, no vegetation on the marsh could be seen.*



# Learn to love your gulls

Mike Swindell describes the gulls that can be found around the Alde and Ore and neighbouring coastline

Many general birders have little interest in gulls. Many of the general public do not like them. But they are just as interesting as the birds we prefer to watch, and for some specialist birders they are a favourite challenge.

It is worth starting with a simple list of the gulls you are most likely to see, in order of size:

Species	Length( cm)	Weight (gms)	Leg colour
Five main species			
The smaller:			
Black-headed Gull	36	290	Red
Common Gull	41	400	Yellow green
The larger:			
Lesser Black-backed Gull	58	830	Yellow
Herring Gull	60	1050	Flesh pink
Great Black-backed Gull	71	1700	Flesh pink
Two more - a bit different, both smaller			
Mediterranean Gull	37	320	Red
Kittiwake	39	410	Black

I have not included many illustrations (copyright problems), as you will do far better using Google (Images) for a large selection of pictures. I have included some URLs for pictures illustrating specific features.

Just a couple of points to look for: in general gulls take between two and four years to become fully adult, and with practice they can be aged up to this point. Immature birds have a varying amount of brown feathering on their backs and wings. Also the tip of the tail is black until they gain their full adult plumage.



*Herring Gull with a pipefish.*

**The Black-headed Gull**, the commonest gull around Slaughden, is probably the worst named bird in the UK. In winter the head is white, with some dark smudges, the largest just behind the eye. From February through to April, the pale winter head becomes mottled as the dark feathers grow through. By the breeding season the head is dark brown, but looks black against a light background. The bill is red, and is small compared with those of nearly all other gulls.

If the bill and legs are yellow-orange, then the bird is less than a year old, as the red is acquired progressively through the first year. In flight, the grey wing has a white wedge on the leading edge, tapering from the tip to the carpal joint. See <https://gullstothehorizon.wordpress.com/2013/01/05/the-p9-conondrum/> This website also has excellent pictures of Common and Herring Gulls, look under the 'Articles' tab. Some of the discussion is rather technical.





*Great Black-backed Gull.*

**The Common Gull** is also badly named, as it is only present during summer in small numbers, but with many more visiting in winter. However, the name fits well in northern Scotland, where it largely replaces the Black-headed Gull. It is only slightly larger, and this shows if they are both seen together. It is similar to the much larger Herring Gull, with silver-grey back and wings, and black wingtips. The white marks in the black tips are known as 'mirrors'.

As with all the larger gulls, the head is white in the breeding season, but looks dirty in winter, with brown mottling. We have a very small number breeding on Havergate, although the chicks are usually predated by Lesser Black-backed Gulls.

**The Herring Gull** is slightly larger than Lesser Black-backed Gull. However, it is logical to discuss Herring Gull next due to similarity with Common Gull. The grey of the back and wings is a subtle tone or two paler than Common Gull, but Herring Gulls are much larger, and much heavier in general appearance, especially the head and bill.

Resident throughout the year, they can be seen well around the fishing huts near the Moot Hall. They tend to migrate only as far as a local rubbish tip, while the more discerning go to the Aldeburgh chippie. The birds breeding on chimney pots cause concern, but they are really ground nesters, on Orfordness and Havergate. Their numbers have been much reduced by predation from foxes on Orfordness. The plumage progress to adulthood is excellently illustrated at <http://www.gull-research.org/hg/0start.html>

**The Lesser Black-backed Gull** is slightly smaller than the Herring Gull, but this is not noticeable unless you see them together. The main difference is the much darker grey back and wings and the legs are yellow. Young birds (up to one year) are almost identical to young, brown flecked, Herring Gulls. The breeding numbers in the mixed Lesser Black-backed and Herring Gull colonies on Havergate and Orfordness are usually 80% Lesser Black-backed.

The dark grey tone becomes even darker in the north European sub-species, and almost black in a further sub-specie from the far side of the Baltic Sea, mainly in Finland. The level of grey is best assessed by comparing with the black wing tips projecting beyond the tail. Most of the breeding British sub-species migrate to Portugal and Morocco in the winter, where they find many rubbish tips but few chippies. Some of the intermediate north European birds come to Britain for the winter.

A conservation conundrum is generated by the British (less dark) sub-species of Lesser Black-backed Gull. The gulls eat significant quantities of Avocet eggs and chicks. The Avocet is, of course, an iconic bird, especially on the Suffolk coast, and is much loved by bird enthusiasts. But, in worldwide terms, the British sub-species of Lesser Black-backed Gull is threatened, with very few large colonies. So do we protect them, or the Avocets, which have an expanding population?

**The Great Black-backed Gull** is the largest gull in the



*Kittiwakes breeding on Lowestoft Pier.*

world. It also has a particularly strong, heavy bill. First winter immatures (and older birds) can often be seen on the southernmost marsh of North Warren (near the caravan park), and also near the fishing huts. Here the size difference from accompanying Herring and Lesser Black-Backed Gulls is obvious. The back and wings are very dark grey, almost as black as the wing tips. The legs are usually pink-flesh colour, as with Herring Gulls. The Great Black-backed Gull is similar to Common Gull, in that it breeds mainly in north Scotland, Orkney and Shetland, with just one or two pairs breeding by the Alde-Ore, and occasionally at Minsmere.

**The Mediterranean Gull** has expanded its range significantly to the north over the last 70 years, the first British pair breeding in a large Black-headed Gull colony on the Hampshire coast. They are now spread, although fairly thinly, over England, Wales and Ireland, and have nested in north Scotland. They use the Blyth estuary and also Minsmere and the Alde-Ore estuary, always in company with Black-Headed Gulls.

In fact, Mediterranean Gulls are far better qualified to be called Black-headed, since the breeding plumage is truly black-headed, but they are white-headed in winter, with dark smudges as in the Black-headed Gull. Other identification points are a strong white eye-ring (while the Black-headed Gull has a weaker eye-ring), and the adults have all-white wings, with no black tips.

**The Kittiwake** is a rather different gull. It is a rocky cliff-nesting bird, and highly pelagic, roaming the north Atlantic (and north Pacific) outside the breeding season. The bill is yellowish (similar to Common Gull), and the wing tips are black, as if dipped in ink with no white 'mirrors'. There is a large colony on the Yorkshire coast, from Flamborough Head to Bempton Cliffs (RSPB), where you can also see Puffins and Gannets breeding – highly recommended with easy access and viewing platforms at Bempton.

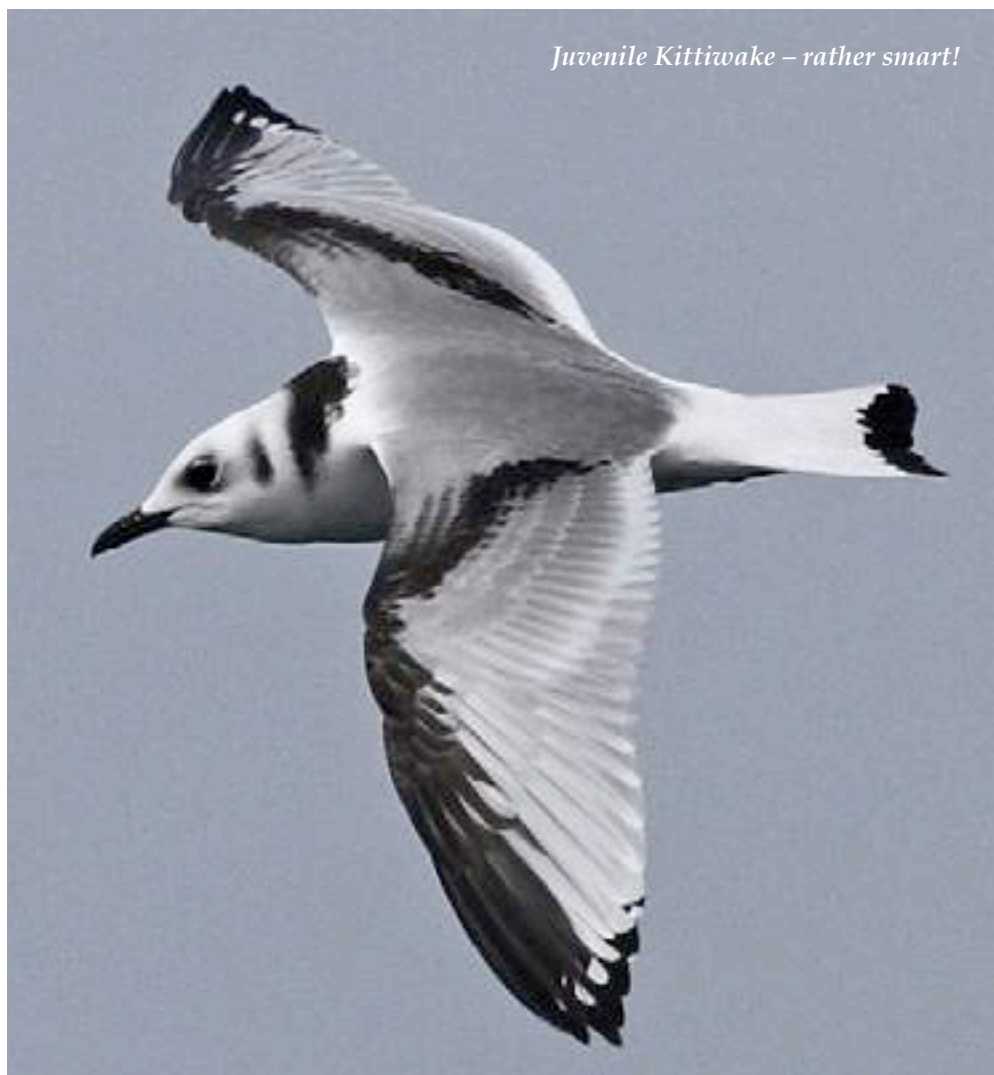
So where are the appropriate Suffolk cliffs? Answer – Sizewell and Lowestoft. The defunct inflow and outflow structures from

Sizewell A have ledges that are just right for Kittiwakes, and there are probably about 200 pairs in total.

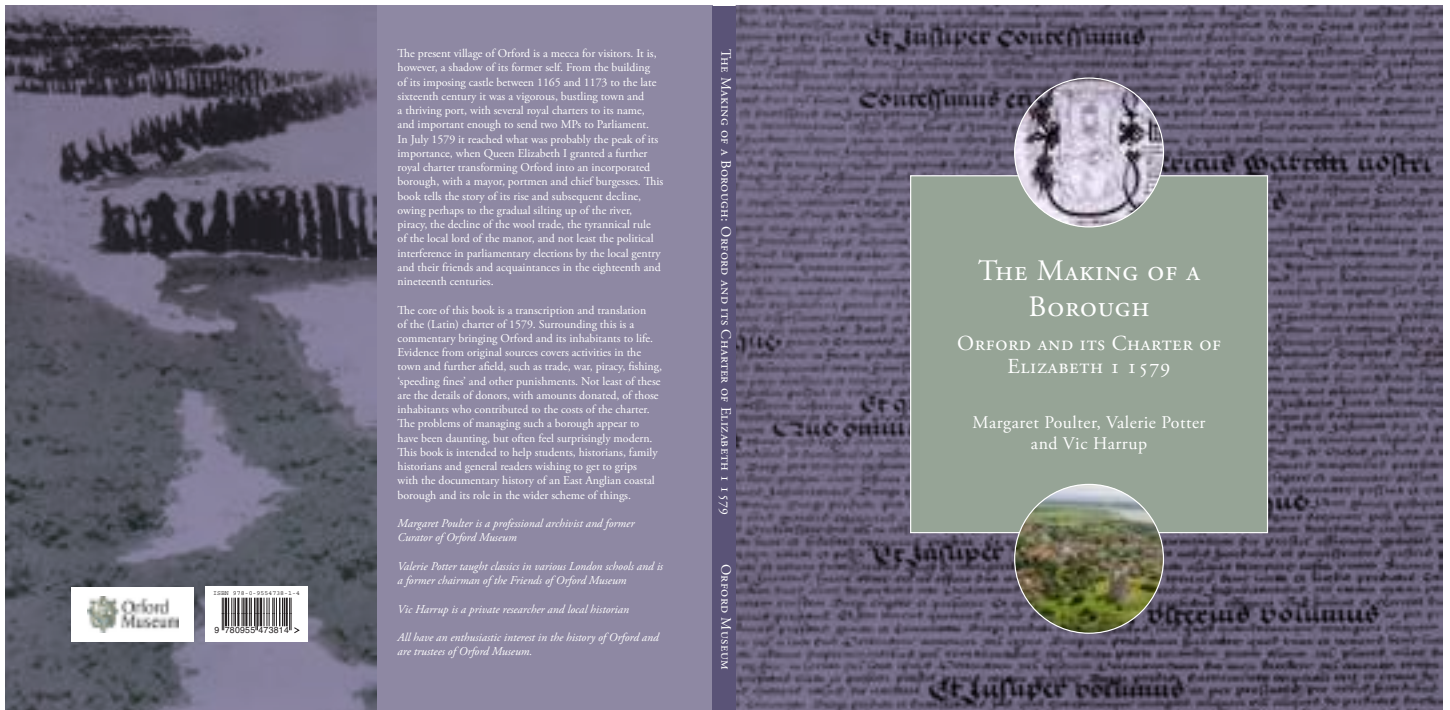
At Lowestoft, they nest on the derelict pier, and the harbour wall on the tyres fitted as buffers for the fishing fleet, now very much reduced. Competition for nest spaces is considerable, and various buildings in the town centre are also used, including the Catholic Church. While most of the British cliff colonies in the north and the Irish Sea are reducing, the Lowestoft colony is increasing.

You are unlikely to see Kittiwakes on the river, but they can sometimes be seen out at sea from Slaughden. By fitting Lowestoft birds with electronic geolocators, we have discovered that some go as far as the Labrador Sea, between Greenland and Canada, during winter, and even down to Long Island.

There are other species of gull that are seen occasionally in the area, mainly in winter. However, these are fairly rare, and if you can simply become familiar with those discussed here, you will cover over 99.9% of the gulls you see locally.







The present village of Orford is a mecca for visitors. It is, however, a shadow of its former self. From the building of its imposing castle between 1165 and 1173 to the late sixteenth century it was a vigorous, bustling town and a thriving port, with several royal charters to its name, and important enough to send two MPs to Parliament. In July 1579 it reached what was probably the peak of its importance, when Queen Elizabeth I granted a further royal charter transforming Orford into an incorporated borough, with a mayor, portmen and chief burgesses. This book tells the story of its rise and subsequent decline, owing perhaps to the gradual silting up of the river, piracy, the decline of the wool trade, the tyrannical rule of the local lord of the manor, and not least the political interference in parliamentary elections by the local gentry and their friends and acquaintances in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The core of this book is a transcription and translation of the (Latin) charter of 1579. Surrounding this is a commentary bringing Orford and its inhabitants to life. Evidence from original sources covers activities in the town and further afield, such as trade, war, piracy, fishing, 'speeding fines' and other punishments. Not least of these are the details of donors, with amounts donated, of those inhabitants who contributed to the costs of the charter. The problems of managing such a borough appear to have been daunting, but often feel surprisingly modern. This book is intended to help students, historians, family historians and general readers wishing to get to grips with the documentary history of an East Anglian coastal borough and its role in the wider scheme of things.

*Margaret Poulter is a professional archivist and former Curator of Orford Museum*

*Valerie Potter taught classics in various London schools and is a former chairman of the Friends of Orford Museum*

*Vic Harrup is a private researcher and local historian*

*All have an enthusiastic interest in the history of Orford and are trustees of Orford Museum.*



## The Making of a Borough: Orford and its Charter of 1579

by Margaret Poulter, Valerie Potter and Vic Harrup

Orford in its medieval heyday was a thriving town, important enough to appear with other East Anglian towns such as Great Yarmouth, King's Lynn, Ipswich and Dunwich in the lists of those which were required by royal writ to provide ships furnished with men and equipment for the Scottish and French wars. Whether it was the collapse of the wool trade, the silting up of the river, piracy, or the depredations of the lord of the manor that ultimately led to its decline, by 1579 Orford was described in the charter as being 'in the greatest state of ruin and decay'.

The core of the book is a transcription and translation of the charter granted by Elizabeth I in July 1579, which transformed Orford into an incorporated borough with a mayor, portmen (the equivalent of aldermen) and chief burgesses. Accompanying this is a commentary bringing Orford and its inhabitants to life.

Evidence from original sources covers activities in the town, trade and taxes, politics, piracy and war, shipping

and fisheries, 'speeding fines' and other punishments, including half a day in the town stocks for being a 'common scold'. It lists the inhabitants who contributed towards the costs of the charter, and details the attempts by the Willoughby family, lords of the manor of Sudbourne in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, to 'take over' the town, resulting in the steward being taken off to Melton gaol by the townsfolk, with a rowdy escort of 30 horsemen.

*The Making of a Borough* charts the rise and decline of the town following the completion of the castle in 1173 until 1886 when the borough was finally dissolved and replaced by the Orford Town Trust (since 1996 the New Orford Town Trust). The problems of governing such a borough often feel surprisingly modern.

*Copies, price £14.50, are available from Elizabeth Spinney, Brundish Lodge, High Street, Orford, Suffolk IP12 2NW. Email a.spinney43@btinternet.com; telephone 01394 450622.*

### Contributions are always welcome!

Please send your observations, about the Association and its activities, suggestions for articles in the *Newsletter* and your photographs to the editorial team at [info@aldeandore.org](mailto:info@aldeandore.org). Digital images should be submitted as jpg files and in a size of 1mb or more to guarantee print quality.

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Please note that signed contributions may not reflect the views of the Association as a whole.

*Horned sea poppies.*



## Alde & Ore Association events, 2018

Where would you like to walk?

Where would be a good place for the annual barbecue?

Do you want to help the Association in its work?

Have you any fund-raising ideas for the river defences?

Please write to [info@aldeandore.org](mailto:info@aldeandore.org) or telephone 01728 452660.