

The Alde & Ore Association

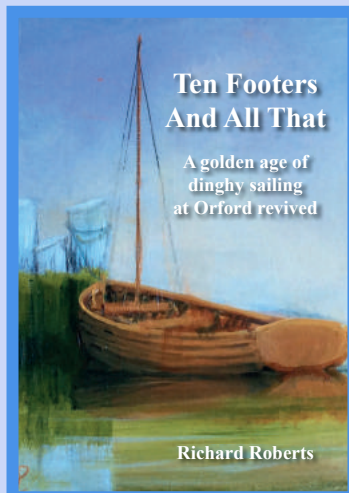
Newsletter 47 - Spring 2017

In this issue

Celebrating the upper Alde's woodlands ~ The Oyster's return
Plans for the Butley Ferry ~ River defence update
Celebrating the ten footer dinghies ~ Events for 2017



*The big spring picnic, see page 4.
Picture by Rob Howarth*



*Golden days at Orford, cover picture
by Jeremy Rugge-Price. See page 7.*



*Welcome back to The Oyster at Butley.
See page 8. Picture Vicki Bingham.*

The Chairman's note

As I was walking recently on a mild March evening, with the moon rising over the trees and casting a silver light on the river and the mud banks at low tide, I thought how precious our river is.

The evening was in stark contrast to the surge on 13/14 January. Then, at lunch time when the wind was high, the river was racing along with the strong north west wind pushing the tide back down the river, and when the tide turned the waves were rolling almost smoothly with the wind. Even so at the Slaughden bend, when the waves hit the river's edge, they broke covering the top of

Slaughden Quay, and the slipways at Aldeburgh Yacht Club, marooning the dinghies stacked on their ramps.

At the same time, just the other side of the seawall, the sea appeared calm, but was being kept flat by the offshore winds. Almost 12 hours later, nearer midnight, the sea was some 2 metres higher than usual and the impact as it hit the shore and raced up to unaccustomed heights closer to the sea wall was of a huge but suppressed force, roaring as it dragged the shingle back down the shore. Nearer the Yacht Club, where the shore is narrower, the sea sprayed well over the top causing some four deep channels in the

Your Voice - Your Estuary
www.aldeandore.org

shingle on the other side of the sea wall road. But the new shingle held up well where the protective rocks had been put in place last summer.

The tide was higher than earlier in the day and the water came well over the quay and dinghy parks but fortunately the wind had died away. At the same time, the water rose near Snape but very fortunately did not go over the new river walls; but it was a close thing. Our estuary is certainly one of great contrasts and well as a wonderful landscape.

In the time since the last *Newsletter*, much work by the Alde and Ore Estuary Partnership has gone on behind the scenes to get the projects going for safeguarding the walls. Following the agreed Estuary plan, the focus is first on the upper estuary where the immediate vulnerabilities are greater. Mandy Bettinson has reported on this in her piece on the AOEP later in this *Newsletter* (see page 10).

A huge amount of preparation is being done for the funding campaign to ensure enough money can be raised to enable the AOEP to carry out its entire plan for the whole estuary. Later this year the Alde & Ore Estuary funding group will be launching the campaign and start the drive forward. The funding group are ensuring that a good chunk of funding will be in place before launching the wider campaign. It will involve contributions from all the communities in the Alde and Ore. If we want to continue sailing, walking, businesses including jobs, to thrive including tourism and agriculture, we all have to contribute. The continuation of the estuary as we know it for the next generations depends upon what we achieve now. We are following the path set by our ancestors who have sought to keep the walls in good repair over the centuries.

During the winter the Association has been keeping an eye on issues affecting the estuary. One concern that has re-emerged is the possible designation of the estuary as a Marine Conservation Zone, as Defra are reviewing all the original candidate areas. We organised a visit by Natural England staff to ensure the nature of the estuary was properly understood and indeed that we could understand government classifications such as sandy and muddy gravels: so we had a cold but interesting trip up the river with Brian Upson piloting and guiding the party.

The River Users' Group also met to discuss views on

the MCZ. The Association, the AOEP and indeed the Wildfowlers' Association have made the point to Natural England that there is already enough protection offered to the estuary through the several habitat designations without imposing further statutory controls through an MCZ designation. In the spring Defra and NE will announce their final list of candidate MCZ sites for full consultation so we may well have to work hard on that consultation soon.

As an Association we have commented on the Sizewell C consultation that ended in February, not least to draw attention to the possible adverse impact of poorly executed transport and coastal plans on the Alde and Ore. Yet another amendment to the Jumbo's Cottage planning application was made and again we commented on the need not to allow anything that would damage that iconic corner of the estuary.

In this *Newsletter* we are continuing to seek to highlight in the articles the huge variety of our local landscape, the activities it inspires and places to visit. The upper Alde Valley inspires the Spring Festival and those venturing near the Butley river will have a revived refreshment stop at the Butley Oyster, and we hope more of you will enjoy a crossing on the Butley Ferry during the summer.

Looking to the summer, we have some interesting walks planned and our annual barbecue. There are always new issues and discussions arising. This year we should see the start of the Natural England consultation on the coastal path plans as it affects our estuary. There will always be planning developments, some good, some bad, which need to be examined carefully

All this is achieved with a handful of Trustees and our splendid ferrymen. Keeping the Alde and Ore accessible to all and well protected from unwanted developments is an ongoing task. We would love to have more members who can help us with these tasks, not least at present a Trustee to lead on planning, a copy writer for articles and Newsletter Editor. Please don't be shy in coming forward. The more people we have, the more that tasks can be shared out and the less each one has to do. After all this is Your Voice – Your Estuary.

I wish you all a very good summer.

Alison Andrews

Don't forget the Annual General Meeting

Saturday, 8th April, 10am at Thorpeness Country Club,

The Benthills, Thorpeness, IP16 4NU. Coffee and tea from 9.30am.

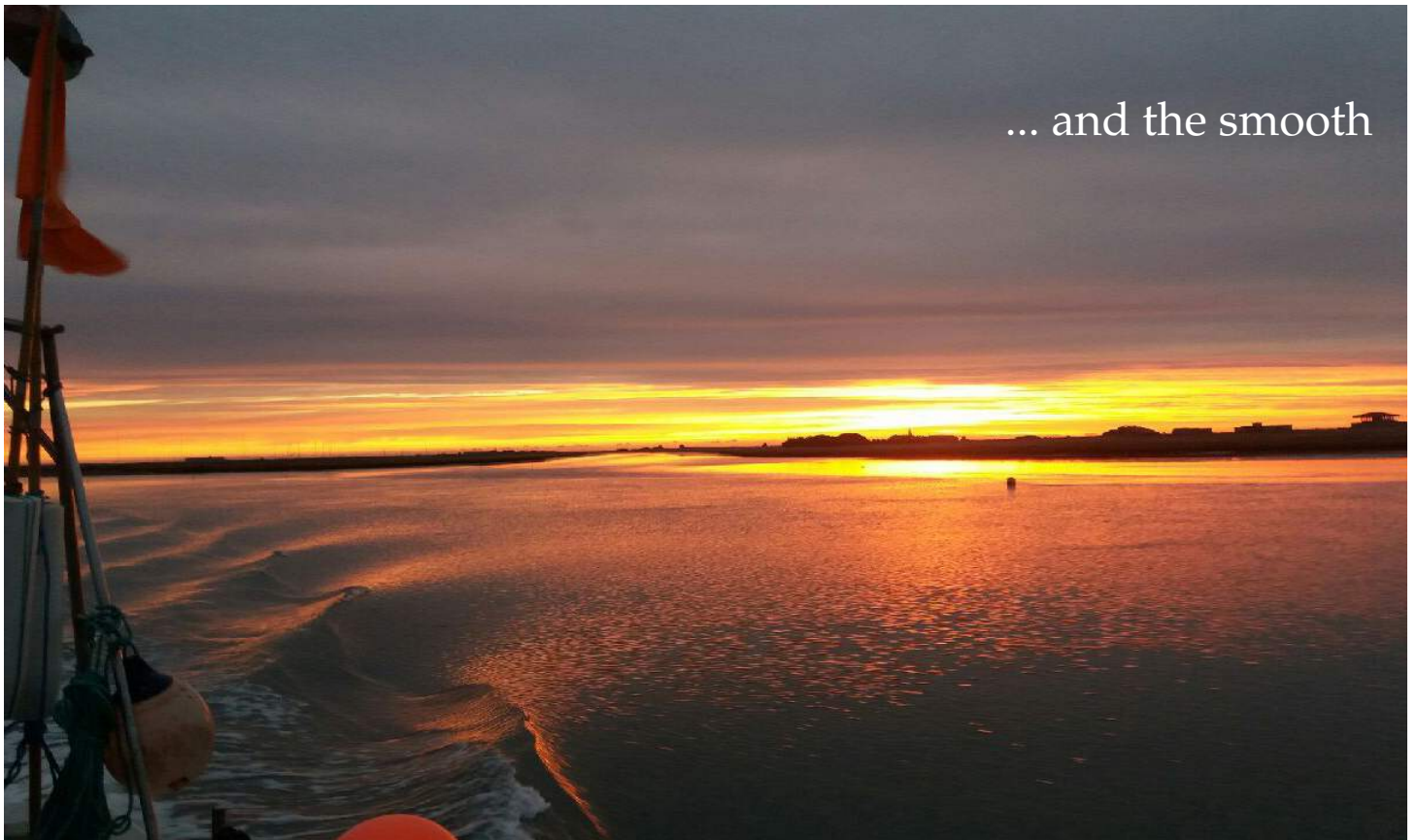
Guest speaker: David Kemp on 'The January 2017 Surge - how near was it?'



The rough...

Above: The surge tide on 14th January at Aldeburgh Yacht Club. Picture: Alison Andrews.

Below: Dawn, summertime. Peter Benstead took this striking photograph of Orfordness, with the lighthouse and the pagodas, on his way to the fishing grounds.



... and the smooth

Quercus & Co

Woodland around the Alde estuary and upper Alde valley

The landscape through which the river Alde flows – and which it also defines – is punctuated by several distinctive patches of woodland. Overlooking the estuary itself are the curiosities of Yarn Hill and Little Japan. More removed from the mudflats and main river channel (I confess to being more familiar with the former than the latter, even in my limited boating adventures) are the much larger expanses of Tunstall and Blaxhall forests.



The Big Spring Picnic Table ~ Celebrating local foods from the Alde valley ©Albanpix.com. Picture by Rob Howarth.

Suffolk to have so many large old oaks standing in our hedges, bristling with epicormic growth and often heavily clothed in ivy. They add weight to the landscape. They give it definition and presence amid the sandy soils near the coast; and they add a certain bearing or seriousness on the heavier ground farther inland – the land upon which the Suffolk Punch was historically hardest at work.

It is the latter land, the edges of what was once called High Suffolk, that gives rise to some of our largest oak trees (though not always our most magnificent – many of which can be found on the lighter soils at Staverton Thicks and Captain's Wood). On the 'upland' clays and along the alluvial soils beside the rivers Fromus, Alde and Ore the trees stand along quiet river banks and field margins – but also in larger plantations of ash, oak, hazel and sweet chestnut – with flashes of sycamore running through them.

It is the richness of this landscape that seems remarkable



Laurence Edwards ~ Stone Man.

These appear as broad fringes of coniferous fuzz beyond the horizons of Iken Cliff. Closer to the marshes stand individual trees, many of them oaks. The majority are, thankfully, still fit and healthy, although one or two have succumbed to disease or perhaps saltwater and stand bare-branched as stag-headed sentinels above the reeds.

Farther upstream the character of the trees and woodland shifts from small gatherings of oaks and large regiments of conifers to pockets of aldercarr and larger groups of oaks and other deciduous trees. These grow in the hedgerows and patches of woodland that are scattered through the inland river valleys. In the hedgerows hawthorn, hazel and blackthorn are common, often entangled with brambles, wild hops and nettles. Intermingled with these are larger trees: oaks, ash and the very occasional effort of elm, still surviving as suckers after the onslaught of Dutch Elm Disease.

Driving and walking along local lanes, it often feels that we are very blessed in this part of



Straw Bales Far Off (The path to Overy Town, Norfolk), 14x18cm, oil on board.



Finishing the Table in 2016.



Oak November.

and which the Alde Valley Spring Festival, tucked into soft land at White House Farm at Great Glemham, seeks to celebrate. The theme of this year's Festival Exhibition is *Quercus & Co ~ A Celebration of the English Oak, Woodland and local Wildlife*. And the accompanying Workshop Residencies explore a theme of *Handmade*, promoting local craft people and makers who work with wood, wool, glass, stone, bronze, steel and leather.

The trees that punctuate and populate the countryside that we are fortunate to live in are very much part of our landscape. They support myriad other species of wildlife and have over the centuries provided us with fuel, houses, ploughs, arrows, bows, boats and even the main frames of sports cars and fighter planes. It is probably safe to say that as a nation the United Kingdom and certainly England were built upon, kept warm and protected by oak, ash, yew and elm – with our bread baked with bundles of hornbeam branches and our livestock folded into our fields with hurdles of hazel.

Beyond being courageously beautiful – in the face of so much felling for fuel over the centuries and, more recently, an apparent onslaught of diseases – our trees hold the landscape together and give us the very air we breathe. In this context it feels important to celebrate their presence in the landscape, their historic importance and also the work of conservation charities and other organisations

that help protect them – notably Suffolk Wildlife Trust and the Woodland Trust in this area, alongside the Forestry Commission.

This year's Alde Valley Spring Festival runs from 22nd April until the 20th May and takes place at White House Farm, Great Glemham IP17 1LS. The Festival Exhibition will feature new works about woodland and wildlife by a selection of local and national artists, including Jelly Green, Freddy Morris, Laurence Edwards, Kate Giles, Roger Hardy, Becky Munting, Meriel Ensom, Jennifer Hall, Tessa Newcomb and Sarah Pirkis.

There will also be a presentation of new works by Craig Hudson and, for the first time in Suffolk, an installation of Maggi Hambling's *Aftermath Series*. Other exhibits include new pieces from *The Suffolk Chair Collection* and there is a new programme of Farm Suppers, Festival Talks and Open Studios. I am showing some new drawings from a project about Suffolk Punches called *The Eye of Achilles*. The finale weekend of the Festival hosts *The Big Spring Picnic* on what is unofficially the world's longest oak dining table at 228 yards (209m) – made from oak trees that died naturally at the farm.

For more information about the full Festival Programme please visit the website : www.aldevalleyspringfestival.co.uk.

Jonathan Gathorne-Hardy

*Unique bronze. Approx H 400mm W 700mm D 450mm.
Retail Price £6,250 Laurence Edwards ~ River Man.*



Freddy Morris ~ Sweet Chestnut Tangle.



Butley Ferry

Plans and actions for 2017

By the time this goes to press the winter working parties will have mended and painted the boat and major repairs to the jetties and approaches across the Saltings will have been undertaken. It is amazing how marine worms enjoy boring through the jetty woodwork, seaweed grows on the jetty, and silt or estuary mud covers the gravel approaches. So each year the ferrymen are diligently busy in winter and early spring weekends refurbishing the crossing places, as well as then carrying out their summer ferrying duties.

The 2017 season starts on Easter Saturday, 15th April, and finishes on Saturday, 14th October, a total of 57 working days. This is spread between 17 (shortly we hope 18) volunteer ferrymen: 16 male, two female.

This season we greatly look forward to the reopening of the Butley Oyster Inn (see page 8), which should increase the numbers of walkers and cyclists. It will also be very nice for the ferryman after a full day to drop in for a pint.

We hope to produce two maps in relation to the ferry. The first will be along the lines of those done by Wilfred George, with local walks, cycle tracks, places of interest, and hostelryes. Hopefully this will show how the ferry can link the paths and roads in its surroundings, including that it can save a six-mile detour. The second, a map showing a series of walks and rides linking in with the ferry, is to be

published with other coastal walks by Suffolk Coasts and Heaths Unit.

We would also like to link in with the Suffolk Historic Churches Trust and their annual bike ride in September. This would provide a splendid way to visit Sudbourne, Orford, Butley, Wantisden and Chillesford churches, all jewels of the Alde and Ore valley, linked by the ferry with the Oyster Inn perfectly placed to give you second wind.

Lastly, but possibly not this year, a sponsored Bike Ride for the Alde & Ore Association using the four ferries of Suffolk may be organised. This journey is a great day out and was written about in the last *Newsletter*.

My thanks to the Alde & Ore Association for running us and to all the volunteers who give their time for this precious ferry to continue running. For more details and updates as events are organised do look on the Butley Ferry page on the Association website, www.aldeandore.org

*Tim Dudgeon,
Trustee and Ferry Leader.*

Two seals and a godwit welcome travellers to the ferry.





Ten footers with George Brinkley and assorted young sailors: Neil McMillan, Roderick McMillan, Anne Lingard, George Brinkley, Philip and Stephen David, two Smullian children, Charles Iliff, Roddy Webb, Jane Sherlock, Andrew Ritchie, Maggie Ritchie, Mary Webb, Tim Parrett, Mary Foreman, Migs Lingard, David Sherlock, Michael Rope, Gill Starmer, and Edward Greenwell.



Towing to the start of the paddle race.



A mixed pair-oared race.

Ten Footers And All That

Ten Footers And All That is a celebration of the traditional wooden dinghies in which a generation (many of whom are now A&OA members) was taught to sail and row in the Ore during the 1940s and 1950s. Richard Roberts, a former Chairman of the Association, writes:

By tracing the individual histories of these little boats I explain the special affection they inspired, and why at least eight are still being sailed here, often by their original owners. The book also depicts the changing life of the riverside and its village over the decades and the unchanging magic of the river.

With a Foreword by Michael Morpurgo, it includes 90 pages of text and illustrations. To reserve a copy (£10 +£1.50 p&p) please contact Richard Roberts on 01394 450567 or email catpaw@phonecoop.coop or drop a note to Smithy Cottage, 29 High Street, Orford IP12 2NW.

All profits will go to the charities Farms for City Children and The Nancy Blackett Trust.



Christine Bromley-Martin and Vicki Bingham in Nellie, 2015 Regatta Day.



Half of the present generation sailing together 2016.

The Butley Oyster returns

Judi Newman describes bringing back to life one of the Alde and Ore valley assets for enjoyment and refreshment for residents, walkers and visitors

“You have done what?!” has been a fairly standard response to the news that my husband Andrew and I had bought a derelict pub last June. The 400+ year old building had been empty for more than four years and the village of Butley feared they had lost their iconic pub forever. It is a familiar news story that pubs across the UK are closing daily, with the pressures of business rates, changing drinking habits and the unpredictability of the industry. Like rural post offices, traditional country pubs

seemed destined to be converted into houses or holiday lets. Surely you would be a fool to consider this a good business decision?

Yet something else is also happening on this resilient island of ours. CAMRA recently reported that Suffolk has bucked the national trend, and we have more pubs opening than closing in this county. The Plunkett Foundation has been supporting hundreds of community-owned pubs and co-operatives across the UK, and Prince Charles’s

charity Pub is the Hub can provide armfuls of examples of rural pubs that have taken on new dimensions to their pub life, embracing community life by opening shops, tea rooms or becoming parcel collection points. The fightback to keep vibrancy in our rural communities is spirited and determined.

In this context, with eyes wide open, the restoration of the Butley Oyster was not as foolhardy as it may seem. There is a huge amount of affection and nostalgia surrounding this pub. Along with The Ship at Blaxhall and The Crown at Snape, the Butley Oyster’s folk nights were legendary and we have had many emails and messages from US ex-servicemen who remember the pub’s singing nights very fondly from their Bentwaters/Woodbridge days.

Much earlier history tells of smugglers using the pub’s cellars for their estuary contraband, and the Butley ferrymen always used the pub as their ‘office’ to keep the logbook safe and dry. Vera Noble’s 60 year tenure as an Adnams’ landlady continues to provide dozens of wonderful anecdotes, from throwing young lads out on a Sunday for ‘playing cards on the Lord’s Day’ to letting everyone serve themselves if her favourite soap opera was on.

However, this is not a charitable or emotional venture, and the pub needs to have a non-rose tinted vision to keep its doors open in the long-term. We are lucky in east Suffolk to have many fantastic pub-restaurants with amazing



Vera's Room' in honour of Vera Noble, The Oyster's landlady for 60 years.



'There were some delights: the original oak beams were cleaned back to life beautifully and we discovered an original inglenook that probably hasn't been seen for a couple of hundred years.'



Rob and Tracy Butcher welcome you to The Oyster. Pictures courtesy David Burns.

menus, and so we felt there was room to re-open a traditional village pub with a beer garden and home-style simple pub food instead of a gastropub.

We have planning permission to convert the barns into a micro-brewery, a village shop, a games/cinema room and a holiday let, so we are looking at the opportunities for the whole site to generate curiosity, footfall and income. The pub sits right next to Rendlesham Forest, with hundreds of cyclists, campers, ramblers and birdwatchers passing by, as well as having a very excited village of locals who can't wait to get their pub back. A familiar quote to us is: "We have lost our pub once; we don't intend to let it go again."

We all know that old buildings don't like being left cold and empty; the Oyster Inn was no exception. The past eight months have seen a full restoration project, co-ordinated by Stowe Building Contractors from Marlesford. Anyone who has undertaken similar projects will appreciate that this is never straightforward! We removed inches of internal cement render, only to find that there were no lintels above any of the rotten window frames so every week saw the challenges grow rather than shrink.

There were some delights: the original oak beams were cleaned back to life beautifully, and we discovered an

original inglenook that probably hasn't been seen for a couple of hundred years. A local joiner in the village made stunning new wooden window frames, and a handmade bar is being installed as I type. So, despite the pain and dust, the restoration is finished and the focus can finally shift towards getting open in time to make sure we can welcome the Easter holiday visitors.

For those worried that our enthusiasm and investment may not be enough to run a pub, rest assured that we have employed an experienced pub couple to live upstairs and run the pub and kitchen. Rob and Tracy Butcher are known to many locals from their bar services at Wantisden Valley, and many remember them from when they ran Isaacs on the Ipswich Waterfront. Tracy's fish pie is delicious.

Vera Noble's legacy remains strong at the pub and we have kept her front lounge as 'Vera's room' in her memory. We know that The Oyster Inn's history is not enough to sustain its future so we do hope you will come, enjoy the pub, support the shop when it opens in the summer, and together we will do our best to keep Butley vibrant, adding to the estuary economy and its growing tourism appeal.

www.butleyoyster.com
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 01394 459722



Alde and Ore Estuary Partnership

Upgrading the estuary walls

Since the Estuary Plan was agreed last June there has been a great deal of activity on the flood defence front. The first phase of the Aldeburgh Marsh wall should be

completed shortly. At the moment there is some ongoing additional work costing £250,000 required to move water vole habitats prior to infilling a soke dyke (a ditch running parallel to the river wall) to stabilise the new wall.

Next phase

We await further hydrodynamic modelling data for the whole estuary, due in June, before any further work can continue. This modelling must be done to get the statutory consent for the works to go ahead. A flood risk assessment is necessary to show that works in one part of the estuary would not adversely affect another part.

The study is being funded by Tidal Lagoon Power (TLP), which is progressing a tidal energy scheme in Cardiff that you may have seen on the national news, but it will require intertidal mitigation that might be possible among a range of locations around the country including the Alde and Ore Estuary. TLP is modelling a number of different scenarios which include three areas of realignment which, should these be agreed, may help to finance some of the upgrading works.

The Partnership has piggybacked on this work and, with Regional Flood & Coast Committee (RFCC) funding, is able to request additional data on aspects such as crest levels. Once the data is available it will then be possible for the business case to be constructed which triggers both the Government funding and the flood defence consents.

This does mean that it may be impossible to start further work this year at Snape and Aldeburgh as the consents may not be agreed before the autumn when wet weather makes it impossible to work on the marshy ground. A very frustrating delay, but necessary, if what little Government funds we can get are to be accessed and consents agreed. Phase II and III on the Aldeburgh Marsh Wall should be completed simultaneously in 2018.

Snape Maltings developments

We wait with interest to see how the Snape Maltings master

plan develops. The main driver for this is how best to use the derelict buildings and to build in a financial resilience for the whole site, to make it the very best international music centre campus it can be. Car parking is always an issue and their potential plan to use land north of the river with a swing bridge over the river to bring visitors onto the site is certainly out of the box thinking.

They emphasise they are at the very early stages of initial planning of the scheme and there is some way to go before planning consents can make this a reality. Any plans, as well as meeting community and environmental wishes and needs, will also need to be compatible with the flood defence plans for which the AOEP is responsible.

Enabling development

Plans are underway with the appointment of two firms of architects engaged to provide a feasibility assessment of the sites offered. Sketch plans will be discussed informally with parish councils in April and May before any formal planning applications are progressed. Your views are very important to us so please keep in touch with your parish council.

The enabling development team has spent a considerable amount of time and effort in ensuring we have architects designing good practical housing that will be as unobtrusive as possible, appropriate for the particular setting and give a range of housing from single to several houses per plot.

It is really important that every village community gives this their support, as the funds raised through enabling development sites will be a considerable contribution to the money needed to safeguard the river defences.

The Estuary Trust Fundraising Launch

Since last September Richard Davey, chairman of the Funding Group, has gathered a team who have agreed a strategy to raise £12 million to help defend the estuary. This will involve everyone who lives, works and visits the area. The fundraising launch date will be in the autumn when we will show a recently-made film presented by Nick Robinson. This will fit in with the agreed programme of works once the modelling data is received in the summer and then we will have more clarity on the final cost.

*Amanda Bettinson,
Partnership Secretary*

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.

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

The Newsletter is prepared and published twice a year by the Alde & Ore Association, registered charity number 1154583.

Our thanks go to the authors and to Alison Andrews, Peter Benstead, Vicki Bingham, David Burns, Rindy Frost, David Goldin, Migs Howard, Rob Howarth, the Orford Sailing Club archive and Jeremy Rugge-Price for providing the pictures in this issue.

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



Aldeburgh: 2016/7 phase of the refurbishment with a raised and broader wall with less steep backslope. The grass will now grow on top.

New wall profile: raised top and vegetation debris showing the January 2017 surge height.



Still standing after the winter



Orfordness Lighthouse, photographed from the sea by Peter Benstead, shows both the new defences in place and how the shingle has increased during the winter.

The Orfordness Lighthouse Trust is planning a series of visits on Good Friday, 14th April; Sunday, 30th April (Bank Holiday Weekend); Sunday, 28th May (Bank Holiday Weekend); Sunday, 25th June; Sunday, 30th July; Sunday, 6th August; and Monday, 28th August (Bank Holiday Weekend).

To book your place, please email orfordnesslighthouse@gmail.com with the number in your party.

Alde & Ore Association events, 2017

Annual General Meeting

Saturday, 8th April, 10am at Thorpeness Country Club, The Benthills, Thorpeness, IP16 4NU. Coffee and tea from 9.30am. Guest speaker: David Kemp on 'The January 2017 Surge - how near was it?'

Walks

Friday, 12th May. A five-mile circular walk around Great Glemham: spring in the upper Alde Valley.

Friday, 23rd June: Martello to Orford along the Ness.

Friday, 8th September. A five-mile circular walk near Snape on public and private paths.

Annual Barbecue

Sunday, 6th August. Just upstream from Aldeburgh. Directions to be announced.

Butley Ferry

Every weekend and Bank Holiday from Easter Saturday, 15th April, to Saturday, 14th October, from 11am to 4pm, weather permitting. For special requests please email ferryman@butleyferry.org

Alde and Ore Estuary Partnership meetings are open to the public. The next ones are to be on 9th May and 18th July both at 2pm. The place of each meeting will be announced on the AOEP website, www.aoep.co.uk