



# The Alde & Ore Association

Newsletter 49 - Spring 2018

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## The Chairman's note

It looked as if the winter would be grey and uneventful but there is always a surprise. There have been a couple of near misses when potential surges fortunately died away before mounting into full force and, with March's Beast from the East, we have now seen ice floes on the Alde.

The photograph shows what I originally guessed was a packed blanket of snow that fell on the saltings and was then lifted off by the ebbing high spring tide after it had covered the saltings. But I am reliably informed that ice forms on the shore

upriver off Little Japan and Blackheath, where freshwater runs into the river and it is this that gets frozen. The ice is then carried down river, and becomes quite soft by the time it gets to Slaughden. It is not a frequent event!

The Beast, with two invasions, was also not kind to all the coast. It was all right to north of the Aldeburgh Martello Tower where the shingle and sand covering the defensive

## A river in all seasons

Ice floes in the Alde near Slaughden, brought by the Beast from the East in March, contrast with the peaceful summer scene on the upper Alde that Patrick Grieve and Susanne Marshall describe on page 10.



rock placements, thankfully greatly enlarged in May 2016, stayed in place despite the easterly battering.

To the south, it has been a different story, particularly with the second Beast, gouging out a long stretch of the haul road some 600 metres south of Martello, leaving a peaked, not broad topped, wall of shingle although, at the time of writing, the sea had not yet overtopped it.

Sadly also the Lighthouse lost some of its protective shingle, some of which came with the January 2017 surge, and works may also be needed there. We live on a very dynamic coast: for example in 1993/4 there was a breach in the shingle wall that was mended.

Given this recent extreme weather, the Environment Agency has intensified its monitoring regime, with, as well as frequent on the ground surveys, an aerial survey of the coast from Bawdsey to Helmsby. The EA already has the necessary assent from Natural England for recycling shingle and is working on some other permissions. That said, some good southerlies and south-westerlies would do a lot to bring some of the shingle back as such winds did earlier this year.

Turning to enjoying the estuary at this time of year, while it may be frustrating not to walk on the middle part of the Aldeburgh river wall this winter, and I hope the numbers of those who ignore the No Way Through sign remain very small. The reward for staying away should be well-established grass swards growing in the spring providing

a good secure covering for the new part of the walls, designed and built to be able to withstand overtopping in 2050 in a 1:200 event.

On safeguarding the estuary defences, while work on the ground is mostly impractical in the winter, there has been a great deal of thinking, assessing and planning. The AOEP have been working hard at trying to finalise the order in which defences works should be done to minimise flooding of one area while another is brought up to standard. This has involved several iterations of the modelling done to assess flood risk, as you will see in the AOEP report on page 12.

It is certainly the case that progress can seem very slow, but it is clear that ours is a unique estuary with many complex interactions between varied river shape, flow, geomorphology, tidal impacts and, on top of those, the many variations that the weather and changing climate throw into the mix. This means that working out the best order to do things will and must take time to ensure the plan is rolled out carefully. But the aim still remains the same.

Angela Sydenham's article on page 8 about a recent extensive court case shows that law in relation to who may be responsible for flood defences is no less complex.

Money is needed to enable the estuary defences to be brought up to standard now, carrying on the tradition of previous generations over the centuries. Fund raising from

## Don't Forget...

Don't forget the Annual General Meeting on Saturday, 7th April, 2018 at 10.30am at the Thorpeness Country Club, The Benthills, Thorpeness, IP16 4NU. Coffee and tea from 10am.

**Walks 2018:** Friday, 11<sup>th</sup> May: new five-mile circular walk around Great Glemham- spring in the upper Alde Valley, again based on Whitehouse Farm, with thanks to Jason Gathorne Hardy.

Further walks: It is planned to have another walk in late June and one in early September. Volunteers to be a walk leader to spread the load would be gratefully received, as would ideas for new routes to explore.

**Annual Barbecue 2018:** Sunday 26 August, just upstream from Aldeburgh jetty near Chapman's Creek, with many thanks to the Skepper family.

**Alde and Ore Estuary Partnership** meetings are open to the public. The Partnership is holding their **Annual Community Meeting at Snape Maltings Recital Room on 14<sup>th</sup> April 10.30am-1pm** and there will be a number of presentations to inform and discuss the scheme options under consideration.

The dates and places of the quarterly partnership meetings are announced on the website [www.aoep.co.uk](http://www.aoep.co.uk), under the Partnership section.

## 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.

the community to ensure the plan can be implemented has been steaming ahead since the launch in the autumn. Around £1.5 million have now been lodged or promised and more is on the way. Of this, over £600,000 is David Andren's generous bequest and it is hoped that others will follow his example either with donations now, or as a legacy gift for the future. If you are still wondering about whether you will give something to help the plan be realised for the benefit of future generations, or would like to help with fund raising generally or organising specific events, do look at the Alde and Ore Trust pages on the AOEP website [www.aoep.co.uk](http://www.aoep.co.uk).

On protecting the estuary from over-urbanisation, we heard earlier this year that The Secretary of State is calling a Public Inquiry into the appeal by the developer against the SCDC refusal of the application to build 43 more houses at Brick Dock which would be very visible from the estuary. The hearing will be in September. The Association has commented over the last few years and hopes to add

its views. That said, the Association badly needs a trustee familiar with planning law to help with the important work that the Association seeks to do through encouraging good or discouraging inappropriate developments which would adversely affect the rivers and their banks.

On organisational matters, you will find on page 9 in this *Newsletter* the Association's privacy policy on holding data relating to our members. This is required by the latest statutory provisions. You will see that the Association only keeps the minimum amount of data possible to ensure that we can contact you and provide newsletters and other information.

As ever, we hope that the articles and photographs in this *Newsletter* reflect the many varied parts of our area – whether the Upper Alde or the Butley, winter as well as summer – all part of the estuary's rich pageant.

I wish you all a lovely spring and summer in, on and around the estuary.

*Alison Andrews*

## Thank you Tim

The Ferrymen's Lunch, held at the Butley Oyster last November, was the occasion to say thank you and farewell to Tim Dudgeon, trustee in charge of the Butley Ferry, before her retired to Devon.

He was presented with the Order of the Rowlock by Roy Truman, his successor, and Stephen Worrall read an amusing adaptation of Rory Hudson's *The Ferryman Waits*.



# Butley Ferry's new boardwalks

Not just a matter of keeping your feet dry, says Roy Truman, but saltings preservation too

Left to its own devices, over a number of years a river will meander and change its course. When people interrupt this process, dramatic changes can take place whether intentionally or not. On the Butley River, when the river walls were raised and the surrounding land drained, Burrow Hill stopped being an island and the river could be crossed over a much shorter distance.

When the ferry was established in the 1600s, and possibly before, access would have been a muddy walk to the water's edge for both people, and animals, making the journey to market in Orford. To make access easier, a simple 'hard' was constructed by throwing rocks and shingle onto the mud, with wooden pilings to contain them, which would in time, sink into the mud, be covered in silt, and the process would begin again.

This simple solution to the problem has had a long-term effect on the river. The hards on both banks have formed a 'pinch-point' where the river must flow. It is no longer free to meander back and forth between the banks and those hards form a barrier where the silt can accumulate, much like groynes on a beach.

Nowadays we cannot expect paying customers to put up with muddy and slippery walks over the mud to reach the ferry. Nor can we continue to throw rocks at the problem. When the ferry was brought back into use, wooden jetties were built on both banks where the mud slope was the steepest. The construction allowed the water to flow through it and access was improved without further

obstructing the flow of the river. The remaining hards, which connect the jetties to the banks, have been regularly topped up with shingle to try to keep the mud at bay but, after much deliberation, a long-term solution is being put in place.

On the Gedgrave bank there is a 40-metre walk across the saltings to get to the hard and the jetty. The old path flooded regularly, and people strayed off the path to find a dryer route. The path got wider and muddier and no amount of gravel was going to make it better. It was decided that a boardwalk should be constructed about 50cm above the old path giving passengers access to the ferry at much higher tides whilst keeping their feet dry and mud-free.

It took a core group of four volunteers, with a few more casual helpers, only two days to complete the boardwalk despite the logistics of transporting materials to the site and having to rely on a generator for electricity. Conditions underfoot were terrible, but the benefits have been worth it. After only one season, the saltings have largely regenerated and the old path has disappeared. The river is now able to flow across the saltings unobstructed now that the old raised path is no longer being built up. While the new boardwalk is visually more obvious than the old path, its impact, environmentally, is much less.

Emboldened by the success of this project, we looked at the remaining hards on both banks and decided that the same type of construction would improve access to the

## Wanted!

**Please consider how you might help the Association in carrying out its role to preserve the estuary area and its features for the benefit and enjoyment of all**

**New trustees:** Do you care about the Alde and Ore Estuary? Have you skills and expertise you would like to use for the benefit of the area? Why not become a Trustee of the Association?

**Newsletter help:** Do you love the Alde and Ore and Butley area? Would you enjoy gathering articles on matters of interest, writing some them and putting the text and photos in good shape? If you could also do the layout that would be good, but not essential. Can you be the Trustee or Committee member to lead on the *Newsletter*? Please apply.

**Planning expert:** We need a trustee with planning experience who can take on the role of monitoring applications and assessing ones that the Association should act upon. Keeping 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 is a very important part of the Association's work to ensure the estuary and its banks retain their unique features.

**Walk organisers and ideas:** Is there anyone or team who would like to organise one of more of the Association's walks each year? We try to find walks that are in whole or in part not normally accessible to the public. We would like to try different formats, such as bird watching or visiting churches. Volunteers to help organise these would be great, as would any ideas for walks.

Help in managing the website would also be most welcome.

**For more information on all these possibilities** please apply to Alison Andrews, email [aldeblackburn@aol.com](mailto:aldeblackburn@aol.com)

*Why we needed a boardwalk!*



*Pilings and supports in place within the old path footprint*

jetties without causing the further build-up of silt, which would happen if we continued to build up the hards. The downside of building timber structures is that they will rot or, in the case of the timbers that are submerged more frequently, become susceptible to marine worm.

This means that a constant programme of repair and maintenance is necessary but the environmental impact of the work on the river is minimised. Over the next couple of years, it is hoped to have both banks linked to the jetties

with boardwalks and non-slip gratings.

Of course, these projects are expensive and, without the support of the Alde & Ore Association, would be beyond the finances of the ferry on its own. And money alone would not get the work done. The volunteer ferrymen have turned out, year after year, often in February and March, to work in freezing water and clinging mud to make sure that the customers of one 'muddy little boat' can keep their feet dry.

# Keeping the 'muddy little boat' afloat

## What goes on behind the scenes at the Butley Ferry

The Butley ferry sits, or rather floats, on a tranquil stretch of water in a peaceful part of the Suffolk countryside. Walk or cycle there to make the crossing (and they are the only ways to reach it) and you will probably find a lone ferryman waiting patiently, sometimes reading, occasionally dozing, for the customers to arrive.

Some days they arrive en-masse and occasionally not at all. You pay your fare, climb into the boat and the ferry glides serenely across to the other bank and you continue on your way. The ferryman returns to his, or her, corned beef sandwiches and flask of coffee and waits for the next customer.

So far, so idyllic. Most customers will not give a thought as to what goes into keeping that one small boat on the water, safely plying its trade, week after week from Easter to October. For a start, there is not just one ferryman; there are about a dozen of them. All are volunteers, and with the exception of a couple of whippersnappers, are retired folk who see age as a benefit rather than an excuse, and there are ferrymen who have hit 80 years and kept at it.

Don't be lulled into thinking that this rowing lark must be easy if octogenarians can do it. When a spring tide is ebbing and the river is emptying at a rate of knots, it is a combination of skill, knowledge and hard graft that gets the boat across the water. Each volunteer has had to prove their ability to row, has had to demonstrate their knowledge of the tides and currents and wind, and the way they each interact with the other. They also have to know when to make the decision as to when it is not safe to cross.

As to sitting peacefully waiting for customers, no such luck! The tide goes up and down and the boat has to go up and down with it. Leave it for too long on a dropping tide and you have a heavy boat to drag through the mud into

safe water. Forget to bring it up with the tide and it will be on Pinney's hard before you can go down the jetty to grab it. One of the more unpleasant jobs is keeping the jetties free of seaweed, brushing and scraping to prevent anyone from slipping.

And those jetties! They didn't appear by magic and they can't be left to look after themselves. Back in the days when the ferry served as a way of getting both people and animals to and from market, the access to the boat was by a 'hard' made by throwing rocks and shingle onto the mud. Now we have jetties constructed of timber allowing our customers to keep their feet dry and, usually, mud free.

Each spring sees groups of hardy volunteers replacing rotten timbers, reinforcing sagging planks and re-fixing loose ones. It is cold, wet and muddy and, with no electricity, hard graft. The call goes out each year and the volunteers deliver. It takes some organising. Trying to find days when the tides allow it, and when enough volunteers are available at the same time can be a bit like herding cats but it gets done.

Spring 2017 saw one of the bigger projects come to fruition with the building of the boardwalk across the saltings on the Gedgrave bank. This was a monumental, but necessary, task that makes the ferry more accessible during higher tides.

And what about the ferry itself? It was described in *The Times* as 'a muddy little boat', a very accurate but not an insulting description! Every October at the end of the season, it has to be taken out of the water and transported to its winter quarters at Butley Mills, generously provided by one of our ferrymen. Once again another team to organise in order to lift the boat onto the trailer and get it on to the road.

Of course it doesn't sit there neglected over the winter.

### To avoid confusion: what are the AOA, AOEP and AOET?

Sometimes we are asked why there have to be the Alde & Ore Association, the Alde & Ore Estuary Partnership and the Alde & Ore Estuary Trust? The three organisations have very different roles but all are related to the wellbeing of the estuary.

The Association is concerned to ensure with all aspects of preserving the area for the benefit of the public are considered, whether by commenting on legislation, policy, planning, or development or

providing means for enjoyment of the estuary.

The AOEP is concerned with ensuring that a sound plan is prepared and carried through to safeguard the river defences, and therefore the estuary, the current plan being to get walls to a standard appropriate for conditions in 2050.

The Trust is, in effect the Treasury raising, collecting and managing the funds needed to ensure that the estuary plan works can be carried out.

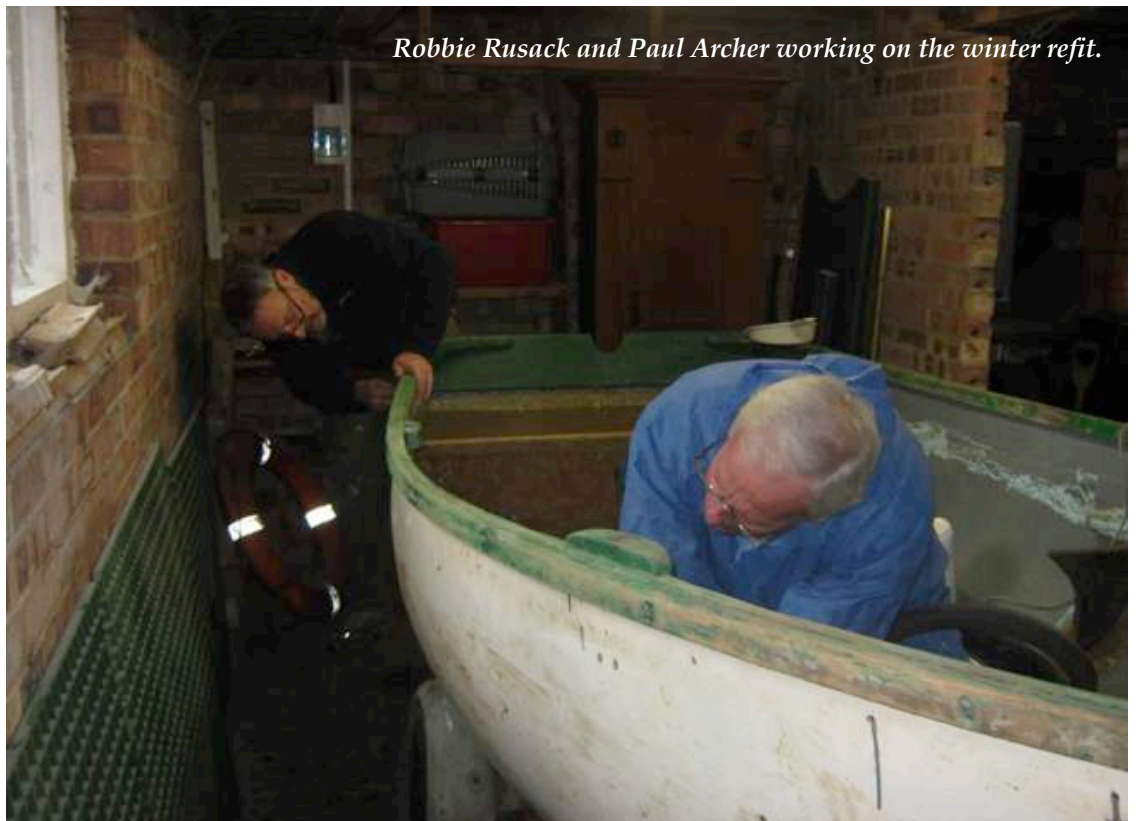
There are fittings to replace, wooden parts to repair, antifoul to apply and topsides to be painted. Some jobs need specialist skills, others just need lots of bodies to get things done. Every year the volunteers get the boat ready, not just because of a pride in what they do but because the ferry has to be independently and officially inspected, and passed fit and safe to use, to get its annual licence. In other words, it has an MOT.

This task has, for many years, been performed by Keith Cutmore on behalf of Suffolk Coastal

District Council. Sadly, Keith passed away last year and our thoughts go out to his family. Keith was a good friend to the ferry but it didn't mean getting the ferry through its inspection was always straight forward. On one occasion he passed the ferry but failed the oars! This winter, the boat has had a major refit, again involving half a dozen people plus donations of wood and materials from others. Then it has to go back into the water so the annual cycle can begin all over again.

So that the ferrymen and women can plan their sessions through the next year, yet another volunteer puts out a rota and provides the now ubiquitous IT support. And there's more. The ferry operates a service that depends on visitor numbers that, in turn, depend on the weather. No one needs the ferry to get to work every day and it only operates for half of the year. It provides a service to those people who have made an effort to get there and, therefore, the money it generates varies from year to year.

If the ferry was an independent organisation it might, after saving its income over a number of years, be able to afford to do many of the refurbishment tasks needed to keep it in operation. Unfortunately, work has to be done when needed; repair work cannot be left for a couple of years and the money has to be found. It works because it has the support of the Alde & Ore Association behind it. The ferry income is passed to the Association and they in turn approve and provide the finance needed when major refurbishment is necessary. Of course, this makes the Alde & Ore Association members the ultimate supporters of the ferry.



*Robbie Rusack and Paul Archer working on the winter refit.*



*Tim Dudgeon and Conrad Natzio cutting timbers for the boardwalk.*

The next time you get down to the ferry (and if you haven't used it yet you are missing a real treat) and you see a ferrymen sitting in their muddy little boat, think of them as at the tip of an iceberg, albeit an iceberg that keeps this little ship afloat.

*Roy Truman*

## A last ditch attempt

### Angela Sydenham reviews a recent legal case on flood defences that found no breach of human rights

A recent case illustrates the constraints on public funds in providing river defences. The judgment, which runs to 35 pages, reviews the background of flooding of the river Severn from the 13<sup>th</sup> century to the present day; the role of the Environmental Agency (EA) in flood control; and national and local planning policy with regard to flood risk covering the area. Sixty-nine paragraphs of the judgment are devoted to the EA's strategy and policy for the land owned by the claimants.

The Severn in Gloucestershire floods even more than the river Alde. According to the judgment 'The River Severn is the longest river in Britain and it is also the greatest in terms of river flow. Its tidal range of 15m is generally considered to be the second largest in the world.'

The claimants in this case owned or farmed land at Minsterworth Ham in the flood plain adjacent to the river. In spite of an embankment maintained by the Environment Agency and its predecessors, flooding frequently occurred. The river walls on other parts of the river had been heightened to prevent overtopping. However the EA did not use their power to heighten the bank at Minsterworth Ham as this would have increased the risk of flooding in Gloucester.

Evidence produced in court showed that the Minsterworth embankment was designed so that flood water coming down from upstream would overtop first in specific areas, be conveyed across Minsterworth Ham and then flow back into the river further down when levels in the channel allowed.

At common law there is no legal right to be protected from flooding and its effects. Landowners are responsible for safeguarding their land and property when it occurs. The claimants therefore sought redress by relying on the European Convention on Human Rights. They failed. Protocol 1 Art.1 (A1P1) of the European Convention on Human Rights provides:

Every natural or legal person is entitled to the peaceful enjoyment of his possessions. No one shall be deprived of his possessions except in the public interest and subject to the conditions provided for by law and by the general principles of international law. (2) The preceding provisions shall not, however, in any way impair the right of a state to enforce such laws as it deems necessary to control the use of property in accordance with the general interest or to secure the payment of taxes or other contributions or penalties

The Court held there was not any evidence showing that works on flood embankments elsewhere had increased the flooding on the claimant's land. Moreover the claimants had received benefits from having the existing publicly funded river wall; such funding was not available to all landowners

In the words of the Judge:

That leaves the Environment Agency's overall policy, which is at least implicit, of using the claimants' land for the purpose of flood mitigation in Gloucester. In a sense the specific policy against raising the level of the Minsterworth Ham embankment is a corollary of this overall policy. In my view, this overall policy does not constitute control or interference by the Environment Agency with the claimants' property under A1P1. It cannot be control, if that word is used in its ordinary sense, since control connotes restraint or regulation which this is not. In deciding whether there is interference for the purposes of A1P1, in my judgment the benefits the claimants gain in flood prevention from the existence of the embankment must be taken into account, along with the detriments. A1P1 is directed to protecting against adverse measures as regards a person's property rights, and that requires a global assessment of the measures taken. Here the embankment is of overall benefit to the claimants, reducing the frequency and volume of flooding, and enabling them to farm the land productively, albeit that on the occasions of severe flooding when it overtops the water will remain on the claimants' land for some time until it drains back into the river through the outfalls.

The Judge went on to add:

But assuming that the policy of the Environment Agency has meant its interference with or even control over the claimants' land, it is evident that there has been a fair balancing of their rights with those of the general interest as required by A1P1 if these are to occur lawfully. A steady stream of consultants' reports and agency strategies, examined at length above, set out the public interest, while recognising the costs which some members of the community will bear from flooding events which cannot be mitigated. In particular, there have been the specific studies of the costs and benefits of the various options for managing flood risk at Minsterworth Ham, including various scenarios for carrying out further works on the



claimants' land. One scenario considered has been to retreat the line, but until now that has been rejected in favour of maintaining the present embankment. All this is against the background of the limited amount of public funds being available to manage flood risk.

The Judge emphasised that the EA was in a better position than the court to make the necessary judgments and cost-benefit assessments about flooding at Minsterworth Ham.

The claimants had an additional argument. They produced evidence to show that in other areas in England compensation had been paid to owners where their land had been used to mitigate flooding. The fact that the Minsterworth Ham owners had not received any compensation they claimed amounted to unlawful discrimination under Article 14. Article 14 provides:

The enjoyment of the rights and freedoms set forth in this European Convention on Human Rights shall be secured

without discrimination on any ground such as sex, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth or other status.

The Judge held that Article 14 was not relevant because the claimed discrimination was not on the basis of a personal characteristic. In any event the situations where compensation had been paid were quite different from the claimants case and justified different treatment.

Although expressing sympathy for the claimants and other flood victims the Judge dismissed the case.

The conclusion to be drawn is that the case shows that there are no easy answers to flood defence on tidal rivers. Not only do individual rights have to be balanced against the public interest but there is uncertainty as to the effect of works on different parts of the rivers. And the position is not static but changes over time.

## The Alde & Ore Association

### Privacy Policy

Preservation of your privacy is important to the Alde & Ore Association and we are committed to letting you know how we use your personal information and to making only responsible use of your data.

This Privacy Policy exists so that you feel confident about the privacy and security of your personal information. We take protecting your privacy very seriously and will always take all reasonable steps within our power to make sure your information is safe.

References to 'we', 'us', 'you' or 'our' in this Privacy Policy are references to the Alde & Ore Association, a charity registered in England and Wales, registered charity number: 1154583.

#### 1. Information about you

We will collect personal information from you when you or your organisation register as a member. This includes your name, title, email address, physical address and telephone numbers.

#### 2. Our use of this information

Any personal information we collect from you will be used in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation and other applicable laws.

Your personal information will only be used to process your requests, to provide you with our newsletters, AGM documentation and other information we think you may be interested in. We also need it to comply with legal requirements, which include maintaining a

register of members and their addresses as required for all Charitable Incorporated Organisations.

We will not share your information with anyone except for the HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) in case they wish to see our Gift Aid forms, and other instances where required by law. All Gift Aid Declarations are kept securely for the six years as per HMRC guidance.

#### 3. Security

We will take reasonable precautions to prevent the loss, misuse or alteration of information you give us.

Communications with you may be sent by email. For ease of use and compatibility, communications will not be sent in an encrypted form. Email unless encrypted is not a fully secure means of communication. Whilst we endeavour to keep our systems and communications protected against viruses and other harmful effects we cannot bear responsibility for all communications being virus-free

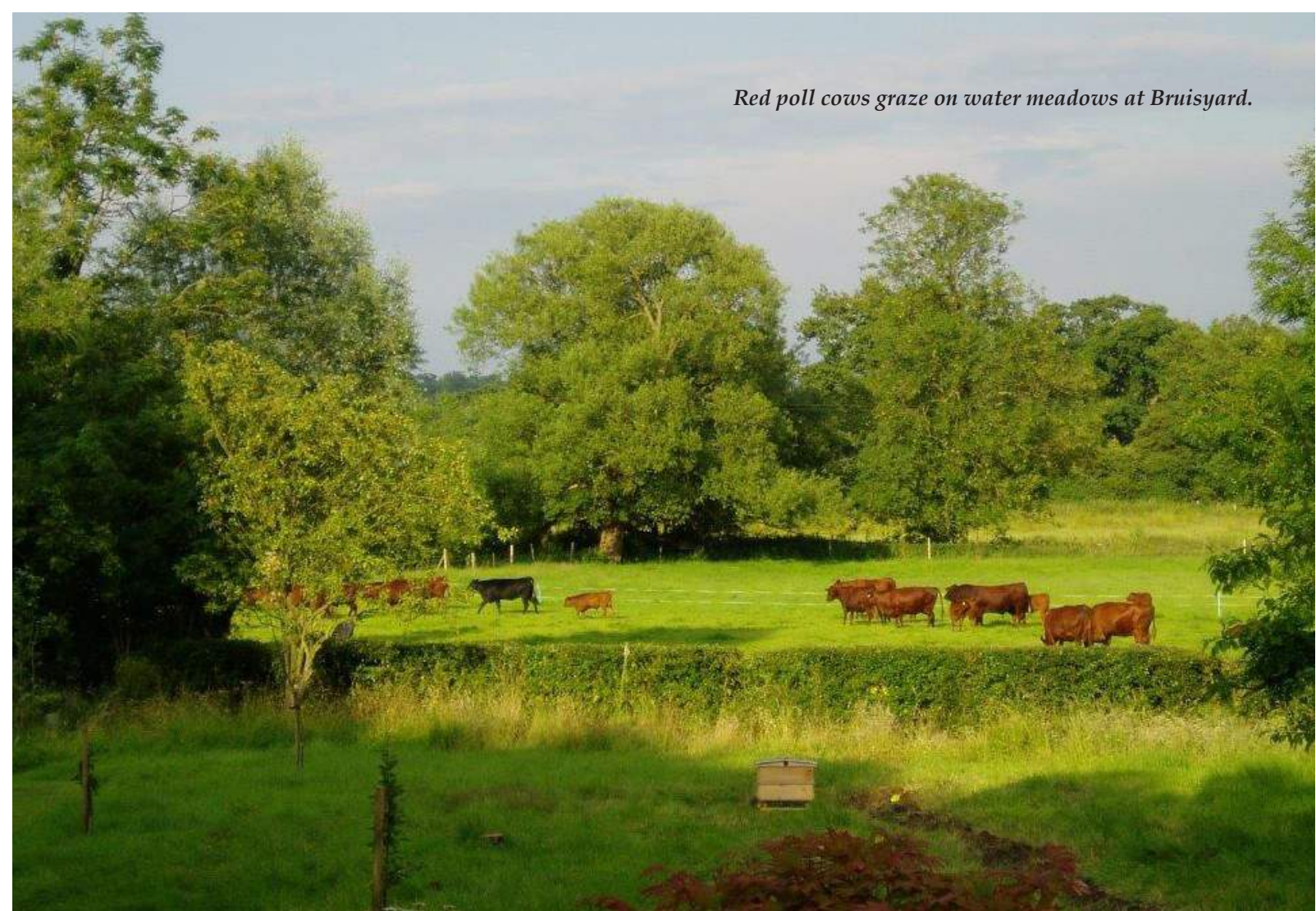
#### 4. Other information

If you would like us to correct or update any information referred to in section 1, please email us at [aldeandore@gmail.co.uk](mailto:aldeandore@gmail.co.uk)

This privacy policy may be updated from time to time, so please check it periodically.

Data requests made by other websites to which there are links from our website are not covered by this privacy policy.

31<sup>st</sup> January, 2018



## The upper Alde

Patrick Grieve and Susanne Marshall describe a precious backwater of Suffolk

The long Alde estuary ends with the historic complex of the Snape Maltings. Thereafter the river Alde follows a gentler winding course through the sandlings farmland with its willow groves, cottages and sugarbeet fields.

From Stratford St Andrew it reaches eight miles inland until it peters out into a ditch at Brundish. This stretch of waterway, fringed with willow and alder, meanders through water meadows and rough woodland, an untrod empty place for birds and small wild things. Otters and water voles are outnumbered by squirrels and rabbits, but the glory of the river banks are the birds, especially in winter when floods draw in egrets, mallard, teal, geese and swans. Kingfishers flash and buzzards mew overhead. The lane to Sweffling follows close to the river and the low road past Bruisyard and then on, giving easy viewing of these glories.

The Alde valley was settled early, when Saxons pushed their boats inland, seeing off the Celtic Britons who fled to the shelter of the oak woods on the high ground, before moving westward to Cambridgeshire and beyond.

Numerous moated sites not far from the river show farming being established and many are still working farms and halls. A Saxon burial mound exists at Badingham, where St John's church was built on an alignment for the setting sun on Midsummer Day, reflecting that the sacredness of the site long predates the arrival of Christianity.

Bruisyard church stands on its hill above the river, the round flint tower having been built by the Saxons as a defence against incursions from Danes, who also came up the river seeking plunder. The simple but serene building contains the remains of two nuns, Plantagenet duchesses, brasses in the Hare Chapel, and traces of wall painting.

Nearby, Bruisyard Hall, now an elegant venue for weddings and functions, incorporates the abbey buildings of a former convent for Minoreesses, founded in 1367. Known as the Poor Clares, the nuns followed the 'Isabella Rule' approved by Pope Urban IV; they wore a brown habit, white kerchief and a black veil. Apart from their devotions they looked after the poor and the sick and were much loved.

Friar Simon Tunsted, the Provincial of the Order, chose to be buried at the tiny abbey in 1369. He must have had a good reason to choose such a poor and obscure place. In 1542 after its dissolution the hall and estate was acquired by Sir Nicholas Hare, whose descendants own and farm it still.

The river was still navigable for small craft until about 1820. The existing bridge at Bruisyard crossroads is arched to allow their passage. In later times, due to drainage downstream to improve pastures, the water level lowered and today the reduced flow has resulted in silting up along this stretch of the Alde.

Bruisyard and Rendham are busy villages, with facilities for visitors, such as The White Horse and Juniper Barn Cafe at Rendham and the White Horse at Sweffling. There are numerous places to stay including Colston Hall, Sandpit Farm and Sweffling Hall Farm. The Print Room art gallery at Yew Tree Farm is well worth a visit. Apart from farming, which is the main industry, there are other enterprises: cricket bat willows are grown and there is the Bridge Works engineering company. The Sustrans cycle route winds its way through the valley. In the past there were extensive osier beds and sandpits providing good local employment.

Curiosities found in the river bed hint at the past history

of this small valley. Near Rendham bridge the bronze head of the Emperor Claudius was found by a schoolboy. It is now in the British Museum, but a replica is in the church. It is thought to have been looted from Colchester after the flight of the Roman legions in about 450. More recently an iron 4lb cannon ball came to light, maybe lost on its way to a ship rather than having been fired in anger, but who knows.

A silent and undisturbed refuge for shy wild creatures, the watermeadows are still grazed by red polls, supervised by herons and quartered by owls of an evening. The upper Alde valley remains a precious backwater of Suffolk. However, greater take off of water for supplies generally, possibly intensive agricultural methods, run off of drainage water and chemicals, and no recent river maintenance by the relevant bodies have led to the river bed silting up and reeds stopping the free flow of water and erosion of the banks. If this is allowed to continue, it can only mean one thing. Farewell to herons, swifts and otters, and so much else. Enjoy it while you can.

Post script: there is hope. This spring we have just heard that the Suffolk Wildlife Trust are about to start an environmental improvement project, so some steps are being taken.



*Patrick Grieve's painting of Bruisyard Bridge, showing how arched it is and how, due to silting, the Alde here is no longer navigable.*



# Alde & Ore Estuary Partnership

It is now nearly six years since the Partnership was formed and we are still hailed as a groundbreaking community partnership set up as a result of the Alde and Ore Futures study in 2011. The overwhelming thrust from the community was that they wanted the estuary to remain as it is and that was the mandate the AOEP took as its mission.

The Partnership now consists of the following voting members, all of whom are volunteers:

- Edward Greenwell, Chairman, farmer nominee
- Guy Heald, finance and business (Chairman of Estuary Trust)
- Alison Andrews, Alde & Ore Association nominee
- Jane Marson, landowner nominee
- Harry Young, business representative
- Rodney West, ecological representative for RSPB, NT, SWT
- Vacancy, householder representative

## Five Parish Councillors representing the community:

- Tim Beach, Snape
- David McGinity, Butley, Wantisden & Capel St Andrew
- Brian Johnson, Boyton and Bawdsey
- Peter Palmer, Aldeburgh Town Council
- Mike Finney, Orford and Gedgrave

## Highlights over the last six years

- 2012 Monthly meetings to scope wall sustainability funding and costs.
- 2013 Assessment of river walls completed by Andrew Hawes.  
Scoping out the Sustainability Appraisal for the Estuary Plan.  
First Saltings restoration project completed.  
December surge tide breached Hazlewood Marsh and flooded Snape.  
The Estuary Trust was registered with the Charity Commission.
- 2014 Drafting the Estuary Plan and website set up.
- 2015 Snape Wall upgraded following surge tide.  
Further saltings restoration project.  
Public consultation on the Estuary Plan.
- 2016 Phase I Aldeburgh wall upgraded - rectifying previous work.

Slaughden coastal defences upgraded.

The Estuary Plan adopted by statutory authorities.

- 2017 Modelling of whole estuary plan for flood risk.  
Launch of Save our Suffolk Estuary funding campaign.

## More recently

The AOEP works closely with the Internal Drainage Board (IDB), a unique partnership nationally in fact, which commissioned a hydrodynamic model of the whole estuary that has recently been completed by HR Wallingford, funded by the Regional Flood and Coastal Committee.

This assessment highlights the flood risk in a number of scenarios (various wall heights and surge events) and provides the information required to apply for consents to upgrade the walls. Part of this modelling was funded by Tidal Lagoon Power (TLP), as they are looking at east coast estuaries for potential inter-tidal habitat creation opportunities to offset their tidal energy projects in the Severn Estuary. TLP's modelling has considered potential managed realignment (MR) options (breaching of defences to create new mudflats) with various local landowners.

As previous modelling had suggested some localised flood risk while the walls were being raised, there were a number of discussions that centred on needing a flood release valve. Partly generated by Tidal Lagoon Power's exploration as to how compatible their needs dovetailed with our plans, MR in the Iken flood cell became an option under discussion.

However, although TLP's MR option could temptingly save the Partnership £2-3 million pounds by reducing the upgrading costs (*ie* less wall to upgrade), the landowners' first objective is to have the Iken wall consistent with the rest of the estuary. This prompted three further modelling runs to understand the implications.

The initial assessment of the report (draft received late on 5<sup>th</sup> March) suggests that it will be possible to have a height of 3.3 metres throughout the estuary (including at Iken) although some flooding mitigation to a small number of houses in Iken and Orford will be necessary as a temporary measure until all the walls are upgraded.

Currently, therefore, the AOEP are proceeding with the agreed estuary plan. It may well be that areas of managed retreat will be needed, but not for a number of years ahead. There is a monitoring programme in place with Natural England to assess the 'coastal squeeze' issues our Estuary Plan may create in time.

The AOEP are working with the IDB to develop a fully costed and phased programme of works for the whole estuary that will include all management costs to provide a more refined funding total.

*Mandy Bettinson*