



The Alde & Ore Association

Newsletter 58 - Autumn 2022



Repairing, renewing, caring for and enjoying the rivers.

Your Voice - Your Estuary

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Editor's introduction

Volunteering has been on our minds in preparing this issue of the newsletter, such as helping young people to discover sailing and the pleasures of the estuary, and the volunteering undertaken by Association members including those who have set up a water-testing project to ensure we can all swim safely, the annual barbecue organisers and helpers and the ferrymen who row their socks off to transport people and their bikes across Butley Creek. We have also included some archaeology, some poetry, a walk in the upper Alde valley and a chat with the new Orford harbour master as well as the environmental matters that concern us all. We are very grateful to Sue Wallace-Shaddad, Sue Ryder-Richardson, Tony Newman and Johnny Bevan for their voluntary contributions and hope that other readers will be inspired to volunteer *their* observations, articles and photographs.

Monica Allen

PS. Please don't throw away the loose inserts in this issue – they aren't adverts for walk-in baths or donkey charities. One is a flyer about the Association to pass on to a friend who doesn't know about us, and the other is a request for your updated e-mail details to continue receiving up-to-date information.

An estuary glossary

The **Alde and Ore Association (AOA)**, set up in 1991, is a membership-based organisation concerned with *all* matters to do with preserving the Alde, Ore and Butley rivers for the enjoyment of the public and benefit to all and works by making the voice of the river heard. (All matters include everything from seeking to influence government policies that may affect the estuary, from planning proposals to activities such as the ferry, walks, walk booklets and more.)

The **Alde and Ore Community Partnership (AOCP)** is the guardian of the estuary plan to keep the river walls, and therefore all the life of the river that depends on it, in good heart. It has a key role in communicating to all the communities in the estuary, particularly through the parish councils, about what is going

on. The AOCP is the successor to the Alde and Ore Estuary Partnership (AOEP), set up by Suffolk Coastal District Council, Estuary Planning Partnership and the AOA in 2012, which had completed its initial task of developing a coherent flood defence plan.

The **Alde and Ore Estuary Trust (AOET)** is the Treasury for the estuary. The Trust is a registered charity whose role is to raise the funds required to make up the shortfall of those coming from government. This will be done through a combination of donations, grants and charitable foundation awards that support flood and environmental defence work. The donations received from community supporters, however small, are vital to this project.

Cover: The Association's Annual Barbecue, July 2022. Photo: Linda Lees.

Chairman's notes

With the very hot summer, being in, on and around the Alde and Ore and Butley rivers has been a very welcome privilege.

There is so much to be enjoyed in the area, and there are many who are not aware of what a precious landscape is on their doorstep. The initiatives of the three sailing clubs on the river, featured in this newsletter, have shown just one way the younger generations can be introduced to the rivers, the wildlife and the open skies and light. There is more that could be done, such as using the river to contribute to school projects. There is so much to learn about, whether it be the role of landscape in defence and the history of defences in our area, studies of river flows and erosion, unique habitats and vegetation, migrating birds and the links with many other parts of the world such as curlews coming just across the channel while our winter ones move to other breeding grounds, or studies of competition within nature with the foxes depleting the lesser black-backed gull colony on Orford Ness, or simply the local ecological niches, with seals lying up near channels to catch the tasty mullets as they move up and down river with the tides. For all of us, being around the rivers often yields new surprises.

During the summer, we saw the odd, but sadly really thoughtless, behaviour of a very few in speed boats, but for the most part those on the river respected it, its banks, its wildlife and other users. If anyone would like to lead on developing the equivalent of a country code for the estuary so that all users and visitors are aware of what we all need to care for, we would love to hear from them.

We are very excited by the wonderful, volunteer-run and -led initiative of monitoring the water quality of the Alde, Ore and Butley which has been developed over this year and, after a pilot run, is now in place every week. It is citizen science in action (see page 12). As you may know, the Association also runs the

volunteer River Defence Committee annual survey of the river walls, which helps benchmark what we have, monitors changes and helps the Environment Agency identify what needs to be done. On page 7 you can read about the latest repairs. There is much that volunteers can do to help as guardians of the estuary. There are many other volunteers working in and around the estuary, such as for wildlife or the National Trust, and we would love to hear more about what they do. It is possible, together, to help keep in good heart the area we love and support people's enjoyment.

In September Lord Deben gave a very stimulating, eye-opening and wide-ranging talk in the Aldeburgh Jubilee Hall on climate change and meeting its challenges: on our East Coast we are very aware of some of its effects. Climate change reminds us that while our estuary is mostly benign, even if wild at times with wind against tide, sometimes it can throw great shocks at us. We know there will always be sea surges during the winter and most go unnoticed, but every now and then, for example in 1953 or 2013, these surges have a massive impact on our area. With climate change we can only know that sea surges will not go away but storms and therefore some surges are likely to become stronger. It is our good fortune that the winds died away in 2017 preventing more flooding, and even last winter there were no waves whipping up the water level. In 1953 the surge was accompanied by lashing winds and waves: these winds will not be getting less strong over the coming years. So, we face a dual challenge: to do what we can to reduce climate change and to protect our estuary landscape, homes and livelihoods. Next January will be the 70th anniversary of the 1953 floods, which will remind us of what might happen if we do not do what we can to increase the resilience of the area. But more of that next year.

There are times when things seem quiet on the estuary front. But as many of you will have seen, when new potential threats



Solitary sunset flight, 28 May 2022. Photo: Robert Farquharson.

to our area arise the community needs to come together to act. In the last few years new local groups have had to be formed in our Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, of which the rivers are a part, to challenge the energy projects that are being proposed to march over the Suffolk Sandlings regardless of the suitability of the fragile coast, the unique environment and the features that draw in the main activity in the economy – tourism: tranquillity, wonderful landscapes, wildlife and all that is associated with sea and river activities.

The Association is already well established and continues to stand

ready to act to take care of the rivers we all love so much; the Trustees are constantly watching out for anything that might affect the area. We also hope that you as members will alert us to things of concern. We must keep the Association ever ready and the more members we have the stronger our voice. So please give the flyer enclosed in this newsletter to any friends and neighbours who are not members of the Association and encourage them to join.

I wish you all a very good winter.

Alison Andrews, Chairman

1953: the 70th anniversary of the floods

We are still asking for your memories for next year's anniversary.



The Crown Inn, Snape in 1953. Flooding happened again in 2013 when the walls, rebuilt after 1953, had started to fail. They were largely restored after 2013 but the work needs to be completed to the resilience standard the Estuary is now working towards.

THE ALDE & ORE ESTUARY TRUST

SAVE OUR SUFFOLK ESTUARY

The Alde & Ore Estuary Trust (AOET) held its second Aldeburgh to Orford flotilla on 4 September when 100 participants took to the water to raise funds to upgrade and maintain the river walls. With support from local sponsors including The Brudenell Hotel, Two Magpies Bakery and Air Manage Suffolk, together with match funding from Cobra Mist Ltd, a total of £45,000 was raised after direct cost and with Gift Aid. This is a significant amount: £500 pays for one metre of wall to be upgraded and prevent tidal surge devastation for years to come.

Other community fundraising this year included a very successful Attic Art Sale organised by Amanda Churchill and held at Aldeburgh Yacht Club back in April, when more than £9,000 was raised from donated artworks.

The AOET's accounts for the year ending 31 December 2021 will be filed at the end of October 2022 and can then be viewed on the Charity Commission's website.

The Flood Defence Grant in Aid (FDGiA) business case for funding for the upper estuary, costed in 2019, was resubmitted

by the East Suffolk Internal Drainage Board earlier this year. We hope the Environment Agency will respond over the coming weeks.

Maintaining the Trust's profile and awareness of its charitable project during the last year has been vital. Its message has been reiterated regularly using social media (find us at @SOSEstuary on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram), website updates and the production of e-newsletters. Please sign up to receive our e-newsletters via our website www.aoetrust.org if you do not already subscribe.

As we head towards the end of 2022, Aldeburgh Bookshop, O&C Butcher and Snape Maltings will be selling the AOET's charity Christmas cards again this year with two delightful festive designs from local artists David Gillingwater and Ben Wardle (see the back page of this Newsletter). The trustees remain very grateful for the ongoing community support and fundraising through these Christmas cards and donated artworks, in addition to new donors giving regularly by standing order or as a one off. Should you wish for further information, *please email info@aoetrust.org*.



All Flotilla photographs: CWH Media.



The main activity of the AOCPP this summer has been to bring the entire community together and write in very clear terms to the Environment Agency (EA) to remove the blockage to the Estuary Plan progressing.

The recent good news is that now, with the rewriting of the Official Business Case for the first stage of restoring the flood defence river walls, the project has, at last, been detached from the link that had existed between it and the deposited clay at Iken. While the criminal investigation into the clay continues, at last the application for works in the upper estuary can now move forward through the EA processes and hopefully emerge with approval and a known allocation of government funds. If that does happen, we can look forward to some work, if only necessarily preliminary work, taking place during 2023. Once the position is clear, there will be community meetings open to everyone in the estuary area to come and hear about what will be happening. And, as work starts in each area over time, the East Suffolk Internal Drainage Board (IDB) will be talking with the local communities where the work is taking place.

In the last month the AOCPP representative has attended an official government working group checking that the management and monitoring of the national Shoreline Management Plan arrangements are refreshed. This official review is helpful so that what has been agreed is not lost sight of and there will be an easy central on-line reference point for us all if we want to know where policies have got to. For the Alde and Ore this means,

in particular, recording the changed policy agreed a few years ago that the shoreline south of the Aldeburgh Martello will be under a policy of Management Realignment instead of No Active Intervention, so that, when the time comes and provided that money can be found, the shingle shoreline can be repaired. We are assured that the EA is continually monitoring that shoreline and for the time being there is no recognised need for any action.

Meanwhile, a joint 'Comms Group' of AOCPP, AOET and IDB have been working together to prepare information boards to enable people to see what needs to be done to manage the estuary defences to protect lives, work and the environment of the estuary and how it will be done.

It may be ten years on from when the Partnership began, but a lot of work has been done in making the Alde and Ore community closer to realising the estuary plans which remain firmly to refurbish the river walls so that they are renewed before they are breached and will be resilient to a large surge in the year 2050, taking account of sea-level rise.

AOCPP meetings are held quarterly. Members of the public are welcome and are given opportunities to speak. The next meeting will be on Thursday, 8 December 2022 at 6.30 p.m., and whether it will be on Zoom or in person will be put on the website nearer the time. www.aocpp.co.uk.

A. Andrews, Hon. Sec. to AOCPP



Repairs to the front of the Aldeburgh Marshes river wall

By the time you read this, the Environment Agency (EA) is likely to have completed works to repair the front of the river wall in the Aldeburgh Marshes section. There are two main areas where the works will have focused, up near Brick Dock and around the Aldeburgh Town Sluice. The EA is doing 'like for like' repairs to the flood embankment to return it to the condition it should be in. This includes repairs to the concrete revetments, scour protection, and any worn areas, on the front face.

While the EA obviously does its own surveys, the annual surveys by the Association's River Defence Committee team have helped prompt this work. It will be very good to see the repairs to the



Damaged block revetments to be repaired.

erosion of the bank near the Aldeburgh Sluice and to the broken block work up near Stanny where water creeps in and erodes the wall behind it.

This useful maintenance work on the front face of the river walls is separate from the major long-term Estuary Plan to restore the river walls to make the walls resilient to huge surges in the year 2050, even taking account of sea-level rise. That major work will focus on giving the walls a broader, higher top with a more extensive, gently sloping back face, which will give the walls greater resilience against being breached, such as can be seen in the works done a few years ago in the middle section of the Aldeburgh Marshes.

While the repairs have meant diverting the public footpaths for a few weeks, but not at the peak of summer holiday walking, they will help prevent further erosion and help protect people and their properties from tidal flooding.

And you may also like to know about the river wall repairs over on the river side of the Ness which the National Trust has put in place this summer. We understand that those works are now largely complete and included the Cobra Mist team transporting over from the mainland about 600 tons of rock and lumps of concrete to protect against the lapping along the river edge.

History from the *Alde & Ore Association Newsletter*, December 2002

Looking back, in December 2002, 20 years ago, the *Alde & Ore Association Newsletter* reported that a new Estuary Planning Partnership looked likely to be formed and launched in the following January. That proposal had been prompted by an International Study Group report, hosted by the Association, which looked at the overall confused oversight of the estuary. This earlier partnership sought to make a huge difference to the communications between the statutory bodies and others with an interest in the future of the estuary. It would, among other things, be a co-ordinating and integrating mechanism to minimise overlap and duplication of work towards consensus. It did indeed go on to do just that, bringing together the very many and varied organisations, public and private, with an interest in the Alde and Ore. Its work, and a public

consultation, led to the formation of the Alde & Ore Estuary Partnership (AOEP) 10 years later with the remit of developing an agreed estuary strategy. That was achieved by 2016 and, after some more groundwork done towards implementing the plan, the AOEP was succeeded by the Alde & Ore Community Partnership (AOCP), with a different membership involving the community particularly via local councils and overarching estuary bodies. Now, together with the Alde & Ore Estuary Trust, which is responsible for fundraising to make up for any shortfall in government funding for the river defences, and East Suffolk Internal Drainage Board (IDB), which is taking on the construction work, the strategy nears implementation. So, progress is made step by step and bodies evolve to meet the functions needed at different times.

The rookie ferryman

Tony Newman

To be a 'rookie' anything in your seventh decade is a privilege, but to be a rookie ferryman and on the Butley River is something special.

I have known the river for a while – sailing picnics at the Old Barn in the 1950s and 60s and a mooring there in the 1970s. We lived in Rendlesham Forest then and knew Graham and Honor Hussey well and so heard all about the early plans for the Ferry. But a busy family and professional life, a move away from the area and a house in France for 35 years took my life on a different path.

As the pandemic began to fade in 2021 and new possibilities opened up, it was Bobby Rusack who suggested I volunteer as a ferryman. Mark Goyder put me in touch with Roy Truman and then the paperwork arrived. It was very impressive. On the face of it, rowing a few people across a modest, muddy creek would seem a straightforward operation, which was certainly my view when I volunteered, certainly not the Styx or the Mersey. But the constraints imposed by the licence and the ubiquitous health and safety demand meticulous attention to detail. This is what Roy does so well. The instructions are comprehensive and clear, which leaves the ferryman to get on with the job with confidence.

Before the boat can be launched it has to be maintained and kept, literally, 'shipshape and Bristol fashion'. It was at one of these pre-season sessions at Butley Mills, where the boat is kept during the winter, that I first met a few of my fellow ferrymen – a friendly, welcoming group. What I hadn't appreciated was that



Tony Newman on ferry duty. Photo: Brian Johnson.



*How to fit a small armoured car on the ferry.
E-bikes are no longer carried.
Photo: Anthony Newman.*

meeting other ferrymen is a rare thing. With the rota one signs up to at the beginning of the season, the only people you meet, apart from the customers, are those you share a session with. I did also meet several others at the launching of the boat at Gedgrave in April and at the presentation of the admirable Queen's Award for Voluntary Service at the ferry jetty.

The instruction was excellent on my first few sessions, when I joined Roy, Bobby and then Stephen Worrall for my initial outings. The rowing is straightforward enough but coming alongside the jetty and choosing the best course to take when crossing takes some practice and is different every time as the tide and wind change. The most challenging crossings are an hour into a spring ebb with a blustery east wind that kicks up snappy little waves. Sharing a session with Stephen in June, we had to close the ferry for an hour or so because of strong winds. The couple waiting were very understanding and, as they said, there are few better places to spend some time just 'being'.

And it is the customers that give the job its real pleasure as well as its challenges. All sorts and all types turn up on one bank or the other – with bikes, children, dogs and huge rucksacks. All are carefully loaded and rowed across to the other side. Some are

just going for a picnic on the Gedgrave shore, others walking the East Coast Path or on a cycling tour. I understand that there are a number of Dutch cyclists that use the ferry saying that this is the fourth ferry they have taken that day, with one still to go – Hook to Harwich, Harwich to Felixstowe, Felixstowe Ferry to Bawdsey, Butley to Gedgrave, Walberswick to Southwold – a fine itinerary. It's difficult to predict how many passengers will use the ferry on a particular day. A busy day would be 60 or more and maybe 25 bikes. Quieter days give precious time to appreciate and enjoy the place and its myriad wildlife – the seals, kestrels, shelducks, avocets, geese and even a spoonbill.

The biggest challenge I had was a family with four e-bikes hired in Orford – 'more like a small armoured car', as Roy put it. I was with Brian Johnson and we agreed to take them across, but just one at a time. Brian spoke to Roy that evening who spoke to the Jolly Sailor in Orford and they agreed that their bikes were really too large for the ferry.

My season as a rookie ferryman has been a memorable experience – meeting great people, spending time in a unique place and simply 'messaging about' in boats. I visit the Alde regularly from Woodbridge in my boat and always anchor overnight on the Butley River. Becoming a ferryman there has added a whole new dimension to my visits.



Spoonbill at Butley. Photo: John Robinson.

New lease of life for the ferry

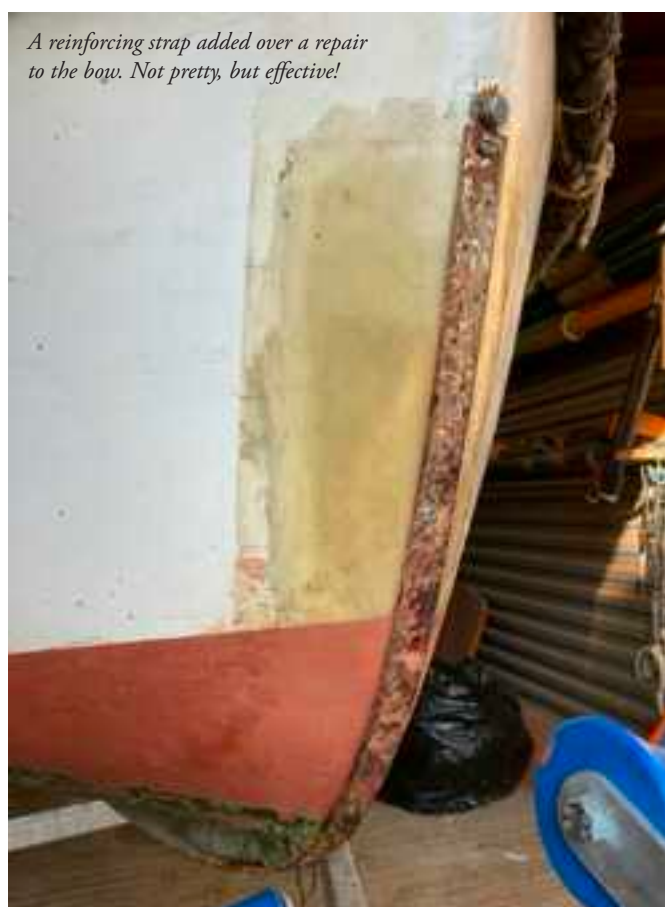
Roy Truman

Our dear old ferry is at least 50 years old, and it is showing signs of both its age and its hard-working life. In a typical season it is bumped, thumped and battered against the jetties, has bikes dropped in and people jumping down into it. Strong as it was originally built, it still flexes to absorb the stresses of its everyday work, and this has taken its toll on the hull and the gunnels in particular.

We have looked, over the last few years, for a suitable replacement but have concluded that it is actually the best boat for the job. So, plan B. Could it be refurbished? Would it be worth the expense? Both of these questions were answered simply and locally and, as a result, the boat will spend the winter at Upson's Boatyard, in Aldeburgh, being pimped, preened and titivated in a major refurbishment that should give it another 50 years of useful life. The Suffolk Coast and Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty has generously grant-aided 70 per cent of the total cost.

This was all arranged early in the season but has since proved to be a decision taken in the nick of time. We knew the topsides woodwork was weakening, but the problem with wood is that it is hard to see inside it. An innocuous bump against the jetty caused a rowlock mounting to be torn off. The poor condition of the underlying timber and old, corroded fittings added to the pain. A small leak below the waterline and into a buoyancy chamber was discovered a few weeks ago: a sign of a hull under stress. We have some very capable craftsmen among our ferrymen, but there are occasions when you have to hand things over to the experts and

so, by the time you read this, our boat will be in the tender care of Brian Upson and his team, and we will look forward to starting next season with a new 'old' boat.



A reinforcing strap added over a repair to the bow. Not pretty, but effective!

A chat with Orford's new harbour master, Matt Smy

Keith Martin

The nice thing about chatting to Matt Smy is that he is obviously enjoying his new job. It was quiet enough on the Quay in late September in the afternoon sunshine – a couple of people popped in – unlike a month earlier when the village was packed. Although he has no historical knowledge of past years' numbers his feeling is that all the businesses in Orford have done well this year. The pubs, restaurants and tearoom have been busy all summer, river trips remain popular, and he has had high numbers of visiting yachts to deal with.

Employed by the New Orford Town Trust (NOTT), the prime job of the harbour master is obviously to manage the moorings, visitors' boats, boat storage and other harbour movements. He also receives many telephone requests for guidance and information on the entrance and navigation from visiting boats – once a fortnight or so, he visits the entrance at low water to check for navigation changes. This year it has been stable, probably because the weather has been stable, with little change. He's obviously doing a good



job because in just a few months he has increased the number of visitors' moorings to ten and on several occasions this summer ten has not been enough. This represents good business for NOTT and for the pubs and restaurants in the village. In addition, he manages the income from the dinghy parks and boat park behind the sea wall.

The launching slip keeps him busy at weekends. Orford has the only public slip on the river, so visiting sports boats have to launch there. It's not cheap to launch at £65 a go, but the water-skiing area and picnic grounds on the Ness are popular destinations and in the good weather this year these have been major attractions. Unlike some people, Matt seems very tolerant of visitors and people who will obviously be less competent on the river than he is. He finds most visitors respectful and careful of the environment and relatively little trouble. Maybe the very presence of a harbour master helps, but he also makes sure every visitor gets a copy of the regulations and the National Trust leaflet on the management of Orford Ness. Orford may be lucky in this respect in that the rest of the river has no management authority and no one to enforce speed limits or other regulations. Maybe this is an issue for the Association to take further!

He comes from a line of several generations of local residents. His great-grandfather used to live in a house on the Ness near Stoney Ditch, but that was damaged in the 1920s and was demolished. Matt was born and bred in Orford and has been involved with the river since he was a small boy. They had an old, flat-nosed, pram dinghy in which he used to mess around at Orford and another boat at Butley Creek. Fishing was always a great love, not just in the river for cod, skate and sea bass but also in the fresh water lagoons behind the river walls where there were plentiful populations of roach and rudd. He hasn't done that for years, but he supposes they must still be there.

Interestingly, many of the recreational anglers have found better fishing in the river this year than at sea off the beach. The Ipswich Sea Anglers club has been holding fishing matches in the river near Chantry Point.

His first job was working for Bill Pinney at Butley Creek for whom he has caught most kinds of fish or lobster as well as helping with the oyster beds. When he started there were seven commercial fishermen at Orford, two at Butley and up to 25 fishing off Aldeburgh beach. Now there are two at Orford, two at Butley and just three or four at Aldeburgh. The catch used to be landed and sent off to the Lowestoft fish market; that still exists but is a shadow of its former size. Lobster was always sold locally and they

could sell up to 150 a week to local restaurants. The big change has been the collapse of the cod fishing industry coupled with bans on rock eel. Cod has always been a valuable fish and used to be plentiful, but it has now largely disappeared from the southern North Sea. Some people blame the wind farms, but he thinks it must be higher water temperatures. There is still a cod fishing industry off the Humber but no further south than that.

They used to lay lobster pots on open ground. These days the quality of fish-finding gear and sonar is so good the fishermen are able to lay pots up against wrecks in locations he wouldn't have dreamt of in his day. They used to spend more time looking for the wrecks than actually fishing. With today's equipment they can see the wrecks and their pots and even see which way the pots are lying. When he started it was possible to make a living working 100 pots. Today it takes 500 pots to run a viable business. Is that from over-fishing? Maybe a bit. But there are also fewer viable locations where they can fish with the wind farms now out of bounds and much more dredging for aggregates breaking up the ground. It's a lot harder now, so no wonder there are fewer people doing it.

He gave up fishing for a living about 16 years ago, since when he has worked at Sizewell A and Bradwell power stations. Reading between the lines, this was more secure, better money but not half as much fun. So, when the post of harbour master was advertised, although it was less money, it was a chance to get back to the river and he took it. He believes there were several applications, and he puts his success in winning the appointment down to being local and to his river knowledge, which seems more than fair enough for the job of harbour master.

Will his boys follow his choice of career, I asked him? Well, they won't be fishing, he responded. There is some interest in the river, and they do go out with him sometimes; one of them has taken a taster session at the sailing club. But like many teenagers they are probably more interested in tech and computers.

The Orford moorings seem to be in good hands. His natural friendliness and helpfulness will stand him and the village in good stead and I would expect visitor numbers to increase in future years. Now that's a nice problem to have.



*Orford harbour dinghy parks and launching slip
(Credit: David Hunter / Alamy Stock Photo)*

Volunteer Hon. Sec.

An exciting opportunity has arisen for an enthusiastic volunteer to join us as Honorary Secretary. You will carry out and take responsibility for the administrative tasks needed to facilitate board meetings including preparation of agendas and minutes. Time commitment would be approximately 3-8 hours a quarter.

If you would like to get more involved with the work of the Association please contact Alison Andrews to find out more on 01728 452660 or go to our volunteer vacancies page on our website.



Water monitoring

Action by Association members

Alison Andrews

Two members, Bobby Rusack and Miv Hall, are organising a year-long weekly testing of water quality in relation to E. coli and nitrates in the Alde and Ore and Butley rivers.

Members may have seen in recent months the publicity given to sewage overflows from processing plants at times of excess storm water and the press coverage of inadequate testing arrangements by government. Responsibility for protecting the public from harmful substances in water has been placed on bodies such as health authorities and water companies, each with responsibilities for particular aspects. So, the picture is patchy.

Last year, River Deben groups found that the Deben Estuary could have a real E. coli problem because of its up-river sewage processing plant, making the estuary particularly subject to polluting overflows. Deben organisations therefore started a 'citizen science' approach by developing a monitoring programme to find out the size and distribution of the problem.

Bobby, a Butley ferryman who also kayaks in the Deben, spotted the move to monitor the quality of water in the Deben. He went to find out more about it from the Deben groups and to see how testing might be done. He also talked with Suffolk University who will interpret the results of the testing. He then, with Miv, who has professional skills in waste management and wastewater treatment, developed a plan for the Alde and Ore Estuary.

Bobby approached two Suffolk county councillors who have both agreed to provide funds from their allowances for activities in their wards to finance the monitoring. Andrew Reid is giving funds to cover the monitoring equipment including collection tools, bottles and the special testing paper for a year, while T-J Howarth-Culf is funding the incubator that is needed to process the testing paper once it has been covered with the water samples. This is very generous of Suffolk County Council.

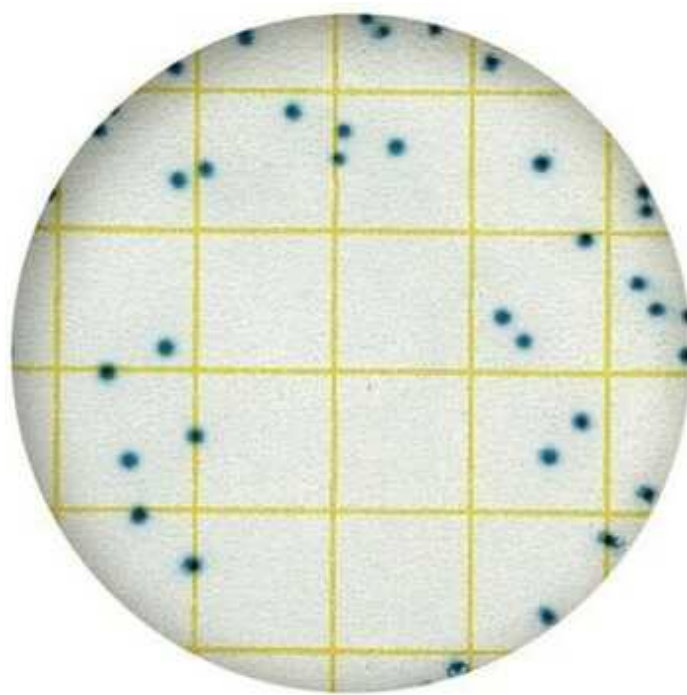
The Alde and Ore testing begins in earnest now. Three areas will be monitored: the Butley, the Alde above Snape and the Alde Estuary, with a total of nine monitoring places. In the upper river there will be two that are close to processing plants at Benhall and Framlingham.

Sampling is a fairly simple action of collecting water in a scoop and putting it in labelled bottles. Samples have to be tested within 24 hours of collection. The samples are taken to the incubator, where tests are done in petri dishes on special paper, which once covered with the sample will 'brew' for 24–48 hours in the incubator. The resulting spotting on the paper will be sent to Suffolk University for analysis. All these procedures are covered by the necessary health and safety and risk assessments.

All the monitoring will be done entirely by volunteers. Water samples will be collected from each of the monitoring points with the work spread between three teams. The samples will then



Collecting water samples: basic equipment.



Counting the results.

be delivered to Duncan Matthew, also a keen sailor, who is very generously hosting the incubator and carrying out the weekly tests.

The water samples are to be tested for *E. coli* and nitrates. *E. coli* is also a reliable marker for other 'nasties' and results could be important for river users, particularly swimmers and canoeists. The sampling and test procedures for nitrates are very similar to those for *E. coli*. While nitrates can cause algal blooms, they are by no means the only substance to do that but are one of a number of substances that are not good for rivers if present in significant volumes. Indeed, the water companies already need such data as they have to take nitrates out of drinking water.

The actual responsibility for dealing with *E. coli* lies with the local health authority. However, no authorities have the resources for extensive water sampling, so up to now, in England, sampling has mainly focused on areas where pollution is a real possibility such as outflows of sewage plants. Other sampling takes place but is mostly done by private firms that need to be sure of the quality of the water they use and have tests done regularly to meet health law requirements.

While the monitoring was started in the Deben because of concern about the *E. coli* content as there are the sewage plants up river of the Deben estuary, the Alde and Ore Estuary does not have a similar plant. In the Alde a fish survey a few years ago showed the presence of Shad, a fish that only likes being in clean water. Advice generally is that in an estuary such as the Alde and Ore, any pollutants will be very much diluted because of the tidal system, so if problems occur they are likely to be above the tidal zones of the river. But recent surveys have shown the limits of testing by local and national bodies and Deben's citizen science initiative will add to the better knowledge of what is happening elsewhere. Undertaking a survey to see what is or is not occurring, given there are no comprehensive surveys, has to be a positive action. The Association fully supports this enterprising initiative by Bobby and Miv, which will further the aims of taking care of the river. It is a positive step towards knowing whether we have a healthy estuary.

Andy Went, Catchment and Project Officer of the Essex and Suffolk Rivers Trust (www.essexsuffolkriverstrust.org), gave a talk to the River Deben Association earlier this year describing a study which brought together a survey from 2015 with an update from 2019 that included other persistent bio-accumulator and toxic

priority hazard substances. He presented a series of maps, which included the Alde and Ore rivers, showing the quality status of the water. While the estuary is generally reported as good, in parts of the non-tidal upper Alde, Ore and Fromus tributaries conditions are less healthy for freshwater fish and plants, although good for freshwater invertebrates. The sources of pollution are thought to be water company discharges, agriculture diffusion pollution, sediment type, food processing and manufacturing. He explained who is doing what to tackle water quality and that to achieve better water quality it will have to be paid for. He also pointed out that the biggest water issue in East Anglia is simply water availability. Sir James Bevan, CEO of the Environment Agency, faced up to these uncomfortable issues in a speech on 'Water: Myths, facts and inconvenient truths', 22 February 2022, www.gov.uk/government/speeches/water-myths-facts-and-inconvenient-truths. As in so many aspects of life, climate change is yet again in the mix of how to improve where we are.



Another take on environmental protection

Crowing roosters, aromas of cattle dung, noisy tractors ... In January 2021 the French Parliament passed a law introducing the concept of *patrimoine sensoriel* – sensory heritage – of the countryside. Litigation related to noises or odours had been increasing in the French countryside as city people bought property in rural areas and seemed to find the countryside noisier and smellier than the streets of Paris. The law was intended to provide a 'useful tool' to support local officials in their role of mediation. The sounds and scents characterising the countryside are now consecrated in an environmental code as part of the nation's heritage.

The Association's annual barbecue

It wasn't actually a barbecue, or even annual. But it was terrific just the same.

After two years' absence from the Association's social calendar the 'annual barbecue' took place on 31 July. Nearly 140 Association members of all ages, accompanied by more than a dozen impeccably behaved dogs, congregated on the bank of the estuary below Blackheath House, with a beautiful view across the wide expanse of the river. The Association is very grateful to Sir Michael and Lady Hopkins, who were kind enough to allow the hordes to park by the house and walk through the grounds to the heather-fringed shore below. Some people arrived by water, meeting the challenges of the tide limitations with just a few wet feet.

The intention of having a hog roast had to be abandoned because of the fire risk in the extremely dry conditions that dominated the main summer weather. Undaunted, Gerard King, of Salter & King Butchers, cooked the pork in advance. Less spectacular perhaps, but it was nonetheless delicious. Gerard generously provided the meat at cost, so we can pass on money to the Estuary repair fund. We are also grateful to his family for assisting with serving the meat, crackling, buns and apple sauce. The Aldeburgh Café provided excellent salads and

many thanks are due to the volunteers who served them and to a second team of dessert servers, to the baristas and everyone who helped with the clearing up, and to the photographers.

In keeping with being as green as possible, the palm leaf plates could be composted, with some even being used for a school project, and the reusable cutlery, in which the Association invested a couple of years ago, is now clean and in store for another day.

Just before most people arrived a huge belt of steel-grey clouds and near-horizontal rain swept from the west over the picnic area but then vanished, leaving an almost immediately dry site. Later, just as dessert had mostly been eaten, dramatic dark clouds again threatened to send everyone into the marquee, but in the end only a little rain fell while spirits remained high, and it was good to have some respite from the very high temperatures enjoyed or endured, depending on one's taste, for most of the summer.

Alison's Chairman's speech, welcoming everyone warmly and appreciating the wonderful setting for meeting all together, reported on the issues concerning the Association, based on its core purpose of taking care of the estuary. In particular, she



expressed the hope that at last it was possible to begin to see a way past the obstacle that had held up the approval of the river defence plan. She reminded everyone that the more members the Association had, the more powerful was the voice of the river to challenge potentially damaging developments and to encourage other measures to take care of the area: she hoped everyone would seek to persuade friends to join.

Finally, the auction of a limited edition print of 'The Sailors Path' by John Dunthorne – readers will have seen this drawing in the Spring 22 issue – provided another highlight and buzz, as people filled in bidding slips and popped them in the waiting box. Bidding was brisk and in the end two prints were sold, making £650 to add to the coffers of the Alde & Ore Estuary Trust. A thank you to John for making these prints available.



Photo credits: Fleur Hayles, Angus Grogogno and Linda Lees. More photos can be seen on the Association's website.

Snape: Suffolk's other ship burial

Roy Truman describes the lesser known of only two ship burial sites found outside Scandinavia.

The Sutton Hoo ship burial is one of only two confirmed and researched Anglo-Saxon ship burial sites known outside Scandinavia. The story of the discovery of the ship burial and treasure at Sutton Hoo is well documented through learned papers and in popular fiction. It has, quite rightly, gripped the imagination of recent generations and, with the opening of the National Trust's Sutton Hoo Centre, has been brought to life for the thousands of visitors it attracts.

But the second site is also in Suffolk, in the area of interest to the Alde and Ore Association, at Snape, close to the church on the A1094 on the way to Aldeburgh.

Unlike Sutton Hoo, the Snape site is easy to miss, even though the road runs right through it. The barrows and mounds, bumps and ditches that were at Snape, unlike those still to be seen at Sutton Hoo, have all but disappeared, and yet, this site at Snape was first excavated over a hundred years before Basil Brown's trowel first hit the soil. I cannot begin, nor am I qualified, to describe the variety and importance of the objects discovered over the years by archaeologists. There are some excellent papers (see references) which I have drawn on which I can recommend to anyone with even the slightest interest in the history of the Alde and Ore area.



Anglo-Saxon ring, held in The British Museum (Courtesy of the Trustees of The British Museum). A replica is held in Aldeburgh Museum.

The landscape is quite difficult to read. Prior to the 1940s, when the land began to be ploughed, it is thought that the area was typical of the Suffolk Sandlings acid heathland and was mostly used for sheepwalks. There were no trees before the twentieth-century plantations, so there would have been a clear view of the barrows in the area both from the North Sea and the Alde River. Now the clues lie in the contours. Just as there was an old valley, now dry, off the Deben River, up which the Sutton Hoo ship would have been towed, so there is a valley up to the

Snape site. From the Alde River, just west of the Little Japan cliff and beach, lies the valley of Ham Creek. On the OS map, using the 5-metre contour, follow the valley sides inland west-north-west for about 2 miles up a shallow valley; the former river valley ends when reaching the 10-metre contour with the northern branch around The Priory and the north-west longer branch near Snape Common. A large area just to the north of The Priory and half a mile to the east of Snape Church was known as an ancient burial site, and in the 19th century, nine or ten large raised mounds were clearly visible. The mounds were said to be 'a matter of wonderment to the simple peasant – who in these latitudes is remarkably simple indeed' (Francis 1863).

A dig, of sorts, was performed in 1827 'by some gentlemen who were supposed by the inhabitants to have come from London' (Francis 1863). They were reported by locals to have taken several cartloads of pottery, bronze urns and 'jewels', none of which was recorded or ever heard of again.

In 1862, Septimus Davidson, owner of part of the site, assisted by Francis Francis, made a more careful excavation using recording methods unusually thorough for the period. They excavated one of the mounds and found, as did Basil Brown later at Sutton



Anglo-Frisian funerary urn, held in Aldeburgh Museum (Credit: [Midnightblueowl](#) under Creative Commons).



Anglo-Saxon claw beaker, held in Aldeburgh Museum (Credit: [Midnightblueowl](#) under Creative Commons).

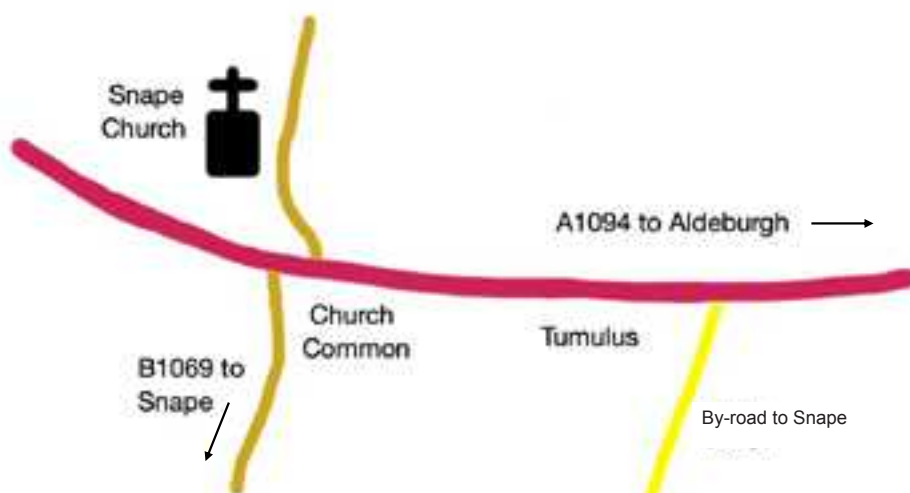
Hoo, lumps of iron which they identified as rivets, and, through painstaking work, discovered the impression of a wooden ship in the sand. The ship, with the approximate positions of the rivets was recorded on a watercolour painting (Filmer-Sankey and Pestell 2001) and was found to be 48 ft long, 9 ft 9 in broad and 4 ft high. One end appears to have been cut off by the construction of the road. Although smaller than the Sutton Hoo ship, it was undoubtedly a very high-status burial but, sadly, unlike Sutton Hoo, this particular grave had been robbed many years before. There were, however, some objects which evaded the grave robbers. One of the most beautiful is a jasper and gold signet ring, Roman in style but believed to be Germanic and contemporary with the ship burial (c. AD 625).

Along with the longship burial were many others, some in graves and some cremated remains in urns, and this suggests a site that was important for hundreds of years. The archaeology also suggests that burials were placed on top of previous burials and several graves were dug out, and the remains strewn about, to accommodate the ship burial. It was the custom to bury items of significance to the deceased with them. Warriors had swords and spears and in two graves, the bodies had been buried in log canoes.

After 1862, apart from two minor finds around 1970, the next, and most recent and seriously recorded archaeological work was between 1986 and 1992 by William Filmer-Sankey and Tim Pestell. Very detailed work was undertaken and minutely and carefully recorded. It found the site to be a mixed cremation and inhumation cemetery with a number of burial urns and traces of two, possibly three, dugout log boats used as burial containers and some special finds such as a lyre.

The site is on private land, inaccessible to the public, and there is no longer anything visible. However, some of the recovered artifacts can be viewed at Aldeburgh Museum.

This was a significant site, right on our doorstep, but, through greed, ignorance and years of both agricultural usage (a large part of the site was ploughed during the two world wars to create land for food production) and road building, much of it has been lost. These days, any major development must produce surveys to identify anything of historical importance and allow archaeologists the time to preserve anything that can be preserved and to catalogue the site prior to its development. Sadly for us, the earliest excavation made long before such requirements came into force probably took the brightest finds. But at least the two subsequent major excavations have given us an insight into what would have been a very important site in the Alde River area.



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Location of the site of the Snape ship burial (Roy Truman).

Bringing on the next generation of sailors And encouraging understanding of the wonderful world of the river

Alison Andrews with thanks to Leslie Downing, Slaughden Sailing Club, Susie Rixon, Aldeburgh Yacht Club, and Mary Hackett, Orford Sailing Club

The Alde and Ore has three sailing clubs of very different sizes, but all seek to encourage the next generation to learn about the wonderful river and the fun of sailing and water activities. This summer has seen a range of different activities.

Slaughden Sailing Club (SSC) was participating in the Aldeburgh Town Council Sports Week for children. As is often the case, it is never possible for the weather to be exactly right for a gentle introduction to sailing. The horrendous wind and rain that day made any chance of going out in a sail boat unsafe, but eventually SSC managed to give all the children a ride in the safety boat, loading from the slipway rather than the quay, which would have been too dangerous. But, despite the weather, 22 children had an amazing day in the creek and front water of the club. There was no concern about getting wet or muddy as the participants learned to row and clambered in and out of the river and creek onto land, boards and small boats. At the end of it, all who had joined in declared the day really fun and will no doubt come back next year for more, or at least the chance to actually try out sailing and the challenges of balance, using the wind and coping with the tide. And SSC has weekly sailing evenings for juniors when they can find or hone their skills, as well as sailing courses for members and non-members. All these activities are done entirely with volunteers from the club wanting to give others the opportunity to enjoy the river.



Getting to know the rigging.

Every year, Aldeburgh Yacht Club (AYC), in addition to several weeks of sailing courses for members and guests and one for a London charity, BigKid Foundation, for improving the lives of young people at risk of social exclusion, runs a sailing programme for local schools in conjunction with the AYC Schools Sailing Trust. An extensive programme taking up three full days in each of the four weeks of June was completed this year with the help of some 44 volunteers, involving onshore and on the water tuition and safety boat coverage in 182 duty slots. This year nine local schools attended, each bringing mostly a year 6 class (around 11 years of age) of some 18–20 children, making a total of 164, and their gallant teachers. Some schools came for a full Activity Day, getting to grips with rigging and sailing in boats with instructors in the morning and hilarious rowing races in the afternoon, not forgetting going away able to tie three sorts of knots! Aldeburgh Primary and Kelsale School came for four full half-day sessions and as a result the children who worked so well and mastered the first steps in sailing were all awarded RYA certificates. A few enjoyed it so much that they joined the AYC summer sailing courses to continue mastering their skills.



Aldeburgh: What a lot of well-earned certificates!

Orford Sailing Club (OSC) has been running sailing courses for many years now, using in house Royal Yacht Association (RYA) qualified dinghy instructors, and this year was no exception. In 2022, three weeks of sailing courses were held, mainly for children, which led to RYA levels 1 to 4 as well as Start Racing and Seamanship courses. Altogether, 76 children, aged between 8 and 16, benefited and eight adults also earned an RYA certificate. In addition, taster sailing sessions were held weekly to get local primary, non-member children on a sailing boat accompanied by experienced sailors in the hope that some at least would be enthused. Three of these children were then given places on the courses. And, as further up the river, a special effort was made to make sure the children had great fun too. At Orford the challenges of strange tidal flows and tricky winds can be even greater than up near Slaughden, but with great encouragement and tuition from the OSC volunteers another group of children

for yet another year have had a taste of the fun of being on the river and enjoying the very special environment and the wide skies.

So, along the estuary, all the children have learned about tidal flow and the effect of quirky winds on a dinghy, how Aldeburgh and Orford, Snape and Butley connect (so different following the river than the road), and seen the occasional seal, cheerful oystercatchers and many sea gulls. And some can now row in a straight line – watch out Thorpeness Mere for new entrants on days too windy for the river.

All this shows what a tremendous role volunteers can play in developing new skills and confidence as well as an appreciation and love for the amazing river world in the Alde and Ore area.



Orford: ready for fun and discovering the river.

A stroll through the Upper Alde valley

Sue Ryder Richardson

The Upper Alde Valley is blessed with many beautiful villages. Here, the meandering river is little more than a quiet brook as it passes through Bruisyard, Rendham and Sweffling. Water meadows are grazed by cattle and sheep, with pastures straddling the river as it flows beside tiny lanes, making its way alongside Benhall Low Street, and Great Glemham, before passing beneath the A12.

Bruisyard boasts the very fine, grade 1 listed, round-towered church of St Peter's. The flint building, believed to date from Saxon times, sits in a wildflower meadow and has a remarkable history. It is well worth a visit. A short distance away is the imposing frontage of Bruisyard Hall, which began life in 1354 as an abbey, founded by Maud of the Poor Clares in Campsea Ashe. Its ecclesiastical history was to last two hundred years, and after its dissolution, the abbey was incorporated into the Tudor Hall seen today.

Further downstream lies the village of Rendham, with its Roman origins. The head of Emperor Claudius, found by two schoolboys in 1907, is now in the British Museum. There is a replica inside the church. The village has historical links to Queen Boudicca of the Iceni tribe, as well as a Saxon heritage. It is mentioned in the Domesday book, where there is evidence of a thriving community.

None of these villages would have existed, or enjoyed their long of history, without the River Alde. It would have supplied fresh water, pastures for grazing, fish and simple river transport for building materials

The Upper Alde Valley is a delight to walk. There are many footpaths, and it is worth using an OS map to explore these, and to make some of the possible variations from the walk described below. This route, of approximately 5 miles, is a circular walk from Sweffling, through Benhall, returning via Great Glemham and Grove Lane.

There are various spots to park in Sweffling, but no official carpark, so to start the walk, make your way to St Mary's Church and walk to the rear of the churchyard, and turn right down the driveway. Cross over the lane onto the footpath, then keep straight ahead through a copse, and over the River Alde for the first time, on a narrow wooden bridge. Turn right along the hedge line at the cross paths and pass through two gates, before continuing straight ahead onto a track by a barn.

The Alde runs on your right through these meadows, which on occasion have grazing sheep and cattle. Throughout the year, this valley is full of wildflowers, from banks of snowdrops in January, through wild garlic, bluebells, and marsh marigolds in spring, and then a profusion of late spring and summer flowers in banks and hedgerows. From overhead comes the persistent mew of buzzards, red kites nest in the trees, and even the occasional kingfisher can be spotted along the water's edge.

As the track curves right, take the narrow, signed footpath uphill into Dodds Wood. Keep to the marked path; there are two way-markers in the wood, the first keeping you left on the narrower path, the second bearing right onto a broader track. On leaving the wood turn left as indicated at the cross paths, in front of the





All photos and map: Sue Ryder Richardson.

red 'Private' sign. On reaching the house, take the right path and follow the signed route to reach a lane at High House Farm.

Turn right here and keep to the left on the higher road. There are wonderful views over the Alde Valley from this quiet lane. Turn right onto the footpath by Kelton Cottage, cross a stile to walk down the hill. There may be cattle in this field.* On reaching the lane turn left and almost immediately right on the footpath over the River Alde again. Keep ahead through beautiful water-meadows, full of ancient oaks, to pass the long table created for the 'world's biggest picnic', and on into White House Farm. There are many events held here by Jason Gathorne-Hardy, and these Spring and Autumn Arts Festivals are well worth visiting. Info at: aldevalleyspringfestival.co.uk.



If not visiting the barns and exhibitions, turn right just before the farmyard, at the cross paths into an orchard. Keep ahead over a field and in the second field bear left following the boundary to find a gap in the hedge opposite the drive to The Grove. Turn right along the lane and at the junction bear right and on over the small bridge over the Alde. Take the track on the left and follow this back to the barn and fields at the start of the walk. Retrace your steps to St Mary's, Sweffling.

*If worried by cattle, continue along the lane and take another footpath right into a wood. A left path takes you down to the

lane, where you cross to another path beside a flint cottage. Cross the River Alde and, after a short distance, take a footpath right over some meadows to reach the Barns at White House Farm. Keep ahead here to walk into the Orchard.

Pub lunch detour. Should you wish to break for a pub lunch, keep ahead from the bridge described in the detour above, and remain on the path to reach the lane. Turn left and then shortly right to follow the wall of Glemham Hall. You will reach Glemham village; turn right at the T-junction to find The Crown pub. There are various routes back to Sweffling from this point as shown on the map. There are pubs in Rendham and Sweffling, both called The White Horse, and in Rendham, Juniper Barn Café. Check websites for opening hours and availability of food.



Trouble at 'Troublesome'

Johnny Bevan recounts a well-planned voyage up the River Alde navigating the winding river channels in his Loch Long, *Astra*, no. 86, which has been in his family for some 60 years

As my competitive juices – and skills – wane, I have rediscovered the simple pleasure of sailing for its own sake, and a seed had gradually taken root of a plan to sail to Snape Bridge. Visitors to Snape will have seen the barge and motor cruisers there and assumed it is an easy ride. Keelboat sailors will know that it is anything but, and the barge skipper who does the trip regularly under sail is a master of his craft. The fun starts at Iken, where

it becomes narrow, winds vigorously, and covers all points of the compass directionally.

I aimed for Wednesday, 10 August 2022. There was a high spring tide and a stable high-pressure system was building towards the second amber heat alert of the summer. The wind was forecast to be a steady and light north-easterly – ideal conditions.

Astra between the reeds.



I assembled the team for the final preparations the evening before. John Grayburn was navigator; he had once kept a motorboat above Snape Bridge and had his last visit to Snape from Aldeburgh in his current craft, *Anne Marie*, plotted on his iPhone. Son Henry served as deckhand and muscle – his day-job as a BA Dreamliner pilot being interesting but not particularly helpful, except in assisting JG spot the withies. Judith and Michael Shallow were to attend in their rib for assistance if required. My wife Veronica kindly provided us with a delicious packed lunch and coordinated the shore party at Snape. Fenders, paddles, lunch and JG's cunningly contrived rake-with-wooden-plank-attached to act as mud-pusher-offer were prepared. The *Loch Long* class captain, Chris Semken, recommended we leave Snape on the last of the flood.

The weather was glorious, but we had a brisk and rather uncomfortable wind against tide all the way from Orford to AYC for our support vessel and crew. In the upper reaches of the Alde the red port-hand marks are either pink or white tins, or simply vertical sticks, while green starboard-hand ones are uniformly tree branches with twigs sticking out at the top. At Iken we were well ahead of schedule, having



After Iken there is another very twisty stretch. We grounded a second time and a passing speedboat (containing an experienced sailor who appreciated the challenge we faced) helped us off after another two or so minutes. We were now on – as opposed to ahead of – schedule, but the last quarter mile was straightforward, allowing us to take in the beautiful view of the approach to Snape.



cast off from AYC at 1025 accompanied by Chris Semken and David Trower in Loch Long *Wildka*.

Upper and Lower Troublesome Reaches at Iken are aptly named. We were too close to the port-hand marker on the first sharp left hander of what is in effect a Z-bend to Iken Cliff and went hard aground. The usual tricks with the jib, weight shifting, and rocking etc. failed, and eventually the Dreamliner pilot's soft mud skills were deployed after about 10 minutes. This spectacle was watched, and indeed photographed, by Patrick Hill in his motorboat. He timed his intervention and assistance to perfection, arriving in a cloud of smoke after watching – seconds after Henry finally freed us. We thanked Patrick profusely, if gently sarcastically, for his intentions and proceeded. Our wingmen in *Wildka* had meanwhile anchored and announced as we passed that they thought one Loch Long was perhaps enough for the soon-to-arrive rib – after a very pleasant sail to Iken they turned for home. We were now alone, but not without support – further encouragement came in the form of Charles Blount and family, who yelled encouragement from their house, and then leapt into a delightful motorboat with three others to escort us.

We were cheered on our way for the last stretch by assorted family – aged between 85 and 3 – who gave us a tremendous welcome. The couple who were moored at Snape Quay sharing a boiled egg for lunch must have initially wondered why there were 20 people watching them do so. We came alongside and thanked them for becoming part of our expedition with a glass of champagne. We contemplated trying to touch the bridge – which had been my initial intention – but with the wind now due east we decided discretion was the better part of ambition and headed home, just able to do the first stretch home with a few long tacks.

Charles Blount re-appeared for another morale boost – this time in a Laser – and offered us some guidance on the channel (some much appreciated local Iken knowledge). In spite of this, we grounded again in Upper Troublesome Reach on the way out, which could have caused a real problem on the gathering ebb, but the Shallows helped us off; we bid them farewell and many thanks at Little Japan. The mixture of tacking, withy spotting and iPhone cross-checking – generally into the wind – on the return journey kept us so busy that it was only at the comparative serenity of Barber's Point that we realised we had not had lunch. We were back on the mooring at AYC just before quarter past two and celebrated with appropriate refreshment.

It is a bit of a challenge in a keelboat, but in a dinghy or canoe, or with a motor, it is not overly difficult if you have some experience. It is also a spectacularly beautiful stretch of our unique river.

I am not sure if *Astra* is the first Loch Long to get to Snape in recent years, but I can recommend it if the conditions are right. Many thanks to everyone who supported us on our adventure – we thoroughly enjoyed our day out, and as we drove across the bridge on our return to Orford we were able to reflect on quite an adventure, and a job well done.

Returning home

Sue Wallace-Shaddad remembers her childhood at Ferry Farm next to Butley Creek.

The farm house stood and still stands lonely among the marshes, its windows looking to the far horizon where the North Sea begins. I was born there on a summer's day, the first of several children to call it home, feel its pull over time.

The fields and meadows became our playground. The black barn, filled with bales of hay, turned into a soft climbing frame and we took rides on the barrow piled high with cattle feed. I named one cow Primrose; I wished I had brown eyes like her. There were eggs to find, the hens creating a treasure hunt for us every day. But dangers lurked too – deep streams, barbed wire, ever present nettles and cows fiercely protecting their calves.

This world was our world and we roamed free, turning up for meals when we were hungry. We were muddy no doubt, a bit scratched and torn but full of fresh air with tales to tell. The dog, a cocker spaniel, shadowed us everywhere, witness to countless escapades, always a friend. The house would envelop us at the end of long days outside. The fire would burn brightly in the grate casting dancing shadows as we toasted some bread. The Rayburn dried out our socks and boots ready for the next day's adventures.



Sue's father Alan Wallace and her mother, artist Anne Paterson Wallace, in 1986, a few years before Alan retired.



Going to school took us to unknown places to face new demands but home stayed constant. It remained an island with life revolving round it, a place for retreat to build back energy. Reading book after book in the holiday quiet, I would dream of far off shores I might see one day. Teenage hopes and fears were wrestled with during long walks in those wide-open spaces devoid of other human beings. Or there were night time sorties to be had, wandering below the star-scape; deep night punctuated by a mosaic of frozen light.

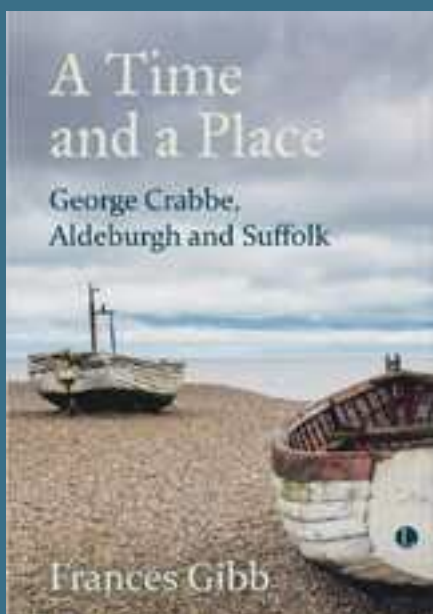
We went our different ways to build our adult futures but always returned. The first months of my children's lives were sheltered there, their roots firmly planted in Suffolk soil and a heritage created for them. It was soon their turn to run through long grass, swing from the rope tied to the old pine tree, dress up in beads, belts and scarves. But they had city lives and only temporary freedom to roam.

The day came when the house was no longer our home, someone else had moved in to bring up their children. It was no longer our road to drive down, our hedge of blackberries, our autumn mushroom feast. We had to follow the footpath signs and behave as visitors. Yet older now, I park a mile away and walk down by the river, skirt round, edge closer to the house, remembering

old pathways. The house is still there, ever watchful, freshened up with a new coat of paint. It embraces us back into memory though we cannot enter and so we pass on by, resuming our distant lives.

Sue Wallace-Shaddad was born and brought up at Ferry Farm with her three brothers. Her father Alan Wallace was estate manager for Greenwell Estates all his working life. After a long international career Sue moved back to Suffolk permanently in 2002. She is a poet and Secretary of Suffolk Poetry Society. This memoir was first published in The Curlew, vol. III, iss. II, Crataegus, by Wild Wood Press, March 2019.

A Time and a Place: George Crabbe, Aldeburgh & Suffolk by Frances Gibb



'A bold, artful, surly, savage race ... only skilled to take the finny tribe'

George Crabbe, eighteenth-century poet, clergyman and surgeon-apothecary, did not flatter the inhabitants of 'the Borough' as he called his Aldeburgh birthplace. In *A Time and a Place*, Frances Gibb engages afresh with Crabbe's writing – tracing, for the first time, the resonance of this place in his life and work. She delves into his creative struggles, religious faith, romantic loves and opium addiction. Above all, she explores the continual lure – for Crabbe and those who have followed – of the 'little venal borough', and the land and sea beyond. A fascinating read for anyone interested in the history of Aldeburgh.

Published by Lutterworth, 2022.

The Whisperings of Butley Creek

In memory of my father

I cradle boats safe on their moorings,
halyards tinkling in the evening breeze.

Far from homespun cares,
walkers relax with their dogs
in the balm of my tranquil gaze.

Sea lavender bristles on my marshes
like a purple beard. Oysters sleep
in my depths, pearl-free,
ready to be woken, swallowed whole.

Lapwings chant *peewit, peewit*.

The lowing of cattle, munch of sheep
accompany a skylark hovering high,
its sweet notes a chorus in the blue
above the green shoulders
of nearby Burrow Hill.

Fourteen years ago, four of you
made a pilgrimage along my banks,
stood on the jetty, its timbers
buried deep in cloying mud
decorated with ribbons of seaweed,

a jumping off point for adventure,
a place where sailors commune
with nature as they slip off to sea.
Your father, he was a sailor,
kept his dinghy on my shore.

How fitting to return, release
his ashes to my liquid embrace.
They float gently with the tides
under velvet stars on summer nights,
rock to and fro in autumn wind.

I welcome him to my ebb and flow.

Sue Wallace-Shaddad

(An earlier version of this poem
was published at www.placesofpoetry.org.uk.)

May walk at RSPB Hollesley Marshes Reserve

Alison Andrews

On 13 May 2022 a group of members met up with David Fairhurst, RSPB, to visit the Hollesley Marshes Reserve. It is a few years since our visit when the reserve was in its first season. With a viewing platform, carpark and café, it provides a great destination for a short walk to enjoy the remote beauty of the lower Alde-Ore Estuary and its wetland habitats.

The management of the reserve itself is very interesting – hearing about all the work that goes into conservation – they maintain the coastal grazing marsh to suit breeding avocets, redshanks and lapwing, wintering fowl, and aquatic plants and invertebrates. Work includes selective winter flooding, grazing with cattle and sheep, controlling invasive vegetation and maintaining water levels to some extent, recognising the impact of increasingly dry summers. But all the while the policy is to monitor changes and work with nature.

The lagoon area is now well established but has had to be protected by fences (not very visible from a human point of view and not affecting bird watching) against predators. With the general ceasing of control of foxes, badgers, buzzards, crows and others in the predatory hierarchy, the breeding sites of our sea and wading birds, more easily accessible from surrounding countryside than those where predators have to cross water, are too vulnerable to be left unprotected. We heard that a good number of years ago there were as many as 30–35 lapwing pairs around here, but numbers have now dwindled to a dozen or so as breeding success and survival is so low, hence the added protection.

We arrived at the carpark, following the ‘Welcome to Hollesley Marshes’ RSPB sign alongside the entrance to the main Hollesley

Bay prison. We set off down the cart track stopping to listen to a blackcap hidden up in the willows and near a wonderfully flowering horse chestnut.

Looking out across the created lagoon and its islands we could see oystercatchers, redshanks, black-headed gulls, a common gull, a few welcome lapwings and nesting mallard ducks keeping cover in and around the reeds and grasses. Going up onto the river wall, we could see both the lagoon and, across the saltings, the estuary to Havergate Island. Retracing our steps south, there was an extensive area of grazing marsh where we could see two lapwing pairs and learned to distinguish between male and female lapwings – a new skill for many of us. Of course, there were egrets, herring and common gulls, greylag geese, shelduck, gadwall and other birds often seen in this area. With the cold and dry spring (hard to remember the temperature back then), there were a dozen or so wildflowers out, but those in bud were ready for any walkers to see in the following weeks.

It was not a day for seeing very rare birds and migrants, but it was a day, especially with Dave’s trusty and reliable telescope, for getting really good views of many small birds, such as whitethroat, linnet and reed warbler, as they perched in trees, on top of bramble or reeds and in hedgerows. My notes recorded we saw and named, with Dave’s help, at least 27 different species! Although it may not have been that sunny, spring was in the air with wonderful peace enhanced by the wind, lapping water and bird songs and the sight of a few orange-tip butterflies.

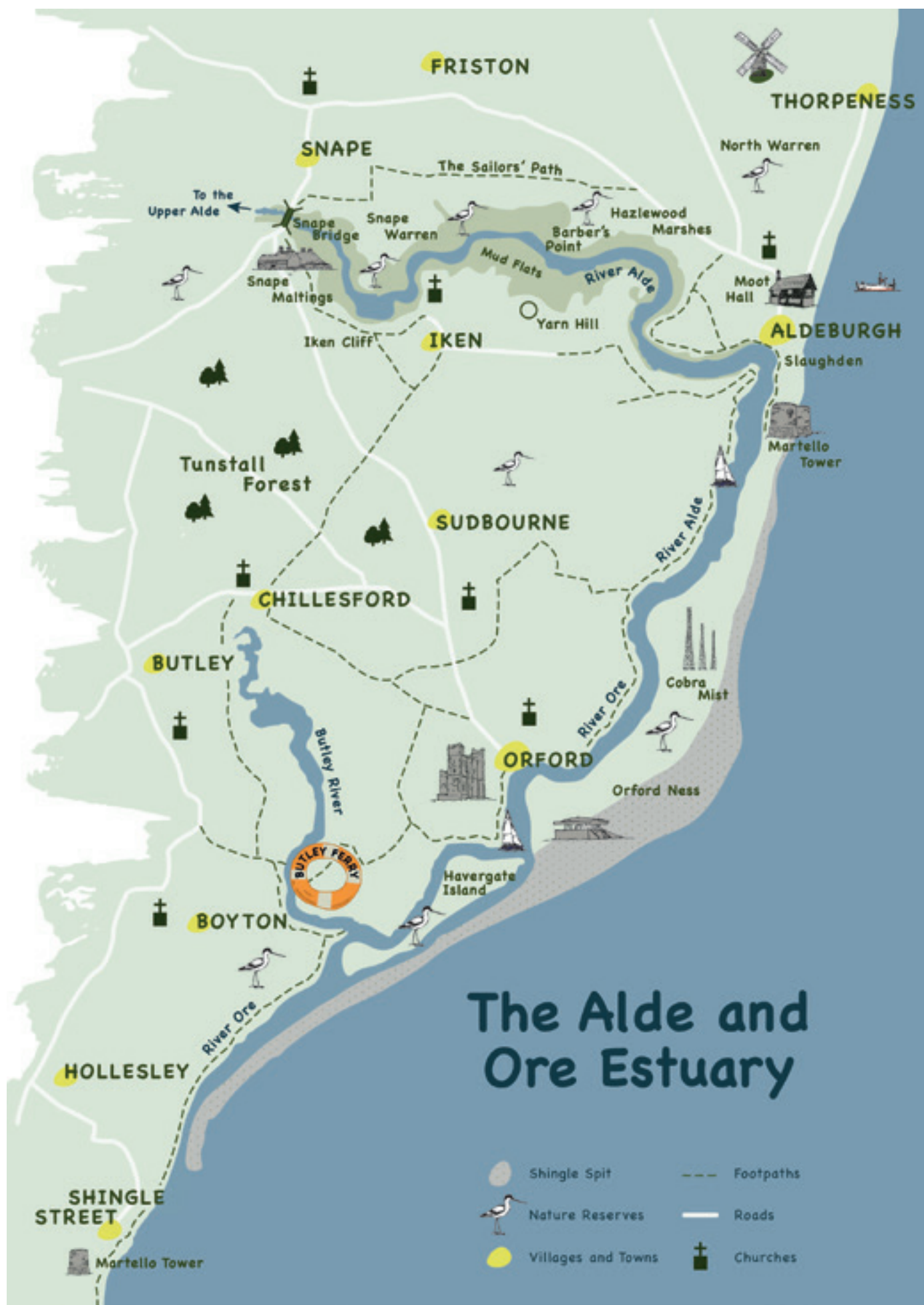
We hope to repeat such a well-guided tour later in November in the top end of the estuary.



What is singing from its hidden perch?



Horse chestnut in full flower.



AOET Christmas cards



David Gillingwater.AE AGMA. *A Crisp frost on the Alde.*
www.portraitsinoilpaint.co.uk



Ben Wardle MA. *Solastalgia 22.*
www.benwardlefineart.net

Christmas cards are now available from the Aldeburgh Bookshop, O&C Butcher and Snape Maltings. The designs were kindly donated by Suffolk-based artists David Gillingwater and Ben Wardle. Each pack contains three of each design and retails for £6.00. Proceeds from the sale of these cards will be donated to the Save Our Suffolk Estuary fundraising campaign.



STOP PRESS!

Friday, 25 November 2022. 10 a.m. – 12 noon. Guided walk at RSPB Snape Wetland.
See www.aldeandore.org website under Events for details or ring 01728 452660.

Alde & Ore Association events in 2023

The following events are planned for next year but dates have still to be confirmed.

Annual General Meeting, April.

Annual Barbecue, July/August.

Walks are being planned. If you would like to devise a walk please email info@aldeandore.org.

70th anniversary of the 1953 floods. We are working on plans to commemorate this.

Further details will appear in the next newsletter and on the website www.aldeandore.org.

And let us know if you have any ideas for future events.



*We have a
vacancy for
an Honorary
Secretary –
see page 11.*

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. The newsletter is prepared and published twice a year by the Alde and Ore Association, registered charity number 1154583, and printed on recycled paper by Leiston Press. Our thanks go to all the authors and to all the photographers and artists for the use of their photographs and illustrations. Please noted that signed contributions may not reflect the views of the Association as a whole.