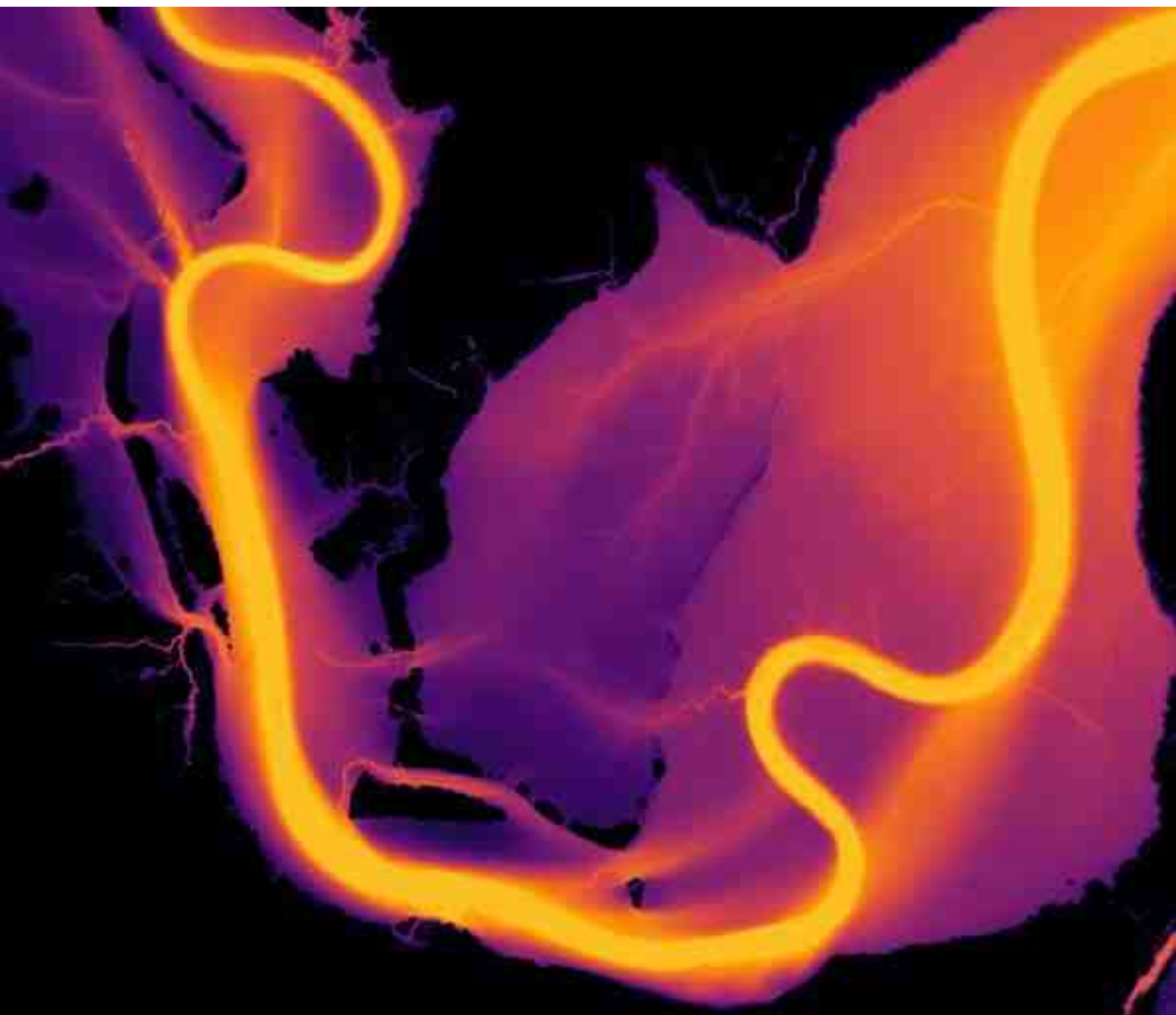


The Alde & Ore Association

Newsletter 60 - Autumn 2023



In this issue: science, scenery and surveys

Your Voice - Your Estuary

Contents

Chairman's notes	3
Alde & Ore Community Partnership	4
Alde & Ore Estuary Trust	5
Butley Ferry jetty improvements	5
A chat with Craig Ambury of the <i>Lady Florence</i> , <i>Keith Martin</i>	6
Slaughden shore and Sudbourne beach erosion	8
The fall and rise of Hazlewood Marshes, <i>Ben McFarland</i>	10
Annual Barbecue 2023	12
Truth and beauty in new maps, <i>Leo Lerner</i>	14
Water testing: A year in review, <i>Miv Hall and Bobby Rusack</i>	16
Alde & Ore Association Survey	17
Memories of the upper reaches of the Alde and Iken, <i>Jan Harber</i>	18
Securing the estuary for years to come	20
Walk on Sudbourne Marshes and Orford sea walls	22
Energy project proposals update at early 2023	24
A note from your Treasurer	25
Michael Flint: In memoriam	26
Xmas cards	28
STOP PRESS!	28

Front page: Iken Blaze (detail), LiDAR model created by Leo Lerner (see article p. 14)

Editor's introduction

Might this be called the science and engineering issue? We have articles on sea and river wall defences, discussion of energy issues, a look at sophisticated technologies that reveal our rivers in new ways, and an update on water testing.

But we've also got a personal look at the changing face of Iken shore, an interview that includes a floating breakfast menu, some beautiful etchings, and for wildlife enthusiasts a fascinating piece on the evolution of Hazlewood Marshes since 2013, with another way of looking at pros and cons of river defences that might seem a little controversial in view of some of the Association's activities, but it does no harm to be challenged.

We also have a summary of the results of the survey where you told us what you thought, a double page spread on this summer's barbecue, and a report on a walk round Orford.

So, not just a single subject issue – we try to cater for many different tastes. And if you think we aren't covering something you are particularly interested in, please let us know – or better still write something on it yourself.

Happy autumn reading and don't forget to order your AOET Christmas cards (p. 28).

Monica Allen



How many members can fit inside this marquee? Barbecue photos pages 12 and 13.



Puzzling over the direction of the rapidly oncoming rainstorm. Walk round Orford, p. 22.



Main godwit roost island, high tide. Hazlewood Marshes, page 10.

Chairman's notes

It has been the weirdest of summers, too much wind in the early days, hot sun and fierce and cold northerly winds in June providing very challenging sailing conditions, then a warm spell to enjoy our estuary area, then an August like those of 30 or more years ago, a bit chilly and damp, and then we come to glorious Indian summer for strolling or sailing and plants becoming confused with second flowerings or lasting longer than usual. In all this the rivers have been a constant source of interest, activity and ever-changing lightscapes.

But at the same time, we are all on notice to do what we can to reduce climate change whether turning off unnecessary light and heating, sharing car journeys or making more fundamental changes such as to the insulation of our homes. At the annual East Anglian Coast & Estuaries Conference 2023 in October a strong message was that our thinking about dealing with climate change needs to change faster than the process of climate change.

I have been given a very thought-provoking book about swifts, which muses on the nature of air and the troposphere and other spheres and how swifts can take our thoughts upwards into new realms. So, too, we might ponder on our plentiful wading birds and how they inhabit the mudflats and saltings or at high tide the marshes for 'loafing' when squeezed off the river's edge. We walk beside the birds and sail past them in two totally different mediums, ground and water. We are all interconnected, and we need to be aware of how our actions impact on ourselves, others, the flora and fauna and even the structure of our amazing estuary landscape.

We need also to understand more about our landscape. The history is intriguing, the themes running through the centuries whether national defence, defence from flooding, making the most of our natural resources, the evolution of the estuary into its current shape or the value of our landscape and its wildlife, flora and fauna. One aspect looked at in this newsletter is the shingle shoreline south of the Aldeburgh Martello Tower; the others we have also covered over the years and will continue to do so. There is always something to discover.

On activities during the summer, constants have been the Butley Ferry, which continues to perform strongly and gives enormous pleasure to many bicyclists and walkers, and the developing water monitoring programme.

On planning, we have at least one positive, as we notified the council of a failure to follow the planning permission building material specifications and that is to be rectified. We welcome members alerting us to new applications, especially before work has started.

We have been keeping a close eye on developments in the several wind power projects as yet more preliminary or statutory consultations march through the area's local community halls. So far all proposals to puncture the Suffolk coast between Aldeburgh

and Southwold will impact on fragile coastline, shores and marshes through the areas of the AONB (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty), but fortunately no plans have returned to a very early idea to somehow make a way under the River Alde at various points. But the Alde and Ore area itself, even if it is not subject to construction, will suffer because of the proximity of all the possible sites, and should one day we see SZC (Sizewell C) and one of the series of wind farm related plants start building at the same time, our local roads will become clogged and possibly more dangerous as they are simply not built in strength or wide enough for continuous HGV traffic six days a week. The organisations SEAS (Suffolk Energy Action Solutions), SASES (Substation Action Save East Suffolk) and Stop SZC are all working hard on these issues.



Turning to Association matters, we were pleased that the AOA survey was responded to by almost 10 per cent of our members: we would have liked more but there is a consistent response that we are working for the right things and are on the right lines. We will be looking at comments and suggestions in finer detail.

We had a very good walk in September. It was very interesting that while we all think we know many of the walks, this one was devised to make a manageable circuit of Orford. It revealed new aspects to all and reminded us of how long the land has been managed and used, from the grazing marshes below sea level to the castle and more modern defence activities. All we need are a few members to plan and run walks so that each year more joys of our local landscape can be discovered by more of us. Please consider helping with this.

Finally, the important development is real progress on the ground for the river's future. October saw the launch of the embankment improvement programme with an opportunity for everyone to find out about what is going to happen. This is timely, as this December marks the 10th anniversary of the 2013 surge when 27 houses and a pub were flooded, livestock lost and the road impassable for a few days, and it took months to make the houses habitable again. Surges can happen every year, indeed there was a small surge on 14 October: we are fortunate when they are not so big as 2013, the near miss in 2017 or the terrible one of 1953.

The launch also showed that the estuary organisations AOET



The Alde and Ore Community Partnership continues as part of the team working towards achieving the whole estuary embankment improvement plans. It does so in collaboration with the Alde and Ore Estuary Trust, which leads on funding to fill the gap between needs and what government grants may be available, and the East Suffolk Water Management Board (ESWMB), which is taking forward the construction work. Members of the public are always welcome to attend the AOCPP meetings.

Phase 1 of the estuary project covering the Upper Estuary, which includes the Snape end of the estuary, Iken and Aldeburgh walls, for which over £11 million of funding has been secured, is well on in preparations for the work on the ground to start next Spring 2024.

The further planning this year focuses on Phase 2 covering the Lower Estuary, from Sudbourne to Gedgrave and alongside the Butley River and to Shingle Street. The June quarterly AOCPP meeting was held in Orford Town Hall to facilitate attendance by members of the public with concerns or interest in the lower

(Alde and Ore Estuary Trust) and AOCPP (Alde and Ore Community Partnership, of which the Association is a member) are working closely together with the ESWMB (East Suffolk Water Management Board in charge of the construction) to get the estuary into good heart. Do read more on page 20. After more than 10 years of developing and consulting on a plan and dealing with the processes necessary to bring it to fruition, we are actually going to see the works start in earnest next spring, and we know that preparations for the follow-on plans for the lower estuary are well underway. It shows that if we really want something to happen, we just have to stay with it and keep moving on even if, at times, progress seems glacial.

We are very sorry we have lost one of our great former chairmen, Michael Flint. Among his many actions, his unstinting efforts for several years to prevent the development of a substantial commercial airport at Bentwaters, some 20 years ago, safeguarded the peace and tranquillity of the area all can enjoy today.

The Association will continue to work with our key fellow bodies for the future wellbeing of the area. To do thus, we would welcome anyone who would like to bring their skills to help on any aspect of taking care of our rivers.

I hope you all have a very good autumn and winter.

Alison Andrews, Chairman

estuary plans.

Giles Bloomfield, Project Development Manager, focused on the thinking and work being done to develop the Phase 2 Lower Estuary part of the project and answered all questions. Great progress is being made towards the preparations necessary for the technical sign-off of the project. The ESWMB with the Alde and Ore Estuary Trust are working on the other key element: the plans to secure all the funding necessary: while substantial sums are likely to come in government grants, for the whole estuary funding has also to be secured from non-government sources including both large trusts and all those who live in, visit or benefit from the estuary. Securing the plans and funds for an estuary able to cope with sea surges for many more years to come is very achievable. More details were given at the Open Day on 7 October at Snape Maltings (see article on p. 20).

AOCPP website www.aocpp.co.uk

Alison Andrews, Hon. Sec., AOCPP

The Trust publishes 2022 accounts

The Alde & Ore Estuary Trust (AOET) have published their Financial report and accounts for 2022 and filed them with the Charity Commission. Do take a look at them. They are on our website (aoetrust.org). The report is full of interesting information about what we've done in the past year to preserve and protect our beautiful estuary. But more than this, we cover what plans there are for the future and how we are going to tackle the challenges ahead.

Some points to note are: The East Suffolk Water Management Board (ESWMB) has received confirmation that the Environment Agency (EA) will contribute £11.1 million to the cost of improving our flood defences in the Upper Estuary. This amazing news has meant that surveys, planning and design of the work is going on right now. The EA have also agreed to pay £99,000 to go towards the cost of producing an application for flood defence grants for the Lower Estuary.

The ESWMB have already provided an estimate of what the funding gap between a flood defence grant and the total cost of the project is likely to be (some £20m). The report has some details about how we see the Trust being able to cover that gap and what we actions we need to take. The Trust has cash reserves of over £700k. The accounts, numbers and details can be found in the full financial statements, on our website: aoetrust.org

Fundraising Initiatives:

The Aldeburgh Bookshop has once again organised the production of two beautiful cards for you to buy. The artists who have generously donated their work are Lily Leaver and Karen Lear. Aldeburgh Bookshop, O&C Butcher and Snape Maltings will be selling these cards in packs of 6 for £6. The Trustees remain very grateful for the community support and fundraising through these Christmas cards.

If you wish to give the Alde & Ore Estuary Trust a Christmas present, you can donate online at www.aoetrust.org

Next year we are exploring the possibility of a third Aldeburgh to Orford flotilla in the latter half of July 2024. Keep an eye out for a newsletter in January. You can swim, paddleboard, kayak or row to raise funds to upgrade and maintain the river walls. In 2022 we raised over £46k from this event.

Please sign up to receive our e-newsletters via our website aoetrust.org if you do not already subscribe.

The final piece in the jigsaw: jetty improvements at Butley Ferry

Volunteers have replaced a 10 metre section of the Gedgrave bank jetty to improve its longevity and access. This section, at the lower end of the bank, was not replaced when the rest of the jetty was refurbished as it had had some work done on it a few years before. On a recent inspection, the timbers of the old underlying structure were found to be suffering from shipworm damage, and raising of the silt level had also made access more difficult.

The price of oak, used on all the other improvements, has increased dramatically, so the new structure was constructed from artificial timber manufactured from recycled plastic. The estimated life span of this material is 40 years, so it should outlast the current ferrymen. The grating on top of the jetty was cleaned and reused. Steps were also constructed between the footpath and the boardwalk: a big improvement on the grassy slope, particularly in damp weather.

This work completes the improvement of the infrastructure from river wall to river wall and including the boat in between. Apart from routine maintenance there should be no need of major work for several years (but don't quote me on that).

We are grateful for a generous grant of £1,680 from the AONB (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) towards the cost of materials. Many thanks also to those volunteers who gave their time, skills and energy to make it possible.

Roy Truman, Head Ferryman



Volunteer James Walker in charge of step construction.

A chat with Craig Ambury, owner of the *Lady Florence*

Keith Martin

Who hasn't seen the *Lady Florence* running up and down the river from Orford Quay? She's been part of the furniture for nearly 40 years, ever since Geoffrey Ingram Smith bought her and started the river cruise business in 1984.

Originally MFV 766 (motor fishing vessel), named *Margaret Jane*, she was built in 1944 as an Admiralty supply vessel – a replenishment vessel for warships at anchor on the south coast. She never saw action during the war because hostilities concluded just as she was completing sea trials. In those days she would have had an aft wheelhouse with a large hold for storage forward – no good for paying passengers on sightseeing trips and so she was later refitted in her present arrangement. She was renamed *Lady Florence* – sadly there was no lady called Florence, it's just a nice name, although Craig's stepfather's mother was named Florence, so there was a link later in her life.

It's quite a thought that there were over 1,100 MFVs built at that time. Some of them travelled considerable distances but the *Lady Flo's* record is less busy. She travelled all around Ireland and then to Holland and Belgium, and the boat was then moved to the Deben where she sat for a couple of years until Geoffrey took pity on her, living on board for a few years before starting the river cruise business. Her history post-admiralty is only sparsely known, but she was involved with the Midhurst and then the Hove sea cadets for a while until 1971, when she was sold into private hands.

When Geoffrey retired in 1992, Craig's parents, John and Susan Haresnape, bought her as a going concern and developed the business into its present shape. The Haresnapes, who still live in Rendlesham, had previously emigrated from Britain to South Africa where their two boys were born. Although South African, Craig was brought up in Bedfordshire from the age of 13. He obviously retained a love for his country of birth because when he joined the business in the year 2000 he wanted a South African operation to be part of the picture. There doesn't seem to be an obvious commercial connection, but he clearly has great powers of persuasion because the business purchased the *Allen Gardiner* to run similar trips out of Durban harbour and Craig moved out there to run it in 2002.

The *Allen Gardiner* was a former South African Air Force fast rescue motor launch built in 1942, originally built along similar lines to British motor torpedo boats. She had four American petrol engines, was capable of approaching 42 knots on the plane and was designed for recovery of South African aircrew and other rescues in the Indian Ocean. She is now fitted with two conventional



Lady Florence in her earlier days as MFV 766.

marine diesel engines and conveys her passengers at more sedate and comfortable speeds. However, she is very shallow draft and relatively light (the opposite of the *Lady Florence*) so can be uncomfortable in bad weather.

Craig describes his parents as swallows – they still own a property in Cape Town and travel south with the swallows for winter and return with them for the British summer. However,



The Allen Gardiner on the R. Orwell



The Lady Florence today.

it became more and more difficult to operate two bases 6,000 miles apart, so in 2012 the Durban business was closed and the *Allen Gardiner* shipped (sadly, he didn't sail her round) to Ipswich where she now runs river trips up and down the River Orwell from Fox's Marina.

South Africa obviously remains influential in his life. In his living room there are pictures of elephants and there are ostrich eggs and other African memorabilia on show. The colours too are reminiscent of African life.

Craig is now one of three skippers driving Lady Flo. She is rarely deterred by the weather as the Lady Flo is heavy and therefore very stable and normally capable of operating in almost any conditions. He has three cruise options – a 2-hour breakfast cruise or a 3-hour lunch or supper/dinner cruise. Most cruises go upriver to Aldeburgh, turning round opposite the Aldeburgh Yacht Club, then downriver, turning short of the entrance and returning around Havergate Island. On a good day, which usually means weekends and peak holiday periods, they are able to run four trips a day – all fully catered. Craig is proud of their catering, and his hotel and catering background comes through here because clearly there's a focus on providing good food. Passengers on the breakfast cruise just finishing as we are talking will have enjoyed a fresh melon starter and a cooked breakfast of honey-baked ham, sausage, hash brown, and eggs, followed by apple-muffins homemade by Craig's mother. How good is that? It would last most people all day. During the midsummer period with longer daylight hours they are able to run two evening trips, an early evening cruise and a sunset cruise which, as we know, can be spectacular.

Very little has changed on board in 38 years. Just the menu, some of the people and the engines. With great foresight the Haresnapes found some Foden engines for sale and bought them as back up – four in all. Craig is on the last one now, so at some point in the future he's going to have to fork out for brand new or go searching on eBay. Maintenance for the Lady Flo and the *Allen Gardiner* is all done at Fox's Marina on the Orwell. Amazingly, the Lady Flo is copper-sheathed rather than anti-fouled – she came sheathed and has been maintained like that ever since, but now needs to be anti-fouled as well.

Safety is obviously an issue – the Lady Flo is licensed by East Suffolk Council and is subjected to an annual inspection rather like an MoT test, as well as for health and safety purposes. It's all taken very seriously and, needless to say, swimming off the boat is not encouraged. They carry all the lifesaving equipment needed, which does not include a life raft. However, this need not be a concern – as for all the other sailors on the river, in extreme emergency the river bank is rarely more than a few metres away. Fortunately, this part of the health and safety plan is yet to be fully tested in anger. He hasn't had many emergencies, although last year his steering cable snapped with full rudder on as he was turning opposite Orford Quay. Luckily, he was able to stop quickly and anchor, presumably without hitting anyone (I didn't ask), so no harm was done. I was also astonished to hear that he has never run aground in the river. It seems impossible to achieve, but he insists he hasn't. I know most sailors won't believe this!

Craig enjoys the natural environment – the birds and seals are abundant now and he's also seen porpoises around Havergate Island and up by the Cobra Mist site. It must prove that the estuary is fairly clean – which is also largely evidenced by the Association's water-testing programme started last year.

We all love the river with its different moods and conditions. But as Craig's job is basically driving up and down sharing his knowledge with his passengers, he spends more time on it than any of us. It's hard to imagine a nicer life.



Craig at the wheel of the Lady Florence.

Slaughden shore and Sudbourne beach erosion

A summary of talks by Giles Bloomfield and David Kemp

Members have asked about what is happening on the shoreline some 600 metres south of the Martello Tower and what it means for the river. What are the implications for the estuary of the lowering of the shingle shoreline on the sea side of the estuary: could there be a breach there?

This article summarises the assessments of Giles Bloomfield, Project Development Manager, East Suffolk Water Management Board (ESWMB) and David Kemp of the Environment Agency (EA), given to both the Association AGM in April and to the June Alde and Ore Community Partnership meeting and checked to ensure it is up to date for this article.

The configuration of the shoreline is that there used to appear to be three ridges at the Slaughden/Sudbourne beach area alongside the sea: a very sticky strong clay base at bottom, the natural shingle ridge on the top of the clay, such as there is in Norfolk and Dunwich/Walberswick, and thirdly above that, slightly away from the high tide line, there used to be an artificial haul road down Orfordness constructed around 1968 to give access to Cobra Mist: the road gave the appearance of a defence wall but was just a haul road (last used to dismantle the lighthouse) and it was behind and above the natural shingle shoreline. The EA last did a full recharge/recycle of shingle along that stretch in 2015, with a partial one 2018. Since then, this beach area has become a natural shingle shoreline.

The natural flood defence system is the shingle beach which lies on top of a wide berm of clay. At times now there is occasional overtopping of the shingle bank with some shingle landing at the rear in a fan, but there has been no breach. A breach would mean a complete cutting through the shingle and clay below forming a regular channel into the river. For there to be a breach into the river, the sea would need to displace all the shingle and cut through the clay layer down to the bed of the estuary channel, some 5–6 metres (15–20 feet) from the top of the wall, which is unlikely to happen for a good number of years even if nature was allowed to take its course without any management. The revised Shoreline Management Plan does allow for management, but is not a guarantee of such management.

What we are seeing at present is the development of a broad gently sloping shingle beach and, in occasional storms, with some shingle being pushed over and pillowing on the marshes behind. This is very similar to what had occurred further north at Dunwich Dingle Marshes a few years ago. There, the situation was overseen by the EA, aiming for a lower profile with a shingle shore shaped like

an aircraft wing, which would achieve a hydraulic balance (drown out) sooner in more extreme events: meaning that while allowing overtopping by a surge sooner, the shingle bank is under less pressure from powerful waves and is kept from being pushed over by the overtopping water spreading into calmer water area behind the shingle bank.

In the context of the Alde and Ore Estuary flood defence embankment improvements, East Suffolk WMB has, based on experience on other parts of the Anglian coast, taken a view on how it might develop over time. While the beach has been lowering it has been broadening at the same time: this is giving it a more parabolic shape which defuses the wave strength, and while water might overtop it, there would be an area of still water behind the shingle beach and not be damaging as powerful waves could be. A complication is that the North Sea can be higher than estuary water level, but while a small spit is pillowing out and flattening behind the shingle bank on the Lantern marshes, the wider, lower profile defuses surges. Looking across the estuary to the possible impact of overtopping of the shingle, the surge water energy would be dissipated in the marsh area, limiting progress across the river. Added to that, the Sudbourne bank is to be strengthened under the estuary embankment improvement project and so would withstand overtopping.

There is a further underlying line of natural defence at Slaughden. The Slaughden area has the advantage of a clay lens or berm which can be seen at low tide which provides good underwater geology protection. Giles has taken a hand auger and seen how sticky the clay wedge is, with the upper interface effectively hardened with embedded shingle contained within. The shingle is also increasingly becoming vegetated helping to key smaller sand particles in place, in combination, increasing resilience to overtopping and thereby reducing the likelihood of breaching for many years. Even in the event of an extreme surge event, he





Looking north at pinch point.

did not think that water getting into the marshes would lead to a closure of the lower estuary turning it into a still backwater any time soon and not in life of the proposed estuary improved embankment project.

If the shoreline does start to erode and nothing is done, it would take 15–20 years to make a full breach according to Professor Pye (for reference to his report commissioned by the Association see end of article). Separately, consulting firm Jacobs, who assisted the Shoreline Management Policy review that led to the coastal policy for this area to change from No Active Intervention after 2025 to Managed Realignment/Resilience, advised that management action can be taken.

The coast is under continuous monitoring by the Anglia Coastal Monitoring Team, two to three times a year, paid for by the EA. Members of the Alde and Ore Association River Defence Committee also send frequent photographic updates to the EA to help with monitoring. If it started to appear that something needed to be done, the evidence needed is already being gathered and would be in place to consider action. Also, on this highly dynamic and shifting shoreline, which looks different every season, with shingle coming and going in different places, the crescent longshore shape of the shoreline area also means that while the shingle may be displaced over the ridge by north-east winds, winds flowing direct from the south or north should replenish the shingle in the crescent. The EA/ESWMB view

is that the mostly likely outcome is that shingle shorelines heal themselves: an example being at Clay Salhouse where there was a huge breach, and eventually wind changed and filled breach overnight.

A supplementary question at the AGM, after appreciation of all that was being done, was that the Review of the Shoreline Management Plan completed a few years ago had set out a number of options for action, all of them costly: was the thinking now that it was better and cheaper to work with nature, may be with a bit of topping up, rather than pursue a manmade



Giles Bloomfield, ESWMB, at the Association's AGM, April 2023.

expensive scheme? David Kemp replied, broadly yes. As could be seen the array of different types of defences to the north of the eroding point – groynes, concrete mattresses, pillows, and others – showed that none were particularly successful. But he said that EA reserved the ability to intervene.

If members would like some more background, please look on the Association website www.aldeandore.org.uk under Publications/ Research and find Professor Pye's reports, in particular that relating to Shoreline Management Plan Coastal Management Area ORF15.1. Or ask us for more details at:

info@aldeandore.org.



News just in

The RSPB says that 30 spoonbill chicks have fledged on Havergate Island this year.

It was only three years ago that spoonbills bred successfully in Suffolk for the first time in three centuries, fledging just four chicks.

The fall and rise of Hazlewood Marshes

Ben McFarland

Director of Wildlife Conservation and Recovery, Suffolk Wildlife Trust

Suffolk Wildlife Trust's Hazlewood Marshes, located on the north side of the river between Snape and Aldeburgh, is one of the most natural parts of the Alde and Ore Estuary, happily no longer constrained along much of its length by estuary walls. The former grazing marsh and freshwater reedbed, a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), was transformed overnight in December 2013 as the surge tide punched holes through the walls. Whilst the grazing marsh has been lost, ever since it has been intertidal it has become an increasingly important part of the wider estuary ecosystem. Having decided not to spend resources trying to re-build the walls, it is now more important for wildlife than it was before, a valuable lesson for us that nature exists despite the estuary walls, not because of them. To listen to the call of the oystercatcher, redshank or curlew, looking across the reserve, it's easy to hark back to a wilder time when much of the river and estuary would have looked similar.

On a visit to Hazlewood Marshes, it's very clear just how important the reserve is for waders, ducks and geese. In winter, dunlin can be found in their hundreds. This little wader, classified as a species of conservation concern, forages and probes in Hazlewood's mud for the huge numbers of worms, molluscs and insects. Another declining species that can be found in the winter in large numbers is the globally rare black-tailed godwit. Tall, elegant and long-lived, they can form monogamous pairings for up to 25 years. Their international rarity makes the Alde and Ore, and Hazlewood Marshes especially, incredibly important. Other birds to be seen at Hazlewood include the impressive spoonbill, Suffolk's classic trio of breeding waders, lapwing, redshank and avocet, and a diverse range of duck such as shelduck, widgeon and teal.

The reserve is at least as valuable for the wildlife unseen, the myriad of species underneath the water. Despite its initial appearance as muddy, windswept and rather barren in places, the reserve is in fact an incredibly productive environment, the result of a decade of deposition of nutrient rich riverine muds. Within the reserve, these habitats include the main channel from the river as well as a multitude of side channels, extensive mudflats and developing saltmarshes. Combined, they provide a wide range of habitat types acting as key nursery grounds for marine fish and invertebrates.

Because of the ebb and flow of the tide, the reserve is highly dynamic with rapid changes in temperature, oxygen, turbidity, and salinity. Changes in prevailing environmental conditions across spatial areas will often drive biodiversity, but such is the rapid change over such short spaces of time because of the tide, it creates a tremendously stressful and hostile environment for many species. This stress limits diversity in the short term but benefits those species that can cope and adapt, enabling them to prosper and occur in very high numbers. These high numbers of fish and invertebrates are then hugely beneficial to a range of species such as otters and osprey.

From our fish surveys we know sea bass, common goby, eel, flounder, pipefish, sand goby, sand smelt and thin lipped grey mullet all now use the reserve, but it is not so much the range of species as the sheer numbers. One short survey in 2017, with a fairly small sampling net, recorded an incredible 8,000 fish, the vast majority very young. This is really strong evidence that Hazlewood Marshes, in a quite short period of time, has become a very important nursery ground. A critical part of the estuarine ecosystem for fish is the saltmarsh. This zone, which extends down from the high neap tide, is twice as productive in terms of invertebrate biomass as the subtidal regions within the main river channel, providing enhanced feeding opportunities for fish fry. The shallow waters can be especially important for juvenile bass, where the rich feeding means they can be at least 8cm in length



Hazlewood looking north from southern wall over old freshwater lagoon, low tide.

by the late autumn. This rapid growth is critical for bass if they are to survive their first winter, since in cold water they tend to stop feeding altogether. Larger bass also use the deeper channels that enter Hazlewood, acting as an ambush predator as smaller fish exit on the ebb tide. Sadly, the UK stock is rapidly declining, and the evidence suggests Hazlewood plays a vital role in helping maintain their population locally.

Perhaps less glamorous, the grey mullet is also found in the reserve. They are classic tidal specialists, strong swimmers, moving rapidly with the tide, although their distribution in estuaries varies significantly with each season. Spawning takes place in the late summer and early autumn, with young post-larvae juvenile fish coming into estuaries around the mid-September, avoiding the worst of the winter weather in the open sea. Grey mullet stocks, too, are under pressure, not from eating but due to the demand for fish meal used in animal feed. The last ten years has seen not only a decline in the number of mullet being caught but importantly a sharp decline in overall size, a known indicator of declining stock, making estuaries and reserves like Hazlewood all the more important.

Of all the fish species recorded at Hazlewood, the ubiquitous humble stickleback is perhaps the easiest to overlook. In the UK there are three recognised species, and the three-spined stickleback and the nine-spined stickleback have an incredible ability to cope with a wide-ranging salinity since they can be found in freshwater, brackish waters and even the open sea. Sticklebacks have a fascinating and highly ritualised breeding behaviour. First, the male constructs a tunnel nest out of vegetation, glued together by threadlike, mucous secretions from the kidneys, known as 'spiggin'. By the spring, the male develops a bright red underside and uses this to dazzle his mate, performing a striking 'zig-zag' courtship dance. The female enters the nest to lay her eggs, the male following directly behind her to fertilise them. The male is then on guard duty for around four weeks until they hatch,

vigorously attacking any potential predator, fanning the eggs with his pectoral fins to supply them with critical oxygen.



Sampling location at north reserve entrance at the top of the tide. Inset: sample of fish caught.

Hazlewood Marshes, consisting of large areas not constrained and hemmed in by the estuary walls, provides shallow, calmer and warmer waters that are ideal for migrating and breeding birds as well as juvenile fish to feed and grow. Whilst there are some excellent freshwater reserves behind estuary walls, the incredible wildlife to be found at Hazlewood Marshes reminds us that nature often benefits most when given space to adapt to natural environmental conditions. More naturalised areas, free from estuary walls, that can work with the ebb and flow of the tide, would certainly benefit a wider range of species, complementing the freshwater nature reserves and adding more biodiversity overall, especially in the face of climate change. With more intertidal habitats, we can help to ensure the wildlife of the Alde and Ore can continue to survive, helping to mitigate the ecological impacts from the ongoing programme of building up the estuary walls.



Spoonbills and cormorants in August (photo: Angela Lord).

Annual Barbecue 2023

By kind invitation of George and Ali Watson, this year's barbecue was held on 6 August on the Chillesford Lodge estate at the amazing crag outcrop overlooking the upper Butley River.

There was a good turnout, with 125 people braving the uncertain weather conditions. In contrast to last year's scorched earth the ground was soaked after record overnight rainfall of over 45mm. One or two people wondered if their cars were going to make it along the track to the parking area. But all made it to the dry hillside and no one had to be rescued.

We were lucky that the rain more or less held off and people who stayed to clear up had the pleasure of seeing the sun emerge. And it could have been so much worse – on the day before there was a huge downpour as Storm Antoni (sic) hit the county and some people had to take a long detour from Butley to avoid flooded roads. But we had the marquee, guaranteed to withstand 40 knot winds, so there was the option of everyone finding shelter in the marquee as we did a few years back. People chose instead to enjoy the outside picnic protected in part from the winds by the crag pit and the angle the marquee was set to the wind.

Gerard King of Salter & King Butchers once again provided at cost the hog roast pork and crackling, which was delicious with apple sauce in a bun. Refreshing salads were on the menu as well plus delicious desserts for afterwards: many thanks are due to the team of servers, baristas and clearer-uppers. As is now customary

we used compostable palm leaf plates and reusable cutlery. Gerard's generosity enables the Association in turn to pass on funds to the Alde and Ore embankment improvement project.

As the tide rose in the Butley River throughout the lunch time, we could all see the very magical sight of shining water filling the creeks, creating a network of watery marshland with the navigable water beyond. Behind us, the last of the season's sand martins were busily flying to and fro on their feeding and fledgling activities in the high cliff edges of the crag pit – during the summer there had been over 100 pairs in all.

Alison welcomed everyone in her Chairman's speech and thanked the Watsons for their generosity for allowing us to drive over their land and set up in the beautiful surroundings of the Butley reaches. She gave a quick summary of the activities and achievements of the Association in the past year, with a reminder of the good news that the upper estuary embankment improvements were to go ahead with over £11m of government funding. Meanwhile work was well underway preparing for the business case to secure grant for Stage 2, the lower estuary, as the programme was for the whole estuary. Further fundraising was now necessary, and as well as major funding sources being tapped by the Alde and Ore Estuary Trust, we all have a part to play through individual contributions and fundraising activities to support the estuary we so love.



Our thanks to Ian Cook for the four photographs of Association members and guests.

Right: Our hosts, Ali and George Watson, with Alison Andrews. Below: Gerard King and team Willie and Lamar.



Truth and beauty in new maps

Leo Lerner

Spatial technology reveals new ways to understand rivers with stunning visualisations of the Alde and Ore estuary.

LiDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) has become a key tool for geospatial and artistic enquiry. LiDAR is a remote sensing technology that measures distance using airborne lasers. It creates highly accurate three-dimensional representations of surface features and objects such as vegetation or buildings by measuring the time it takes for laser light reflected from the ground to return.

Aside from scientific enquiry, another appeal of this technology lies in its visual and artistic aspects. The images are captivating, and because the information has never been presented in this way before, they give us fresh insights which emerge at the confluence of science and art.

An aircraft or unmanned drone is usually used for LiDAR scans comprising up to 100,000 laser measurements per second. The data from scans can be used to create a set of points that show the 3D shape of the scanned objects, commonly referred to as a point cloud. Each point represents a specific location on the earth's surface, with three dimensions: the Cartesian mapmaker's 'X' and 'Y', (to make a conventional flat two-dimensional map) as well as a third 'Z' value corresponding to elevation or height.



Butley Creek

Geospatial information from satellites can be added to provide augmented global coverage.

Passing over any terrain taking LiDAR measurements achieves in minutes what could take hundreds of hours of manual surveying. Because it is so quick and accurate in collection, recording changes over time using multiple passes reveals transformations that might otherwise be missed. This is absolutely the case for the Alde and Ore, where change is constantly occurring, whether intertidal, seasonal, or across much longer fluvial time periods.

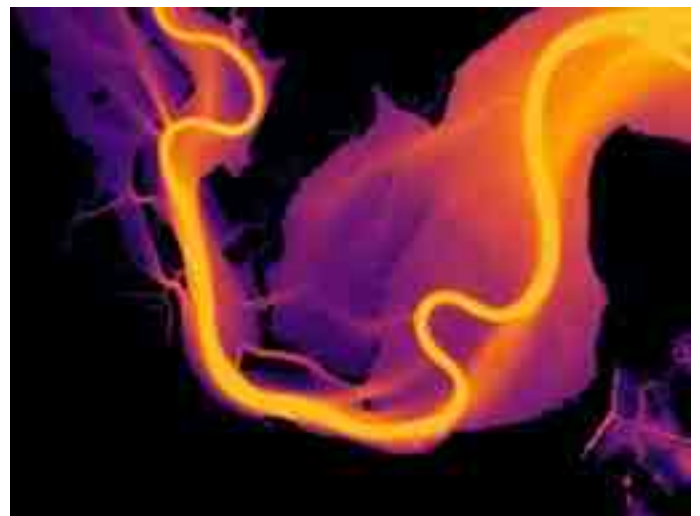
What the measurements can be used for

LiDAR is widely used in planning and environmental management to support spatial decision-making and enhance the understanding of real-world features and phenomena.



Cobra Mist

Common applications include land use classification, environmental impact assessments, and natural resource and climate change investigation. Data on sensitive habitats, water bodies or endangered species can be overlaid onto accurate and highly detailed surface elevation models to reveal existing



Iken Blaze

and potential effects of flooding, hydrological dynamics such as flow and fluvial or coastal erosion, and human impacts such as modifications to the built environment. LiDAR passes can assess forest inventory, tree canopy density, and monitor changes in marshland. LiDAR can even 'see' through vegetation to the ground below by working out the difference between the first and last return of each emitted laser pulse. It has already been used in the estuary for planning defences and also to illustrate land areas relevant to archaeology.

Insights into river dynamics and patterns

LiDAR aerial imagery is well-suited to the unique characteristics and challenges associated with riverine systems. River network analysis, including elevation, flow direction, sediment transport, erosion, drainage patterns, and watershed delineation facilitate powerful understandings of river connectivity and the full range of hydrological processes. They can also be used for floodplain mapping, a topic of accelerating relevance in south-east England, where rising demand for housing has pushed construction into riskier, lower-lying land.

Revealing the invisible through time

LiDAR offers profound insights into the unique environment of the Alde, Ore, and Butley rivers and their surroundings. Physically, the rivers can be seen to have stretches of high sinuosity, with high potential for bank erosion and shifting meander patterns. The technology can also model and assess flood



Alde & Ore Estuary Classic Blue

risks and potential effects according to different tidal scenarios. This allows for specifically targeted environmental interventions to reduce these impacts and to formulate any necessary emergency response strategies.

Planning for climate change resilience



Iken Blue

Perhaps most critically, LiDAR can assist climate change adaptation strategies for the estuary. By modelling potential impacts, such as sea-level rise and the impacts of increased rainfall intensity, it assists in identifying vulnerable areas, and planning for resilient infrastructure. It facilitates and helps to communicate resolution-making that mitigates the effects of climate change on the river system and assists in the conservation and enhancement of the rivers' natural and cultural resources for present and future generations.

Images show LiDAR models of the Alde and Ore created by Leo Lerner.

Leo Lerner is a former dinghy racer on the River Alde. He is currently a research fellow at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles, investigating the role of expertise and place attachment in health and social research. He is a keen geographer and maintains a steadfast connection to the Suffolk coast.

Limited edition prints

A series of limited edition prints of the Alde and Ore estuary, digitally signed by their creator, Leo Lerner, has been produced from high-resolution LiDAR data. The prints depict the rivers and their channels in ways that have not been previously visualised. 10% of profits from sales of these new prints will be donated to the Alde and Ore Association. To see more maps and buy prints visit LidarMaps.org. Or use this QR code to see the images online.



Water testing on the Alde and Ore: a year in review

Miv Hall and Bobby Rusack

As we approach the first anniversary of our water testing programme, it is useful to look back on the journey we started in October last year. Motivated by known water-borne pollution found in the River Deben, the focus of the project was to assess the potential health risks to users of the Alde and Ore river system from sources of pollution. To this end, an initial eight sampling points on our river system have been extended to cover three additional locations prompted by local stakeholder concern and our developing knowledge of water quality.

Using this risk-based approach, we can see that there are clear activity-related and population-related components to this assessment of risk. In other words, the closer to the water your preferred activity takes you and the higher the number of participants involved, the greater the risk of contracting water-borne infections. Translating this to our geographical study area, we have chosen Orford and Slaughden as centres of water sports activities, including swimming, where data on bacteriological contamination could be useful. We are not forgetting the less numerous river users such as kayakers, anglers, yachts in transit and others who may come into contact with contaminated water, so the wider river network is also tested at key locations.

A parallel objective has also been to develop methods of determining the ecological health of our rivers, and alongside the monitoring of nitrate concentration in our routine samples we have been invited as observers to events organised by the River Deben Association involving the collection and identification of invertebrates and fish. These techniques would be useful future additions to our monitoring programme and any members with expertise or interest in aquatic ecology will be warmly welcomed!

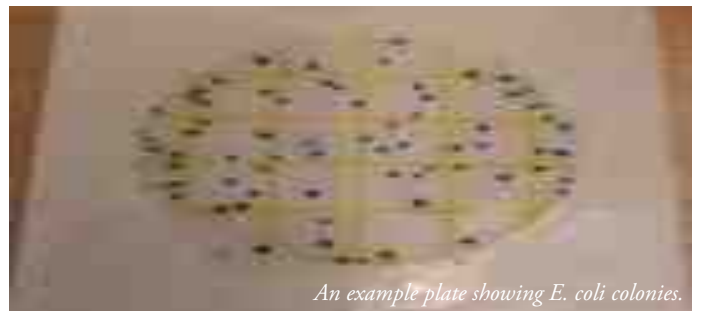
Unquestionably, the high-profile media coverage of the shortcomings of UK water companies has elevated the concern about water discharged into our rivers from inadequate or poorly run sewage treatment works. We are fortunate that we have a relatively protected river system set against some of the worst examples of raw sewage discharge in large urban areas. There are, however, complex factors which impact our local waters and which warrant continued surveillance.

To ensure we have a balanced view of the water treatment industry, our group of volunteers arranged a visit to a sewage treatment works (now rebranded as a water recycling centre). Anglian Water was very co-operative in arranging a visit to its Blaxhall works and made available three knowledgeable members of staff to conduct our visit. We learned that the controversy over combined sewerage overflows stems from surface water run-off entering the sewer system. Whilst modern drainage systems divert relatively clean surface and roof water into soakaways, there are legacy connections to the system which contribute large volumes during periods of heavy rainfall. Operating permits allow this excess volume to be discharged to prevent back-up



and flooding. It was also explained that bacterial measurement in treated effluent is not regulated in their permit conditions, except to the extent that oxygen-using bacteria, which include *E. coli*, will come under the category of pollutant which is regulated called BOD (biological oxygen demand). Where bathing water is impacted by bacteria in treated sewage, additional treatment is required in the form of disinfection with formic acid or additional ultraviolet light treatment. Southwold and a part of the Deben which is securing bathing water status were mentioned as possible locations where this may be necessary.

We were also given helpful information about the exact location of the discharge point for Orford works, which has helped us refine our sampling regime so testing now includes near Orford



Quay, as well as ditches above and below the water treatment plant at Gedgrave.

The map here shows all the testing points but as the scale is so small, it is worth pointing out that test samples are taken both above and below the water processing plants at Benhall Low Street water extraction plant, Langham water processing plant, Snape Watering processing plant and Gedgrave Marshes Orford.

The good news is that water quality at Slaughden has been reasonably consistent such that it would meet the Environment Agency's standard of Excellent over the past year. Recent isolated

higher results do not appear to be connected to sewage treatment discharges upstream. Bird and animal sources have been known to have an impact along with end-of-season boat cleaning at the local quays.

Work is now in hand for a second year of monitoring and further updates will be provided.

Postscript: We have just heard we have secured a contribution of over £700 towards the first six months of 2023/24 from the Amenity and Accessibility Fund run by the Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB.

Alde & Ore Association Survey

Don't you get frustrated by constantly being asked online to rate on a scale from 1-5 the service or product you've just received, when all you've done is enquired about a shop's opening hours or bought a bag of dog biscuits.

Yes, you cry. So we are very grateful to all of you who responded when the Association asked you to give us your views on – the Association.

As part of the Committee's ongoing process to improve how we communicate with and engage members, in July the Association emailed its members a link to a 10-minute survey asking a range of questions on what they thought about the Association and what areas of its work were most relevant or interesting – from river wall defences to wildlife conservation to guided walks, etc. By the September deadline, just under 10 per cent of the members had completed the survey plus a further 31 non-members.

We conducted the exercise because we want to know what is important to members. As the only membership organisation covering the whole of the Alde and Ore estuary and Butley River area membership is of vital importance for lending weight to our campaigns.

The survey responses tell us we are broadly on track and focusing on the things that matter. The areas that people considered important were: making representation to public inquiries and consultations, campaigning for sea and river defences maintenance, fighting detrimental planning applications, supporting conservation of natural habitat and monitoring for man-made and natural threats to the fragile ecosystem.

The topline results show that:

- While 40% feel they know the Association well, the same proportion feel less sure, but all they feel it fulfils an important role
- The top two most important activities are (1) campaigning for the maintenance of sea and river defences (2) representation to public enquiries.
- 20% of respondents would like to be more actively involved.

- The most popular activities include supporting conservation initiatives and attending events and talks.

- Over a quarter of respondents thought the three organisations concerned with the estuary, the Association, AOCP and AOET, were the same (There were a number of open comments about the role of the three organisations).

- Email is the favoured form of communication (although this will be biased as it is an online survey)

- There were many votes of support for the good work being done.

Overall, responses to a high proportion of questions on activities were towards the upper end of a positive view (scale 4, 5) and generally above 80% for all activities, but Trustees are in the process of taking a much closer look at the survey results so that changes and additions can be worked on to meet needs more effectively.

We acknowledge that there are difficulties in making clear the distinction between the remit of:

- the Association, which is the only membership-based organisation covering all the Alde and Ore area and is concerned with all matters to do with preserving the Alde, Ore and Butley rivers for the enjoyment of all,
- the Alde & Ore Community Partnership, which was formed to help deliver the Estuary Plan for the river walls and involves local organisations, and
- the Alde & Ore Estuary Trust, responsible for raising funds for the Estuary Plan to make up the shortfall of those coming from government.

Many thanks to those of you who took the trouble to complete the survey. We will be looking at the results of the survey in detail, including the interesting open comments, and will be following up with those who expressed an interest in volunteering.

Monica Allen

Down the years

Memories of the upper reaches of the Alde and Iken

Jan Harber

The loveliest part of the whole river is at Iken, where the church and rectory stand lonely on a little wooded hill at the head of the bay that curves sharply back beneath bracken and oak trees and steep, sandy cliffs. There is something very restful about this place, very old and very friendly; there is no church in England which gives you in quite the same way such a feeling of security and changelessness.

So wrote Julian Tennyson in his wonderful book *Suffolk Scene*, first published in 1939. His words on the Alde and Iken are just as meaningful today, over 80 years later. As is the black and white photo of the Alde at Iken, one of several taken especially for the book by Clive de Paula. It is interesting to note that there is a jetty in the foreground, just upriver of the church, which is no longer there.

My first visit to Iken was during a summer holiday cruise with my dad, Jack Coote, who was gathering information for his yachtsman's pilot book *East Coast Rivers*. The first edition was published by Yachting Monthly in 1956. The chapter on the River Alde contained



Iwunda anchored at Iken Cliff (East Coast Rivers, 1950s).

renowned river pilot, can clearly be seen on the shore.

In Jack's copy of the 1965 4th edition, I found a newspaper cutting of an article by Ian Nairn, illustrated with drawings by David Gentleman, about the new concert hall soon to be built at Snape Maltings. Mention was made that motor barges were to start once again bringing grain by river to Snape quay. 'They expect to work up eventually to a boat a week – mostly coastal traffic coming from London, loading up with grain and then going to Antwerp or Rotterdam.' Jack had scribbled a note that, in 1966, Jumbo had piloted the first of these barges, the 100 ton *Atrato*, 27 years after he had last brought a vessel, the *Beatrice Maud*, up to the quay just before the war.

Jumbo's cottage can also be seen in a photo in the 1967 5th edition featuring Jack's next centreboarder, *Blue Shoal*, anchored at Iken Cliff. On this page a warning has been added that when anchored at Iken 'motor barges are trading again to Snape Bridge, therefore a riding light is essential.'



The Alde at Iken, photograph by Clive de Paula (J. Tennyson, Suffolk Scene, 1939).

his photograph of our family boat, the leaky old centreboarder *Iwunda*, anchored at Iken Cliff. The cottage of Jumbo Ward, the



Blue Shoal anchored at Iken Cliff (East Coast Rivers, 5th edn, 1967).



Iken from the air, September 2007 (photo: Janet Harber).

Robert Simper, in his booklet *Over Snape Bridge*, gives a first-hand account of how in 1966 Jumbo came aboard the sailing barge *Lord Roberts* just below Slaughden Quay to pilot her through the upper reaches to Snape. When they were off his cottage they picked up Mrs Ward and got to the quay an hour before high water. George Gooderham, the then owner of Snape Maltings, ‘rushed off to the Plough and Sail to order drinks for everyone before they shut at 2pm’. *The Lord Roberts* was the first sailing barge since before the war to re-visit the upper reaches of the Alde.

There is a sad little note written by Jack on the Iken page of the 9th edition of *East Coast Rivers*: ‘Check with Russell Upson at Slaughden (Jumbo Ward the pilot is now dead?).’

In the 1970s and ’80s my sister Judy and I, with our children, had our own boats and carried on spending summer holidays on the rivers and creeks of the East Coast, including visits to the Alde and, if the tide was right, to Iken. After Jack died in 1993 Judy and I continued to produce further editions of *East Coast Rivers*.

In 2007, with my brother-in-law Graham piloting the small aircraft, I took a series of aerial photographs for the book. In the one shown here of the Alde at Iken looking towards Snape, there is no jetty to be seen anywhere.

The 90ft Thames barge *Adieu* visited Snape in 2009 and I was lucky enough to ship on board for her return trip down to Orford. The photo shows *Adieu* passing the yacht barge *Blackthorn*, moored in

those days at Iken Cliff.

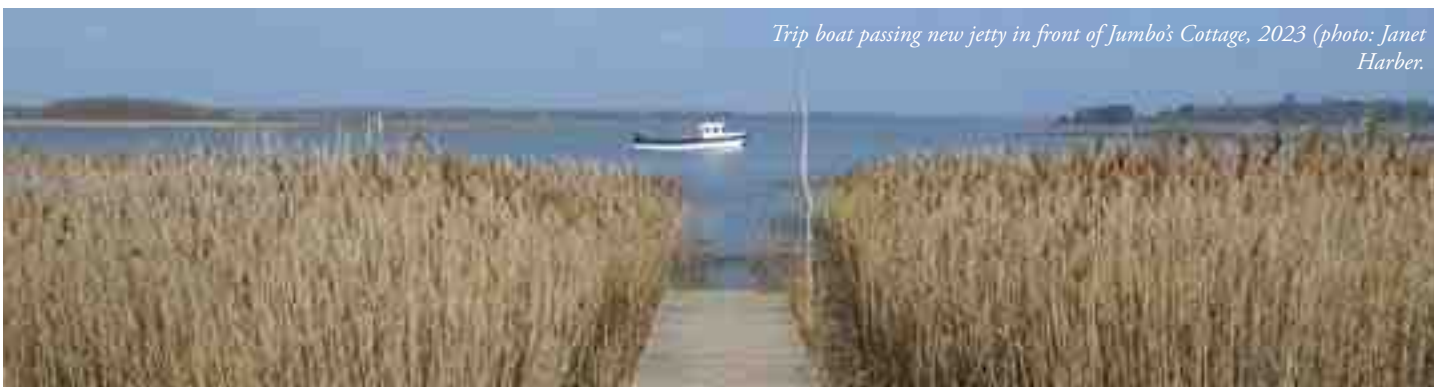
After Jack sold his centreboarder *Blue Shoal*, he bought a Twister, *Mardi Gras*, which he sailed for a few years and then sold to a new owner who kept her at Aldeburgh. Many years later, after we had moved to Sudbourne, we discovered that *Mardi Gras* was still going strong, now sailed by John Calver, whose father had bought her from Jack. John was kind enough to take me for a sail on her in 2017 when we took the spring tide up to Iken and back to Aldeburgh. I believe that John had an interest in Iken church in his bell-ringing capacity of tower captain.

Sadly, the little tiller-steered barge *Cygnets*, built in 1881 and until recently a familiar and delightful sight berthed at Snape Quay or sailing the upper reaches of the Alde with Des, has gone. She is currently up for sale. The yacht barges *Blackthorn* and *Dinah* are no longer moored at Iken: *Blackthorn* is at Skeet’s Melton Boatyard and *Dinah* was last seen at Malden.



Adieu passing Blackthorn, 2009 (photo: Janet Harber).

The remaining barge on the Alde, *Onderneming*, is Dutch, the houseboat/holiday-let that never leaves her permanent berth at Snape. There are, of course, the trip boats, at least two operating now, as well as the hire canoes, paddle boards and, these days, very occasional visiting yachts. Despite these modern additions to the river, I like to think that Iken is still mainly as Julian Tennyson described it all those years ago: restful, old and friendly. It is for me still the loveliest part of the whole river, but I do wonder what Jumbo Ward would think if he could see his old home now.



Trip boat passing new jetty in front of Jumbo’s Cottage, 2023 (photo: Janet Harber).

Securing the estuary for years to come

Open day on the Alde and Ore embankment improvements, summarised by Alison Andrews

October 7th saw the Hoffman Building at Snape Maltings given over to presentations of the project to improve the Alde and Ore embankments. This project will upgrade them so that they can withstand major surges in 2050, in spite of sea level rise, and more years beyond.

Morning activity

In the foyer, people could learn why the estuary walls were needed and why action was needed now, what could be lost if nothing was done, what was planned and the funding for it. There were nine large information boards, and a good number of the AOCF, AOET and ESWMB team there to answer any questions (AOCF Alde and Ore Community Partnership, AOET Alde & Ore Estuary Trust, ESWMB East Suffolk Water Management Board).

These posters explained the background to the plan for managing the estuary to allow for sustainability and resilience. They explained why the estuary walls are there – most have been in place for the last 500 years and the earliest a few centuries before – and why the walls need to be upgraded now. A catastrophic flood can happen at any time and, except in a few places, little has been done since the major repairs after the massive 1953 floods.

The posters outlined what could be lost if the walls are not repaired: some 767 homes and 300 businesses, leisure, tourism and arts generating over £100 a year, 44 km of tidal defences, substantial amounts of farm land and related food security,

footpaths, employment and the mosaic of nationally protected plant and wildlife habitats.

The posters described the improved wall design, which can already be seen on the upgraded stretch in the middle section of the Aldeburgh marsh wall. They also covered the organisations involved in all this work, the funding secured and what was still needed. With preparatory surveys being completed in 2023, the aim is to complete all the works, in both the Upper and Lower Estuary, over 8 years, with work on the ground starting in 2024.

All this can be seen in more detail in a new Virtual Visitor Centre <https://aldeore.exhibition.app/>. The Centre also has a page where you can place questions and comments, so if you can't find what you want to know, do ask.

The afternoon

In the afternoon there was a presentation of the different aspects of the project for the whole of the Alde and Ore Estuary and a long question and answer session so that everyone had a chance to ask questions and get a full reply.

The talks covered the details behind the estuary project, the operational process getting ready for works to start on the ground, with all the necessary surveys and assessments done during this year, the funding needs and the approach to funding. The talks also looked at the role of the AOCF in serving the estuary communities by being a voice and stewardship of the strategy.



Question and answer time: from left to right Alison Andrews, Hon. Sec. AOCF, Elizabeth Stanton, Treasurer AOET, Giles Bloomfield ESWMB, Tim Beach, Chairman AOCF, Pete Roberts, ESWMB, Jane Maxim, Trustee AOET, David Kemp EA.

First, the whole estuary plan has been divided into Phase 1 and Phase 2 because of the size of the project. However, the aim is to improve all 44 km of estuary walls so that they will be resilient to a rare event similar to the 1953 floods, even taking account of sea level rise, in at least the year 2050 and for many years beyond. If the walls are left to decline further, and some could give way in a strong surge within 5 years, there is much which will be lost or damaged.

What is needed to ensure the Phase 2 grant application can be approved is certainty that the necessary funding will be forthcoming. While a substantial sum is likely to be awarded, there is a gap we have

to fill together of some £20 million. As work so far has secured funding to start the Upper Estuary, there is every reason to be positive that the remaining £20 million can be achieved in the time scale necessary. The Trust will be leading on securing large donations, but we can all as individuals play our part by donating, making pledges and having fun fundraising .

The talks also provided an insight into quite how much has to be done to prepare for such a major construction project. It is not just a question of arriving on site once the wildlife window has been identified. Some of you may have seen a number of figures in orange high visibility jackets around the upper estuary walls, taking samples and measurements to ensure that structural obstacles are identified and planned for and that the soil structure will allow winning clay for the walls, and creating ditches and wildlife areas.

The extensive survey work, which is statutorily required, of the birds and animals in this environmental protection area heavily designated for its wealth of different wildlife has also shown that there is a more than healthy water vole population in the area. Given that nationally they are an increasingly rare and threatened species, the issue is to work out a management strategy to keep the healthy vole population going and to continue alongside or re-join the landscape once the defence improvements have been done.

The Alde and Ore Estuary Trust was able to outline its plans for securing funding to fill what gap is left after government funds

have been identified. And during the discussion several interesting ideas emerged and will be explored, including how to tap into the many visitors who come to the area every year and enjoy being here - some 80,000 in Orford and many more elsewhere throughout the estuary.

Water vole.



The Alde and Ore Community Partnership Chairman chaired the proceedings. The AOCPP has an overall role in communicating at parish and town council level with all the estuary communities and stewardship of the estuary strategy. All the organisations, AOCPP, AOA, AOET and the WMB are working as a team to deliver the future of the estuary.

Full details of the talks will be made available on line, together with the slide presentations that formed the basis of the talks, in the new Virtual Visitor Centre. There will be links to this Centre from the websites of the Alde and Ore Association, the AOCPP and the AOET, and you can access here from the QR code.



An estuary glossary

Alde & Ore Association www.aldeandore.org

The 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 the benefit to all and works by making the voice of the river heard. All matters include seeking to influence government policies that may affect the estuary, scrutinising planning proposals, and activities such as the ferry, walks, walk booklets and more.

Alde & Ore Community Partnership www.aocp.co.uk

The AOCPP works with the community to help deliver the Estuary Plan now that it has entered the implementation phase. The Partnership involves the whole community, with every parish bordering the rivers represented together with county and district councillors, businesses, the East Suffolk Water Management Board, and the Alde and Ore Association. The Partnership will also continue to work with national agencies including Natural England and the Environment Agency and locally with Coastal Partnership East.

Alde & Ore Estuary Trust www.aoetrust.org

The AOET is a registered charity whose role is to raise the funds needed, where government funds are not available, to deliver the Estuary Plan. This will be achieved through a combination of donations, grants and charitable foundation awards that support flood and environmental defence work. Contributions from community supporters, however small, are also vital to this project. Donations to the AOET enabled an outline business case to be completed to secure government match funding to deliver the Phase 1 works within the Estuary Plan. Further donations are urgently needed to complete Phase 2.

East Suffolk Water Management Board www.wlma.org.uk/east-suffolk-idb/home/

ESWMB is a Flood Risk Management Authority that carries responsibility for implementation and delivery of the construction works for upgrading the river walls in line with the resilience approach in the Estuary Plan. ESWMB also works with the Environment Agency to obtain necessary approvals and access government funds.

Walk on Sudbourne Marshes and Orford sea walls

Alison Andrews

Colin Chamberlain mapped out a 7.5 mile walk, with a slightly shorter route option after lunch. On 1 September, some 22 intrepid Association members and friends met at Sudbourne Church, where those less familiar with it learned there had been a thorough going restoration in the 1870s outside and the inside was designed to look more like a prosperous Victorian suburb with a tongue and groove ceiling. But viewing all that and the splendid Devereux family hatchments, recently restored thanks to an AOA member and a Heritage Lottery grant, and evidence of the prosperity of the area in the form of a large monument to Sir Michael Stanhope, an Elizabethan Privy Councillor, was for a rainy day.

We set off up behind the church along the sides of turnip, sugar beet and potato fields, arriving down in the elongated low area of the Sudbourne Marshes. These have been marked out by an irregular series of drainage ditches and dykes, evidence of works over the years to secure good pastures. Construction of the river walls began in the late 12th century, soon after the earliest walls near Orford were built around 1168, to secure pasture for sheep to feed the workers building the castle. All this area is now below the estuary level within the very long Flood Cell no. 4, running from Ferry Point down to Gedgrave, and will be part



Map of the route from Sudbourne to Orford and back.

Along the marshes alongside a bank. Cows under control.



of the second stage of the Estuary embankment improvement programme. The walk route was simplified by being able to cross over a short stretch of private land managed by David Black and, thanks to him, the grazing cattle were all on the right side of fences as far as we were concerned, especially the few dogs on leads who happily accompanied their owners.

Arriving on the river wall we looked across at the radio masts, once the bastion of the BBC World Service, and at Cobra Mist, a massive nuclear-proof building built as a joint radar venture between the United States and the UK but now in private ownership since the state no longer wanted it. Sadly, the lighthouse is no longer one of our landmarks since the sea undermined it after well over 200 years' service and it had to be taken down, although many historic artefacts including the very special glazed lantern at the top are being preserved.

The river wall walk provided an opportunity to enjoy the wide Orford skies with scudding clouds and to look at the extensive border of saltings lying just beside the wall. We learnt that 37 per cent of England's saltmarsh is to be found in the Alde and Ore. Breaking the waves before they hit the river walls, the saltings are also highly valuable as a habitat for nursery fish, birds and marine creatures of every kind, and last but not least as a means of carbon capture and storage; they are definitely not to be trampled on or worn away at the edges by the wash from over-speedy craft.

On the walk we saw some 30 or so different wildflowers in bloom, not as many as one might see in midsummer, but amazing how many there were: the best were the last of the sea lavender, sea aster and a late goats beard. It was a blowy and not bright day, good for walking, but not for bird life as the seemingly long-lasting high spring tide left no room for waders.

After passing Orford Sailing Club, where racing started in 1876,



Saltings, aerials, Cobra Mist and the river wall.

almost 150 years ago, lunch in the Jolly Sailor was well timed. We were all under the covered area in the garden when the heavens opened. Orford is a little different now than in the 1500s when there were 11 ale houses, it being a busy port and market town.

After a good lunch, everyone choosing what they wanted, from fish and chips to a very tasty, sophisticated ploughman's lunch, it stopped raining. Good planning. Some opted for the more direct route back. The remaining core set off south along the river wall to Chantry before turning inland via Richmond Cottages, then up over the hill through a hedge-tunnelled pathway with wood-surrounded fields beyond it, which was in great contrast to the open low grass of the river walls, and on to Sudbourne Church.



Orford Castle and church with sunflowers.



The sun did shine sometimes.

It was a most enjoyable day, with plenty of fresh air, lots of different conversations and meeting up with old friends and new people. It was surprising how many of us only knew parts of the walk and few had done every part, so it was very interesting seeing the full circuit around Orford. Thanks very much to Colin Chamberlain for getting us out and about.



On the river bank. Plenty to see. (Photo: Lizzie Clark. All other photos by Alison Andrews.)

Status of the several energy project proposals near the Alde and Ore area at early October 2023

Alison Andrews

Sizewell C

The Government approved the proposal, but it has been challenged by Judicial Review. That will be heard on 1–2 December 2023. The main elements of the challenge are the lack of provision for potable water. A desalination plant was proposed in the last weeks of the National Inspectorate hearing; at that time it was not clear how long it would be needed for, but it now appears that it will be needed for the 15-year construction period and potentially for 60 years of operation of the reactors.

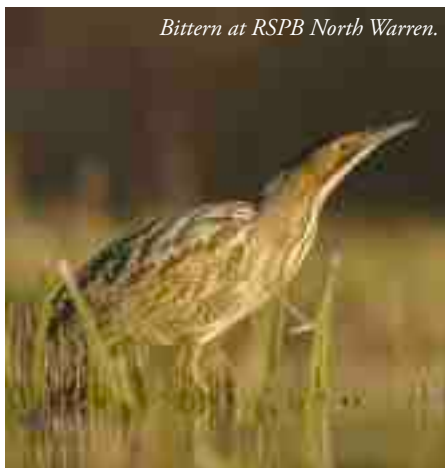
Meanwhile, although the judicial review puts the go-ahead on hold, EDF is getting on with many preparatory works needed before the major construction of the plant itself. This autumn, the creation of a wetland at Benhall from a low-grade arable area is causing much concern because of the substantial excavation and then transport of the soil to the Sizewell area on local B roads and the A12. There are several other substantial changes to the landscape closer to Sizewell including cutting down woodland and closing paths, with a few alternatives being provided.

Wind farms energy coming ashore:

Scottish Power Renewables

EA1N and EA2 involve the construction of three large substations at Friston, not just the National Grid substation, and also structures known as cable sealing ends, which are also very large, just not as large as the substations. Overall they will occupy 30 acres with structures up to 15m high. The power would be brought in by cables under the cliffs at Thorpeness and then cabled (eventually to be buried) through some 7km of the AONB (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty). This is being challenged including because of potential flooding at Friston.

National Grid Electricity Transmission (NGET) has consent for the Friston via EA1N/EA2 above. This is the lynch pin of all the wind energy projects coming into Suffolk Coastal. Should the legal challenges currently in progress on the above succeed, then none of the other projects have a grid connection in this coastal area and the offshore grid would be the obvious solution.



Nautilus Interconnector

This is intended to be a sharing interconnector between the UK and Belgium. Informal public consultation was held last year with three possible routes to a subconverter station to enable onward transmission to Friston and then on to the overhead power lines. Currently the project lead is considering whether to access via the Isle of Grain instead, or, more recently, has been investigating pooling the power from Five Estuaries and North Falls windfarms to a Nautilus offshore platform for it to be transported by one set of cables to West Grain.

Sea Link

NGET is proposing to construct an undersea transmission cable between Suffolk and Kent to boost the supply network in London and the South-East. Two potential landfall points have been identified: Sizewell and the beach road between Aldeburgh and Thorpeness, with cabling through North Warren on to a large converter station at either Blackheath or Knodishall, with a final network connection to National Grid's proposed Friston substation. The Statutory Consultation will take place at the end of this October/beginning of November before they apply for a Development Consent Order (DCO) in 2024.

LionLink (formerly known as Eurolink) interconnector

National Grid Ventures (a non-regulated for-profit company) is proposing to construct a subsea interconnector between the Netherlands and Suffolk to enable bulk power to be transferred either way to meet peaks and troughs. Unfortunately, the power from Holland is not green, but from fossil fuels. Potential landfall points have been identified at Reydon, Southwold, Walberswick, Dunwich and Aldeburgh, with cable trenching to a 26-metre high, 5-hectare convertor station: two massive halls which, once operable, are locked for 25 years with access limited to a few key holders – in other words, no jobs. The convertor station then converts DC to AC on to the National Grid Friston substation. Statutory consultation will take place in 2024 with a DCO in 2025.

Potential impacts on the Alde and Ore area

The Association challenged the proposals for Sizewell C and Scottish Power Renewables because of the long-term impact on coastal sediment drift and erosion.

All the projects will seriously impact the local traffic in their surrounding areas during the construction years – 5 years for electricity plants, 12 plus years for Sizewell C. While the road network is adequate for local and tourist traffic, it will be overwhelmed by traffic loads such as 1,000 HGVs a day, 6 days a

week. The combined effect, should several projects be constructed in the same time, which looks very likely, will be very harmful to local daily life, businesses and the tourist trade that forms a significant part of the local economy. Those accessing the estuary areas would also be likely to encounter traffic problems.

For more information you are advised to visit the websites for SASES (Substation Action Save East Suffolk), SEAS (Suffolk

Energy Action Solutions) and Stop Sizewell C.

Meanwhile, the Association will continue to keep close to developments and ensure that the value of the Alde, Ore and Butley rivers area continues to be made known to the planners. The Association is not taking a stance on energy policy but any policy needs to take account of what exists on the ground.

A note from your Treasurer

Hello members!

Having been Treasurer for almost ten years, I thought that it was about time that I wrote a little note for our newsletter. You will be happy to hear that our finances are still strong and in good order.

The role of the Association's Treasurer is not very taxing or difficult, I am happy to say. On a week-to-week basis I note our income received from subscriptions and from activities such as the Butley Ferry, walks and the annual barbecue. During the summer months there is a little more activity because of the expenses for these activities. In December and January, I claim Gift Aid from HMRC and prepare our annual accounts.

I also work closely with our Membership Secretary when most of your subscriptions come into our account in January. Thank you all for paying using standing orders and clear references – this really helps us to know who has paid.

I took on the role of Treasurer following Colin Chamberlain in 2014 and I have enjoyed it. It is now time for me to move on and make space for fresh talent. If you would be interested in taking up the role, please contact me at treasurer@aldeandore.org.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Birgitta Bostrom



The changing water levels in the river



Misty morning a few days before the small surge on 14 October 2023 (photo: Alison Andrews).



Flooded dinghy park on 14 October (photo: Duncan Matthew).

Michael Flint – in memoriam



It is with great sadness that we report the passing of Michael Flint in late September shortly after his wife Phyllida.

Michael had an amazing and varied career before he came to Orford and began many years contributing to many local organisations. The Association is particularly grateful to

him for all he did as a Committee member and Chairman of the Association and for his wonderful art work depicting the essence of the Alde and Ore estuary. There are so many facets to his life that here we mostly focus on his contribution to the Alde and Ore and only hint at there being so much more that others will speak about.

From all the memories I have seen he was felt unanimously to be simply irrepressible, immensely charming and incredibly knowledgeable. He retired to Orford some 25 years ago but had long association with the town as his grandfather had been the local doctor.

Before coming to Orford he was a solicitor and a senior partner in the eminent Chancery Lane firm of Denton Hall (as it then was) and developed a specialisation in film contract law which led him for a time to be a leading executive in Paramount Films based in Hollywood. In retirement he continued to pursue his interest in film as a member of BAFTA, spending the early part of each year viewing all the new film releases and voting on them as part of the annual BAFTA awards. In Orford he and Phyllida became well known for their activities in tennis, sailing, golf and bicycling around Orford, and that was just for relaxation. Indeed, he was

still playing golf when he reached ninety.

Michael joined the Alde and Ore Association Committee in 1997, just six years after it came into being. He was Vice Chairman from 1998 to 2000 and then served as a very full time Chairman for three years 2000–2003. The principal challenges at that time were the campaign in relation to the proposed commercial development of the Bentwater airport site, the formation of the Estuary Planning Partnership, securing the position of the Association by converting its constitution to that of a charity using his invaluable legal skills, and dealing with one of the government plans, the Posford Duvivier report, about the future management of the estuary.

He will be particularly remembered by the Association for his part in the campaign against the development of Bentwaters as a commercial airport, using his extensive network of contacts in public life and his great legal skills to make the necessary weight in public matters. The Bentwaters campaign was a long and hard-fought battle. The planned development to open the airport up to substantial airport usage would have resulted in untold damage to the area, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, through noise, light and air pollution. Significant sums in the thousands were raised to fight the proposals. Having had to deal with a less substantial but still damaging proposal follow-up proposal some ten years later, I can vouch for the enormous amount of work that campaign will have involved.

Michael was Chairman when the Association hosted a study by the North America/UK Countryside Exchange who recommended, given the estuary's large number of government organisations and local bodies, all with different and sometimes conflicting interests or lack of insight into others' concerns, so varied is the estuary area, how they might better work together. Under his chairmanship, working with one of his successors, David Andren, the Estuary Planning Partnership was created



Michael Flint. Walk Along the River Wall. Etching.



Michael Flint, Brick Dock. Etching.

with some 40 participants and proved to be the starting place for developing the basis for the future estuary partnership, which in turn led to the plans we now have to secure the estuary embankments for the next generations.

Michael also played a very active role in tracking down and challenging planning applications that might be injurious to the estuary area. He retained an abiding interest in the wellbeing of the area. Indeed, only in September I had a lively conversation with him about the current issues.

In his retirement Michael began a wholly new career. As well as continuing to pursue his and Phyllida's strong love of opera, travelling to many parts of the world, he became an accomplished painter, producing a large body of works particularly water colours involving local scenes in and around the estuary, often with charming titles such as *Strange Weather Over Orford Ness*.

An artist friend and mentor, whose painting group Michael joined when he started out suggested that the medium of etching might suit his style. He was right, and on Michael's website he is quoted as saying 'that in etching he has found the pantechnicon of means to suit his ideas'. Michael went on to produce memorable images of our

coastal environment, in ever-changing moods. He exhibited widely, culminating in a birthday exhibition at Snape Maltings, and finally at the Watchhouse at Orford only last month. He was proud to have won first prize in the annual Law Society exhibition in London a few years ago.

He was also a founder and very active member of the Sudbourne Park Printmakers. Indeed, for the Association's 30th anniversary newsletter he kindly provided a magnificent etching of a barge at Snape Maltings. We are so pleased to reproduce it here, together with two more of his etchings in remembrance and appreciation of him.

Quite apart from his time with the Association, among the many other things he did, he was also a leading light in the development of Orford Museum and was its chairman for some years. He took a keen interest in local music and was an active trustee of Aldeburgh Music for some years.

Orford and the Alde and Ore Association, amongst many others, have been more than fortunate to have had someone who gave so much and so energetically to the local community as well as all he did at the national level. He will be missed.

Alison Andrews on behalf of the Association.



Michael Flint. The Bridge at Snape. Etching.

Please send your observations about the Association and its activities, suggestions for articles in the newsletter and your photographs to the editorial team at newsletter@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 note that signed contributions may not reflect the views of the Association as a whole.



The Aldeburgh Bookshop have created two wonderful Christmas cards which are available to buy in packs of 6 for £6. Proceeds will go to The Alde & Ore Estuary Trust.



'Christmas at the Cliff' by Lily Leaver

Lily Leaver has just finished her first year at the Edinburgh College of Art, where she is studying Fine Art. When she is in Suffolk she lives in Iken with a view over the River Alde.

These wonderful cards will be available to buy at The Aldeburgh Bookshop, O&C Butcher and at Snape Maltings.



'A Rose for Winter' by Karen Lear

Karen Lear is a florist, celebrant, artist and muse. A lover of books and our glorious Suffolk coast, where she has lived almost all her life. As the seasons change, so do the flowers she captures in pen and finger-painted acrylics.

Please visit our website to read more and for information on how to donate: www.aoetrust.org

Alde & Ore Association events in 2024

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

Annual General Meeting, mid-late April.

Annual Barbecue, end July/August.

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

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

Stop Press!

Congratulations to the Association's chairman, Alison Andrews, on receiving the 2023 'Sue Allen Memorial Volunteer Award for Contributions to Coast and Estuary Management'.

Alison was presented with the award at the East Anglian Coast & Estuaries Conference held in Ipswich on 12 October 2023.

The Association has always greatly appreciated Alison's tireless hard work on behalf of all those concerned with the wellbeing of the rivers and surrounding areas, and it is terrific that she has now received wider recognition.

