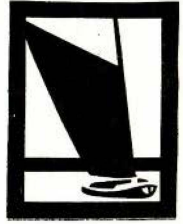


THE NORFOLK WHERRY TRUST



Bulletin - November 1981

The New Wherry Base at Womack, by Peter Dunham

This is to let you know how we are getting on with the wherry base at Womack. As you know, we have leased from the Norfolk County Council a plot of land near the County Sailing Base, with a 60 ft. river frontage.

Last year a start was made by excavating a mooring bay and in August this year we continued with the next stage. The cut from the river bank 25 ft. wide and 120 ft. long has now been excavated and at the end of this cut the pile foundations for the new boatshed and workshop 75 ft. long x 36 ft. wide have been driven and ready to receive the superstructure when we can afford to continue. The work has been carried out by May Gurney and Co., Ltd. at a very reasonable price. We hoped to find a satisfactory bottom for the piles at about 30 ft. but although the sub-strata did firm up at this depth, it was necessary to go to an average 40 ft. before a satisfactory 'set' was obtained.

The next stage will be to purchase the materials to build the timber framed structure and form the quay heading within the boatshed and hopefully a scheme can be arranged with the Youth Opportunity Scheme of the Manpower Commission to construct the building. The drawing on page 2 shows the proposed building, which consists of a timber portal frame, roofed with asbestos sheeting and the walls clad in black weather boarding, and comprises a wet dock and workshop and small office alongside.

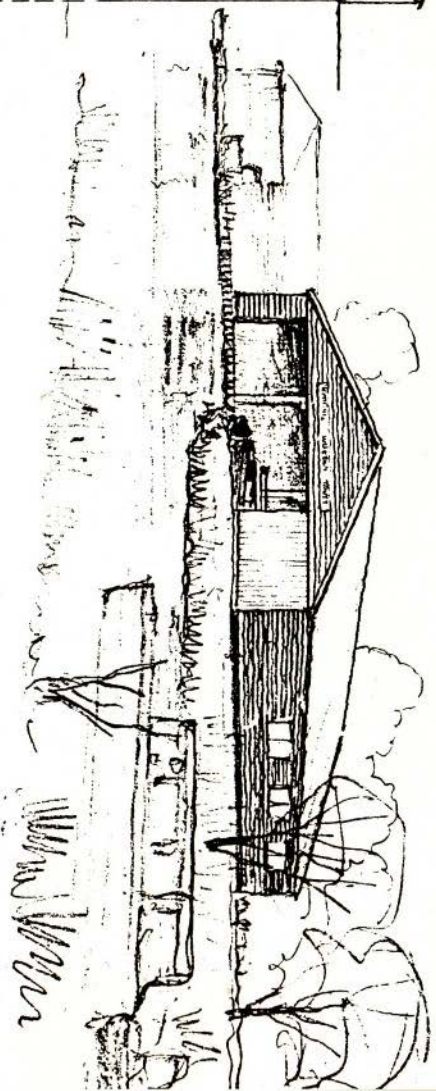
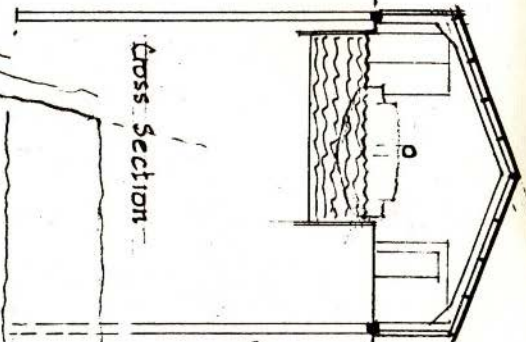
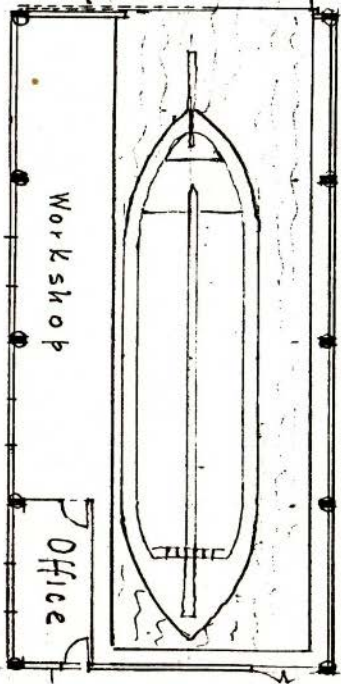
Incidentally, I have made a drawing of the Albion itself 22" x 16" and a hand coloured print can be purchased for £7. All the net proceeds (about £5 per copy) go to a fund to build the base. Why not buy one? If every member did so we could build the base now! Or how about one for a Christmas present to someone. If you are interested, please order one from Ewan Anderson, Pam Oakes or preferably from myself:

Peter Dunham,
Honorary Architect to the Trust,
[details redacted]

Womack Water

Cross Section

Plan scale 1" = 16'0"



NOVELLY WHEATBY RACE WHEATBY

PLEASE HELP!

You have just read of the progress to date with the Womack base and it is perhaps appropriate for me to let you know how far we have gone towards meeting the financial targets.

Total donations (large and small) amount to £6,400 since the appeal was launched in April 1980. We have just paid the main contractors £4,686 out of a total account of £6,686 for sinking the piles at the base and they have kindly agreed that settlement of the balance of £2,000 may be deferred until 31st December to allow the Trust time to raise the necessary finance. As part of the appeal process we are seeking over £3,000 from various sources and hope that part of this will be forthcoming in time. We estimate that Albion's base will require a total £15,000 investment, but once we have the contractors' account behind us we shall need little outside assistance and our policy can revert to one of self-help with future progress dependant upon cash resources. I should add that in my judgement it was perfectly correct to proceed with the piling work in advance of available funds since further delay would have escalated costs considerably; furthermore, once the contractors were committed on site they failed to find 'bottom' at the expected depth and the additional 12 feet necessary cost £1,650 more than their quotation.

We must put that setback behind us and concentrate on paying our way. To date, the sum of £7,200 has been spent on the base (including £800 from the general fund). We are still solvent with approximately £400 in the bank and about £700 charter income will accrue before the end of the year to cover insurance, maintenance and other outgoings. It is, however, possible that we shall need to approach our bankers for assistance unless the money can be found to settle the contractors' account and to meet other running expenses.

If any of you feel able to offer support in any way, whether directly or by approaching an employer or local fund raising organisation we would all be very grateful. As your elected Committee we attempt to preserve Albion with all the means at our disposal, but we would never pretend to a monopoly of wisdom and our membership has come forward so many times in the past that we hope we can count on your full support again. In that context it is with sadness that I must report the loss of 260 members who have felt unable to pay their subscriptions for the past five years. Clearly, there comes a time when we can no longer afford to keep in touch with former subscribers via the regular bulletin, and we have very reluctantly struck them from the mailing list. If each one of you can find just one new member then the Trust would benefit by approximately £1,400 p.a. (700 x £2) and so help to keep alive the aims and objects of the Norfolk Wherry Trust, namely, to preserve a Norfolk wherry in perpetuity.

Please do not think that the task we have set ourselves makes me in any way despondent. On the contrary, I am delighted with the ground we have covered in recent years; grateful to our membership for its loyal support, and proud of my own association with the Trust.

If you are able to help in any way, please contact me: Earl Ayers, Honorary Treasurer, c/o Lloyds Bank Ltd., 47 London Road North, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1BL.

"MEMORIES OF THE WHERRY YACHT 'HATHOR' " by Humphrey Boardman
(Chairman of the Norfolk Wherry Trust 1949 - 1961)

This wherry was built in 1905 for my aunts, Miss Ethel and Miss Helen Colman. The interior was designed by my father (Edward T.) A specification in the building was that the wherry should be able to get through the old bridge at Ludham so that she could be brought up to my parents' holiday home at How Hill and on up the river Ant to Barton Broad.

The old Ludham bridge was similar to the two remaining old bridges at Wroxham and Potter Heigham with which some readers may be familiar. There wasn't much room to get through when the river was high from rain or a big flood tide miles away at Yarmouth, there was often less than 4 ft. clearance under the arch.

'Hator' was built by Daniel S. Hall of Reedham. She was 56½ ft. in length, beam 14½ ft. and drew 4 ft. Under full sail, with the bonnet, the sail area was over 1,100 sq. ft.

The name 'Hator' (pronounced Heart-or) needs some explanation: the younger brother of these ladies had been in poor health for some years, suffering from a 'delicacy of the lungs'. On medical advice he went to live in the warmer climate of Egypt. His condition continued to deteriorate. Helen has written: "In the middle of January (1897) he left his hotel and embarked on a sailing vessel named 'Hathor' to voyage up the Nile, thus gratifying his strong wish to see something of that wonderful river". He traversed nearly the whole navigable length of this river but "On Sunday, 7th February, Alan died when the 'Hathor' was at Luxor". (This sailing vessel, two masted, with lateen rig, was one of a fleet of "DARKABEAS" hired out by Messrs. Thomas Cook for the entertainment of tourists). One might consider it rather morbid for Helen and Ethel to give their new pleasure wherry the same name were it not for the fact that 'Hathor' was "The Goddess of Joy and Love, of the Sky and of the West - the abode of the dead." This also explains an unusual feature of the wherry. The saloon and cabins, which occupy the space given over to the hold on a trading wherry, are panelled throughout with sycamore, which is light yellow-gold in colour, decorated by inlays stained green, yellow or red. The general motif depicts lotus flowers but each door has a different inlay depicting sphinks, winged scarabs, sailing boats, snakes, fish, crocodiles, cats, frogs and wild fowl. The use of light coloured sycamore made the accommodation bright and cheerful.

It was a lovely day at Reedham in July 1905 when the launching ceremony took place.

The ladies wore their summer best, ankle length frilly dresses with lace collars and leg-of-mutton sleeves. Some wore flat topped white yachting hats while the more elderly were in black with parasols to shade their eyes. The men folk were smart; father was in white. The head gear varied from boaters' to bowlers, while the junior employees of Mr. Hall wore caps. My sister Joan, aged 3½, and her brother Chris, aged 2, dressed alike in pretty frocks, stand on a trestle table covered with a Persian rug. On the table is a basket

decorated with ribbons. The caption to the photograph in mother's album reads "Joan sets the pigeons free".

I can hardly remember the first skipper, Dan Kerrison, but he must have been in charge for several years. He was followed by Albert Grimes, of Salhouse, with Toby Pitchers as mate and steward. The skipper was responsible for sailing the wherry and caring for the gear. The mate went forward to hoist or lower the sail and to do the quanting when necessary. On a narrow stretch of river this included pushing the bows off the bank to help her round on every tack. At the end of the day, while the skipper furled the sail and put on the cover, the mate-cum-steward was preparing the evening meal for perhaps six hungry passengers and themselves. This was done on a paraffin stove in the crew's tiny cabin aft (the 'cuddy'). Usually the wherry was moored near an inn. It was quite in order for the crew to go ashore to refresh themselves and to give time for the cuddy to cool down after all that cooking.

Next morning, sure enough, Albert would be up early swabbing down the deck, not only to clean it but also to keep the planking tight. When we youngsters were aboard he would sometimes quietly slide open our cabin window and let a few drops from his mop fall upon our heads. That woke us up in a fury, but we forgave him when Tony served us with fried eels for breakfast. When the moon and tide were right Albert always set his eel lines last thing at night.

In those early days we believed everything that Albert said. The tower of the little church of Burgh St. Peter on the Waveney is constructed in a peculiar way. The original Saxon round tower, built of flint, was struck by lightning many years ago. It was replaced by a square tower built of brick: five rising squares of brick each a little smaller than the one below so that it looks as though you could compress it from the top like a concertina. As we sail quietly by Albert says "Look at that telescopic tower. They've got it up to full height today. That's in honour of Hathor passing".

When I was a little older Albert started to instruct me in the art of sailing a wherry. I could sail a dinghy by then and had sailed the white boat, but this was different. If you are tacking a wherry up the river against the wind you can't just put her about and go off close hauled on the other tack. She will stop dead. You must bear away across the river with the sail full of wind to get her moving. Then, as you approach the leeward bank you can haul her up very close indeed and she will shoot a surprisingly long way, almost straight into the wind - if you do it right!

Winter quarters were at Carrow Works, where she was winched out into a shed on the Yare near where it joins the Wensum. The summer moorings were arranged on the Yare at Brundall or on the Bure near Wroxham railway station. Both were accessible for visitors who found it convenient to travel by train, such as nurses from the Norfolk and Norwich or Jenny Lind hospitals.

I still have the visitors book, beautifully bound in leather, which provides a fascinating record of what went on. There are some interesting signatures in this book including:

20 June 1908 Frederick Duleepsingh
4 July 1908 Margaret, Megan and David Lloyd George,
of 11 Downing Street.

H. Rider Haggard, Henry J. Wood, Carice Elgar and others.

The most glorious days that I remember were in the years just before and just after the '14-'18 war. There is an entry in the book dated 21 October, 1911 "On this day, on passing Belaugh Church the Hathor completed the 1,000th mile for the present season" That year the season extended from 22 April to 3 November. Halcyon days which have gone for ever.

Hathor is still afloat and being well cared for. I visited her recently. She is in a snug berth at Martham in use as a houseboat. The mast is also being well looked after, but I fear that if Hathor were to sail again a new one would be required.

Oh for the day when one could visit Arthur Elliott "mast and block maker", of Great Yarmouth. He would take you by boat to a spot just below the old Breydon swing bridge (gone now) where he kept his timber. Beautiful logs of pitch pine of great length, carefully chained up but afloat in the water. You could choose your piece of timber and have a new mast within a fortnight.

H.C.B.

THE CHARTER SITUATION

Albion has had a busy season starting early in March and continuing through to mid-November. By the end of the season she will have been booked for 137 days so she is making a good effort to earn her keep. From March until mid-May she was based at Thurne. Then she went round to the south river and sailed from Bramerton until late August, when she returned to Thurne. Most of the charters were for a weekend, but there have been some full weeks and some mid-week charters as well. It may be of interest to quote from the log describing some of the more interesting trips:

Friday, 20th March, 1981

19.15 Aboard. Filled and lit lamps and made general preparations
23.30 Party from Leicester Polytechnic aboard and complete.

Saturday, 21st March.

06.30 Turned to and stirred the party. Wind SW, force 5, with frequent showers. Breakfast. Got mast down owing to strong head wind.
08.30 Cast off, quanting. Wind now force 6.
12.10 Got to the pump house, $\frac{1}{2}$ mile east of St. Benets. Moored up to the windward bank to give everyone a rest. Hoping for better weather.

- 16.00 No improvement in the weather. Wind now stronger than ever. Cast off and with some quanting and others hauling from the bank managed to reach Bondon's staithe near the entrance to South Walsham Broad.
- 18.30 Tied up and settled down to an evening on board. Wind still SW, force 7.

Sunday, 22nd March. Wind still force 7 but now from the west so astern for our intended course home. Swung the vessel (ie turned her round on her moorings). Raised the mast and cast off aiming for Thurne.

- 10.40 Making reasonable progress quanting and nearly sailing from the pressure of the following wind on the mast.
- 13.40 Moored at Thurne just before closing time. Stowed the ship.
- 16.30 All secure. Party dispersed.

What a trip! Never had the sail up. Hard work all time; total distance travelled about 10 miles. In spite of that a charming post-card was received from the organiser of the party: "On behalf of us all who took Albion for a walk last weekend, a big thank you. We thoroughly enjoyed ourselves! No doubt some of us will be back in May". And they were. The following summary shows that it was a very different sort of trip.

Friday, 29th May.

- 19.30 On board at Bramerton.
- 21.15 Party from Leicester Polytechnic arriving.
- 23.15 Party complete and aboard.

Saturday, 30th May.

- 10.00 Cast off heading down river. A sunny morning, wind SW, force 2. Ebb tide under us. Hoisted full sail plus the bonnett.*
- 11.45 Left the main river and made our way up to the narrow dyke leading to Surlingham Broad.
- 12.45 Anchored to the mud weight on 6 fathoms of chain. (Surlingham Broad is a beautiful stretch of water surrounded by trees with a great variety of bird life. There is always a heron or two flapping about or standing motionless in the water fishing. Albion has just come through the narrow upper dyke which is shallow with only just enough room to steer the mast between the overhanging trees. She will leave by the lower dyke, equally narrow, which rejoins the main river near Coldham Hall. There is only just enough water to float Albion - she draws 3" 6". Because it is so shallow it is

rarely visited by yachts or motor cruisers. The hulks of several old wherries which have been left there to end their days in peace make a slightly melancholy addition to the scene. As you may gather. It is a spot much loved by the writer. It's a lovely place for painting and, years ago, it was a lovely place to teach the children to sail.

- 15.05 Weighed. Quanted through the lower dyke. Full mainsail and bonnet when we got to the main river. Sun still shining, wind light and variable, tide still with us.
- 17.30 Turned into Rockland lower dyke. Swung the vessel and secured. (I don't know if they went ashore that night. They could have taken the dinghy and rowed a short mile up the dyke to Rockland New Inn, which isn't a bad spot).

* The bonnet is a device unique to wherries. It consists of a length of canvas about 2 ft. in depth which is laced along the foot of the sail. The gaff can then be hoisted two feet higher making the sail even bigger than it was before.

Sunday, 31st May.

- 05.30 Turned to. Got to make an early start to catch the tide. Misty, wind, what there is of it, coming round to E (Thanks be to God).
- 06.35* Cast off. Low water on the main river.

The next entry in the log reads "12.05. Whitlingham. Top of the tide". They had sailed a long way in those six hours. Back past Coldham Hall and Brundall, past three dykes leading to Surlingham Broad, past Surlingham Ferry, past Bramerton Woods End (that's three good pubs they've gone by). Through Postwick Reach where, strangely enough, there are high wooded hilly banks on either side. They had nearly got to Norwich. By the way. I read the log they had sun all day; what wind there was was favourable and they had the tide under 'em all the way. They didn't waste much time. See the next log entry.

- 13.10 Moored at Bramerton. Turned the vessel and secured. (They didn't have much help from the wind on the way back down river but you see they had got the tide under'em again. That's the way to do it).
- 16.15 Party dispersed. (That little trip must have been a recompense for those nice people who came from Leicester Poly-technic.)

Do I go on too long? Can you bear with an account of one more Albion trip? After all you haven't got to read it if you don't want to, and I want to tell you about it. I can't stick to the log with this one - the vital information as to the vessel's movements are there but very laconic. I think Ewan was pretty busy that day, but he and I have talked about the passage from Bramerton to Oulton Broad in mid-July.

The party were from the Carrow Yacht Club (I would like to say more but have you ever heard of Colman's Mustard made at Carrow? All Colmans for generations have made a great contribution to yachting in this country, and still do so, as some of you may know).

The other thing about this trip was that Walter Cates was the mate. Young Walter was mate to his elder brother, Jack, who was the last skipper to earn his living in the old hard way before the Trust took her over. Our Ewan is not bad at sailing our old Albion, but, my heart, when Old Jack or Young Walter are on board she go like a bird. I know 'cos I've been there.

This party were so keen that they got away from Bramerton at 21.00 on Friday, 10th July. They moored up near Surlingham Ferry at 22.15.

They were away again next morning at 07.45 on the first of the ebb (that old tide is very important on the south river). Wind force 1-2 from the west (favourable). "Misty, but looks like sun coming" which it did.

At 09.00 they tied up at Brundall to take on fresh water and supplies. That only took them twenty-five minutes if the log is true. Surely it must have been an all male party! Then on again under full main plus bonnet. Wind W, force 2, weather sunny. Down they go past Coldham Hall, Buckenham Ferry and the sugar beet factory at Cantley. When they passed Reedham Ferry they started thinking about Reedham Bridge.

Reedham Bridge is a railway swing bridge. It normally opens very smartly when a yacht appears but this time, with the tide under them and a gentle following breeze they saw the red flag up and a notice saying "fifteen minutes" ie, wait for the train. Walter spoke quietly "In the old days we would have shot it." Conditions were ideal with wind and tide in favour. Ewan said "Yes, with this crew we can do it". Ewan went forward to lower sail and mast. Walter took the helm. Under these circumstances the man at the helm must have full confidence in his crew. He wants to sail as close to the bridge as he dare. If the sail comes down too soon he won't have steerage way through the bridge. If the mast comes down too late, putting it in polite language, he and his vessel will be in a mess.

At the right moment Walter quietly says "Down you come". Ewan lowers away smartly on the one halliard. Down comes the sail, followed by the gaff. A smart tweak on the gaff line by a previously instructed crew member ensures that the whole lot comes down amidships on the

hatch covers. Ewan unships the gaff jaws and drops them on the hatch. The hatch covers are the removable roof of the hold which extends from the mast to the steering position. She was built to carry a big load. Ewan then lets go the forestay. The mast drops back to about 45°. Owing to the counter-balancing lead on the heel of the mast it needs a gentle pull on the halliard, which is still there, if you see what I mean. You've got to find another bit of string to lash it down with.

Through the bridge. Let go that bit of string - up the mast come half way. Haul on the forestay and she's home. Lash on the gaff jaws and haul away on the halliard. There we are away again.

An interesting exercise. Don't forget that it used to be done by two people only: the skipper and his mate, usually a boy because he didn't need so much pay as a man (sometimes his wife).

They had done so well that they were a bit ahead of time. They turned off the Yare on to the 'new cut' ('new' about 100 years ago when this little canal was cut to make a shorter passage to Norwich helping Lowestoft to compete with Yarmouth for trade). They moored up for an hour at the far end of the cut waiting for the flood tide up the Waveney. The wind was coming up a bit from the west so they put in one reef. They had no trouble after that, a lovely sail to Oulton.

"18.30 Anchored to mud weight and five fathoms of chain in the ham at Oulton Broad."

A grand trip! At a very rough guess I would say that the distance travelled was more than 35 miles. I wish I had been with them.

Compiled by Tony Bentall
with help from Ewan Anderson
and Albion.

Further notes on Albion's activities

For the past three years a party from Relfgar School, Rugeley, Staffordshire, have worked for three days on Albion or the base over Easter in return for two days sailing. They have booked again for 1982. Not only this but Ewan Anderson and the wherry have been presented with a clock and barometer mounted on oak "In appreciation of the experiences you and the wherry Albion have given to our pupils".

The continued winter visits of the officer cadet team from HMS Daedalus, always followed by an appreciative letter from their Commanding Officer, seem to suggest that both of these groups appreciate a course in survival training! We do not offer them much in the way of comfort.

The success of these visits must reflect directly on the enthusiasm and ability of those who are responsible for their organisation, especially Ewan and Ivan.

Albion will be laid up in mid-November at Upton Dyke by the courtesy of Tim Whelpton. We have not, as yet, got any power at our own new dyke at Womack. The ability to use power tools greatly facilitates routine maintenance. As usual we shall be relying largely on volunteer labour. If you would like to help please contact Ewan Anderson, at the Croft, Lingwood, Norwich (phone [redacted]). We need your help. It's fun and there's a nice pub not far away at Upton.