

ALBION

The Wherry

The Members Cruise

Oh, wasn't it merry
That day on the Wherry
With David and Mary and Pat!
The sun was a-shining
While George was divining
The point to steer Albion at!

We got down to Acle
Without a debacle
And shot Acle Bridge good and clear!
At Stokesby we landed
And helped a boat stranded-
While taking on vino and beer!

With none of us wanting
To do too much quanting
As back towards Acle we plied;
Our help was repaid
By reciprocal aid
Of Smuggler attached alongside.

So if YOU haven't been
On a voyage serene
You've really got nothing to lose,
Just book in advance;
Seize the wonderful chance
Of a Wherry Trust Member's Day Cruise!!

Cecil Kellehar

KEEPING ALBION SAILING

Navigators and General Insurance Company are proud to be helping the Norfolk Wherry Trust to keep Albion sailing by providing her with a new sail for 1999. Navigators was established in 1921 initially to insure the tickets of seagoing Masters in the event that they lost the ability to earn their livelihood at sea, but soon turned to yacht insurance and issued the first policies to be specially designed to cover yachts. By this time ALBION was already in her twenties.

Navigators has remained at the forefront of yacht and motorboat insurance for the last seventy years and since 1960 we have enjoyed the backing and resources of Eagle Star Insurance, now part of the Zurich Financial Services group, one of the world's leading providers of insurance and financial services. We have had a presence in Norwich since 1956 and have established close ties with the marine trade in East Anglia as well as the boating community in general.

To remain at the forefront of this unique industry demands commitment and dedication in much the same way that members of the Norfolk Wherry Trust have needed commitment and dedication to keep Albion sailing.

Navigators have insured Albion since November 1985 through the agency of Hugh J. Boswell Ltd., a company nearly as old as Albion herself, being established in 1906. During that period there have been very few incidents notified to us and none of them has resulted in a serious claim, a tribute to the skills of her skippers and crew, sailing a vessel of this size on what is often a narrow and crowded waterway.

Albion's new sail will be handed over at a ceremony during the season on a date to be advised later.

ALBION

Fiftieth Anniversary Journal of the Norfolk Wherry Trust

(registered charity 306007)

Patron: Sir Timothy Colman, D.C.L.

President: Major James Forsythe, M.B.E., T.D.

Vice Presidents: John Crane; John Perryman

Trustees: Ann Mackintosh; Michael Brett; John Crane; Jayne Tracey; Ed Zelinsky.

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A special word of thanks must go to all of the contributors to this second special edition of the Journal. To all the writers listed above, who have produced a varied range of material to support our celebrations, and to those who have supplied photographs and other illustrative material, John Beecham, Roy Clark, Doreen Dickenson, Basil Brown, Mike Fuller, Kim Dowe and Harry Clow. My separate thanks must go, as ever to our Archivist, Mike Sparkes.

Editorial

For two major anniversaries to come one after the other is quite exceptional. The Centenary of 1998 will be remembered for many years. A splendid anniversary celebrated in many and varied ways. See the centre pages for our colour round-up of the centenary year. Whilst not everything has been covered they represent your editor's choicest moments! And so we come to 1999 when we celebrate the Fiftieth Anniversary of the formation of the Norfolk Wherry Trust. We hope that this year will truly be a members year, with two major events to recognise that **Albion** would not be here without the support of members, both at the beginning, through the difficult times of the past, and the continuing challenges of the present and the future.

We will celebrate this anniversary with a summer day out on July 11th. The intention is to welcome as many members as possible to a combined event; the A.G.M. at Cox's yard at Barton Turf followed by a picnic on the Punt Club pontoon in the middle of Barton Broad. An afternoon enjoying the broad along with opportunities to sail on **Albion**, a river cruiser, a racing punt and several other boats, with a water-borne bus service operating between Barton staithe and the pontoon. In the early evening dinner will be served at the Sutton Staithe Hotel. The day is planned to be an informal occasion for members to dip into as they wish. Some may prefer to do other things in the afternoon. The choice, as they say, is yours! Come along and enjoy yourself. Later in the year we will have our usual Laying-up supper followed by some entertainment.

As this editorial is written, Mike Fuller and his team have nearly completed the winter refit and **Albion** is going to be in fine form for the season. The standing right-ups have been the major areas to be replaced this winter, and early in the season he is planning to start work on a spare mast. Mike is planning to retire from "active duties" this year but will still take on committee responsibility for the upkeep of **Albion**. We are all indebted to Mike, who with his team of volunteers has helped keep **Albion** in fine shape. His involvement with **Albion** and her maintenance goes back for nineteen years - this shows real commitment and underlines his love of **Albion**. Thanks, Mike!

Albion had a really busy year last year and was seen by many people. It has been estimated that she made 135 passages, carried 1620 people and sailed for about 2000 miles during her centenary year. She was of course seen by many more people during staithe visits, open days, when carrying Woodfordes ales to various pubs and at the Vintage Wooden Boat Show event at Horning.

It has been a delight to collect together the articles and illustrations that go to make up this edition of the Journal. When I thought about this fiftieth year it seemed to give a perfect opportunity to reflect on the development of the Norfolk Wherry Trust through events during that fifty years by those who had experienced them. To all those who responded so well, my sincere thanks.

We begin with an article from one of those with the foresight to save a Trading Wherry. Roy Clark was there at the beginning and has written a detailed account of his experiences at the formation of the Trust. His article is supplemented by Mike Sparkes, who once again, has

come up trumps. Mike and Keith Robotham, our new Chairman had gone to Yarmouth earlier in the year to sort out some old records and returned with some exciting early material. Mike has compiled a record of **Albions** early life with the Trust. Of particular interest are extracts from the log showing **Albions** movements in the early months.

Two past chairmen have written of their involvement with the Trust. John Perryman and John Crane have both written about the way the Trust responded to the challenges during their administrations. Their involvement spans the last thirty-four years and gives us some background to the problems associated with keeping an old wooden boat afloat. Their articles take us step by step along the path towards a secure future for **Albion**.

Mike Fuller has put together an extensive article outlining his involvement with **Albion** and her maintenance since the early 1980's to the present. Mike is the latest in the line of dedicated people who have kept **Albion** in good shape. It is this practical application of skills that enables your membership dues to be put to good use. Keeping **Albion** with her black sail alive on the broads. His article describes the type of work necessary each winter, but can't fully describe how cold it is when the work is being done, nor the difficulties in handling large baulks of timber.

John Burt looks back on his cruises on board **Albion**, spanning the last twenty years. He highlights for us some of his particularly memorable moments.

For those who have not yet seen 'The Last Wherry', Paul Baker its Producer has described his approach to making the programme. Many of you must have seen Paul and his team as they shadowed **Albion** last season.

To complete this issue of the Journal we continue the story of 'Boss' Applegate.

In conclusion, a mention of three events that will be occurring during the year. **Maud** celebrates her centenary and both Linda and Vincent Pargeter hope to mark this with the completion of their mammoth project. It will be a stirring sight to see her under sail. We look forward to it and to **Albion** sailing in close company with her. The second event will be the handing over of a new sail for **Albion**. Navigators and General have generously donated a new sail to replace the present one which was getting quite worn having served for over ten years. We hope to have a small ceremony to mark this event later in the year. The third event reflects the broads in a wider context. At the end of the season, from November 7th to November 21st David Dane the broadland painter is organising an event "The Broadlands 2000" at the Broadlands Wildlife Centre on Ranworth Broad. This will be a special broadland event for the Millennium focusing on important features of the broads through paintings with informative boards to support them. Taking an environmental standpoint the exhibition will highlight the organisations and groups that support the natural development of broadland. The exhibition will be open from 10.30am to 4.00pm daily.

Chairman's Report

In the early sixties I became involved with the Sheringham branch of the British Sub-Aqua Club. This was my first serious introduction to water and to boats. At that time our club house was in a small shed on the fisherman's slip and we soon decided that we needed a proper base of our own. We set about building this in one corner of the car park. It was an asbestos building set on a concrete foundation; all work carried out by the members giving a wonderful feeling of involvement. I have many wonderful memories of the years spent learning the various aspects of diving, sailing, and inshore fishing with long-line and pots off the Norfolk coast.

For me the wheel has now turned full circle. I am still involved with voluntary work and the major project is still a new building, but this time the venue is the Wherry Staithe, Ludham.

In 1984 I decided that the North sea was too deep, too rough and too cold for me and I moved my interests inland to Womack Water. Wandering down Horsefen Road one day, I met Sid Chettleburgh and after a lengthy conversation he persuaded me that I might enjoy joining and working with, the Wherry Trust. At this time the Trust had acquired the present site, but there was no quay heading, no workshop and no wet dock for **Albion**. Access was by plank and duckboard. This meeting led me in time to become Vice-Chairman to John Perryman, John Crane and Anthony Trafford.

The fiftieth anniversary of the Norfolk Wherry Trust is an important marker in its history. In 1949 when **Albion**, then the **Plane** was saved by the Trust George VI was King, the Berlin airlift was still at its height, Mount Everest was still to be climbed and the 'Four-minute' mile was still to be run. In February 1949 women were pleased to note that clothes rationing had ended and children were even happier that sweet rationing had also been lifted. The first flight of the De Havilland Comet, the world's first jet passenger aircraft took place, pay in the RAF was approximately 31/- (£1.60) per week and the average male wage was £4.50. In 1999 we see enormous changes around us but our central aim still holds true, 'the preservation of one or more trading wherries.'

In January this year, Mike Sparkes (our archivist) and I had a memorable day which started at the Maritime Museum at Yarmouth. We collected ten boxes of Trust records; books, logs, minutes, correspondence and financial records about the early years, all making fascinating reading. Alongside these records are various models and a full-size Lateener, the **Maria**, twenty-seven feet in length.

From these records I would like to sketch in some of

the events of 1949. The inaugural meeting was held in the Stuart Hall, Norwich at 7.30 p.m. on Wednesday February 23rd. 1949. In the chair was Lady Mayhew and on the platform was Mr. H.C. Boardman, Mr. G.R. Clark, Col. S.E. Glendenning, Mr. M. Milles, Mr. J. Forsythe and skipper Mr. J. Bates. The long term aim agreed was to build a new wherry, estimated to cost £1,750.00. If we relate this to today's costs it would represent a project of £85,000.00 at a conservative guess. At subsequent meetings the idea of refurbishing an existing wherry was agreed. The first wherry suggested was the **Hilda**. She was in very bad condition. The **Plane** had also been put at the Trusts' disposal. She belonged to Colmans, seemed to be a better prospect, and at a meeting on April 6th 1949, Roy Clarke proposed that **Plane** should be re-christened with her original name **Albion**. This was seconded by Mr. W.L. Clabburn.

From a newspaper cutting: A fete in aid of the Trust raised £60. It was held at the home of Mr. and Mrs. James Forsythe. As the fete was drawing to a close a telegram arrived from Humphrey Boardman, with news of **Albions** victory in the wherry race at the Breydon Regatta. As a footnote to the fete were the results of the Baby Show. Winner of the 6 months to 1 year class was Carol Joy Carter, and winner of the 12 months to 2 years class was Julia Wyatt. If they cares to contact the Trust their prize is still awaiting collection.

Where are they now?

From another cutting: A Wherry waltz was written and I quote, "it hasn't got words as it would take more than one voice to sing it, but I have written it to dance to." This was composed by the well-known and well-loved Ted Ellis. Letters and telegrams were also exchanged seeking support from the rich and famous. An exchange between Roy Clarke and Winston Churchill is on file and a number of letters from Michael Seago indicated his continuing interest.

During my years with the Trust as Vice-Chairman and now as Chairman I am aware of the great support of the membership. I am grateful for that and for continued support as we develop the Trust into the next century. James Forsythe, our President continues to remind me of that very important passage from the Trust Deed, "*The object of the Trust is to preserve in perpetuity one or more examples of the Norfolk Trading Wherry.*"

Without you all it is not possible.

Keith Robotham

Yellow Flags-Black Sails

How the Trust was born

I am sometimes asked what made me think of preserving a Norfolk Wherry. Looking back over half a century I can pin point the moment when the idea first entered my head. It was a day we had all been training and waiting for, the 6th of June, 1944.

I had beached my ship a little to the west of Courseulles and seen all the troops and vehicles I had carried safely over the sand dunes and into the thick of the fighting.

Picking my way carefully after them I was soon looking out at a battlefield for the first time in my life - it's an experience sailors don't often have. The sight was sickening; houses turned to rubble, a church in ruins, gardens crushed by tanks and trucks, dead and dying cattle littering the fields with khaki-clad figures huddled where they fell. The noise was incessant, clattering small-arms fire and the throaty boom of heavy guns from the big ships lying off. All around was the smoke and stench of bitter conflict with shouted orders ringing out to marshal the men into their proper groups before they were marched off into the unknown.

I lifted my eyes at last and saw that there was marshland right up to the foot of the dunes with a dyke running through it for all the world as if a piece of Norfolk had been put there to remind me of home. And by the sides of the dyke I suddenly noticed a stretch of yellow irises, quite undamaged, proudly nodding their heads to the westering wind, the yellow flags of my youth. How often had I gathered an armful of them to take home to my mother while the great sails of wherries floated by in the stream beyond. I wondered if there would still be wherries when the war was over and if there weren't I determined to try and see if I could resurrect one. Coming back across the Channel that night I kept thinking of different ways such a thing might be done but it would have to wait until the present job was finished.

Months passed with little let up in the demand for arms and supplies which had to be ferried over to France, but for all the hard work there were moments when I could light my pipe and day-dream about life after the war. At last there was peace and I could hang up my uniform and don the civilian suit a grateful government had provided for me.

Now was the opportunity to search around and discover whether there were any wherries left. But all my efforts drew blank until one morning at breakfast I asked my wife who suggested it might be a good idea to talk to our old friend Col. Glendenning who was well known about the rivers in his yacht *Ada*.

When I did question him he was not very encouraging as he believed most of the hulls still afloat had been turned into lighters while the rest had engines in them. Eventually I broached the idea of trying to find a sound enough hull that could be restored, re-rigged, and set working again. It's certainly a possibility he said, after several minutes thought, but you would need to interest a lot of people as something like that has never been tried before.

We had long discussions after that and many names were put forward of people who might be interested. A few were, but many more were not, saying it was a hare-brained scheme that could never succeed. But we persevered and had much encouragement from Lady Mayhew, Humphrey Boardman, Capt. Fred Poyser, Chris Perks and Capt. Palmer, besides well wishers not only in Norwich but throughout the broads. We carefully weighed up all the pros and cons and decided that the time had come when we should see what public backing we might expect. In a letter to the Eastern Daily Press we outlined what we proposed and were gratified at the enthusiastic response. Stemming from that came the decision to call a public meeting in the Stuart Hall, Norwich and the attendance exceeded all expectations.

I remember to this day the excitement I felt standing up in front of that very large gathering and speaking of our plans. It was our intention I said to establish a Trust to which everyone could subscribe and to raise money in all possible ways. I appealed directly to the audience for contributions and recall Lady Mayhew handing me a very handsome cheque which started the ball rolling. I held it up for all to see as volunteers went round collecting notes, cheques and cash which by the end of the evening amounted to more than £500, a quite outstanding sum for those days.

This meeting signalled the go-ahead for the formation of the Trust with a steering committee whose first task would be to find a wherry hull sound enough for restoration. There was little enough choice but in the end it was decided that the *Plane* belonging to Colmans and lying at their wharf near Carrow bridge was the best option. Thanks in no small measure to the efforts of Lady Mayhew, Colmans were persuaded to sell and it was now the responsibility of the Trust to turn a bare hull into a real live sailing wherry.

The committee charged with the task of bringing this about comprised Messrs. Boardman, Clark, Clabburn, Glendenning, Forsythe, Percival and Miller. Humphrey Boardman was chairman and myself secretary, quite a mixed bag of interests and skills, but we fell to and in a surprisingly short time the *Plane* was on her way being towed down to

Fellows yard in Yarmouth. Here essential restoration was to be carried out and her name reverted to **Albion** which she bore when launched in 1898.

This meant she would need new name boards and I asked a practising wood carver in Elm Hill if he would make them with gold-leaf incised lettering. He made a splendid job of them except that he had to use bronze leaf with gold being quite unobtainable. I paid him the £9 he asked and carried them off well satisfied with how well they would look when screwed in place. But later on I was to be sadly disillusioned.

Finding the timber to make a mast proved very difficult as the firm I contacted in Liverpool assured me that all the pitch-pine forests had long since been cut down. However they could supply a baulk of oregon and this was put on the rail for Fellows who still had craftsmen able to tackle the job. A counter weight of about a ton would be needed for the foot of the mast so I launched an appeal with the slogan 'Lead for Albion's Mast.' The response was immediate and varied ranging from old accumulators, discarded water pipes, flashing off roofs and a handful of toy soldiers handed to me by a very small schoolboy! One Sunday Ted Ellis and I set off to row round all the hulks on Rockland broad as he thought there might be some lead tangles or suchlike which we could scavenge. It was a very successful foray and we came back with more than a

hundredweight.

The **Albion's** first sail had cost some £5 and although Jeckells of Wroxham had quoted a figure appreciably more than that, which was only to be expected, we knew we should get a first-rate job as in the past they had made sails for many wherries. They specified that it would be fashioned from heavy flax canvas, seamed together with tarred twine and roped with coarse yarned Italian hemp.

It was about this time that I first met Jack Cates when he came in to see me and asked if we had appointed a skipper yet. I said we hadn't whereupon he asked if perhaps we might consider him as he had been in wherries since he was a lad. I liked the cut of his jib and felt instinctively that he was the sort of man we wanted, so at the next committee meeting I proposed his appointment, about the best move we ever made in those early days as he proved a tower of strength.

We drove down to Fellows' yard some days later to see how work was progressing and wrapped up on the back seat I had my prized name boards. I got them out and proudly showed them to Jack expecting he would be full of admiration. Instead he just stood and looked shaking his head and saying, "They're the sort of boards for a pleasure wherry, not a trader, we'll have to get some painted." And we did, bright yellow lettering on a blue background,



The Plane at Colmans' wharf in 1949



The **Plane** leaving Colman's wharf in Norwich behind the sailing barge **Greenhithe**



The **Plane** along with the sailing barge **Greenhithe** being towed to Yarmouth by the steam tug **Cypress**

and when they were finally in place I could see how right they were in comparison with mine. But they still survive, screwed to a wall, though the bronze leaf has turned a dingy brown.

While Jack kept an eye on things in Yarmouth we made strenuous efforts to recruit new members and raise money wherever possible. I went to many meetings spreading the word a well attended one being in Beccles which Capt. Poyser had organised, and many new members signed up. The boys of Paston Grammar School formed their own Friends of the Wherry society and from time to time sent us donations. I remember going to a Rotary Club luncheon in North Walsham where I had a very cordial reception because wherries were no strangers in the town.



Volunteers working on the *Plane* scraping off the hull at Fellowes yard, Yarmouth

The crowning glory of any wherry is her Jenny Morgan, made of iron rod with a cut out of the famous Welsh lass besporting her flowing skirt and ornamental hat. Barnards of Norwich made and presented this to us which I enjoyed painting in brilliant colours, while my wife later sewed on the fathom of twelve inch red bunting which I seem to remember we got from Hurn's chandler's shop at the bottom of Exchange street in Norwich.

Jack and I spent many hours together sorting out the hundred and one things that cropped up, and with him I rubbed shoulders with many of the one-time skippers who were still around. In one riverside cottage we encountered a tough old character enjoying a dish of freshly fried herrings which his daughter had cooked for him. His method of eating them was simple enough; he took the flesh from the bone with his thumb and first finger making a better job of it than I could with a knife and fork. He spoke of his time with the monster wherry *Wonder* of which he retained few fond memories. She seemed, he said, to have a will of her own and it was hard work making her go where you wanted. I listened to

tales like this and realised it was living history, the very stuff of wherrying life, of the Broads and rivers, and I ought not to let it go unrecorded. So I began making notes of all I heard and as I filled more and more note books I realised that some time I must record them in permanent form as such memories were too valuable to be lost forever. Some years later I was able to expand all the material I had collected and published the book 'Black-Sailed Traders,' which though long out of print did I believe focus a lot of attention on the work of the Wherry Trust.

In the fulness of time and when Fellows had spent all the money we could afford, the *Albion* was floated out of her dock, the mast was raised and her sail bent on. We made plans to sail her on her maiden trip under the Trust flag from Great Yarmouth to Norwich and looked forward to an exciting departure through

Breydon bridge and up to Berney Arms. But it was not to be. When it was time to start the whole area was under a blanket of fog and we groped our way over Breydon Water with the help of a harbour launch. After much delay we eventually reached Hardley Cross where the civic heads of Norwich and Great Yarmouth gathered on board for a modest cold collation. A toast was drunk to the *Albion's* success and much later than we had hoped we arrived in Norwich.

I walked down next morning for a mug of tea and a word with Jack and felt no little pride as she lay there in all her glory, the pride of the waterfront. We had a committee meeting soon after when Humphrey Boardman moved that I should be made an Honorary Life Member of the Trust. It was a kind and much appreciated gesture, and as despite the passing of more than fifty years I am still alive, I presume I remain a member still!

They say old men forget, I know I do, but two events from the pioneering days stand out very clearly in my mind. The first was that very successful 'Norfolk



September 12th 1949, Albion leaves Fellowes yard to have mast and sail fitted. Note Jack Cates with boathook at the bow



Making the sail for Albion at Jeckells sail loft

Night' which Jeanne Bush arranged and presented in the Stuart Hall, Norwich. I felt it was a great tribute to the Trust that so many distinguished East Anglians, and others associated with the area, should have gathered round to give their support. There was Percy Edwards with his incomparable bird song impressions, from blue tits to bitterns, and Sidney Grapes with down to earth tales of Norfolk life which kept the audience in high good humour. On a

a brave picture which delighted my wife and two children who insisted on coming with me. A comfortable south-easterly allowed Jack to show her paces and we entered Lowestoft harbour in fine style where, with the bridge off, we found crowds of people to welcome us. We passed sedately through Lake Lothing and so the **Albion** returned to where she was first launched in 1898. That day we revived a long-standing wherrying tradition and gave a good



Albion sails through Breydon Bridge in thick fog on her first trip with the Norfolk Wherry Trust, Thursday October 13th 1949

more serious note we had the distinguished pianist Kathleen Long playing music by E.J. Moeran, 'Stalham River' and 'Windmills.' Moeran was Norfolk born, the son of a country parson, and grew up in the county. Also in the programme was a Twenty Questions item presided over by Lincoln Ralphs in which R.H. Mottram took a leading part. Jeanne Bush then appeared to great applause to give us that splendid poem by Ted Ellis, 'The Norfolk Wherry.' Finally the curtain was rung down with the baritone Edgar Samuel, accompanied by Cyril Pearce, singing the stirring 'Songs of Travel' by Vaughan Williams. It had been in every way an evening to remember and I'm sure those who had the good fortune to be there still do.

The second event was when I took my launch **Turn of the Tide** down to Yarmouth and picking up a line from Jack gave the **Albion** a pluck through the pierheads and out to sea. Free of the land she made

pickling in salt water for her hull, no bad thing for an old wooden vessel. Then through the lock into Oulton Broad and into the Waveney where she was built to work.

So the dream I had those long years ago, when the world was in turmoil, had come true and the black sail lived on to delight all those who love our Broads and rivers. Last year in June I was once more at Courseulles and walked along the dunes to the spot where I landed in 1944. I had no difficulty in finding it for there they were, those yellow irises, growing as bravely as when I first saw them. They had survived fifty turbulent years and I began wondering if they could have been there during the previous fifty years, when **Albion** was born. I like to think they were.

The Early Years

The following notes are taken from news paper cuttings for the year 1949 also from Albions first log under the newly formed Norfolk Wherry Trust. Fifty years ago the sailing wherry was thought to be part of history but today, in 1999, the Broads will soon have seven wherries sailing when Maud joins the fleet.

1949 14th January *The Eastern Daily Press* carries an article to preserve a Norfolk trading wherry, those interested were asked to get in touch with G. R. Clark, Augustine Stewarts House Tombland, Norwich. The article ends with; We are your obedient servants, HERVEY BENHAM, HUMPHREY BOARDMAN, G. R. CLARK, G. E. FFISKE, S. E. GLENDENNING, MARTIN MILLER, VERA MORRISON, CHRISTOPHER. G. H. PERKS, W. M. H. POLLEN, F. C. POYSER, HECTOR. L. READ, LEWIS STOREY.

1949 23rd February:-On this day a meeting was held in Stuart Hall, Norwich at 7.30 p.m. chaired by Lady Mayhew. The Norfolk Wherry Trust was formed. Lady Mayhew, Mr Hector Read and Mr Lewis Storey were appointed the first trustees. The following committee were elected:- H. Boardman (Chairman), G. R. Clark (Hon. Secretary), J. Forsythe (Hon. Treasurer), Lieut.-Col. S.E. Glendenning, Messrs W. L. Clabburn, M Miller and Percival (Horning)

1949 31st March :-The wherry PLANE formerly the

ALBION, now lying near Carrow Bridge Norwich, was one option proposed by the newly formed Norfolk Wherry Trust, the other was the wherry HILDA, but the estimated cost of repairing the latter was too high.

1949 31st August :-The E.D.P reported that many experienced wherry men offered their services as masters, Jack Cates at the age of 45, has been selected. A sailing panel of about 75 men able and willing to spend time on board for trips, the total membership of the trust is now 300.

Albion Log.

Thurs. Sept. 29th :- Launched from Fellow's Dock @ 2.30p.m 1949.

Frid. Sept. 30th :- Painters and shipwrights working on wherry.

Sat. Oct. 1st :- No labour at work on wherry. *News Chronicle* reporter came on board.

Mon. Oct. 3rd :- Painters and shipwrights working.

Tues. Oct. 4th :- Shipped the mast by dockyard hand crane. Mr Boardman brought winch from Norwich in his van. Painters and shipwrights working.

Wed./ Thurs. Oct. 5/6th :- Painters and shipwrights working.

Frid. Oct. 7th :- Sail came on board & bent by Jeckell's men. Borrowed crotch block from "Hathor."

Sat. Oct. 8th :- Mate Mr George Cates started work



Albion leaving Yarmouth harbour en route to Lowestoft

aboard.

Sun. Oct. 9th :- Had a trial sail to Berney Arms with Mr Clark on board.

Mon. Oct. 10th :- Returned to Fellows Dock to complete painting. Received crotch block from Yarmouth Shipping Company.

Tues. Oct. 11th :- Loaded 3 standards of timber for Jewson's and 7 barrels oil & 12 drums for Shell Mex.

Wed. Oct. 12th :- Finished painting at Fellows & moored near the upper ferry. Received 2 quants & boathook from Elliots.

Thur. Oct. 13th :- Left Yarmouth at 09.30 in tow with commisioner's launch. Lord Mayor of Yarmouth on board. Arrived Jewson's Wharf at 19.00.

1949 13th October :-ALBION sails from Yarmouth to Norwich, with a stop at Hardley Cross for the meeting of the Mayors from both places to act out an ancient ceremony. The crew on the day were the Cates brothers Jack and George.

Albion Log

Fri. Oct 14th :- Dis-charged timber at Jewson's 10.30 Dis-charged oil at Shell Mex at 15.00.

Sat. Oct 15th :- Left Norwich at 07.30 arrived Surlingham at 10.30.

Mon. Oct. 17th :- Loaded sugar beet for Mr Blake & left Surlingham at 13.00 arrived at Cantley 15.00 dis-

charged beet at 17.00 (34.75 ton).

Tues. Oct. 18th :- Lying at Cantley, too much wind S.W gale.

Wed. Oct. 19th :- Left Cantley at 11.15 arrived at Yarmouth at 13.00. Dropped thro. bridge to Jewson's.

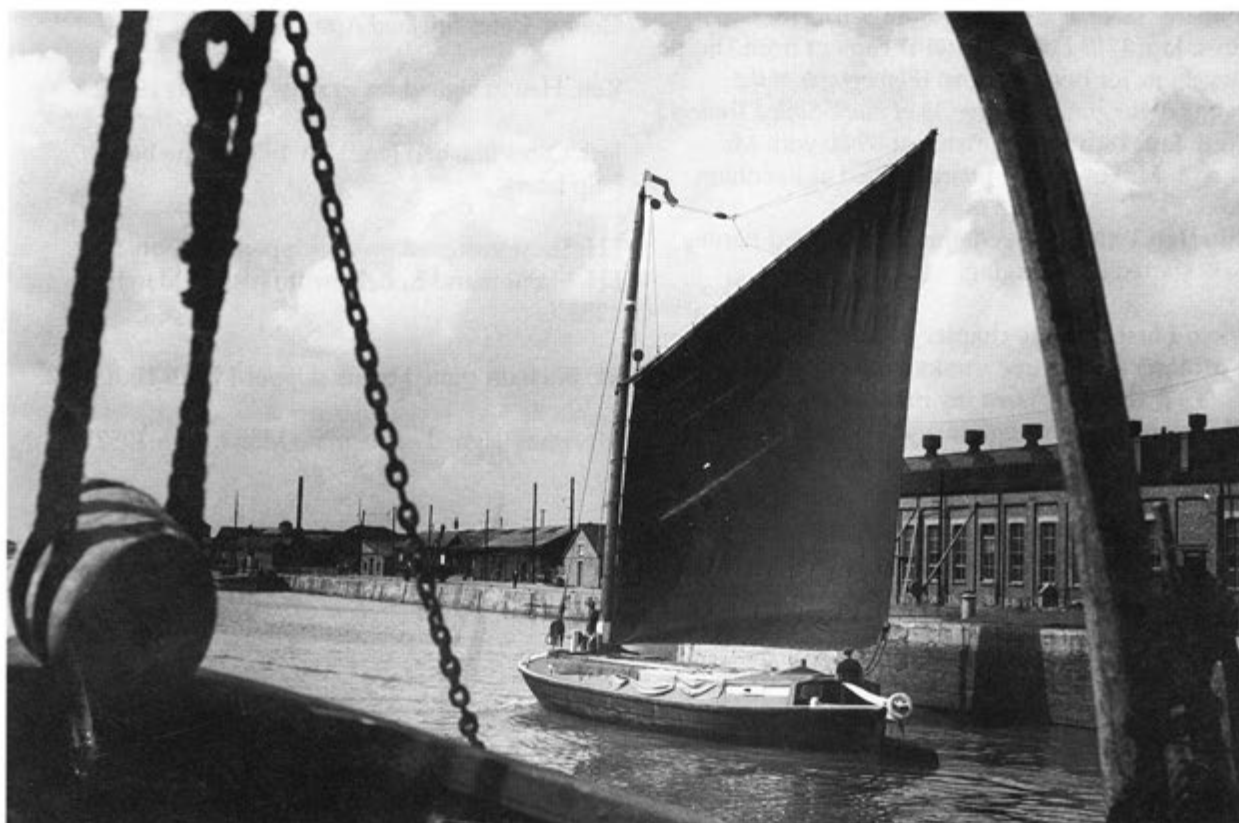
Thur. Oct 20th :- Loaded 12 standards of timber for Jewsons Norwich.

Frid. Oct 21st :- Left Yarmouth at 17.00 arrived at Reedham at 21.30.

Sat. Oct 22nd :- Left Reedham at 06.30 arrived Norwich at 13.00, with the help of tug from Bramerton.

Sun. Oct. 23rd :- Shoved from Foundry Bridge to Jewson's.

Mon. Oct. 24th :- Dis-charged 12 standards of timber (30 ton) After carrying 38 ton sugar beet from Surlingham to Cantley, **Albion** leaked badly taking on alot of water. She went back to Fellow's Yard at Yarmouth to have the cabin repaired and the decks caulked, after being repaired she was loaded with timber for Norwich and 3 ton coal for the Berney Arms, leaving on **Nov 1st.** arriving in Norwich at 14.15 on **Nov. 2nd.** after a tow from M. S. 'Festivity'. Leaving Surlingham on **Nov. 4th.** loaded with 37 ton sugar beet the martingale & spans broke on route to Cantley. Over the next two weeks she carried sugar beet and timber, on **Nov. 17th** she broke her gaff jaws after leaving Surlingham and moored at Buckenham, the next day she had a tow to Cantley from the Barge 'Oxygen'.



Albion sailing onto Lake Lothing after passing through Lowestoft swing bridge

Penciled in between the log **Nov. 17& 18th** are the words ' George laid up'.

Nov. 21st. Albion is back at Fellows having gaff repaired and new spans made

Wed. Nov. 23rd. gaff came aboard, left Yarmouth 10.15 with Mr Clark as mate, arrived at Potter Heigham at 1415.

Fri. 25th. left Potter @ 11.00 loaded with beet, Mr Glenshaw as mate arrived Yarmouth 17.30. The next mate was Mr Glendenning from Cantley to Surlingham on **Nov.28th.** Jack Cates left Surlingham on **Wed. Nov. 30th.** with a Mr Tyrrell as mate called (Sceweys) an old waterman friend. After discharging beet at Cantley they headed to Potter for more beet. On the journey back they had to moor at Cold Harbour because of too much wind, next day **Thurs.**

Dec. 8th. they went on to a sunken shore and had to use the winch to get off, unfortunately she crossed the river and rode on top of a pile causing part of the deck to lift, this happened just below the lower 7 mile house. After discharging the beet they again headed to Surlingham, while lying at Surlingham on **Sun. Dec 11th.** Mr Clark and Mr Forsythe surveyed the damage. Back to Cantley with more beet only to be damaged again this time a crane put a hole through the aft hatch. The repairs were carried out by Mr Broom of Brundall from the **14th to the 16th Dec.**

Albion was moored at Foundry Bridge, over Christmas from the **24th to the 28th Dec.** Sugar beet was the main cargo in early January 1950.

Wed. Jan.11th Unbent the sail & got it ashore at Colmans for dressing.

Frid. Jan.13th Dressed sail, drew 2 Gall. Tar Colmans store & 2 brushes from Roworth.

Tues. Jan. 17th Loaded sand & cement from Thorpe Gravel pits for Berney Arms. (*Photograph of the loading of the gravel on page 33 of Black-Sailed Traders.*)

Wed. Jan. 18th Left Norwich at 09.00 with Mr Clark & Mr Fowler on board arrived at Reedham 16.00.

Thur. Jan.19th Left Reedham 04.00 arrived Berney 05.30 started dis-charging.

When I first read the chapter in *Black-Sailed Traders* of **Albion** carrying tree trunks from Thorpe to Beccles it always crossed my mind to discover **Albions** movements before and after Roy Clark's excellent story, first we go to loading reeds at Rockland on **Mon. Feb. 27th.** after loading 383 fathoms of reed they sailed to Buckenham with Mr Clark on board. The next day they left Buckenham & 09.00 arriving at Acle at 20.00.

Wed. March 1st. left Acle at 05.30 arrived Horning at 10.00 (discharged) left Horning 13.30 arrived back at Acle 16.30.

March 2nd. left Acle at 09.00 arrived Surlingham 21.45. The next day left Surlingham 08.00 arrived Thorpe 10.00. Lying at Thorpe over the **4th / 5th & 6th March.** From the **7th to 11th** hauling trees to river bank.

Mon 13th started loading trees, Tuesday finished loading trees and left Thorpe at 12.00 arrived

Buckenham 16.30. The next part of the log covers Mr Clarks story :-

Wed. Mar. 15th. Left Buckenham at 10.00 had Mr Clark as mate arrived Beccles at 21.30.

Thur. Mar. 16th. Dis-charged trees & left Beccles at 15.00 arrived at Surlingham at 21.00.

Fri. Sat. & Sun. lying at Surlingham.

Mon. Mar. 20th. Lying at Surlingham, Film Company made a few shots of the wherry

Albions first log gives us an insight into the daily life of a working wherry carrying timber from Yarmouth under sail, sugar beet from the farms along the river, getting fuel and other goods to remote places around the broads the Norfolk Wherry Trust were successful to keep alive part of the working history of a rural area of East Anglia. The wherry made a loss in the early years but thankfully for us today the members in 1949 were proud to see a black- trader gliding through the river valleys holding on to a by-gone period when commercial goods travelled under canvas by the free winds of time

Early Skippers and Mates

Jack Cates signed on as skipper on Sept. 26th 1949.

George Cates signed as mate on Oct. 8th 1949.
George Cates finished April 1950.

Ken. Hewitt signed on as mate May 8th 1950.

Jack Cates finished Jan. 12th 1952 (came back to help later)

J.H. Stanton signed on as skipper Jan. 19th 1952.
J.H. Stanton and Ken. Hewitt finished March 7th 1952.

Vic. Bircham signed on as skipper March 10th 1952.

Mr Ames signed on as mate March 10th 1952.



OBITUARIES



Humphrey Colman Boardman

Died on 15th June 1998 at the age of 93. Attended Norwich School, Malvern College and Trinity College, Cambridge. He qualified as an architect and joined the family firm in Norwich. He married Vera Wilson in 1934. They had three children. Vera died in 1969 and two years later he married Isobel Aitkin. Rowing was an early passion. He rowed for Britain in the Olympic Games of 1928 and won two gold medals at the 1930 Empire Games. He went on to coach the Cambridge boat crews. In 1948 he was one of the first few people who responded to the call to preserve a Norfolk Trading Wherry. In 1949 he was present at the first meeting when the Norfolk Wherry Trust was formed and became its first Chairman, a task he performed to the best advantage of the Trust for many years. His association with the Trust was of long standing, and he played an especially valuable part in promoting the "Save the Wherry Week" in 1966. At his death still held the position of Vice President.



Lady Mayhew

Died on 13th July 1998 at the age of 100. Born Beryl Colman she later married Sir Basil Mayhew. Her lifelong interests included sailing, a love of the broads and she had a special interest in the Brown boats. She was one of the founders and an original trustee of the Norfolk Wherry Trust and was instrumental in obtaining the unrigged hull of the Plane, later Albion from Colmans for a nominal sum. Based on her wide experience her input into the Trust was immensely valuable. It was she who in a particularly difficult period (experts believed that Albion should be scrapped), told the committee: "that we have taken on the task of saving at least one trading wherry and must not be put off by the difficulties, but must carry on until we have achieved our original aim." Lady Mayhew was in later years a Vice President and was present at the launch of Albion's centenary year on the 4th April 1998. Her last function was at Horning, at the Vintage Wooden Boat Club's meeting where she accepted a plaque on behalf of Albion and the Trust.

The Norfolk Wherry Trust are very sad to have lost two such fine people and worthy colleagues who have been of immense help in ensuring that Albion has survived into her second century. The reading below, taken from the Service of Thanksgiving for Lady Mayhew, has been included as it sums up our thoughts for them both at this time.

What is Dying - Bishop Brent.

What is dying? I am standing on the sea shore. A ship sails to the morning breeze and starts for the ocean. She is an object of beauty and I stand watching her till at last she fades on the horizon, and someone at my side says, 'She is gone.'

Gone where? Gone from my sight, that is all; she is just as large in the masts, hull and spars as she ever was when I saw her, and just as able to bear her load of living freight to its destination. The diminished size and total loss of sight is in me, not in her; and just at the moment when someone at my side says, 'She is gone,' there are others who are watching her coming, and other voices take up a glad shout, 'There she comes' - and that is dying.

John Who?

There is no doubt about it, the Norfolk Wherry Trust is unique in the annals of maritime history.

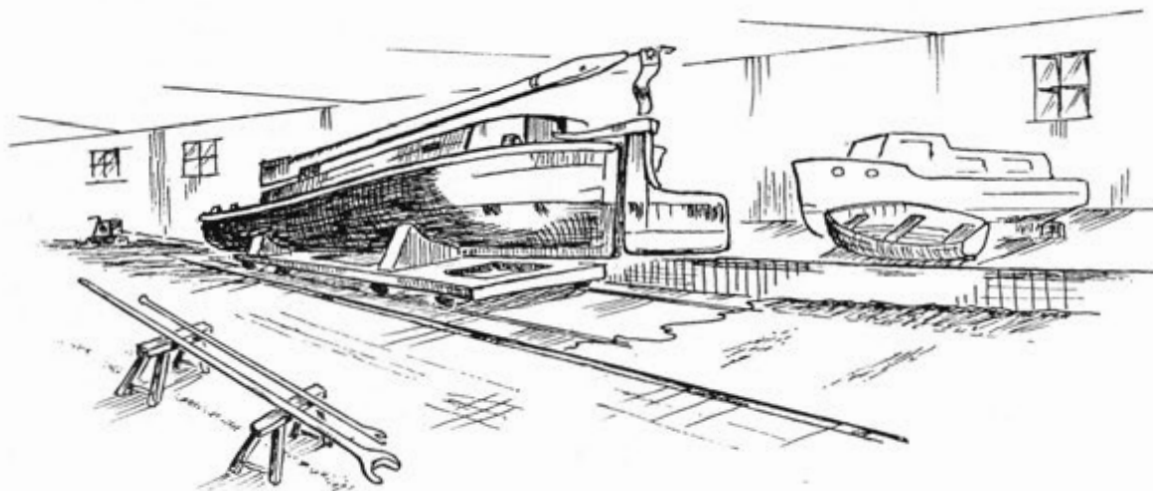
For fifty years a collection of ordinary folk with like minds have kept afloat and in working order a heap of ancient wood and canvas despite its' determination to rot away and fall apart. It is, perhaps, worthy of note that **Albion** has actually outlived several of those inspired enough to start the venture in 1949.

The Trust was formed in an era long before conservation and preservation became fashionable buzzwords. Indeed the venture was greeted with some scorn, with a general view that it would never last! The fortunes of the Trust did, inevitably, ebb and flow and it was at the lowest of these cyclic ebbs that I became involved. What seemed like a good idea at the time has lasted for nigh on thirty-five years - so far. On reflection, it does seem that occasionally I took it upon myself to take responsibility for decisions that, with due modesty, helped to make the old girl a centenarian.

Perhaps if I had shaken my head, sucked my teeth and pronounced the patient too ill to save, then we would not be where we are today.

'Save the Wherry Week' gave us the impetus and funds to tackle my plan. The first stage included replacing all the rotten frames and an Oulton Broad yard was engaged to do the work. Disaster loomed when, with half the frames removed, the yard announced that they could not continue with the work. Woe was us for clearly we were becoming undone!

The day was saved - or **Albion** was - when an old chum, Peter Holt, offered the use of his tiny yard on Lake Lothing. Peter had a slipway about the length of **Albion** and a small cradle, quite inadequate for the load. At that time the old Gorleston South Pier was being dismantled for re-building and a vast heap of massive baulks of timber were available for scrap. Now it was during 'Save the Wherry Week' that I met Dougie Blewitt of Oulton Broad. Dougie was to become a close friend and a great asset to

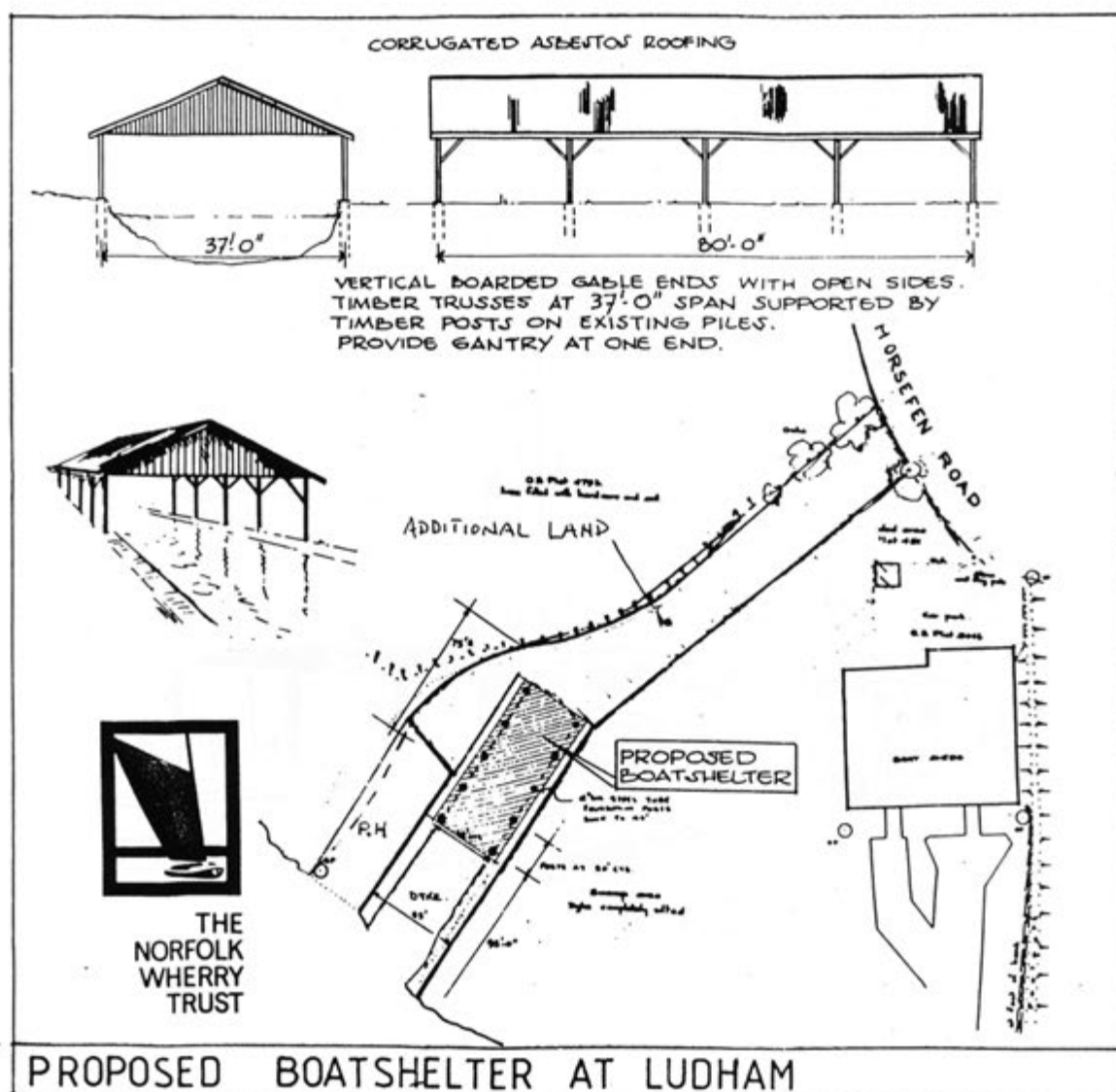


A 'Last Stand' survey

It all started, as Enid Blyton would say, in 1965 or thereabouts when the committee announced in the E.D.P. that **Albion** was to be laid to rest with her sisters on Ranworth Broad. As a young and eager naval architect and marine surveyor I offered my services to do a 'last stand' survey before taking the final step. Mr. Duffen was the Hon. Secretary then (I think) and there was another nice chap involved - I think his name was Forsythe. I did the survey at Herbert Woods 'Fairmile' slipway, thought about the results for a while and then announced to the A.G.M. that working to a five year plan I believed **Albion** could be saved. The 'Save the Wherry' week ensued.

the Trust. Our friendship started when I asked him to help with collecting some of these baulks of timber from a site at Hopton, take them to Peter Holts yard and help build a cradle to support **Albion** in her parlous state. This done I was able to arrange subcontract labour to complete the re-framing work. A lesson was well learned and all future work was done at George Overys' yard on the massive slipway and under the control of Alec Stuart, the yard foreman and master shipwright.

We proceeded with the master plan year on year. Being in 'the business' allowed me to keep a very strict eye on the quality and extent of the work and to keep to budget. With



Drawings showing original base site with additional land marked and proposed wet boat shed

a new impetus to the Trust and Albion in good 'fettle', James Forsythe was prompted, one day, to propose that we take Albion to Ely as part of an inland waterways event and by water to boot!! "What a great idea we all exclaimed but is she up to it?" Wherries had been to sea before - yes - and got wrecked! Anyway as a publicity event it was too good to miss so Perryman went out on a limb again, surveyed Albion most thoroughly and made recommendations concerning towing and safety. After all, messing about on the sea was serious business and the bottom was deeper than our best quant!

We went to Ely - made history with a wherry sea voyage and came back. There was a time though, as the waves were rolling along the deck and every joint was creaking when I wondered if maybe I had been a bit hasty and, perhaps, I should have said no to the idea. Still, nothing ventured as they say.

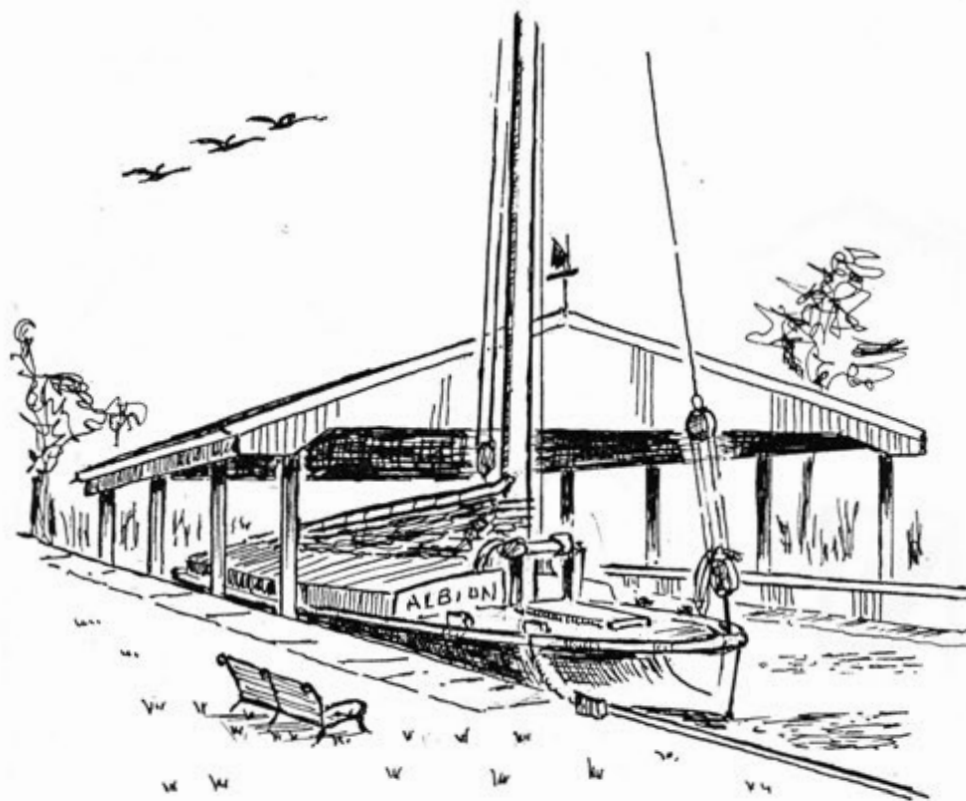
Somewhere during that time I took over as editor of the Trust journal - The Quant - and used it to promote an interest amongst the membership in the history and practical aspects of wherrying. I was helped enormously in this endeavour by David Bray, the master of wry humour and understatement. David later took over the job and later made the journal a classic of its type.

In the Trusts' 25th year I had the idea to restore Hardley Cross and re-enact the old civic boundary event. Once again Dougie Blewitt turned to and together with Bill Youngs (in the masonry business) the cross was repaired and the Mayors of three boroughs met on Albion in company with other fine craft and proceeded to the Cross and had a 'Frolic.' During the course of this event, when the Mayors were assembled in the hold, Lady Mayhew was heard to remark "Does this constitute a nest of Mayors?" (A Mayors nest) get it? We are all indebted to Lady Mayhew for her quiet humour and constant encouragement.

Years went by and my business took a lot of my attention. The Trust ran into a very bad spell with what seemed, from the outside, to be a lot of infighting and sniping from the sidelines. It was a bad time and the general public, by way of the press, were withdrawing support. "Would I like to go on the Committee and take sides?" I was asked "No, thank you." I replied. "Well, er, would you be Chairman?" Vanity, vanity all is vanity as someone once said. That and the fact that I could not resist the challenge, got me the job. I was lucky to be able to build up a very supportive committee of like minds. We put together another of my 5-year plans but this time it included the seemingly

impossible task of buying our own land and dyke and erecting a permanent wet boat shed. To complete such a task would mean that **Albion** would have permanent protection against the ravages of the weather and perhaps, more importantly, the collateral of property should it ever be necessary to borrow money for a total refit. At least that is how I saw it.

annual loss and relied upon 'handouts', grants and local generosity. The chartering philosophy had been, over the years, to operate on a shoestring and charge accordingly. I felt that times had changed and we could afford to be more bullish. We looked at every aspect of income potential, making use of the new opportunities offered by surplus mooring space and a quality site. In the fullness of time and after a lot of hard work by everyone, the time



A home at last

The plan was presented to the Trustees, after all, they were to carry the can if it went wrong. Ian Mackintosh and Anne gave it total support and the others felt happy with it. So off we went again - head above the parapet once more!!

First we purchased the land and obtained planning permission. Sounds easy, but it could not have happened without Pamela Oakes. Oakes by name and oak by nature, staunch and true and impervious to lightning! The paperwork and meetings connected with this part of the plan was beyond belief but Pam was able to use her secretarial skills with devastating results and call upon the might of Mackintosh's when necessary.

I was determined that there would not be a cult of personality and that every task would be undertaken with everyone on the committee knowing about it and every important detail recorded. That way I hoped to guard against the pitfalls of infighting and tendencies to egotism. It worked.

The plan to quayhead the dyke, erect workshops and build the wet boat shed all came together thanks to the work of a dedicated committee. Everyone had a job and got on with it. Forgive me but I cannot remember names in order that individual credit can be given. Suffice it to say that as a group we were unstoppable!

For donkeys years the Trust had been operating at an

came when all bills were paid, we owned the property, **Albion** was in very good order and there was money in the bank.

In September 1988, we were graced with the presence of Colin Moynihan (Minister for Sport) who duly wrote an unsolicited testimonial and three years later the Trust gained the prestigious Scania award. It had taken eight years of intensive effort on our part to come from the slough of despond to international recognition and financial stability.

Then it happened. In developing our site at Ludham, with full planning approval, we had opened the door to other developments on Womack Water. I took the stoniest personal objection to the development of a reed bed site on the south east boundary of our plot, mostly for reasons of principle. It became clear to me that I had become too subjective about the Trust and **Albion**, and was in danger of losing sight of the broader picture. So I became an ex Chairman before I put my head over the parapet again but this time to get it shot off!!

So, that was that. Quit whilst ahead, always leave 'em laughin' know when to play and know when to fold etc. It was a great game and I had some good partners at the table but most of all it was my privilege and pleasure to share my cards with James Forsythe --the master.

My Links With Albion 1980-1999

It was in 1980 when I first came into contact with **Albion**. During the winter months she was laid up at Womack Cruisers. This was at a time before the base was purchased. In the summer she was based at Thurne dyke.

I was working at Womack Cruisers at this time and frequently saw working parties arrive to paint her during the early spring. It made me wonder how **Albion** survived; guessing that sometimes there was not a great deal of money to spend on her.

During the year I managed to have a few sails on **Albion**. Vaughan Ashby was the skipper and I was his mate. That was when I learnt to sail her. Vaughan was chairman for one year and during his term of office I began to work on **Albion**, first of all doing small jobs, and beginning my links with her that have lasted nineteen years to date.

In 1981 the painting and repairs were done by a party of twelve Air Artificers of the Fleet Air Arm, brought in by Ivan Edwards. They slept at Womack Cruisers; bunking down in the workshop at night and using the cooking facilities at Misty Morn, a small bungalow in the grounds.

In the winter of 1984-85, Syd Chettleburgh asked me if I would like to help him do some repairs. Some were paid jobs and some were for the love of it. By this time I had left Womack Cruisers and was a self-employed woodworker, doing all sorts of jobs.

For this winter Syd had decided that some of the timberheads were getting bad, so these were due for replacement. We shaped the replacements, fitted them in place, bolted them up and fixed new pins as cleats in the tops. One or two of the hatches needed repair, then were repainted by Syd and the work was finished for Easter.

In those days all the work was done in the open, moored in a cut at the base. This had been dug out in 1981-82, after the Trust had first rented, then bought the land from Norfolk County Council. Getting to the dyke was difficult, with only a small walkway, about a metre wide, down which everything had to be carried. These walkways were made of duckboards and were often under water during winter high tides. There were no electrics and no shed. If we wanted power we plugged into the County Sailing Base's junction box, which had to be arranged for us.

In 1985, John Perryman and the committee had inspected the hull and discovered that the main beam was rotten and would need to be replaced. This major work was scheduled for the winter of 1985-86. Syd felt that we could manage it by using my workshop for fabricating the beam. He located a suitable baulk of timber at May Gurneys yard. The wood was previously a pile from Great Yarmouth harbour, measuring fifteen feet long by fourteen inches square. This arrived at my workshop on Syd's trailer, complete with barnacles!

We made a pattern of the old beam then Syd began taking out the old bolts, which were three quarters of an inch diameter and a variety of lengths, ranging from eighteen inches to thirty-four inches, all extremely rusty. In the confined space of the hull, Syd had to knock out about three inches of bolt, cut it off, then start again until all the

bolt was knocked out. The two quarter knees were taken out and an iron brace put in place across the hull to hold it in shape while the main beam was out. The old main beam was so rotten that it finished up in a heap in the middle of the floor.

In my workshop the main beam was shaped. The timber was Jahra, from Australia. It was very tough to work but eventually we finished the shaping. The following Monday, we took **Albion** along to Womack staithe, where Nicky Brooks used his digger to lift the new main beam into place on two planks of wood, which formed a sliding platform for us to work from. This done, we took **Albion** back to base to fit the beam, which was completed by the same Thursday. On Friday we drilled the holes for the new bolts. As we were doing this we came across some rot in the starboard tabernacle, so it was decided to replace this as well. It was three inch thick oak, fourteen inches wide and about ten feet long. It was fitted in place, bolted to the main beam and supported by a forward quarter knee. This illustrates perfectly the problems associated with maintaining an old wooden boat. Once you start exposing timber you often find other problems that you weren't expecting. These then need to be attended to as there is no point in replacing just the original part without also attending to the newly-discovered problem.

After the main beam was bolted in place, the uprights were fitted alongside their knees. To complete the work we partitioned under the beam with one inch matchboard to tidy up the area. Syd again did the painting. Nicky Brooks had offered us some brick rubble from an old barn for our car park, and he delivered this.

For the 1986-87 winter refit it was agreed that all the hatches should be taken to my workshop for overhaul and painting. Syd and I carried them, one by one, across the base to the road and loaded them on our trailers, ready for the drive to the workshop. More rubble was delivered for the car park and much of this was shovelled into place, some being reserved to start a roadway down to the dyke.

It was this year, I think, that May Gurney piled the dyke ready for the new shed. This was done from the river as nothing large could cross the base site. It had snowed when we returned the hatches back to base so, once unloaded they were turned over and slid down to the dyke like toboggans - much easier than carrying them!

During the summer of 1987 Syd laid most of the roadway from Horsefen road down to the dyke, so gradually the site was being improved. In the winter it was at first thought that there would not be too much to do but, when ceiling planks were checked, it was found that many were rotten or showing some signs of rot. I suggested that we replaced them with tanalised timber. This was done and the faces were planed and painted white. They are still sound today.

While working on a job at Neatishead I came across two ex. World War II army huts. I asked the owner if he still wanted them and said that the Norfolk Wherry Trust could make very good use of them if he didn't. He said we could have them as long as we took them down and cleared the site afterwards.



Mike Fuller and Syd Chettleburgh on Albion at the end of a winter maintenance period

Syd organised a party of helpers and I borrowed a tractor and trailer from Nicky Brooks, so away we went one Saturday morning to take the sheds down and return with them to the base. This took two loads during the day and was followed by another load on the following Monday morning. The parts of the sheds were stacked at base when one Trust comic asked, "what are you going to do with that heap of matchsticks?" Later in the year Syd and I erected the workshop. Syd also got a load of old scaffolding boards and made the quay heading and linked the piles together with concrete, ready for the wet shed.

While this was being done we still managed to extend the roadway and laid old concrete slabs inside the shed as a base. Storage of **Albion's** fittings could now take place at the base, rather than at my workshop where they had been stored for the previous three years.

The 1988-89 winter programme was to be taken up with the construction of the wet boat shed. Before that was started we had our usual Laying-up Saturday when a team of volunteers came in to strip out **Albion** for the winter. Syd arranged for May Gurney's river crane to come for a day and lift for us while we got all the trusses, purlins and posts bolted up for the wet shed. The roof sheets arrived, and with Syd pushing, I drilled the holes and we had the roof in within a week. We finished off with barge boards and gable ends.

Syd erected the gutters and painted **Albion** ready for the season as usual. We also finished the roadway to the dyke this year so the base was much improved.

I am not certain, but I think that it was in the winter of 1989-90 that John Perryman obtained some powerful wood preservative and Syd and I took out all the ceiling planking and sprayed the whole boat. We were not allowed to be on the boat for at least two weeks and then Syd replaced all the ceiling planking again. The Trust was offered a large pole, good enough to make a new gaff from. It was in Witton Wood, near North Walsham, so

with Nicky Brooks' tractor and trailer on loan again off we went, led by Syd and a team of helpers through North Walsham to collect it. All went well; we loaded it up, tied it down, but couldn't return through the town as it was over thirty-five feet long. We took by-roads all the way back to base, until Syd got lost. Imagine the scene as I tried to turn round with that load on board at a dead end. We eventually got home and unloaded - another job completed. At this point I must thank Nicky Brooks for all his help - he made many difficult jobs a lot easier.

It was during this period that Syd laid the electrics and water pipes to the site. He and I found that the starboard side of the cuddy was rotting. This had recently been replaced using Mahogany which was not very durable. We made a new one from English Oak and steamed it into place with kettles of hot water and blowlamps to soften it and two Acro jacks to persuade it into place. This worked and it was duly completed and Syd went on to paint again ready for Easter.

The 1990-91 winter re-fit was the biggest I had been involved with. It all started with Syd getting an Oak tree about twenty-five feet long and over twenty-five inches in diameter. This was cut into two inch thick boards. Syd had asked Peter Bower of Wherry Yacht Charters if we could pull **Albion** out on his slipway and this done we started checking over **Albion's** hull. We found many planks in very poor shape, those along the water line being only about three-quarters of an inch thick instead of their normal one and a half inches. So we set about taking patterns and returned to base to cut the planks before returning to the wherry to fit them.

We had a bit of steaming to do at the forward end when putting in the planks, using buckets of water and a blow lamp to generate the heat needed. After finishing the planks we lifted an aluminium sheath that had covered the walkways and discovered much rot. We cleared out the rubbish, cut out rot discovered at the bottom of the standing up-rights and replaced all boards on the



Albion with Hathor, Olive and Norada on Oulton Broad



Albion at one of the many staithe visits receiving a symbolic load



The Bishop of Norwich on Albion approaches St. Benets Abbey for the annual service



The Hardley Cross ceremony



H.R.H. The Duke of Edinburgh on board Albion with Kim Dowe



Albion, flying her original pennant at the Re-enactment ceremony, October 10th 1998



The new main beam being raised from its trolley. 1985-1986



Main beam being lowered into place on Albion

walkways, from fore end to cuddy, using correct scarf joints throughout.

We fixed a new bolt to each staunchion to strengthen then hull and we made new rubbing strakes and fitted the bin-iron back on, caulked everywhere it was needed and filled all joints with tar. The hull was then fully primed and tarred twice, using approximately four hundred weight of tar. The tar was heated to a brushing consistency with blowlamps before it could be brushed on.

Albion was re-launched and with Fred and an Inspectors launch **Albion** was towed to Upton for her mast and then back to base. A pleasant trip after all that work. Syd painted up as usual, ready for the season.

My thanks to Peter and Barney for all their help that winter - we could not have done it without them. Syd and I have put in about four hundred feet of timber in the hull plus both walkways and two rubbing strakes from one tree that winter.

As the cuddy door was leaking and showing signs of rot, these were on the list of jobs for the 1991-92 re-fit. The aft beam wasn't too good either and one quarter knee had begun to break up. It was agreed that these should be replaced. Syd went out and found the oak needed for the work to begin.

We began by taking out all the bolts from the knees and the beam. This was followed by the removal of the cuddy roof and the cuddy bulkhead. A pattern was taken of the old beam, it was removed and a new one was fitted. A new quarter knee was fitted on the starboard side and also a smaller knee in the cuddy. Everything was re-bolted with three-quarter inch bolts. A new bulkhead was made and fitted with a backing board for the stove and lockers to be fitted to it. One cuddy roof beam was renewed and the cuddy door posts replaced. The cuddy aft bulkhead was renewed followed by a new roof, fitted, caulked and filled ready for painting. The horse was bolted back in place.

While Syd was painting I made two new cuddy doors. Syd found that the other tabernacle post needed replacing so that was completed as well.

As well as these major jobs, there were always small items that needed doing. Syd made a new set of gaff jaws one year, the hatches always needed attention, new steps for entrance to the hold needed to be made, etc..

1992-93. This year we made a solid toilet partition. Previously there had been a curtain and a rail. A shelf for a hand basin and other shelves, for life jackets etc. were constructed. A new toilet was installed and at this time the floor was levelled. The galley area was improved with good work tops, cooker stand with extinguishers and a rubbish locker to one side.

Syd and I had a few moans about the money spent, but we always gave more time than 'we booked in' and I thought that we worked well together, but times were changing.

Times change. During the 1993 season we were told that a committee would take charge of maintenance and we will have to estimate a cost for the work done on **Albion** in advance. Syd decided that it was time for him to go which left me to do it all. As I only had two more years to go

before I retired I didn't mind as I enjoyed working on wherries.

Paul Bown was in charge of the maintenance programme. For the 1993-94 winter season he asked me to do the woodwork and Kim to do the painting. We agreed to this and assessed that a new fore hatch, coamings and some port fore deck needed replacing. An estimated price was submitted.

Paul got the oak and pine for the deck. I took out the coamings and the decking to clear away the rotted sections and refitted it all. I then made a new storage area in the forepeak to tidy up everything that was stored there. While this was going on, John Cooper, a new man, was helping Kim to do the painting and cleaning up.

It was then agreed that a light should be installed in the toilet near the front standing upright. This was successfully completed. The old iron dinghy, used as a tender, was rusting away and a new one was needed. The Trust bought a good solid glass fibre hull and delivered it to my workshop for fitting out, which I did with John Cooper acting as apprentice. This dinghy is good for the outboard and very stable.

New gas regulations meant a complete sealed off box, fitted for one bottle, had to be made on a platform to provide an inlet and outlet to the outside of the hull. This was lined with stainless steel and a lid made. This was all piped up to the cooker and checked. The last job for the winter was to get a new stove for the cuddy. This was ordered and John and I went to Stalham to collect it. It was fitted in place and everything was O.K.

One point to note was that this winter we had exceptionally high tides, which caused the shed to flood. The paths and roadway also flooded. George Roll gave us about five tons of old tarmac and Kim, John and I laid it on the roadway after Kim carted it. This was our contribution for this year.

The winter of 1994-95 was time for pulling **Albion** out again, as Paul had said that he wished to see what the bottom was like. But before that was done other jobs needed to be done above the waterline.

We decided to have a good clean out everywhere from bow to stern. All sorts of rubbish, from shoes to sash cord weights hid in odd places, also mud and rags. Kim started and cleaned out the forepeak and fitted a good platform to stand on and repaired the bilge pump. Meanwhile, John Cooper and I sorted out the hold and fitted a new gas locker, as it was agreed to have two bottles now. John re-piped it all and it was tested. Two new water tanks were bought and fitted, one each side, complete with new taps and were fitted with lids. The chain racks were also brought inside from forward to help the balance of **Albion**.

Kim finished forward and went aft to the cuddy and found a pile of iron laying on the planks and some more under the bunks. Out it all came, as it does no good at all to oak. Oak is turned to something resembling blotting paper after prolonged contact with iron and approximately ten hundred weight was found there.

We fitted a door to the toilet area and I made a lockable locker for the souvenirs. **Albion** was painted up and

made ready for pulling out at Horning.

On a Monday morning Paul and I took the winch to Horning and spent most of the day getting the trolleys ready. Kim and Paul had already brought **Albion** round, after dropping off the mast at Colin Faceys' yard. We took off all the hatches and pulled **Albion** out in about three hours on the Tuesday morning. Paul got all the workers scraping and touching up the hull, then it was tar varnished and launched two weeks later. I missed the launch as I had flu'.

While sailing **Albion** during 1995 Kim had noticed that the rudder wasn't feeling quite right, so I checked it out and found it was going rotten at the top of the main part, just under the waterline. It was agreed that another rudder should be made and that the aft deck should be replaced as it was leaking. It had been patched over and over across the years.

I went to the East Anglian Timber Company and picked an oak tree for the rudder. The tree was cut into three inch thick planks. It was a good one with a nice shape.

Kim, John and I got started on the rudder. Kim lifted it off the boat and dismantled it into seven pieces. He took the pinion irons to be built up and straightened.

I first had to make seven parts from the oak boards, all three inches thick and of differing widths. They were all drilled on edge for five eighths of an inch bolts to suit bolting three boards together, and bolting the last of that three to another two, and the same again for the last two. This done the boards were bolted together, shaped and the top and bottom cleats bolted on. With the pinion irons fastened back in place the rudder was painted and tarred.

While I was completing the rudder Kim and John were taking off the aft deck, the starboard side deck by the side of the cuddy and the top plank. We started rebuilding there by steaming in a new top plank with hosepipe, blowlamp and clamps; with John on water, Kim on blowlamp and I'm on the clamps. It took approximately one and a half hours steaming. It was then fitted, caulked and replaced with nails and screws at the scarf joint. On we went to the aft deck and starboard side deck fitting and caulking up. As we approached the port rear of the cuddy we found a rotten section and replaced the bottom four inches. This done the deck work was continued. A new surround for the well was made and John made a new platform in the foot of the well while Kim fitted the lockers and continued with the painting.

John and I found a plank in the starboard side that was showing about ten feet of rot and this was replaced ready for tarring.

Last but not least, John fitted a sink in the toilet which improves that area, while I made a new table top, which was varnished and looked better and cleaner.

Back went the rudder one afternoon and with the painting finished **Albion** was once again ready for the season.

I would like to say thank you to Kim and John for their continuing help and also to Richard Brooks for preparing all the bolts and pinion irons for the rudder as a gift to the Wherry Trust.

In the summer of 1996 **Albion** took the Caen Stone from

Great Yarmouth to Norwich and I was asked to make a frame to support the stone while it was being transported in **Albion**. It was designed to enable the stone to be seen while being transported and to provide a cradle when being lifted out of the hold. I used four inch by four inch posts and beams for the structure.

The following winter, 1996-97, began with a discussion by skippers about the positioning of ballast aboard the wherry. Some wanted ballast of about thirty five hundred weight to be placed aft to help balance the mast weight forward. I disagreed, as wherries had never carried weight aft, only in the hold. This sort of discussion had been going on for years. When I first started Syd had mentioned that **Albion** didn't sail too well, so I suggested putting more weight under the table and in the lockers under the centre bunks in the hold. This worked fairly well, but when Kim and I took out the weights found aft in 1994 the balance changed again. After a lot of talk it was decided that I should extend the box under the table aft, as much as possible, and add extra weight there. This has worked.

John and I started the box and table top with new seats. They were all varnished to make them easier to clean, and the boxes under the bunks were easier to get to as storage space.

Another oak log was needed for the forward decks and covering boards. I got this from the same place as before. Next we made up cupboards and shelves to store all kitchen equipment, in place of the open shelves. I obtained the wood and John, now an improver, fitted all of them while I made the doors. These were then varnished. Two stainless steel tops were ordered and fitted each side of the cooker.

John and I then tackled the forward end on the starboard side as it was getting bad here and the joints were not remaining watertight when **Albion** sailed. First we removed the covering boards and then the decking. The front upright and standing upright came next where we found a knee beginning to rot underneath this. We also found that three bolts that held the front starboard knee from the beam to the side frame had been cut off sometime. This was all replaced and bolted together as it should be. The bolts of eighteen inches in length were made from three-quarters of an inch rod for us by Mr. Amis as a gift to the Wherry Trust. All the wood used was two inches thick and enough remained to do the other side later. Next came the new covering boards. They were shaped and fitted in place out of one and a quarter inch thick oak nailed in place and painted white.

Meanwhile Kim was getting his painting done. He checked all bolts for tightness and fitted a new bin iron on top of the standing uprights. I fitted a small water tank for water supply to the toilet sink. This has worked well. New hatch covers have been made and new ropes acquired.

Albion had been grounding as she entered the dyke so the committee decided to have it dredged and the spoil dumped behind the quay heading. This left big heaps to clear up. Kim had a small digger to level one side but the other side had to be done by hand and with a wheelbarrow by Kim and I. Then it needed raking and liming before setting the seed, again given as a gift to the Trust. The grass has now grown and looks good.

A stock of oak is building up for further maintenance work and a baulk for a new mast is lying at Lowestoft. Twelve

poles are being converted into quants, as we need them. Kim has made two and I have de-barked the rest.

The slipway at the base is building up steadily and I hope to have the lower edge dredged.

During the summer I took on the cleaning of **Albion** on her return from trips, as the committee could not find another cleaner. So each week I go down to the base and pump out and clean up where needed, change tea towels etc. I must thank my wife for washing the tea towels every week.

For the winter of 1997-98 the committee decided that **Albion** should be pulled out and have everything done that was necessary for her one hundred-year refit.

I started by getting some oak planks from the usual source. Two trees, one straight and the other with a gentle curve, both cut to one and one half-inch thickness. It had been found that water was laying on the walkways. This was because the staunchions had started to rot at their bottoms allowing the walkways to sag. We changed the starboard side for new ones before pulling **Albion** out on the slip at Horning. Pulling her out was done as the last time, one day to get ready and one day pulling out.

After **Albion** was out Kim booked a pressure cleaner and gave her a good clean up from deck line to keel. John and I did a survey of the bottom, inside and out. We found four planks at the aft end on the port side, about eight to ten feet long, and six planks at the aft end on the starboard side, about eight to fourteen feet long needed replacing, as well as another nearer the middle of the boat, again on the starboard side. This last was about five feet long and just above the waterline.

John, Ron and I started taking these out ready for new planks. For the work near the stern we spent our time standing in water, dressed in thigh boots. Each plank had a patter taken, then off back to Ludham to cut out from new timber, then back to Horning to fit and fasten them. This took five weeks to finish, working three days a week.

Kim started getting ready for his tarring, by caulking up all loose seams and odd nail heads that needed filling first. The hull was finished with two coats of tar and we launched **Albion** exactly five weeks after pulling her out.

Meanwhile Steve, another helper, scraped the mast, which Kim had picked up on the return journey from Colin Facey's yard, and took **Albion** back to base ready for us to finish off before the end of March. **Albion** was taking on board a little water as she took up, so it was a trip to base at least once a day to pump out for a week. Then the leaking stopped.

We next took out the port side staunchions and replaced them.

Kim painted outside and everything was washed inside and everything made ready to refit all the bits and pieces. The Chairman had arranged for a new gas cooker and for it to be fitted and tested as per regulations.

Ron, John and I reloaded the six and a half tons of ballast, had the fire extinguishers checked at Wroxham, brought the mattresses back from store, and cleaned all the crockery and cutlery. Water tanks were filled, Kim rigged up the sail and **Albion** was ready for her centenary

season.

The busy centenary season was not without incident. **Albion** had hit something hard on her bow and the forces had been transmitted to the stern where she sprang a joint. An amount of ballast was taken out to lighten the hull and raise the waterline and a repair was carried. One Sunday afternoon the gaff was broken whilst being lowered. I started work at 6 a.m. and an old gaff was installed, and **Albion** ready to go out, by 10 a.m. I was helped by Kim and Hugh. It was decided that a replacement gaff was required so I found a source of two new lengths, each of forty feet and these were worked to shape by Adrian and I over a period of five weeks.

In September we had **Albion** in for a mid season tidy. During the centenary year she had been out and about more than ever and her paintwork had got a bit worn. Several areas were given a fresh coat of paint by Roger, Adrian and I, and the tar on the hull was run over with blowtorch and scraper by Kim, to brighten her up ready for the rest of the season which included the relaunch ceremony at Lake Lothing and the visit of the Centenary Patron, His Royal Highness The Duke of Edinburgh.

In the winter of 1998-99 we spent most time on renewing the standing uprights on both sides after stripping out the hull as usual. These were getting tired and some rot was to be seen. Our supply of oak was coming in handy as we were able to get straight on with the work. John, Adrian and I removed the old wood and shaped up new replacements. The rest of the winter work has been involved in a general tidy round following the busy centenary year. Kim spent some time cleaning out the bilges to ensure that there was no build-up of debris. We have learnt that nothing causes rot in an old boat faster than badly-kept bilges. My thanks go to Colin Buttifant, our neighbour at Swallowtail boatyard. Colin has been helpful over several years and this year he planed all our new timber and made up a new set of blocks. Colin has also been closely involved with the restoration of **Maud**.

Kim has painted all round and **Albion** is now looking as good as ever for her one hundred and first season!

A few general points

Every year at the end of the season **Albion** has to be stripped out and all her equipment stored. This rests her, protects her gear and leaves a bare hull more suitable to be worked on. Remember she is now just over one hundred years old and needs to be looked after! Every spring she has to be fitted out again after all the work has been done on her. Most of this work has been done by volunteers and we are always looking for help. The running of the base also requires volunteers as the roadway needs maintenance, the grass needs cutting and trees and reeds need cutting. The slipway is in progress; the quay heading needs some maintenance, as does the wet shed. The maintenance shed is past helping.

My thanks must go to Syd Chettleburgh for helping me to help in the first place. Also thanks to Kim for all the hard and heavy work that he does to help me and the Trust. Next, my thanks to John Cooper and Ron Swan for their help. They have graduated over the years so they are nearly boatbuilders now. Thanks also to Roger, Roy Elson, Roy Dickerson, Steve, Paul Bown, Adrian, Penny and the committee for their help over the years. Many thanks to all.



The wherry base before pathways, quay heading and wet boat shed had been installed. Notice the duckboards to keep your feet above water!



Cladding for the wet boatshed being prepared ready for installation

The Making of 'THE LAST WHERRY'

I was handed a letter from Bruce Moffat in December 1998, and asked to see what we could do. At the time I wasn't sure what to do, the possibilities were endless, a series of short films for Look East, a documentary for the Matter of Fact series, or a special one-off film. My problem was that we don't often make the kind of film that this should be. Look East would be interested, but not for all the events that the Wherry Trust were planning.

I decided to go ahead and find a reason for making it later. I am not a Norfolk person, but I had come across wherries as a boy, holidaying on the broads. We were about to moor up to a likely looking post in Rockland broad, when a helpful chap, senior in years, pointed out that when the tide dropped we'd have a hole in the bottom of the boat, as there was an old wherry under us. We moved on, and I wondered what a wherry was. I soon found out, and like many others I was very happy I had.

I met Bruce, and he introduced me to Mike Sparkes, we talked about the Trust's plans, and I looked at some of the old photographs and documents that Mike had brought along. We talked for a couple of hours, I made a few pages of notes, bid them good evening and then I put it all to one side. I had other projects which had to take priority. Whatever was to happen with the Albion programme, it could wait until the spring. A little background reading would suffice in the meantime. I might have forgotten it altogether if not for Bruce Moffat. Bruce is a tremendous organiser. He became something of an alarm clock for me. A few weeks before a major event, he would phone me to check I had all the details I needed, or was it to see if I had forgotten, or had no intention of coming along? In the end I made five short films for Look East, and the Matter Of Fact documentary, The Last Wherry. The first

day's filming had to be the centenary launch in April. Amongst the expected guests were Lady Mayhew and Major James Forsythe. It was a blustery but often bright day. Albion looked magnificent, as did Lady Mayhew, who rather stole the show. When the rain held off, the skies were dramatic, and our first pictures of Albion under sail gave me great pleasure. I was confident this would make a good looking programme, if nothing else. But a programme does need a good story. Wherry Trust members would be happy with 30 minutes of pictures of Albion on Wroxham broad, sailing enthusiasts would enjoy the pictures and a potted history, but there are BBC viewers with little or no interest in sailing. No really, there are.

I had read Martin Kirby's book, a gem, I had read Robert Malster's books and I had read Roy Clark's Black-Sailed Traders. I wanted to tell the story of the Albion, the trust and the history of Wherries. Far too much for only 30 minutes of programme. I spoke to Robert Malster, whose accounts of his visits to Hobrough's dock were delightful, he had to be in. I tried to speak to Roy Clark. He has little contact with the Wherry Trust and was reluctant to take part in the programme. Water under the bridge and all that.

I was determined he should be included and spoke to his son, Rodney. With his help and a good letter from me, Roy agreed and was enormously helpful. During the making of a programme, there are four stages, the idea, the research, the filming and the editing. The programme changes during each stage. The research had led me to Roy Clark, Robert Malster, John Fox - who used to work for Hobrough and later, May Gurney, and Vincent and Linda Pargeter, amongst others. Each had a story to tell. During



Paul Baker and BBC East crew filming 'The Last Wherry'

the filming, they told me, and the camera, their stories. Some stood out as magic. This inevitably meant other elements or people would be left out. Robert Malster had told me about his childhood exploits to Hobro's, and I had heard that John Fox was still living on the site. They had known each other then - in 1949, and so I arranged to film them together. It was better than I had hoped. John was an extraordinary man, his life was the river and his wherries, albeit under motor. I and the film crew were amazed by his memories of and feeling for the wherries. It is my deepest regret that he never saw the programme before he died

We had several happy days filming. Surprises such as meeting Kim about to take a party of children out for the week when we were filming Maud. We spent the day filming with Vincent and Linda Pargeter (what determination they have), then went to find Albion. Kim had said they would probably reach Barton Broad by early

evening. We chased around the northern broads, we talked our way into a lift out to the broad (thanks to Brian Eady, accounts of this you may have seen in the Vintage Wooden Boat Owners Log) and were rewarded with a glorious golden light as the summer sun began its descent in the evening. Those were my favourite pictures of Albion under sail.

We became a familiar sight at the events through the year. There was the occasional groan as we asked a manoeuvre to be repeated, again and again. But always with good humour, always with skill. Thanks to all of you who helped in the filming - organisation, ferrying, sailing or just putting up with us being there. I hope you enjoyed watching it as much as I enjoyed making it.

Paul Baker. Producer, The Last Wherry.



Lord Roberts loading reed at Thurne dyke, March 1969

Albion Cruises

Having lived at the birthplace of Albion for forty-five years perhaps I am biased in my connection with her and my opportunity to sail with her over the years under many and various skippers.

It all started in the late 60's or early 70's when a past chairman invited me to a 'laying up' supper at the Wherry Hotel in Oulton Broad, where I signed up as a member. One thing worried me - a lovely old vessel but no chance for members to sail in her - so I put the question to the 'top table' that evening, and was told if you can find a skipper and crew she's yours for a weekend. By the end of the evening we had a full complement and so started my many years before the mast.

Various memories come to mind. Bringing her back to winter moorings at Oulton dyke when Somerleyton rail bridge didn't open in time as we raced up the Waveney, early on a Sunday morning, with a strong north east wind behind us - the train already having crossed the river - and at the last minute having to drop sail and mast only to be blown into the reeds on the other side of the bridge, which then slowly opened, but just a little too late for us! Every warp and rope on board was then

employed and rowed up river to an old wherry post on the opposite side, thus blocking all traffic as we slowly winched our way out of trouble, leaving behind many irate cruisers, also blown on to the reeds and attempting to rescue each other!

I don't think it was ever recorded in the log or annals of the Trust, but it was witnessed one day when an over-enthusiastic skipper showing new members on a cruise how to quant, lost his footing on a slippery deck and went overboard with his quant. He re-appeared like 'Mr. Chad' with nose and eyes above the gunwale and four fingers on either side. So perhaps that's why the planks have now been roughened with sand.

Besides many invigorating sails, all recorded on film in the early days, others come to mind. Crabbing sideways down the Yare on a strong tide and little wind with an excellent un-flappable skipper, unfortunately no longer in this area. Getting stuck on the mud on a Saturday afternoon on Wroxham Broad is not to be recommended, especially during a racing regatta in front of the committee boat!

Before the days of the Honda outboard, towing



Albion with the wind well behind her on the river Waveney during her centenary year

Albion along the riverbank, against tide and wind, was healthy exercise for the crew, but only to be undertaken by the fit and strong. Even thumbing a tow from a passing cruiser resulted in a happy wave back from the boat with no suggestion of help. Schedules still have to be kept when returning to base.

One Saturday afternoon we shot Potter Heigham Bridge with just two inches to spare, and an intrigued gallery above us, on our way to Hickling Broad. Across the broad it was noticed that our dinghy had vanished and was drifting peacefully about one hundred yards away astern of us. With no other craft in sight one member of the crew, who shall be nameless, felt obliged to dive overboard, swim and retrieve the same only to be greeted on his return - not with cheers - but pails of clean water being thrown at him before he was allowed back on board. We never did make the staithe and the Pleasure Boat inn that afternoon, being stuck on the mud, and had to return to Potter for the night, with a 4.30 a.m. passage through the bridge the following

morning!

There was a time when there were no luxurious foam mattresses on the bunks and every small movement on the canvas created squeaks from the lacing. Hatches were battened down on a cold dark night and snoring was well underway when all of a sudden, about 2 a.m. a horrendous, piercing scream rang out from the darkness. Someone in a top bunk, well zipped up in his sleeping bag, had got cramp in his leg, and couldn't escape from his cocoon.

I suppose I have been privileged to have had more than my fair share of weekend cruises each year - sometimes twice a year since those early days. To be out in our unique countryside and Broads, living close to nature is an experience reserved for the fortunate few.

In this fiftieth anniversary year of the Norfolk Wherry Trust long may Albion bring pleasure to new members as our thanks go out to all those who have kept her so well during the last fifty years.

My Time With The Wherry Trust

I joined the Wherry Trust over twenty years ago having been recruited by James Forsythe at a time when membership was low and finances were very much hand to mouth. I had spent many childhood holidays at Horning and it was immediately after the war that my brother Guy introduced me to sailing. In pre-war days he had been part owner of an old sailing cruiser and when peace came he would sometimes hire a half-decker. He used to take me along as crew.

In 1948 I was for about a year in South Africa and when I came due to come back to England, I received a cable from Guy "Have offer of very nice half-decker, £400, will you go shares?" I replied, "No-too much." When I got home he said the boat was still on offer and persuaded me to go with him to Oulton Broad to look at her. I fell in love with her and the deed was done! We shared her for over forty years until he died. I kept her for a year or two afterwards but sadly decided that my sailing days were over. I tell all this to show my association with the Broads. It partly explains my fondness for Albion.

When I joined I made it clear that I was too busy to take an active part, but hoped when the time came to retire I could contribute more than my membership fee. In those days Lady Mayhew, Humphrey Boardman and James Forsythe were Trustees. It was about the time of the famous voyage to Ely, when they took her round the coast to the Wash, then up the Ouse to take part in an inland waterway event - a trip which I believe was not without incident!

At this period Albion had no base and was normally moored at the Chairman's property on Oulton Broad. There were a number of changes on the Committee and the outcome was that John Perryman took over as Chairman and affairs took a new direction. John is a naval architect and his advice on Albion has been invaluable. We

had to vacate the Oulton moorings and were offered a home for her by Wynter Blathwate, the Rector of Horning in a dyke at the bottom of his garden. This generous offer solved the immediate problem, but it was a difficult location for access by land and must have been inconvenient for the rector.

I took early retirement in 1982 and it was round this time that James asked if I was prepared to become a Trustee. Ian MacIntosh had joined the Trustees not long before and it had been thought that there was in him a younger man to provide continuity in future years. Lady Mayhew and Humphrey Boardman had already expressed a wish to retire. Tragically Ian died suddenly while out sailing - a great shock for his family and a great loss to many organisations in Norfolk, including the Wherry Trust, in whose affairs he was very active. His widow, Anne, bravely undertook to take his place on the Trust, but the Trustees were still anxious to arrange for replacements to take over from the two old founder members. Michael Brett and I could hardly be adequate substitutes, but it was decided we were suitable candidates to fill the vacancies.

Once retired and a Trustee I began to attend committee meetings. At that time there was a considerable Yarmouth and Oulton Broad contingent, so meetings used to be held at the Blofield 'Globe.' Pam Oakes was already the Secretary, having progressed from being Minutes Secretary.

John was determined to get Albion in better condition and to secure a permanent base where it would be easier for maintenance work to be carried out. There was some improvement in the financial affairs so it became possible to start seeking a suitable place. The Trustees and Committee were all agreed that this must be our priority. The 1981 Accounts show a "permanent base fund". Early in 1982 it was arranged to lease what is now our own site

from Norfolk County Council. The property included a small dyke which had to be much longer, wider and deeper and there was difficulty securing permission from our landlord for this work to be carried out.

It is significant that up to this time Pam as Secretary was responsible for arranging charters, but demand had increased to the point where this involved too much work and she asked to be relieved of that task. So for the first time the committee looked for a Letting Secretary. Already committee members had their separate duties - a method of working which has operated well over the years.

Another problem was our Treasurer, who was a bank employee. Unfortunately he got into serious trouble with his employer and was dismissed by the bank. In the circumstances it was necessary to replace him and Terry Walls, who was already one of the skippers undertook the task.

As the base was rented we were reluctant to carry out any major improvements and it was resolved that as soon as the base fund had grown sufficiently we should buy a property. I have kept my copy of the Minutes of a Trustees Meeting held in March 1985. Lady Mayhew and Humphrey Boadman were present although both by this time had resigned as Trustees. John Perryman and Pamela Oakes were both there and Group Captain Basil de Jongh represented the Broads Authority. The existing base site had been offered to the Trust, with the addition of a small extra area, for £5000. It was agreed to accept the offer. Group Captain de Jongh advised against approaching the Broads Authority for a grant, but said they might look favourably on a request for help with development. It was agreed payment should be made from the trusts funds. It was also agreed we should build a wet boat shed and it was hoped to use labour provided by the Manpower Services Commission. James undertook to deal with the planning side of the project and I undertook to assist. It is of interest that at this meeting Group Captain de Jongh raised the possibility that Maud might in due course also be able to use the boat shed.

From this time I found a special role on the Committee in dealing with the boat shed project. The hope that it would be completed in a year was not to be realised. Plans were prepared and an application for planning permission was accepted subject to various not too onerous requirements. However, it became apparent that it would be difficult to achieve much without employing experienced contractors. It was decided that the original idea of a timber shed was not practical - a steel structure would be needed, to be supported on piles. It was found necessary to sink these about twenty five feet. So phase 1 was to dig out the basin to the required dimensions and to sink the tubular steel piles and then fill them with concrete. We then had the mooring basin we needed with the tops of the piles projecting above ground level and with receiving bolts for the new structure cemented in. We now had figuratively to draw a breath.

During this time Sid Chettleburgh joined the Committee and soon proved a great asset in many ways. He was a skipper and he understood many maintenance tasks. Also as the base developed he did many improvement jobs. Sid was a great expeditor and if we needed anything he always seemed able to obtain it cheaply or at no cost. He was soon given the title Bosun with responsibility for

alerting the Committee about any problems with Albion which needed attention and in most cases for carrying out the work entailed.

John Perryman made it a rule that Albion should be taken out of the water every three or four years to examine the hull and carry out repairs. There were few boatyards able to take her and the work they undertook became more and more expensive. But with Sids help we were able to do many jobs without the services of a boatyard and he enlisted the help of Mike Fuller. It was some time before I personally understood that much of the knowledge and skill came from Mike.

We all appreciated that it was unreasonable to expect the work to be carried out in the open so the boatshed became more urgently needed. We also needed desperately a workshop and store and Sid managed to get hold of two old sheds which he erected and joined together. The cash situation finally enabled us to place an order for the boatshed and in the Minutes of October 1987 is a report that the steel frame would be erected by the end of the month. The building was finally completed early in 1988.

In the meantime much work had been completed at the base. Paths had been laid, fencing erected, water and electricity supplies arranged. The Manpower Services Commission had helped with much of this work although we were unable to use their services on the actual building. A start had been made on a slipway, but work on this was later halted.

At this time the Journal was edited by David Bray who brought it up to a high standard. His marine experience was also of benefit in regard to Albion herself and he wrote an excellent series of articles on wherry rigging.

January 1988 saw discussion of celebration of Albion's 90th Birthday and of a grand opening of the base. Blakes had agreed to sponsor a new sail and later in the year we received a grant from the Broads Authority. As at that stage we had an overdraft because of the work on the base this help was particularly welcome.

The base was officially opened by Lady Mayhew in the presence of a suitable gathering. Albion's birthday was celebrated on the 29th October at a dinner.

In 1988 we also find the first references to Keith Robotham and Mike Sparkes, two of our stalwarts who are still on the committee. Keith was to take charge of the moorings at the base and Mike became our Archivist. Keith soon took complete responsibility for the base and in November 1989 was elected Vice-Chairman.

Early in 1990 John Perryman expressed a wish to vacate the Chair. He had held the position for a long time and steered the affairs of the Trust with great success to a strong position. However, it was difficult to find a successor. The Vice-Chairman was too committed with his business to spare the time needed. I was asked to put my name forward, but considered that I was not sufficiently involved with Albion herself. Nobody else could be found so eventually I agreed and I was elected at the 1990 A.G.M. At this time we had some concerns about the proposed plans of our neighbours the Broads Authority who were building their base next door, but after some negotiations, these were sorted out.

I first took the Chair in June 1990. Concern had been expressed that Albion was taking in water and it had already been decided that she must be slipped in the coming winter. An approach had been made to Peter Bower, owner of the wherry yachts, who had established facilities for hauling these out of the water. He agreed we could use this facility at Wroxham if we could undertake the repair work ourselves. Although it was clear that some replanking would be needed, Sid was confident that he and Mike Fuller could do the job and so it was agreed.

At the June meeting it was also reported that the financial situation was good. In spite of the cost of the base, this had been greatly improved during John Perryman's term of office and we had received several substantial donations.

On reviewing the situation in general on taking over, I concluded that we needed more boat-building experience on the committee and also someone to be responsible for recruitment of new members. So I appealed to my colleagues for help in seeking to strengthen the committee. In the course of time we made progress in this, but also unfortunately there were some resignations.

Albion was slipped on 31st October 1990 and Sid reported on his examination. Numerous tangles were removed and under all of these the timber was rotten. Planking on the water line was worn down to only 5/8 of an inch thickness (15 mm), in places. Some planking on the side decks had been covered with aluminium sheet and these planks had rotted. Clearly we were only just in time! At the time of the report four hundred feet of planking had had to be removed and three hundred feet had so far been replaced. Much work had still to be done at the end of December. All this work was done by Sid Chettleburgh and Mike Fuller working in bad conditions in the open and at the lower end of the slip they were wading in several inches of water. At the end of the work all the timber put aside for the planking had been used. Some jobs above the water line had to be deferred, but sufficient work was carried out to enable her to be sailed during the following season.

The experience with Peter Bowers' slip caused us to rethink the plans for our own, which we now realised could be simpler than we had thought and we started to make preparations for this. Later however, concern was expressed that this design might damage Albion's hull and further preparation was again deferred.

The final cost for the 1990-91 winter work on Albion came to about £11,000, which was accepted. We were relieved that she was now in good condition. The cost would have certainly been much higher had we employed the services of a boatyard. A major job that Sid and Mike undertook was the fitting of a new main beam. This is the transverse member immediately aft of the mast which transmits forces from the mast to the general structure of the hull and is one of the major elements in the whole wherry. This heavy timber was becoming unsafe. Its replacement was a difficult task successfully accomplished.

About this time consideration was given to adding to the list of Trustees and in due course Peter Tracey, and Anthony Trafford were appointed. A few years later Peter Tracey indicated he no longer had time to devote to the Trust and it was agreed that his wife Jayne should take his place.

David Bray and his wife Mary resigned from the committee so it was necessary to find a new editor and

somebody to deal with souvenirs. We also needed someone to handle social affairs. Fortunately we had recruited Roy and Doris Elson, Douglas Harding and Hugh Bruce. Roy had agreed to help with the base and he also took over insurance matters. Doris undertook souvenirs, Douglas who had considerable sail training experience was persuaded to become editor and Hugh became social secretary.

In August 1992 Sid Chettleburgh decided to resign from the committee and gave up his maintenance work although he continued as a skipper. However, we were able to divide his responsibilities between one or two of the others and Mike Fuller took over the maintenance work.

It was early in 1992 that we heard we were to receive an award from the Scania Trust. This Trust gives prizes each year for the best achievements in restoration and preservation of early transport equipment - rail, road, water and air. John Perryman had entered Albion in this competition and we won third prize for 1991. They said they would like to hold a presentation on board Albion, so we managed a small celebration at the base later in the summer when their representative was able to visit. John Perryman was guest of honour as it was under his chairmanship that most of the work had been done.

We suffered a further resignation when Terry Walls decided to give up as Treasurer, but he promised to carry on until a replacement could be found. This created a problem which was solved when Pamela introduced Anna Dugdale.

We were at this time becoming concerned about safety aspects due to increasing regulations. The skippers had sometimes been slow in reporting accidents. Also, we decided to review further our insurance provisions. We decided to draft more detailed instructions to skippers and had some difficulty in obtaining acceptance of these. It was felt that they showed a lack of trust and destroyed the voluntary spirit, but we had to protect the Trust in particular against the risk of legal action and the increasing tendency for claims against insurance.

The winter work for 1992-93 included deck repairs and some internal work. This was undertaken by Mike Fuller assisted by Kim Dowe. We had by now established a small sub-committee under Keith Robotham to supervise maintenance and also to control the allocation of duties to the skippers. We discussed the provision of timber for a spare mast.

With regard to funds we decided to introduce a membership scheme for companies, having in mind particularly those which used a wherry in their name or logo. Our efforts to increase membership had not been very successful and for summer 1993 we decided to increase the number of Open Days, when Albion would visit various locations round the Broads. Ben MacIntosh had joined the committee and would deal with publicity.

By early 1993 I was beginning to have some health problems so I gave notice that I would like to resign from the Chair at the next A.G.M. Anthony Trafford had been a frequent attendee at Committee Meetings, since his appointment as a Trustee and he had been very helpful in many respects. It was therefore the opinion of many members that he should be proposed as the next Chairman and this decision was confirmed at the 1993 A.G.M. Keith agreed to continue as Vice-Chairman.

I had not participated very closely in some of our activities, but I had tried to build a strong support with my committee and I like to think we worked well together. We did our best as a team to steer affairs in the right direction and we left Albion in better shape than she had been.

More recently I have not been in touch with the day to day

Boss of Broadland

On the Rivers Again

Pleasure tripping, a brush with the law and a lively cruise with the Nine Merry Men from Lancashire.

Spring came along and at about Whitsuntide, when I was standing at the shed door, I saw a brand new pleasure wherry, the **Dragon** beating up the river and just going to moor alongside where we stood. It was the one the Company had built during last winter and she was making her first trip. One of us took his bow rope to moor her head on, so that they could get the sail down. Whilst we stood admiring it, the steward got the order to lower.

It happened that nearly all pleasure wherries used to carry a large garden chair on the foredeck for passengers to sit in comfort and be out of the way. The steward moved the chair forward, put the crank on and started to lift the pawl, facing forwards. Now this is next to impossible to do, besides being very dangerous. You always face aft so that the pressure comes towards you, and you throw your weight and strength against it.

There's a terrific strain, particularly if it blows.

The skipper, standing on the cabin top to catch the heavy gaff in his hands, took one look forward and shouted, "Drop the pawl again." Then he asked us to lower the sail for him, which we did. Then we had a few minutes talk together, and learnt that the steward was straight out of the Navy, and had never been in a wherry before. He did not even know how to quant.

The following Saturday, I was asked to sail the yacht **Crocodile** belonging to our director, Mr. Chambers, round to Wroxham as she was wanted there. I made a start on Saturday morning, and had a good sail up river. I arrived all right, stowed sails, moored up and prepared to go home. This meant walking nine miles as I had no bicycle, and at that time could not even ride. I reported to the manager, Fred Press that I had brought the **Crocodile** round.

"All right, Boss," he said. "Where are you going now?"

"Home," I said.

"Don't be in a hurry," said he, "I want to talk to you. You saw the **Dragon** up at Potter a few days ago? Well, Buck Foster, that's the skipper, has brought the wherry in and he won't go another trip with the steward. He knows nothing about the work. I must get someone today as she's going straight through the summer, booked right up. Good wages as wages go. A pound a week for stewards and twenty five shillings for a skipper, with tips and food or an allowance."

"Yes," said I, "and plenty of work. Seven days a week and 16 hours a day."

He grinned. "Yes, we throw that in."

We went on board, and I was introduced to the skipper. I

affairs of the wherry, but I have greatly enjoyed in particular two events. I was invited to join Albion on the occasion when she carried the stone from Caen to Norwich Cathedral and this day will always be in my memory; it was a great privilege to participate. The second event was the visit of the Duke of Edinburgh last year, which he so obviously enjoyed.

knew him slightly, but as he had been nearly all his life on the rivers Yare, Waveney and Chet, he did not know me. Our party joined us, and the next morning after breakfast we hoisted sail alongside the quay. I had time now to have a good look at the ship that I had joined the day before. She made a pretty picture with her long, sleek, black hull, speed in every line of her; snow white decks and brasswork gleaming in the sun. All the cabins and deck fittings were of English oak with a heavily carved tiller.

We made a couple of trips, and though the hours were long and the work never ending I had an easy time as far as deck work was concerned. All stewards in pleasure wherries usually come on deck to quant in a head-wind reach, especially if there was any hurry to catch a tide, or near Yarmouth. But I soon found that this skipper was one of the finest experts at wherry sailing that I had ever known. I asked him two or three times during the first few days if he wanted me.

"Boy Boss," he says, "You've got all you can do down below and a bit over, and I can make the **Dragon** do her bit."

He was never in a hurry, but nine out of ten yachts and wherries, if they happened to be going our way, were quietly left astern.

About a month later we were doing a fortnight's trip, and having done Oulton Broad and Beccles, we left Yarmouth to make a passage to Wroxham. It was nasty weather and blowing hard. Now the wherry was built of green stuff, not properly seasoned, and on a trip or two before we had had a little trouble with a leak. I had noticed for some time that as she went about from one tack to another she seemed sluggish, but just then one of the ladies pushed back the sliding hatch and told me there was water on the cabin floors. I jumped on deck and going down into the saloon, I found the water about an inch deep. That meant it was six inches deep right through. The skipper said we would put her ashore in the next reach.

We got an anchor on shore, and lowering the sail we set about baling her out. She had never had a pump fitted. After another start we arrived at Wroxham the following day, a Saturday, with our trip finished. The skipper went to the office and reported what had happened to us. The manager said the skipper could sail her down to Yarmouth, and he would arrange to have her docked at Fellow's yard, and would come to look at her himself.

After she was put into dry dock the shipwright made a thorough search, and soon found the cause of the trouble - a shake in one of the planks well down on the starboard quarter. It was soon put right, and then my artful skipper asked the manager for another six inches of keel. "It'll make her twice as handy," said he.

The **Dragon**, a fast wherry before she was docked was

even faster now. A couple of days later we hauled out of dock and taking on board Mr. Fellows and his sister and one or two friends, we made sail for Norwich. It was the quickest passage I had ever made on that river. The skipper grinned at me.

"What do you think of her, Boss," he said. "We shan't want any more quants, only at the Bridges!"

Nine Merry Men

One trip followed another but one or two incidents were outstanding. I am not writing this to make people think that all trips on the Broads were a drunken spree but on holiday a lot of people are apt to let themselves go. There was a lot of money in some folk's hands, especially businessmen, and they were not afraid to spend it. After we had cleaned up we were told that we should be taking a party of nine on board. Our manager said, "It ought to be lively. They call themselves the Nine Merry Men from Lancashire!"

That evening they came on board. I had seen a few stores shipped for a trip since I started yachting but nothing equalled theirs. There was enough drink to last an ordinary trip a month and this was for a fortnight. On Sunday morning we made a start, arriving at Horning for lunch. Getting on the way once more we moored at Potter Heigham for the night, and next morning we were told they would like to see Yarmouth.

We moored below the bridge on the Repps bank where there is a wide stretch of marsh belonging to a nearby farm, and feeding on it some fine young colts and cattle. The custom is pretty well stamped out now, but at that time nearly fifty years ago; three boats out of every four carried either an air-rifle or a breech-loader gun, sometimes two. And nearly everybody shot at anything they saw just for fun. Whilst we were washing up and getting ready after breakfast, they brought an air-gun on deck and a box of pellets, and began amusing themselves by shooting at the bullocks and horses. It was not my job nor the skipper's to say anything to them, but I mentioned to one of them that if they were reported it would cause a row. I knew they had hit one or two of the animals by the way they jumped. We both saw it did not suit for them to be told so no more was said.

The Law takes a hand

We sailed away shortly after, and having a fair wind, soon reached Acle. It was not quite lunch time. We were moored near Fishley Mill, well away from other craft, and nothing suited them better than to start shooting at the colts and cattle close by. I got lunch ready and all hands went down to it. It was nearly over when I chanced to step on deck and looked toward the Bridge. I saw a policeman coming towards the wherry about a couple of hundred yards away. I nipped down below, and looking round the saloon said, "Have you hidden that gun up?" "What do you mean, Steward?" they said. "Nothing," says I, "but there's a policeman about forty yards away on the bank, and I think he's going to make a call on you." I added, "There's no doubt you've been reported by some marshman working close by. He's seen you alright, but you've not been clever enough to have seen him."

You should have seen their faces!

"Get on deck and speak to him while we hide the gun" said one of them. I came on deck just as the constable

arrived.

"Good day," said he, and I agreed with him. It was a lovely day, with a glorious sun shining down on us. To his next query, "Are your people on board?" I replied, "Yes, lurching."

"Could I have a word or two with one of them?"

"Certainly." I stepped along to the hatchway and called down. "There is someone wishes to speak to you, Sir."

I walked into our cabin and left them to it. But oh the lovely innocent look on his face as he came up! We heard the first question and answer.

"It has been reported to me that people on this wherry have been using a gun on those colts on the marsh."

"Oh no, Officer, you must have been misinformed. We should never dream of such a thing." Plenty of blarney and then: "Come on down below and have a drink and let's talk this over."

It was a fatal move on the policeman's part. The skipper, as he saw his helmet disappear, turned to me and said:

"That's done it."

There was plenty of talking and laughing down in the saloon. Evidently they were having a merry time. After a bit it fell much quieter.

"This is an infernal long lunch," I said to the skipper. Now I knew we had a doctor on board - I also knew his name and where he came from - but what happened in the cabin I never knew. Whether they gave him a harmless sleeping draught with his drink, or whether they were well mixed, (which could be done in the pantry) I cannot say. Anyhow, when I was called to clear the table, there lay the copper, as drunk as seven monks and sleeping as peacefully as a baby. The beggars were laughing and skipper and I joined in!

The next problem was how to get rid of him. The guests very soon decided. They were nine strong young fellows and one was sent on deck to have a look. And they had that copper out of the saloon and on to the bank in two shakes of a lamb's tail. They picked a nice shady place for him, and laying his helmet by his side, they nipped back on board. To the skipper they said: "We sail for Yarmouth." And in the words of the poet, "Ours was not to make reply, Ours not to reason why."

We cast off moorings, and with a good ebb tide and a nice westerly breeze, the **Dragon** went down that twelve miles of river to Yarmouth like a scalded cat!

We moored at the Yacht Station. All hands had their tea, and the Merry Men decided to have dinner ashore and see the town before sailing next day. It was a nice little break for us, just getting rid of one hot dinner with its attendant washing up. The skipper went off for an hour or two later on, and I had a good clean up down below. About the only time you can do it properly is when you have a clear ship. I very seldom went ashore, as we had too many valuables lying about in the cabins. You could not lock up as you never knew when they were coming back, but they evidently trusted us for there was something to be seen in our fore cabin that I had never seen before, nor since.

In front of the cabin there were two great oak knees that supported the mast, and these projected beyond the panelling and formed two shelves on each side about a foot to eighteen inches long. All that trip they were full of sovereigns, handfuls of them, thrown down anyhow. When they played cards at night, they just strolled into the cabin, scraped two or three handfuls off and shot them on to the

saloon table. That was one reason why I never went ashore that trip. Myself, I can't play cards, and I thought it was a wonderful thing when they went away, that there was only about thirty bob difference between the winners and losers. That sort of thing is quite alright but if any of my young readers are just starting in the world, it is well to remember the good things your mother taught you. It pays in the long run.

It was getting late before I had finished - nearly nine o'clock. After having a look on deck I went into the cabin, put the kettle on, made some tea and had a feed. I lit a cigarette and being fond of reading, I rolled my mattress and blankets down and turned in with a book. "Well," I thought, "this day is safely over, and now for a quiet night." Little did I dream how it would finish up!

About ten, I dropped the book and, blowing out the lamp, rolled over and went to sleep. I was woken up by a voice calling, "Skipper, wake up, we want you."

I knew quite well it was not our skipper as he never made a sound if he was late coming on board. I shouted out: "Who is it? What do you want?" "Steward," he says, "We want a bit of help. There's been a bit of an accident. Dress and come ashore and I'll show you."

Wondering what the devil could be the matter, I lit the lamp, dressed, and went on deck. As we came out of the Yacht Station and walked a short distance down the road, he told me what had happened. It appeared that our lot

had wine and dined and gone to a theatre or the Aquarium. After having a final drink, four or five of them decided to hire one of the open four-wheeled cabs and drive back to the wherry. At that time, Yarmouth down there was not like it is now. There was a row of iron railings next to the river, but the other side of the row was quite open, and at the bottom of the long slope was a fair sized dyke, with about two feet of water in it, and about four feet of stinking mud. The horse made a good trip till he was about fifty yards from the Yacht Station entrance. Then he suddenly shied at something, perhaps a bit of paper blowing across the road under the full moon. Anyway, he bolted down the incline like four year old, and landed bang in the middle of the dyke taking the driver with him.

They all climbed out and fished out the cabby. When we arrived, I was forced to laugh. We all did. "I'm afraid hauling the horse and cab out is going to be an awkward job," said I. Then I had an idea. Taking a couple of them back with me, we brought a spare mooring rope and our mainsheet with its pair of treble blocks. Making the rope fast to one of the iron posts, we stretched it across the road, and put a Blackwall hitch on the hook of the block. Then we ran the other block to the axle of the cab and we were ready for hauling out.

While we were getting ready, several skippers and stewards came down the road. When they came up to us, they roared with laughter, wanting to know if I was going to launch. "No," I said. "We're hauling up, lend a hand."

YACHTING ON THE NORFOLK BROADS

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They all hauled on the rope and, to the tune of a shanty, that old cab came up like a wisp of smoke. We had cleared the horse of his harness, and now with plenty of help, we put a strong canvas band round his neck, and in the twinkling of an eye, he was on his feet and walking up the bank. The axle was bent but we found that the wheels would go round, so when we had harnessed up, the cabby went rattling up the road, and no doubt he was glad to be there.

Bidding our chums good night, we gathered up our gear, went on board, and I turned in again. But the Merry Men sat down and played cards till the small hours of the morning.

The following day they told us they would very much like to see Oulton Broad, so at slack water we pushed out with the crowd, and took the flood tide over Breydon, arriving just after lunch. Then we went on to Whitlingham and then back to Wroxham.

After another trip or two the season finished and we were both paid off. I came back to the yard and my skipper took a job on the roads at Loddon where he lived.

A strange dream and a summer's wherry sailing; romance on Potter Heigham bridge - and the sack.

There was plenty of work, as the firm were busy building up a fleet and also buying others. I lived at home with my brothers and sisters at Causeway Cottage just up the road from the bridge.

After the youngsters had gone to bed, my father and mother and I would sit and yarn about the early days of both of them. The talk turned on dreams and what they meant. My old dad was pretty hard-headed, and said that it was all bosh. "But," he continued, "I'll tell you about one of them, and it's about buried money."

My mother's maiden name was Howell, and her mother was a Miss Crow. Her people had owned three farms and a lot of property in a large village not a hundred miles away from here. Her sister married a man by the name of Burton, and she ended her days in Catfield, not far from the lovely Barton Broad. In their early married days before I was born, my parents used to walk over and visit the old lady. My mother, Emily Isabella, was a great favourite of hers. They told me she was a smart old lady, generally dressed in black silk, with a long gold chain around her neck, and a lovely gold watch hanging on it. One day she said to my mother, "Bella, my dear, what do you think has been happening to me lately?"

"I don't know," said my mother. "Nothing bad I hope."
"No indeed, I am not even frightened. It is a dream I have had three nights running."

She lived all alone, and she told my parents that at about midnight each time in the dream, she woke up, and saw perfectly plain at the foot of the bed, a lady dressed in what looked like grey silk, with a big lace ruffle at her neck and on her sleeves. In her hand she was holding a lighted candlestick, and with the other she beckoned her to follow, and pointed down the stairs. In fancy she did so, and passing into the kitchen, the figure stopped. She pointed to the hearth stone and vanished. My mother and father both asked at once:

"What do you think it means Auntie?"

"I think it is buried treasure," she answered. "Rose

Noble's."

My old Dad wanted to make a start at once, but the old lady would not let him.

"Not while I'm alive, Bob," she said. And she would not budge from that. He knew where the house was and promised that one day he would take me and show me. But he died before he could do so, as I will later tell you. I know it is an old-fashioned house with a high pitched roof. And if anyone today is living in such a place, and is having a new stove put in, or pulling the old house down, it might be worth their while to go down an extra few feet under the hearthstone. The old aunt told my mother she was welcome to anything that was found there. Incidentally, I have been over two or three times to have a look, but I could not fix it.

A busy winter passed away and just before Whitsun I was sent for to sail the **Dragon** again. I arrived on board, and we quickly finished her off, as we were due to sail in a day or two.

After several trips one Saturday morning, the manager was passing by. He turned towards us. "You want to look smart next trip," he said. "Mr. Harmsworth and his wife, a friend, their Secretary, a lady's maid and a bull dog are having a week's trip with you."

"Right," I said, "We'll do the best we can for them."

They duly arrived, with a mountain of luggage and gear of all sorts. I soon saw that we were in for a busy time, and in addition, I was expected to wait at table all through meal times. And it was hinted that if the party were well looked after, we should not lose by it.

The first episode occurred when the skipper went ashore for fresh milk for tea. Our passenger, the bulldog, was having a stroll round, and when the skipper was turning into the gate leading to the yard, he suddenly found himself greeted by a gleaming row of ivories and low growl, which meant "Keep Out". Finally his owners had to come and take him away.

We got away after tea, however, and sailed down to Wroxham Broad and moored for the night, and I got my orders to see that the dog had plenty of water and also that he was well fed.

We got under weigh next morning, lunched at Horning, and reached Potter Heigham late in the afternoon, as it was very fine with very little wind. I was told next morning that the bulldog was to have a chicken and ham breakfast! I cut off a huge plateful and pushed it through the serving hatch, and after that I went to our cabin with the skipper to have ours. We usually had bacon and eggs, but soon decided that for the crew, chicken and ham was much better. We ate and thoroughly enjoyed the dog's breakfast, thinking quite rightly, that being a passenger, he contributed nothing to the success of the trip! I cut some cold meat and buttered bread for him, but he turned up his nose at that and walked off!

Later in the day the skipper was asked what was to be seen above the bridge, and on being told that there were two or three lovely Broads there, our party expressed a wish to see them. We lowered the mast, and hoisting sail just above the Railway Bridge, we moored just at the entrance of Potter Heigham Sounds.

After getting dinner over, and washing up, the skipper and I turned in early that night, for you are quite in the wilds

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up there, with the nearest village fully two miles away. We were in a wilderness of reeds, marsh and water. It was a lovely calm night with the sky full of stars, but there was a summer mist covering all the low-lying marshlands, and it was deathly quiet.

Illness on board.

I had been asleep about a couple of hours, when I thought I heard someone knocking. Then I heard a voice saying, "Steward, are you awake?" I roused up and putting the hatch back, asked what was the matter and who was speaking. It was Mrs. Harmsworth.

"Will you please dress and come and look at my husband," she said, "I'm afraid he's very ill."

Closing the hatch I lit the cabin lamp and pulled on some clothes. Jumping on deck, I went to the after hatchway and down into the saloon. I walked forward to the cabin and had a look at him. The lady, who was terribly upset, asked me what I thought of him. Her husband appeared to have great difficulty in breathing and was very much flushed.

"It would be a bad business if anything happened to him," she said. "So much depends on him. You must get a doctor on board at once, or as soon as possible."

"You've set me a nice job, Madam," I said. "The nearest one I know is four miles away at Ludham. As it happens, I am a native, and I'll get one as soon as I can."

"For goodness sake do, Steward, I'm worried to death."

I bolted into our cabin, roused out the skipper, and told him what was wanted. We were soon ready, and set off walking towards Potter Heigham. If I had not been born a Broadman and brought up in the district, I should never have tackled the job. The way was only a rough cattle track, with twelve-foot dykes on each side waiting for you if you made a false step. And the mist did not help matters much. I turned to the skipper with a laugh and asked him how he was enjoying himself. He cursed the road, the patient and the Doctor, and consigned them all to a place much warmer than our present one.

Doctor's dilemma.

After stumbling along for about three quarters of an hour, we arrived on the road. "We've got the worst over now," I remarked, and in about another half hour we arrived at Dr. Gordon's house. I picked up some small gravel and threw it at the window. In a minute or two it went up and a voice like a foghorn shouted out:

"Who is it?"

"Boss Applegate from the pleasure wherry **Dragon**," I replied. "We've a gentleman on board taken ill. Could you come and see him?"

"No," thundered the doctor. "Not till morning."

But when I told him it was the 'Tit-Bits' and 'Daily Mail' man, he changed his mind and said he would come at once. I said, "No, give us half an hour's start, and then you drive down to the Bridge. As we're near the Sounds, we'll row you up."

A fast-trotting pony soon brought him along, and finding a double-oared skiff, in another half hour we fetched up alongside the **Dragon**. The Doctor went down below, and after about fifteen minutes, we got the order to row him back to Potter. The dawn was just breaking on a lovely morning as we pulled the Doctor back, and by the time we had rowed ourselves back again, we had both of us had enough. It was

about seven o'clock, and going into the cabin I said:

"Breakfast for me and you too, I presume."

"Just fits the bill, Boss," the skipper replied.

As we were eating it, Mrs. Harmsworth came to the hatch and thanked us very much for what we had done during the night. She laid down two sovereigns and told us they were a present. We asked how the Master was and she told us that he had been ordered to leave the water and take rooms ashore, and that we were to sail back to Potter as soon as we had finished breakfast. We soon arrived and moored at the Bridge Hotel quay, where the luggage was put ashore. During the packing up, rooms had been booked at Cromer, and when all was ready, Mr. Harmsworth came on deck. He told us he was very sorry to give up the trip, and gave us orders to take the wherry back to Wroxham as soon as possible. He also asked us to put the lady's maid ashore there as she was going to Dereham to have a holiday with her mother. So, making us a present of all the stores on board, they left to take the train, and we saw no more of them.

We washed up and cleaned the cabins, and I walked up the road to see my people, whom I very rarely saw during the summer months.

When I came on board the lady's maid wanted to know when we were going to start for Wroxham. I told her as soon as the skipper came on board. At that time the Bridge Hotel was kept by a man called William Knights, known as *Stitcher*, quite a well-known character. Going inside I found the skipper and some chums of his having a few rounds of drinks. Taking him aside I reminded him that we were still under orders as we had to get this girl to Wroxham and put her ashore so that she could get home that day. He promised to be on board very soon.

We got through the Bridge and hoisted, and with a stiff breeze about south-east, we made a splendid run up river, and arrived at the Company's yard in the middle of the afternoon. We put our passenger on the train and then went into the office and reported the occurrence to the manager. We all agreed it was a pity the trip was spoiled, but it could not be helped. I then told him that we had a lot of stuff on board and no one to eat it. I suggested having the staff on the yard invited to dinner to clear some of it away. Needless to say the idea was received with gusto. They all swarmed on board, and I was kept busy in my shirt sleeves carving and drawing corks. A sing-song followed, and late that night we packed up. We hauled some of them up the hatchway and laid them in the sheds, and we let a few of them sleep on board. And so ended what I would call "the Newspaper Trip". On the following Saturday, in glorious weather, we sailed again on a rather longer one.

We were moored one night at Horning, and next day just as we were finishing breakfast, I looked out of the cabin door and saw a wherry coming in our direction. There was only one man to be seen and he shouted, "Are you coming this way?"

My skipper poked his head out: "I'll be seeing you, Jimmy," he shouted. Now this wherry was the pretty little **Corrine** about eighteen tons, belonging to Mr. Trafford of Wroxham Hall. She was making a passage down to Yarmouth to bring up a cargo of coal for the House. This wherry was in charge of a first class waterman, James Pitchers by name, one of my skipper's old cronies.

Now it turned out that we too were bound for Yarmouth. Buck laughed and said, "I'll have a go at old Jimmy, after we've washed up the breakfast things and made a start."

"Are you in a hurry?" I asked.
 "Oh no," says he. "Let him go."

There was a fresh easterly breeze - the worst wind you could have going down river, and both wherries ought to have been reefed: but I never saw our skipper reef half a dozen times in the three seasons I sailed with him. By the time we had hoisted, the **Corrine** I judged was about two miles ahead of us. I asked if I should quant to help the tacking.

"No," he said. "There's no one with him, and I'm going to sail fair." And that day I saw one of the finest exhibitions of single-handed wherry sailing that I have ever seen.

Both skippers were big strong men and experts at this game. Miles down near St. Benet's Abbey, she was still a mile and a half ahead, but as we got into deeper water with the wind freshening, our extra depth of keel and weight - we were a full twenty-two tons - began to tell. We passed him, and getting through Acle Bridge, when we arrived at Yarmouth we were nearly two miles ahead. It was a great race and our people thoroughly enjoyed it. I very much doubt if any other wherry but ours could have given Jimmy and his little **Corrine** a hiding. When the two old cronies got ashore that night, it took several pints to slake their thirst and sail it over again.

The summer ended, and being paid of, I came home to work in the yard for the winter. While I had been away, a clergyman, the Rev. C. Prangley, came to take charge of the parish. He invited several village lads to the Vicarage to take part in preparing for Confirmation. My brother Bob and I joined in and we were confirmed in Stalham church. Mine had been a wild and careless life, and this was something to make you think. It was a step in the right direction and I still think so.

And now for a wonderful adventure! While I was standing on Potter Heigham Bridge one Sunday night, a party of Repps girls strolled up. All at once I thought I would see if I could

find a sweetheart. Knowing one or two of them, I started asking them one by one if I could take them for a walk. I got four refusals, but much to my surprise and delight, when I came to the last one she said "Yes, I don't mind."

She was a bonny lass with brown hair and laughing blue eyes, by name Lottie Jeary, and she had lived in the next village all her life. Her mother was dead and she was housekeeper to her father. A few days later we met again, and we continued walking out together for several months, and then I did a crazy thing. I told her it would be best if we parted, as I was much too fond of wandering to settle down yet. When she had gone I knew in my mind that it was all wrong and that I had given up something very precious, the love of a good and true-hearted girl. I was a headstrong beggar in those days, and in a few weeks, I sailed away again in the Dragon. But I was not happy for I had struck something that would not work off, and also something that could not be shaken off. Coming home one night after a trip, I said to my mother, "I'm going back to my girl again if she will speak to me."

"It's the best thing you'll ever do," she said.

I walked into the village and saw her with one or two friends, and said I wanted to speak to her. We renewed our friendship, and when I saw her home, she said: "Do you think you know your own mind now?"

"Yes," I said. "I shan't run away again." And as I sit writing this at seventy years old, I say, "Thank God we are still walking together after forty-seven years."

I sailed away with a light heart this time, little dreaming that before three months had passed, I should be back at sea again and thousands of miles from old England.

More money . . . and the sack

It happened this summer that the firm had a new manager, a



Geo. Applegate sheds with cabin yachts in foreground

Mr. A. Pegg, and I found him all right to work under. He owned a handsome little six-ton cutter, the Resless Well, before we finished, we had a week or two at home owing to the scarcity of charters, and during that time both of us were put to work in the yard. At noon on Saturday we took our wages, and much to my surprise we were handed a pound each in our packets. Taking mine back to the office, I asked Mr. Pegg if he had made a mistake. "What's the matter," he said. "Isn't there enough?" "Yes," said I. "Too much. Five shillings a week too much. I've never had only fifteen shillings ever since I started." "Look here, Boss," says he. "My orders from Norwich as regards wages, is to pay the ordinary hands in the yard one pound per week for sixty hours providing they know their job, and you know yours. Run away now, I'm going to lock up and then go and have my tea."

I thanked him and went on board, and after another week or two, we were paid off once more and I returned to Potter to work.

About the last week in September, I mentioned to my brother the difference in pay in the two yards. He advised me to say nothing about it or I most certainly would lose my job. But I did ask the manager about it a day or two later, and I promptly got notice to quit. I was told that it

was nothing to do with me in any way. This was the first regular job I ever had, and there I was on the beach with winter coming on and no prospect of work anywhere.

Now I have a great affection for that old bridge. Several months before I had found a sweetheart on it, and now standing on the other side I found a job. A few years before, my Uncle George had given an order to E. Collins of Wroxham for a seven ton cutter, the Idler and she was hired every year by a young fellow called White, who used to sail her himself with his friends. They were having a late trip this year, and as he knew me well, he stopped and spoke to me now.

"How are you getting on, Boss?" he said.
"Not very well," I replied. "I've just got the sack."
"That's nothing to worry about. You've been to sea before, haven't you?"
"Yes, ten years ago."
"Alright," says he. "I'll get you a berth aboard a steamship in less than a fortnight." I thanked him very much, saying I was willing to go anywhere out of this. I did not know it at the time, but he was one of the head shipping clerks for the Union Castle Line. He told me to go home and ask my mother to get my clothes ready and my bag packed, and to stand by for a telegram, and with that he wished me the best of luck and went his way.

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MEMBERSHIP

It is that time of year when I have the task of reminding all of the membership that their subscriptions are due for renewal on April 1st. Many of you pay by Bankers Standing Order and this should mean that your payment comes through automatically, however, there have been one or two cases recently when this has not been the case and I would ask those of you who pay in this way to check your statements just to make sure.

To those members who pay by other methods PLEASE could you pay on time as this does make my job easier (and leaves me free to spend more time on Albion meeting you all!)

I hope that a good many of you were able to join us at one function or another during the Centenary Year: It was a very enjoyable year and we took on board about 70 new members over that period. So to you I say welcome on board and thank you for helping to keep Albion afloat. All members play a vital role in this.

Enjoy this Fiftieth Year of the Norfolk Wherry Trust and I look forward to meeting some of you again this year.

The subscription rate for the year to 1st April 2000 is:

Individual membership	£7.50
Family membership	£10.00

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39
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