

# THE ALDE & ORE ASSOCIATION

Registered Charity No. 1064789



The Association exists to preserve and protect for the public benefit, the Alde and Ore River and the Butley Creek and their banks from Shingle Street to their tidal limits and such of the land adjoining them or upstream as may be considered to affect them, together with the features of beauty and or historic or public interest in that area.

## RDC BULLETIN NO. 4 December 2007



**Overtopping on Aldeburgh River Wall – photo courtesy of Andrew Hawes November 2007**

### THE SURGE

That the recent surge filled the river to capacity was demonstrated by the flotsam left behind within inches of the top of the walls along much of their length. In reporting the results of the exceptional survey carried out by our volunteers after the event on 9<sup>th</sup> November we have concentrated on sites only where overtopping or damage was caused by the high level of water, as these indicate where most problems are most likely to occur in future. We also comment on the handling of the event by the authorities, report on progress of the planned protocol and finally ask you to note the date for the RDC's first annual meeting.

The volunteers' reports are presented from Snape Bridge to Shingle Street on the South and West side and similarly on the North and East side of the river and take into account points made in a subsequent meeting with Mike Steen:

### SOUTH AND WEST BANKS

#### 1. Snape Bridge to Iken

- Nothing to report

#### 2. Iken to Chapman's Creek

- Further erosion to wall at end of armour near Stanny House buoy, otherwise no overtopping on this stretch. However the EA's survey identified damage to recently repaired block work where the uncompacted clay had been washed out. This will be repaired again.

#### 3. Chapman's Creek- Orford

- Ferry Farm side of Westrow Reach - A short area of river wall approximately 20 metres is low and nearly overtopped. Narrowing saltings due to erosion. This area is in need

of maintenance to bring it back to its original height. The EA say that the surge caused no further deterioration so suggest that this might be an example of work to be carried out by the landowner (Skepper)

#### 4. Orford – Butley Creek

- **Butley Mill** - At the height of the tide the water reached the top of the wall at the main drain flood gate. There was apparent leakage through the wall at this point. The flood gate does not seal so that at high tide salt water leaks into the Mill and, at exceptional high tides, into the mill pond. The EA has done some work on the gate but agreed to look at it again
- Two areas at Butley (Greenwell) are at particular risk (within about 6 inches of overtopping) and an engineer has been asked to do a survey of their levels. Together they add up to approximately 300 metres

#### 5. Shingle Street to Butley West Bank

- North of the beacon there was some over topping with shingle thrown back over vegetated areas resulting in a narrowing of the shingle bank. There was also over topping at 391492(Greenwell land). Additionally the beach profile at the mouth of the river was considerably altered.



#### 6. Havergate Island (RSPB)

- The breach on Havergate Island was adjacent to the northern inlet sluice that feeds the three northern lagoons. It is thought that the water overtopped at a low point here, eroding the inside of the wall and cutting back to create the breach. The breach opened up to be approximately 4 metres wide at the top, narrowing to 2 metres wide at the bottom. It was approximately half the depth of the wall, water only flowed in during the high tides of the Friday (9th November) and the weekend. By the middle of the following week tide levels had dropped so water did not come through the breach. The breach was plugged on Friday 16th, with further work in the following week. Water levels on the lagoons rose by approximately 30cm. As it was saltwater adding to saltwater it is unlikely to have caused any ecological damage. Low points on Doveys lagoon (at the south end of the island) also overtopped causing slumping to the inside of the river wall, but the wall did not breach. There was also overtopping onto the visitor reception area, causing damage to bridges, steps, etc. - this is still in the process of being repaired.



## NORTH AND EAST BANK

### 7. Snape Bridge to Blackheath

- No breaches occurred in the stretch but there was considerable overtopping at the Blackheath Sluice and beyond for approx 60 metres (OS212 3905 5764) – see photos below



- There was an additional small area of overtopping just before the spot where the footpath leaves the marsh (4020 5740). These over topplings into the grazing marsh are less serious than the potential for damage to the Concert Hall and shops if water came over the concrete wall from the Maltings to the river bank. The EA says that any action on the wall will have to await the strategy

### 8. Blackheath to Barbers Point

- Some undermining of the cliff at Little Japan, but not too serious. Only in one spot has there been a minor fall of the cliff.
- The concrete revetments at the Blackheath House end of the Ham Creek wall continue to cause concern. Photos have been taken. The revetment blocks are, in many places, now next to useless and the wall behind is being eroded. The EA agreed to look at this.
- The river wall on Roundhill side of the Suffolk Wildlife marsh, an SPA, is in a poor state. The EA is planning some minor work there this year, however a complete job must await the strategy.



### 9. Barbers Point To Aldeburgh Martello Tower

- **Aldeburgh Sluice:** bank still in poor condition. To north side of sluice two of the undercut parts of the bank where the armour has gone and an earth cave is being carved out, now have each a single long crack going up to 1-2 feet into the bank, from a few inches wide at the outside to a finger inside. One of the fingers is in line with the edge of the path if projected vertically, indicating the start of undermining the path. The EA agreed that this might require work now.
- In the slumped area between West Row and Chapmans the water over topped. A 15-20 metre wide area of the bank away from the river had the grass lying flattened where

the water had rushed over (see Andrew Hawes' photo) Work has started to raise the wall height by a modest 100mm

- New development - on the corner near Stanny the river side of the bank is now sheer open earth. The seabiet roots do not hold the bank like grass and many plants are half washed out. The EA will check this where much of the damage has been caused by cattle



## **SURGE MANAGEMENT**

There has been much local comment of the way the flood warning was handled and how people were informed of the risks as these developed. The Environment Agency are responsible for issuing warnings of risk level. These go to nominated individuals who are told what each level means. The Police deal with public safety and evacuation if necessary and SCDC provide the refuges and transport to these.

Criticisms included:

- The 'imported' police and firemen were inadequately briefed and were not aware of the local situation
- Warnings stated that the tides would peak at 7.30-8pm where in reality high tide was 12.30. Police on Orford Quay had no idea of when high tide was predicted
- Telephoned warning did not describe grading system – information is needed regarding the time the surge is likely to arrive
- No sandbags were available in Orford nor were there sufficient in Aldeburgh - it is the responsibility of the individual property owner to acquire these, however it is generally thought flood boards provide a much better defence says Mike Topliss SCDC's Flood Defence Officer

## **UPDATE ON PROTOCOL DISCUSSIONS**

The Environment Agency is in the process of producing the first draft of their protocol. This will cover the terms and conditions under which landowners can carry out maintenance of their own river banks. We hope to have a first draft in January after they have received comments from Natural England and SCDC.

## **BLYTH STRATEGY**

Suffolk County Council, Waveney District Council and Suffolk Coastal District Council have joined up to challenge the latest Environment Agency proposals for the Blyth Estuary which they describe as totally unacceptable. Representatives of the SCAR Partnership and the Alde and Ore Association attended the Suffolk County Council Cabinet meeting on 4 December. All the Councils have agreed to work with SCAR and other local interest groups such as the Alde and Ore Association to oppose the Blyth strategy proposals. Paul Woodcock, the Agency's Director for the Anglian region has confirmed that, as a result of funding constraints, the same approach is likely to be adopted for the Alde and Ore. Further details are available on our web site.

See <http://aldeandore.net/SCAR1.htm> and <http://aldeandore.net/news1.htm>

### **RDC ANNUAL MEETING**

The Annual Meeting to review RDC's first year will be on 26<sup>th</sup> April 2008 in Sudbourne Village Hall at 1200 followed by a sandwich lunch. It would be a great help if you could let Mandy Bettinson know if you are able to attend. ([Amanda.bettinson@keme.co.uk](mailto:Amanda.bettinson@keme.co.uk) or 01394 450863)

### **A&O ASSOCIATION ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

This will be held on 29<sup>th</sup> March 2008 in the Jubilee Hall, Aldeburgh at 5pm. The guest speaker will be Professor Kenneth Pye (Kenneth Pye Associates Ltd – Scientific Research, Consultancy and Investigations). Professor Pye is our consultant scientist and very well worth coming to hear. We do hope you will put both these dates in your diary and look forward to seeing you there.

**Richard Marson**

**Chairman, River Defence Committee**

**10 December 2007**