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Founded 1938
Registered Charity No 246007
www.dedhamvalesociety.org.uk

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EDITORIAL

Members will notice several changes to this edition of the Newsletter. We have laid it out in columns, we have reduced the size of the typefaces and some of the photographs. Overall the publication is slimmer. The Summer edition will include advertising. All these changes have been made in the interest of reducing cost. Although colour printing is cheaper than it used to be it is still much more expensive than black and white and the Society's limited resources can no longer afford to meet the full cost of two 20 page editions each year. I welcome feed back on these changes. Photo credits are due as usual to Paul Gallifant and Sue Eking and to John Bedington for the photo of Thorington Mill. The photo of the Transformer Poles at Boxted Mill is by an unknown hand.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

The date and location for the Society's Summer Party has not yet been decided. Members will be notified in good time.

The AGM of the Society will be held at the **Constable Memorial Hall in East Bergholt on Monday 19th September 2011.**

David Eking

Front Cover

The River Box 20th December 2010

Photo by Sue Eking

FROM THE CHAIRMAN – LOCALISM AND A POND

One dark January evening I ran into Will Sambrook who, with Francis Terry, is one of our two most recent additions to the Society's committee. Will invited me along next day to see Dedham's new nature reserve in the fields below Castle House, now the Munnings Museum. I went along frankly not expecting to discover a great deal, and found to my surprise that a shallow pond had emerged from within a thicket cleared by volunteers from the Green Light Trust and the Dedham Vale and Stour Valley Project. I never knew there was a pond there, though it is evidently old. We resolved to look it up on local maps and to ask Society members whether they remembered it and whether its disappearance into the undergrowth predated Sir Alfred Munnings grazing his horses in that field.

The emergent pond became my sign of hope for the New Year. The Dedham nature reserve is not unique in the Vale – the Trust created a one in Stoke-by-Nayland, recreating a Constable view from the bottom of the hill in the process, and there are others – and it is too early to say how special it might be ecologically because no management plan has been written for it yet. One can say that its tussocks are a hunting ground for owls, the pond must have frogs, the oak pasture has potential for encouraging the return of wildflowers and there is great potential to engage local residents and their children in the unseen wildlife of the Vale. There is a lot of work to do.

Also hard work but with some potential is the latest legislative development of the year, the coalition government's Localism Bill.

This complicated Bill is decidedly ideological, without being very convincing that the "ism" it seeks to foster is coherent or sensible.

It bundles together, for example, the abolition of the Standards Board, which caused a tsunami of box-ticking for councillors down to parish level; the creation of more elected mayors; and the abolition of Labour's regional layer of regional planning and its Infrastructure Planning Commission. The guide to the Bill says: "Planning does not give members of the public enough influence over decisions that make a big difference to their lives." It is ironic, therefore, that the Bill omits the one thing that would actually give local people that influence: a third-party right of appeal allowing them to intervene when applications have been mishandled or go against the local plan. A third-party or "community" right of appeal would, make the system more symmetrical by balancing the right of appeal that developers already enjoy - as a pre-election Tory green paper argued. The Lib Dems included it in their manifesto. So campaigners believe there may yet be a chance of reviving it.

We will be supporting our sister organisation, the Campaign to Protect Rural England, in calling for coalition MPs to recognise that true localism must mean letting local residents say no as well as yes.

Charles Clover

VISIT BY RICHARD BENYON MP, UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE AT DEFRA TO THE DEDHAM VALE AND STOUR VALLEY PROJECT

Richard Benyon MP is one of a team of three Ministers at DEFRA (Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) and has specific responsibility for the Natural Environment. His portfolio therefore includes National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The visit, on 20th December 2010, had been arranged several weeks before and we were somewhat nervous of entertaining the Minister on the second shortest day of the year, sandwiched between engagements in Lowestoft beforehand and London afterwards, especially as the Vale is famous for its Spring and Summer hue rather than its Winter features.

In the event luck was with us. It was a bitterly cold day and everywhere was covered with heavy snow. The train carrying the Minister and his private secretary, Will Pryer, to Norwich broke down at Marks Tey. I had a message saying the time at Dedham Vale would be severely truncated but after another hour in the freezing cold train still stuck at Marks Tey it was clear that plans would have to be changed.

Travel to Lowestoft was abandoned and, having a 4-wheel drive car, I collected the Minister and his Private Secretary

from the station, took them back to Shrubs Farm to thaw out and get some refreshment. We then had the rest of the day to show them the Vale, including part of the proposed extension; the high voltage power lines and then most of the AONB en route to Willy Lot's cottage. Nigel Chapman, Chairman of the Joint Advisory Committee of the Project, and Simon Amstutz, Chief Executive, joined us in East Bergholt and we all went on to the Dedham Assembly Rooms where a group with interests in the Project, including Charles Clover, Chairman of DVS, were able to question the Minister. Finally, we went to Stoke by Nayland to see one of the Project's works in progress.

Richard Benyon is a countryman with a very good appreciation of rural matters and I was delighted to note his enthusiastic support for the integrity of AONBs. He is visiting as many protected landscapes as he can and whilst we cannot expect him to resolve our problems, at least he now understands them. He has now seen all the areas where we have concerns and these are outlined in an edited version of the letter I wrote to thank him for visiting the Dedham Vale.

"On behalf of the Dedham Vale AONB & Stour Valley

Project Partnership, I am writing to thank you and Will Pryer for visiting the Dedham Vale on Monday, 20th December. We all feel we were fortunate that despite, or perhaps because of, the arctic weather conditions you were able to devote the best part of a day to being with us, see much of the AONB and part of our hoped-for extension as well as meeting a number of those involved with the Project. Thank you for listening to their concerns and answering their questions. This was much appreciated.

Although the AONB is famous for its Spring and Summer scenery, I think you will agree that with a coating of heavy snow it did look astonishingly beautiful. I enclose press reports with photographs, the one at Dedham showing in the background Bridges Farm which was given to the National Trust by my family. Amongst other matters, we were able to show you:-

- The high quality of the landscape in the area which we hope eventually to have designated as an extension to the Dedham Vale AONB.
- The fragile nature of the landscape on the edge of the AONB at Great Horkesley which is under threat of inappropriate development
- The distress caused to residents and visitors by flight paths being routed over the AONB which was specifically designated *to preserve the tranquil landscape immortalised by John Constable*. In the case brought by the Dedham Vale Society against NATS in the High Court in December 2005, the Judge ruled *inter alia* that account should be taken of AONBs when constructing flight paths.

However, five years later, a satisfactory solution to this problem has yet to be found.

- How high voltage pylons can damage the landscape and why no further overhead cables should be erected in the AONB or its proposed extension.
- The valuable work undertaken by the Project to preserve and enhance the landscape.
- This includes an on-going programme of undergrounding low-voltage electricity transmission cables which has greatly improved the landscape quality.
- Over sixty projects in progress and still to come under the *Managing a Masterpiece* scheme, largely funded by the National Lottery.
- Plans underway to introduce commercial funding to compensate for public sector cuts.

For our part, Nigel Chapman, Simon Amstutz and I were very pleased to hear of your passion for Protected Landscapes, your encouragement for our Project and support for its work. I was especially glad to note that there are to be regular private meetings between Ministers in different departments when you can ensure that the concerns of AONBs are understood by Ministers in the Departments of Transport and Energy, amongst others.

With best wishes for a happy and successful year in 2011,

Robert Erith TD DL
Chairman Dedham Vale and Stour Valley Project Partnership



Robert Erith, Richard Benyon, Nigel Chapman

Photo courtesy of East Anglian Daily Times

VISIT TO NATIONAL AIR TRAFFIC SERVICE (NATS) HQ

Tom Hill QC and I visited the HQ of Nats at Swanwick near Southampton on Thursday 18th November 2010.

We were met by a senior team, including the Operations Director, England and Wales (in practice Chief Executive), the General Manager, South & East England, the Manager Operational Procedures and the Head of Airspace & Air Traffic Management Tools Development with whom we had a very open discussion on an informal basis.

We were shown the Operations Room and some of the new technology. Safety is the overwhelming priority and we were made aware of the problems with rough weather and the need to avoid areas of storms if possible. It was also clear how much easier it is to send aircraft in a straight line at 2 ½ mile intervals than to have a more random distribution of flight paths.

A great deal of work is being done to facilitate TAC (Transitional Altitude Change) which will come into effect in 2014. This will affect the whole of Southern England and will give NATS more options regarding flight paths and heights at which aircraft can fly safely. This will allow them to get much more out of the available airspace.

A lot of work went into the 2008 Consultation (the most recent Proposals which would largely avoid flying over the Dedham Vale) and they acknowledged our support, but there were over 14,000 submissions in respect of the Proposals as they affected the region as a whole and many were opposed to NATS' plans. However, the plans laid out in the consultation are expected to form an integral part of the eventual new developments.

There has been a downturn in traffic of 5% or more since 2007 and 2007 levels are not expected to recur until 2014.

We went through all the reasons for avoiding the Vale (which originally underlay the 2004 Airspace Change) and pointed out that there would be no need for further consultation if inbound aircraft were directed to the routes as consulted upon prior to the implementation of the 2004 Airspace Change.

Print-outs of noise patterns were handed to them and they realized how the Dedham Vale had been more adversely affected since the 2004 Airspace Changes than it had been previously. The response was that they would look hard at whether there might be ways to alleviate impacts on the Dedham Vale.

NATS is well aware of our existence and the distress caused to members, as well as to other inhabitants of, visitors to and users of the AONB. The Dedham Vale Society website is regularly monitored by their Management Team.

The meeting was amicable. Both sides can now put names to faces. We shall continue the dialogue in the expectation of positive results in due course. We shall also need to review the implications of the withdrawal of the 2008 Proposals upon the Order of the High Court (arising from the 2005 litigation). This Order was made and the litigation was "stayed" on the basis that what became the 2008 Proposals would be carried forward to implementation and that nothing more could be achieved in the litigation at that stage. We will now need to consider whether the litigation needs to be revived. Inevitably this will depend upon the response we receive from NATS and we will keep members informed of developments in this regard.

*Robert Erith,
President.*



Is this the last Elm in the Vale?

DEVELOPMENTS ON THE PYLON BATTLEFRONT

In September 2009, National Grid opened consultation on four options for the general alignment – "route corridors" – for a second line of 400kv pylons between Bramford west of Ipswich and Twinstead south of Sudbury. By the July 2010 DVS Newsletter, National Grid's choice of route corridor had been delayed until September. It is now expected in February 2011 – twelve months later than originally envisaged.

In the July Newsletter, we reported that the coalition of Suffolk & Essex groups opposing more pylons, on any of the route corridors, had challenged National Grid's case for needing extra transmission capacity in the next 10 years, and that Suffolk County Council were moving towards our position.

A lot has happened since.

We put a range of questions to National Grid in July. These were answered just before Christmas. Some of the answers are cogent, some are not. But by then, the original basis of National Grid's proposals had been largely overtaken by events. The new nuclear power station Sizewell C has gone back some years. But offshore wind power has come forward. Zone 5 of the Crown Estate Round 3 development rights has been awarded to a consortium of Iberdrola (Spanish) and Vattenfall (Swedish). They plan 7.2 GW of wind power capacity – double the size of Sizewell C. Obviously it will take time to come about. But if any significant proportion connects to the grid at Bramford – and the first 1.2 GW is due to connect there in 2015 - extra onward transmission capacity from Bramford is just a matter of time.

Zone 5 is colossal. But it is only part of the proposed offshore wind power in the North Sea. There are essentially two options for connecting this to its markets: piecemeal, project by project; or an integrated solution which takes the whole programme into account. The integrated solution would involve much less onshore transmission. It would also naturally fit with the proposed European North Sea grid, endorsed by the Prime Minister at the January meeting of north European heads of government. But the piecemeal approach is what emerges from the present regulatory regime.

This is crucial. National Grid is not a free agent: it is constrained by the regulatory regime. This is the responsibility of the regulator, OFGEM, and behind OFGEM, the government in the form of DECC (Department for Energy & Climate Change). OFGEM are even now revising the regulatory regime, but it is not clear that their proposals will deal with the problems of offshore wind power connection.

The passage of time has changed the context of this debate. When we started, there were just two proposals for new transmission lines in view: Bramford – Twinstead, and a very similar one in Somerset, to connect a new nuclear power station at Hinckley Point C to Bristol via the Mendips AONB. Now, people are starting to realise it goes much much wider. The Iberdrola/Vattenfall plans for Zone 5 could well involve a new line from Lowestoft through the Waveney valley. Snowdonia, Lincolnshire and the Lake District are all under threat. We are not alone. We are, unfortunately, first.

All this came out at a Symposium organised by Suffolk County Council at the Institution of Civil Engineers in Westminster on 19 January. It was chaired by Tim Yeo, MP for South Suffolk and, significantly, Chairman of the House of Commons Select Committee on Energy. National Grid, Iberdrola/Vattenfall, the amenity groups from Suffolk/Essex and Somerset, OFGEM, DECC, Siemens (on new transmission technology) and an environmental economist spoke.

What the environmental economist said was important. It is possible to evaluate people's aversion to pylons, and express it in money terms – "willingness to pay to avoid, or to accept compensation for, loss of amenity" - to set against the cost of undergrounding. Such techniques are standard in other fields of social cost-benefit analysis. They need to be applied here, crucially to include the value people put on iconic landscapes such as Constable Country, even if they don't live there.

So the Symposium brought out the key points, and National Grid, OFGEM and DECC were under pressure. Well done Suffolk CC. This now has to be followed through.

We also have to pursue National Grid's "Revised approach to undergrounding", announced just before Christmas. So far from responding to the points made to them, it is barely distinguishable from their previous approach. The only difference yet perceived is that it removes any special consideration for statutorily protected landscapes such as AONBs. Breathtaking.

In November, DECC commissioned an independent report on undergrounding costs. The Suffolk/Essex coalition submitted evidence. The report is due shortly: we expect it to show that National Grid has overstated the costs (but they remain substantial).

It may be worth summing up the case we are now making. It has two main thrusts:

A Individual on-shore transmission projects:

- 1 Undergrounding costs less, now, than National Grid claim
- 2 Undergrounding costs will fall
- 3 Costs of undergrounding are small as % of final consumers' electricity costs
- 4 Society is willing to pay to avoid this sort of environmental detriment (witness the decision to invest in offshore wind power, which costs double onshore)
- 5 This willingness-to-pay is of the same order as undergrounding costs now
- 6 DECC/OFGEM need to incorporate environmental detriment costs into decision making and price control

Outcome: widespread undergrounding, with falling costs

B Grid development strategy:

Now:

- Tactical/piecemeal
- Driven by electricity industry
- Reactive to individual generation projects
- 10 year time horizon
- Outcome: patch & mend existing onshore grid.

Needed:

- Strategic/integrated
- Driven by DECC
- Proactive
- Taking account of energy policy and underlying patterns & forces
- Recognising EU dimension
- 25 year time horizon

Outcome: North Sea grid.

We may not win, but we shall give them a good run for their money.

Adam Sedgwick

“E.J. RUDSDALE’S JOURNALS OF COLCHESTER”,
Edited by Catherine Pearson, published by The History Press. £12.99.

This recently-published book contains the edited journals of Eric Rudsdale who was born in Colchester in 1910 and who became one of the leading authorities on Colchester history. He was a prolific diarist from the age of ten until his untimely death at the age of fifty-one. His burning interest in archaeology began at Colchester Royal Grammar School and at thirteen he recorded his first find of Roman pottery in a cart-load of soil. The following year he wrote, “Got the skeleton from Mr Collier. Brought it home secretly, for mother won’t have it in the house...Washed it when Mother was out.” In his spare time he helped at the Castle Museum and after leaving school in 1928 he became assistant curator. He also had a passion for ancient buildings and became secretary of the Civic Society at a time when many Tudor buildings were being demolished. (It took the 1960s and 70s to complete the vandalism!) Rudsdale travelled around the district either on a bicycle or by pony and trap stabling the latter at Bourne Mill, a building in which he had a great interest, eventually persuading the National Trust to preserve it. He was also very interested in agricultural history and he organised a museum exhibition at the Essex Show from 1932 each year until 1939 by which time the display incorporated a purpose-built farm complete with animals, dairy-maids and farm-hands demonstrating traditional farming practice.

He held pacifist sympathies and was very anxious about the possibility of being called-up when war-clouds loomed in 1939 but his age and poor physical health militated against this. Instead, he took on fire-watching duties at the castle and became superintendent for the air-raid shelter located in the vaults and, in addition, he was seconded as secretary to the Essex War Agricultural Committee. Towards the end of the war he also became part of the team at the Royal Observer Corps post at Great Horkesley during the doodlebug and V2 period. By late 1944 he had become disillusioned with the hierarchy at the museum and applied for a position of curator at Wisbech, a job he began in January 1945. He became consultant archaeologist at Scarborough in 1949 but, after six months, his health began to deteriorate and he returned to Boston where he remained until his death from kidney failure in November 1951.

Catherine Pearson had to condense the diaries by four-fifths in order to comply with the publisher’s conditions but her editing skills are such that the book is one which I found difficult to put down. There follow excerpts which have particular connections with the Stour Valley.

Rudsdale had known Marshall Sisson and his wife, who lived at Shermans in Dedham Street, for some years and on Whit Monday 1940 he cycled over to see them. “He told me that the ARP arrangements there, how each is perfect in its kind—Ambulance, Wardens, and AFS,- but each loathes all the others so much that all exercises are done separately. It is hoped that it will be alright on the night. Had a most pleasant evening in his lovely house. There is a guard on East Bridge now and all persons are stopped after dark. I came back at

midnight, in glorious moonlight, and I was carrying a plan of the Roman Streets on the Colchester Library site, I hoped I should not be searched.”

He visited the Sissons a number of times and mentioned to Sisson on one occasion that he was keen to find work on the land, presumably to escape the seemingly chaotic life in Colchester.

July 20th 1940: “He promised to mention it to a friend. This morning the friend arrived, none other than Mr Parrington of Sherbourne Mill, Lawford who came to see us years ago about an archaeological discovery on his land. He was very kind and said he would certainly give me work for the harvest.”

Rudsdale had, by then, moved to live at Shermans.

August 5th: “Began work at Sherbourne Mill today. There did not seem very much to do but I amused myself successfully. I had lunch and tea at the Mill, all the butter and cream you could eat, and home-made bread.”

August 9th: “This is a charming life. Out on the farm all day. Good food and plenty of it. Back to this lovely house (Shermans). Supper by candlelight, then talking in the drawing-room, Sisson on the spinet, Mrs Sisson on the recorder.”

The Sissons, meanwhile, had taken a holiday in Yorkshire and Rudsdale moved to the Mill where, “I now have a pleasant room in the front of the Mill House.”

August 16th: “Went to Mrs Belfield’s in Dedham for tea, it was a dull afternoon and Agatha Belfield, a somewhat intense young lady, was explaining to me various aspects of hand-weaving, a subject on which she is most enthusiastic.” During the conversation Rudsdale could hear, “...an increasing roar of aircraft, and obvious thuds of bombs.” On returning to the Mill they were told that, “... seven bombs had fallen on the other side of the railway line, about a quarter of a mile away.”

Two days later he noted, “Drove Mrs Parrington to Dedham and Langham, were stopped by the Home-guard which was rather awkward as I had no identity card. Mrs Parrington had hers in her garter, which was also awkward.”

There is a great deal of detail about his air-raid experiences at the Castle. He had cycled in from Lawford on August 26th and noted in his diary, “Tremendous air-battle this afternoon. The sirens sounded and we had a full crowd in the vaults. I went up onto the roof, and very soon the air seemed full of the screaming of falling planes. We have all heard the sound so often on films that it really seems quite natural and one tends to forget that this is real and that you are watching young men go down to a particularly unpleasant death.”

This contrasted absolutely with the rural idyll.

August 28th 1941: “Cycled towards Boxted and passed one of Mr Page’s wagons returning from the harvest field painted grey and red, with a lovely pair of Suffolks, two boys riding on them and a man leading. Then cycled back by way of Langham and met another pair-horse harvest wagon coming down the hill to Blackbrook, the setting sun picking out golden lights on the horses’ coats and on the yellow sheaves piled high on the cart. With the wheel-skid on they slid slowly down into the gloom at the bottom of the valley.”

Eventually, Rudsdale had to leave Mill House to make way for a Land Army girl but in June 1943, whilst visiting Ida Hughes-Stanton at Stratford St Mary, he was introduced to, “A most charming girl, Jaqueline Conran, wife of the director of Southampton Art Gallery. She is tiny, delightful little thing, with copper-coloured hair, most charming.” Mrs Conran lived at Higham in a little cottage on the road to Shelley, “... the only access being down a steep drift-way. Delightfully remote, almost reminiscent of Wales. The period of the place must, I imagine, be between 1480 and 1500. Wish it was

mine.” In September 1943 Rudsdale moved from Lawford to stay in the Conran’s cottage because Jaqueline was returning to Portsmouth but shortly after his arrival, a searchlight appeared nearby and the magic evaporated. By March 1944 he was on the move again, this time to, “Woodside, Boxted, on the edge of Spratts Marsh.”

In April 1944 he began work with the Royal Observer Corps near Kersey’s Farm where, two days before, an American Bomber had crashed with a huge explosion. Rudsdale felt out of his depth, the calculations for tracking the aircraft made little sense but as time went on he became more confident.

September 23rd: “A few Mosquitoes came around and then we saw a diver (flying bomb) to the north-east over Dedham way, in a cone of searchlights. It seemed to track along the river, over Stoke Church, at great speed but not very high, its light huge and flickering. One of the Mosquitoes dived from 3,000ft, with lights on, tracer squirting. We both cheered. Nothing happened. The ‘plane did it again and had another shot. Still the diver went on, by now about over Nayland. It seemed hours before the flame finally went out and then another few seconds passed before the diver crashed on the marshes...”

The diaries not only cover many aspects of a wartime garrison town and the countryside surrounding it but also the story of everyday life and its effect on the man and woman in the street. There is touching detail of Rudsdale’s relationship with his parents and also of love spurned. I cannot recommend this book too highly.

Paul Gallifant



Photo taken outside Shermans, Dedham, probably while Rudsdale was visiting the Sissons. L to R: Margery Sisson, Agatha Belfield, Dian Belfield, Joy Parrington on the horse.



The Farmyard at Sherbourne (Shirburn) Mill where Rudsdale spent many happy hours away from the chaos of Colchester.

ESSEX PLANNING NOTES

By the time you read this piece it is to be hoped that the Planning Application for Horkesley Park will have been heard by the Colchester Borough Council Planning Committee and we may have edged closer to a conclusion, although in early January we were advised that there were still issues to be resolved around the Essex Highways Authority report, a response was awaited from Nature England and legal opinion was being sought on a number of issues. If the application is rejected by Colchester Borough Council, we will no doubt face a further period of uncertainty as an appeal will almost certainly be lodged.

The original application was raised in 2001, ten long years ago, and the membership of the Dedham Vale Society is to be congratulated on the strength of their support in rejecting this wholly inappropriate intrusion into the AONB which resulted in over 1000 well argued letters. One would like to think the process is nearing its end but I have a feeling that new applications at Horkesley Park may well face the Society in the decade ahead. I am reconciled to growing old whilst opposing many more applications!

We live in interesting times and in the next few months and indeed, years we are likely to see the whole approach to planning change, perhaps dramatically. At the moment we have national Planning Policies and the policies of the local government Local Development Frameworks which provide tight guidance on what is acceptable. The argument on what is permissible then becomes one of interpretation – the developer and those opposing a certain application will argue what is, or is not, acceptable under the planning regimes that exist. However, this debate is conducted within the bounds of an established set of rules. The aim of the new coalition

government seems to be “localism” and much of their thinking is set out in the Localism Bill published in mid December. The Bill has been described as the most radical shift in power since town and country planning was first born in the aftermath of World War 2. The aim is to have local communities taking decisions at the local level to meet the needs of those communities and this includes many planning decisions. Are we moving into a period where planning decisions are made at the parish rather than at district or borough council level?

I have written before of the high regard that the British approach to urban and rural planning is held within continental Europe where anything appears to go as far as planning is concerned. Are we going to adopt a similar hands off approach in the United Kingdom?

We have already seen over recent years relaxations in planning with a number of activities such as loft conversions, extensions etc being placed outside the planning system provided there are no local objections. My colleagues in the south of the county report these changes are already impacting on the look and feel of certain communities where uniformity was regarded as being important.

Another issue is the drive for home generated electricity. Within the Vale we are already seeing attractive red tiled roofs disappearing under grey, dull sheets of photoelectric cells – fortunately planning permission is needed where a listed property is involved. Additionally small domestic wind turbines are outside planning control. Can we look forward to a Vale coated in photoelectric panels with a wind turbine gently turning in the garden? Perhaps my age is showing!



Dedham December 2010

A final thought is how the cut-backs in local government spending will affect planning. A valuable part of the planning process is the pre-application site visit from a member of the Planning Department to advise in what is acceptable or not. A local farmer within the AONB is considering replacing a barn which lies within a village envelope. He requested a site visit for advice but was told this was no longer possible – is this a one-off or a new policy caused by cost cutting within the council? We face a challenging period ahead in our efforts to protect the Vale.

*Roger Drury,
Planning Secretary Essex*

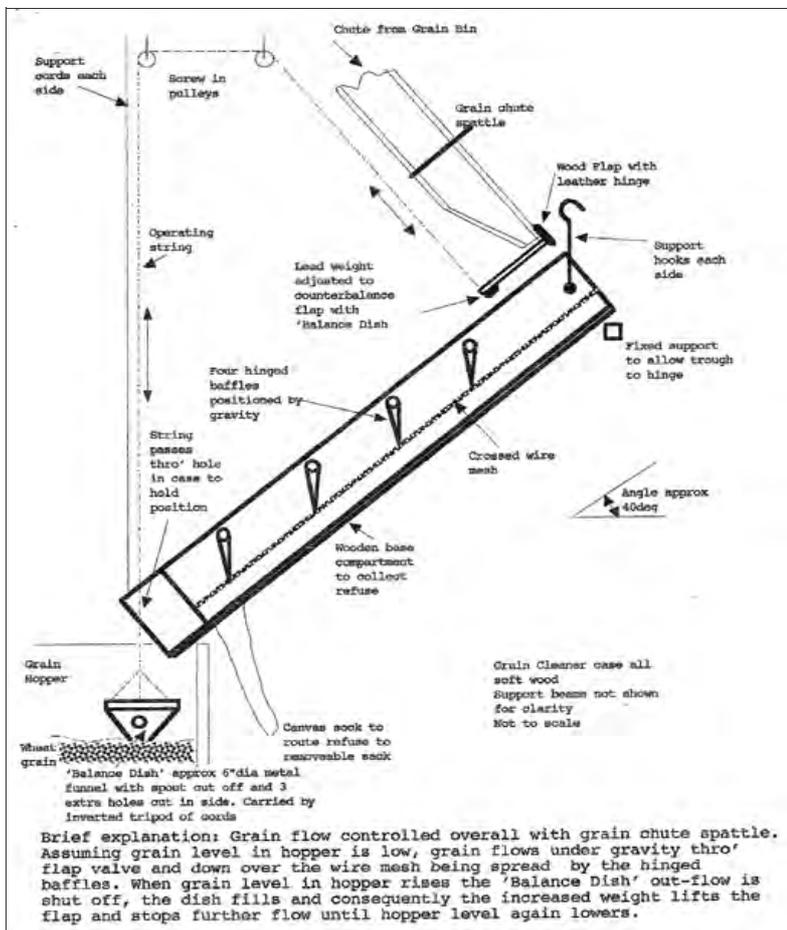
SCRIES AT THORINGTON MILL

I am a watermill (Charlecote Mill, Warwickshire) and have long also had an academic interest in the history and workings of old mills.

I have recently been researching the existence of a rather obscure piece of milling equipment called a scry. This is an inclined open chute down which grain runs from the storage bin to the hopper that feeds into the millstones. The bottom of the chute is a wire mesh of a size slightly smaller than the grain, so that as the grain falls down the chute any dust, small seeds or insect eggs fall through the mesh and are collected in a sacking or wooden container beneath and thrown away. Quite a boring bit of kit in itself: but a scry works best if the grain is let into it in small dollops, so that it makes a thin sheet of grain over the mesh and does not clog or spill, and that was normally achieved by the use of a "balance dish" – a delightfully Heath Robinson contraption consisting of a funnel (tundish) hanging within the millstone hopper by a string attached to a flap in the delivery spout from the storage bin. As the grain falls from the end of the scry into the millstone hopper, it passes through the funnel, which gradually sinks and closes the flap, cutting off the grain supply. When the grain in and around the funnel has all passed through the millstones, the weight of the empty funnel is no longer sufficient to keep the flap closed, so it opens thereby delivering another dollop of grain and raising the funnel again, and so on. The accompanying drawing, based on a scry and balance dish in the fine windmill at Stonecross in Sussex, and reproduced courtesy of Mike Chapman, shows the principle.



Thorington Mill House and Mill refurbished



Basic principle of Scry and Balance Dish

Anyhow, I have been made aware of (only) about half a dozen surviving examples of scries in mills, though they were once

common in Kent, Sussex, Essex and Suffolk, and one of those was in Thorington Street Mill, illustrated on your website. Sadly the balance dish has gone (Stonecross Mill now has the country's only balance dish), but the picture shows the bottom of the scry over a millstone hopper, and the hinged flap from grain bin for another scry (not in position) for another pair of stones. Having seen the picture I was keen to come and see the mill, and I am grateful to Sarah Carr for putting me in touch with Hector Wykes-Sneyd, who kindly opened up the mill for my wife and myself.

And let me say, what a lovely mill! In nearly fifty years of looking at mills, I have not seen one more beautiful. It is wonderful that the estate has kept the inside too just as the miller left it, with all the interesting machinery and equipment (the scries incidentally had a particularly endearing feature for emptying the screenings, which I had not seen elsewhere – a nicely made sliding lid, like on an old-fashioned pencil box).

Whilst in the area we also enjoyed an excellent walk along the vale from East Bergholt to Flatford Mill, and left with happy memories of our visit.

*John Bedington
Warwickshire*

SUFFOLK PLANNING NOTES

The scrapping of the East of England Regional Authority and its strategic plan for the area has meant that District Councils are now required to plan for the growth of both housing and jobs within their districts. This has resulted in a core strategy consultation paper on the “**Future Growth of Babergh District to 2031**”. The Committee of the Society has considered this document and commented accordingly, although noting that a merger with South Suffolk District has also been proposed and would inevitably require a revision of the core strategy put forward. The basic strategy is to confine development of both jobs and housing to the fringes of the three major towns in or on the edge of the District, ie Sudbury, Hadleigh and Ipswich. This is said to cause the least damage to the environment, reduce commuting, avoid the need for additional infrastructure and not disfigure further the still largely unspoilt and often exceptional rural landscape of the District. The Society supports this basic strategy in principle but has clear reservations on any development in the AONB, in Key Service Centres (the major villages) or elsewhere within the smaller villages or the open countryside of the District. Even marginal encroachments beyond village envelopes could be damaging and, in particular we have restated our opposition to the building of so called “affordable” housing under the “rural exception sites” policy which the Council has indicated will continue to have considerable emphasis and support. In summary we have argued for minimal development within Babergh District as a whole. We believe that this is fully in accord with the central agenda required of all Local Development Frameworks (formerly District Plan) of sustainability, ameliorating climate change and reducing carbon footprints. In north east Essex and south east Suffolk this is only achieved if all significant development is located in Colchester or Ipswich, at Felixstowe or Harwich, by an A12 or A14 junction, or alongside the Great Eastern mainline ie not in Babergh! This does not mean that there should be no development in the district. Many new jobs are site specific and there will be locality specific cases where there is a need to improve the mix of housing stock, eg for more small units or sheltered housing.

The unusual application to replace a modern 1970s house within an even more avant-garde 21st century structure in Martens lane, **Polstead** has been approved but the Council has imposed conditions which should ensure that the lane is reinstated following any damage done by the construction traffic. A long running proposal to add a large house next to the Cemetery in Cemetery Lane, **East Bergholt** has re-appeared but has at last been resolved. Despite objections again raised because it is considered to be over large for the site the Council has now granted permission.

The final and perhaps most interesting development is the ongoing construction of a large house at **Dalton’s farm, Plough Lane** on the boundary of the parishes of **Stoke by Nayland and Leavenheath** and in the middle of the Stoke by Nayland Golf Course. This new dwelling suddenly started to appear in the late summer/early autumn of 2010, apparently without any application having been made. As it lies in a prominent position in open countryside within the AONB considerable alarm was expressed. Enquiries with the enforcement department of the District Council, however,

reveal that it was not quite as outrageous as it seemed. Back 30 years ago in 1980 permission was granted for a dwelling on the site to house an agricultural employee. Foundations were dug within the permitted time frame of this ancient grant and the owner’s lawyers have successfully argued that therefore the permission is still valid and the house can be built without further application. However, the Council has also confirmed that the restriction to an agricultural employee imposed at the time of the original grant also remains valid. It will be most interesting to learn the employment of the occupant of this new four bed-roomed house in the middle of a prestigious golf course.

David Eking



Views of New House at Dalton’s Farm



November Sunset in the Vale