The late Dudley Courtman demonstrating his canoe skills in the summer of 2000.

William Marriage.
In this issue

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We welcome a new member:
Hazel Stothard

We always welcome members’ photos, articles, “snippets” and other contributions to Coates’ Cuttings. Please e-mail them to maurice@chelmercanaltrust.co.uk or post them to Maurice Austin, Tindal Lodge, 11 Valletta Close, Chelmsford CM1 2PT.
From the Board Room.

William Marriage, Neil Frost & Maurice Austin
with help from Mike Smith.

We have met several times since the last Coates’ Cuttings was issued. Much of the meeting time has inevitably been taken up with routine matters such as our finances, administration and the “dreaded” GDPR. All members and contacts will have now received details of how we will handle and protect your personal data. We obviously do want to keep in touch with you but if, at any time or for any reason you want to be removed from our data base, do please tell us and you wish will be actioned and respected.

Renewal notices and formal AGM papers will be dispatched with the mailing of this Coates’ Cuttings. The AGM, which takes place on Tuesday 18 September, from 19:00 to 21:00 hours (7pm till 9pm for those still using “old money”) at Moulsham Mill, will be followed by an interactive quiz. Neil Frost has kindly volunteered to arrange this; he promises it will be “something different” from our usual après-AGM activity. There might even be prizes!

We had much discussion on the need for an equipment shed at Heybridge; we have previously agreed to purchase and install and have even chosen the one we want! As ever, there are difficulties getting all the permissions and consents sorted out.

Neil did submit a request for a new piece of kit – this is covered elsewhere in this Coates’ Cuttings.

We still do need to recruit additional Trustees. We are down to the minimum level of three. You are warned, you may be approached!
The Passing of Dudley Courtman.

Chelmer Canal Trust’s first Chairman passed away in March after his medical condition suddenly worsened. I had known Dudley reasonably well for just a few years and liked and respected him but I was unprepared for the genuine torrent of grief amongst those who knew him better than I had.

There is no doubt that he touched the lives of all those he had contact with, whether personal, professional or just casually. In fact, Dudley never did anything casually despite the low-key demeaner he displayed. In the fullness of time, we will give a detailed obituary but, meanwhile we publish an edited extract of a conversation he had with William Marriage shortly before his death.

Picture: Dudley and his wife, Pamela at a Buckingham Palace Garden Party in May 2003.
INNS or IASs?!

Neil Frost.

Within its role of ensuring that the Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation remains a valuable resource, removing Floating American Pennywort from the Navigation and its various feeder streams has been an ongoing project for the Trust for something like 15 years. It has been an impressive piece of work. Today the Navigation is fully navigable, but 15 years ago several parts of the Navigation were completely blocked along several hundred metre stretches, meaning that some stretches were impassable.

On the Chelmer and Blackwater, we actually have outbreaks of three of the most well-known and prolific Invasive Non Native Species, (INNS) or Invasive Alien Species (IAS): Floating American Pennywort ("Hydrocotyle ranunculoides"); Himalayan Balsam ("Impatiens glandulifera"); and Japanese Knotweed ("Fallopia japonica"). What INNS have in common is that they have been brought to the UK, either deliberately or inadvertently, from parts of the world where they have natural predators which keep them in check. In the UK those same predators don’t exist, meaning that these species can start to take over large tracts of land or water unchallenged and wiping out the native vegetation. Invaders!

Floating American Pennywort, “Hydrocotyle ranunculoides”.

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Over many years, the Chelmer Canal Trust has been a leader in the development of management techniques for Floating American Pennywort, a plant that originated in Central and South America. But like many other projects around the UK dealing with Pennywort, we know it is unlikely, efficient as our various techniques are, that we will fully eradicate the weed. Whether it is removed by machinery, handpicked or treated with herbicide (the recommended range of techniques) nevertheless this cunning weed manages to survive in sufficient quantities that if we lessen our efforts it can re-infest its favourite locations very quickly.

Thankfully, skilled scientists are working on alternative techniques to eradicate several Invasive Non Natives. It’s not rocket science - but it is straightforward science! CABI – a not-for-profit scientific research, publishing and international development organisation – are on the case! Go to the part of the world where these species grow naturally and from where they were originally imported, find what predator keeps them in check there, bring that predator back to the UK and release it onto the weed here. Seems straightforward, right? Wrong!! Legislation exists that stops such random releases.

Himalayan Balsam, “Impatiens glandulifera”.
Apart from many other good reasons, the fact that this new predator might predate on more than the target species is a very important concern (some might have noticed that Himalayan Balsam - *Impatiens glandulifera* - is in the same family as one of our favourite bedding plants, the Busy Lizzie, *Impatiens walleriana*.) So, tight controls, quarantining, careful testing and assessment have to take place over several years and in a variety of test habitats, and approval has to be obtained before there can be any release into the wild.

Bio-control of Balsam and Knotweed can wait for another time. CCT is currently primarily interested in a biological control for Floating Pennywort. Step forward, all the way from Argentina, a weevil by the name of *Listronotus elongates*.

These little critters could well spell the end of Pennywort on the Navigation, or at the very least prevent its ability to out-compete other native plants. In tests in the UK it has been shown to be a very effective bio-control. It appears to be very plant-specific. When it has munched its way through the stems of the available Pennywort it starts to show a small interest in similar plants around it, but thankfully doesn’t seem that keen, however hungry it is, and eventually dies out.

Testing with our little friend *Listronotus* is ongoing to ensure that its release into the wild can be safe and effective. After all, it might be a rapid muncher its native climates of South America, but is it up to the task in the more challenging climate of the UK?

Only time (and more careful testing) will tell. For our loyal and hard-working volunteers who pitch up every month to keep Floating Pennywort at bay little *Listronotus*’s release into the wild can’t come soon enough.
Do You Recall Dick Parsons?

He has written:

I have often thought I should write to you. Why? Because, as well as being a member of the IWA and having a narrowboat moored near Braunston, I was born in Shrublands Close (just round the corner from Navigation Road, Chelmsford) in 1945 and lived there until we moved to Highwood in 1963 – as a result of which I had first-hand experience of the Chelmer and Blackwater navigation and of the working barges. I’m now also a CRT volunteer lockkeeper, working at Stoke Bruerne, Watford and Foxton having lived up this way for the last twenty-five years.

Two or three years ago, I was working at Watford following the Crick Show – I can’t remember how many boats went through, but it was a lot – and I was spoken to quite sharply by a crew member off a >>>>

Not Nobby, but the last horse-drawn barge on the River Lea - in 1955 near Waltham Abbey. Previously used in Coates’ Cuttings no.33, June 2006.
working pair. She said “I’ve been on the canals for thirty years, I bet you can’t make a similar claim”! What I’d done wrong I really don’t know but she hadn’t noticed that I’d kept the towpath side clear (we were bow-hauling the butty) nor that I was managing the water so that the cratches of both the motor and the butty weren’t being deluged; in fact, I don’t think anybody noticed – but there you go! and all true. So, says I “let me see, my first time on a canal boat was in 1953. I was eight and the horse’s name was Nobby”. All said with a smile, of course; Shrublands Close was adjacent to a couple of fields (where Tesco’s was built and where Bond’s additional carparking is now) where animals for slaughter were kept for a few days after Friday market. The barge horses were also kept there in summer and I’m sure you will know they were Nobby, George and Duke; in my mind, in that order. Duke is now probably the most well remembered; he was certainly quite a glamorous grey but quite aloof and a bit flighty. George was an ok grey horse but likely to nip. Nobby was a splendid, very friendly bay horse with beautiful soft ears.

Chances are you’ve got sources for all this type of reminiscent stuff but I wondered whether you would like me to provide the odd piece, not just about the navigation, but about life in the area at about that time. Browns were still running wooden barges then and I’ve lost count of the number of trips I had to Heybridge, along with friends with similar interests, but when I went to secondary school at Sandon (I was there for two years) things had changed. The horses had gone and the wooden barges replaced with steel motorised boats, I think four of them each with a Greek letter motif – alpha, beta, gamma and delta. Mr Poole was still in charge and, provided we asked properly, and behaved, we were allowed to put our bikes on top, work the locks and get home later than we should have been.

Happy to oblige if you’re stuck for copy.

With best wishes

We hope you enjoyed this little story from Dick, a former Chelmsford boy. As mentioned in CC56, readers are encouraged to write to the Editor with comments, recollections and so on. A lively correspondence between us all can only be of benefit and might even be enjoyable!
Where is the Pilot? Valerie Brundle.
My late parents and the people of Woodham Walter always maintained that one of the first "doodle-bugs" came down at the Warren in the Second World War. I am not sure if this story is true but there was certainly a small plane, or so it seemed, which had crash landed in the orchard but with no sign of a pilot anywhere. It was, as we now know, a V1 Rocket.

Another war time mystery is what happened to the bomb that did not explode! A lone German plane, obviously lost and trying to make its way back to the coast, dropped three bombs. One fell at Little Baddow, the next made a huge crater in Bell Meadow at Woodham Walter and the third dropped in the field beside the church but never exploded. Village people saw the bomb fall and an extensive search and dig were made or so the story goes, but nothing was ever found.

So, the pilot didn't exist but is the bomb still there? Or will we never know?

Marsh Marigolds on the canal bank.
In Conversation With Dudley Courtman.

Shortly before Dudley’s untimely death, William Marriage recorded a long conversation with him. We are pleased to be able to share some extracts of the talk.

“The illness I had just after Christmas has restricted my activity; there is a limit to what I can do, even walking round the block would not be advisable. I am not depressed, just cheesed off.

The Chelmer has always been part of my life; I know it intimately, I knew it as a boy and grew up with it. My twin brother and I used to canoe it often. When we were teenagers, we took up an irresistible challenge to paddle the length of the navigation – competing with the girls nautical training corps! We trained hard and competed seriously – and we beat them soundly!

Shortly after that, John Marriage appeared on the scene. He was concerned that the canal company was in disarray and he couldn’t tell what was going to happen so, he suggested the best way to preserve the waterway was to form a trust to preserve and enhance it. John was so enthusiastic but he obviously needed people to work with to achieve his vision. This is where you, William, and I came in and we fostered the Trust and helped prevent the navigation disappearing without trace.

I have always been a willing volunteer and so became Chairman of the new trust with John’s considerable support. When John died, I sort of took over the whole thing. John never did become Chairman, probably because he was involved with all sorts of organisations connected with the water.

Pennywort was a problem even in those days. I recognised the seriousness of the problem as I was a biologist, having obtained a qualification in Field Biology from London University. I knew that the only solution would be to get rid of it, to get it all out and I have campaigned vigorously to eradicate it. And rightly so as it has turned out as we are still not free of it.
Dudley described his career in Education and spoke highly of the support he received from the London Borough of Newham in creating the outdoor education facilities at Heybridge and Fairplay House. He thought the local authority was very forward looking and felt they understood the significant benefits to be gained from such training. We shall cover this aspect of the conversation in the next Coate’s Cuttings.

Picture below: Dudley displaying some of the knoxious weed, Floating American Pennywort, “Hydrocotyle ranunculoides’ he felt so strongly about.
The Navigation is a fantastic community facility in the middle of Essex which needs enhancing and that has got to be a major reason for the Canal Trust.

I believe the Trust should continue as it is, despite the good work of the IWA. I always saw it as a watchdog to ensure the navigation can be maintained and developed in the public interest.

The Trust exists to preserve the interests of the general public. To me, it was always very clear. The major objective should always be that the general public gets as much pleasure out of the navigation as I did from boyhood onwards.”

Dudley in mischievous mode!
Further Memories of the Basin as a Child
Terry Woodcraft.

These are my memories of the shops, churches and the tollgate.

When I was young there Mrs Boorer's shop on Lock Hill sold all sorts of odds and ends, including sweets. The next shop was where the Tiptree Jam Café is; in those days this was a bungalow, an old couple lived there and sold Wall's ice creams. As you walk down from the wall was the Chapel, now in a state of disrepair; it was run by a gentleman who lived in a bungalow next to what is the entrance to the car park. I believe he may have been an army Captain or Major in the First World War. Before you get to the Chapel on the left there was Mr Percur's shop/post office and my granny would send me round there to get two Lyons fruit pies which we would have for sweet after lunch with custard which my Gran would have made whilst I went to get them. As you walked along the street towards the Church, there was a dairy selling milk and butter. Next door there was a butcher's shop. All gone now thanks to the big supermarkets and better personal transport as most people now have cars. In those days, we had a very good bus service even on Sundays, the bus stop was at the church.

Now this brings me on to St. George's Church, the church you may have noticed looks similar to the bungalows as you enter the Basin. That is because they all come from the same place, namely Osea Island. They were the old huts used by the Royal Navy when they had a base there during the First World War. May and Butcher must have purchased them from the navy and once again my Dad had a job, dismantling and rebuilding them. The church was once the Petty Officers' mess. The huts at the end of Basin Road where built as accommodation; they are much changed and are now very nice bungalows.
The last bungalow on the corner of Basin Road and Goldhanger Road is the former toll house and opposite the bungalow on the other side of Basin Road in the hedge you could still see the old post of the toll gate until recently. If you walked a little way up towards Heybridge, there was another shop and a chance to catch an Osbourne bus. In those long-gone days, just after the war, the public got a better service both with shops and public transport.

Is this progress?

The Susan Trust.

The Susan Trust was established to restore and maintain, in working order, the Chelmer Lighter, ‘Susan” on the Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation in Essex. Chelmer Canal Trust has one “place” on the trustee Board of The Susan Trust. Following the death of Dudley Courtman, Maurice Austin has been appointed to that position.

Susan in Springfield Basin.
Third Wednesday Walks. Maurice Austin.

A small group of keen walkers have met regularly to explore our beautiful canal/navigation. On one occasion, William stood in for Maurice as he was unwell. Many thanks for doing this. Regulars have included Gillian Parker and Mike & Pam Robarts.

As previously mentioned, I will, initially, concentrate on those parts of the Navigation that can be conveniently reached by bus, although car drivers will not be forgotten and parking facilities are considered! The target is to get all the “bus walks” ready by the end of 2018, with others to follow in 2019.

So far, the only difficulty we have encountered has been the stretch of path alongside that “major store” in Maldon. The area is significantly overgrown and virtually impassable for at least half a mile or more. The overgrown area can be by-passed by walking through a busy car-park and crossing several busy roads at a roundabout, not an attractive proposition! The other side of the navigation does have a clear and attractive “green” tow path as well as a tarmacoded cycle path. The authorities have been approached to clear the path but with the current crisis in local government funding, I am not very hopeful of speedy action!

Unfortunately, the email address we set up for walks did not work, probably a problem with Maurice’s computer (or the operator!) so, in the meantime please use maurice.austin@phonecoop.coop if you would like to be included in that list.

There is no walk during August

On Wednesday 19 September, we shall meet in the City Centre by the Town Statue in Backnang Square at 10:30 and explore the Chelmer Valley. About 4 miles of gentle, level(ish) paths. Conditions underfoot should be good but wear stout shoes or boots just in case. Subsequent walks will be held on 19 September, 17 October, 21 November, 19 December.

Details of these walks will be sent to those on the email list and will also be posted on the website. Hope to see you at some of these.
Visit To Marriage’s Flour Mill – 20 Feb 2018.

This was an opportunity for CCT members to visit a working Essex flour mill with a long history of connections with the Chelmer. This mill still has working millstones as well as modern roller mills.

W & H Marriage & Sons has been a family run flour milling company for almost two hundred years. Founders William and Henry Marriage started the business aged only seventeen, following the death of their father. It is said that the Marriage family had been farmers and millers in mid-Essex since the seventeenth century.

Today the fifth and sixth generations of the Marriage family are continuing the milling tradition started by their ancestors William and Henry Marriage back in 1824.

A more detailed report will be held back till the next issue of Coates Cuttings.

One of the products of the general mill. I thought it was a picture taken on pay day but William strongly refuted that notion! William Marriage.
Summer Barbeque Cancelled due to Worst Possible Weather Forecast!

The planning and preparation had gone on for months, William had just returned from holiday and intended to rise at the crack of dawn to load the gazebo and other barbecue kit onto the trailer, prepare the boat and do the hundred and one other tasks necessary for a successful canal-side barbecue. Ron and Judith Abbott had scrubbed Blackwater Dawn spotlessly clean for it to be used to shuttle picnickers from Hoe Mill to Rushes Lock. Maurice had bought a suitable amount of sausages and burgers (for himself, Angela, Clive and Henry, the Italian greyhound) and Neil had been called away to Captain a couple of choir concerts.

After more than fifty days without rain, an excess of sunshine and extreme heat, we were looking at the first dry and warm barbecue for several years. However, forecasters were beginning to hint that the jet stream was beginning to slip and some of those cold fronts were appearing over the right shoulder of the weather forecasters!

Being a good sailor, William looked up the Met Office weather forecast the day before the planned barbecue. To his horror, he saw almost the worst possible scenario. Guaranteed very heavy rain for much of the day! After consultation with colleagues, it was decided to cancel the barbecue. The previous couple of years events had been miserable because of persistent rain but at a rate far less than the forecast!

William rapidly went to work to cancel the shuttle boat, advise all who had offered to help, put a note on the CCT website. It was later agreed to hold the barbecue later in the season; when arrangements have been made, members of the CCT will obviously be advised by email and through the website.

We obviously regret having to cancel the barbecue, but the forecast was so bad, we would have been irresponsible to go ahead. Apart from any discomfort caused by the weather, “messing about” on the canal side could have been dangerous in persistent, heavy rain.

Just a reminder of the much more benign conditions last year!
Maurice Austin.
Just to demonstrate that William and colleagues made the right decision, even if conditions on the day did not reach the appalling conditions forecast!

Extract from Met Office forecast.
A greater than 95% chance of rain almost guarantees a poor experience!
Neil’s New Kit?

Ever wanting to keep the Chelmer & Blackwater in tip-top condition, Neil Frost has suggested the Chelmer Canal Trust invest in the item of kit shown below which is currently being used on some of the London canals. If we buy, he is willing to operate it!

I can’t show a picture of it due to copyright issues, but have a look at the following link:

https://www.facebook.com/cnn/videos/10158587060786509/

Methinks that Neil’s tongue is firmly in his cheek! Or is it??

Coates Cuttings Production Schedule.

The astute amongst you will have wondered just why we bothered to publish a production schedule in the last issue. Well; a host of issues including poor health, flooding, overwork and general procrastination have combined to ruin your Editor’s best intentions. The current plan is to “slip” an issue which means that preparation of issue 58 will commence immediately with the hope of getting back on target by the AGM.

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Work Party News

Wednesday, 11th July 2018.
Weed busting and Litterpicking, Hoe Mill

Rumour had it that there was some international event going on and starting at 7pm - but the five of us who turned up for this work party weren't fussed about that. (especially given the final result!).

What we had expected was that we'd be able to use a workboat and cover a decent amount of the Navigation - but having only found out very late on that we couldn't use it we couldn't change our plans and go elsewhere.

Nevertheless, especially as coracle-man Steve had brought a fold-up dinghy, we could do something useful. Volunteer time is valuable and we don't want to waste it or take our volunteers for granted.

William took to the unfolded dinghy like the proverbial duck did!
Heritage Walks
In conjunction with Chelmsford Civic Society, we are holding three

**Guided walks along the Chelmer & Blackwater Navigation**

**Saturday 8th September:** 11:00 - 15:00.

**Thursday 13th September:** 11:00 - 15:00.

**Saturday 15th September:** 11:00 - 15:00.

**Details:** A guided tour to discover how Chelmsford became industrialised and enjoy the beautiful water meadows.

An easy walk from Sandon Park & Ride site via Sandon Lock to the City Centre looking at the Chelmer & Blackwater Navigation, the basin which enabled cheap coal and wood to be delivered to the country’s first gas works. Walk or bus back.

Enjoy the dramatic contrast between the busy A12 and surrounding roads and the peace and solitude of the Chelmer & Blackwater Navigation – a canalised river. A gentle walk to the canal at Sandon Lock, 'upstream' to Chelmsford City Centre via Barnes Lock and the water meadows. Look at the basin at the head of the canal, the gas works which bought early industrialisation to Chelmsford and the significant development in the former gas works area. There will be an opportunity for refreshment in the City Centre (and maybe a quick bit of shopping if you must!) after which we can either return on the Park & Ride bus (a nice experience in itself) or walk back. Steady pace.

Booking via Eventbrite limited to 25 people on each tour.

**Location:** The Sandon Park & Ride is located beside junction 18 of the A12. The meeting point will be by the Park & Ride bus stop.

These walks will be lead by Maurice Austin assisted by the 3rd Wednesday Walks team.
2018 CCT Dates for Your Diary

Saturday 1 September 0900 - 1200 Work Party
Saturday 8 September 1100 - 1500 Heritage Walk
Thursday 13 September 1100 - 1500 Heritage Walk
Saturday 15 September 1100 - 1500 Heritage Walk
Tuesday 18 September 1900 - 2100 AGM & Interactive Quiz
Wednesday 19 September 1030 Walk

Saturday 6 October 0900 - 1200 Work Party
Wednesday 17 October 1100 Walk
Tuesday 30 October 1900 - 2100 Board

Saturday 3 November 0900 - 1200 Work Party
Tuesday 6 November tba Moulsham Mill
Wednesday 21 November tba Walk

Saturday 1 December 0900 - 1200 Work Party
Wednesday 19 December 1100 Walk

Up to date details of all our events can be found on our website at:

http://www.chelmercanaltrust.co.uk/events.htm.

Useful Telephone Numbers

Essex Waterways Ltd ..........................01494 783453
(Operating the Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation)
General Manager .............................07966 375351
Grant Everiss, Heybridge Basin .............07712 079764

Ron and Judith Abbott, Blackwater Boat Trips .....01206 853282
Heybridge Boat Trips ..........................07835 657462
Paper Mill Lock, Tea Room and Boat Trips ..........01245 225520

Environment Agency — General Enquiries: 03708 506 506 (Mon-Fri 8-6)
Incident hotline: 0800 807060 (Freephone 24 Hour)

The Editor, Coates Cuttings, Maurice Austin.........01245 492328

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www.chelmercanaltrust.co.uk
www.facebook.com/ChelmerCanalTrust
The Crane at Heybridge Basin. 

Neil Frost.

Chelmer Canal Trust

Protecting the Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation

Issue 57, Summer 2018