



the gaff line

special edition

For the Friends of the Wherry Yacht Charter Charitable Trust

We are delighted to have been contacted by Diana Wilson about a diary, written by her Great Aunt Di, detailing and picturing her holiday aboard the wherry yacht 'Spree' in 1911.

In the main newsletter we have published extracts from this diary but here, online, we have the space to let you enjoy them in full. We continue our serialisation in this final instalment, rejoining the group starting the search for their lost camera...

Thursday July 13th

We had anchored close to the mouth of Fleet Dike near St. Bennett's Abbey. It had a mill built on to it which gives it a quaint appearance. Another fine morning and we were soon in the dinghy accompanied by George who was to be landed at South Walsham to go asharpin. Norfolk folk I find turn 'e's and 'o's into 'a's, thus shopping is sharpin; to steer is to stair. The entrance into South Walsham Broad is very narrow and a stiffish breeze was blowing. A notice at a cottage of 'worms on sale' aroused our fishing instincts but we sped on and landed George at the staithe, somewhat with difficulty on account of the bushes and the wind. We sailed around this very charming Broad - so prettily treed and lovely water lilies among the reeds and flags. It seems a favorite haunt of the tufted grebe. We landed at a charming island with lovely rose bower and after cruising about for an hour returned to the landing stage and disembarked to have a stroll. Looked round the curiosity shop. Back to the boat and away, past many fishers to The Spree in time for lunch.

On up the Ant to Ludham where we anchored in our old spot below the bridge and near the windmill. Out came the fishing rods and a very few small fishes were thereby enticed but we unhooked and put them back. A new wherry, Cyclops, came up with a crew of six men to be put through the bridge. George returned from more 'sharpin' having made enquiries for the lost camera and got onto the tracks thereof.

Friday July 14th

Away we three sailed with a head wind up the Ant. It has many delightful corners made sweet with hay makers and picturesque cottages. It was so shallow in one part we went aground several times even in the dinghy, but nothing serious. The white water lilies were lovely on Barton Broad and the rushes and reeds in fine banks. Very few boats about, too much wind for most amateur sailors I expect. We tacked and tacked and passed into Stalham Broad almost unrecognisable as a Broad so narrow is it on account of the reed beds.



Pictured, from top right: photograph of reed cutters, photograph of a lane in Stalham village, postcard of Barton Broad, postcard of Wayford Woods at Stalham

The wind nearly gave out but fortunately just held on and by 3 o'clock we landed just below Stalham staithe. We had started at 10.45 and lunched en route so this cannot be called quick travelling. Stalham proved a nice little village. The church has a fine old font.

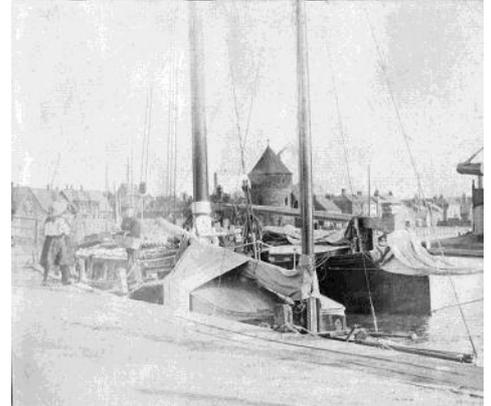
Mildred had a go at sailing and steering while I did my best to shelter from the blazing sun. Weed and reed cutters were at work but could take no photos as the sun was in the wrong direction. Stalham Broad was crowded with duck and a large bird got up; we thought it must be a bittern. We held up for tea at a small garden and tempting arbour. While it was preparing we visited Irstead church, very neglected and service but seldom held.

A very light wind made progress slow and we soon landed near a windmill within sight of Ludham Bridge to go in search of the lost camera. Alec and I crossed a dyke or two and beautiful meadows then up a grassy shady lane and out onto the road where we eventually ran Mrs. Fishcot to earth and secured the camera. I culled honey suckle, woodruff, forget-me-nots and some heads of yellow phlox-like plants, all of which grow in great quantities with meadow sweet and hosts of other watery plants. We found Mildred having a quiet doze and, the wind dropping, had to take to the sculls in order to reach The Spree and dinner.

Meanwhile George had been to Wroxham and greeted us with the unpleasant news that The Spree was re-let and we must be in Wroxham by 12 am next day. There was nothing for it but to pack. After dinner The spree up-anchored and glided along in the dim mysterious twilight till nearly 11pm when we tethered close to Horning Ferry.

Saturday July 15th

Opened warm, cloudy and wet but a fair wind so we were under way soon after 8. We passed Wroxham Broad with regretful minds at being unable to sail round it once more. There were many boats owing to the regattas. Went up to Loynes stage near Wroxham Bridge and bade a sad farewell to The Spree. The sun was shining as we went up into the village to lunch and get cards. Alec disposed of the remaining stores; we collected fishing rods and various left articles of clothing. At 1pm took train for Sheringham where we walked round and got some pleasant digs.



Pictured, from top right: photograph of girls by the river, photograph of wherries moored, postcard of Wroxham Broad