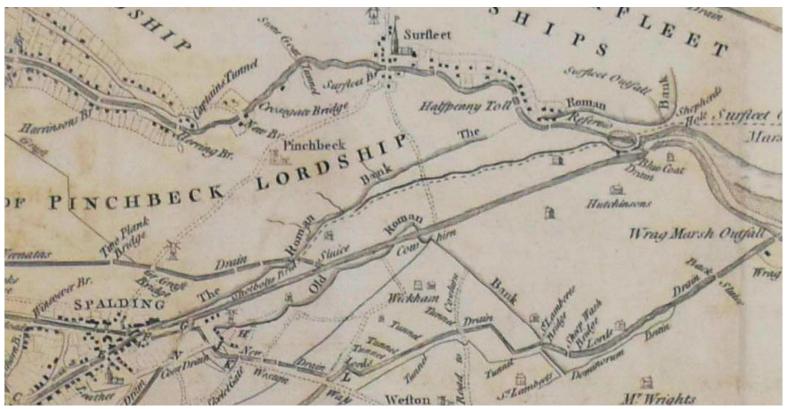
SURFLEET RESERVOIR

A historical look at this drainage landmark using images from the SGS collection with personal reminiscences



Joseph Featherstone's map of Deeping Fen, published in 1763.

Living in South Holland, we sit on the flood plains of two of the four rivers that flow into The Wash. Whereas most Spalding residents recognise the importance of the Coronation Channel and pumping station at Pode Hole for making the town a safe and flood free place to live, what about the rivers and drains downstream of our town?

One place that is often overlooked and mis-understood is Surfleet Reservoir. So why is it important and why "reservoir"?

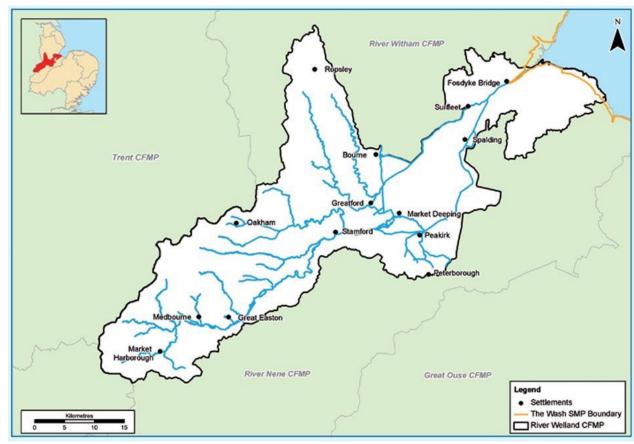
My grandfather was sluice-keeper at Surfleet Reservoir from 1959 to 1975, so my first ten years were spent visiting my grandparents there most weekends and school holidays. It was a friendly and exciting place to visit in the warm summer months, but also had its own charm in the snowy winters. Fifty years ago, it was a much quieter place to visit with only a dozen or so holiday chalets and few permanent residents. The area within the Reservoir was meticulously maintained, the river banks and grass around the chalets were regularly mown, and the weeds and debris in the Glen were regularly dredged onto the banks to stop them fouling the sluice doors.



2023 Google satellite view of Surfleet Reservoir, showing the River Glen running through the middle, with the Vernatt's Drain then River Welland to the right.

Topography

The Welland and the River Glen were originally tidal along their length. These two rivers along with the Vernatt's and Blue Gowt drains meet at Surfleet Reservoir, where the Welland then flows along an improved cut towards Fosdyke Bridge and out into the Wash. The first sluice on the River Glen was built at Surfleet in 1739 and the first tidal sluice on the Welland only being built at Spalding in 1953. The only other sluices at Spalding before then were at the end of Cowbit Wash which were built and improved from the seventeenth century onwards.



River Welland Catchment Flood Management Plan (CFMP).
© Environment Agency 2009

The River Welland rises in the Hothorpe Hills in Northamptonshire then flows east through Market Harborough, Stamford, Market Deeping and Spalding to the Wash near Fosdyke. It has a catchment area of around 650 square miles along a length of about 65 miles. The River Glen consists of two tributaries, East and West Glen, which join near Greatford to form the Glen, which then flows across the Fens into the tidal Welland at Surfleet. The tributaries flowing down to Surfleet have an approximate combined length of 76 miles and a catchment area of around 142 square miles.

In the seventeenth century, The Adventurers - in South Lincolnshire these were such people as Sir William Russell, the Earl of Bedford, Sir Robert Bevill, Sir Philibert Vernatti and Captain John Perry - began to drain and reclaim the lands lost to the fens and marshes. As well as improving Deeping Fen and the Cowbit Washes, one of the major schemes was to dig what is now the Vernatt's Drain that carries the water from the Counter Drain, South Holland Drain and North Drove Drain that meet at Pode Hole.

Glen Sluice

Historically, the Glen was always a slow-flowing river that also stagnated when being backed upstream by the tidal inflows. The name Surfleet derives from Old English $s\bar{u}r$ (sour, damp) plus $fl\bar{e}ot$ (estuary inlet, creek). A bridge over the Glen in Surfleet village is mentioned in 1320 by the Commissioners for Sewers.

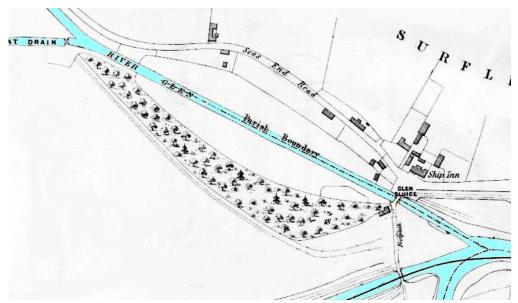
In April 1729, the Deeping Fen Adventurers received a letter from Captain John Perry, expressing the opinion that the only way to improve the drainage was to improve the river outfalls. He proposed the construction of scouring sluices; one on the river at Spalding, one on Vernatt's drain at its outfall, and one on the River Glen at Surfleet. He died in February 1733, before the works could be carried out.

Revising Perry's plans in 1734, John Grundy Snr. the renowned drainage engineer and SGS member produced a map of twenty-two miles of the River Welland, and formulated the construction of a reservoir and sluice at the junction of the River Glen and the Welland.

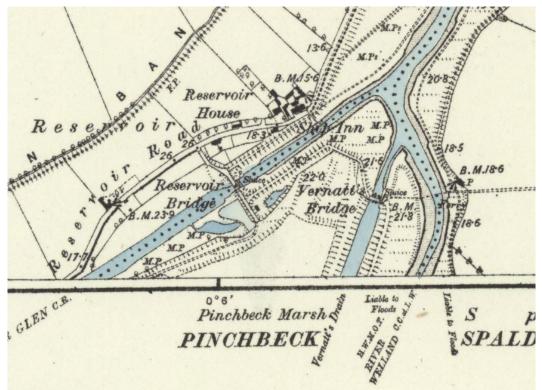
The idea being that a large head of water held behind a sluice could be discharged in such a way that the resulting rush of water could be directed to scour the river below that point and remove the sedimentary shoals of silt. Various works were also planned to improve, deepen and straighten the Welland towards Fosdyke and out into The Wash.

In 1737 work by The Adventurers, guided by surveying work by Grundy and Humphrey Smith, led to an Act of Parliament for engineering work to be carried out. At Surfleet, a reservoir covering eight acres was created and a sluice with three openings spanning a 24ft waterway at the mouth of the Glen was built in 1739. Grundy continued to work on the Welland through Spalding until 1746, making the channel deeper and wider and carrying out other routine improvements, at a cost of about £1,200 per year. It was also Grundy who proposed lengthening the Vernatt's Drain and creating an outfall at Surfleet Reservoir, but these proposals were not implemented until 1774 - long after his death.

In the end, the use of the storage reservoir proved to be ineffectual because of the work done subsequently to improve the Welland downstream of Spalding that had improved its flow sufficiently to scour the river bed. By 1824 another Act of Parliament authorised the Welland Trustees to replace the sluice at the request of both the Deeping Fen Adventurers and the Dykereeves of Gosberton, Surfleet and Pinchbeck. This was because the sill of the Glen sluice was now too high, meaning the Glen wasn't discharging into the Welland until it was high enough. However a new sluice would not be built for another fifty years.



This plan from 1855 shows the 1739 Glen Sluice near the Ship Inn and the "reservoir" area behind it designed by John Grundy senior. The river has been colourised to make it clearer. The old Vernatt's Sluice from 1774 is also shown below it. At the top left-hand side of the plan is the Blue Gowt Sluice joining the Glen. That sluice was designed by John Grundy junior and has a simple pair of-doors to stop the Glen backing up into the drain.



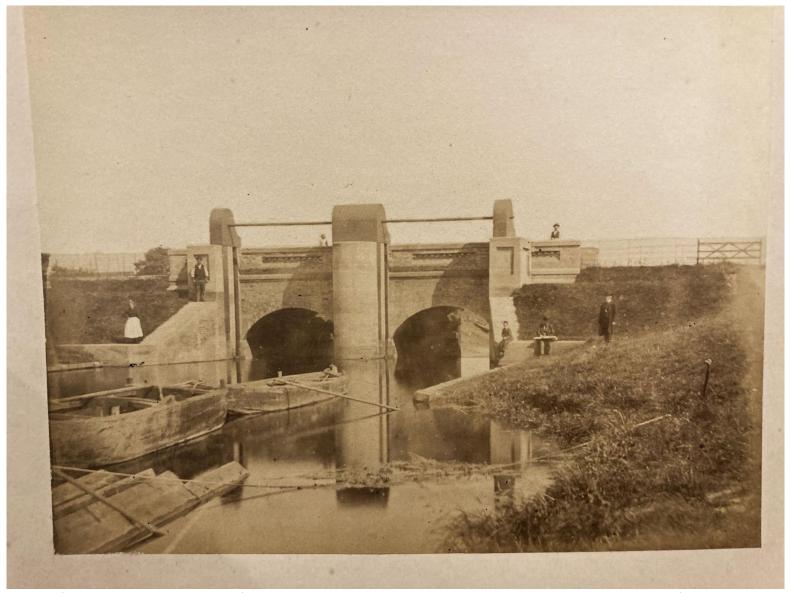
This Ordnance Survey map of 1886 still clearly shows the curve of the reservoir from where the Blue Gowt drain joins the Glen up to the Ship Inn. This map now shows the new Glen Sluice ("Reservoir Bridge") built in 1879 and the new canalised embankments of the Glen outfall. The two ponds to the south of the Glen Sluice - shaded blue either side of the bridge causeway - are the remains of a channel that was dug around the site of the new sluice, so that it could be built "dry". They were partially filled in when the old sluice was removed in 1880. There is still a pond on the landward side of the sluice.

The Glen Sluice

We are lucky enough to have photographs in the Society's collection that show the construction of the 1879 Glen Sluice, shown here:



It's possible that the gentlemen either side of the sign saying "Level Of Old Sill" are John Kingston of the Welland Trustees (he later designed and built the current Surfleet Bridge) and Alfred Harrison of the Deeping Fen Trustees.



This is the landward side of the new sluice showing the lifting machinery that allows slacker doors to be raised above the bottom of the sill to allow the water to flow into the Welland. The doors were raised and lowered by a winding mechanism on the bridge by means of a sturdy, detachable winch handle.

The sluice keeper would need to be aware of rainfall and tide times and manually check the river levels.

This was eventually replaced by electric motors that use river level sensors to determine action needed on the upstream and downstream doors. The middle pillar still shows height markers carved in Roman numerals from the base of the sill in one foot increments.



This photo is taken on the seaward side and shows the slacker doors with the Glen discharging over the top. The sea doors are open here and hard to see. They are designed to meet in the middle at an angle of around 60° so that rise of the incoming tide will close them. The wooden footbridge also enables the sluice-keeper to open and securely close the doors manually using a boat hook. The bottom of the outfall was also lined with square oak timbers, extending from the sluice out towards the Welland and were visible during dredging work in the 1980s. It is along this stretch that sea-going pleasure boats are moored.



The keystone of the old 1739 sluice was preserved and built into the wall of the bridge over the new sluice. Now faded and weather-worn, the inscription reads, "This Sluice was erected and built by order of the Honourable Adventurers of Deeping Fen, according to the model and direction of Messrs. Smith and Grundy.

W. Sands, Bricklayer
Samuel Rowel, Carpenter
1739"



On the other side of the wall to the old keystone is a memorial plaque. The inscription reads,

"This sluice was erected by the Trustees of the Deeping Fen Drainage Act, 1856, assisted by contributions from other interested districts.

The first stone was laid by Lord Kesteven on the 17th February 1879.

The sluice was opened 5th November 1879. The Deeping Fen Trustees being:
The Right Honorable The Earl of Lindsey, The Right Honorable Lord Carington,
The Right Honorable Lord Kesteven, William Hunt Esq. Robert Everard Esq.
Edmund Pawlett Esq. George Shillaker Esq. J.C. Campain Esq.
William Holland Esq. James Holland Esq. S.W. campain Esq.
Messrs Bonner & Calthrop, Clerks
John Kingston & Alfred Harrison, Engineers
Messrs Cook & Bennett, Contractors."

On Friday 21st November 1879, the Stamford Mercury gave a comprehensive report on *The New Sluice at Surfleet Reservoir:*

During the dry season of some ten years ago we were so often told that the wet season had forever forsaken this island that many had come to believe it, but a succession of wet seasons dispelled the illusion and convinced the most sceptical that the danger from floods is as great as ever. The old sluice at the mouth of the river Glen, built 140 years ago, was no doubt considered ample for its purpose at that time, and its cill was most likely placed as low as the tide in the Welland would allow the Glen waters to escape. But since the channel had been carefully trained, an increased scour had taken place in its bed, and a much better outfall secured, leaving the cill of the old sluice several feet above low water, so that the improved outfall was of no advantage to the district drained by the Glen.

Hence the necessity for a new sluice was strongly felt; and it needed only to be known that the old sluice was fast becoming unsafe to lead those gentlemen having charge of the important district to decide upon erection of a new one. After due consideration it as decided to place the new sluice in the same channel as the old one, but a little further inward towards the land, a temporary cut being first made to conduct the Glen waters round the site of the new sluice to the outlet as before.

The design of the sluice was well worked out, and the result is a very neat substantial structure, which will not suffer by comparison with any sluice in the district. It consists of two 15ft openings, and the cill is placed 6ft lower than the cill of the old one, consequently reckoning from navigation level, its capacity compared to the old one is as 300 to 96 or as 25 to 8 – rather more than 3 to 1, and this difference will still be greater in the case of floods.

The roadway over the sluice is formed on the top of the brick arches and enclosed between parapet walls. The sea doors which exclude the tide are of English oak, and present a massive appearance. The land doors, which are intended from keeping the Glen waters from escaping, except by permission of the sluice keeper, are a combination of oak rails covered with boilerplates and strengthened with iron ribs or rails. The mode in which these doors work is rather a novel one, and may be considered almost in the light of an experiment. The foundation upon which the structure stands is sand or silt, which, being enclosed with sheeting piles and further protected be several transverse rows of the same, is thought to be the best upon which a structure can repose. Not the least indication of subsidence is visible in any part of the work. The walls, which have concrete bases, are of brick and stone combined, and are faced throughout either will Bramley Fall stone or blue bricks set in cement.

The engineers under whose joint oversight the work has been done are Messrs. Kingston (of the Welland), Harrison (of the Deeping Fen), and Lancaster (of the Black Sluice). Messrs. Bonner and Calthrop were the solicitors, and Messrs. Cook and Bennett the contractors.

The first sone was laid by Lord Kesteven in February last, and the sluice was formally opened by him on the 5th inst. There remain the dams to remove and the embankment across the temporary cut to be made; after which the old sluice will be taken up, and the advantages of an improved outlet be given to the district.

The total cost of the new sluice was £15,000. To think that it has not needed any structural work in the last one-hundred and forty-four years is quite remarkable and a testament to the architects and builders. The sluice doors have obviously been replaced, but the stone, concrete and brickwork have stood up to everything that the tides, winds and rain could throw at them.

In August 1880, the contractors, Messrs. Cook and Bennett advertised for sale by auction, "100,000 second-hand bricks, beams, planks and 200 lots of miscellaneous wood and materials [...] taken up from the old Glen sluice".

They also auctioned the following plant and materials left over from construction:

- 1200 cubic feet of Memel (oak) and pitch pine from 16 to 44ft long and 12-14inches square
- 8 horse-power portable engine
- 3-inch Gwynne centrifugal pump with a 20ft head of lift
- About 40 navvy barrows
- About 400 sheeting piles 3in by 11in and from 12 to 18ft long
- Boarded office, 16ft square
- Scantling ladders, grindstone, water tubs
- Cart gears, harness and heavy cart
- Portable forge, vice and smith's tools
- Surplus iron, sleepers
- 1000 red bricks and 300 blue bricks



The lifting machinery for the slacker doors on the Glen Sluice in 2023



A seaward view from the Glen Sluice in November 2023 – along with a resident heron

The low white house behind the left-hand bank is Seagull Cottage and was the original sluice keeper's residence for many years. There are fewer boats moored here these days. It was once a custom to spend a day going "Down Below" as the locals call a trip out into the Wash. The berms are now choked with reeds. In better days these would have been covered in short grass, with duck-boards leading to the jetties and ladders leading down to access the boats.

The Vernatt's Sluice

Work commenced on the Vernatt's Drain in 1642, when it ran from Pode Hole until it entered the Welland via a sluice at one and a half miles north of Spalding. A drainage act of 1774 empowered the Adventurers to improve the Welland at Spalding and lengthen the Vernatt's drain to join the Welland at Surfleet next to the Glen. The improved drain was designed to have a clear waterway of thirty feet and a bottom width of twenty feet.



Hilkiah Burgess watercolour dated 1832, "The RESERVOIR – nr Fossdyke – Lincolnshire"

As the Burgess watercolour shows masts the *other* side of the river bank and presumably one of the buildings is the Ship Inn, so we must assume that this shows the 1774 sluice at the Vernatt's Outfall. It can't be looking over the Welland, as there was only one small building there, labelled "Ferry House" at Wragg Marsh on the 1855 plan.

In 1816 a newspaper article names a former Ferry Man, Marshall Foreman, who was suing his brother-in-law for not paying him to transport "his servants, and cattle and carriages" across the Welland. On the 1851 Census, John Ownsworth is listed as a Ferry Man along with his ten year old son William.

The original Ship Inn was a small pub with low ceilings and probably dated back to around the eighteenth century, or even earlier and was originally owned by the local drainage trustees - as several other riverside pubs in the area would have been. The pub was demolished and rebuilt sometime around 2002.

In 1818 John Rennie's report on the state of drainage in Deeping Fen, noted that the Vernatt's sluice at Pode Hole had three openings of ten feet each giving a waterway of thirty feet, whereas at the Outfall, the sluice had two openings with the same width of waterway.

In April 1842, the Lincolnshire Chronicle reported: Explosion of Surfleet Reservoir Sluice

"On Wednesday morning about 2 o-clock, the foundation of this sluice, situate at the outfall of Vernatt's Drain, four miles below Spalding, where it joins the waters of the Welland and falls into the estuary at Fosdyke, gave way when the tide threw up the doors and dislodging the greater part of the masonry work, forced its way up the Vernatt's Drain to the Pode Hole engine, but fortunately did not raise the waters of the drain over its bank.

It appears that the sluice has long been too high, and was latterly considerably weakened by the fall of water down the Welland, which for the last six months, owing to the excessive rains, has been unprecedented."

In May 1842, the Stamford Mercury reported:

"Spalding – There are now erecting in the raff-yard of Mr. Edw. Maples, merchant of this town, eight enormous tunnels, each 21ft long, 4 feet 1 inch wide, and 4 feet 7 inches deep, requiring 20 three-inch deals, 20 six by four oak braces, and 115 screw bolts, for the temporary sluice erecting at or near the Reservoir."

In November 1855, plans were finally drawn-up by the Deeping Fen Drainage Trustees for a replacement sluice, including lowering the sill to the same height as the bed of the Welland and deepening the drain by five feet. Work began during the winter of 1856/7 under the direction of William Lewin with the foundation stone being laid by Sir John Trollope. The new sluice has three openings of eleven feet and despite several dramas, the sluice was officially opened on 5th October 1857.

Lincolnshire Chronicle - Friday 23 January 1857

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Lawless Navvies.—The works erecting at the reservoir give employment to 150 men, whose lawless acts create considerable alarm to the peaceably-disposed inhabitants at Surfleet Seas End. On Tuesday, one of them went into Mr. Chas. Meltou's kitchen, at Coal Beach House, Surfleet, and said he should stop all night. He remained in the house a long time, and after a deal of persuasion he was induced to go away.—A short time since Mr. Smith, the brewer, sent his dray with several barrels of ale to the public-house near the works, when some of these men took away from the dray a barrel of ale, which has never been seen since.—On the 4th inst., a man was stopped in Surfleet by three navvies, and robbed of 12s. 6d., and very much injured. It is expected that application will be made to the Home Office for a troop of soldiers.

Lincolnshire Chronicle - Friday 01 May 1857

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Accident.—At the works at the reservoir, Surfleet, a serious accident befel the foreman on Monday. While guiding the ropes, he unthinkingly placed his right hand on one of the piles, when the monkey falling smashed three of his fingers off from the sockets. Mr. Styles, surgeon, of Spalding, was sent for, and under his care the unfortunate man is going on favourably.

Yachting.—On Saturday, the Red Rover, now very much enlarged, was launched from the ship-yard of Mr. Parnell. She gracefully took the water, and on Monday repaired to join those from Boston to open the yachting season.

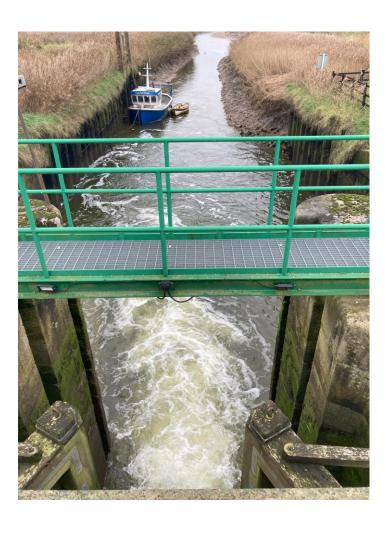


Photo of the 1857 Sluice taken in November 2023

The slacker doors are raised via a cog and ratchet mechanism. The highlighted lettering says "C.D. Jennings. Iron – 1873 – Founder. Spalding." This cast iron structure holding the lifting mechanism probably replaced a wooden one. In November 1857, Mr. Sissons, the Contractor advertised surplus materials from the building of the sluice for sale by auction. Amongst other things, items included: a quantity of Timber Deals, Battens, Boards, patent Iron Stable Fittings, Horse Gearing, etc. "Also the Workshops, Stables and Cottages, which are built of such materials and arranged in such a manner as would be suitable for Cottage Building."



Downstream views of Vernatt's Sluice, 2023



Sluice Keepers and Seagull Cottage

By trawling through the Census records and newspaper archives, I've managed to find the following former sluice keepers:

1851 Census - Frances Read (widow, age 46) "Fresh Water Door Keeper"

[N.B. 1857 - Vernatt's Sluice rebuilt]

1871 Census - John Buck (age 53) "Canal Sluice Keeper"

1871 Census - Frances Read (widow, age 64) "Sluice Door Keeper"

[N.B. 1879 - Glen Sluice rebuilt]

1881 Census - John Buck (age 63) "Sluice Keeper"

1891 Census - John Buck (age 74) "Glenn Sluices Keeper"

1901 Census - John Buck (junior, age 42) "Sluice Keeper"

1911 Census - John Buck (junior, age 52) "Sluice Keeper"

Newspaper accounts reveal:

c.1913-33 - Smith Rout a.k.a. "Mitt" Walker

1933-53 - Bertie Andrew - Welland Catchment Board

1953-59 - Albert Burnett

1959-75 - Eric Munton - Welland and Deepings I.D.B.

1975-on – I can't remember who replaced my grandfather and can't find when a sluice keeper was no longer required once the sluices were automated. The Environment Agency now regularly inspects and maintains the machinery. The sluice keeper's residence, *Sluice Bungalow* was originally owned by the Welland & Deepings Internal Drainage Board, but is now privately owned.

It would be interesting to know whether Frances Read or John Buck lived in Seagull Cottage, but none of the Census records mention it by name. In the 1841 Census Frances Read is married to John Read, wheelright. No mention of an occupation of "sluice keeper" can be found in the 1841 or 1861 Census records.

In February 1947, the Spalding Guardian noted the following about Seagull Cottage:

"The Sanitary Inspector (Mr. F. Luker) reported that, with Councillors Machin and Skells, he had inspected the old sluice-keepers cottage at Surfleet Sea's End, which was unoccupied, and he recommended that the Council requisition it and make it habitable for a few years."

In 1965, Lincolnshire Free Press features writer, Sheila Robson interviewed the owner of Seagull Cottage, Mrs. Cynthia Lewis and described it as:

"thought to be about 200 years old, was once a farmhouse, then the sluice-keeper's home. Later it became derelict and was used as a Home Guard post during the war. Then it was acquired as a weekend cottage by a family who did a lot towards restoring the property."



Seagull Cottage was replaced as the sluice-keeper's residence by "Sluice Bungalow" on the opposite side of the Glen, on the downstream side. It was built in the 1920s or 30s and I remember it having art deco features, notably in the style of the doors and draughty Crittal windows, but still a more modern proposition than Seagull Cottage. The bungalow had two bedrooms, a front room (*saved for best*), a dining room that was also used as a day room—all with coal fires. It also had a pantry, kitchen and bathroom.

It also had a fresh water well outside, as well as a copper rain gauge sunk into the large silt-laden garden, away from any buildings or trees. You could get a good crop of large vegetables from the fertile soil.

Rainfall measurement and recording would be part of the sluice-keeper's job. A good set of Tide Tables and a keen eye on the weather forecast were essential to know when the sluice doors would need to be opened or closed.



"Sluice Bungalow" circa 1960
The "Iceni" Clubhouse can be seen in the background (see later-on)



Eric Munton, sluice-keeper, taken in 1973

Leisure:

In the 1961 obituary of former sluice-keeper Smith Rout "better known as Mitt Walker", the Lincolnshire Free Press noted that, "When he first went to the Reservoir there was only one bungalow, that of Mr. Sam Kingston."

George Samuel Kingston and his wife organised and popularised swimming at the Reservoir during the 1920s. The Lincolnshire Film Archive has a three and a half 16mm silent movie, titled: Swimming At Surfleet Reservoir (1927) which shows "Family footage, chiefly of interest as showing the summer houses (beach huts, in effect) which were springing up round this popular resort."

Despite a public swimming pool officially opening in Spalding in 1934, it suffered several funding crises and wasn't always open. Instead, the locals made good use of the River Glen by holding several swimming galas at Surfleet reservoir during the 1930s and 40s.

In August 1939, the Spalding Guardian reported, "owing to lack of a swimming pool in town, Spalding Grammar School had to hold their swimming sports this year at Surfleet Reservoir [...] They were favoured by fine weather and some excellent sport was witnessed."

In 1948, one Spalding Guardian article tells of a "ladies diving contest" taking place; another reports on a "cork-bobbing" competition held on the August Bank Holiday in 1949. Swimming as a leisure pursuit continued into the 1950s. There was also a fenced off, shallow paddling area on the river's edge, at the junction of the pond that remains as a remnant of the diversion for the building of the sluice and this was still visible into the 1970s until the bank was reprofiled.

The following two images show a stark contrast in how the Reservoir basin has become over-developed in the last century. The postcard dates from 1926 and the photograph from 2023:







"Little Hut" in 2023

The solitary hut on the postcard still lives to tell the tale. Here it is in 2023, looking a little worse for wear.

In the 1960/70s it was used by my grandfather as a tool shed and workshop – and a place to keep his fishing gear and eel traps. It is still in the same place I remember it, but I have no idea when it would have been dismantled and moved from the other side of the river to its current position.

As I remember it had three "rooms" and a felt roof. The exterior was painted white with green doors. The outer door in the middle was blocked off with a toolbench running along the interior wall.

The large chalet behind it was built for Des Miles, MBE, the former head of the Welland & Deepings Internal Drainage Board, in the 1980s.

Agriculture

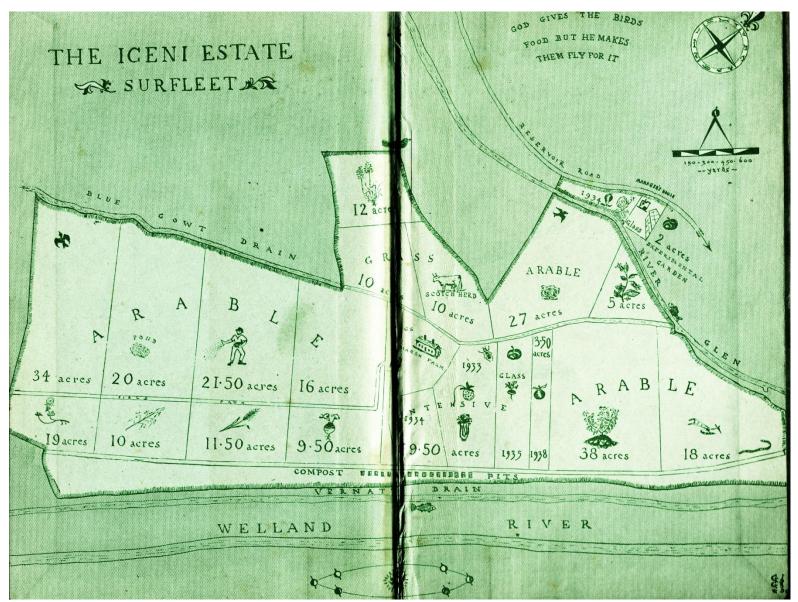
In the early years of the twentieth century, Sir Albert Howard was the Imperial Economic Botanist to the Government of India. He observed Indian farming practices, in particular their method of composting to improve the soil structure and fertility. He documented their organic farming techniques and developed it into the *Indore* Method.

In 1931 Captain R.G.M. Wilson bought nearly three-hundred acres of what was Burrell's Farm at Surfleet Seas End with the objective of restoring the indifferent and neglected condition of the land and developing it into a higher degree of fertility. The farmland lied between the Glen and the Welland and was partially divided by the Blue Gowt Drain. In 1927 Wilson had previously rented 450 acres of farmland near Littleport and managed to bring it to "a good state of cultivation." Burrell's Farm was renamed the Iceni Estate, and Wilson's objective was to create two clearly-defined functions. The first being a large market-garden, mixed farm. The second being an agricultural research station.

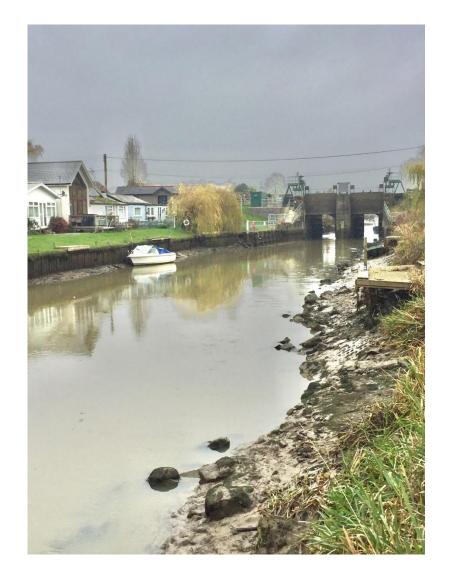
In 1935 Wilson read a letter in The Times written by Sir Albert Howard and wrote to him. Howard sent back a pamphlet titled, "The Manufacture of Humus by the Indore Process". Towards the end of 1935 Sir Albert accepted an invitation from Wilson to visit Surfleet. There he instructed Wilson on the preparation of compost heaps using the Indore System.

Visiting the farm later on in the 1930s, George Godwin observed the following, "Below us, to the north west, a potato crop was in full growth. It was a carpet of dark green upon which appeared to lie a soft sheen of plum-purple bloom. Beyond the canal, to the east, another potato crop was also in flower. Thus I was able to compare the two crops growing within a quarter of a mile of each other in similar soil, but under widely differing conditions of cultivation. That comparison left no doubt in my mind: whatever the scientific explanation, the Iceni crop looked so much fuller in life, of growing power."

The author H.E. Bates visited the Iceni Estate in 1941 and wrote about it in his Country Life column in The Spectator. He noted it's management committee drawn from the farm workers, also its canteen and Clubhouse. He mentioned the above-average increased yields of sugar beets, and "it has already produced, in the first six months of the year, 30,000 lettuces and 1,500 crates of bunched carrots."



The Iceni Estate in George Godwin's book The Land Our Larder



Conclusion

This moody photo with glowering skies, taken in November 2019 shows the slacker doors lifted to full height and the sea doors wide open. This followed a stint of several days of heavy rain. It is very unusual to let the river level drop as low as this.

As the reservoir basin was always designed to hold water, there are dozens of newspaper reports from the nineteenth century through to today telling of the Glen overflowing into it. If there is a high tide the other side of the sluice, any floodwater simply has nowhere to go.

Residents wishing to have a chalet in the Reservoir originally paid a ground rent to the Welland & Deepings Internal Drainage Board (and presumably still pay ground rents) for the privilege of having a weekend retreat on the understanding that they knew the risks of the possibility of flooding.

I still shake my head whenever there are reports of the Glen overflowing and the residents are complaining that their homes have flooded, when it was never intended for permanent homes to be built there.

The next time you feel adventurous and haven't been there, take some time out and have a walk around the basin and river banks. The Ship Inn has a good reputation for fine food, so you can walk it off afterwards and get some fresh air. Remember to take your wellies though... just in case.

Author: Pat Wensor © 2023

With acknowledgement to the Spalding Gentlemen's Society

Further Reading:

- The Land Our Larder George Godwin (1939)
- A Biographical Dictionary of Civil Engineers in Great Britain and Ireland Sir Alec Skempton (2002)
- A History of the Fens of South Lincolnshire William Henry Wheeler (2nd edition, 1896, reprinted 1990)
- Embanking, Draining: The Changing Fens Susanna Davis (SHDC, 1994)