

Little Ouse Headwaters Project

www.lohp.org.uk



Restoring the Little Ouse at Blo' Norton - October 2013

Part 1 What was done and why

Project manager -
Nigel Holmes

Photos: Nigel Holmes, Chris Gay, Arthur Rivett, Reg Langston, Peter Hughes,
Penny Hemphill, Nigel Clark, Helen Smith, Nicky Rowbottom

**Recently the Little Ouse here
was getting choked up**



The Little Ouse - Autumn 2013

What was it like?

- Thick black mud (silt) along the whole bed of the river
- Full of reeds and sedge
- The water hardly flowing



**But in a few days it changed
from this**



..... to this



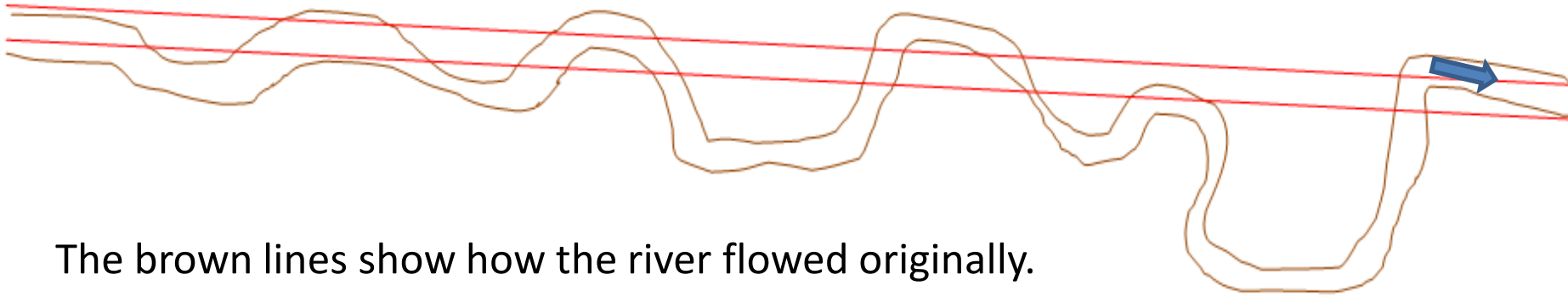
What big differences can you see?

Why was this work needed?

- The river has a very gentle slope here and flows very slowly. (It drops just 30cm in 1km)
- It wants to meander and tends to build up silt (mud).
- The river had been changed a lot in the last 100 years, especially in the 1960s and 1970s.
- Let's see how.....

Past changes (1)

View from above



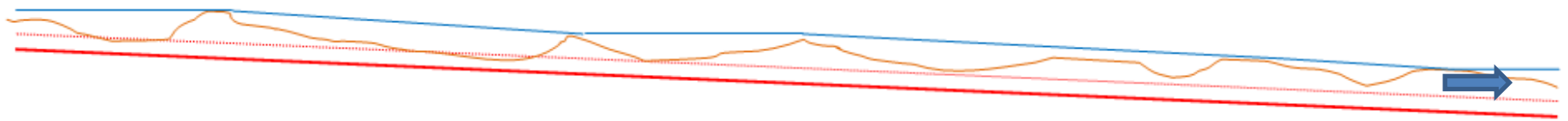
The brown lines show how the river flowed originally.
The red lines show how it had been changed by the start of the 1980s.

All the wiggles (meanders) had been straightened out.
This was to try to make the river work better as a drain.

They wanted to dry out the land and make it possible to grow crops.

Past changes (2)

View from the side



The brown line shows the original bed of the river.

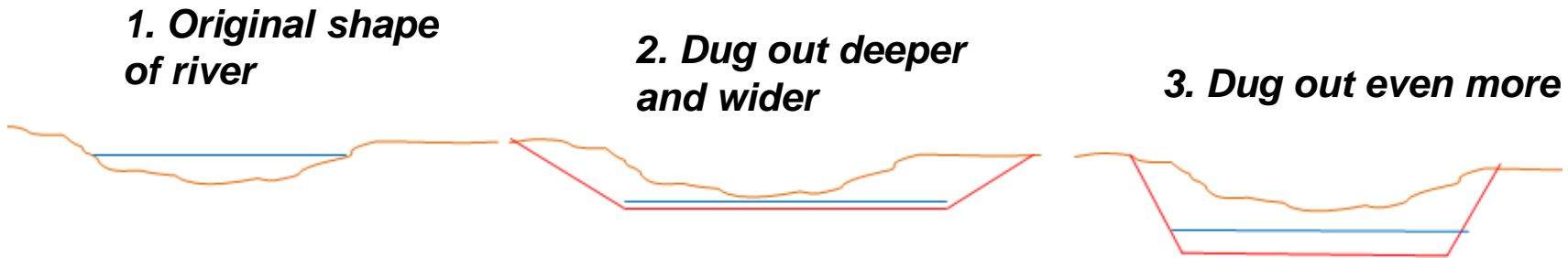
The thick red line shows how it had been changed by the start of the 1980s.

It had been dug out to the same depth all the way. All the shallow bits had been smoothed out.

This was also to try to make the river work better as a drain.

Past changes (3)

Three cross sections



The brown line shows the original bed of the river.

The red lines show how it was changed over the years.

It was dug out deeper and wider - and was made into the same shape all the way along.

This was also to try to make the river work better as a drain.

Was everything OK?

When we started this project, the river's channel was

- Straight-ish
- Smooth on the bottom
- Deep and wide

That's good for being a drain but not so good for other things.

The Little Ouse needed help.

The LOHP wanted to:

- make more and better wildlife habitats
- improve the water quality
- give the river a better chance to keep its own channel clear (more about this later)
- make flooding less likely, or certainly no more likely
- make the river better for wildlife and for people

People love the Little Ouse

Local man John Bailey remembers . . .

I loved this river - it gave me so much pleasure.

I was born less than 100 metres from the Little Ouse river bank - and spent whole days as a youngster exploring the river & fens - marvellous memories!

I am so pleased to know that something is being done to reclaim a river that gave me so much pleasure.



The Ouse had an incredible variety of healthy, biggish fish.
I caught many over the years – and always put them back.
I once caught a 1lb 10oz perch - an exceptional fish for this river at the time.

What was done in October 2013?

1km length of river upstream from the ford at Thelnetham was changed for the better.

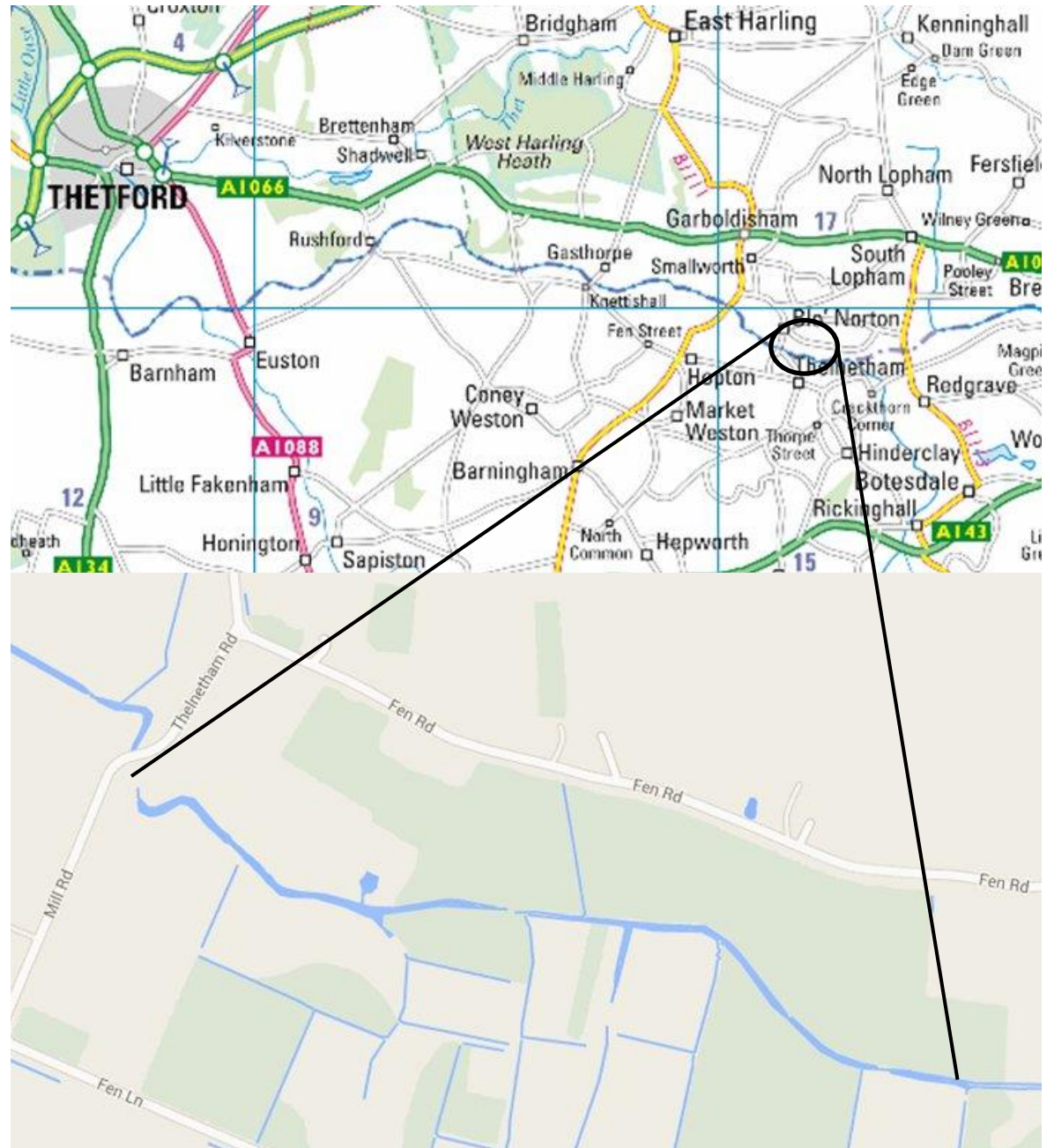
It took:

- A river engineer
- People with chain saws (to clear a few trees)
- Two people in waterproof suits (see Part 2 to learn what they did!)
- A digger + driver
- Money and help from the Environment Agency
- Help from the LOHP and Suffolk Wildlife Trust

Where?

1km length of
river upstream
from the ford
at Thelnetham

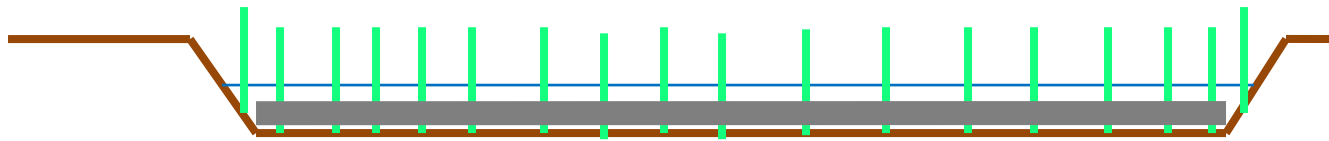
The river drops just
30cm in all that
distance.



How?

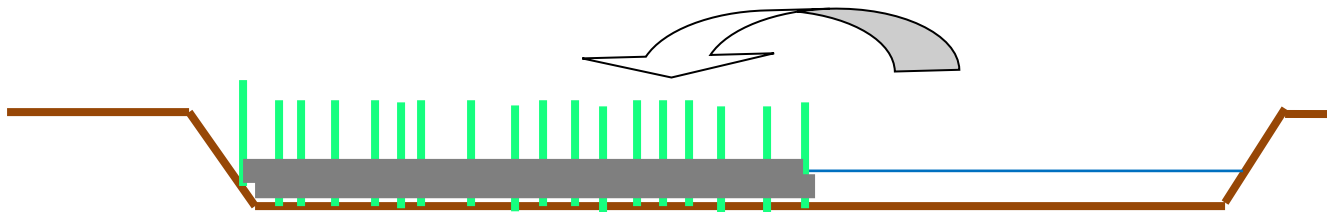
The shape of the river channel was changed, to make it flow faster and help it keep itself clear.

The mud was moved within the channel, it was not taken out.



1) Typical cross section **BEFORE**

- Reeds, shallow water and deep mud all across the channel



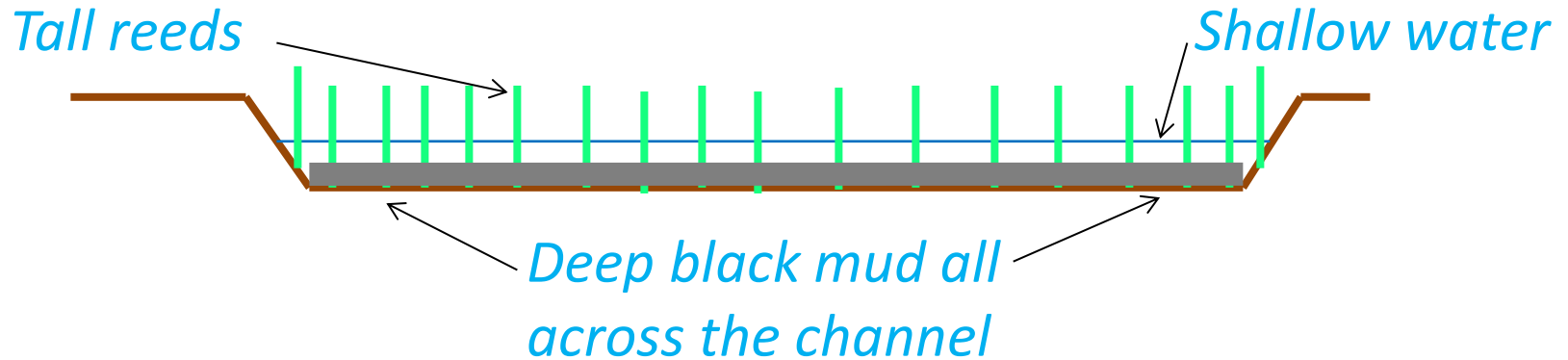
2) Typical cross section **AFTER**

- Mud and reeds moved to one side (sometimes to the left, sometimes to the right)
- Clear (and deeper and faster) water in just half the channel



Let's see that again slowly . . .

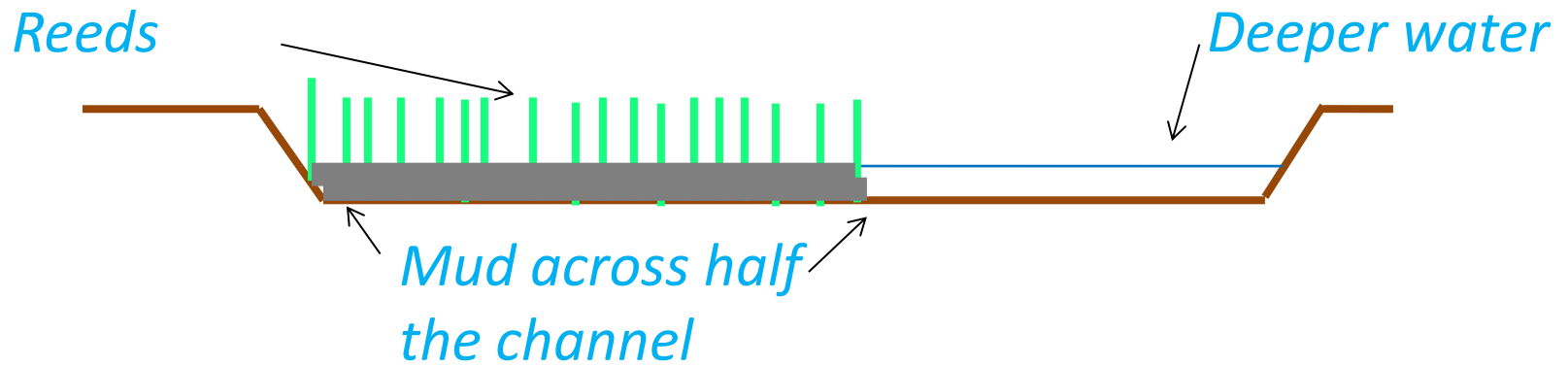
Typical cross section **BEFORE** the works



Before



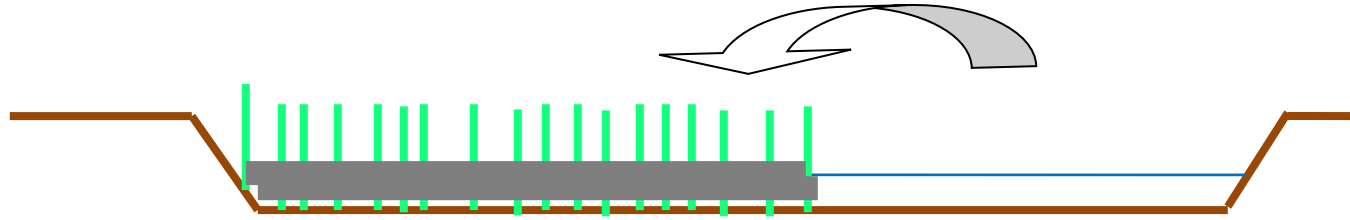
Typical cross section **AFTER** the works



After



In summary. . .



The digger folded the mud and reeds from one side of the channel onto the other to make a narrower, clear channel.





The new channel has bends in it - and pools



The river now has more energy

and moves much faster. This will help keep the channel clear.



How can you tell this water is running?

Other projects like this, elsewhere, have worked well



River Darent newly done

← Seven years ago Nigel and his team gave this river a wiggly channel with some shallow places and some deeper places.

Seven years later it still → follows the wiggly route and has lots of energy to keep itself clear.



River Darent 7 years later