

The origins of Geldeston Lock: Act (2) 1656-1670

Let's get rich by digging!

Read the story all the way through.

If there are words you don't know look them up in a dictionary.

Then think about the questions and make up your play.

The sources of the Waveney and the Little Ouse rivers are less than 100m apart, at Redgrave/Lopham - eight km west of Diss. The Waveney flows east into the sea at Great Yarmouth, and the Little Ouse flows west and eventually into the sea at Kings Lynn.



It isn't possible to go by boat from one river to the other, but they are separated by less than 100 metres.

In the 1660s **Francis Matthew** has the idea of creating an inland waterway for boats, to run all the way from Yarmouth to Kings Lynn.



He wants to dig out the channels of the River Waveney and the Little Ouse and link them together where they both begin.

He thinks:

It will be great for trade

The government can tax the loads on the boats, and get money to spend on things for the public.

Horses will be healthier because they won't have such heavy loads to pull

It will be useful for moving armies because boats can carry much bigger weights than roads

The roads will be better, because there won't be so much heavy traffic churning them up.

He presents the plan to Oliver Cromwell in 1656. Oliver Cromwell is the leader of the Army that set up Parliament and cut off the head of King Charles I. Cromwell is very busy with very important things. **Nothing happens.**

He tries again in 1670. By this time England has a king again, as well as a Parliament. **He presents the plan to King Charles II. A bit happens.**

Why only a bit?

The whole plan is far too expensive and too difficult, but one part of it does get done. An Act of Parliament is passed and

- ✓ the River Waveney between Beccles and Bungay is improved in the 1670s by digging it out deeper, and
- ✓ the very first locks are built at Wainford, Ellingham, Shipmeadow and Geldeston.

A good thing

Making the River Waveney deeper and putting in locks is A Good Thing. Why?

Remember getting stuck in the mud? That won't happen any more. And

even bigger loads of timber, flour, corn, beer, sugar and every other item can be shipped to and from the towns all along the river.

Oh good - here comes another man with a Great Idea!

Characters in the play

Francis Mathew

Oliver Cromwell

King Charles II

People who might lend Francis money to pay for his idea

People who think the plan is impossible

A map maker to draw the route to show Oliver C and King Charles

The people who dig the channels and build the locks

Their boss

Props to be found / created

A big impressive-looking map

Action

1. Francis Matthew thinks about the problem, and comes up with his Great Idea.
2. He finds some people who will help pay for the project – and some people who think he is mad.
3. He gets a map-maker to make a plan.
4. He presents his plan to Oliver Cromwell – who doesn't support it
5. He presents his plan to Charles II – who is lukewarm
6. The Act of Parliament is passed.
7. The River Waveney is deepened and **Geldeston lock** (and 3 others) are built.



Is Francis Matthew happy about part of his plan being put into action?

What do the workers and carpenters who get jobs digging the locks and building the lock gates say?

What do the traders in the towns say?