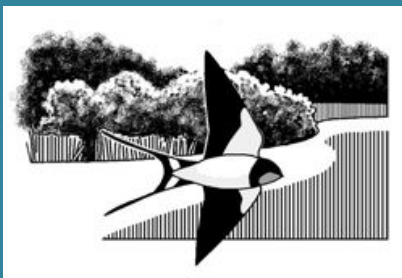


News from the Ouse

ISSUE NUMBER 4
April 2012



Anna Chilvers



Each site has a sculpture and info panels

WELCOME

to the newsletter from the Little Ouse Headwaters Project. This year is our tenth anniversary and we hope you'll come and celebrate with us.

The Project was started by a group of local people, all still very much involved, to conserve the wildlife, landscape and cultural heritage of the upper Little Ouse valley.

More sites for wildlife - and for you!

In just ten short years we have acquired a string of conservation sites in the valley, and started the long process of restoring them for wildlife. We have made many sites accessible for local people to enjoy.

More helpers every year . . .

Our membership has increased enormously, and currently stands at 165 (49 of whom joined in the last year). Volunteering has grown too: more than 75 people now help with site management, education work, guided walks, building bridges, community work and admin, plus a wide range of technical work like photography, biological surveys and computer technology. We always need more help, and there's a role for all skill levels and interests.

More money for more work

As the LOHP has grown, so has our need for funds. Last year we had our biggest ever grant, from the Heritage Lottery Fund, for a three year project to buy and restore valley habitats, and organise a whole range of activities in the community. We are now nearing the middle of that project. Read more about it inside . . .

Come and enjoy the project

In 2012 - our 10th anniversary year - our most important event will be the September celebration: *Food, Farming and Folk*. Other events include a dawn chorus walk and a history walk. See p7

Major restorations done

Most of the initial restoration work has now been done on Webb's Fen, Broomscot Common and Scarfe Meadows. The new fen pool at Webbs Fen is settling down nicely, and we hope to graze all three sites this summer. Special feature on Scarfe Meadows on p4.

Power from the people

Our first ten years have been successful beyond the modest expectations we had in 1992. This success has been due to a lot of hard work from the many volunteers who have put their shoulders to the wheel. Individuals and organisations have been generous with funds and support, and our neighbours and graziers have helped us manage our growing land holding. But without doubt, the most important help has come from the community of the Little Ouse valley. Without you our work would be impossible.

Find out more

You can find out more about the LOHP in this newsletter and on our website www.lohp.org.uk. There is also information about how you can join in. Or simply come and enjoy the paths and rich wildlife of this fabulous corner of East Anglia.

We hope to see you soon!!

Greet the spring by dusting off your bike and cycling round the LOHP sites! Bob Hayward describes a really good route on p6.



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Gorse versus rabbits

Class teacher Tamsin Young describes the start of a scientific project on Broomscot Common.



Tiny gorse shoots regrowing

Last Wednesday we walked down to Broomscot Common where we met Mr Langston. There was a work party from the LOHP cutting and burning gorse to help new gorse to grow. Mr Langston explained that the growth was not happening because the rabbits were eating off all the new young shoots.

We examined the areas where this was happening and looked at the gorse shoots, the lichen and mosses and the very sandy soil which does not give many nutrients to the plants for fast growth.

The gorse is important because it encourages a lot of insects to live in it, which bring in birds - especially linnets, last year there were twelve nesting pairs on the Common, they would like to have more.

Tamsin Young

Read in the next newsletter about the children's experiments to find out just how much the rabbits affect the regrowth of the gorse.



Massive rabbit sculpture



Male linnet on gorse



Children write about their visits



Measuring at the common

We went to the common to do some measuring. We used metre sticks and trundle wheels. We got into groups and started measuring.

We all had lots of fun there.

Albion and Matthew

Scarfe meadows

On Thursday we went to Scarfe meadows. Reuben, Ethan EG and Flynn saw a Robin. We saw a sculpture of some reeds. Then we hid behind the reeds and went to the peat bog where Sam and Hannah got stuck in the mud. Harry and Ethan K buried Lewis in the reeds. On the way back everyone saw the Robin feeding.

Lewis and Ethan EG.





Sitting on a throne

When we went to Scarfe Meadows we were hiding from Mrs Young. It was really fun. We sat on the plants and when we did it looked like we were sitting on a throne. Everyone loved the trip.

Amelia and Chloe



Funnel web spider's home

A spider, grasshoppers and ladybirds

We went to Broomscot common and saw a funnel web spider and lots of grasshoppers. And when we walked a little way forward we saw lots of ladybirds it was difficult because they wouldn't keep still.

Morgan Olley and Alice Gray Davies.

Towards the end of last year we received the dreaded phone call

and early the following day three Ofsted inspectors came striding across the playground, two of them had come to look at safeguarding, liked what they saw and disappeared in a puff of smoke leaving us with one eagle-eyed interrogator for the next 2 days.

LOHP enriching the children's curriculum

At Garboldisham Church Primary we pride ourselves on our curriculum; we try as much as possible to base our lessons firmly in the local area and encourage children to learn from their natural environment - spending as much time outside as we can. For this reason the Little Ouse Headwaters Project has been a real bonus for us, allowing us to learn about aspects of our area which we otherwise would not have encountered such as peat cutting and land management. The partnership working with the Sainsbury Centre in Norwich has allowed the children (and their teachers) to make links between lives led in this small corner of England and those of people in far away places - looking for the universal problems people all over the world face and the ones particular to ourselves.

Striking displays

Visitors are invariably struck by the quality of the children's work on display and also by the depth of the children's understanding and their willingness to tell anyone who will stand still for long enough, all about what they have learned. So our OFSTED visitor was as enchanted with the children as any other. She sat with me at the end of her two days and told me what a privilege it had been to spend time in the school and to meet the children, that she had never seen a school where the 'creative curriculum' was working so well. She said, 'Congratulations, you have an outstanding school'.

As symbiotic as lichen

The LOHP has been a big part of that creative curriculum and so I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has worked with us in whatever capacity for their efforts. We see this as a long-term relationship which we hope will continue to be as symbiotic as that shown by the lichens we have been learning about on Broomscot Common.

Alice Hemmings, Head teacher

LOHP helped school attain 'Outstanding' inspection report





Scarfe Meadows - getting wetter and better

Scarfe Meadows lie on the north (right) bank of the Little Ouse, just downstream of Garboldisham Fen. A series of wet meadows, it might once have been fen just like its neighbour, but was drained at some time in the past to become good quality stock grazing.

Drained to grow richer grass

The network of ditches dividing the land into small fields is evidence of this drainage, and we know from old maps that some drains have been filled in to provide more grass. The old meadow grasses



were replaced with just a few species of agricultural grasses in order to feed more cattle. This process – called “agricultural improvement” - may have benefitted past farming, but it damaged the site’s wildlife. Many animal and plant species were lost as the meadows became dryer and dominated by lush grass.

Wetland plants return

Surveys show that the more sympathetic recent management has already encouraged some wetland plants to return.

Putting a berm in the ditch

The LOHP bought the meadows in 2010 so that we can restore them for wildlife. We have already started by opening up the ditches and cutting back trees invading along the ditch sides and out from the hedgerows. We have sloped the ditch margin on one side and cut a step (called a ‘berm’) on the other. This will offer a more diverse wetland habitat, and provide niches for many more kinds of animals and plants. We are continuing to work with, and benefit from the knowledge of Brian Lambert, the grazier for the previous owners.

Water voles - the star turn

Perhaps the star of Scarfe Meadows is the water vole, which has a good population along the central ditch. Water voles have declined all over the UK because of loss of habitat and predation by feral mink. Conservation organisations and private landowners have worked hard in some wetland areas to improve the management of their land. Water vole numbers have often responded very well to sympathetic habitat work. We hope to see them expand their numbers along all the ditches on this site.

The real prize will be the return of lapwing, snipe and redshank



Will we get snipe back . . . ?

Over time, we aim to raise water levels so that wet meadow plants can once again grow here. The real prize, though, will be the return of ground-nesting waders such as lapwing, snipe and redshank. These birds’ numbers have declined greatly because of drainage and loss of their ancient valley habitats.

. . . it’s partly up to you!

We hope you will enjoy your visit to these lovely old wet meadows. To avoid disturbing the ground nesting birds we may need to restrict access between April and July, although you will still get good views of the meadows from the adjacent public footpath.

Dogs should be kept on a short lead at all times on this site.

Mike Harding

Habitat care on a grand scale

Heavy machinery doesn't have to mean heavy-handed:

care and precision by local contractor Peter Frizzell has helped to reshape and restore the fens along the Little Ouse for the past 10 years.

Volunteers *and* contractors

Recreating and maintaining the wildlife corridor along the river's headwaters is the work of a regular band of volunteers, and also of local contractors like Peter, brought in for larger-scale tasks such as digging scrapes and restoring ditches.



Precision digging



Tim and Peter Frizzell unloading pipes to make a culvert

Peter started as a volunteer

Peter cut his teeth volunteering at Redgrave and Lopham Fen in the 1990s and then subcontracted his skills for a while before setting up his business in 2000, specialising in the management of nature reserves. He has been involved with the Little Ouse Headwaters Project since the start, and also works in the Broads and the Brecks as well as further afield.

Knowing the project's aims

"Our work involves every aspect of nature reserve management – scrub clearance, fencing, mowing, specialist excavation works...you need specialist knowledge of habitats so that you don't cause damage," he says. "That comes from working on sites, having an understanding of the ground conditions, and knowing what the aims are for managing them."

Local employment

In the winter months Peter has a team of around 10, and tries to keep six employed throughout the year. His brother, Tim, does a lot of the excavation and grass cutting, and says the important thing is to be sensitive to the environment where they're working.

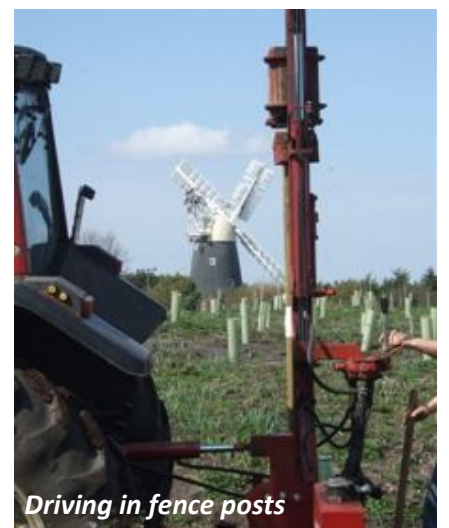
A tool for every job

They have a wide range of equipment for all kinds of restoration work and annual tasks. The three excavators have attachments including a stump grinder, reciprocating cutter head and landrake; the tractors have flails and flail collectors for managing vegetation, and the fencing machinery includes a post-knocker and auger.

From Scarfe to Broomscot

Peter's most recent work for LOHP was at Scarfe Meadows, re-profiling ditches to improve water vole habitat, and improving access to the site. Later this year Peter and his team will be at Broomscot Common, fencing, managing gorse to get a varied age structure, mowing and controlling ragwort. They will also be installing piezometers – groundwater monitoring devices – so that fluctuations in the water table can be measured.

Judith Tooth interviewed Peter Frizzell



Driving in fence posts

Get closer to nature - and history

Bob Hayward, LOHP Trustee and keen cyclist shares his route around the LOHP sites

Most of the Little Ouse Project area lies within a five mile circuit of quiet roads

including part of the national cycle route from Kings Lynn to Lowestoft and part of the Angles Way long distance path. This cycle circuit is packed with enchanting history and wildlife so the easy five mile route can take as little or as long as time allows.

Just keep turning left

Join the circuit anywhere and go anticlockwise, turning left at each junction. Footpaths take you into the Little Ouse area and it's worth just pushing the bike and walking a little way. The plants and animals are described on the wooden sculptures at key points.

A mill and a prison for debtors

We start on the Blo Norton road just off the B1113 after the Norfolk sign. On the rise to the right near the house is the site of the Lopham windmill, demolished in the early 1900s. Next to it was the Duke of Norfolk's gaol house for debtors.



The Frith is on the left. Go up the hill and turn left to find (on the S bend) the Lows. Continuing westwards there is a wooded area to the left and a footpath leading into Blo Norton Fen. Shortly after this the footpath to Betty's Fen leads off left - opposite a gravelled drive. About 50 yards into the footpath is another descriptive sculpture. The view at your next left looks a lot like Holland. (Make a detour to the right to see the church on the hill - a real medieval beauty.)

Thelnetham's delights

You don't have to wade the ford here as you did only 60 years ago. On the left the LOHP sculpture describes Parkers Piece and ahead stands the magnificent working 1819 windmill of Thelnetham. Turn left onto a road section of Angles Way. The footpath across Middle Fen leads to Bleyswycks Bank and Bob's bridge over the Little Ouse. At the sharp bend a footpath leads north to Webbs Fen and Angles Way goes straight on to Hinderclay Fen. Up the hill is Thelnetham village hall (was the school). Turn left at the crossroads onto National Cycle Route 30. Half way down the hill is another magnificent medieval church. On the hairpin turn is St Mary's medieval holy well. On the left at Holiday Farm a footpath leads to Hinderclay Fen.



A family cycle ride packed with enchanting history and wildlife

Redgrave's water mill & windmills

At the duck factory bends another footpath leads to the Fen. The next left leads over Crackthorne bridge, where Redgrave's long-gone medieval water mill once stood. The duck factory grew over 60 years from Buttons duck farm. On the hill to the left a white house stands on the site of one of Redgrave's three windmills, none of which survive. On the left, a new house, Mill Meadow, shows the site of another windmill. Turn left at the crossroads onto the B1113. Right is Gallows Hill.

The sources of two rivers

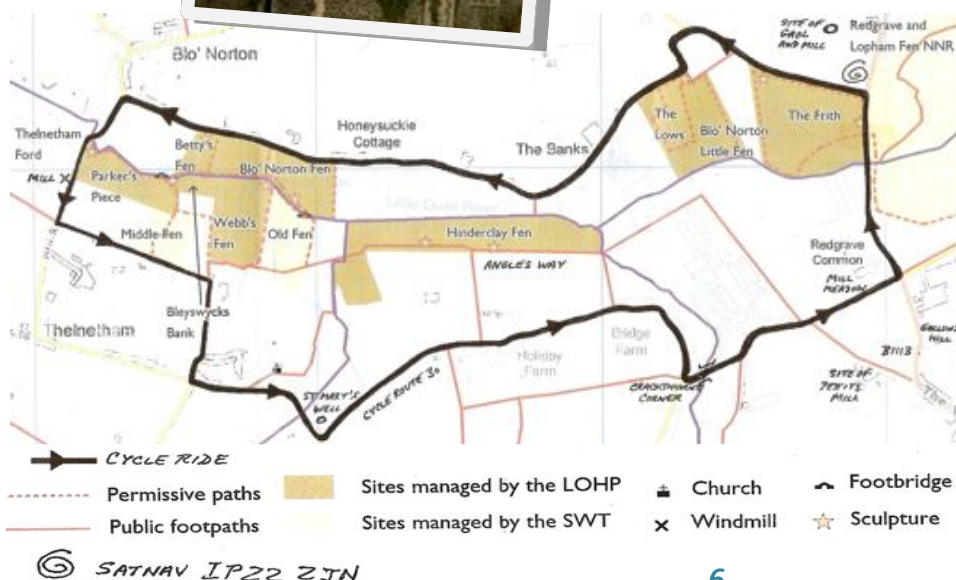
Between the Suffolk sign and the Norfolk sign on either side of the road are the sources of the rivers Waveney and Little Ouse. This is the ancient 'Lopham Ford' - the only place it was possible to travel from Norfolk to Suffolk at all times of the year. Hence the importance of Lopham and Redgrave for thousands of years.

Traces of the last Ice Age

On the right is Redgrave and Lopham Fen - now home to ancient European horses and the raft spider. On the left, on the Frith, two sculptures explain this Ice Age phenomenon and its wildlife. The next signpost is the road to Blo' Norton where the circuit starts.

Come and enjoy this family cycle ride - full of hidden surprises and journeys back into our past.

Bob Hayward



Artists in action - LOHP sites give inspiration!

An autumn guided walk round Broomscot Common and Scarfe Meadows with Rowena Langston showed the group a lot about these very contrasting new sites,

and what can be seen at each one. This inspired the afternoon art workshop with artist Rosemary Humphries. Everyone soaked up what they saw, and produced work based on the trees, landscapes, flora & fauna and of course the two sculptures: *Bunnies* and *Grasses*. It was really good seeing how the two areas had influenced people - as all the sites can do.

The crack willows on Scarfe Meadows were particularly interesting - with a recent fracture on one large trunk. Two new young members, Ethan and Finn, aged 10 and 8, used the willows and the colours found in the area. We look forward to revisiting these sites as they develop, and capture the changes in art. Rosemary's work is inspired by the Project sites and activities, as can be seen from the painting of a work party at their tea break! *Rosemary Humphries*



Margaret Buckland



Rosemary Humphries

New Years' Day Winter Walk

It wasn't very wintry for what has become a traditional Sunday morning walk with the LOHP members, to blow the cobwebs away after the Christmas excesses. The outing

proved more popular than ever, with some regular and lots of new faces amongst the 70 or so walkers accompanied by 18 dogs. This must be a record for the canine contingency! Reg & Rowena Langston did a sterling job of leading the walk and keeping everyone in order. A pleasant 2 hour stroll took us through some of the new sites, and we viewed the beautiful sculptures en route. A fantastic start to the LOHP new year.

Bev Blackburn



Events

Sun 6th May

Dawn chorus walk (+ breakfast) led by John Hill. Numbers limited, **booking essential**, contact Bev on 07747 691285 for more details.

Sat 1st Sept

10th birthday celebration, Food, Farming and Folk afternoon and evening on the Frith, with hog roast, bar and ceilidh

Nov 2012, date tbc

History walk with Lucy Willgress, including opening of Thelnetham Mill

Work parties

Get out and enjoy yourself whatever the weather at a LOHP work party. They take place monthly on Sundays (see dates below) and weekly on Wednesdays.

Check details on the website or ring for up-to-date information:

15th April The Lows - our annual thistle-digging party!

13th May Turf pond digging at Blo'Norton Fen

June - no workparty

8th July Hay raking on Hinderclay Fen meadow

12th August - Blo'Norton Fen sedge raking

9th September - Hinderclay Fen sedge raking

Reg & Rowena Langston 01379 898009
Jo-Anne Pitt 01379 898684
Helen Smith 01379 687680
Nigel Clark 01379 890460

We're not in it for the money . . . but because of the way the grant funding works, every volunteer on a work party 'earns' the project £25 to spend on more conservation.

Membership application

Name:

Address:

Postcode:

Phone:

E-mail:

I wish to support the LOHP as an:

Ordinary member:

(£2 per annum)

Friend of the Fens:

(£10 minimum per annum)

Junior member:

(25p. per annum)

Please tick one category and indicate the amount paid for Friend of the Fens. Please make cheques payable to 'Little Ouse Headwaters Project'.

I wish to donate £..... to the Little Ouse Headwaters Project

I want all my subscriptions and donations to the LOHP to be Gift Aided until I notify you otherwise. I pay Income Tax/Capital Gains Tax at least equivalent to the value of my contribution.

giftaid it

Signed:.....

Dated:.....

Registered Charity No: 1098232



Contact LOHP

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Write: LOHP, Waveney Cottage, Redgrave Rd, South Lopham, Diss, IP22 2JN

Phone: 01379 898684 www.lohp.org.uk

Newsletter editor:

Nicky Rowbottom - 01502 578470

Can you help?

The LOHP relies on volunteers to run the charity and help with conservation (and other) work.

Might you have some energy and some time?

For more information contact *Bev Blackburn, Volunteer Co-ordinator and Event Manager* - enquiries@lohp.org.uk, or phone *Jo* on 01379 898684.

Wordsearch

THRUSH FROG
THE FRITH TEAL
DARTER ELM
HORSEFLY OAK
LIZARD ASH
SNAKE VOLE
CATTLE FEN
LINNET

P	D	A	R	T	E	R	Y
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DOGS WELCOME, BUT NOT WHERE THEY MIGHT FRIGHTEN THE SNIPE...

Well-behaved dogs are a joy to their owners and don't necessarily damage wildlife. We welcome responsible dog owners on our sites, when birds aren't nesting or feeding, but a couple of problems have come to light. On Betty's Fen, Hinderclay Fen and along the riverside path fouling is a problem so please do pick up anything your dog leaves. On Scarfe Meadows recently we had a case of dogs being allowed to run freely across the site.



If this starts to become a regular practice then the uncommon birds we hope to attract - like snipe - are not going to stay and feed here. Please keep dogs under close control on our sites at all times - and keep them on a short lead when cattle or sheep are present.

Many thanks for photos to:

M. Harding, T. Young, H. Smith, C. Gay, R. Langston, P. Frizzell, P. Hughes, A. Rivett, B. Hayward, N. Clark