

News from the Ouse

ISSUE NUMBER 1
APRIL 2011



What makes the headwaters so special? Page 2

Residents' survey -
We want to know what you think. Please fill in the enclosed survey and send it back to enter the **PRIZE DRAW.**

IN THIS ISSUE:

- Introduction 1
- What makes the headwaters so special? 2
- Pull-out guide to wildlife sites in the Upper Ouse Valley..... 3-6
- Events and how to join in.....7&8

WELCOME

to the first issue of the new LOHP newsletter.

The Little Ouse Headwaters Project charity was set up in 2002 by local residents to restore, conserve and promote the enjoyment of the wildlife and landscape of the Little Ouse valley on the Suffolk/Norfolk border.

The LOHP trustees believe this area is really special – we hope you'll be inspired to pull on your boots and explore the valley. Our sites are always open for walkers to enjoy.

Our aims

The main priority of the Project is landscape and wildlife conservation, but we're also interested in the valley's archaeology, local history and in promoting public access and enjoyment. The project is run entirely by volunteers, and we work closely with, and support, other local charities.

What we do

LOHP volunteers turn their hands to almost anything which will help the valley's wildlife or help more people get to know it better and enjoy it more. So far we've cleared rubbish, restored hedges, put up footpath signs, overseen major earth-moving works, built bridges (literally), organised events and raised money.



Project area map - pages 4-5

Join us

We always need help – if you have time, money, skills, knowledge or strength – please get involved.

This newsletter will give regular information about the valley and the project, publish the weird and wonderful things we discover and help you get to know the area better. Three editions per year will be distributed in the seven parishes and it will be on the LOHP website.

Can you help?

As part of the project we're looking for information about everything which has affected the area's landscape and wildlife in the past. We're interested in old maps and aerial photos, old buildings and stories about the lives of local people and the valley's wetlands. We'd love to hear from you if you can add anything.

Nicky Rowbottom, Editor
Contact details: 01379 898684 or enquiries@lohp.org.uk

What's this – and where?
See page 3



Exciting times – expanding our work

The valley is a fabulous place: rich in wildlife and with a fascinating history. Recognising this the **Heritage Lottery Fund** has awarded us a grant of £370,400 to spend over the next 3 years extending the project. We will be buying sites and managing them for wildlife, improving access, running a wide range of activities for people to join in, and carrying out more plant and animal surveys. Why not send an email or make a phone call and come and take part?



A historic border

This shallow valley forms the historic border between Norfolk and Suffolk and contains the source of not one but *two* rivers.

Two rising rivers

The Waveney and the Little Ouse have their modest origins on either side of the B1113 just north of Redgrave. From here they quietly begin their journeys in opposite directions: the Waveney to the east reaching the sea at Yarmouth and the Little Ouse to the west, flowing out eventually into the Wash at Kings Lynn.



Arthur Rivett

Once the biggest valley fen in England

This river corridor was once the biggest area of valley fen in England, uniting the great wildernesses of Breckland and Broadland. Centuries of use for peat cutting, reed and sedge harvesting and grazing created a mosaic of habitats where wildlife flourished alongside people and domestic animals.



Andrew Price

Destruction

As in other parts of the country, the more intensive farming production systems since the Second World War destroyed or damaged most of the wetlands.



Helen Smith

Little treasures

Today, little pockets of land around the Little Ouse (and Waveney) headwaters still have wildlife that is recognised as being internationally important.

People power

A group of people, passionate about the Little Ouse wetlands, have been working their socks off to improve sites for wildlife and access for people. And it's getting better every year!



Helen Smith

"I never realised they were two rivers. Not until I noticed they were flowing in opposite directions"

From damselflies to harvest mice and from Norfolk horn sheep to Redpoll cattle, the countryside of the Ouse valley is home to some very special animals and plants.



Helen Smith

"This project is about all the heritage - not just the wildlife; and it's about the people too"



Helen Smith

The Frith

Rough pasture on the Norfolk side of the Little Ouse river - which has its source in the south east corner. Until the 1940s the Frith's sandy soils supported heathland and acid grassland.

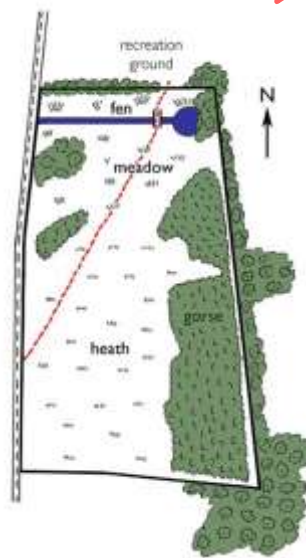
With hedges and oak pollards restored by LOHP, the Frith is now a great place to explore. Look for the ring of pine trees, the re-dug pond, the ancient oaks, little owls and (in summer) cuckoo flower, purple hairstreak butterflies and giant puffballs – so big they have even been mistaken for sheep!



The Frith

Helen Smith

Broomscot Common (in Garboldisham)



A lovely slice of valley side ranging from dry heath at the top of the slope down to soggy fen meadow near the stream. Ungrazed for years, the site was being invaded by scrub; we are now beginning to restore it for wildlife.

Management here will be achieved by a combination of people, livestock and rabbits.

Hinderclay Fen

A very varied mosaic of wet fen, woodland, scrub, grassland and small patches of heath lying along the Suffolk side of the Little Ouse. As its soils were too poor and waterlogged to grow food crops it was used for centuries as a source of fuel, animal bedding and grazing for livestock.

The fen endured some tough times in the second half of the 20th century and lost a lot of its unusual wildlife through being drained and dried out.

Restoration and management started by the LOHP in 2000 is bringing good results. Interesting features today include heather and harebells, lichens, adders' tongue fern, water rails, kingfishers and - once in a while - the surprising sight of shelducks with ducklings.



Arthur Rivett

The Lows

Blo' Norton Little Fen

Standing in this secluded wet woodland on the Norfolk side of the River Little Ouse, amongst the willow and alder trees, with water on all sides, it is easy to imagine yourself in a primeval swamp.

In spring it comes alive with the songs of chiffchaff, willow warbler, blackcap, garden warbler and whitethroat. Woodpeckers, tree creepers and marsh tits are year-round residents.

A real treat on summer evenings is the sight and sound of a woodcock on his territorial flight. These beautiful - and increasingly rare - waders like to nest in wet woodlands.

Mosquitoes are an irritation to us but vital food for the birds!

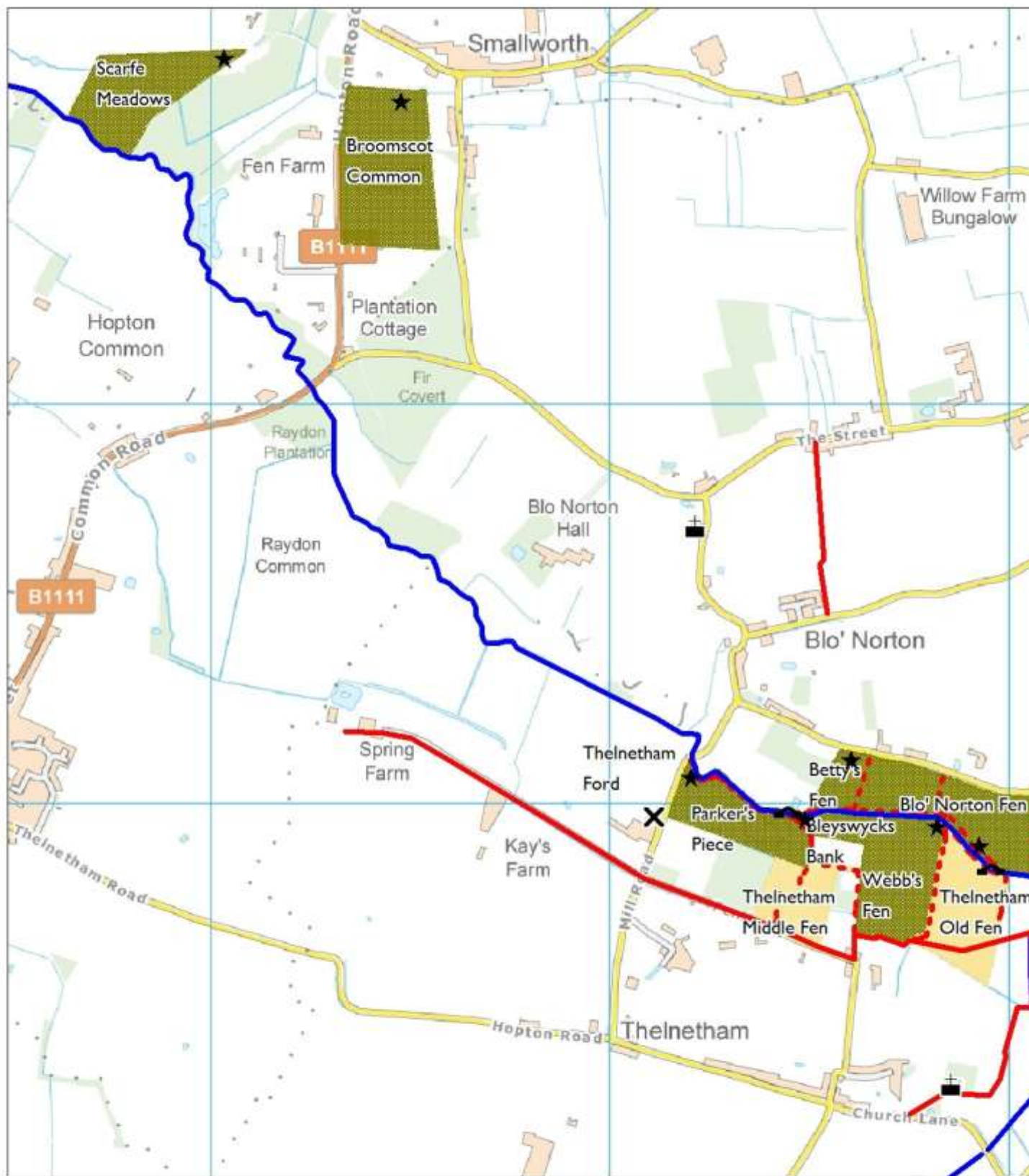
The Lows

A series of rough wet pastures stretching from the Blo' Norton Banks Road to the Little Ouse river on the Norfolk side.

The site gives beautiful views over the valley and gets wetter and wilder as you get closer to the river. Left ungrazed for several years the grassland was being swamped by rank grasses. LOHP started grazing it again in 2002 and the rare and less competitive plants began to make a comeback.

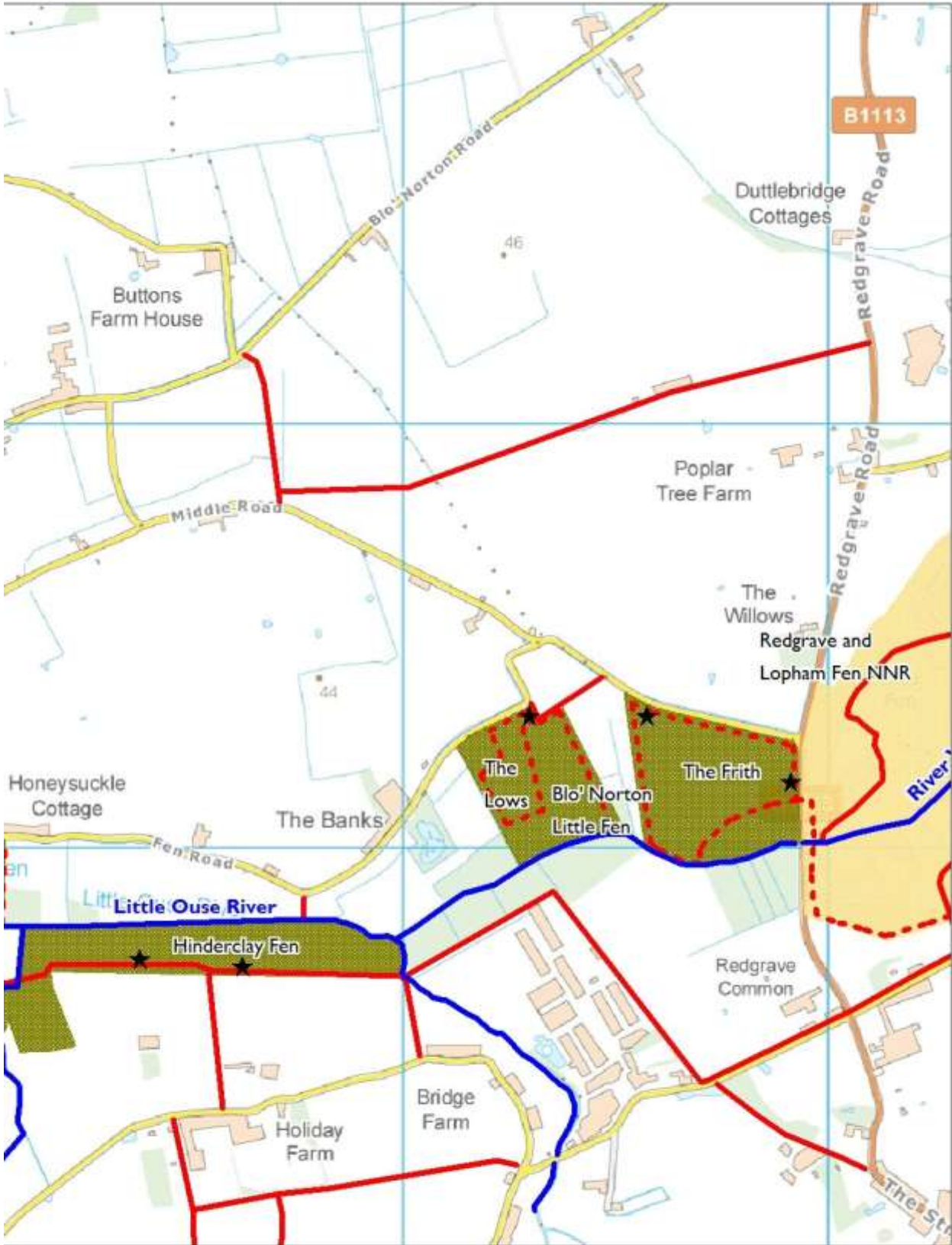
Today the site is special for its magnificent hedges with mature oaks and crab

apples, its early marsh orchids and puss moths. In winter snipe feed on the water margins and we hope that they will return as a breeding species.



Key

- Permissive paths
- Public footpaths
- Sites managed by the LOHP
- Sites managed by the SWT
- Church
- ✕ Windmill



-  Footbridge
-  Sculpture



Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2011

Webbs Fen

Another vital link in the chain which is slowly reconnecting the valley's isolated wetlands together. Webb's Fen will be restored and will form a wild wet corridor between the two parts of Thelnetham Fen and Blo' Norton Fen on the other side of the river.

The reedy fringe along the river margin is a good place to hear wetland songbirds such as reed and sedge warblers.

This site will be open later in the year.



Betty's Fen

This is the western third of Blo' Norton Fen on the Norfolk side of the Little Ouse. It is named after its previous owner Betty Williams, who sold it to LOHP hoping it would be enjoyed by future generations of Blo'Norton villagers.

Conservation work is successfully restoring the site's rich wetland habitats. An area of open, wet fen has been recreated in the centre of the site but the encircling fringe of more mature woodland has been kept.

Many of the old willows have split at the base and fallen. The old trunks are home to communities of ferns, mosses, liverworts, fungi and invertebrates.

Britain's smallest duck, the teal is a speciality of this site. They can often be seen on the new, wet fen areas.

On warm days in summer and early autumn rich metallic blue-green damselflies (banded demoiselles) can be seen flitting along the river and over the wet fen.

Scarfe Meadows



We are restoring Scarfe Meadows to wet grassland with wide, open dykes, fenny margins and some scrub and hedgerows. The high water table creates the right conditions for wetland birds such as lapwing, snipe and redshank.



Scarfe Meadows

Helen Smith



Banded demoiselle damselfly

Andrew Chick

Blo' Norton Fen

Lying between Fen Road and the Little Ouse river this has always been waterlogged land, useless for food crops. Historically it provided fuel, thatching material and animal bedding.

We have concentrated on clearing the invading scrub and started regular mowing. The haystacks are home to slow worms, grass snakes, and many kinds of beetle.

Open areas are recovering well: wetland plants such as saw sedge and bog pimpernel are thriving. Water shrews are a speciality of the site. They are as happy hunting caddis larvae underwater as they are crunching up beetles, snails and earthworms on land.



Parkers Piece and Bleyswycks Bank

Between them these two sites have 500m of river front, including the only section that has not been straightened and still has meanders. These sites are strategic for the valley's wildlife, lying as they do between Thelnetham and Blo'Norton Fens. Conservation work done here makes a continuous strip for wildlife to colonise and move through.

Restoration here has been quite dramatic: a Scots pine plantation has been cleared, invading scrub removed, the land surface lowered and ditch banks reprofiled to improve them for water voles and the land surface lowered. The plan is to restore a variety of open fen habitats, together with wet woodland.

Grazing has been reintroduced to recreate and maintain the species-rich wet grassland.

Get stuck in!

A great way to get fit and de-stress at weekends, work parties also make a huge contribution to restoring sites for wildlife.

Volunteer days count as match funding towards some habitat restoration grants, so we can turn your time into more grant money.

Work parties are on the second Sunday in most months and on most Wednesday mornings. If you want to join the Wednesday parties, please contact Reg Langston on 01379-898009.

Wear wellies or strong boots and old clothes - we provide tools, gloves and refreshments.

Check work party details

Please check the website or ring for up-to-date information:

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

Sunday work parties

10 April 10.30 am
Hinderclay Fen Rowena Langston
 Birch seedling clearance

8 May 10.30 am
The Frith & Lows Helen Smith
 Thistle digging

10 July 10.30 am
Hinderclay Fen Nigel Clark
 Cutting/raking fen meadow

14 August 10.30 am
Blo' Norton Fens Jo Pitt
 Sedge raking/pond digging

11 September 10.30 am
Hinderclay Fen Reg Langston
 Sedge raking/pond digging

Open Evening

HEAR ALL ABOUT IT!

Wednesday 13th April 7.30
Garboldisham Village Hall

The project is active in several parishes and has recently extended to include Garboldisham. If you are interested in local history, wildlife, landscape, creative arts (writing, photography, painting), practical conservation work, or quiet enjoyment of your local patch come and find out how to join in. Refreshments provided.

Tree Sculpture Design Workshop

Saturday 16th April 1 - 3.30 pm
Garboldisham Village Hall

Each LOHP site has a unique oak sculpture with information panels embedded. Come and find out how the sculptures are made and take part in designing sculptures for the new sites in Garboldisham. No booking - just turn up on the day. Tea and biscuits provided. Children welcome – but with an adult please.

Heritage walk

Sunday 12th June 10.30 – 4ish
An all-day walk through 400,000 years of environmental history

led by Tim Holt-Wilson & Prof Richard West
 5 to 5.5 miles long. Start and finish at the Frith (parking there). Numbers limited. Please book by emailing LOHP (see back page) or ringing 0845 458 8261.

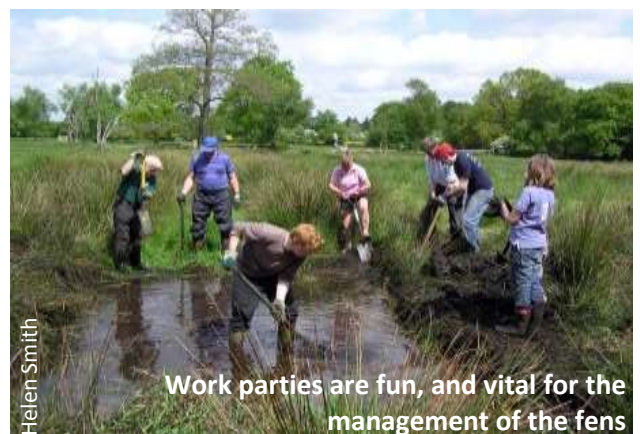


Helen Smith



Helen Smith

Whatever your level of energy, knowledge or skill - there's something going on in the valley you'll enjoy



Helen Smith

Work parties are fun, and vital for the management of the fens

For more opportunities to get involved as a volunteer - see the back page →

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:	(£0.25 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 Aid until I notify you otherwise. I pay Income Tax/Capital Gains Tax at least equivalent to the value of my contribution to the LOHP.

Signed:.....

Dated:.....

Registered Charity No: 1098232

PRIZE DRAW - find and fill in the residents' survey online at: www.lohp.org.uk/survey



Key volunteers needed

Could this be you?

- Oral history**
 A volunteer to record, transcribe and archive oral histories in the project area. Training and equipment provided.
- Archive**
 A volunteer to coordinate and manage the new LOHP community archive: gathering, organising and documenting material and preparing content for the website.
- Photography**
 Photographers needed for all aspects of LOHP's work: sites, wildlife and the life of the upper Little Ouse valley.
- Historical research**
 Help research a wide range of topics on the history and natural history of the LOHP area. All levels of ability welcome.
- Events and guided walks**
 Help to organise events, everything from small publicity events, to guided walks, public talks and through to much larger celebrations and fairs. Some experience of event organisation would be helpful.
- Natural history and ecology**
 We need help with all aspects from recording of species and habitats through to detailed ecological research, data management (including GIS) and analysis. All levels of ability welcome. Some training can be given.

How to contact LOHP

Email: enquiries@lohp.org.uk

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

Phone: 01379 898684

www.lohp.org.uk