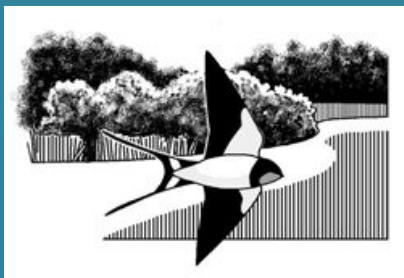


# News from the Ouse

ISSUE NUMBER 3  
December 2011



**Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> December 2011**  
**AGM and Annual Talk**  
**Hinderclay Village Hall 7.30 pm**  
**All welcome.**  
**A brief AGM followed by:**  
**Stop the alien invasion!**  
**A talk by Mike Sutton-Croft,**  
 Norfolk Non-native Species  
 Initiative Co-ordinator  
**Refreshments and raffle**  
**Non-members £2**

## Volunteers are amazing

As well as everything else they do, volunteers continue to provide the backbone of our habitat management team, with an expanded programme of work parties fuelled by tea, biscuits and enthusiasm.

Find out what these volunteers were doing - on page 9.



*Winners of the LOHP survey prize draw were Nellie & Sue Unsworth*

## IN THIS ISSUE

Children's eye view .....	2-3
How grazing works for wildlife .....	4
Inspired by her grandfather .....	5
Focus on Broomscot Common .....	6
News and bats in the valley .....	7
All about you .....	8
Events & volunteering .....	9
Membership & sits vac .....	10

# WELCOME

to the third new-style Newsletter from the Little Ouse Headwaters Project. The LOHP was started by a group of local people nearly ten years ago, to help conserve the wildlife, landscape and cultural heritage of the upper Little Ouse valley.

## Site restoration

Our work was given a huge boost this year by a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund. The extra money has allowed us to buy or restore three new sites – Scarfe Meadows and Broomscot Common in Garboldisham, and Webbs Fen in Theltham. The grant also funds education work with primary schools and students, social history research and a whole host of activities with volunteers and the local community. So it's been a busy nine months for us.

## New access and new habitats

By the time you read this, Broomscot and Webbs Fen will have been re-fenced for grazing. We have improved access to all three new sites with new gates and bridges.

At Webbs Fen, a new peat pool has been dug, creating one of the rarest wetland habitats. We have beautiful new sculptures at each site which interpret their wildlife. The sculptors led a guided walk through the valley sculpture trail in September.

## Children and adults together

Working with Garboldisham Church Primary School has been especially rewarding. The students and teachers have been learning about the wildlife and social history of the Parish and its sites, helped by the wonderful artists and staff at the Sainsbury Centre for Visual Art in Norwich, and by our own Trustees.

## History from stories

Local volunteers have been capturing the knowledge of local people who have lived and worked in the valley for years. These oral histories have provided a wealth of colourful stories about the valley. The information they contain will help us better understand how the landscape has evolved, and how we should conserve it.

## Discover for yourself

Find out more about the project in this Newsletter and on our website [www.lohp.org.uk](http://www.lohp.org.uk).

Why not 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!



*What drastic work is this? See page 7*



## Garboldisham Primary School

Children, staff, parents and governors are exploring the area along with LOHP volunteers.

### Rowan Tree Class - Litter Picking at Broomscot Common

All the school has been involved, but Rowan Tree Class has done more than most, working with LOHP volunteers on Broomscot Common. Armed with large black plastic sacks, gloves and litter pickers borrowed from Mrs Hance, the class spent a whole morning removing all sorts of litter from the Common, and discovering some very exciting invertebrates and mammals in the process.

Back in school, the class were concerned that people aren't taking care of the local area well enough. They asked if they could put hand-produced posters around the village reminding people of the dangers of litter to wildlife, and the harm to the environment. Garboldisham Parish Council fully endorsed their enterprise. Here is a sample of the handiwork displayed around Garboldisham.

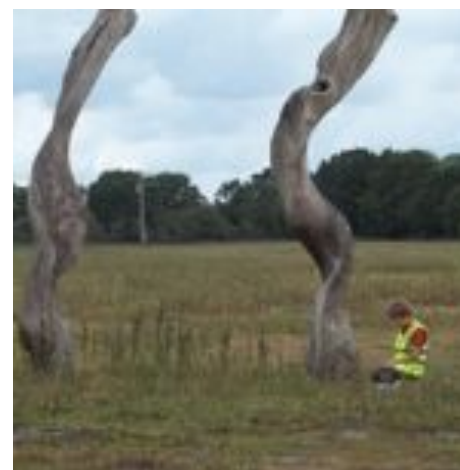
*T. Young*



### Our visit to the Frith

We went to the Frith on a sunny day to have a look at the source of the rivers Waveney and Little Ouse. Mr Langston took us all the way to the top of the Frith where we saw some pigs. Then we went on a bug hunt, we found a lot of bugs, arachnids and lizards. Ethan and Reuben went looking for adders!

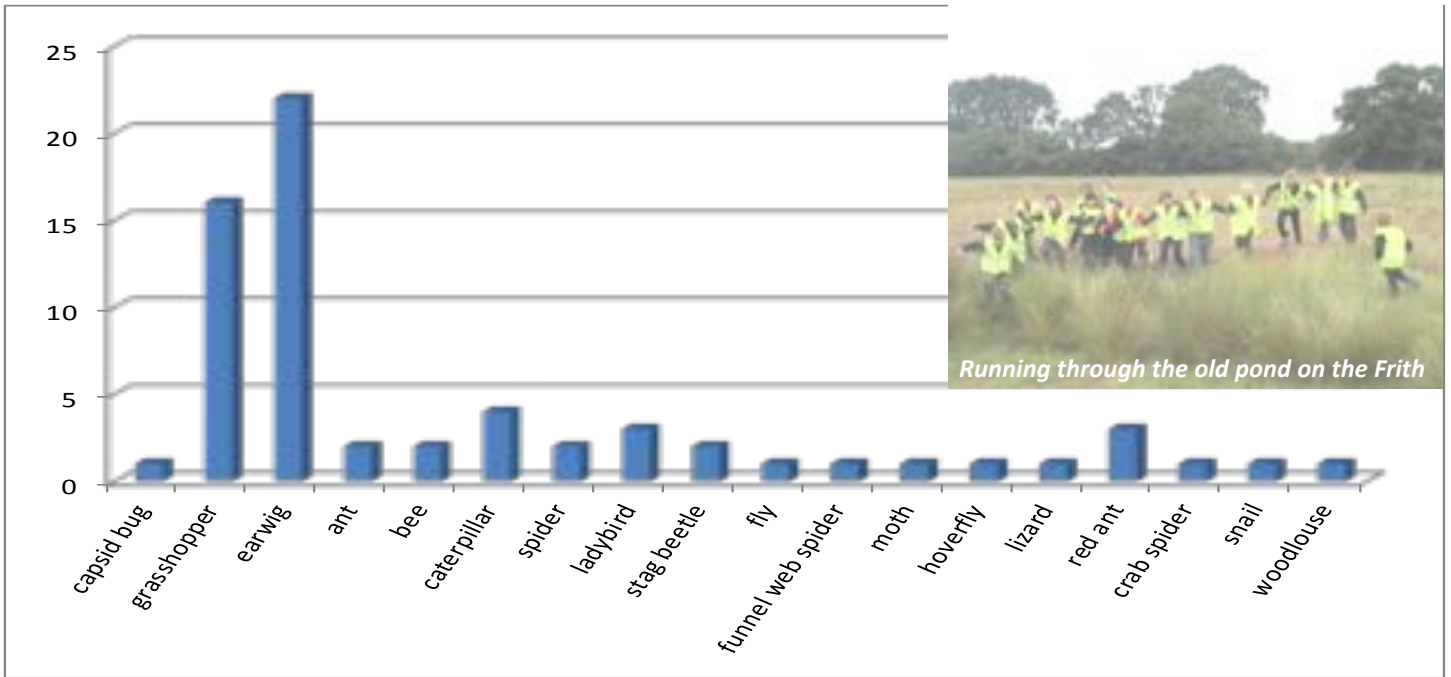
*Ethan and Jared*



**Fresh air, science, geography and maths . . .**

We got loads of insects on our trip to look at the Little Ouse. We got to run through an old pond and long grass which had lots of grasshoppers and hedge crickets. We collected 1 snail, 1 wasp, 29 grasshoppers, and lots of other things. From the information we made bar charts.

*Henry and Flynn*



**Insect facts**

We did insect fact sheets about a bug that we caught in our bug hunt, some of our facts were true but the bugs where hard to see so a few facts were a bit mad.

In the end though everything turned out fine.

*Joe and Louis*



*Running through the old pond on the Frith*

**Years 3 and 4 went to the Frith for a bug hunt.**

We met Mr. Langston from the LOHP project who told us all about the Frith.

I found lots of woodlice in the wooden tree. I caught one and put it in a pot to look at it. I saw some rabbit bones.

*Alice Gray Davies*





*Norfolk Horns and Southdowns graze The Lows*

**Getting large herbivores to do the work** is one of the most important ways we keep our meadows, wet grasslands, heaths and fens good for wildlife.

### Slowly does it

Grazing is a gentle, gradual form of management. Low numbers of animals grazing over a long time keep the more competitive grasses and rushes in check, allowing smaller plants to flourish. Without grazing, the smaller plants would be smothered by the more aggressive ones which develop quickly and grow a dense canopy of leaves. Their canopy catches all the light, shading out the smaller, weaker plants. An enormous network of grass and rush roots can take most of the nutrients and water from the soil, depriving the smaller plants. Because the aggressive plants are so dominant, unmanaged habitats have few species, and often lack the rarer plants we value most. Although it can be a shock to see

sheep or cows biting off flower heads, it is a price worth paying. The impact of aggressive plants suppressing weaker ones is much worse than the loss of a few flowers. Grazing can be good for insects and other animals too. All types of stock are choosy about what they eat: some plants are delicious and are eaten greedily - others are avoided, and these grow taller. Slowly, a varied structure develops: short turf with tall patches.

Because of this variety in structure, more animal species find places that suit them. Grazed sites are often very rich in different animals.

**Although it can be a shock to see sheep or cows biting off flower heads, it is a price worth paying.**

### Nibblers, biters and browsers

Different grazing animals have very different ways of grazing. Nibblers such as sheep and rabbits crop the grass very close to the ground. They are ideal for heaths (like Broomscot Common) where the ground is so poor in nutrients that the sward is very short and open. Cattle tend to wrap their tongues around longer plants tearing and biting them. Generally they do not crop so close to the ground but take bulkier, denser herbage. Goats, rather unruly animals, browse woody species such as trees and brambles. This is ideal when restoring a habitat overgrown with scrub. The most diverse habitat structure is created when more than one type of grazing animal is used, but this is only possible on large sites.

### Three cheers for our graziers

The LOHP uses either sheep or cattle on its sites. Owning and managing stock is expensive and needs very specialist skills. We prefer to work with local stock owners like Brian Lambert and Denis Jenkins to get our grazing done. They have the expertise and the animals. At the start of the season we discuss how the land should be grazed, and work together to achieve the right results.

### Old-fashioned breeds mix well with wildlife

Different breeds of sheep and cows can also graze in remarkably different ways. Modern commercial stock tends to be unsuitable for conservation because they have been bred to eat high quality, intensively-managed grassland, not the rough herbage typical of wildlife sites. Traditional breeds are usually

better for wildlife since they eat a wider range of plants, and can cope with poorer quality food.

Some breeds do well on very dry sites, others are good for places that are always wet. The size of animal is also important – robust sites often benefit from larger animals such as Highland cattle, but very fragile sites with lichen heath or rich layers of delicate ground plants or mosses would suit smaller stock such as Dexters.



*Dexter cattle on The Lows*

### Who's where on LOHP sites?

If you want to see conservation grazing in action, visit our sites in the summer. Redpoll cattle, an old British breed, graze on Parkers Piece and Bleyswycks Bank, as do Southdown sheep. Norfolk Horns, a local breed of sheep, were on the Lows until late summer. Other sites host more varied cattle breeds, often continental/Hereford crosses.

*Mike Harding*

**When Caitlin Jenkins and her dad, Denis, decided to start a herd of cattle, they chose Red Polls in honour of her grandad,** who used to work with the old Suffolk breed. He would be proud of her: at just 19 years old her livestock skills have already earned her several prizes at the region's shows and beyond.

### **Marvellous mothers**

Red Polls are a rare breed, but are becoming quite popular again, says Caitlin. They eat anything and, apart from a bit of hay in really cold weather, and mineral buckets, they don't need extra food. They are very good mothers, with plenty of milk, and they're small, which should make them easier to handle – though that's not always the case, she says. The herd, begun only last year, now stands at 17 females, the oldest five years and the youngest born a few weeks ago. Some of the

herd graze on Parkers Piece, and the rest at Rushford.

### **Winning top prizes**

At her first show, last year's Newark and Notts, Caitlin came home with first in class for one year-old Zita and second in class for two year-old Yader. This year, she took them and another female, Anya, as well as two Red Poll bulls belonging to their neighbour Paul Rackham, to the Suffolk, Norfolk and Wayland shows. 'One of the bulls, Lancelot, was awarded breed champion at two out of three shows,' she says. 'Zita was made breed champion at Wayland – where Anya and Yader also won their classes – and Anya and Zita won their classes at the Norfolk Show. They're big classes, so we were really successful. And I was really pleased with Lancelot – who we now have running with the heifers – as he wasn't mine but I'd picked him out and prepared him for the shows.'

### **Good breeding and good food**

Success is down to starting off with good cows and knowing what to feed them. Caitlin brings in her selected animals for halter training and puts them on a diet of barley, sugar beet pulp, soya, linseed and honeychop ready for showing. 'And on Parkers Piece it's moist, there's plenty of grass, and shade under the trees. I like the set-up, the area, it's much more natural,' she says.

### **Farming and photography**

Caitlin has just completed a two-year photography course at Norwich City College and hopes to bring farming and wildlife photography into her work in the future. For now she's establishing her own livestock contracting business as well as looking after the family's cattle and sheep.

*Judith Tooth*



*Caitlin Jenkins with some of her Red Poll cattle*



of plants adapted to the driest conditions can survive here. In places, the intense rabbit grazing has created open ground dominated by grey-green lichens, tiny annual plants and nibbled stumps of fine-leaved grasses. It is our own piece of Breckland in the heart of Garboldisham.

is known to be artificial. A gentle slope connects the heath and fen - where dry sand gives way to moister, siltier soils rich in nutrients. The loamy slopes have developed a meadow habitat dominated by dense grass. Because the site hasn't been grazed for many years, dense tussocks of grasses such as false oat grass dominate the meadow. The smaller flowers there have been suppressed by these fiercely competitive grasses, but we aim to recover the meadow flora when grazing returns to Broomscot.

**Rabbit grazing has produced bizarre globular gorse bushes**

**There is nowhere in the upper Little Ouse valley quite like Broomscot Common.**

All of its habitats were once widespread in the valley, but are now rare. While there are fragments of heath, meadow, fen and gorse scrub all around the Little Ouse, there are few places where they have survived in a single sweep of wild land like this. Geology, the shape of the land and the way that water moves through the site determine where each different habitat is. The Common is made up of a flat hill top covered by deep, gravelly sand; a peaty, soggy valley bottom, and a gradual slope which links the plateau to the boggy valley bottom.

**Very, very poor soil**

You can see the sharp sands of the plateau top in the spoil heaps round the many rabbit burrows.



The soil here is very low in nutrients and in summer is parched and droughty. Only a small number

Rabbit grazing has also produced the bizarre topiary-like globular gorse bushes around the scrub. The dense gorse marks an area that must in the past have been disturbed and enriched with nutrient, as this prickly shrub often follows human activity.

**A little wetland too**

A small, peaty fen has developed in the valley bottom. The peat stays saturated because it is constantly supplied with moisture moving down the slopes through their porous soils. The fen is dominated by rushes and wetland plants adapted to permanently wet soils. A handful of marsh orchids were found this year – a sign of a richer flora that should emerge as the site is restored. There are signs that water voles use the wetland area, even though the ditch



**A vestige of the old wild land**

This small fragment of the wild landscape of the Little Ouse has survived only because it was set aside as common land. Now owned by the Garboldisham Parish Charity Trustees, it is leased to LOHP. Before the great land-grab of the enclosures, old maps show that nearly all of the Waveney and Little Ouse valleys between Diss and Knettishall Heath was wild land. This is coloured pink in the old map below. Now, most of the pink land

has been turned to agriculture or other land uses. The Little Ouse Headwaters Project is working to restore the remaining fragments of wild land in the valley. We also aim



## Major site improvements

### Fencing on Webbs Fen

A tractor-mounted post basher was used to put in the fence posts. The peat on the river edge is so soft that knocking them in was very easy: just the weight on top of the posts drove some into the ground, unlike the same job at Broomscot Common where the hard ground made the posts bounce out!



Stock fencing all around the site will keep in the grazing cattle and sheep.

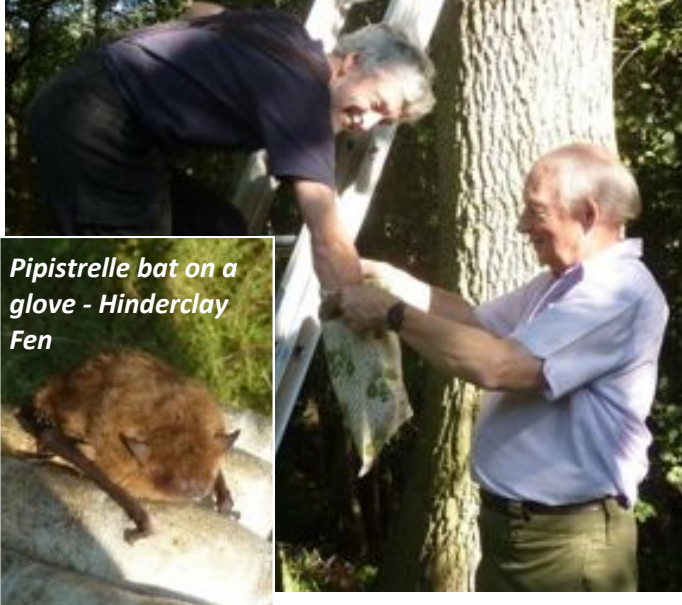
### Ditching on Webbs Fen

All the internal field ditches were filled in with peat from the new scrape area in the northwest corner. The



scrape itself will be the wettest part of the Fen. Because the newly-moved peat is so soft and spongy, some of the cut trees were placed in the ditch at the end by the river, to help make it solid enough for vehicles to cross. This will slowly bed down and make a solid crossing for vehicles for mowing or moving livestock.

*Arthur Rivett and Nick Woods led a group of volunteers to check all the bat boxes on LOHP sites*



*Pipistrelle bat on a glove - Hinderclay Fen*



*Digging the scrape and using the peat to fill in the old drainage ditches*

### Agricultural archaeology

Webbs Fen had been thoroughly underdrained both with modern plastic land drains and older land drains (clay pipes). The land was always wet and never grew very successful crops.



*Modern plastic pipe land drains were removed to re-wet the fen*

## Bats in the valley

Early autumn is the time we check our bat boxes. This year we were initially disappointed that so many of the purpose-built sawdust/cement boxes contained bird nests. But some boxes had pipistrelle bats. Arthur and Nick have licences to handle bats so they identified, aged and sexed the bats before releasing them. The maximum found in one box was five females and one male. Autumn is the mating season for bats so males are defending territories and attracting females. In total we found 21 pipistrelles along with bee, wasp and hornet nests and a wood mouse that ran down Nick's back! The Suffolk Bat Group have records of at least six species from LOHP sites. By the end of October, bats will have found all sorts of places to hibernate. Hollow trees, buildings (including barns, houses and churches) and underground sites such as wells and cellars are all used - if they can get into them. The important factors for bats are temperature (between 4°C and 8°C), a fairly high humidity and no disturbance. Some kinds of bat will travel many miles to a suitable site so in winter they will leave the valley completely.

*Reg Langston*

### Do you have room for some breeding bats?

If you have a building overlooking the valley and you'd like to help bats please contact the LOHP on 01379 898684.

**Why is the LOHP so interested in you?**

When planning the project’s new programme details we needed to know who might be interested, and what our approach should be. There’s no point organising toddlers’ outings if everyone’s over 80 – nor running weekday events if everyone is in full time work.

**Where did we get the data?**

From the survey in the first issue of this newsletter, and from the 2001 Census. We learnt how much people know about the project area and how involved you are in its care. If we repeat the survey at the end of the project, we can measure any changes.

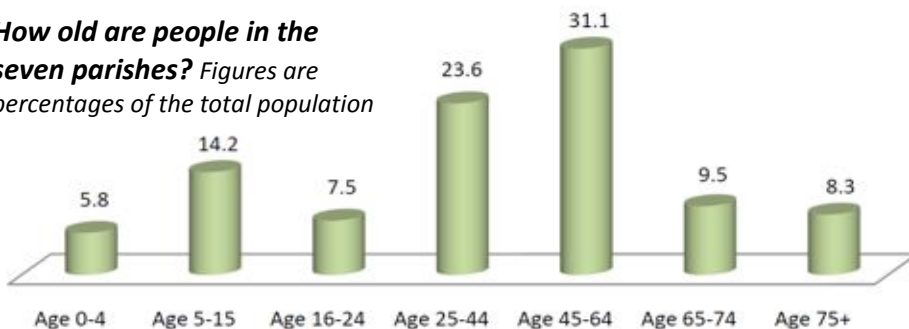
**Sweeping generalisations**

In 2001 there were 3,100 people in the seven parishes living in 1,263 households, with very few empty houses or holiday homes. The LOHP project therefore has a local and resident audience, with low numbers of tourists. We assume from this that you have a strong stake in the local area and - from the surveys - we know that there is a deep interest in the local environment and its conservation. Some people who filled in the questionnaire have lived in the area for more than 70 years, and some for less than two.

**How old are you?**

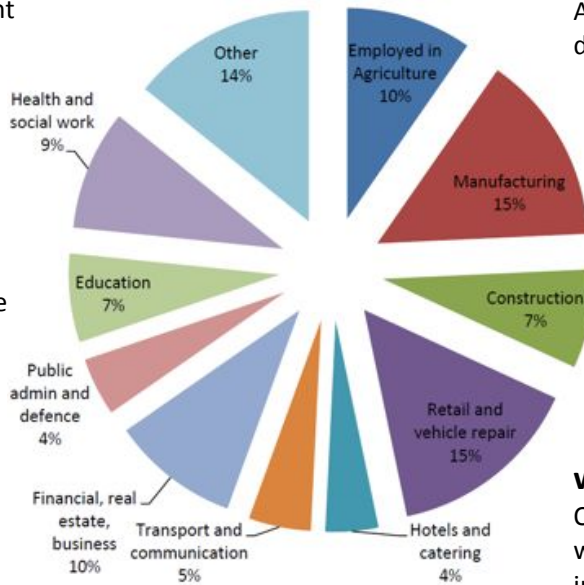
The population divides almost exactly at the age of 45 (see graph). The LOHP wants to get all ages more involved. The project needs to capture young people’s interest to make use of their energy and foster lasting commitment for the future, and older people are vital because of their knowledge and experience, both in managing land, and

**How old are people in the seven parishes?** Figures are percentages of the total population



in managing organisations. Some also have more time to help with LOHP activities and some are local decision makers or landowners.

**Few now work on the land**



Few people nowadays work in farming. Most local people have no connection with land management, and know very little about the need for active conservation. The LOHP is therefore providing materials and events which explain what is happening on local sites and why.

**What do you know and like?**

Although most survey respondents knew about the LOHP, only a third had ever been to an event. The Little Ouse River itself was the best known and most visited place, followed by Hinderclay Fen and Blo’ Norton Fen. The least known were Scarfe Meadows and Broomscot Common. Everyone who responded is interested in landscape, the countryside and wildlife, while local history, archaeology and old buildings interested more than 90%. Landscape and farming arouse the

strongest interest with 26% declaring themselves passionate about food and farming and 31% passionate about landscape.

**Travelling about**

As in most rural areas, cars are the dominant mode of transport here. More than 90% of the local population own at least one car and there is very limited public transport.

There is evidence that local people will walk or bike to local places, so we are working to improve access, waymarking and cycle routes. We will only promote activities which match our sites’ available car parking.

**Masses of you want to join a work party**

Only 1% of respondents have joined in work on LOHP sites , but 38% would be interested to . . .

**.. SO LOOK AT PAGE 9, GET YOUR DIARY OUT NOW, AND BOOK A DATE WITH LOHP!**

**Event - Tree Sculpture Walk**

The September weather stayed perfect for another lovely day out in the Little Ouse valley as we rambled around the areas of sculptures old and new, all carved by 'Hearts of Oak' of Coney Weston. Andy Manning, environmentalist and chainsaw artist, told us about the inspirations for the sculptures - all very different and interesting in design. Why not take a walk yourselves to see them!

*Bev Blackburn*





## Volunteering with the LOHP

In December 2010, our lovely friend and provider of fab veg Chris Lloyd, mentioned a meeting at the Village Hall, something to do with the Little Ouse. Previously, Chris had said something about raising money to buy Scarfe Meadows, which meant nothing to us at the time, but I said I'd send a cheque. My partner, John, and I had been in Garboldisham for 5 years. But, with our work taking us away from the area at unexpected times, we didn't want to commit too much too soon. Chris was going to the meeting, so we said we'd go too - though on a cold night it was an effort to leave the house.

### Warm welcome

When we arrived, I was nabbed at the door and I joined up there and then - it seemed churlish not to, although I had no real idea of what I was letting myself in for! But I needn't have worried. Very welcoming people all around, illuminating talks and slides, and all so easily presented without fuss or hierarchy.

### First work party

John and I turned up for our first work party at Broomscot Common, having a huge bonfire and wrecking our jackets with flying embers, as you do! That was it: we were hooked. There really is no pressure to do more than you feel able to do, and the tea/coffee/cakes/biscuits arrive just when you need them. Everyone has been so welcoming from the very first - I know some

There really is no pressure to do more than you feel able to do, and the tea/coffee/cakes/biscuits arrive just when you need them

names now, and people come and go as commitments allow. The work can be hard but it's always a joy to look forward to it and wonder where it's going to be.

### No worries - no guilt

I love the fact that it's so well organised, you don't have to worry about things - and the mishaps add to the morning's delights. Getting to know other volunteers has been a joy - and how clever and gifted, hard working and diverse everyone is. I'm sometimes loth to commit to things - it's easy to get too involved and then have to withdraw because of time constraints, but with the LOHP I don't feel that. There's no pressure on you, so you don't feel guilty about not going one week - or not going for ages - you just turn up when you can, and you really do have fun (and sweat) at the same time as doing something worthwhile and you can see the difference there and then. That's why I volunteer for the LOHP. It's very low tech, hurrah, it's simple and straightforward, it's full of lovely energy and amazingly well put together. Come and see for yourself!

Laura Cox, Wednesday - and Sunday - volunteer



Fifty trustees and volunteers had a feast at the volunteers' barbecue in Hinderclay in September - great company & food

Volunteering can be both this . . . . and this!

## Events for your diary

**History day** - revealing and discovering the valley's history. Talks and exhibition.

Experts from University of East Anglia will be there. Please bring your old photos, maps, and artefacts to show us.

**Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> Nov 10 - 4pm**  
Blo' Norton Village Hall

### • Annual talk and AGM

**Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> Dec 7.30 pm**  
Hinderclay Village Hall

*More details on back page →*

### Winter Walk

**Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> January 2012**

Greet the New Year and walk off the mince pies with a bracing stroll around some of our sites.

Start at 10.30, back in time for lunch! Meeting point details will be on our website nearer the time, or phone 01379 898684 .

### Winter work parties . .

#### ..beat off the winter blues

with a LOHP work party. **Second Sundays and most Wednesdays.**

**11 December Scarfe Meadows**  
Gapping-up hedge  
Reg Langston 01379 898009

**8 January Broomscot Common**  
Gorse coppicing  
Reg Langston 01379 898009

**12 February Hinderclay Fen**  
Tree seedling clearance  
Rowena Langston 01379 898009



## 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 to LOHP.



Signed:.....

Dated:.....

Registered Charity No: 1098232

## Can you help?

### Key volunteers needed...

The LOHP relies on volunteers to help run the charity. With our new land and projects the current team is feeling the strain a bit – can you help?

**Hon. Secretary** – the current secretary will step down at the AGM. We need someone who can help with correspondence and emails, directing enquiries to the rest of the team. We have lots of people with technical know-how to deal with details, so you don't need to be an expert, just well-organised and familiar with email and basic computing.

**Meetings Secretary** – this could be the same person as the Hon. Secretary – or a 'job share'. The trustees meet at least 4 times a year – someone has to get them organised!

**Book keeper** – the Treasurer would love some help with the day to day management of our accounts, ideally from someone experienced in this type of work and familiar with Excel spreadsheets.

Also.....

### Do you walk any of our sites regularly?

We're looking for people who are often out and about to keep an eye on the livestock and report any problems. We've had a few cases of **upside-down sheep** lately, and once spotted they just needed rolling back upright, but in the past we've had issues with dogs running loose, and very occasional escapes. We'll give you guidance/training on what to look out for. If you could help with stock-checking please let us know which sites you visit, and how often.



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

## Annual talk and AGM, 7.30pm

Tuesday 6th December in Hinderclay Village Hall

A brief AGM will be followed by an illustrated round-up of the LOHP's year. The main talk, **Aliens in the East Anglian countryside** by Mike Sutton-Croft from the Norfolk Biodiversity Partnership will start at about 8pm.

Seasonal refreshments will follow the talk. Contributions of finger foods and raffle prizes will be much appreciated. Non-members are very welcome - we just ask for a £2 donation to help cover costs.

### Cryptic word puzzle from Newsletter 2 - answers

1. *Scrub*    2. *Reeds*    3. *Fen*    4. *Voles*    5. *Ouse*  
6. *Snipe*    7. *Hedge*    8. *Sheep*    9. *Pond*    10. *Otter*

**Many thanks for photos** to R. Langston, M. Feakes, J. Tooth, T. Young, M. Harding, B. Blackburn, N. Rowbottom, J. Pitt



## How to contact LOHP

**Email:** [enquiries@lohp.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@lohp.org.uk)

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

**Phone:** 01379 898684    [www.lohp.org.uk](http://www.lohp.org.uk)

**Newsletter editor:** Nicky Rowbottom - 01502 578470