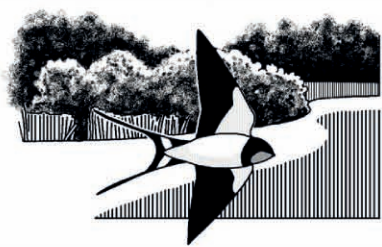


## News from the Ouse

ISSUE NUMBER 5  
August 2012**LOHP on the web . . . . . just a click away**

If you haven't yet looked at the project's **NEW** website you should. It's been skilfully put together and it's packed with information about the LOHP, the sites that we manage and the Little Ouse valley.

We've been able to produce this new website partly from Heritage Lottery Fund grant and partly from volunteers doing masses of work for nothing. (Huge thanks to Stephen Baillie, Laura Smith and Sue Brooks.)

Go and have a rootle around it and enjoy:

- ⊕ the easy-to-use **map** - click on any LOHP site on to get more information
- ⊕ the frequently-changing **homepage** for the latest news, events and work parties
- ⊕ **newsletters, reports and footpath maps** (all downloadable)
- ⊕ **new features** include:
  - lists of all the species recorded on our sites
  - archive and learning resources sections. (Still being worked on.)

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**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. Find out more - and join in.

**We look forward to seeing you!**



Come and join  
the celebrations  
**Food & Folk on  
the Frith**

**Saturday 1st Sept  
2.30 till late**

**All welcome**

**See page 7**

**10 YEARS OLD IN 2012  
HAPPY BIRTHDAY LOHP!**

**INSIDE**

Local children learn about  
hungry rabbits - see p.2



Reg Langston

**Why did this cow  
love a wet valley?  
Read about her  
on page 5 . . .**





## Practical science: helping the gorse

Children from Garboldisham Primary School learnt a lot about construction and about the rabbits' relentless search for food when LOHP volunteer Reg Langston helped them test out different kinds of rabbit-guards round gorse bushes.

George Odgers from Year 6 reports....



We went down to Broomscot Common to carry out experiments which we had invented to help stop the rabbits from eating the young gorse.

In our experiment me, Alex and James decided to have a dome of chicken wire covering the young gorse, supported by

bamboo canes. Around the dome twelve wine bottles would make a sound to scare away the animals when the wind blew.

As we worked on it we decided that making a dome would be too difficult. Instead, we made a cylinder and had time only to put in four of the wine bottles. We decided this would be best anyway, as if they got broken it would maybe hurt the sheep.

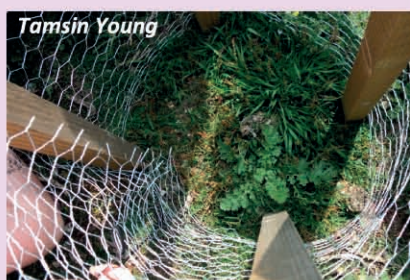
### Results?

Unfortunately, when we went back to check, much of the gorse in some of the experiments had been eaten by rabbits and in some cases mice! We found one had even been leant on and broken by a clumsy sheep. (We knew it was a sheep because we found wool on the chicken wire.)

Some of the experiments were affected by plants such as ragwort growing over the young gorse. However, some of the experimental structures did survive - including ours. We were very surprised when we saw it as we had expected the terribly wet and windy weather to have destroyed it. We think the fact that our gorse wasn't eaten probably had something to do with our structure being in the middle and that the rabbits had eaten all the other gorse before they saw ours. We were pleased to see how much our gorse had grown (3 - 4 cm) in that short time.

We hope the wine bottles deterred the wildlife a bit but we need to give it more time to be certain.

We had to change some of our experiment due to shortage of time, so we predicted that it probably would not work very well. Our group has been pleasantly surprised with the results so far. We look forward to our next trip to the Common to see whether our experiment has continued to be successful.



## Not put off by bad weather!

Class teacher Tamsin Young describes the wide range of ways the children have been learning at the LOHP sites.

This term has been a term of two halves weather-wise. At first we thought Summer would never arrive! However this has not deterred the school from visiting and sampling what the LOHP sites have to offer. Years 1 and 2 observed Mr Langston planting trees at the entrance to Scarfe Meadows. They discussed why each tree needed a jacket and the species planted. This kick-started a project on wood, its uses and origins, building and creating patterns, carvings and dwellings.



### Learning how to observe, record and compare ...

Rowan Tree Class (years 3 & 4) have had numerous trips to the sites. They have taken photos to compare particular areas throughout the year, they have observed the bird boxes and frog spawn, compared the temperature inside and outside the protective sapling covering and discussed the implications to growth, especially in the snow and created a data base using data loggers to compare temperatures, light and coverage with the school field. We're all looking forward to seeing what this Summer has to offer.

Garboldisham Primary School



## Garboldisham life and work in the 1950s (Part I)

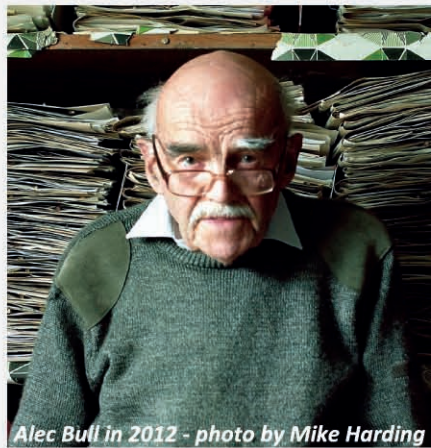
Alec Bull, author of *The Lowing Herd* and long-time supporter of LOHP has recorded some fascinating memories for the Project.

Alec lived with his family on Garboldisham Ling in 1951-2 and remembers it as 'the most remarkable community we had ever lived in, being very much 'all for one and one for all''. He was a junior cowman, and on days off he and his wife cycled miles with their two little girls. His working day was long (5am – 5pm, with an hour off for breakfast and two for dinner) but in return he had a three day weekend every six weeks.



Almost all rural families at that time relied on farm-work for their income, although some could add to it with other skills. Alec recalls the versatile Billy Baker being in charge of the pig unit. Billy used to stand in as cowman if any of the six regular cowmen were off, and in his spare time was also the local cobbler making a good job of mending boots and shoes.

In other cottages on the Ling and nearby lived the farm foreman, general farm workers, a tractor



driver, horsemen (10 horses still worked on the farm), and cowmen. Altogether the farm staff totalled 33 men of whom only two were over 40.

Some men kept to one trade while others exercised various skills. One of the latter, Percy Alderton born 1909, son of a blacksmith, was occasionally taken off his usual

cowman's duties for special projects including showing the general farm workers how to lay land drains. He was also one of the last people who knew how to make clay lump bricks and did this when repairs were needed to

the farm buildings and cottages.

A short walk away across the fields lived 'Lofty' a very tall, German ex-Prisoner of War (PoW) and his English wife. Though integrated into the local community he still wore his brown PoW uniform with dark knee patches. He worked as a general farm worker and got on well with everybody.

**Comparing Alec's notes with the situation today shows how vital LOHP'S work is - to conserve and expand good habitats for wildlife in what has become a difficult environment.**

Alec has a very keen interest in natural history and kept notes of the wildlife he saw. These are from 1951/2.

- **January 14<sup>th</sup>** Several clumps of spurge laurel flowering on Broomscot Common [at that time the area known as 'the Common' included the land on the opposite side of road from what is left as common today.]
- **Apr 11<sup>th</sup>** The fenny bit of Broomscot Common was a blaze of yellow from marsh marigolds.
- **Apr 20<sup>th</sup>** Woodlark from the roadside opposite the Common.
- **Apr 27<sup>th</sup>** Tree pipit singing on Broomscot Common.
- **June 21<sup>st</sup>** Corn marigold flowering along the edge of Broomscot Common.
- **Aug 25<sup>th</sup>** Garboldisham Ling. From this date for two or three weeks, stone curlew were calling, as they fed on the extensive pastures. Seven noctule bats going to bed at daylight in a hollow ash near the cowshed, the tree also contained an active hornets' nest.

### HOW ARE THEY DOING NOW?

- **Marsh marigold** - no longer so common in LOHP area, now just a few scattered plants
- **Tree pipit** - rapid decline since the mid-'80s. On the UK Birds of Conservation Concern Red list with a population decline of >50%
- **Corn marigold** - classed as 'vulnerable to extinction' on UK's Red List of threatened plants
- **Stone curlew** - no longer breed in the LOHP area. Long-term decline in population and distribution nationally through changes in farming practices. Numbers fell by over 85% between 1940 and 1985 (to a low of about 150 pairs). Despite an increase since then through extensive efforts in nest protection on arable land, their status in UK is still critical.
- **Noctule bat** - has disappeared in LOHP area since early 1990s
- **Hornet** - actually increased range in the last 20 years (but still just central and southern England)





Peter Hughes

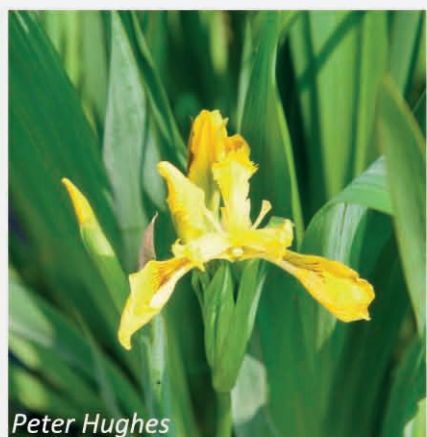
## Webb's Fen's wild future

### Making the links

Webb's Fen was bought by the Little Ouse Headwaters Project in 2011 with most of the funds coming from Heritage Lottery Fund. The main aim was to re-connect the two ancient fens of Middle and Old Fen, Thelnetham. It also linked up LOHP's land at Parkers Piece and Bleyswyck's Bank, and the fens in Blo' Norton on the north side of the river. Putting together the jigsaw of old wetlands, re-making a landscape as old as the Little Ouse itself, is one of the most important aims of the LOHP.

### Recent history

Before we bought the site, Webb's Fen had been managed as productive farmland. The area had been ploughed and reseeded to improve the grazing. Nearer to the river, the field was under-drained so that it could sustain a tree nursery. Some of the trees remained and grew into a small plantation. These trees were not native wetland species.



Peter Hughes

### Water is bringing in wildlife

Since buying the land it has been our ambition to return it to fen. The trees were removed roots and all, and in their place a fen pool was dug. Fen pools are the very first stage of fen creation. We hope this will colonise with stoneworts and other water plants. Gradually, fen plants will colonise until the pool develops into wet fen. The material dug out to create the pool was used to backfill the ditches within the site. These ditches kept the water table low – ideal for agriculture, but not for wetland wildlife. Since the work was finished last winter, the fen pool and the field itself have been kept wet. This will help fen plants recolonise.

We hope that birds such as lapwing and snipe will be encouraged to breed on the restored wet meadows.

### Early signs look good

It's early days for Webb's Fen. Wildlife will take years to return to this small patch of peatland. Early signs are promising – a surprising range of wetland wildflowers were found this year, and lapwing were showing a keen interest in spring. These early successes give us confidence that Webb's Fen will one day form part of the great sweep of valley fen that once filled the bottom of this valley.

*This beautiful shallow scrape is being colonised by animals and plants which need wet conditions. It replaced a small plantation of non-native poplars (below) which were removed in 2011 to bring back the site's open character.*



Jo-Ann Pitt

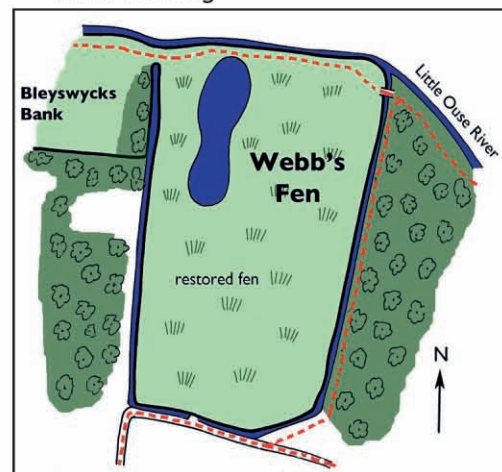
### New footbridges mean new walks

As part of the work, we have made a new footpath along the river so that you can watch the wildlife return.

### Dogs welcome under close control

If you have a dog with you, please keep it on a short lead so that sensitive wildlife is not disturbed.

Mike Harding





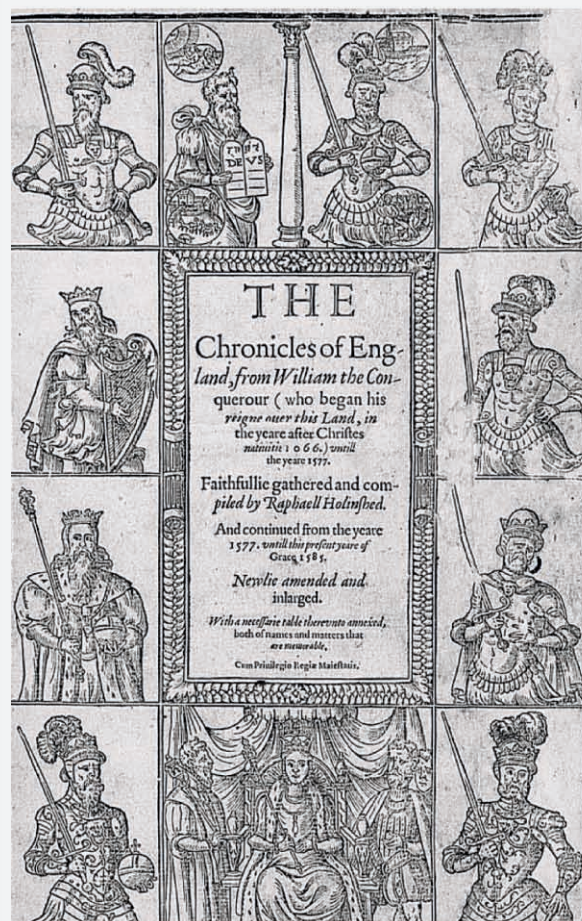
## A Tudor view on wet valleys

Low wetlands of river valleys, now the focus of LOHP restoration, were a blessing to farmers in the past - at least according to Raphael Holinshed who wrote his famous *Chronicles* in 1586. **Martin Ward tells us more....**

Historians in the LOHP should enjoy Holinshed's delicious Elizabethan prose. But, sadly, he was not a man to look on the bright side. There was not much that he approved of: a fashion for chimneys robbed people of their traditional lungfuls of smoke and so made them soft; locks on doors were for cowards who couldn't defend their property; Venetian glasses were for fools and always ended up in pieces anyway. He would perhaps have approved, though, of the LOHP's restoration of the bottom lands.

As with most topics, in this passage he purveys his wisdom with a haughty air. It was his habit not to abandon any topic until he'd had a go at someone – and this is no exception. To be fair to him, though, he did champion the cause of poor tenant farmers who were so grossly abused by exorbitant rents imposed by landowners at that time of economic upheaval.

He finds that the 'bottoms' were useful in providing a lower quality but more abundant crop than the higher and drier 'land meads' – and that this higher land was too valuable to use as pasture if animals could be properly husbanded on the 'bottoms'.



### Holinshed's account of 'bottom lands' and pasturage as practised in late sixteenth century England.

*"Our meadows are either bottoms (whereof we have great store) or else such as we call land meads, and borrowed from the best and fattest pasturages. The first of them are often overflown by the rising of such streams as pass through them, or violent falls of land-waters that descend from the hills about them.*

*The other are seldom or never overflown, and that is the cause whereof their grass is shorter than that of the bottoms, and yet it is far more fine and wholesome, since the hay of our low meadows is not only full of sandy cinder, which breedeth sundry diseases in our cattle, but also more rowty [rank], and full of flags, and therefore not so profitable for forage as the higher meads be.*

*The difference, furthermore, in their commodities is great, for whereas in our land meadows we have not often above one good load of hay, or peradventure a little maize in an acre of ground, in low meadows we have sometimes three, but commonly two or upward, as experience has oft confirmed.*



*Of such as are twice mowed I speak not, since their later mow is not so wholesome for cattle as the first; although in the mouth more pleasant for the time: for thereby they become often times rotten, or to increase so fast in blood that the garget [bloat] and other diseases do consume many of them before the owners can seek out a remedy.*

*Some superstitious fools suppose that they which die of the garget are ridden with the night-mare, and therefore they hang up stones which naturally have holes in them; as if such a stone were an apt cockshot [narrow passage] for the devil to run through and solace himself withal, whilst the cattle go scot-free and are not molested by him.*

*But if I should set down half the toys that superstition hath brought into our husbandmen's heads in this and other behalves, it would ask a greater volume than is convenient for such a purpose, wherefore it shall suffice to have said thus much of these things."*

Passage taken from: Raphael Holinshed and John Stow: *Chronicles* 1586 [Blackies English Texts ed. W.H.D. Rouse, (modernised spelling)]

Martin Ward





May 2012

Chris Gay



1977

Peter Dolman

## Thelnetham Windmill

The turning sails of windmills have been part of the Suffolk scene for over 800 years. William Cobbett wrote of seeing 17 from one vantage point near Ipswich, and during their heyday in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century there were nearly 500 working in the county. From the 1840's their numbers dwindled and by 1939 a mere 13 were still working, though dozens stood disused. Today just a handful of windmills are left in Suffolk, all owe their survival to deliberate preservation and are in varying degrees of repair. One of the best of these is the tower mill at Thelnetham in the Little Ouse Valley.

Thelnetham mill is remarkable for two reasons. Its early history is unusually well documented (in the diary of Thomas King, a local carpenter), and in the 1980's it was transformed from utter dereliction to full working order in just seven years, by the concerted efforts of volunteer mill enthusiasts.

### Decline and restoration

- **1819** Built for William Button, a local farmer. At first the mill had cloth-spread sails and the cap was turned into the wind by hand.

**The mill will be open to the public on August 12<sup>th</sup> and September 9<sup>th</sup>, from 11 to 5.**

- **1832** Modernised and fitted with a cast iron shaft and the eight-bladed fantail for keeping the sails facing into the wind.
- **Early 20<sup>th</sup> century** Still working but deteriorating along with its trade.
- **Mid 1920s** Finally ceased work – now had only two sails left.
- **1932** The last miller, Alphonso Vincent, died and his son George lived there for many years, jealously guarding it.
- **1973** George Vincent died, aged over 90, by which time the mill was in a poor state.
- **1974** Sold for conversion to a house.
- **late 1979** Five Suffolk Mills Group members became joint owners of the derelict mill. Until then, any volunteer work on local mills had been limited to basic repairs aimed at keeping out the weather. This mill presented a rare chance to return a mill to full working order.
- **1980 – 1987** Slowly repaired with the help of mill enthusiasts from all over the country and even abroad. Every detail carefully designed to ensure all new work was faithful to the original. Two week work camps became a regular feature each summer.
- **Aug 1985** Four new sails turning in the breeze and the restored mill regularly opened

to the public. Much of the credit for the extraordinary achievement must go to the late Peter Dolman.

- **1990's** several tons of flour were produced and sold annually.

The continued care of buildings like this is always a problem, when it depends on the energy of a few individuals. Peter Dolman's untimely death in 2002 was a blow, and his drive and knowledge are sorely missed. Now the Suffolk Building Preservation Trust has agreed to take on the ownership and help achieve a secure future for the mill. It is still in working order, but to be sustainable needs its own group of local volunteers, like Pakenham watermill.

This spring such a group has come together and work has started. Volunteers from LOHP joined in on a (pouring wet) site clearance day.

### To get involved contact

Mark Barnard on 01473 264755



Volunteers recently clearing the outhouses

Reg Langston



# Happy Birthday LOHP!

We're celebrating our 10th anniversary on September 1st. Come and join in an afternoon of events, demonstrations, fen fun and food for all the family followed by an evening of folk music and a Ceilidh.

Find out how people used to survive on fen produce and how human activities have shaped the countryside of the Little Ouse valley.



Helen Smith

Refreshments served all day, including a hog-roast from 4.30.

- Children's activities
- Delicious local food & drink
- Great music
- Guided walks
- Pond dipping
- Quizzes and prizes

For more information, see [www.lohp.org.uk](http://www.lohp.org.uk) and click on the event link.

*Please help us with the decorations by entering our competition .....*

Come and join the celebrations!

## Food & Folk on the Frith

**Sat. 1st Sept**

2.30 till late

All welcome

Entry free.

Parking fee - £2 per car

Cycle parking - free.

## Competition - design and make some bunting!

What do you love about the Little Ouse Headwaters area?

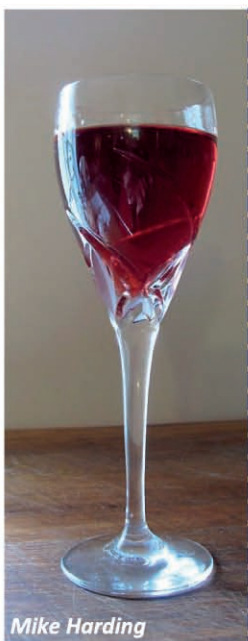
Is it the dragonflies or the windmills, the sunsets or the misty mornings; the song of the sedge warbler, or the smell of watermint? To make the Frith look **festive** - and to celebrate all the things that make this a wonderful place to visit and to live and work in - we invite you all to design and make some bunting to decorate the Frith for Saturday Sept 1st.

Show us what the place means to you with paints, embroidery, crayons, patchwork, applique - whatever you like....

Age groups: under 8, 8-11, 12-16 and 17+. Separate prizes for adults and children.

Many thanks to **Albright of Diss** who are very kindly providing the prizes.

**Contact:** Sue Lawrence for a pattern and details - 01379 658611 or [enquiries@lohp.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@lohp.org.uk), or see [www.lohp.org.uk](http://www.lohp.org.uk)



Mike Harding

## Delicious . . . local . . . sloe . . . gin

### Ingredients

450g sloes (blackthorn fruits) picked when very ripe (maybe late Sept /Oct)  
225g caster sugar  
1 litre London Gin (the best you can afford - it makes a difference)

### Method

1. Freeze the sloes for a week to break the skins. (Less tedious than pricking with a needle.)
2. Defrost and pour into a large sterilised jar. You can sterilize by putting the jar in the oven for

half an hour, just as for jam.

3. Pour the sugar and the gin on top. Seal tightly and shake well.
4. Store in a cool dark cupboard and shake every other day for a fortnight. Then shake once a week for two months.
5. After two months it is ready to drink, but improves with age.
6. Some like to decant the purple liquor and discard the sloes but we leave them in until drinking to develop a fuller flavour.

### Variations

You can make blackberry brandy by swapping sloes for blackberries and gin for brandy. No need to freeze the blackberries, but reduce the sugar by a third. You can also make damson gin in the same way. The proportion of ingredients should then be 600g damsons, 140g sugar and 1 litre Gin. You can make a boozy crumble with the damsons when liberated.

Mike Harding



## 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

## 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? We'd love to hear from you if you do.

For more information contact **Bev Blackburn, Volunteer Coordinator and Event Manager** - [enquiries@lohp.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@lohp.org.uk), or phone **Pete Fox** on **07500 044587**.

## 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:

- **Sept 9** *Sedge raking* Hinderclay Fen
- **Oct 11** *Pond digging* Blo' Norton Fen
- **Nov 11** *Hedge planting* Hinderclay Fen
- **Dec 9** *Scrub clearance* Blo' Norton Fen
- **Jan 13** *Coppicing gorse* Broomscot Common

**Reg & Rowena Langston** 01379 898009 (Hinderclay and Broomscot)

**Jo-Anne Pitt** 01379 898684 (Blo' Norton)

**Nigel Clark** 01379 890460 (Hinderclay)

## Other events

- **Saturday 1st Sept** 2.30 till late, LOHP 10th birthday celebration, *Food and Folk on the Frith* See page 7
- **Sunday 4th Nov** *History walk* including opening of Thelnetham Mill. (Led by Lucy Willgress who has just completed a project on the history of the valley fens with the Landscape History Dept. at UEA.) See website for time and place to meet.

## New arts project in the Little Ouse valley

Come and join a new creative group to produce visual art, poetry, prose or music reflecting the local wildlife, landscape and social history of this fabulous area. You'll be **very** welcome. —and it's **free** to join.

- **Thurs 20<sup>th</sup> Sept**, 6.30-9.30 pm *Introduction and taster session* Redgrave Activities Centre, Redgrave, IP22 1RL
- **Sat 29<sup>th</sup> Sept**, 1-4pm *Guided walk/talk*. Starting from The Frith (on the B1113 between South Lopham and Redgrave, grid ref TM039793, post code IP22 2HL.)
- **Sun 7<sup>th</sup> Oct**, 1-4pm *Study day and arts planning session* Sainsbury Centre, Norwich, NR4 7TJ

For details contact Bee Farrell on 07712 651213 or email [lohpandscva@googlemail.com](mailto:lohpandscva@googlemail.com).

This group is run by the Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts with the LOHP. Funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund.



## Contact LOHP

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

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

**Phone:** 07500 044587 [www.lohp.org.uk](http://www.lohp.org.uk)

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