



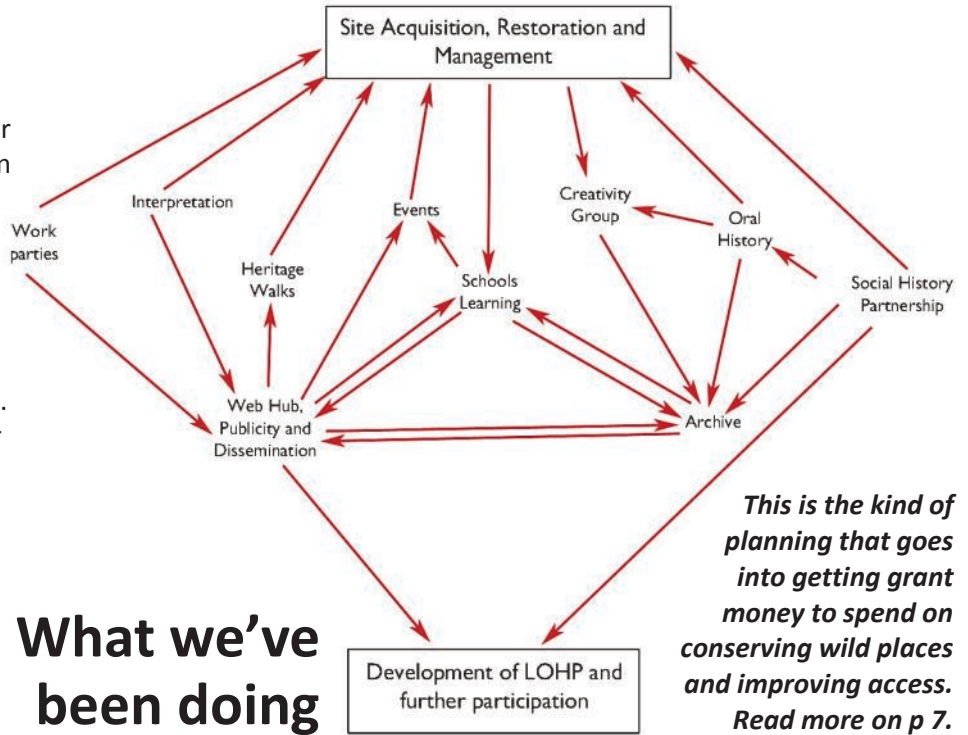
# News from the Ouse

ISSUE NUMBER 10  
April 2014

## WELCOME

to the newsletter of the Little Ouse Headwaters Project. The last year of our HLF funded project seems to have flown by (see page 7 for a round up of what we've been up to), and once again we're looking forward to spring in the valley. It has been a remarkably wet and windy winter, though we have escaped lightly compared to other parts of the country. We've been out and about checking for storm damage, and although you will find some of our paths still rather muddy, all sites are open as usual - so why not pull on your boots and make the most of the lighter evenings ahead, join us at a work party, or get to know the area in early May on our guided walk? I look forward to seeing you!

Jo Pitt, Chair



### What we've been doing

## A packed annual meeting



The AGM in December was a chance to reflect on the project's very significant achievements, and to hear some details about the autumn's river restoration project on the Little Ouse. The lucky audience were able to see and hear the vitality and enthusiasm of Nigel Holmes, the river engineer who masterminded the restoration of a whole kilometre of river at Thelnetham. Nigel explained the background to what was done and also showed pictures of the sorts of views we can look forward to on the Little Ouse in the future. It was inspiring to see examples of very successful similar projects elsewhere which have brought lasting improvements for wildlife and people.

Trustees: Reg Langston, Jo Pitt, Pete Fox and Helen Smith

Poos on the Ouse - whose?  
See page 8



## IN THIS ISSUE

School's action .....	2
Focus on alder buckthorn .....	3
Photographers .....	4
Scarfe Meadows .....	5
Volunteering and events .....	6
HLF project .....	7
Membership & calendar .....	8





## ***Garboldisham Primary School using willow creatively***

**In October 2013 Garboldisham Primary School helped Reg Langston and other LOHP volunteers pollard the big willow tree beside the pond on Broomscot Common.**

Mary Feakes describes how they used the cuttings:

We had a willow arbour at School, in which a lot of the willow had died, probably because it had not been kept wet enough. We asked Mr Langston if the LOHP could help us and he said that they had got to cut down a willow on Broomscot Common to make the pond habitat better.

Mr Langston and a lot of his helpers had brought big loppers and saws, and showed us which pieces of willow to cut and we cut a lot of it down.

After overwintering in barrels of water the willow cuttings had grown strong roots. This meant they would have a head start when we planted them into our arbour. One windy Wednesday morning in January, Mr Langston and two of his volunteers came to help us plant these rooted cuttings. Mr Langston sorted them out into size, and we dug holes, filled them with water and carefully heeled in the cuttings, some of which were over two metres high.

After they had been securely planted, the tops of the cuttings were attached to the willow arbour using cable ties. We had to make sure they were not tied too tightly, otherwise they would cut into the bark.

We had to keep the cuttings well watered, to keep them alive. Luckily it has been very wet so we have not had to do too much.

We are thrilled to see our cuttings are shooting beautifully.



***Go and admire this wonderful willow in the summer when it regrows its twigs and looks magnificent again***

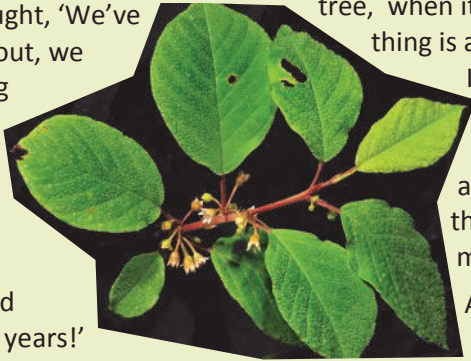


# A very ignorable shrub - was once positively explosive

**Chris Lloyd is a very knowledgeable and enthusiastic supporter of the LOHP, and living proof that volunteers can help in lots of different ways.**

Chris's involvement in conservation dates back to the 1970s when he was working in the agricultural seed trade. 'It was a boom time for farming', said Chris, 'And I thought, 'We've taken too much out, we should be putting something back. I started to lead work parties for Suffolk Wildlife Trust at Market Weston Fen – and carried on for 22 years!'

More recently, Chris has offered other skills for the benefit of LOHP sites. His decades of experience of propagating and nurturing native tree seedlings are yielding healthy young saplings of unusual varieties which are now being



**Alder buckthorn leaves and the rather unshowy flowers**

planted out in appropriate places in the Headwaters area. These have included spindle, wild pear and most recently a dozen alder buckthorn.

'The parent alder buckthorn tree is in the wet area at the bottom of my garden. I planted it originally because I wanted as much variety as possible in the garden. It's very healthy and the seeds germinate well. To be honest it's a bit nondescript but, like a lime tree, when it's in flower the whole thing is a-buzz with insects.

It's nice to foster and propagate something that's a bit unusual, and of course you know that you're helping so many different insects.'

Alder buckthorn in the countryside is very much overlooked because unless it has its berries it is very ignorable – or mistakeable for ordinary buckthorn.

Chris picked these particular berries in October 2011 when they were nice and black and soft - before the birds polished them all off. He put them in a mixture of leaf mould and compost then topped it with sharp sand to stop weeds, help drainage and make the shoots visible when they came up.



**Chris Lloyd with some of the many healthy native tree saplings he has raised from seed**

## Alder buckthorn and power politics

In the past, alder buckthorn played an important role in international power struggles.

Charcoal from alder buckthorn was found to be one of the top three tree species for use in making gunpowder because it lights easily and burns evenly and slowly.

In 1915 the War Office put an appeal for it in *Gardeners' Chronicle*, and it was still being actively sought and processed for this purpose well into the 1940s.

## Records are very patchy for this overlooked species.

The Suffolk Biological Records Centre has scattered records of alder buckthorn from across the county but only two in this area: from Hopton Fen and Market Weston Fen.

Keep your eyes peeled for it this year and let us know if you find any more.



Arthur Rivett

## BRIMSTONE FACTS . . .

- Often the first butterfly of spring
- Also lays eggs on ordinary buckthorn
- Hibernates as an adult - often among leaves of ivy, holly or bramble
- Its long proboscis can reach the nectar even in thistles and teasels



Sylviane Moss

**'They're lovely plants that Chris has grown. We planted them out in January 2014 – in wet places on Hinderclay Fen, Parkers Piece, Blo'Norton and Betty's Fens.'**  
Reg Langston



## Vital volunteers behind their cameras

The LOHP is very lucky to have access to images from a wide group of committed and skilled photographers. Several new volunteers responded to an appeal for help two years ago. Recently they discussed how best to organise the (very large) photo collection and have decided on a clever piece of software which gives the facility to search not only by site, date and photographer but by many other key words as well. Soon, when we need a picture for a funding bid or a newsletter, a talk or a poster, there'll be no more desperate scratching of heads and sending emails to lots of people, all of whom then search their individual picture libraries. Under the calm custodianship of Peter Hughes, the LOHP photo archive will be reliably searchable and all in one place.

### Measuring change - visually

A crucial role for photography in nature conservation is to record change. We have a system of fixed point photography on the project's newer sites, and are planning to establish it on The Frith, The Lows, Blo' Norton Fen and Betty's Fen as well.

### What can you do?

We're very grateful to everyone who sends in photos for us to use. If you would like to submit photos, or you would like to join the group, Reg would love to hear from you. Contact him on 01379 898009.



Getting to grips with the new software's potential are Chris Gay, Reg Langston, Peter Hughes, Arthur Rivett and Di McDonald



Picture challenge. As you visit the LOHP sites this summer can you find where this photo was taken - before 2007? Answer in next issue

## A moment caught at Webbs Fen

I joined the LOHP in 2011 having been inspired by reading a copy of this newsletter. The Photographers' Group was set up in December 2011. One of its most important roles is 'fixed-point' photography. Each member of the group has been allocated fixed-points at which we take four photos (roughly N,S,E & W) every three months to record the changes in the habitat of the fen. By their very nature, fixed-point photos are in no way artistic but rather a scientific record.

My fixed-points include Webbs Fen. The new scrape had just been dug in October 2011. In addition to my official fixed-points I decided to try to record the evolution of the scrape by taking photos of it every three months from the same point. These panoramas are composed of about five individual overlapping photos that I merge together in Photoshop. This one was taken in June last year.

Peter Hughes





# Making Scarfe Meadows wetter and better

The plan has always been to restore this site to traditionally managed wet meadows. This winter was a perfect time to bring up the water levels and do our bit for flood prevention downstream.

Before the sluice was installed there were no controls on the water table on the site, and ditch levels were too low. The new sluice allows us to raise water levels to create true wet grassland from what was a relatively dry meadow.

The beneficiaries will be water voles, and ground nesting and overwintering wading birds like lapwing and snipe. The work will also allow a better wet meadow flora to develop and will encourage species-rich fenny margins along the edges of the ditch. By holding up water on sites like this, the risk of flooding further downstream can be reduced. The sluice is working well, the site has been flooded and at least six snipe have been happily overwintering on the new scrape.



Di McDonald

*The crucial pipe is eased into place  
December 2013*



Reg Langston

*February 2012*



Alan Garner

*Look out for more water voles here -  
a sure sign of a healthy wetland*





## Working and learning together

Words from the eldest Sunday work party member about the youngest



In the foreground you can see the problem - young trees which would grow up and smother the heath if LOHP didn't remove them

DI McDonald

to teach us how to stop the saw getting stuck fast in the log!

This month his lesson was about tree bark and the creatures that inhabit it. This fascinated us all. The other question was how to tell lichen from moss. Sean discussed this with Jacquie in order to tell Edward how to remember which is which. Edward *did* remember as he told us all before he went home.

We all enjoy our work parties, it's great to stand back and see the results of our labour. Other people labour more than I manage and now you all know I'm getting old - that's my excuse for 'resting' or admiring the effects of everyone else's work.

Margaret Malley



Rowena Langston

Sean, Edward and Charlotte tackling gorse, last autumn

Waiting for the weather to decide what it would do. The people that make decisions must have had a headache or two. At long last, the chosen Fen was decided: Hinderclay. As this was my favourite Fen I felt the weather had lost and I had won.

The task for the day was scrub clearing - we tugged and cut all the little seedlings that showed their heads. Edward, our youngest volunteer today arrived, I'm not sure if Mum and Sean bring Edward or he brings them! He doesn't waste any time getting started, so off they went with clippers in hand.

My turn now to sort out the much-needed drinks and, contrary to what the Wednesday work party says, we Sunday people do earn our bread and cake and, sometimes even Laura's rock cakes! Because I had reached my big 80 on that Saturday I decided on a few 'specials' to celebrate, a trip to Mr Morrisons did the trick and all was set. I put out the cups and had to stop everything from blowing away. We soon ate up the goodies, had our drinks and chat, then everyone went back to work, except me. I cleared up the results of our feast and hoped I hadn't forgotten anything.

Now Edward had questions for his Mum and Sean and, of course, the rest of us. At the last work party he learned the difference between push and pull with a saw, Sean carefully making sure that all was safe. I think Sean should have a class for the oldies like me

## Earth, air, fire and water

- all the elements were present in abundance at these winter Wednesday work parties



This bonfire will have to be moved!

Reg Langston

By the end it was really unpleasant and I'm not sure anyone could be paid to do this, especially when Len fell flat on his face in it. Alas - no cameras!

Reg Langston

Photos can't do justice to the mud at Bettys Fen where the mid-week group spent 3 sessions burning brush.



Reg Langston

## New Year's Day walk: fun in the (rare) sun!

On a warm, sunny Sunday in January a group of thirty-ish keen individuals aged between 4 and 80, five border collies and one terrier enjoyed the annual winter walk in the valley. Richard Young from Suffolk Wildlife Trust was our guide across Redgrave and Lopham Fen, pointing out the volunteers' recent scrub clearance and the beautiful Dartmoor ponies which usually graze in Dunwich Forest.



Bev Blackburn



## Three years of progress, funded by the Lottery

Mike Harding takes stock of what's been done – and how

### In January 2011, LOHP started a very diverse project supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

The project would buy and restore wetland on what was to be called Webb's Fen in Thelnetham, together with restoration work on Broomscot Common and Scarfe Meadows, both in Garboldisham. We also added a huge variety of activities which gave people the chance to get involved and to learn about these and the other sites managed by LOHP.

### All the parts linked up

We aimed to link all of these activities together so that one supported another, like the spider's web on the front page. It looked great in the grant application but proved more difficult in reality with some elements getting rather behind. But we had a lot of fun and we accomplished a huge amount.

Here are some of the things we managed to do:

- ◆ Webb's Fen is a fine, developing wetland, as is Scarfe Meadows, and Broomscot once again a beautiful heath.
- ◆ Anyone can now visit the sites and there is plenty of information about them on the web site.
- ◆ We have published 11 of these newsletters telling everyone in the villages about the valley and its wildlife.
- ◆ Our work parties have expanded so that more people are helping to conserve more wildlife.
- ◆ We arranged four super guided walks and a whole range of small events to celebrate the valley. We held our 10-year anniversary celebration on the Frith.
- ◆ The LOHP oral history volunteers recorded nearly 25 interviews gathering fascinating memories of the valley.
- ◆ We have built an archive of information and history about the valley. Research on local history has given us insights into how the valley and the river used to be managed.
- ◆ Garboldisham and Hopton Primary Schools have done some fantastic work based on their local sites and we hope to carry on working with them.
- ◆ The Creative Group, supported by the Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts in Norwich, produced a wide range of wonderful artwork, and exhibited it in the project area. The Group hopes to continue.
- ◆ LOHP is now better equipped, better trained and with more people helping than at any time in its past. It has a bright and rosy future and is already planning new work.

My role in all of this? To keep the wheels oiled, keep the machine working and keep LOHP and the HLF happy. I was the project coordinator. When I was feeling a little too grand I might have called myself the Project Manager, (although it was mostly unmanageable) or General Factotum when I was being more realistic. Over the last three years I have seen three lovely sites set on course for a wildlife-rich future, met and worked with some lovely people, and spent a satisfying amount of other people's money.

### Lucky fens - and lucky us

I was reminded constantly of what a rare and special place this is, with a range of sites that very few in Britain have on their doorsteps. Sally Mills, one of the creative group, summed it up perfectly when she said "The fens are what we have. This is our thing". I was also reminded of how lucky the fens are to have such a great bunch of people to look after them.

Mike Harding



The Heritage Lottery Fund is one of the four bodies set up to distribute funds raised by the National Lottery. They give grants to projects which look after our heritage (and their interpretation of what heritage is can be very broad), or to organisations who want people to learn about or celebrate their heritage. You can find out more about HLF and the projects they support at [www.hlf.org.uk](http://www.hlf.org.uk).



*Peter Hughes*  
The source of the Little Ouse - tamed into a straight, dug ditch

We reached the far side of Redgrave and Lopham Fen, and the area where maps show the source of the Waveney, although at this point the 'source' is little more than a straight ditch, probably dug at some point for drainage purposes. Across the road on the Frith, the source of the Little Ouse looks very similar.

Jo Pitt told us a little of The Frith's history, including that it was ploughed up for farming after the second world war. When this proved

unsuccessful it was used as a slurry dump. This has resulted in an ongoing project for the volunteers to clear nettles! Then on to The Lows where we learnt about the variety of flora and fauna.

A lovely, educational time was had by all!

Bev Blackburn



*Bev Blackburn*

**Membership application  
(not renewals)**

Name:

Address:

Postcode:

Phone:

E-mail:

I wish to support the LOHP as a . . . .

Ordinary member:	£2 a year	
Friend of the Fens:	£10 min a year	
Junior member:	25p. a year	

Please tick one category and write the amount paid for Friend of the Fens. Cheques payable to 'Little Ouse Headwaters Project', please.

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.



Signed:.....  
Dated:.....

Registered Charity No: 1098232

**Note on membership renewals:**  
All renewals are due in April. We send out a letter to all members. Please don't use this form to renew your membership.



**Contact the LOHP**  
**Email:** 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)  
**Newsletter editor:**  
 Nicky Rowbottom 01502 578470

**The LOHP needs you!**  
 The LOHP relies on volunteers to run the charity and help with conservation (and other) work. Might you have some energy and some time? If so we'd love to hear from you. To get involved, and for more info, send an email to [enquiries@lohp.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@lohp.org.uk) or ring: **Bev Blackburn**, Volunteer Coordinator and Event Manager on 07747 691285 or **Pete Fox** on 07500 044587.

**Work parties / Events**  
 Get out and enjoy yourself whatever the weather at a LOHP work party or event. Work parties monthly on Sundays (dates below) and weekly on Wednesdays.

**6 Apr Digging Thistles – The Lows**  
**Date changed to avoid SWT plant sale at R&L Fen**

**11 May No work party** this month, bird nesting season

**?? June Bird ringing demonstration, Hinderclay Fen**  
 (date/time to be confirmed, dependent on weather, see website or contact Reg/Nigel)

**13 July Mowing/raking – Hinderclay Fen**

**10 Aug Mowing/raking – Blo' Norton Fen**

Check details on the website or ring for information:  
**Reg & Rowena Langston** 01379 898009 (Broomscot)  
**Jo-Anne Pitt** 01379 898684 (Blo' Norton)  
**Nigel Clark** 01379 890460 (Hinderclay)

**CPRE\* NORFOLK ANNIVERSARY GUIDED WALK**  
**The Little Ouse Fens in Spring**  
**Sunday 4th May 2 p.m.**  
 As a CPRE Norfolk Award winner, the LOHP will be helping celebrate CPRE's 80th anniversary with a guided walk. Starting from Parkers Piece, this is a free event. Walks of differing lengths will be available.  
**Booking essential see [www.cprenorfolk.org.uk](http://www.cprenorfolk.org.uk) or phone 07826 401506**  
 Car parking available. Dogs on short leads welcome. Stout footwear and clothing appropriate to the weather. Thelnetham Windmill will be open to visitors in the afternoon. Check LOHP website for details.  
 \*Campaign to Protect Rural England

**Suffolk Walking Festival - Challenge Walk**  
 Diss to Knettishall. 8 hours/16 miles, passing through LOHP sites. Wednesday 21st May. Start 9 a.m. (£15)  
 See <http://suffolkwalkingfestival.co.uk/category/discover-suffolk-challenge-walk/>

**Poos on the Ouse - otter!**  
 This was Arthur Rivett's lucky day. He found a beautiful splurge of otter droppings (known as spraint) beside the river just after the digging work finished last autumn. The otters are obviously enjoying the clear, flowing water.



Arthur Rivett