

News from the Ouse



Little Ouse
Headwaters
Project

Conservation & Community

Ellie Beach - a new face in the Fens

Our new Conservation Manager, Ellie Beach, started work in February. Her three-year post is generously funded by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation. Ellie takes over from Pete Fox, who has done a great job for us since last summer. Pete remains an LOHP Trustee, and we wish him well for his season monitoring breeding waders in the Broadland marshes.

For the LOHP's new Conservation Manager, coming to work here is a return to her roots. Born in Norfolk, near to the Broads, Ellie is delighted to be able to work for a project where she has at least one foot in her native county.

Enthusiastic about wetlands

Fascinated by nature from a very early age, Ellie's degree combined ecology with agricultural biology.

This mixture of studies has stood her in good stead for her career in conservation management. During her course, she spent an unpaid year's placement with English Nature (now Natural England) in the Broads, where she discovered a deep love of wetlands and realised, 'This is what I want to be doing!' She relished working outdoors and loved the mixture of species monitoring and practical conservation work. 'It was really satisfying,' she said, 'to be able to see your day's work making such a positive difference to a piece of land.'

Honing her skills in Hertfordshire

Short term posts on the North Norfolk coast and then in the Lea Valley Regional Park led to a full-time job with the Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust, running their bittern conservation project, then as a Reserves Officer. For seven years she worked for the Trust, managing wetland sites, before joining Hertfordshire County Council's Countryside Management Service. *(continued on p2)*



Don Davis

Help us to help him

We have the chance to buy and restore two lovely hedged meadows - vital pieces in our local wetland jigsaw - perfect habitat for yellowhammers, whose numbers have declined by 56% in the last five decades. *See p3*

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Rowena Langston



Who's looking at you?

Photographer Martin Phillips caught this striking image on camera. *See p6*

Sponsor-an-acre scheme going well

Find details of our Sponsor an Acre scheme on page 7, along with an inserted application form.



We are very grateful to the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation for their generous support. They funded our Conservation Manager post over its first 18 months and are now continuing their support for the next three years.

(Continued from page 1)

Here she specialised in land management, across a wide range of sites and habitat types - writing site management plans, organising which tasks could be done by volunteers and which needed contractors, and filling in grant applications to secure funding for habitat management. She also worked with parish councils and landowners, and helped farmers apply

The LOHP's new logo

Martin Phillips, LOHP volunteer and a member of the Creative Fen Group, describes the process of designing the new look.

The new logo is designed to raise the profile and recognition of LOHP as an important local and regional charity.

LOHP workshops, events and the Creative Fen Group helped me gain the knowledge to design an effective new logo.

I used simplified elements from the old logo, combined with new ideas and colours. The curves to the tops of the logotype reflect the bend of fen reeds.

In the coming months, I hope to help develop the design style for LOHP as part of the communications team.

for government subsidies within environment-friendly farming schemes. 'The job was very wide-ranging,' she said, 'As well as all the land management work, I ran public events and guided walks: a particularly popular one was when we invited people to come and meet the cows!'

Unusual grazing animals

It was during Ellie's time with the Wildlife Trust that she had the idea of introducing water buffalo onto the wetlands at Rye Meads. This proved not only highly successful for the habitats, but also very popular with visitors, who loved seeing the massive animals enjoying the wet grazing.

Great time to start a new job

Ellie missed working on wetlands and she has long been keen to come back to Norfolk to live and work. She therefore sees the LOHP job as a superb opportunity to combine all that she loves best. 'Reading up about the LOHP's work, before I applied,' she said, 'I couldn't believe how much had been achieved by volunteers. It's amazing. I really wanted to get involved and see how I could help the project achieve its aspirations. Now I've started the job, I've been very struck by what a lovely little suite of wetlands this is, all strung together in a comparatively small area. It's been great to start to get to know the sites at this time of year, too. Although it's

A water vole came to greet Ellie on her fourth day of work. She hadn't seen one for years. Now she has her sights set on an otter. Somehow I don't think it will be long!



a bit wintry, the bare trees make it easy to see the shape of things, and it will be exciting to see the seasons from the start of the year.'

Looking forward to monitoring...

Ellie is impressed with the quantity and quality of the LOHP's habitat and species monitoring programmes. Her MSc research project centred on citizen science projects, with a special focus on riverflies, so she will feel quite at home with the LOHP's planned scheme described on page 5.

...and looking forward to meeting you

The project's sites are already making an impression on Ellie, 'I can see why so many people love these places,' she said, 'and for anyone who doesn't yet know them - you have a treat in store. Do come and explore them - and, if you'd like to, get involved!'

Nicky Rowbottom

Valuable links with school

In science ...

In December, Mr Langston brought some barn owl pellets into Garboldisham School for Beech Tree Class to study. The children used sharp knives and kebab skewers to dissect them, sorted the bones into groups, and identified them. It turned out that



the main diet of the owl was wood mouse, but common shrews and field voles were also present. The children fixed the bones onto card to make an interesting classroom display.

Every child, even those who were squeamish to begin with, thoroughly enjoyed this lesson.

In the warmer weather, we will be working outside again with the LOHP. Beech Tree Class will be looking at the local environment and how it has changed. Mr Langston will bring in his soil corer for us to investigate how the soils, particularly round Broomscot Common, have built up and how this may have affected farming practices.

... and art ...

Local artist and Garboldisham School governor, Rosemary Humphries, continues to support the school in

many ways. Cherry Tree Class are going to be looking at her paintings of the Little Ouse landscape and comparing them with photographs of the area.

Once again, everyone at Garboldisham School would like to thank Mr Langston, Rosemary and all of the other LOHP volunteers who come in to help us.

Alison Nightingale and Carol McGahan



We're appealing for something very precious - please donate



Arthur Rivett

Common blue butterflies

As many of you will know, the first few miles of the Little Ouse – the Headwaters – is a very special place, home to thousands of species of plants, insects, birds and mammals. Wetland habitats, where these species can thrive, were drained at a rate of 1,000 square kilometres a year in the middle of the 19th century, and this dramatic decline continued in the 20th Century. Valley fens like ours, and many of the species they support, are particularly rare - the Little Ouse and Waveney headwaters have the largest remaining area of this precious habitat in Britain.

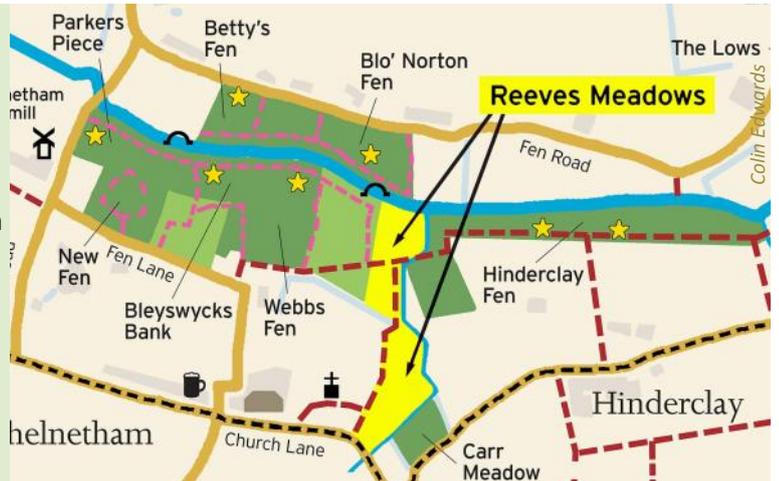
Help needed

With your help we can make our area even more special, today and for generations to come. We've always been dedicated to making space for nature to thrive, at the same time opening up the countryside along the Little Ouse River so that everyone can enjoy it. Bigger areas benefit more wildlife, and having continuous wild areas helps animals, birds and insects move around the area and establish sustainable populations.

Making strong connections

We now have a unique opportunity to make an even bigger and better-connected area for wildlife, by buying

and restoring Reeves Meadows, which run from Thelnetham's historic and secluded church down to the river and fens. The meadows are one of the most important remaining links in our chain of sites along the river, reuniting Hinderclay Fen with the complex of nine wildlife sites that comprise Thelnetham and Blo' Norton Fens.



Contains Ordnance Survey data

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Helping habitats and access

As well as benefitting our existing sites, Reeves Meadows themselves have lovely hedges and are a hunting ground for barn owls. We plan to restore wildflower grassland with water courses rich in dragonflies and water voles. At the same time, we'll make the meadows a gateway to the valley, so that local people and visitors can enjoy improved access to the Angles Way long-distance path and the network of paths around our fens, heaths and woods.

How to donate

We need to raise over £140,000 to buy and restore Reeves Meadows. Every donation, large or small, will play an important part in helping us reach our goal. We hope to get grants

from other charities and organisations, but donations from individuals are our most valued form of support. To donate please visit www.lohp.org.uk/support-us/reeves-meadows-appeal or

Brimstone butterfly



Arthur Rivett

send a cheque (made out to the Little Ouse Headwaters Project) to Membership Officer, Sue Lawrence, 22 Back Hills, Botesdale, Diss IP22 1DW. Thank you for your support.

Bob Hayward



Arthur Rivett

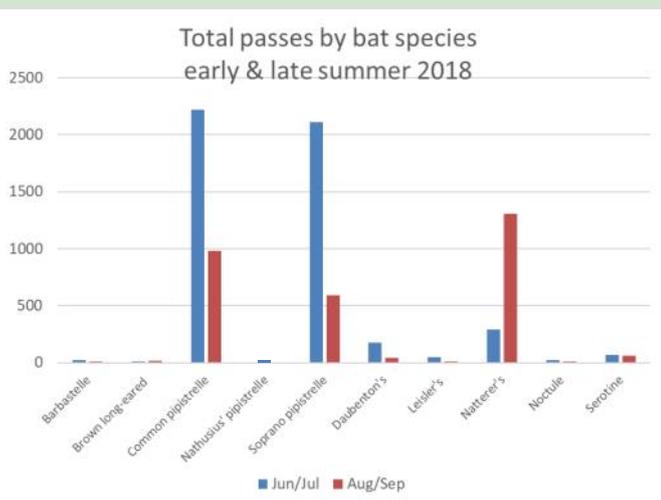
The future at Reeves Meadows? Cowslips - once as common as buttercups - survive in small numbers in Reeves Meadows. With the right management, they will become abundant again.

Bats on LOHP sites in 2018

The LOHP has been participating in the bat survey run by the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) since 2015, using special equipment to record the sounds made by bats as they fly past.

The BTO analyse the recordings, quantifying the number of flight passes by each bat species or group of species - it is not always possible to identify every call, so some are assigned to a group or pair of similar species. We now have a network of eight recording locations on LOHP sites. The number of passes gives an indication of activity rather than necessarily the number of bats.

In 2018, the recorder was put out for one night at each of the eight locations in June/July, and again in August/September, so there were two recording nights per location. The graph below shows all the species identified, together with the number of passes recorded, by species, in early and late summer 2018. Common and soprano



Total number of passes recorded of identified bat species in early and late summer 2018, at the eight recording sites

pipistrelle and Natterer's bats were most frequently recorded, with much lower records for the other species. These findings are similar to those for 2017. The early summer peak for common and soprano pipistrelles is probably associated with activity around the maternity colonies.

We think the Natterer's bats probably breed in the bat boxes as we often find clusters of them when we check the boxes in the autumn. The August/September peak for Natterer's is probably young bats flying with the adult females.

Most of the species recorded are widespread. However, Barbastelle is one of Britain's rarest bats, so, whilst we are finding only low levels of activity, it is exciting that we are recording them regularly on LOHP sites. Barbastelle colonies are not very big and they move around a lot from roost to roost. The old trees with holes, cracks and loose bark are very important roosting sites for them.

Rowena Langston and Arthur Rivett



Natterer's bats probably breed in our bat boxes



Barbastelle—one of Britain's rarest bats

Snippets.....

Starlings find a good performance space at Webbs Fen

LOHP has had its own murmuration of starlings on several occasions this winter. Up to 1200-1500 birds have performed a synchronised aerial display over Webbs Fen



Bev Blackburn

before descending as one to roost among the reeds on or near Blo' Norton Fen. Bev Blackburn caught them on camera during one afternoon in December.

A new pond on the Common

We found that the original pond on Broomscot Common was acting as a trap for silt, washed down from the fields crossed by Broomscot Common's ditch. A new pond was therefore dug and the old pond adapted to make a more efficient silt trap. A new dipping platform will be built in the summer so that school parties can carry on pond dipping in a silt-free pond.



Pete Fox

Stop for a coffee?

I've never liked coffee, but for the first time I felt I was really missing out when I went to chat with Philip, who runs Café Piccolo, and was serving, from his tardis-like tiny van, wonderful concoctions of varieties of steaming coffee.

Philip has recently set up on Sundays 10-3 at Redgrave and Lopham Fen, next to the Education Centre, following his partner Edward's success at Knettishall Heath, on Fridays as well as at weekends. It was a wonderful cold frosty day and he was very busy with all the people who had come out to stretch their legs with both two- and four-legged companions. Everyone was appreciating the good



quality hot coffee and a possible pastry - whilst enjoying nature all around them.

Philip explained that his aim is to serve the best possible coffee in beautiful surroundings, whilst committing to try to buy locally and ethically.

He told me that all the disposable cups are compostable.

If, like me, you don't like coffee, don't despair, as he has 14 different types of tea, and one of his customers told me that his hot chocolate was the best she had ever drunk. As Redgrave and Lopham Fen and

Knettishall Heath are so close to the LOHP sites, I would highly recommend you call in after your walk - I'm sure you won't be disappointed.

Check times and places at <https://en.gb.facebook.com/cafepiccolosuffolk/>

Sue Lawrence

Riverflies reveal water health

Volunteering with LOHP has given Reg Grainger the chance to learn much more about life under water.

Having spent most of my childhood and adult life wading and exploring waterways, fishing and increasing my knowledge of life in the water, I jumped at the chance of a riverfly monitoring workshop to help me to understand more about fly life in the Little Ouse, where I volunteer.

Learning from anglers

The workshop was conducted by the Anglers' Riverfly Monitoring Initiative (ARMI), presented jointly by Ben Fitch, Riverfly Monitoring Initiative Project Manager, and tutor, Ian Hawkins, Fisheries & Conservation Officer, Bury St Edmunds Trout Club. It was held at The Grange, Great Cressingham, as it

has easy access to the River Wissey, which is in excellent condition with extensive fly life and invertebrates.

Biosecurity

There was a good mix of both classroom and practical sessions, which included the importance of biosecurity, that is, the need to ensure there is no of transfer of non-native plant or waterborne species between sites. This certainly emphasised the importance of cleaning equipment in any type of water activities such as canoeing etc.

Sampling scientifically

The practical session involved wading in the river with a sample net, and collecting samples of fly life within a given time span in different parts of the river. The samples were collected in buckets and taken back to the classroom for species identification.

Vulnerable to pollution

We were monitoring for caddis flies, upwing flies (*otherwise known as mayflies, Ed.*), stoneflies and freshwater shrimp; other species such as snails and small fish collected were not counted. Having divided the samples into their species these were counted and recorded. These are the first species to be affected by any type of pollution in the water.

Bringing it home to the Little Ouse

The three sampling kits provided to the LOHP can now be used to assist in the collation of data on the online

Blue-winged olive mayfly. *Mayfly nymphs emerge throughout the late spring and summer. The initial winged form, the dun, moults again to become an adult.*



Ian Hawkins

database, and monitoring should be carried out once a month if possible, to monitor the health of the river continually.

It was a very well run and informative course and I can't wait to get my waders on in the Little Ouse!

Reg Grainger

Putting it into practice

In December, Reg Grainger and Pete Fox identified 2 sections of river, one at Scarfe Meadows the other at Hinderclay Fen, that are suitable for the Riverfly monitoring. Now Ellie Beach is in post, Ian Hawkins, a Riverfly trainer, will come and give a short refresher to the trained volunteers, and regular monitoring will be carried out at least six times a year.



Ian Hawkins

Ponds - ghostly and ghastly!

Laura Cox describes the 2018 AGM

“What a wonderful, friendly, fun, informative and culinary delight of an evening!

Grateful thanks to Jo Pitt

Once the official business was dealt with, Jo Pitt was warmly thanked for all her amazing hard work over the years as a Trustee, and received an atmospheric photo, by Arthur Rivett, of Blo’ Norton Fen.

Norfolk’s thousands of ponds

We were then treated to a top class talk by Dr Carl Sayer, full of humour and wit, and crammed with extraordinary and fascinating facts about Norfolk Ponds, ‘ghostly’ and ‘ghastly’, as he termed them. For example, did you know that once



Rowena Langston and Jo Pitt

Arthur Rivett

upon a time there were at least 23,000 ponds on agricultural land in Norfolk? Some were made when marl (lime) was dug out and some were for animals to drink from. If you see a clump of trees in a field, or a slight dip in the land, or slightly darker vegetation, that might well be the residue of an old pond, long since scrubbed-over. But they can be

found and restored, as Carl showed, and brought back to life, with a wealth of living things – plants, flowers, birds, insects, pond creatures and much more. And all because he used to fish for a species of carp as a child, where he lived! I shall always be scanning the horizon now, for possible evidence of long-lost pond habitats with enthusiasm and awe.

Seasonal cheer

The Creative Fen Group’s exhibition was more than enough to delight the senses; the food was fab, too, thanks to the many people who brought lovely things to eat, savoury, sweet and downright naughty, and mulled wine and juice. I shall remember the evening, with affection, laughter, friendship and learning.”

Laura Cox

Art exhibition - 2018 and 2019

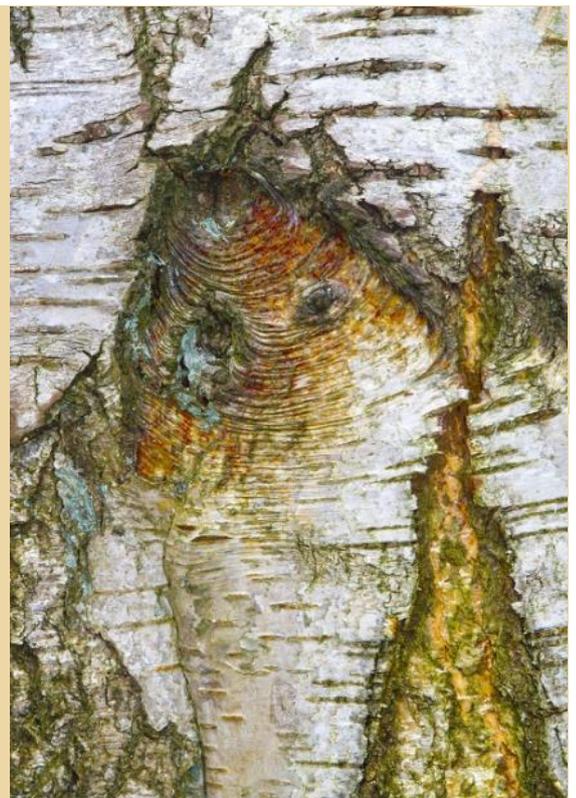
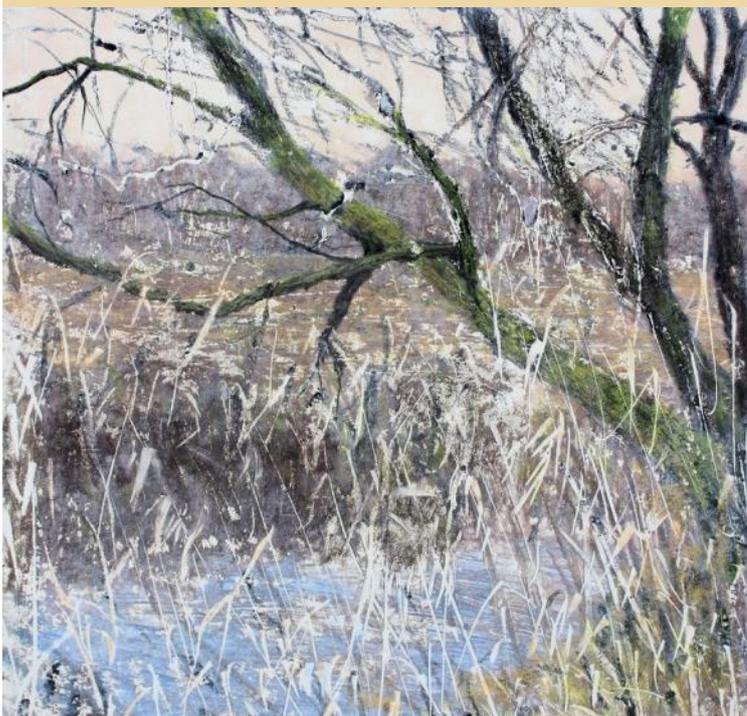
The Creative Fen Group held their first exhibition at The Fox Community pub in Garboldisham last November. The aim was not only to promote our art work, but also to show the work of the LOHP and the

interest that Garboldisham School is taking in our local area.

The Exhibition also helped to advertise the pub, whose takings for the weekend were up by £300.

Pictures and cards depicting life on the fen, using watercolour, photography, textiles and lino cuts were sold.

Gillian Crossley-Holland, Thelnetham Fen in January



Martin Phillips’ subtle study of birch bark

Come and see us in 2019!

Our next exhibition - again at The Fox - will be held over the weekend of May 17-19th. The exhibition will run from Friday morning (tea and cakes available) through to Sunday. Refreshments will be available at the pub all weekend, with Souvlaki Shack Street food on Saturday 5.30 - 8.30.

Sally Mills

Winter Walk

A winter walk with the LOHP is a great way to chase away the end-of-year blues. Reg and Shirley Grainger describe this year's walk led by Rob Webb.



LOHP's walk routes are not just through the countryside, they take in villages too

Anyone driving along the main road through South Lopham on the last Sunday morning of 2018, may have thought that the locals were all desperate for more festive cheer at the White Horse, but in fact we were gathering for the LOHP Winter Walk.

Around 60 people and half a dozen dogs set off, led by South Lopham footpath warden, Rob Webb, whose local knowledge entertained us along the way with stories of the history of both Lophams. Who knew how important the growing of flax and weaving of linen was to the local economy in Victorian times? Queen Victoria herself was known to wear linen garments originating from the Lophams.

The walk was over green lanes, footpaths and byways, which had mostly been opened to the public by the parish council and local landowners over the last 25 years, including the planting of several trees. Although a little sticky in places, the going was easy and the rather unseasonably warm day allowed us to work up a thirst for a refreshing drink and bowl of soup in the pub afterwards.

Our thanks to Bev for organising this lovely walk.

Reg and Shirley Grainger

Meetings with otters?

Have you ever had a close encounter with an otter?

Meg Amsden of the Suffolk Otter Group is putting together a collection of recordings of people telling their otter-related stories to use in an exhibition. She is keen to hear from anyone who would like to share their story.

Contact Meg on megamsden3@gmail.com

A creative way to give

Formed in 2002, the LOHP manages about 175 acres of fens, heaths, meadows and woodland.

Each acre costs more than £120 a year to look after and we need a regular income for this, in addition to project grants and membership subscriptions.

Could you give regular help?

Existing members and non-members, businesses and individuals are all equally welcome to become sponsors. Sponsorship costs £120 a year or £10 a month, by standing order. You can, of course, sponsor more than one acre.

If you wish, your name can appear in future newsletters, as a thank you for your commitment to the LOHP and to our environment. The LOHP is dedicated to restoring and conserving land neighbouring the Little Ouse, for the local community - both now and for future generations.

Our many dedicated volunteers give essential time, energy and labour to help maintain the land, but it does need dedicated money as well. Sponsorship for yourself - or as a gift - will give you the satisfaction of continually helping to care for a very special area of our countryside.

To become a sponsor: Please complete the enclosed form and send it to Edward Coales (Treasurer) at the address on the form.

Grateful thanks to all our sponsors, including those willing to be listed below:

Cyprium Motorsport Systems Ltd, Redgrave
 John and Belinda Sears, Garboldisham
 Dr Adam and Olivia Stone, Wortham
 English Electric Motor Co, Redgrave
 Peter Frizzell Ltd, South Lopham
 Andrew Dickson Ltd, Rickingham
 Mr Euan Sutherland, Banham
 Mr John Wallace, Coney Weston
 Andrew Aves, Hinderclay
 Mrs Paddy Richards, Wortham
 Dr Tim Cooke, Wattisfield
 Dr Dianne Creasy, Blo' Norton
 Starwing Brewery, Redgrave.

Who are our sponsors - and why?

John Wallace farms land in Thelnetham and is based in Coney Weston, where he's approaching his 52nd harvest. In 2008, with his business partner, Andrew Daniels, he formed Wallace Daniels Ltd which undertakes contract farming in South Norfolk and North Suffolk. He writes:

'The LOHP came to my notice when walking with my family in Thelnetham. It is a fascinating place and watching it and the various management prescriptions being used, adds to my understanding of how such areas should be treated - and if possible be added to - as wildlife havens and for flood mitigation.

As someone who is involved with two agricultural charities, I am also impressed by the way that the trustees have found funding elsewhere to support the project.'

Membership application

(not renewals)

Name:

Address:

Postcode:

Phone:

E-mail:

I wish to support the LOHP as a:

Friend of the Fens: £10 min a year

Ordinary member: £5 a year

Junior member: (<18 years) £1 a year

Please tick one category and write the amount donated below.

I wish to donate £..... to the LOHP.

Please make cheques payable to the *Little Ouse Headwaters Project*.

We can reclaim the basic rate of tax that you have paid on the gross equivalent of your donation so, for example, a membership payment of £10 is worth £12.50 to us. Therefore, if you are a UK taxpayer, we would be very grateful if you would Gift Aid your subscription by simply completing the Gift Aid section, and date and sign this form.

I want to Gift Aid the above donation to the LOHP

Please treat as Gift Aid donations all qualifying gifts of money made today and in the future.

I am a UK Taxpayer and understand that if I pay less Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax in the current year than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations to charities, it is my responsibility to pay any difference.

I understand the Little Ouse Headwaters Project will reclaim 25p of tax on every £1 that I give.

Signature:..... Date:.....

Please notify the LOHP if you: 1) wish to cancel this declaration, 2) change your name or home address, or 3) no longer pay sufficient tax on your income and/or capital gains. If you pay income tax at the higher or additional rate and you want to receive the additional tax relief due to you, you must include all your Gift Aid donations on your Self-Assessment tax return or ask HM Revenue and Customs to adjust your tax code.

The basis in law for LOHP holding your personal data is Legitimate Interest.

Note on renewals: All renewals are due in April. We

send a letter to all members. *Please don't use this form to renew your membership.*

A big thank you to all those members who send donations along with their renewals. We greatly appreciate this extra support for the work we're doing to enhance the valley and its wildlife.



The mark of responsible forestry

Newsletter printed by www.reflex-litho.co.uk

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 time? If so, we'd love to hear from you.

To get involved, and for more information, contact **Bev Blackburn**, Volunteer Coordinator and Event Manager at: beverly.blackburn@lohp.org.uk or 07747 691285, or **Nick Lingwood**, Hon. Secretary on: 07772 769025.

Work parties

Get out and enjoy yourself - whatever the weather - at an LOHP work party or event. Work parties are monthly on Sundays (dates below) and weekly on Wednesdays. *Please check website/email circulation for details and location which may change, depending on the weather.*

- Sun Apr 7** Seasonal work Place to be confirmed
- Sun May 12** Seasonal work Place to be confirmed
- Sun Jun 9** Search and find flowers on New Fen, Thelnetham.

Sunday work parties start at 10.30. Please check website or your emails for up-to-date details.

Sunday work party contact: Bev Blackburn 07747 91285
Wednesday contact: Reg Langston 01379 898009



LOHP on Facebook & Twitter

for news and great photos go to www.lohp.org.uk and click on the icons



Events

Apr 14th Look out for LOHP stall at SWT Plant Sale, Redgrave & Lopham Fen

May 5th 7.30 pm Evening chorus walk, led by Rob Fuller. Park opposite Thelnetham Windmill.

Aug 23rd 7.30 pm Thelnetham Bats and Fens walk led by Mark Smith - see website for details.

To contact the LOHP (Reg. charity no: 1098232)

Email: enquiries@lohp.org.uk

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

Phone: Ellie Beach on: 07919 912045

Website: www.lohp.org.uk

Newsletter editor: Nicky Rowbottom