

News from the Ouse

ISSUE NUMBER 21
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Get your boots on and get going!

Spring strolling

The LOHP manages an exciting series of sites along the upper Little Ouse valley. Many of these can be combined in a walk ideal to appreciate the flourishing of spring. Being a loop, this route can be accessed from a choice of starting points.



Parkers Piece

Riverside vegetation will be springing up, supporting appetites large and small, from cattle to sheep with lambs. Listen for the splash of water voles, and watch for the jewelled flash of a kingfisher darting along the river.



Blo' Norton

Across the bridge, turn through Betty's Fen, following the causeway with views over sedge and reeds. Then

alongside fen meadow strips - havens for rodents,



Common lizard seeking early sunshine

grass snakes, amphibians and insects - to rejoin the river past the sedge and wildflower-rich areas of Blo' Norton Fen.

Hinderclay

Return to Suffolk by the footbridge, around Old Fen then through alder carr to Hinderclay Fen. This tapestry of habitats spans drier woods to sedge-beds and lush meadow, then reed-beds ideal for birds. Not forgetting reptile-friendly sandier heath with gorse, heather, purple moor grass and much more.

A track leads south from Hinderclay Fen, then west by road to visit Carr Meadow, before passing the chalk spring at St Mary's Well.

Thelnetham

Returning by road, turn right past the church and around Old Fen. Pass alongside Webbs Fen, popular with waterfowl, and then through Oak Tree Fen. This recent addition has areas under restoration to fen meadow, older ponds and trees, including some hazel coppices.

Suffolk Wildlife Trust's Middle Fen flourishes with orchids and other flora. Neighbouring New Fen is under

Peacock butterfly sunning itself



WELCOME

to the newsletter of the Little Ouse Headwaters Project.

The land managed by the project is almost always open to people at all times and has restored our freedom in those special places to what our ancestors knew.

The weather will soon improve and what could be better than a walk in the tranquillity of real countryside, seeing nature awaken after winter.

There are many other ways to enjoy and be involved with the project, which is for the benefit of all and could not exist without volunteers and donations.

Read inside about the volunteering opportunities - to meet people of similar interests, have fun, and make a difference. We also need help with the less visible - admin tasks such as finance, accounting, marketing, publicity, social media, video, web & phone funding, and crowd funding.

Bob Hayward

Chair chair@lohp.org.uk

LOHP restoration, with fen vegetation recovering on the wetter ground and wildlife-friendly woodland on the drier western side.

Before returning to Parkers, the White Horse pub is nearby, and Thelnetham windmill may be open too.

Words and photos by Nick Lingwood

For a map - see www.lohp.org.uk/our-area/where-walk

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School achievements ... and plans

Under the guidance of LOHP volunteer Rosemary Humphries, Garboldisham Primary pupils had fun with home-made paint.

Beech Tree class were doing a project on the Mayan civilisation. We looked at how their artwork was created from what was available locally, and spent a merry half term experimenting with what is available here. This gave us a wonderful chance to talk about the issues. We made paints from blackberries (purple), onion skins (yellow), cochineal (red – and luckily the beetles do come from Mexico!) and kale/spinach for green. Making it thick was a challenge. Suggestions online included cornflour or ground sugar: cornflour made it thick but turned it pale - icing sugar worked well, but was very sticky. The kale/spinach was good but it went off and smelly very quickly! So we had great discussions about all this, and what to do when you can't just go and buy stuff. It also made us value what we used far more since we had worked

hard to produce it, rather than just buying it without thinking.

The children used the paints with sticks, on rolls of paper, and had enormous fun. Comment: 'It's smelly!' 'Well yes, it's not been processed/cleaned etc, which is why it's such fun to try it out!'

I made some egg tempera with cochineal. Its silky texture and how it dried with a sheen impressed them.

As ever, the children are a joy to work with, and I am inspired by what they think and say.

Rosemary Humphries



The pupils and teachers are looking forward to working with the LOHP during the Spring term.

LOHP volunteers will be helping to shape and cut back our willow arbour, a favourite feature on our playing field.

We are also delighted to be involved in a community project at Scarfe Meadows, to plant 420 saplings from the Woodland Trust. The planting should happen before Easter and will involve staff, children and families. We are looking forward to the woodland corridor being a resource for the school for many years to come.

Mr Jones, Rowan Tree class teacher, is leading the school in collecting 'green points' from the Woodland Trust. We have already earned both Bronze and Silver awards and are now surging towards a Gold Award. The tree planting will help towards this award, as will Rowan Tree class's writing and drawing about their regular visits to the local area for their Outdoor Education sessions.

Carol McGahan

Ramblings

Many of you know the LOHP sites well, but do you know the other attractions in this lovely valley? This edition's topic for review is teashops and cafes in the vicinity (such a difficult job!).

Wortham tea shop is on the common along the A143, next to the village shop/post office. It is licensed and has a comprehensive menu including homemade cakes, snacks and main meal specials. One of our favourites is the homemade quiche with wedges, coleslaw and salad - delish! In winter, they are closed on Tuesdays.



Wortham tea shop

Blo' Norton

Next up is **The Beehive coffee shop**, part of the Dutch Barn Nursery in Blo' Norton. The premises are licensed and the menu includes soup, jacket potatoes and toasties, plus homemade cakes (yum). There is a tea garden for warm, sunny days - plus the distraction of the nurseries and gift shops. It's closed on Tuesdays (but best to check).



The Beehive

Hopton

Lastly for this session, we visited **The Well** in Hopton, run by friendly volunteers from High Street Chapel, who enjoy providing a meeting place for everyone. It's housed in a beautifully renovated building which

has been a butcher's shop in the past. It's open Thursday to Saturday, serving lovely soup, quiche (in



The Well

summer), pasties and homemade cakes and a good selection of teas and coffees. There are a couple of tables outside, along with a doggy water bowl for our four-legged friends.

Village shops - local produce

If it's a sunny day suitable for a picnic (and we have to make the most of them!), why not try some of the superb local produce which can be found in the village shops in Hopton, Wortham, Redgrave or Garboldisham.

Sue Lawrence and Bev Blackburn

Walks, work parties and a way with words

Judith Tooth talks to LOHP's new honorary secretary, Nick Lingwood.

It was a damp and misty new year's morning when Nick Lingwood joined his first LOHP walk five years ago. He was interested in walking, but hadn't thought of getting his hands dirty. Then he heard mention of work parties, caught sight of the newsletter ... and the following month he found himself at Broomscot Common with a group of volunteers. Now he's the project's new honorary secretary.

Friendly atmosphere

'First of all, it was Sundays each month, but now I come to the weekly Wednesday work parties too,' he says. 'What I enjoy, first and foremost, are the people and the atmosphere: it's especially friendly, welcoming and relaxed, and there's a lot of humour. Then it's about having a connection to the sites and learning about the mix of habitats.'

Understanding deepened through training

Then came an opportunity to take part in identification workshops, and what Nick learned made him look for and at things more: his appreciation for the sites grew and he understood what made them special and how they fitted together. Training on assessing sites for management plans followed, looking at ground levels and water flows and taking soil cores on Oak Tree Fen*. Sharing specialist information with volunteers in this way further developed Nick's appreciation.

Favourite sites?

'As well as the work on Oak Tree Fen, I really enjoyed helping the restoration work at New Fen, where a huge amount of volunteer involvement, some combined with Suffolk Wildlife Trust, was

needed. Hinderclay Fen is a favourite site because there's such variety - birch wood, fen meadow, reedbed and short heath - in a small area. I also particularly like Broomscot Common, where we joined with Norfolk Wildlife Trust on a wildlife surveyors' programme. It's special because you might think it's just short grass and gorse, but, with training to assess the site, you discover a wealth of plants, and appreciate the knowledge and enthusiasm everyone has brought to it. Now as a trustee and honorary secretary of LOHP, I'm looking forward to the challenge of learning and understanding more, and helping make decisions. It's good to help things continue.'

Walking and writing poetry

Working from home in IT support gives Nick, a medieval history graduate, the flexibility to choose his hours. Although he now spends more time volunteering on sites, he still enjoys walking. Inspired by his walks in the local landscape, and drawing on his growing knowledge of plants, he has discovered a talent for poetry, and has just published a

collection of poems, *Words for Things: Poems and Photographs*, written during the past 18 months.

The best words in the best order

Following the seasons, Nick gives new life to observations made on his walks: a small copper butterfly is 'A sunset shrunk to fit two little coins', while comma butterflies are '...awoken by the spring / To dance their warmest welcoming'. 'A dipping, bobbing, twisting course / You cannot help but be your name' he says of the pied wagtail, and of the crack willow: 'Willow which the parting winter splintered / Hangs from a rope of its twisted skin'.

After a particularly grey winter, the opening lines from his poem, *Awakening*, have a particular resonance:

'Green begin the hawthorn buds
And white the hawthorn blooms,
Gorse grows gold within its brush
And snowdrops melt anew.'

Judith Tooth

(*Oak Tree Fen is the recently named block of two small meadows and some woodland, between Webbs Fen, Bleyswycks Bank and Middle Fen. Ed.)



Judith Tooth

Nick at Hinderclay Fen

Dragonflies

Pam Taylor, Norfolk County Dragonfly Recorder, unravels some of the secrets of these remarkable animals.

Dragonflies are fantastic creatures; colourful, agile, delicate and ferocious all at the same time. Although most people won't know their individual identifications, everyone can delight in these insects of summer that dart and dance around our wetlands.

When to look

Here in Norfolk and Suffolk dragonflies can usually be seen from mid-April to November and sometimes even into early December. The first species to appear are Large Red Damselfly, Four-spotted Chaser and Hairy Dragonfly, although the last of these is a little more choosy than others about where it lives. From this point onwards the diversity of species builds until mid-summer and a good site can record over twenty species overall. By



Hairy Dragonfly

David Kitching

unpolluted water, in which to breed. Only a handful of species favour, or can be found in, faster flowing large watercourses such as rivers. That is why areas such as those surrounding the headwaters of the Little Ouse are so important. After mating, a female will fly off, either alone or still in tandem with the male, to lay her eggs. Large hawk-type dragonflies and damselflies insert their eggs individually into plant material, soft wood or similar substances, next to or in water. Chasers,

The exact time varies from species to species, but can also be influenced by the surrounding temperature and availability of food. One species of dragonfly, the Golden-ringed, is found predominantly in the north and west of Britain, including Scotland, and has been recorded spending up to seven years as a larva, although five years is more usual.

Moulting and growth

Once hatched, the larval form can only grow by shedding its outer case (exoskeleton) and replacing it with a new, larger version. This is initially formed under the old case, then expanded and hardened once the old exoskeleton is discarded. The moulting process happens ten to fourteen times before the larva is ready to emerge as an adult. At each moult, the wings in their individual



Large Red Damselfly - female

Autumn the skies will be dominated by Migrant Hawkets and Common Darters, with just a few other species left over from the main flight season.

What's the difference?

'Dragonflies' is a collective term that includes both damselflies and true dragonflies. Damselflies are the more delicate, with pencil-thin bodies, eyes on the sides of the head and four equal wings held in line with the body at rest. True dragonflies are more robust, have eyes that meet on the top of the head and wings where the hind pair are broader than the forewings. They hold their wings outstretched at rest.

Where they breed

Most dragonflies and damselflies are reliant on still or slow-moving

skimmers and darters scatter their eggs directly into the water, or occasionally onto the saturated mud around the edges. If laid in spring or early summer, these eggs hatch into larvae within a few weeks. If laid later in the year, the eggs tend to over-winter before hatching the following spring.

Larvae

In general terms, damselfly species spend one to two years as larvae, while dragonflies are usually two to three years in the pond or dyke before emergence.



Emerald Damselfly - female

Peter Kitchener

Southern hawker - male



David Kitching

wing-cases develop a little more, but in all other features each larval stage resembles the one before - just bigger.

First flight

On emergence, the exoskeleton is shed for the final time. The adult dragonfly will then expand both its body and wings, before both harden and it is finally capable of flight. All species leave the wetland area after emergence to feed and mature, only returning when ready to breed themselves. How far they travel during this period depends on the species. Some will only travel a few metres, while others will go several miles. Some migratory species are even capable of crossing the North Sea.

Pam Taylor

(Note: We've used capital initial letters for the common names of these species to avoid confusion - so Common Blue Damselfly is a particular species as opposed to any one of a number of common, blue damselflies. Ed.)

Species to look out for locally:

- The narrow channel of the headwaters of the Little Ouse is the perfect place to see male **Banded Demoiselles** flashing their wings to attract the attention of females. Males also compete with each other by flying face-to-face and flashing their large blue wingspots at their opponent.
- Areas of fen make good hunting grounds for **Brown Hawkers** in the main months of summer.

- Search areas of reeds and shallow pools for damselflies such as **Large Red, Azure and Emerald Damselflies**.
- **Emperor Dragonfly** is our largest British species; highly territorial, the males don't tolerate rivals on their chosen patch of water.
- **Common Darters** soak up the warmth of the sun in late summer and autumn by basking on pale boardwalks and handrails.

Windmill opens its doors to all

Thelnetham windmill is a Grade II* tower mill, constructed in 1819 and rescued from dereliction during the 1980s. It is a working windmill and produces flour using traditional millstones and wind power. The mill is maintained and operated by a friendly, enthusiastic small group of volunteers who hold a working party each Tuesday.



Chris Mills

In addition to maintaining and operating the mill, this small group have made big improvements to the site and buildings. They have added a borehole, toilet, visitor centre, engine shed to house an old working Ruston Hornsby oil engine and a nearly-finished granary.

The mill is open to the public on open days, when volunteers give guided tours between 11am and 4pm.

They are looking for volunteers to take part in the various activities to maintain the buildings and grounds, to help with milling the flour, or on open days, to act as guides (for which training will be given), or to serve teas.

For more information on how to get involved to support this historic mill, visit www.thelnethamwindmill.org.uk or call in on any Tuesday for an informal chat.

Chris Mills

Open days in 2018

April 2nd	Easter Monday
May 7th	May Day + Peat Fest
May 13th	Sunday
May 28th	B/H Monday
June 17th	Sunday
July 15th	Sunday
Aug 27th	B/H Monday
Sept 16th	Sunday
Oct 14th	Sunday

A fen student

Will Eden spent nine weeks working as a short-term volunteer placement with the LOHP in the autumn. Here he reflects on his experiences.

Connecting to nature

I value the experience of working at LOHP with conservation manager Rob Martyr and the wonderfully enthusiastic volunteers at the Wednesday work parties. In a world with an abundance of bad news about the natural environment, it is very refreshing to see a project with a long-term vision, which links with the local community and the school in Garboldisham. The project gives people a connection to nature, and works to inspire a new generation of ecologists, conservationists, environmental scientists, and of course, LOHP volunteers.

Gaining new skills

During my time with the LOHP, I learnt many conservation and monitoring methods vital for managing this rare fenland ecosystem, such as how a certain number of grazing livestock in a certain area can be beneficial in enhancing the rich diversity of plant life. I saw, on LOHP sites, an example of small-scale animal agriculture being used for conservation. I learned, from the expertise of Mike Harding, how we can monitor the water table by installing a transect of dipwells (an evenly-spaced line of monitoring points) perpendicular to the



Getting in touch with peat cores

Little Ouse from Blo' Norton to Thelnetham Fen, and taking observations of the area's unique soil at each location. Measuring fortnightly water characteristics along the river and uploading the data to FreshWater Watch's global citizen science project, has given me a good knowledge of river water quality analysis. I took part in an early morning moth trapping session (albeit unsuccessful), and saw how a bat recorder works, from Rowena Langston's guidance. I also gave my time towards replacing grazier signs across the LOHP areas, made a vegetation map of Broomscot Common, learned how to put up electric fences, and attended the Wednesday volunteers' work parties. Without these days the project would cease to function.

Passionate about sustainability

Finally, why am I spending the next academic year gaining this type of experience? When there is very little financial incentive, pursuing a career in conservation is not really encouraged in the context of a society which worships personal income and wealth. But looking at it in that context is wrong. The answer is quite clear: the UK is one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world, while the wider planet is in a state of change at a speed and scale not seen in many millions of years. The way humanity is living is simply unsustainable, and if this continues, during my lifetime we will see large areas of the planet become virtually uninhabitable, and a sixth mass extinction of animal species. The reason I study the environment is because I am concerned about whether it is possible for eight billion people to live modern and peaceful lives in a rapidly changing earth system. I am therefore grateful for this experience with LOHP, and hope more young people can be inspired to get involved with fantastic projects like this.

Will Eden

Working dogs and a working mill

In early October, 26 people enjoyed a very pleasant and informative walk led by Rob Martyr, the LOHP conservation manager, with a tour of Thelnetham windmill.

Rob explained the LOHP's current conservation management work carried out on various parts of these important wetlands - and what needs to be done in future to maintain and improve the habitats. LOHP sites have a great variety of soil types ranging from the sandy loams on dry grasslands to the peaty loams of the fens.

The work has included clearing non-native trees and replanting with native varieties on the varied ground of New Fen, and rewilding the river to increase flow and improve habitats. Also explained was the cutting of reed on Blo' Norton Fen and Betty's Fen. We were fortunate to observe the super volunteers of the Sunday work party who had been carrying out this task, but at the time we saw them they were being refuelled

with tea and cake!

Dogs at work

After the walk, the LOHP's grazier, Denis



Rowena Langston

Jenkins, and his daughter Caitlin, gave a very interesting dog-handling demonstration on Parkers Piece with the 'help' of some 30 sheep. Denis also brought along two of his Red Poll cattle, which are used for fen grazing, and explained a great deal about the breed and his involvement with them.

Thelnetham windmill was open and working and many people took the opportunity of a guided tour followed by (you guessed it) tea and cake!

Glyn Pugh & Lizzie Glazier



Rowena Langston

Mother's pride - a Red Poll cow and her bull calf

Midwinter walk



Though the weather was kind to us on the day of the LOHP winter walk, we couldn't venture into any LOHP sites because of the recent inclement weather and fen-like fens!

Dogs (around eight of them) and people (around 60) set off on a lovely amble through the undiscovered Suffolk countryside around Redgrave. We ventured towards the church (where visits/tours can be arranged) and on towards Redgrave and Lopham Fen, along the Angles Way, to return via Money Pot Hill to a welcoming choice of homemade soups and bread. All had seconds - most sustaining! Thanks to all those who helped in the kitchen and those who kindly provided the soups.

The lovely route walked is one that will be of use to those who wish to follow it in the future. Many thanks to Jo for planning and also leading the walk on the day.

Chris Blackburn

Volunteer party + talks

Just before Christmas - instead of a hardworking work party - Rob Martyr arranged an indoor party, with four speakers, and refreshments, to celebrate our volunteering efforts.

Ian Hawkins showed how improving part of the River Lark for wild trout, has helped many other creatures. The water quality was affected by factory effluents and other contaminants upstream of the country park, where Ian and other volunteers have put back 'S' bends within the canalised banks. Bringing in tons of gravel together with sticks to hold back sediments, has created areas above water level and deeper pools. They planted hundreds of native plants, matching local ones, especially flowering plants to attract pollinators, and plants for dragonflies to lay their eggs on.

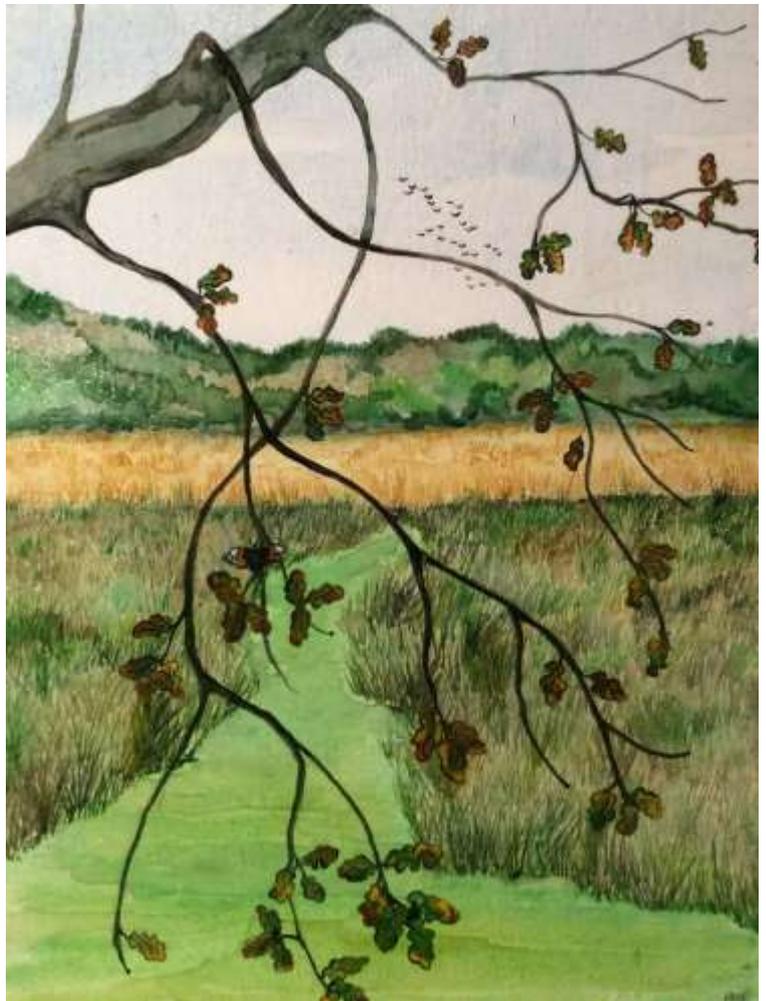
Rob Martyr shared fascinating facts about otters: they can swim for 4 minutes underwater, travelling 400m, and can smell their prey in water. They eat about 1kg per day, up to a quarter of their body weight.

Sam Lee from the RSPB focused on Suffolk's turtle doves. She told us that these birds have some strongholds, but that their decline has been drastic (94%). Recently, this may be slowing, as details about their migration routes and needs in winter and summer are discovered. She was keen to get everyone involved in www.operationturtledove.org.

Nigel Clarke enthralled us with his description of the endangered spoon-billed sandpipers, following their flyway from breeding grounds through China to Myanmar. Data collected about the regular feeding places, flyways and wintering coastal areas helps to conserve them. In China, the birds have an important feeding place, which was threatened by large development which has now been abandoned.

These speakers and their projects were inspiring. Thanks to Rob and everyone else who helped to put on this event.

Sarah Day



Fen view

by Frances Beasley

The painting is watercolour on canvas board, using a more delicate style for the background to contrast with the tree branches in the foreground. My sketch book is my inspiration and paintings become an amalgamation of various images.

Frances Beasley

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.

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 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 8 Thistle and ragwort digging Parkers Piece
Sun July 8 Road verge cut and clear Blo' Norton Fen
Sun Aug 12 Cut and clear meadow Hinderclay west

Sunday work party contact: Bev Blackburn 07747 691285
 Wednesday contact: Rob Martyr 07919 912045

*Not May and June - to avoid disturbance to breeding birds.



LOHP on Facebook & Twitter

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



PEAT FEST

A day to celebrate what's beneath our feet!

Monday 7th May 10am - 3pm

Parkers Piece, Thelnetham windmill and nearby (IP22 1JS)

All things peat including art, natural history, bunting competition, family activities, guided walks, windmill tours, food stalls and more . . .

See website for further details

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

Email: enquiries@lohp.org.uk

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

Phone: 07919 912045 (Rob Martyr, Conservation Manager)

Website: www.lohp.org.uk

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