

Gunton Woodland Community Project

NEWSLETTER

January, February, March, April 2012



*Apologies for the lateness of this Newsletter.
As there's a lot to include it will be a double sized edition.*

Springtime in Gunton Wood

This has to be the best time of the year as the wood comes back to life with new growth, swathes of flowers and continuous birdsong. The snowdrops were late this year and the aconites even later; so much so that we began to think they had been stolen.



But eventually they showed and, after a flurry of February snow, the ladies got busy dividing and replanting. Then it was the turn of the daffodils and primroses followed by cowslips on the wild flower meadow. Once again, Moore's Lane is a mass of flowers and, judging by the foliage, the bluebell display in Church Wood is spreading to cover most of the rest of the wood. Lack of rain for the young trees was a problem but April brought life-saving showers which subsequently turned into continuous downpours.

Another grateful recipient of the rain was, of course, the pond and we were delighted to see large quantities of frog spawn, a sure sign of good health. The combination of rain and strong winds in early March brought down several trees, including this goat willow in Moore's Lane, providing proof of the need to try to limit the size of these trees because of their shallow root systems.



In February it was bird box time again and Colin Giddins again took on the lion's share of the work, helped by Ken, Richard and the two Davids.. The remains of last year's nests were found in 37 boxes, an all-time record. Nine boxes needed replacing and many others were repaired but it wasn't long before our "friendly" woodpecker resumed his attacks.... The nest building and egg laying timetable has been upset this year by the weather as a cold and wet April has followed a warm, sunny March. You could almost see the tits scratching their heads, wondering what to do



Nature Reserve

Perseverance has paid off and the top pond has been virtually cleared of its invasive bur weed. The lower pond, too, is looking very healthy following the removal of the last pieces of debris. This pond remains completely clear of duckweed, an unexplained phenomenon. A lot of effort has been put into clearing fallen trees from the ditches bordering the Reserve.

Unfortunately, some dog walkers do not seem to think it necessary to pick up after their animals and, together with the inevitable litter blowing in from the Filling Station, this can spoil the experience of walking through a very attractive area of natural woodland.

Another matter of concern during the Easter School holidays was the stupidity of youngsters who lit a large fire while camping in the Reserve. This could easily have spread causing a great deal of damage and the Police have been informed of the situation.

Foxburrow Wood

The work programme under Suffolk Foundation's "Grassroots" scheme has been completed with the installation of a kissing gate and steps at the Northern entrance to the wood. Well done to everybody involved in making this fascinating piece of Ancient Woodland more accessible to the public.

Work Parties

Work parties continue to be well supported and every Thursday morning at 9 o'clock 25 or more volunteers gather at the tool shed. Usually the weather is kind and everyone is anxious to get started. But it is no easy matter to distribute jobs quickly to so many people, although we are getting better. We divide into groups, one fencing, another chipping, another doing essential tree work, another weeding and so on.. All too soon it is 10.30 am and we start to smell the coffee and taste the cakes it is nearly always somebody's birthday. David usually has a few words to say about forthcoming events and then it's time to put the tools away and go home. It's a great way to take a little exercise in the "Green Gym", to keep up friendships and we would all be lost without our Thursday morning "fix".

15th A G M

Fine weather helped to secure a strong turnout for the Annual General Meeting held at Gunton CP School on 21st March 2012. All 3 Gunton Councillors, Matt Gooch (SWT) and Harry Hill (PCC) plus 67 members attended. Barry Shimmield opened the meeting with a summary of the Minutes of the previous year's AGM, followed by a report on the year's activities which could be summarised as "steady progress across the board". Membership continues to grow, the Group's financial assets increased by an additional £600, mainly due to generous donations, and all the social events were fully subscribed. Highlights of the past year were the 1000th Work Party in June, the adoption of chainsaw operations funded by a Lottery Grant, many improvements to the Nature Reserve, successful school visits including lots of pond dipping and Group outings to Hyde Hall, the South Coast, Gressenhall and Snape. Both the Chairman and the Secretary thanked the Committee and Work Party volunteers for their unstinting help in the continuing success of the Group which is highly respected in the community.

Our guest speaker, Mr Colin Challis, led us through the fascinating history of Lowestoft Porcelain from its 18th Century origins in Gunton Wood until the demise of the Lowestoft factory in Crown Street. After showing samples of a modern version of the ware, for which he is responsible as Chief Artist, the Chairman thanked him for a most interesting talk enlivened with many anecdotes.

The Committee was re-elected with one change; Chris Chapman replaced Brian Channing who is standing down after serving for 14 years, for which he received gratitude and warm thanks from everyone present.

After discussing next year's work programme, including a contribution from Matt Gooch on the Nature Reserve, Harry Hill from Gunton St Peters PCC gave an update of the Church Field Memorial Wood project following which he answered questions from the floor.

The Chairman summarised the full list of Social Events planned for the year and then took some AOB items. A vote of thanks for the Committee's work over the year was proposed by Mike Field and the Chairman then closed the meeting.



Christmas Spectacular at Snape Maltings

It seems a long time ago now but just before Christmas the Group enjoyed its customary outing to Snape to watch the Co-Op Juniors perform their amazing music and dance extravaganza. The show used the North Pole Express as its theme visiting Siam, Scotland, America and London on its *fantastical* journey to meet Santa Claus, whilst thwarting the evil machinations of the Ice Queen. How these young artists manage to display such talent is astonishing.

Work Party Dinner at Lowestoft College *East*

There was a full house on 17th January when we took over the entire restaurant and dined in fine style, courtesy of students on the College Catering Course. All agreed it was an excellent dinner and a most enjoyable evening.

We are much indebted to David Briggs for organising both of these events

Planning

A few weeks ago the Department for Communities and Local Government produced their **Revised National Planning Policy Framework**. This followed widespread criticism of the earlier draft document to which we also voiced our comments. The new NPPF is definitely an improvement with more safeguards in place for our precious Strategic Gaps and Open Spaces. But, as always, the devil is in the detail and we must remain vigilant to see how the new rules are implemented in practice. It does seem rather surprising that such a far reaching change in Planning legislation does not get debated and voted on in Parliament but that is the situation and the NPPF is now law.

Litter Pick

This year we brought forward the date of the joint GWCP / GPRA litter pick by a few weeks to avoid the rubbish becoming masked by undergrowth. There was an excellent turnout of 40 volunteers and in a couple of hours nearly 60 bags of litter were recovered which, in many ways, is a sad reflection on the way our green spaces are being treated by some members of the community.



Tesco were very co-operative by providing hot-cross buns and other items while Waveney Norse helped by lending us litter pickers and by organising the removal of the mountain of rubbish.

Woodlanders and Residents plan another joint effort in the Autumn to try to stay on top of this problem following the school Summer holidays.



Sea Front Airshow

Can you help? The 2012 Air Show will follow a different format from previous years. It will be much earlier and will fall on a weekend, **23rd and 24th June**. New crowd control arrangements will be in place on Royal Plain and we have been asked to assist with an alternative style of bucket collection. David has already been in touch with many of our members who have helped before but more names would be appreciated so please contact him on 515944 if you can manage any 2 hours between 8 am and 6.30pm on either of the two days.

Churchfest

In late September, most Churches in the Lowestoft area are getting together to organise various family events. Gunton St Peter and St Benedict are planning a *Teddy Bear's Picnic* in Gunton Wood and we have been asked to work with them to make this a day that the Bears will never forget. There are no **fixed** plans yet but there are lots of great ideas, so please put **Sunday 16th September 2pm – 5pm** in your diaries, as we will need co-ordinators, stewards and other helpers on the day.

Excursions

Floriade World Expo Thursday 10th May to Monday 14th May 2012



Floriade was officially opened by the Queen of the Netherlands in the first week of April and it won't be long before we too will be able to enjoy the excitement. If you are "on-line" you can find a 3D interactive map of the Park on the official Floriade website. The coach is fully booked and you should all have received full instructions from David. Please call him if you have any queries. It's time to dig out those passports, E111 medical cards, travel kettle (for coffee/tea), Belle luggage labels, (and don't forget the camera and phrase book!). **Coach Boarding is 5.45am on 10th May**. Luggage can be left at 70 Gunton Church Lane between 3pm and 8pm Wednesday 9th May. **All Aboard !!**

Beth Chatto Gardens, Elmstead Market Thursday 14th June 2012

10 years have passed since GWCP organised its first ever excursion to Beth Chatto and it will be fascinating to see how her extraordinary "ecological garden", built largely on gravel and scree, is coping. Lunch has been arranged at the Boathouse Restaurant on the River Stour in nearby Dedham after which you can choose between a rowboat, a riverside walk, a stroll around the village or a visit to the Sir Alfred Munning Art Museum. Ray and Molly Adcock (tel 516913) have organised this trip and although it is fully booked they are keeping a reserve list in case of cancellations. Full payment of £30 pp is required by 17th May latest. Coach departure time is 8am from St Peters Church, Gunton Church Lane, returning at about 6.30pm in the evening. Sunshine has been requested.

Lavenham and Melford Hall, Sudbury Thursday 30th August 2012

Ray Adcock has organised a late Summer outing to Lavenham and Long Melford in the heart of Suffolk. Lavenham is probably the best preserved medieval village in England, famed for its wealth of timber-framed houses, while the main street of nearby Long Melford also has a remarkable collection of buildings dating from the 15th Century. We will visit two of them, the impressive Holy Trinity Church and the Cock and Bell where we have booked a pub lunch. In the afternoon we shall explore the National Trust property Melford Hall, home of the Hyde Parker family who have close connections to Beatrix Potter. Full inclusive cost for the day varies between £32 and £35.50 pp depending on the menu choice (deduct £6 for N.T.members). Departure time is 8am from Gunton St Peters Church, returning at about 7pm. If you are interested, please contact Ray Adcock (516913) for a Booking Form.

Snake Christmas Show 2012 Sunday 16th December 2012

In case you like to do your forward planning in good time, David has managed to secure the best seats in the house for the matinée performance on Sunday 16th December, leaving Gunton St Peters Church at 1pm and returning at about 7pm. Cost is about £26.50 pp, payment by October 1st please. Call David (515944) to reserve tickets, bookings will be accepted in the order they are received.

Queen's Diamond Jubilee Party Saturday 2nd June 2012 1pm – 5pm



As announced at the AGM we have big plans for celebrating this event. Our Woodland Party will be held on the School Playing Field, by kind permission of Sue Barrett. There will be a nominal charge of £1.00 pp (children under 12 free) which includes a free BBQ hotdog, hamburger, tea/coffee/squash and a glass of bubbly to toast the Queen. If you have special dietary needs you can bring your own food to be cooked on a separate BBQ. There will be raffle prizes and a **cake/pickle/jam** stall. We need lots of contributions so please contact Ellie (584810) and Molly (516913) respectively **if you can bring any of these items**. There will be also be side shows and games. Admission will be by ticket only, available from David or Rosemary. Numbers will be limited. During the afternoon one lucky number winner will have the honour of planting the Queen's Jubilee Tree.

Cuttings

- **Website** Our present site www.guntonwoodland.org.uk is under the umbrella of *OneSuffolk*, a Suffolk County Council service for Community Groups. *OneSuffolk* is now in the process of changing its software to SilverStripe CMS, an open source platform, and we need to transfer our web pages ASAP. If there is a computer whiz out there with a little spare time who would like to help, please contact Barry on 562527.
- **More Website** Just to illustrate how useful the website is we were recently contacted by someone in Sussex who is a direct descendant of Hewling Luson of Lowestoft Porcelain fame. We plan a meeting soon which should help to fill in the gaps in our knowledge of this fascinating story which began in Gunton Wood.
- **Memorial Wood** The measurements of ground water levels in 10 locations on Church Field have now been completed and a new submission will soon be made to the Environment Agency as a first step towards gaining Planning Approval. Meanwhile a tentative Business Plan is being considered by the Norwich Diocese. There is still some way to go before we will know whether this scheme is "on".
- **North Sea Cycle Marathon** Our very best wishes go to John and Mo Dickerson who have just started a 6000 km 100 day bike ride on the NSCR *North Sea Cycle Route*. When asked "why are you doing it?" John and Mo replied rather sheepishly, "It's a challenge". Well that is very true. If you want to follow their progress Barry can give you a link on Facebook.

Nature Notes Alexanders *Smyrnium olustratum*

When does a wildflower become a *thug*? Take Alexanders for example. They used to be confined to a narrow strip around the coast of Britain, but now they populate every verge and roadside smothering other wild flowers. (This may be the result of salt gritting in Winter). So GWCP is conducting a cull. The entire plant is said to be edible but many people find them overpowering. Here is a recipe where the taste remains as a gentle background.....

You need 60 mussels, 1 onion, 30g finely chopped leaves of Alexanders, 60g butter, 60 ml parsnip wine and black pepper. Put mussels in large saucepan with onion and half the Alexanders. Add parsnip wine and heat to steam them open, discard those that don't. Pour into a colander, collecting the juices. Pour back into saucepan (leaving grit behind). Heat, whisk in the butter. Put the mussels in a big bowl, pour the juice over, add the rest of the Alexanders and few twists of black pepper.

Bon appetit !

