

LINCOLNSHIRE  
TRUST FOR  
NATURE  
CONSERVATION



Grimsthorpe  
Nature Trail

July 16th—August 28th  
1973

10p



Lincolnshire



Fifty years of the  
Bourne Area Group



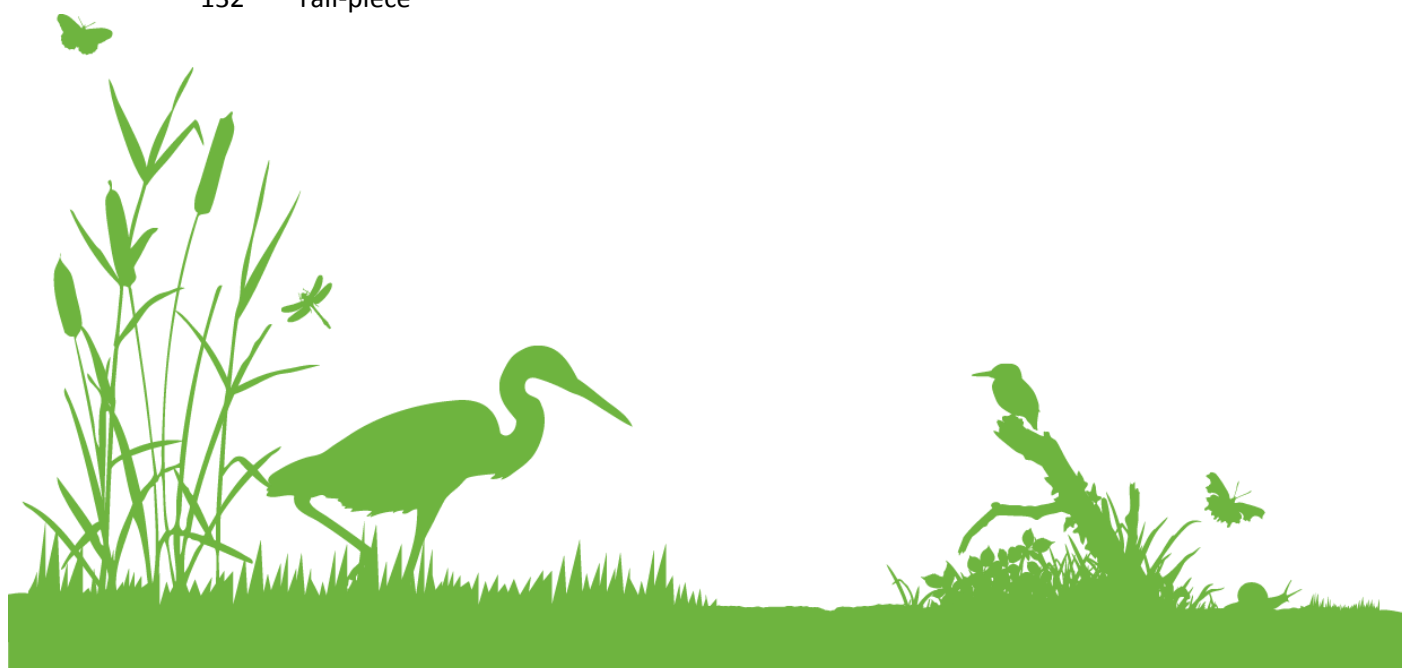






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## **INTRODUCTION**

The Lincolnshire Naturalists' Trust (now Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust) was formed in 1948. It was the third County Trust to be formed, preceded by Norfolk (1926) and Yorkshire (1946). By 1969, the Trust's 21<sup>st</sup> anniversary year, it had acquired 30 reserves covering some 2,500 acres. Membership at just over 2,000 had also begun to grow more rapidly.

The formation of the Area Groups had started a couple of years earlier in 1967; eventually there would be 17 based on the main centres of population and covering the County. Each Area Group organises local meetings and events, fundraises and promotes the Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust locally. The Bourne Area Group covers the area around Stamford, Bourne and the Deepings. The formation of the Area Groups also helps with the delivery of 'Lapwings', the Trust's magazine. The magazine is published three times a year, with most copies being hand delivered by local volunteers, thus saving a huge amount of postage.

Each Area Group has evolved differently and has different strengths and weaknesses, often depending on those who served on the Committees at any one time. As the Bourne Area Group celebrates its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2019 it is perhaps a golden opportunity to look back, and to make a record of 'our' story.

This document was compiled/written by Dave Vandome, with assistance from Chris Bladon, Terry Barnatt, Barrie Wilkinson, David Sheppard and Trish Stubley. Sue Curtis proof read the original document. Written originally as a 'Word' document the lay-out falls short of what could have been produced by using a desk-top publisher, but considered acceptable. All photographs are by Dave Vandome, unless otherwise attributed. Photographs and scanned images vary in quality, many are scanned from prints or colour slides.

It seems fitting that this document be published as an e-book, using the technology of today. Fifty years ago none of this could even be dreamt of – so what will the next five decades bring us?



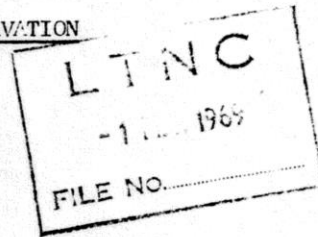
## IN THE BEGINNING

The Group was inaugurated at a meeting of members on 9 April 1969. Mr D A Bell was elected Chairman and Mr T Barnatt Honorary Secretary. The meeting was addressed by Ted Smith, the Chairman of the Trust, as recorded in the Groups first newsletter.

### LINCOLNSHIRE TRUST FOR NATURE CONSERVATION

#### BOURNE GROUP

Newsletter - April, 1969.



#### Inaugural Meeting

The Bourne Group of the Trust was inaugurated at a meeting of members at Bourne County Secondary School (by kind permission of the Headmaster) on 9th April, 1969. Chairman for the meeting was Dr. J. A. Galletly. Mr. A. E. Smith, Chairman of the Trust, spoke about the work of the Trust, the importance of conservation and the effects of future industrialisation. The proposition to form a Bourne Group was passed by the meeting and a committee was elected as follows:-

T. Barnatt (Sec.), D. A. Bell, Dr. J. A. Galletly, G. Burrows, Mrs. H. M. Baile, Mrs. J. G. Porter, J. A. Gibb and C. W. Hughes.

The film 'Wicken Fen' concluded the meeting, which was attended by Trust members from Gosberton, Pinchbeck, Grantham and Sleaford as well as from the Bourne area.

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Mr. D. A. Bell was elected Group Chairman at a meeting of the Committee on 25th April. Mr. P. R. A. Berkeley, Administrator of the Trust, was present at our first Committee Meeting and was able to give guidance on a number of subjects discussed. The Committee is indebted to him.

#### Group Members' Meeting

Visit to Baston Fen Nature Reserve, Saturday 17th May, 1969, at 3.00 p.m.

Meet at the Reserve Entrance, directions as follows:- Leave Bourne via Austerby and Willoughby Road. At the manure works turn right and then immediately sharp left to follow the straight fen road, past Chafers Ltd., for about three miles. To Tongue End bridge over the Glen to the Counter Drain, turn right along the road beside the drain and continue for about three-quarters of a mile to the Reserve entrance on your right. Wellingtons advised.

Anyone requiring assistance as regards transport should get in touch with the Secretary, at 37 Edenham Road, Hanthorpe, or Mr. C. Hughes of 59 North Road, Bourne.

We hope that as many members as possible will take this opportunity of taking a look at the nearest Nature Reserve to Bourne.

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Details of future meetings will be sent to members in due course.

T. BARNATT, Local Secretary.

On 25 April the first Committee meeting of the Bourne Area Group was held at Bourne Grammar School. Members present were Mrs Baille and Messrs Bell (chairman), Terry Barnatt (secretary), Charles Hughes, Dr Allister Galletly and Gerry Burrows. Mr Berkeley, the Lincolnshire Trust for Nature Conservation (now the Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust) Administrator was also present, and Mr Gibbs sent his apologies. Mr Berkeley talked about things other existing Area Groups were doing, such as coffee mornings, plant sales and film shows during the winter months and outdoor meeting in the summer. It was agreed to start indoor meetings with a film show in October, a field trip to Baston Fen Nature Reserve was organised for 17 May, and a visit to Clipsham Quarries was suggested as a summer meeting, as can be seen in the Groups second newsletter.

LINCOLNSHIRE TRUST FOR NATURE CONSERVATION



BOURNE GROUP

Newsletter - June 1969

The Group's first field meeting, held on May 17th. at Baston Fen Nature Reserve, was, in spite of the showery weather, a successful meeting. The interest shown, which we hope to maintain, is very encouraging.

In this newsletter you will find some details of our next two summer meetings. We hope to organise a further field meeting in September, followed by a Film Show in October and other social activities, Natural History and Conservation talks, during the winter months.

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Saturday, 21st. June. - Visit to Twyford Forest area. Joint meeting with L.N.U. and other Group members. Details available later.

Saturday, 19th. July. - Visit to Clipsham Quarries. Meet at Quarry entrance, on Holywell - Clipsham road, at 3 p.m.

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The Committee hope that everyone will find something of interest in the meetings, and any ideas members may have for social or fund-raising activities are welcomed. It is hoped that as many members as possible will take an active part in the work of the Trust, through the Group, so using the interests and abilities of everyone to help in the conservation of our wildlife and countryside.

As most of you will know the Trust is mounting a Nature Trail in Grimsthorpe Park, in August and September, and help from as many local members as possible will be needed. If you are able to help and have not sent in the form, asking for help in manning the Trail, please let the Group Sec. have it at our next meeting.

Local Secretary

T. Barnatt.

Mr Berkeley also talked about a proposed nature trail around part of Grimsthorpe Estate which was being set up, with Trust members acting as wardens and guides. Early guest speakers included Barrie Wilkinson from Trust staff and Don Wright, who had helped set up the Grantham Area Group the previous year. A draft constitution for the Group was discussed and approved at the Committee meeting held on 5 July 1969 at Clipsham Quarries. In the early days all entries in the 'Minutes Book' were hand written, and it was not until 1981 that type written entries started to make an appearance. Trying to follow the activities of the Group just by reading the minutes is not easy, with many broken strands and even differing spellings of the names of Committee members, but these records provide an insight into how the Group developed. Some variation in spelling of names has been retained in the following paragraphs. Progress and news of events might also be published in the Trust's 'Lapwings' magazine from time to time, adding a second source of primary information for this 'book'.

The Minutes Book records that Mrs J D Porter joined the Committee at the second Committee meeting, at the third Mr Gibbs and Gerry Burrows resigned from it, with Rev. Cross, Mrs Maxine Jessop, J Godfrey and Geoff Harmston being approached as replacements. At the next meeting in May 1970 Mr Harry Greateorex joined the Committee. Mr Bell informed the Committee that due to changes in the Forestry Commission he would be leaving the area. Charles Hughes was elected vice-chairman, so as to take over as Chairman when Mr Bell moved on. However, Charles took over as Secretary when Terry Barnatt resigned in August 1970.

In 1970 field trips to Colsterworth (with the LNU), Castor Hanglands, Grantham Sewage Farm, Gibraltar Point and Bradgate Park in Leicestershire were organised. Indoor meetings were held at Bourne Secondary Modern School and included a short series of talks by the Nature Conservancy (Monks Wood), with whom Mr Bell had been in touch.

At the Committee meeting held on 20 November 1970 possible new nature reserves in the area were proposed. These included Toft Tunnel, along with a one mile stretch of disused railway line skirting Dobbin's Wood, which is part of Grimsthorpe Estate and owned by the Trust's patron the Earl of Ancaster. Other suggested sites included the lakes at Hollywell, a flooded brick pit on the Aslackby Road in Kirkby Underwood and another brick pit at Dolan Road, Lound. Hugh Scarborough, Arthur Ward Mick and Cindy Curtis joined the Committee. Winter meetings included a talk on the pollution of the River Eau, a film show (with the AGM) and a slide evening.

At the 1971 AGM (Annual General Meeting) Mrs Porter and Mrs Baille resigned, Mrs Leslie Dunne joined the Committee in June. In a drive for new members town wide advertising and hand delivery of leaflets, along with a Christmas fair in the Abbey Church Hall, were organised. At this time setting up a junior group was being considered, with an approach to the YOC (Young Ornithologist Club) and the RSPB (Royal Society for the Protection of Birds).

At the 1972 AGM Mr Bell finally stepped down as Chairman, his place being taken by Philip Grimes, the Estate manager at Grimsthorpe Estate, Charles Hughes remaining as Secretary. Mr Greateorex also resigned from the Committee. A bank account was opened with the Trustees Savings Bank and Harold Scarborough became the Group's first Treasurer. Two films were shown after the AGM: 'The Story of the Swallowtail Butterfly' and 'The Birds of East & Central Africa'. Dr Galletley resigned from the Committee in 1973, but he remained a stalwart within the Trust locally, hosting fundraising garden parties at his house on North Road for many years.

## **UP AND RUNNING**

By 1973 membership of the Trust had reached 3,400 and it managed over 40 nature reserves. There were comings and goings from the Committee, but with Philip Grimes as Chairman the Group flourished. This was helped by publicity afforded by the activities of the Group, especially the nature trail at Grimsthorpe.

An article in the Trust's March 1973 Newsletter (forerunner of the Lapwings magazine) reported that – The Group was responsible for mounting an exhibition on aspects of South Lincolnshire's wildlife and conservation in the Willoughby Gallery at Corby Glen. The exhibition was opened by Lord Ancaster on 6 November, and remained open until 18 December. This was the first of a number of exhibitions the Area Group mounted in the Gallery.

Other events included a film show held in Bourne in aid of the Trust's Appeal and the Christmas Bazaar in Judge's Shop, which had now replaced the Fair. Mrs Patricia (Trish) Stubley joined the Committee in 1974 and became the Secretary.

In most years some 'excess' money is sent to HQ. In 1975 the Treasurer reported that the balance in hand was £92.71p and that the Christmas Bazaar was the main fundraising event for the Group. Harold Scarborough took over from Philip Grimes as Chairman. In his report he said that the indoor meetings were better attended than those outdoors. He mentioned Dr Nigel Turnbull's talk on orchids, saying it showed the sort of talent that was contained in the Group. He also said that the Trust's film shows were very well attended. The films were often taken to and shown in Stamford by Harold Scarborough. Mrs Jo Everingham's name appeared for the first time in the minutes book, she and Trish were commended for the work they had done with the reclamation of the pond in Aslackby. The Committee was now:- Harold Scarborough (Chairman), Trish Stubley (Secretary), Miss Lesley Dunne (Treasurer) with Dr Michael McGregor, Mrs Jo Everingham and Mr Robert Greifenburg, with Philip Grimes and Charles Hughes standing down. 1975 also saw the purchase of the Maler-Haley display boards, which we still use now! Also in the minutes from 1975 is the following:-

‘Any Other Business – As there is on many occasions a poor turn out to speaker’s meetings the reasons for this were discussed. It was agreed that Friday nights were probably not very good, as many people have other functions to attend on that evening.’

Various ideas to improve attendance were put forward. Some things never change!

It might be worth recording that a barbeque had become a regular event. In 1976 this was held in Jo Everingham’s garden in The Laurels, Kirkby Road, Aslackby. It was a ticketed event (25p), with tickets being printed locally. A band and disco were present, and amongst other things Jo had a stall selling Trust merchandise. Jo had taken on the role of selling Trust goods, and these were on sale at various locations, including the Tulip Parade at Springfields. Over £300 was taken in 1976 during the two days of the parade. After the barbeque it is recorded that the event raised £27.81, with a further £50.07 taken for Trust sales.

### **A TIME FOR CHANGE**

Jo Everingham took over as Chairman in March 1977. The rest of the Committee were:- Trish Stubley (Secretary), Miss L Dunn (Treasurer), Harold Scarborough, Dr McGregor, Charles Hughes and Miss J Pywell. Bob Sheppard and David Westbrook joined the Committee at their September meeting. In October 1977 Jo Everingham took over from Chas Hughes as Reserve Manger of Dole Wood. Bob Hill joined the Committee in February 1979, becoming Treasurer at the AGM. Trish was briefly replaced as Secretary in 1980 by Mrs Pywell. Trish took over organising Watch Club activities during the summer of 1980.

The 1981 AGM was held at Bourne Secondary Modern School, 18 members were present. Treasurer Bob Hill reported that donations over the past year amounted to £37, and the bank accounts held £163.67. Chairman Jo Everingham said that a sponsored bird watch held on Grimsthorpe Estate had raised £300 and Trust sales for the year had been £405. She went on to say that there were now approximately 185 adult and 85 Junior Area Group members. The Committee was now:- Jo Everingham Chairman, Trish Stubley Secretary, Bob Hill Treasurer, with other Committee members:- Dr Michael McGregor, Mr Dunne, Mrs Dunne, Mr David Westbrook and Bob Sheppard. Miss J Pywell resigned from the Committee and Mr Norman Ives was nominated to join.

An entry in the minutes of the Committee meeting held on 4 February 1981 is worth noting – Jo Everingham asked the Committee to approve to hire a chainsaw for £6, the Committee approved, it was a different world then! At the 1982 AGM it was reported that the sponsored bird watch had raised over £462 and that £533.60 had been taken for Trust sales. Over 3,380 people had been skating on the ice at Baston Fen, raising another £288. An article in the Trust’s ‘Lapwings’ magazine also mentioned the sponsored bird watch – ‘Congratulations to WATCH members and pupils from Westfield School who raised £452 from a sponsored bird watch. Undaunted participants bravely plodded through a thunderstorm and torrential rain. ( Lapwings 56, 1981).

Dr McGregor stood down as a Committee member and Dr Nigel Turnbull was invited to join. Trust sales continued to be good, with over £1,000 being taken in 1982. Bob Sheppard and Mr D Westbrook resigned from the Committee, being replaced by Mrs D Aaron and Dave Vandome, Dee Aaron taking over as secretary from Trish Stubley for 2 years at the December 1983 Committee meeting. Terry Barnatt came back on to the Committee in March 86, after a break of 16 years. During 1986 a grand open day was planned at Grimsthorpe Estate. It was to have a marquee with local craft artists displaying and selling their work, a sheep dog display, model aircraft flying and a display of classic motorcycles, amongst other things.

An extract from the 1987 AGM report reads:- The audited accounts for the year to 31 December 1986 were then presented by Mrs Stubley, Hon. Treasurer, audited by Mr R D Hill. The current account holds £102.87, the deposit account £40.67 and cash in hand £6.14. The Grimsthorpe Open day had raised £830.62 and the car parking at the Nature Trail £453.50, the sponsored bird watch, a disappointing £20. Altogether the Area Group was able to send £1,200 in the appeal year to Alford HQ and £200 to Gibraltar Point Field Station (for laboratory equipment).

Jo Everingham opened the 1987 AGM with a tribute to Mr R D (Bob) Hill, who had died on 22 December 1987. He had been a Trust member and on the Committee for over 10 years. She said that he will be sadly missed for his support and guidance over the years, and for all his help on the Nature Trail, and every aspect of Trust activities. She went on to report that over 200 people had visited Dole Wood on the open day and 3,500 had visited the Grimsthorpe Nature Trail, with £2,699 being taken for Trust Sales.



The Committee for 1988 at the start of the year was:- Jo Everingham (Chairman), Trish Stubley (Secretary/Treasurer), Dave Vandome (Press Officer) Miss Joan McClelland (Membership Officer) with Mrs Jan Shaw, Alan Jones and Ileene Jones, with Nigel Turnbull resigning. Roger Favell and Betty Peek joined the Committee in November 1988, significantly at the AGM in January 1989 Jo Everingham and Trish Stubley resigned, along with Jan Shaw. The new Committee was:- Terry Barnatt (Chairman) Ileene Jones (Secretary), Roger Favell (Treasurer), Joan McClelland (Membership), Dave Vandome (Press) and Dr David Sheppard (Biological Records).

### END OF AN ERA

Trish Stubley had been Secretary of the Group for most of the 15 years she had been on the Committee, and Treasurer when needed. Jo had been Chairman for 12 years. As an appreciation for their dedicated and outstanding contributions to the work of the Group they were each presented with an engraved crystal goblet at the 1989 AGM.



Trish Stubley with John Redshaw making the presentation and Jo Everingham.

John was making the presentation on behalf of the Trust as a member of the Trust's Council.

*Photo:- Tony Story  
(Stamford Mercury)*

Joan McClelland took over the running of the Grimsthorpe Nature Trail and sales in 1989 and in that year the shop had taken £2,389.71 in sales and £336.13 in car parking. At the January 1990 Committee meeting Joan was elected as Chairman, with David Sheppard as Vice Chair. In 1991 Margaret Bradley took over as Secretary from Ileene and Nick Galer was co-opted on to the Committee. David Sheppard gave a resume of the Dole Wood Open Day which had been enjoyed by at least 400 people on a glorious sunny day. The refreshments tent took £67, plant stall £59 and £40 was collected in donations. Margaret Bradley had taken £15, taking visitors to/from the roadside to the wood in her pony and trap. Incredibly the Watch stall took £70 and £171 was taken in Trust sales.

### NEW TECHNOLOGY - 1990

The production of Area Group newsletters and programmes up until now had been a challenge. Type written pages could be duplicated by first typing/cutting a stencil. Correcting a stencil was not easy, and the resulting duplicated copies often of poor quality. Typed pages could also be photocopied at HQ. In the early days an Area Group programme with an occasional newsletter were produced, but few copies seem to have survived. In 1990 Dave Vandome started to use his Amstrad PCW 8256 word processor to produce a four page Area Group newsletter. Copies of the newsletter were printed using a dot matrix printer, any pictures (and the Trust header) were (literally) cut/pasted on to the 'top copy', which was taken to HQ for photocopying. The newsletters were mainly written by David Sheppard and Dave Vandome. The first newsletter had an article by Terry Barnatt as Area Group Chairman on the front page, and an article by Joan McClelland on page 4 reporting on the success of the Nature Trail. Later a separate 4 page newsletter was also produced by David Sheppard and Dave Vandome for WATCH (now Wildlife Watch) members. The newsletters make fascinating reading, and a digital/scanned archive has been created at HQ.

From the January 1991 newsletter local Trust members learnt that some form of entrance fee for the winter meetings was being considered, the cost of room hire at the Red Hall had been raised, and some meetings were incurring a loss, even with more than 80 people attending. A raffle and the selling refreshments clearly not covering

cost of room hire and guest speaker fees. We also learn that County-wide Trust membership stood as 8,707 with 200 members being in the area covered by the Bourne Area Group.

### THE START OF THE NEXT ERA

David Sheppard took over as Chairman of the Area Group in March 1992 and in September 1992 Mrs Chris Bladon joined the Committee. The full Committee was now:- David Sheppard (Chairman), Margaret Bradley (Secretary), Roger Favell (Treasurer), Nigel Turnbull, Joan McClelland (Membership Secretary), Joan May, Nick Galer, Chris Bladon and Dave Vandome. Chris Bladon soon became heavily involved assisting Joan McClelland with the Grimsthorpe Nature Trail and Trust sales. There was a lot going on around this time, so here is a list of some topics discussed at the September Committee meeting:- Dole Wood Open days and the Grimsthorpe Nature trails; Correspondence regarding the re-location of the car park in Bourne Woods and the closure of the Peakirk Wildfowl Centre; a survey of churchyards; the creation of a newt pond off West Road, Bourne; progress with new nature reserves at Stanton's Pit and Toft Tunnel; staffing the Rutland Water Bird Fair stall, and so on.

Bliss – In 1993 minutes finally start to be type written/printed for all Committee meetings, and with the Area Group newsletters adding to the information sources a much fuller account of the Group's activities can be seen. In the 1994 AGM minutes David Sheppard reported on the previous year. He said that the Area Group had organised 12 meetings for adults, 11 WATCH meetings and four other meetings for Members. There had been 50 days where the Grimsthorpe Nature Trails were being staffed and 26 days when conservation tasks were being carried out. This made a grand total of 103 days. In addition there were four Area Group Committee meetings, and the Group were also represented at various committee and sub-committee meetings at Trust HQ. Members also attended the Conservation Forum, the Standing Conference of Area Group Officers, the Trust AGM and the official opening of Banovallum House (the Trust's new HQ). David Sheppard thanked the Committee and all the members for their efforts in producing such an impressive performance.



In 1994 Beryl Simmonds joined and Terry Barnatt returned to the Committee, Terry took over from Roger Favell as Treasurer. In this year the Area Group celebrated its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Terry Barnatt designed a logo, which was used on the Area Group programme and newsletters.

The March Trust meeting held in the Red Hall was a journey through the Group's existence. Many long-serving members attended including Mr & Mrs Sam Cross and our longest serving and founding member Terry Barnatt. Although there was sadness at the recent death of Philip Grimes, one of our past chairmen, three other past chairmen were present, including Jo Everingham, who came all the way from Anglesey to be with us. The evening provoked many interesting anecdotes about people and past events; such as the field meeting that never was because nobody could find the venue, and how one speaker had to finish somewhat abruptly when his wife went into labour at the back of the room! The Group also organised a garden party. There would be a barbeque, a bar, Morris dancers, tombola and a raffle. WATCH type activities were arranged for children. A photographic competition and exhibition were also held.



Philip Grimes, past Area Group Chairman and Kesteven Area Group representative on the Trust's Council. He was appointed as Agent at Grimsthorpe by the Earl of Ancaster in 1970 and designed his first Nature Trails in 1973.

*Photo:- 'Lapwings' No. 66 (Autumn 1986)*

Joan McClelland resigned from the Committee in 1995, with Brenda Jones taking over the Membership Secretary post. There had been a rapid rise in local membership as a result of the highly successful 'Door to Door' campaign, where paid recruiters went door knocking. In December 1995 Brenda Jones reported that 156 new membership addresses had been added to the mailing list almost doubling the local membership. Trust membership at around this time was approximately 9,000.

Over the years significant improvements were made to the 'shop' at the Nature Trails. Moving it into the stable yard had raised its profile, and visitors to the Castle were more likely to pop in. As a result, sales takings rocketed, exceeding £10,000 in the 1995 season, with over £1,200 being taken over one weekend.

Mrs Joan May and Mrs Beryl Simmonds stood down from the Committee in 1996. With Terry Barnatt resigning as Treasurer some change to the Committee was inevitable. Ileene Jones agrees to take over as Treasurer with a relative but enthusiastic newcomer, Don Lipscombe joining the Committee as deputy Sales Coordinator, working with Chris Bladon.

Jo Everingham died suddenly on 12 April 1996; as previously mentioned she had served as Chairman of the Area Group for over 10 years. She and husband Bob had moved to Anglesey in 1990, where they had owned a house for a number of years. A collection at her funeral in Bangor raised £65 which was donated to the Area Group. She lived for her birds and flowers and it was her wish that her ashes be spread in Dole Wood. On Sunday 21 April a small gathering of family and friends met at the Wood to say a final goodbye to Jo.

At the 1997 AGM Joyce Lipscombe joined the Committee. The May 1997 Area Group newsletter reported:- A livelier than usual AGM meant that we over-ran our usual time and the meeting lasted for one hour and ten minutes. Just after Joyce went off to make the tea her husband nominated her for a place on the Committee. Joyce took Don away shortly afterwards, but they were still on speaking terms later! The Committee now looked like:- David Sheppard (Chairman), Dave Vandome (Vice Chairman), Margaret Bradley (Secretary), Ileene Jones (Treasurer), Brenda Jones (Membership Secretary), Chris Bladon (Press and Publicity rep and Sales Coordinator), Don Lipscombe (Deputy Sales Coordinator, Joyce Lipscombe, Terry Barnatt, Roger Favell and Nigel Turnbull.

Joan McClelland died on Saturday 18 July 1998. Joan was a valued member of the Bourne Area Group and was its Chairman from 1990 – 92. From the late 1980's she had organised the nature trails and shop at Grimsthorpe and it was through her hard work and initiative the shop thrived. She was a great fighter for conservation causes, not only for the Trust, but for many other groups. Her greatest interest was owls, they fascinated her. In September that year three oak trees were planted at Stanton's Pit in her memory.

At the 1999 AGM Don Lipscombe took over as Treasurer and Nigel Turnbull left the Committee. Nigel was replaced by Mr Chris Howes, Wildlife Ranger at Grimsthorpe. In the few years he had been in post Chris had worked wonders on the Estate, bringing back large areas of Limestone Grassland into management, vastly improving the flora and fauna of the area. His election onto the Committee reinforced the links between the Estate and the Trust, first established by the Earl of Ancaster.

Geoff Wiliamson, Ros Roberts and Christine Bond joined the Committee in 2000. Ros was a Wildlife Watch Group leader and Geoff enthusiastically took hold of fundraising, visiting local firms asking them to donate items to be used as prizes at a future garden open day. Before that event James and Hazel held an open garden in May. Some 120 visitors took advantage of the fine weather to walk around their newly created garden, which was stocked with a collection of alpine plants. Plants, Trust goods and refreshments were on sale raising a total of £400.

The 'Wildlife Garden Open Day' was held on 1 July in Ros Roberts' garden. Despite the weather a steady stream of children of all ages enjoyed the various activities on offer. Pond dipping was extremely popular and the many unusual creatures discovered were quickly identified by the resident experts aka 'Professor Pond and 'Meadow Man'. In addition, the garden reverberated to the song of the nightingale and much else, thanks to the excellent recordings of Terry Barnatt our third resident expert. The donated prizes raise £391, and the day was a great success.

In 2002 Margaret Bradley and Geoff Wiliamson resigned from the Committee. Although Geoff had only been on the Committee for a couple of years he had achieved an immense amount in that short time. He managed to persuade many local businesses to make donations or to give prizes for events, a rare talent. Dave Vandome briefly took over as Secretary from Margaret, but the Meetings Secretary post she held remained vacant. However, Margaret was so well organised that she had speakers already booked for the next 18 months, and a list of potential speakers and contacts for beyond that. Margaret died in July 2002. It was perhaps fitting that the last meeting she attended was a farm walk which she had arranged at Manor Farm in Stainfield on 14 June. Margaret was never one to sit still. She attended almost every meeting and helped in some way at all of our events. Margaret's funeral was at Edenham Church where the Area Group was represented by Chris Bladon and Don Lipscombe and Trust HQ was represented by Terry Barnatt, our representative on the Trust's Council. At the Committee meeting on 4 September Christine Bond took over as Secretary and Joyce Lipscombe became Meetings Secretary, both tasks carried out by Margaret.

In 2002 Grimsthorpe Estate closed down the Trust's shop, preferring to run it themselves. The shop had developed and grown over the 30 years and had become a major source of income from the sale of Trust merchandise. In 2003 Chris Bladon took over as the Area Group's representative on the Trust's Council from Terry Barnatt. At the AGM in April 2004 David Sheppard reported that Trust membership was now over 23,000, Brenda Jones added that the local mail-out of Lapwings now goes to 460 addresses, an estimated 1,000 members. Hazel Williams joined the Committee, taking on the post of Fund-raising Co-ordinator. Hazel and her family had already run a number of open garden events and raised a considerable amount of money for the Trust. Their Open Garden event in August 2004 attracted over 100 visitors and more than £200 was raised from plant sales, refreshments and the admission charge.

After at least 25 years at the Red Hall the winter meetings from 2005 would be held in the Methodist Church Hall. This was a sad decision to make and one the Committee deliberated over at length. However, because of the Disability Discrimination Act the Area Group had to hold its meetings in premises accessible to those with restricted mobility. There were two new Committee members; Loretta Barry took over from Brenda Jones, who stood down after 9 years as Membership Secretary, and Dr Vin Fleming joined as Wildlife Records Officer.

At the 2006 AGM it was reported that the local membership had risen to 605 addresses, 1,340 members. Christine Bond, Don and Joyce Lipscombe retired from the Committee with Denis Cawdron and David Mainwaring joining, David taking over from Christine as Secretary and Denis taking on the Meetings Secretary from Joyce. David (Dave) Mainwaring had already been working on Trust nature reserves for five years by the time he joined the Committee, and had been heavily involved with the development of the new Deeping Lakes Nature Reserve, for which he had been made Volunteer Reserve Warden, assisting the Volunteer Reserve Manager, Dave Vandome. Hazel Williams took over as Treasurer from Don Lipscombe. So, the full Committee in 2006 was:- David Sheppard (Chairman), David Vandome (Vice Chairman), David Mainwaring (Secretary), Hazel Williams (Treasurer), Denis Cawdron (Meetings Secretary), Chris Bladon (Press and Publicity rep and Sales Co-ordinator), Roger Favell, Chris Howes and Vin Fleming (Wildlife Records Officer)

Loretta Barry retired from the Committee in 2008, being replaced by Janice Coulson as Membership Secretary. Dave Mainwaring stood down as Secretary at the 2009 AGM, being eventually replaced by Valerie Machin in 2011. In 2009 it was going to be a year of anniversaries: Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust was celebrating its 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the Bourne Area Group its 40<sup>th</sup>. It was the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the closure of the Bourne – Saxby railway line which ran through Toft Tunnel, and the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act which established National Parks, National Nature Reserves and SSSI's (Sites of Special Scientific Interest). So 2009 was significant nationally, at county level, for the Bourne Area Group and for one of our local Trust nature reserves. To celebrate all of this the Area Group attempted to run 60 events during the year. Some were open to all, such as the nature reserve visits and a Jubilee picnic in Grimsthorpe Estate, some were for members only, such as an Anniversary Dinner held in September.

At the 2011 AGM David Sheppard stood down as Chairman of the Group, a position he had held for 19 years. Nineteen years is a long time for anyone to do anything, and even by just reading these pages it is possible to get some idea of what he and the Group had achieved during that time. David stayed on the Committee for a further year, until he moved out of the area. Vin Fleming took over as Chairman from David. Also standing down at the AGM were Chris Howes and Janice Coulson.

As part of the Group's long standing relationship with Grimsthorpe Estate it has occasionally been offered the Willoughby Gallery in Corby Glen to mount exhibitions. From 15 June – 13 July 2011 the Group mounted an Arts & Crafts Exhibition with the theme 'Lincolnshire Art: wildlife & heritage.' It was organised mainly by Chris Howes and David Sheppard, and a good range of original art was on show including photography, paintings and engravings. Throughout the month there was a steady stream of visitors to the exhibition.

In 2012 Steph Pakey took over from Chris Bladon as Sales Co-ordinator and Mr Chris Fisher joined the Committee. Unfortunately Denis Cawdron had to stand down due to poor health in 2013, Roger Favell also stood down after serving on the Committee for 25 years. In 2014 there are three new committee members: Ian Sutherland, Malcolm Scriven and Flynn Pakey. Flynn was the first 'Youth' member on the Committee, and despite only being 14 years old at the time had already worked for 8 years as a volunteer on nature reserves. Chris Fisher briefly took over as Wildlife Records Officer in 2014, before moving out of the area. In the July 2004 Area Group Newsletter Valerie Machin took the opportunity to say a huge 'Thank you' to the many people who assisted with the delivery of the mailing, three times a year. She wrote "This past year, you nineteen helpers, with assistance from friends and



families, I'm sure, have hand-delivered approximately 1,840 envelopes! Using the most recent postage charges, this means that you have saved the Trust about £2,400! A brilliant effort by so few people! The money you have saved is supporting the work carried out by the Trust throughout Lincolnshire".

She went on to say "We deliver in Stamford, Bourne, the Deepings and all the villages in between and around these towns. Our smallest round is ten addresses and the largest is over two hundred. We could always use more helpers in order to spread the load".

Two articles from the March 2016 Newsletter are worth reproducing here:-



**Denis Cawdron** – we are very sorry to have to announce that a long-time friend to and member of the Trust Denis Cawdron, died recently following a long illness. Denis was a Committee member for many years and acted as meetings secretary helping to provide the programme of winter talks and lectures for members. He was also was an active and founder member of the Deepings Camera Club and was a keen and active birdwatcher. Committee members were amongst the many mourners at his funeral in January.

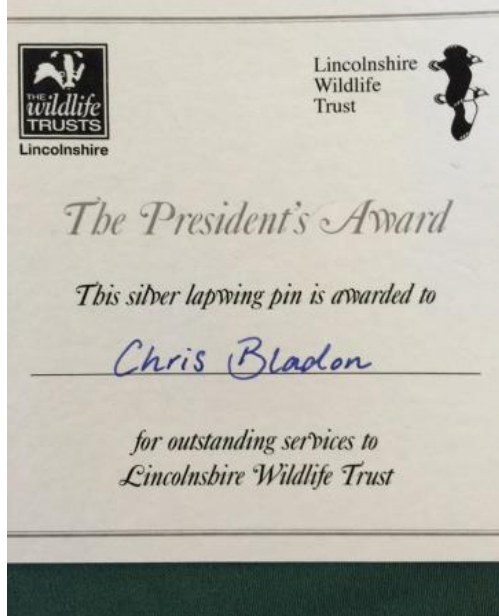


**Chris Bladon** – We are delighted to report that at the last Trust AGM in October, Chris Bladon received The President's Award from Geoff Trinder for her services to the Trust.

So we send our congratulations to Chris who, over the years, has raised many thousands of pounds for the Trust through sales of goods, beginning with the shop the Trust once had at Grimsthorpe Castle.

She continues to be an active Committee member and also our representative to LWT Council.

Two other local Trust members have been awarded the President's Award:- Terry Barnatt and Dave Vandome.



Also in 2016 Phil Huggins joined the Committee and took over the vacant Wildlife Records Officer post. The October Area Group Newsletter recorded the untimely death of Libby Owen, who had long supported the Trust locally. She loved nature and often showed her photos of local wildlife at our Members' evenings.

At the 2017 AGM Malcom Scriven resigned from the Committee and Vin Fleming gave notice that he wanted to stand down as Chairman of the Group, saying he was definitely resigning at the 2018 AGM.

So, after the 2018 AGM Vin was replaced by Phil Huggins as Chairman. Valerie Machin resigned from the Committee, leaving the Secretary and Membership Secretary posts vacant. Dave Vandome agreed to act as Minutes Secretary as a stop-gap measure, and Hazel Williams remains the Group's Treasurer. Other Committee members are:- Ian Sutherland (Promotions rep), Chis Bladon (Press and Publicity rep), Steph Pakey (Catering co-ordinator), Flynn Pakey (Youth rep), and Vin Fleming, taking over the Wildlife Records Officer from Phil.

High on the priority list of 'things to do' the Committee is currently planning the events that will celebrate the last fifty years, and perhaps look forward to the next?

## NATURE TRAILS AND SHOPS

The Grimsthorpe Nature Trails and shop were such a major part of the Area Group's activities in the early days it warrants a more detailed look. Nature trails run by the Trust were very popular. In 1969 there were three trails, including one at Grimsthorpe. The spring 1982 'Lapwings' magazine featured five nature trails:-

Well Vale, near Alford, was open three days a week from Saturday 10 July to Saturday 4 September.

Belton Park, near Grantham, where a lakeside nature trail was run in conjunction with the facilities in the house and gardens. The House and gardens were open five days a week from 9 April to 3 October.

Doddington Hall, near Lincoln, where a short nature trail was open two days a week from May to August.

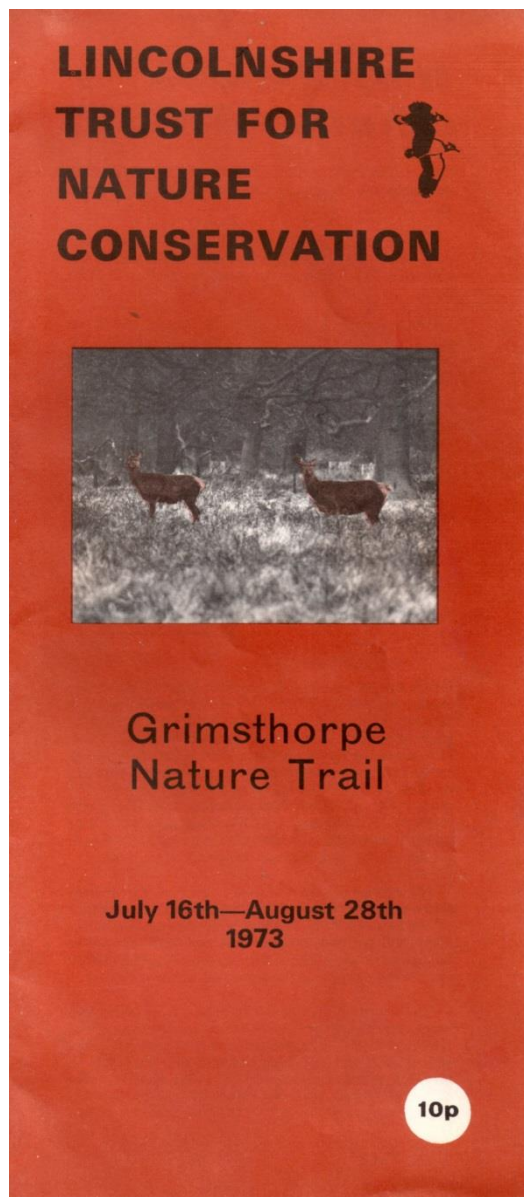
Gibraltar Point, where a popular Walkabout Guide was available from the Visitor Centre throughout the year.

Grimsthorpe Park, near Bourne, which was open every day from Sunday 11 July to Sunday 22 August. AA signs directed traffic from the A1 from the west, and Bourne from the east for the duration of the trails.

The Belton and Doddington trails had Estate admission fees for the house or the grounds.

Both the Well Vale and Grimsthorpe trails were staffed by volunteers, who also ran a trail-head caravan/shop selling Trust merchandise. Other Trust nature trails would come and go, but for this local history only one will feature:-

## GRIMSTHORPE NATURE TRAILS AND SHOP



The First trail with a guide book ran from 16 July – 28 August 1973. 'The Deer Park Trail' started from a trail-head wooden hut or one of the caravans from Moor Farm. The hut had displays, which may help visitors to identify some of the species they might have seen. The caravan also contained display boards. The Trail was signposted, 1.5 miles long, and took visitors through part of the rides and avenues of the deer park. A 12-page black and white illustrated trail booklet was available for 10p. Along the trail there were numbered posts, which were referred to in the booklet. So, at the first post the booklet says that the trail starts near the junction of avenues of oak and horse chestnut trees which were planted about 1650, and were shown in an engraving dated 1684. The booklet continues to describe some of the wildlife species that can be seen, or have been recorded in that area.

There were 10 marker posts, each with descriptive text in the booklet. At post 10 a separate 'Pots and Pans' trail could take visitors around a series of quarries. The second trail was 1 mile long, but looped around to re-join the first trail, adding  $\frac{1}{4}$  of a mile to the length of the 'Deer Park Trail'.

The booklet explains that the curious name of the area derives from the disused stone quarries, some of which are deep (like pots) and some shallow (like pans).

The back page of the booklet gives information about the Lincolnshire Trust and its conservation aims, and lists 19 local firms that sponsored the trails.

The following page is a scanned image of the centre pages of the booklet. Considering that this was the first year of the trail the booklet must have taken a lot of preparation. There is no indication about the author or illustrator, but I suspect Philip Grimes was responsible for most of the text and drawings in this (and the second edition of the guide) booklet.

**8** You now enter a broad clearing known as The Dark Riding. On either side are OAKS, ELMS, HAWTHORNS, some ASH and one or two FIELD MAPLES. Look for signs of DUTCH ELM disease — defoliation, especially in the upper branches, caused by a fungus growth whose carrier is the SCOLYTUS beetle.

The area is rich in birdlife, the commonest birds being STARLINGS and JACKDAWS which nest in the hollow trees. You may also see the JAY, most brightly coloured of the CROW tribe and an inveterate egg stealer. In late afternoon you may spot the LITTLE OWL whose swooping flight gives it away, for its immobility and bark-coloured plumage make it hard to see when stationary. BARN and LONG-EARED OWLS also haunt the Dark Riding, an indication of the presence of VOLES which form a large part of their diet.

This is a place where the PURPLE HAIRSTREAK butterfly may be seen, probably in the upper branches of the OAKS. It is the female which has the deep purple forewings; the male is a dull brown on top but on the underside of his pale grey wings is the dark delicate line which gives him his name.

Towards the end of the Dark Riding the trail takes you through an area where BRAMBLE and HAWTHORN are re-invading the pasture. Before myxomatosis RABBITS provided a check on their growth. In spite of recurrent outbreaks the disease seems not so lethal now.



*Bramble*

**9** As you enter the bracken beds through the gate notice how clearly defined are the areas occupied by the BRACKEN and by the GRASSES. This is probably an indication of soil acidity.

Although the bracken gives a dull appearance and prevents other plants from succeeding, it is in its dense cover that the RED and FALLOW DEER dropped their calves and fawns in May and June. Notice their tracks crossing the trail, and their "slots" or footprints in the softer ground.



*Red Deer Calf*

In the grassy areas you will see the rich yellow flower of ST. JOHN'S WORT whose leaves contain tiny oil capsules, the pinks of BLACKBERRY and DOGROSE, the purple of KNAPWEED, and the vivid green of DOG'S MERCURY — the first of the woodland plants to flower before it is denied sunlight by the flush of tree leaves in spring.

**10** Oak trees dominate the bracken beds, but you will notice that none of them is less than 100 years old, and many are "stag-headed" and decrepit. The browsing and grazing animals such as DEER, HARES and RABBITS make natural regeneration impossible. The sentry box-like tree guards at this point indicate an attempt to enrich the area by planting sapling OAKS in a guard which should give protection from wind and animal damage until they are safely established.

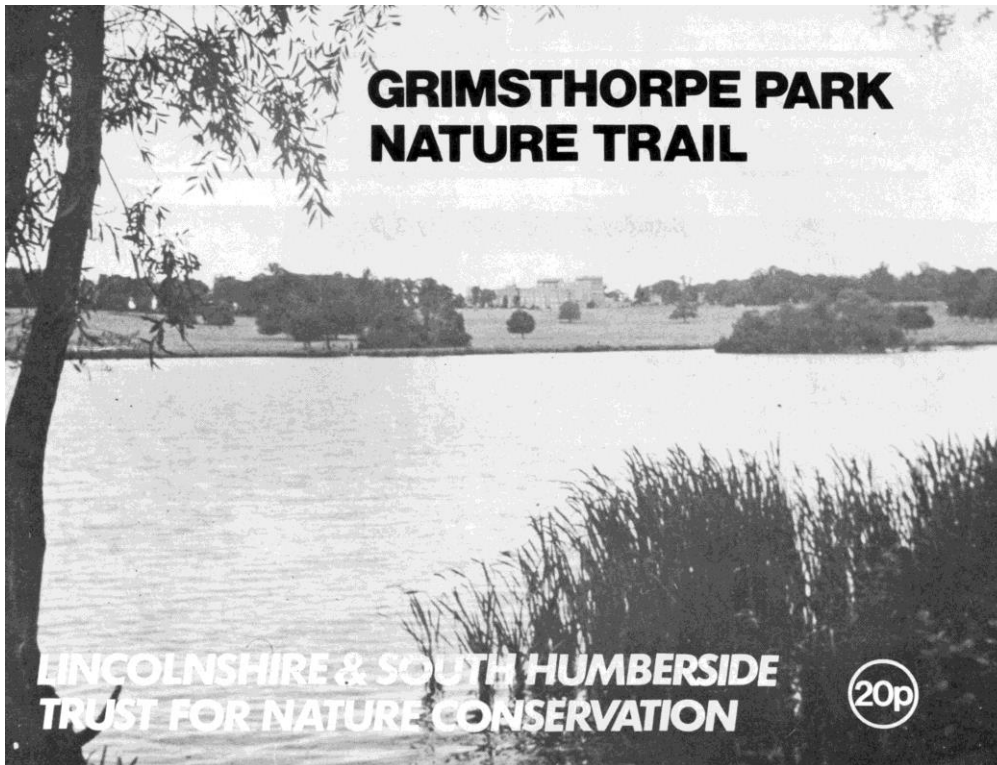
The hummocks on your right are anthills. Although colonies of RED ANTS still exist in some profusion, the heavy overgrowth of grass resulting from a depleted RABBIT population has denied this valuable food source to the chicks of the GREY PARTRIDGE. This is one cause of their decline in recent years, but GREY and RED LEGGED PARTRIDGES are still to be seen here, as is the WOODCOCK whose long bill probes the soft earth for subterranean insects. Watch here for the SPOTTED FLYCATCHER as it dashes out from a bough to catch HOVER FLIES and MOTHS.



*Woodcock*



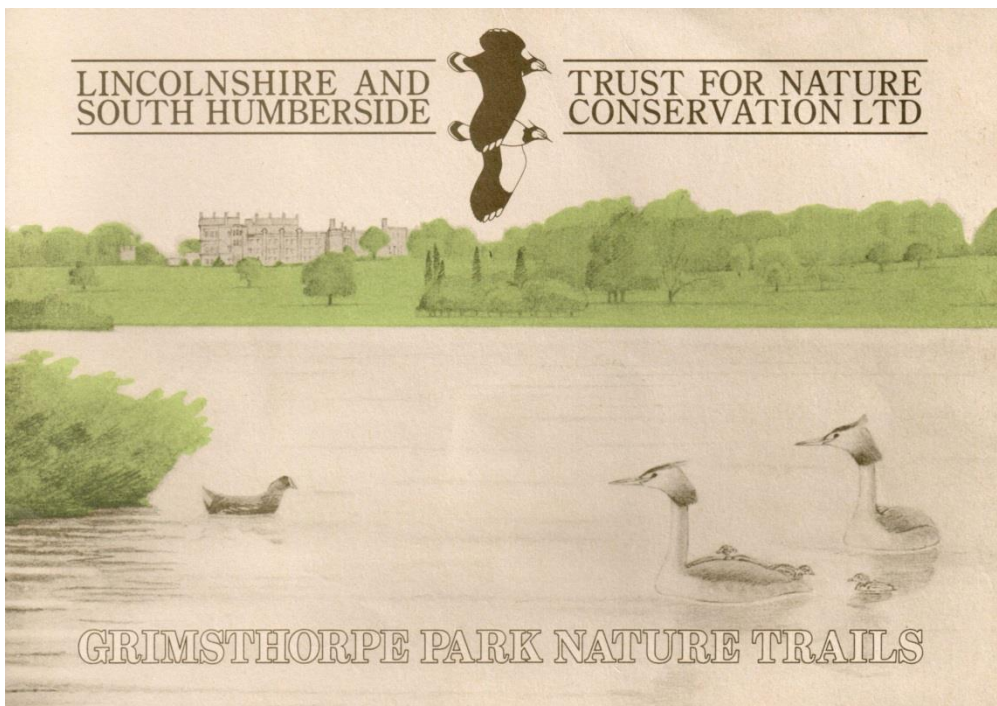
By 1981 a second nature trail guide had been produced:-



This was a 14-page black and white illustrated booklet describing what to see at the 12 marker posts around a 3 mile trail, with a shorter loop of 2 miles back to the car park. The Nature Trail caravan had replaced the hut, allowing space for the sale of Trust merchandise. One drawback of this booklet was that it needed updating each year, so stick-on labels giving the trail opening/closing dates, and dates for the house opening had to be applied.

Although the trail was now longer, it did not go as far into the estate, missing out the 'Pots and Pans' area for instance.

The third trail guide was published in 1984:-



This was a completely re-worked publication, printed on light grey textured paper with a wash of colour added to a few of the otherwise monochromatic illustrations.

The guide for the first time has a map. The 'Lakes Trail' follows the route in the previous guide, but a second trail around the 'Pots and Pans' reappears. This time it can only be accessed by car or a bike ride along a 2 mile stretch of the Old Coach Road. A second Trails car park was located near Elsea Pit.

The Trust gratefully acknowledges the help of the Countryside Commission in the production of the guide. Philip Grimes is thanked for his part in the preparation of the booklet and the trail routes, although the illustrations this time are by Crispin Fisher and the booklet was designed by Robin Johnson Associates.

Two pages of the booklet are reproduced below:-



## GRIMSTHORPE PARK NATURE TRAILS

Grimsthorpe lies near the eastern edge of the once extensive Kesteven Forest. The limestone ridges rise 200 ft above the nearby fens and are overlain by glacial boulder clay. Grimsthorpe Castle is sited on such a ridge between the valleys of the rivers Glen and Eden.

The first Trail, called the LAKE TRAIL, covers the northern quarter of the 2,000 acre Park. It passes round the lake and provides fine views of Grimsthorpe Castle, home of the late Earl of Ancaster who was Patron of The Lincolnshire and South Humberside Trust for Nature Conservation and who was first to encourage nature trails on the Estate.

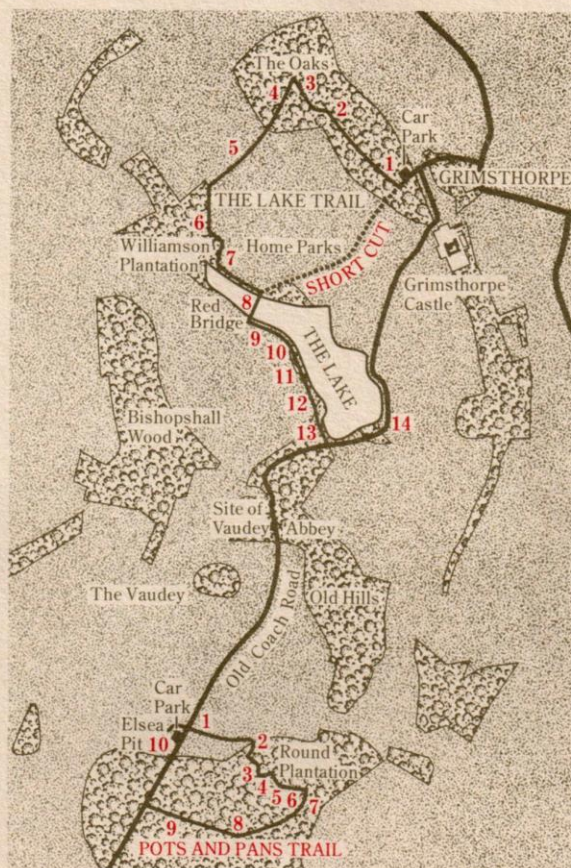
The Lake Trail is about three miles long but there is a short cut of about two miles.

The second Trail, known as POTS AND PANS, is reached by car or bike (not on foot please) along the tarmacadamed coach road signposted through the open farmland to a second car park.

You are very welcome to have a picnic in either of these car parking areas but please respect the waymarks and do not go elsewhere in the Park. The Trust gratefully acknowledges the help of the Countryside Commission in the production of this guide.

- Nature Trails
- Open Parkland
- Woodland

Scale 0 500 metres



□ 9 **The Lakeside.** Here is a large *crack willow*, the tree getting its name from the brittle nature of its timber. *Greater willowherb* fringes this area and there are also patches of *great reedmace* and *reed sweetgrass*. Amongst the *pond-sedge* near the water's edge *reed buntings* are often seen searching for food. The male *reed bunting* is a small brown bird with a black head and throat and white collar. *Moorhen*, *coot* and *great crested grebe* are regular nesting birds in the vegetation at the edge of the lake. You may see young grebes riding piggy-back on their mothers or, later in the year, as stripey versions of the magnificent adults.

*Alder* trees fringe the lake, some with their roots in the water. The roots develop ball-shaped nodules containing a bacterium called *Schinzia alni*. The bacterium fixes nitrogen from the air (in the same way as the bacteria within nodules on pea and bean roots) which can then be used by the tree.

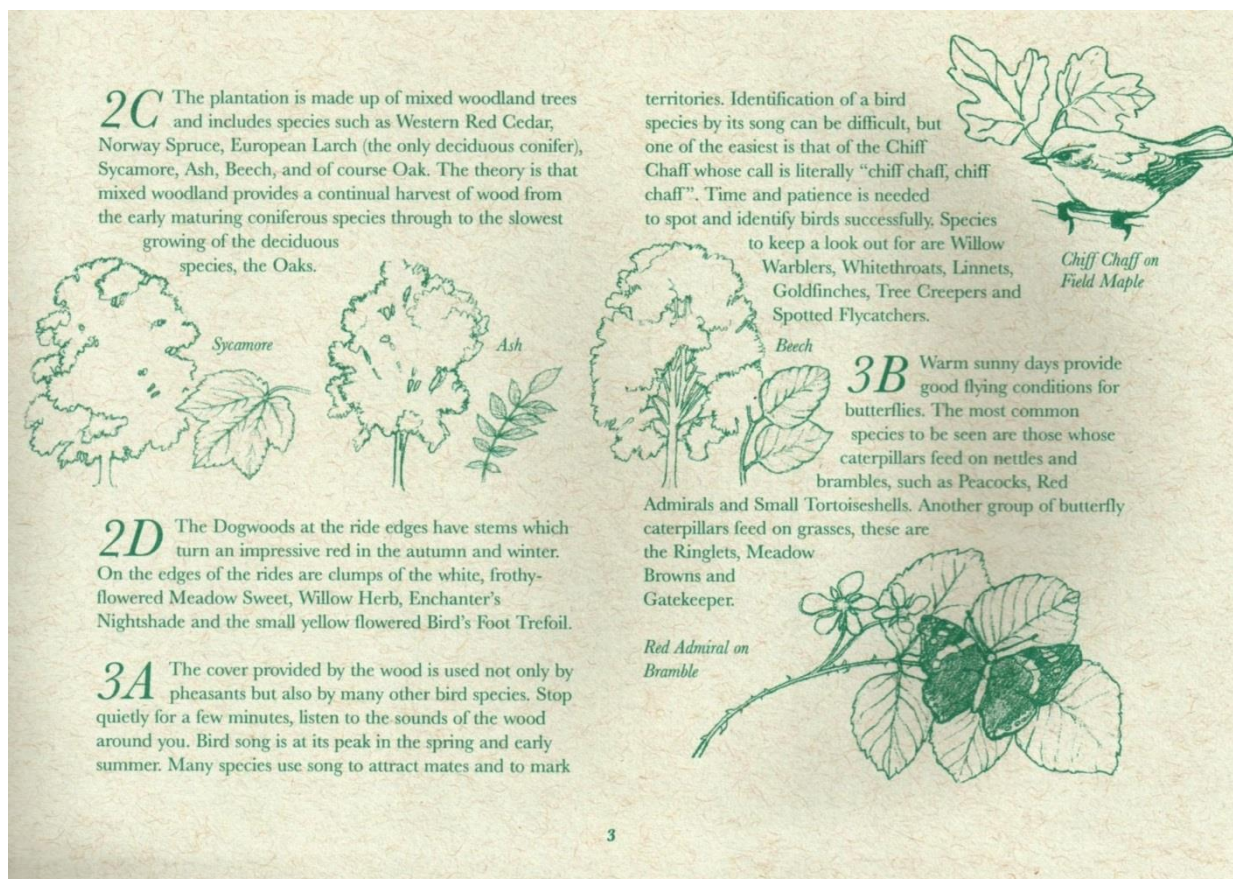
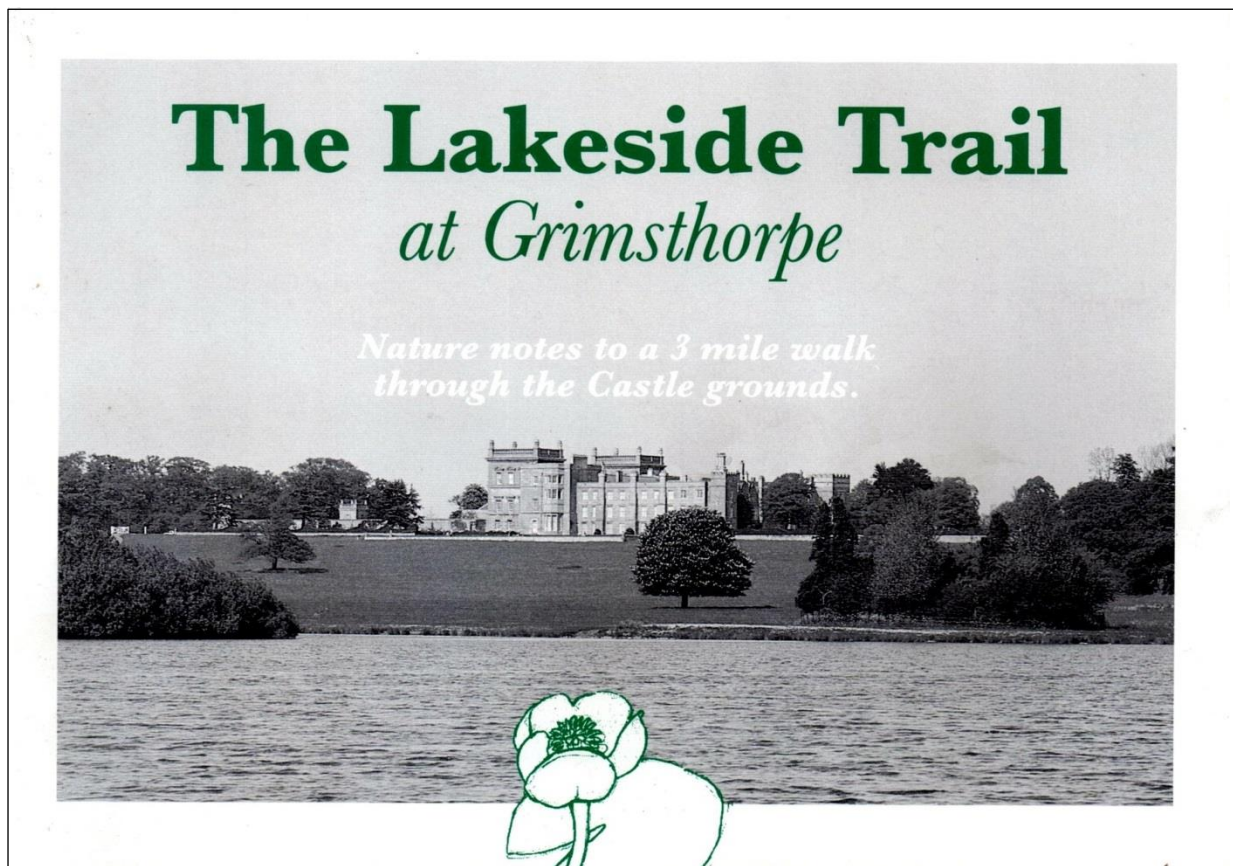
□ 10 **The Copse.** Near the entrance to this copse you will find *prickly sowthistle* growing on the edge of the field. The copse consists of *oak*, *beech*, *alder* and *horse-chestnut*. Look in the bark of the elm logs lying by the track for the breeding galleries of the *Scolitus* beetle, carrier of the fungus which causes Dutch elm disease. *Stock dove*, *great spotted* and *green woodpeckers* are often seen here and also *lesser spotted woodpecker*. The flora consists mainly of ground ivy but you will also find *burdock*, whose thistle-like flowers develop into the sticky seedheads whose tiny hooks adhere to clothing or animal fur and so disperse to start new colonies. Avoid touching the purple spotted umbellifer which is *hemlock*: it is poisonous.

- a Yellow Water-lily
- b Silverweed
- c Common Bird's-foot trefoil
- d Common Rock-rose
- e Colt's foot
- f Black Medick
- g Creeping Jenny
- h Scentless Mayweed





The fourth and final guide was published in 1995. The trail was again around three miles long, with a short cut that reduced the length to two miles. The route avoided the Old Coach Road altogether, taking visitors through 'The Groves' plantation and to approach the Castle from the south.



The 12-page guide once again was printed on textured paper, with a pastel green text. The design and illustrations were by Mackenzie Wilson, Corby Glen.



## THE CARAVANS

In the early years Barrie Wilkinson from HQ, sometimes assisted by Terry Bailey (Mid Lincs Warden) set up the trails, putting in the marker posts and information points. Barrie Wilkinson recalls:-

The Trust had two caravans, one large one small plus a permanent one at Well Vale. The two mobile ones were stored at Moor Farm from 1970 and towed to each site as required by someone from Horncastle I believe. I know my summers were very busy setting up the nature trails each year. Terry Bailey used to help me with Grimsthorpe as there were two trails there Pots and Pans and Lakeside. My car had to go almost everywhere. I remember at Bardney Forrest one year in my new white Ford estate I was driving along one of the unmade rides and had forgotten about a shallow ditch which I went over with a bump which made a loose cap on a tin of creosote come off and it splashed all over the inside of the car!



Trail head caravan at the start of the 'Lakeside Trail' or 'Deer Park Trail', probably in 1969. (Photo:- Barrie Wilkinson)

## THE 'NEW' CARAVAN

Transporting and storing the blue and white caravan was problematic, and eventually it was considered to be not roadworthy. When the 'new' caravan first appeared on the scene it also was well past its prime, but since it was stored at Grimsthorpe it didn't need to be roadworthy! The outside was faded and 'well used' on the inside. Before the 1984 season the outside had been painted, and the inside transformed into 'a shop'!





The freshly painted caravan. 'We' painted it, Jo Everingham didn't like the white paint we had bought for the top half of the caravan, so mixed in a little of the green paint, and the result looked good. Colin Faulkner from the Spalding Area Group painted the text and logo. Graham Underhill painted the inside.



Dave Vandome fitted out the inside with storage cupboards under the display area at one end, and the void where the double bed was stored was fitted with shelves. Mr & Mrs Browning of 'Contrast Carpets' in Market Deeping donated a cushion floor covering laid over the original blue floor (as shown above). Some of the original caravan



fittings were retained, like the storage unit on the right. It looked good, and gave us a superb outlet for displaying and selling the merchandise.



The caravan had its limitations. It was fine with a few visitors inside it, but it did creak and groan a bit if a whole load of people tried to get in, and with increasing numbers of people using the trail it really wasn't suitable. For the 1993 season the shop moved into the stable yard, occupying the space where in olden times a coach was kept. It was a bit basic, and we reused the units from the caravan to add to the sales display area.



Inside the coach 'garage'.

Trestle tables and make-shift displays, but it was much roomier, and close to the café, all of which making for a good sales space. The huge doors might have been needed for coaches – but it could be rather chilly (and windy) with them open.

*(Photo:- Chris Bladon)*

In 1996 the shop moved to one of the converted stables in the yard, and this was a step change in retailing!





For a start – it looked inviting from the outside...



... and the inside was fitted out with 'proper' shop fittings – it looked – professional! (Photo's:- Chris Bladon)

By 1995 the shop had become a major sales outlet for Trust merchandise, with annual takings exceeding £10,000. It was also a major commitment by the volunteers who ran the trails and staffed the shop. In 1995 the shop was open between 11.00am – 5.00pm two days a week from 16 April until 28 September, during August the shop was open five days a week, making a total of 76 'shop' days. Since it was usual to have two volunteers staffing the shop at any one time (sometimes it was rather busy) an estimated 152 volunteer days was recorded for the 1995 season at the 1996 Area Group AGM. Stock had to be ordered and delivered, often volunteers would travel to the Trust HQ in Horncastle to pick up stock. It all needed stock taking and auditing.

The trails benefitted our local funds, with £392 for car parking and entrance fee money being donated to the Area Group by the Estate in 1994, for instance. But its true value cannot be over-stated. Staffing the shop on a cold, wet



and windy day and few customers was not much fun. But usually the volunteers thoroughly enjoyed the 'work', and often had time to speak to the customers about the Trust, its aims, and got them to join the Trust.



Grimsthorpe Estate would sometimes have other sales opportunities, like a Christmas gift fayre.

*Joan McClelland with David Cowling (Trust Sales Manager) at the 1995 Christmas event. (Photo:- Chris Bladon)*

Grimsthorpe Estate took over running the shop in 2002.



This photo was taken in September at the end of the 2001 season with some of the volunteers along with Helen Baker, who had taken over as Trust Sales Manager after David Cowling.

It was the end of an era, with over 30 years of nature trails on the Estate, and over 17 years of running a shop.

A magnificent achievement by all concerned.

Volunteers at the Grimsthorpe Nature Trails, 1990 – end, supplied by Chris Bladon:-

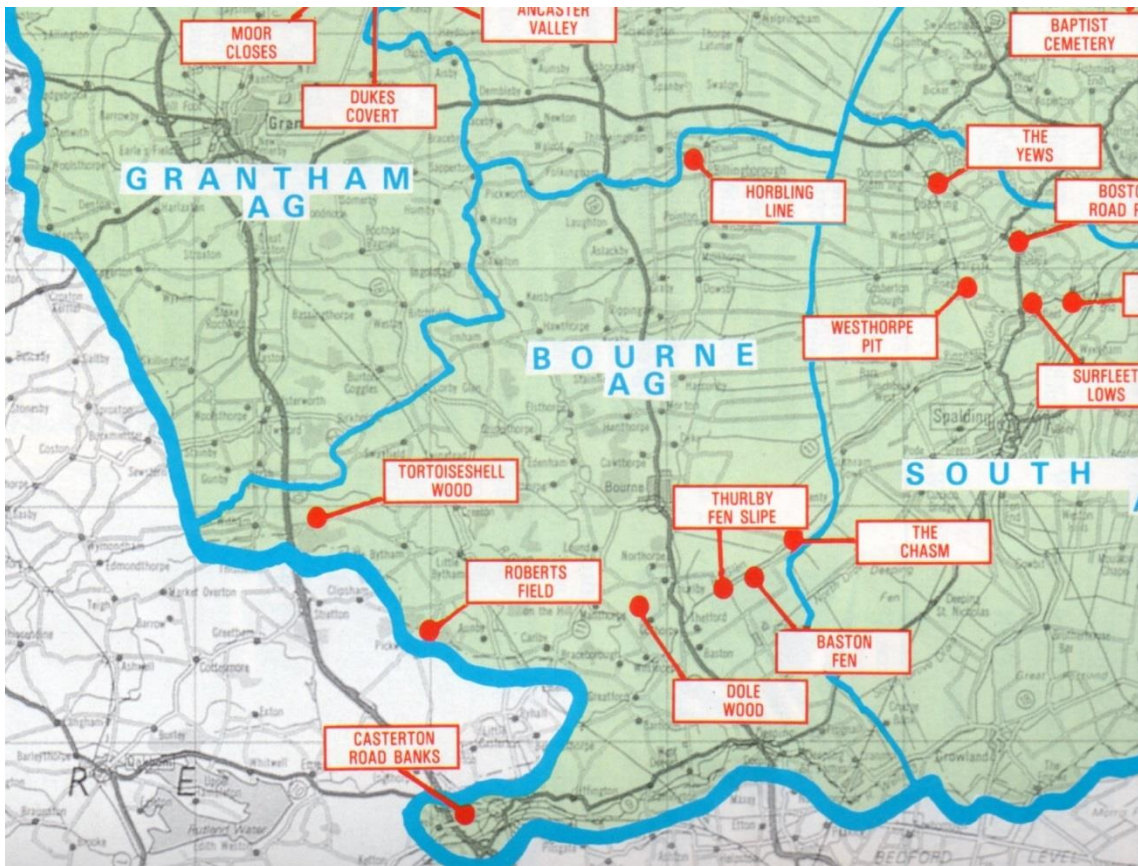
Mr & Mrs Baldwin	Miss J McClelland
Mrs M Bradley	Mrs V Middleton
Mr & Mrs Coulson	Mrs M McGarry
Mrs P Cross	Mrs P McGarry
Mr & Mrs Cridford	Dr & Mrs McGregor
Mrs V Davies	Miss P Morton
Mrs M Doman	Mrs P Morrisonm
Mrs J Dunn	Mr & Mrs W Normington
Mrs D Edmunds	Mrs E Osgothorpe
Mrs V Edwards	Mrs E Pomfrett
Mrs J Fisher	Mr & Mrs Rowland
Mrs C Graham	Mrs S Small
Mrs S Grundy	Mrs H Storr
Mr & Mrs B Hebborn	Mrs P Stubley
Mrs J Johnston	Mrs N Tarry
Mr & Mrs A Jones	Mr & Mrs Thorgood
Mr & Mrs J Jones	Mrs I Waldram
Mr & Mrs J Lee	Mr & Mrs Wells
Mrs J May	Mr & Mrs C Wright
Mr & Mrs D Lipscombe	Mr & Mrs Underhill
Mr & Mrs D Mainwaring	Mr & Mrs Yates

With thanks to them all.

## AREA GROUP NATURE RESERVES

### INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to record the history of the nature reserve in the Bourne area – and straight away we hit a problem – which are the reserves in the Bourne area?



*The map above was published in the January 1992 'Lapwings' magazine.*

The 17 area groups were mainly created in order to break up the County into manageable sized areas for 'Lapwings' and newsletter distribution, with the bulk of the mail-out being hand delivered by volunteers. There was once an effort to create Reserve Management Groups (RMG's), where Volunteer Reserve Manager's (VRM's) within an area occasionally met under the chairmanship of a Convenor. The importance of the RMG's has faded somewhat now the Trust has Regional Field Staff covering the County.

So, if we take the 1992 map and have a closer look at the 'Bourne' area:- The VRM for Tortoiseshell Wood was Angela Bates, member of the Grantham Area Group.

Robert's Field was under the management of Barrie Wilkinson, the Trust's Reserves Officer.

Max Winslow from Stamford was the VRM of Gt Casterton Road Banks.

The VRM's for Thurlby Fen Slippe were Kay & Richard Heath, from the Spalding Area Group.

Baston Fen and The Chasm were being managed by John Redshaw, from the Spalding Area Group.

The VRM of Horbling Line was Bill Pateman, from the Sleaford Area Group.

The VRM for Dole Wood was Dave Vandome, from the Bourne Area Group.

In practice therefore, nature reserves in the 'Bourne Area' ended up as those managed by volunteers from the Bourne Area Group, and similarly for those in the Spalding, Sleaford and Grantham Area Groups. At one stage Kay & Richard Heath were managing four nature reserves, John Redshaw looked after four, and Dave Vandome also had four.

For the purpose of this look back over the past 50 years we will be focusing on:- Dole Wood, Toft Tunnel, Robert's Field, Horbling Line, Stanton's Pit and Deeping Lakes Nature Reserves. All photos by Dave Vandome, unless otherwise attributed.



## IN THE BEGINNING

The beginning was simple – 50 years ago the only nature reserve close to Bourne was Baston Fen, which was established in 1967. John Redshaw had been closely involved with acquiring the reserve, and pulled in volunteers from Spalding and Bourne to help with the work.



*An early work party at Baston Fen, with Kerry Harrison, Terry Barnatt and Tim Wayman clearing up after the 1968/69 winter ice skating (Photo:- John Redshaw).*

## DOLE WOOD

Mr Ken Stephenson leased the part of the wood he owned to the Trust to become a Nature Reserve in 1975. The first VRM was Mr R Bell, and the second in 1976 was Chas Hughes. John Redshaw was often consulted about work on the reserve, and was on hand to help with the management. In 1977 Jo Everingham became the VRM, organising work parties to create glades and paths. In 1981 an article in the Trust's 'Lapwings' magazine reported – work parties of up to 15 members met on first Saturday of the month from September. They cut back over-hanging branches, cleared the ditch and extended one of the glades.

Jo was good at a lot of things, but paperwork and record keeping were not top of her priority list. Dave Vandome took over from Jo as VRM in 1989. The good thing about Dole Wood is that it changes very little.



*This photo of wood anemones near the reserve entrance was taken in 1984, but it is not much different now.*



*The wood is a delight, especially so in spring, and it is very tempting to include LOTS of photographs of bluebells, but here are just a couple from 2011.*



### **OPEN DAYS**

In 1989 Jo Everingham thought it would be a good idea to have an open day. She chose a date in May, but it soon became clear that an earlier date might be needed to catch the bluebells at their best, so we held two open days. Although publicity went out for the earlier date in April we didn't expect many visitors. So, on a lovely sunny morning on Sunday 16 April, we were totally overwhelmed by a steady stream of visitors; 320 people turned out.

For the second open day on 7 May we were more organised, we had a refreshments tent, guided walks and activities for children, this time over 500 people visited the wood.



*Jo, selling Trust merchandise. Just inside the entrance to the wood.  
7 May, 1989.*





*Opposite the sales table we had display boards and information about the Wood and the Trust.*

Just why so many people turn out for the open days remains a mystery; after all, anyone can walk around the wood at any-time they choose. But, every year since 1989 the Bourne Area Group has held a public open day, and every year 200+ visitors come to the event.



*For the open day on 6 May 1990 we even had tractor rides to/from the wood from the car park area along Obthorpe Lane.*





David Cowling, the Trusts Sales Officer brought his sales caravan, and we had a refreshments tent, a plant stall and lots on offer for the 300+ visitors. Over 30 volunteers had worked either on the day or in preparation for it, it was quite a grand affair!



*For the 1991 open day Margaret Bradley operated a shuttle service from the wood to the car park area along Obthorpe Lane with her pony and trap. (photo:- D Sheppard).*



Some years later ...



*Towards the end of the open day on 24 April 2016 – it was overcast and quite chilly.*

*Some volunteers (Iain Banks) had been helping most year since 1989 ...*



*... some volunteers (Marcus and Alex Williams) had not been helping for quite so long!*

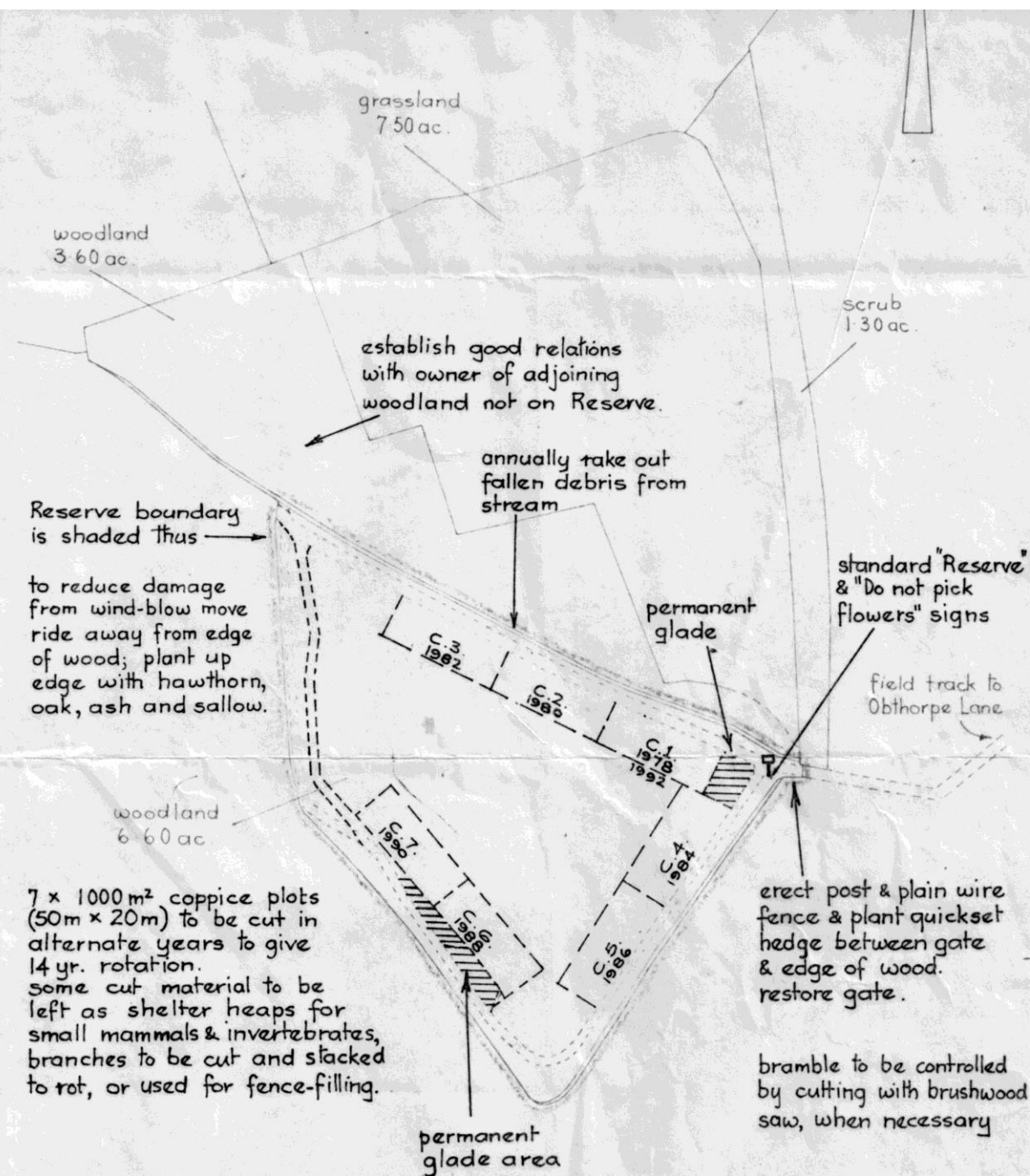


## **DOLE WOOD – MANAGEMENT**

The first management plan (see page 30) was drawn up by John Redshaw in 1978. It isn't too far away from the current management strategy. The original plan was to have a number of coppice plots (C1 – C7 on the map), where the hazel trees would be coppiced on rotation. Although some coppicing is still done from time-to-time the hazel grows too slowly for a regular cycle. Sixteen of the mature oak trees were felled in 2010 in order to let more light in to the coppice plots.







## MANAGEMENT MAP (1978)

LINCOLNSHIRE TRUST FOR NATURE CONSERVATION LTD

Registered Office: The Manor House, Alford, Lincolnshire.

SITE: DOLE WOOD,  
THURLBY.

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SCALE: 1:2500  
0 100 200 300 400 Feet  
0 20 40 60 80 100 120 140 160 Metres

GRID REF.  
53(TF)/092 161

DRAWN REVISED  
EJ Redshaw  
11.9.1974

Work parties in the 1980's cleared brambles from some of the coppice plots (plots C1 – C3) and established the path around the wood. For the most part that is all we do now, but we do have to keep an eye on the ditch and prevent it blocking near the reserve entrance.

We have had help from a number of groups – the Caravan & Camping Group were regular volunteers in the early years, and in 1989 we had 15 students from Casterton College working in the wood for 4 days and “a great deal was achieved” according to the records.



*Students from Casterton College, 1989.*

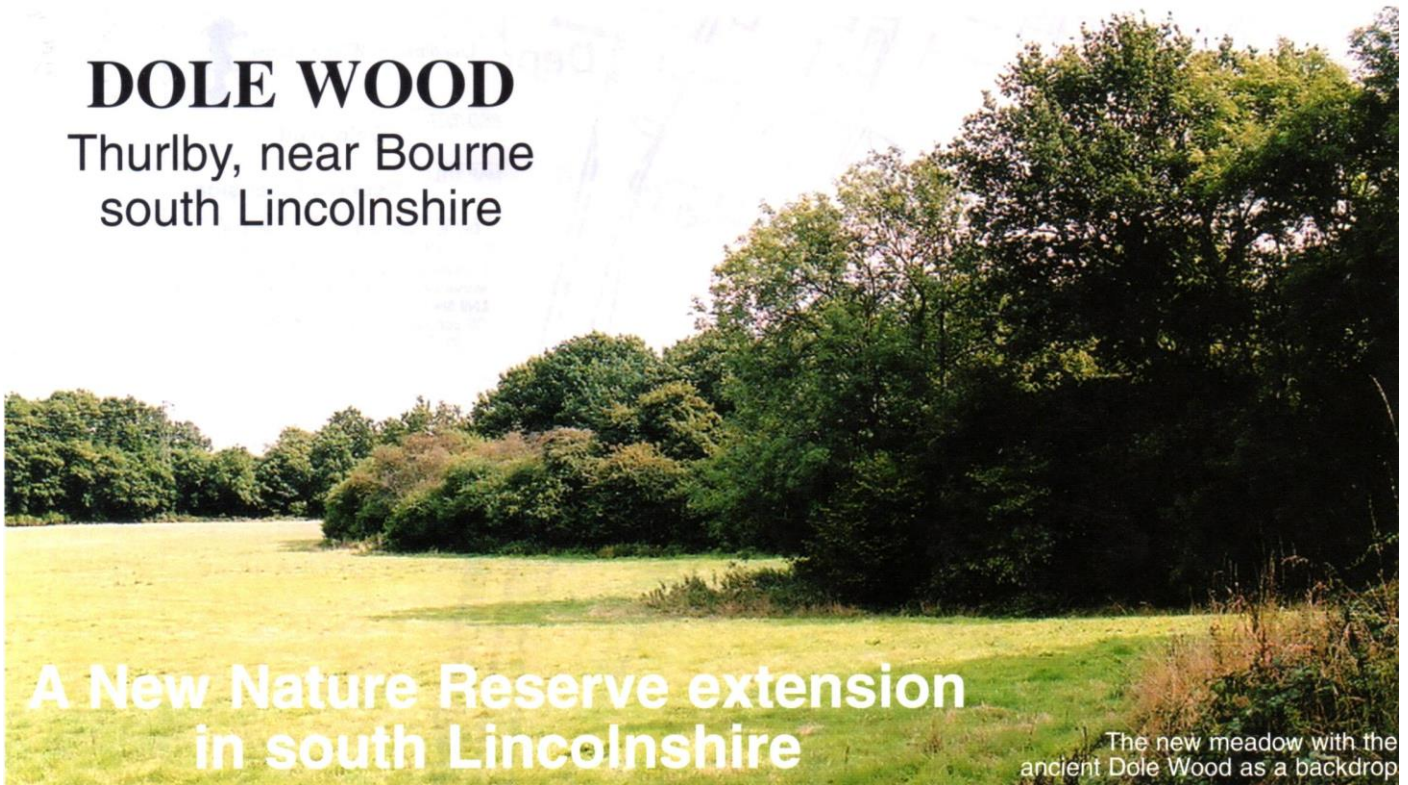


## DOLE WOOD EXTENSION

In 2005 an opportunity to buy part of the wood arose, leading to an appeal and subsequent purchase.

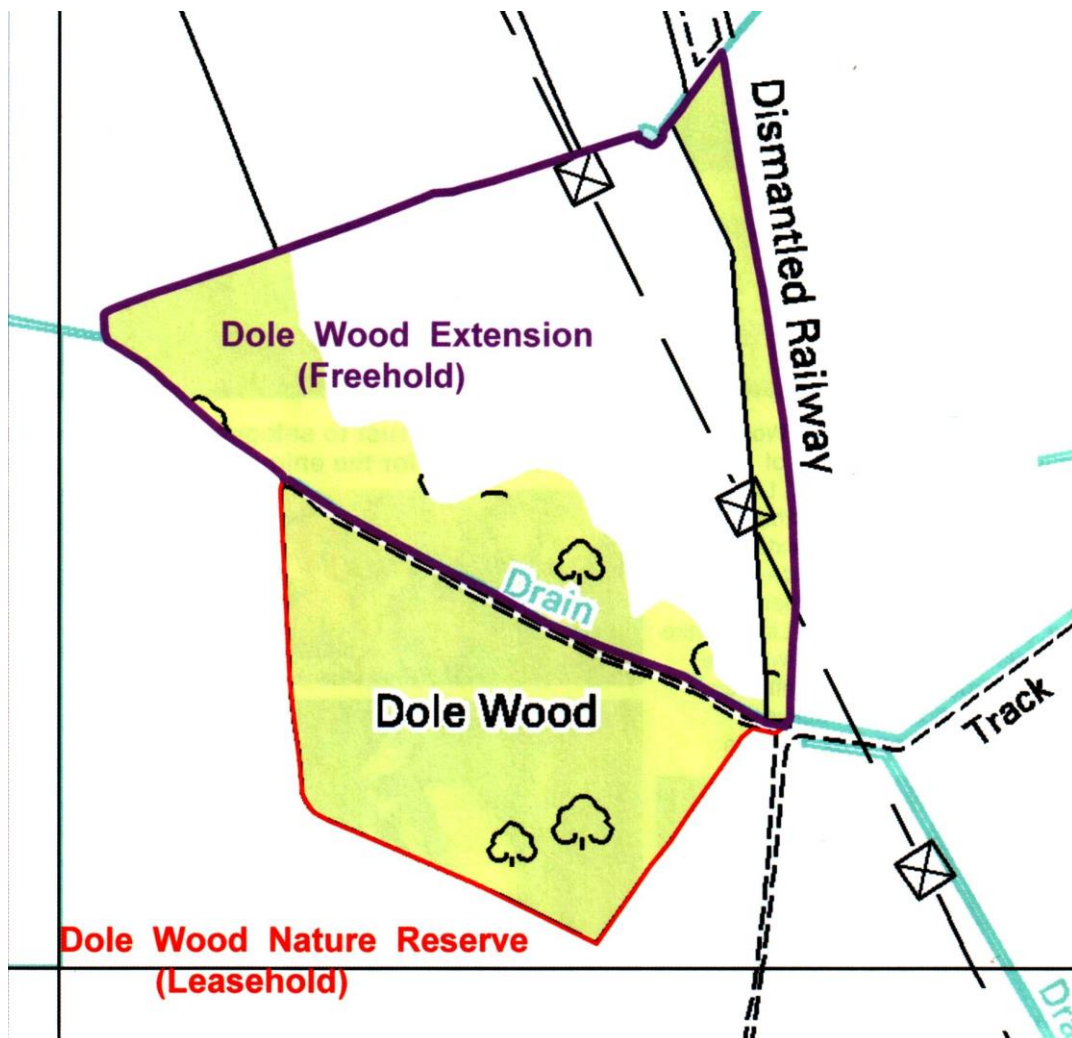
# DOLE WOOD

Thurlby, near Bourne  
south Lincolnshire



A New Nature Reserve extension  
in south Lincolnshire

The new meadow with the  
ancient Dole Wood as a backdrop



Along with part of the wood the purchase also included a meadow and part of the dismantled railway.



The 1922 Ordnance Survey map shows that the meadow was previously wooded, and the intention is to return it to woodland. In February 2008 the perimeter of the meadow was planted with 500 shrub trees, such as hawthorn, hazel and field maple. The shrub canopy will develop, and eventually the grasses in the meadow will be replaced by woodland plants already growing around the edge of the field. Although some oak trees have been planted there are hundreds of self-sown oaks growing in the field.



*Spindle, one of the shrubs planted in the meadow. September 2017.*

### **NEW CHALLENGES**

Strangely, more time is being spent managing the dismantled railway land and the meadow than on the wooded part of the reserve. Although the shrub planting is doing well, blackthorn and brambles are ‘marching’ into the meadow from all sides, threatening to swamp out the shrubs. So cutting them back is necessary until the shrubs get established (and can compete with the brambles and blackthorn).

Also, during the winter of 2017/18 Western Power carried work out to eventually remove the overhead power line and put the cables underground crossing the meadow. The work needed some clearance of trees on the former railway line, but this will recover with time. We will need to keep clear a wayleave under the cables where they cross the railway line, and restrictions apply as to what can grow above the underground cables in the meadow.



*Power line poles for onward transmission south of the reserve, and the old cable and towers which will eventually be removed. January 2018.*

## **THE FUTURE**

Challenges include Dutch Elm disease and new tree diseases like Ash die-back, which so far has not hit the wood and Acute Oak Decline – which has! Climate change is already influencing when plants flower, but these factors can be more accurately assessed when the Area Group celebrates its centenary in 50 years time!

Opportunities for expanding the wood may arise, and the Trust would be keen to purchase the leasehold part of the wood, if it ever came up for sale. Delightful it may be but it is isolated – wildlife corridors linking the Wood to Park Wood to the east and Math & Elsea Woods to the north would be an exciting project – we can but dream!



## TOFT TUNNEL

Chronologically speaking the next nature reserves to be declared in the Bourne area are Robert's Field and Horbling Line, both in 1985. However, neither of these two would be cared for by 'our' volunteers until much later. So, the next reserve to be managed by the Bourne Area Group was Toft Tunnel in 1993.

Researching for this history has revealed that Toft Tunnel was proposed as a nature reserve by the Area Group's Secretary Charles Hughes at a Committee meeting held on 20 November 1970. At that meeting Dr Allister Galletley proposed that a one mile stretch of line which started near Dobbins Wood on Grimsthorpe Estate and included the Tunnel be a nature reserve. In 1976 it is recorded in the minutes of the Committee meeting held on 8 September that Stuart Crooks (Conservator LTNC) had written to the Hon. Secretary about the railway cutting at Lound, asking if we knew anything about it. Mr Scarborough had contacted Philip Grimes (Grimsthorpe Estate Manager) about it. It is recorded that the cutting is to be used for rubbish dumping. The minutes go on to say Frank Cossey had surveyed the area and that it was very good for grassland butterflies; it was agreed that this information should be sent to the Trust. Mr Scarborough proposed that we should recommend that this area should not be used for dumping, but that the Council should think towards re-cycling rather than dumping. This was unanimously agreed.

Fast forward to 1990, and with the collective memory of the Committee at the time oblivious to any previous discussion or knowledge of the Tunnel the following article was spotted in the 'Bourne Local' newspaper published on 10 May:-



The article sparked the curiosity of the 'two Davids' (Sheppard and Vandome) who did a spot of trespassing. They headed to the east railway cutting first, and after wading through waist high nettles eventually managed to get to the east tunnel entrance. They walked through the tunnel and into the west cutting – it was like entering into a lost world!



*West cutting. May 1990.*

It was a fine spring day, and the hawthorn blossom looked amazing. The floor of the cutting was rabbit grazed, and clearly full of wildflowers.





*Looking back at the tunnel entrance in the west cutting.*

Was the Council really proposing to use the cuttings as a waste dump?

There followed a short media campaign to stop the dump proposal:-

# Nature haven is saved from dump

Protests from nature lovers over plans for a rubbish dump on land at Toft Tunnel near Bourne have forced South Kesteven District Council to agree to turn the area into a nature reserve.

The council now plans to retain the land as a haven for flowers and wildlife.

Lincolnshire County Council and Anglian Water Authority were among the bodies objecting to the scheme to dump non-toxic waste on the redundant land.

The council's Finance and Land Committee had planned to dump rubbish at the cutting and had contacted the bodies as part of its consultation process.

South Kesteven public relations officer Harry Thomas said: "In the course of the feedback of replies it became apparent to us that there was a

great deal of conservation that could be carried out there in terms of the flowers and wildlife.

"We are a caring council, and the strength of feeling was evident against having a rubbish dump, and we listened to that response."

The council now plans to enter into consultations with the Lincolnshire Trust for Nature Conservation over the future of the site.

Amenities Committee chairman Ian Croft said he welcomed the move.

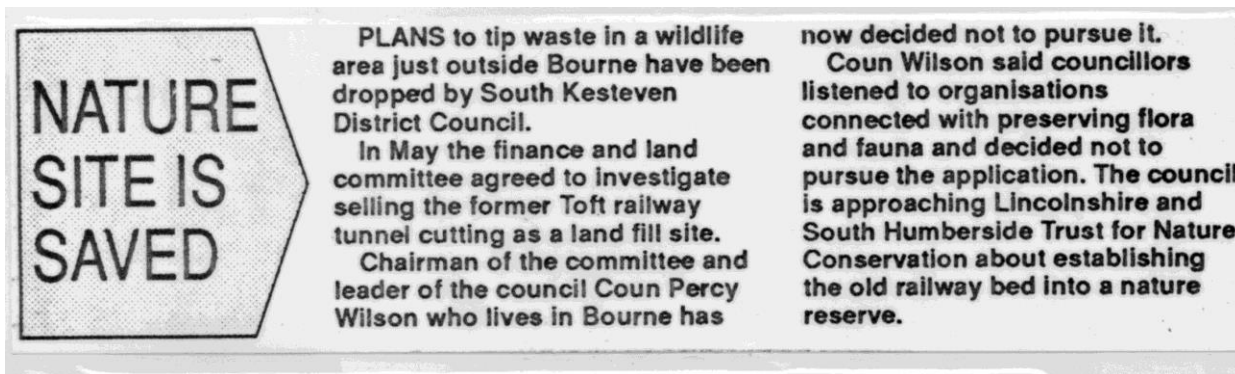
"I believe this small piece of land, which the council owns, forms a natural nature reserve," he said.

"At a time when this sort of thing is becoming of increasing recognised value, it would be very wrong of the council to sell it or use it for dumping rubbish."

Lincolnshire Trust for Nature Conservation spokesman Lloyd Austin said the group would be happy to talk to the council once it had been informed of its plans for the site.

*Stamford Mercury, Friday 3 August 1990*





*Lincs Free Press, 31 August 1990*

Which led to the land eventually being leased to the Trust as a nature reserve.

### **TOFT TUNNEL NATURE RESERVE**

Before the reserve could be declared open, a considerable number of problems needed to be sorted out – not least the access. Roadside ditches needed to be crossed, paths created, and steps built. Stamford Construction Company kindly donated four 30cm diameter concrete drain pipes so that the roadside ditches could be crossed.



*Roadside entrance to the east cutting.*



*Steps down to the track level at the east end of the east cutting.*





*Steps and a ramp,  
near the east tunnel  
entrance.*



*Clearing the path, on  
top of the east  
cutting.*

### **THE MAKING OF A NATURE RESERVE**

So, a considerable amount of clearance and engineering work was required! Work started on the reserve on 27 September 1992. The initial phase was to clear a path along the top of the east cutting. This was achieved by the end of November. Work continued, building the steps into the east cutting and creating a path over the tunnel. We had a lot of help. On 15 November 1992 Morton Girl Guides got most of the cut material out of the east cutting and to a fire site. Guides from Corby Glen and Scouts from Bourne also helped out. On 29 November seven members of the Caravan & Camping Club were working on top of the tunnel.

By the end of March 1993 the east side was more or less completed and the west side was nearing completion, some 756 man/hours so far. By the end of April 1993 the 39 steps (yes, it just had to be done!) in the east cutting and the 76 steps in the west cutting had been completed with the total man hours now totalling 844.



Saturday 22 May 1993 was the date of the official opening ceremony. The ceremony was jointly officiated by Ted Smith, the Trust's Chairman and Cllr. Ron Briggs, Chairman of South Kesteven District Council (SKDC). Approximately 50 guests were invited to the ceremony, these were mainly those who were involved in working on the reserve or supplied goods or services for the reserve. Refreshments were provided for the guests, with tables and chairs set out on the grass in the SKDC Lound Depot, which adjoined the reserve. It was quite a grand affair on a fine spring day, and a highly successful event.

# Toft Tunnel opens on a wave of nostalgia

**A CROWD** of nearly 60 gathered to witness the culmination of more than 800 hours of work by volunteers when Toft Tunnel Nature Reserve finally opened.

Cllr Ron Briggs, Chairman of South Kesteven District Council and Mr Ted Smith, Chairman of the Lincolnshire Trust for Nature Conservation officially cut the ribbon last Saturday, May 22, which is only 11 days earlier than the centenary of the tunnel's opening to goods trains on June 4, 1893.

It was a day of nostalgia for more than one of the guests, Mr Michael Atkins, of Broadlands Avenue, Bourne was on the very last train to go through the tunnel in February 1959.

Railway photographer Mr Philip Wells of Osler Drive, Bourne took photographs near the tunnel the day before the closure and Mrs Margaret Pashley (nee Hewitt), formerly of Bourne, but now living in Grantham, who travelled to Leicester on the line to buy her wedding dress and, with husband, Brian regularly used the line.

## Tribute

Reserve manager Mr Dave Vandome, Cllr Briggs and Mr Smith paid tribute to everyone who assisted with the work and materials on the site.

The two chairmen each received a wooden plaque with a scene of the east cutting tunnel entrance burnt onto the board.

The reserve includes a large portion of the gorse in

Lincolnshire, a buckthorn, cowslips, a pond and wet areas, areas of limestone grasses and acts as a linear wildlife park.

The tunnel was the only one on the former Midland and Great Northern joint railway system and was built as part of the Bourne-Saxby line linking Bourne and the Lincolnshire and Norfolk coast with the industrial Midlands.

Bourne Civic Society is planning a railway exhibition to mark the centenary of the opening of the Bourne-Saxby line to goods trains.

The exhibition at Baldock's Mill, South Street, Bourne, will open Saturday and Sunday, June 26 and 27, July 3 and 4, 10 and 11, 17 and 18.

Anyone who has photographs, railwayana and other items connected with the railways in and around Bourne should contact Cllr John Coleman, tel. 0778 423203.

**Pictured right; Emily Richardson (10), Ted Smith Chairman of the Lincolnshire Trust for Nature Conservation, Dave Vandome Reserve Manager, Cllr Ron Briggs Chairman of the SKDC and Jonathon Johnson, aged 11 who has worked on creating the new reserve since last October so has good knowledge of its recent history. Jonathon also produced a book about the history of the tunnel since its construction 100 years ago, the book was on display at the opening ceremony. Photo: Sarah Bradshaw. Ref no.72/7.**



*Above and left: article in local paper, origin unknown, probably the Stamford Mercury or Bourne Local.*

Emily was an active member of the Bourne WATCH Group and her mother Jane was a Group leader. Jane had organised the refreshments for the day.

Jonathan had been a regular volunteer working on the reserve.

The ribbon 'cutting' ceremony had to be carried out several times for different local papers – Emily was getting a little bit frazzled by the time this photo was taken!



Unfortunately in October 1993 the west cutting had been used by a 4 wheel drive vehicle, which had caused heavy rutting. So we had to build a barrier at the end of the cutting.



*The very muddy conditions were caused by an overflowing ditch on the north side of the cutting, creating a flowing stream along it.*

On 21 November 1993 there was a work party of 4 adults and 5 children from Bourne Heritage Hunters (junior Civic Society), clearing dead wood from the top of the west cutting. There was a group of 6 adults carrying out Community Service and being supervised by John Fuller; they were taking ballast from the tunnel to surface-dress the steps. Jonathan Johnson, David York and Dave Vandome were also there. Well attended work parties were held on the reserve most Sundays, with usually more than 15 volunteers. The Community Service workforce were invaluable, clearing scrub, repairing the rabbit fencing and a lot of the heavy work throughout the winter of 93/94.

On 14 June 1994 Dave Vandome was presented with the Bourne Rotary Club rose Bowl Award on behalf of the volunteers. The Rose Bowl was awarded annually to a group or individual for improvements to the local environment. In the same year Dave Vandome as an employee, received a Community Service Award of £500 from Christian Salvesen for his work at Toft Tunnel and with the Bourne WATCH Group



*Presentation of the rose bowl in the Burghley Arms, Bourne.*

*Ray Vokes (left) Rotary Club Senior Vice President with Dave Vandome.*

*(Photo:- Bourne Local)*





*The winter of 94/95 saw a continuation of the scrub clearance in the west cutting. On 9 October there were 16 people working on the reserve including six children and six parents from the WATCH Group.*

*We got a lot of work done that day.*

### **TOFT TUNNEL - MANAGEMENT**

By the end of March 1995 we had cleared scrub from about half of the west cutting, opening up bays that would eventually be covered with wildflowers. Management of the west cutting has 'settled down' since 1995, with annual 'hay' cuts in July – December. Usually part of the hay cut is done early, say July – August time and the remainder cut later. This allows for some late flowering plants to set seed, and for invertebrates to have a nectar source well into autumn. Selective cutting back of scrub to keep the grassland/wildflower open and clearing any wind-thrown trees is carried out during the winter months. Steps, paths and fencing require maintenance throughout the year.

Part of the land on top of the tunnel has been opened up by laying the hedges, and is now a wildflower meadow. Management in the east cutting is concentrated on keeping a balance between the shrub trees and the taller canopy trees.





*'Hay cut' in west cutting, cut material raked off the slopes. October 2009.*



*A young Flynn Pakey. October 2009.*

Flynn had already been working as a volunteer for three years before this photo was taken.





*Flynn with Brian and Norah Littler, west cutting after the late 'hay' cut. October 2009.*



*Flynn and Brian, after the late hay cut in the west cutting. 31 December 2017.  
Spot the difference!*





*Partial hay cut in the west cutting, leaving areas with late flowering plants such as Black knapweed uncut.  
18 August 2016.*

#### **SOUTH KESTIVEN DISTRICT COUNCIL**

As leaseholders Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust are responsible for the day-to-day management on the reserve but SKDC do, when needed, carry out work on the reserve. For instance, as a result of a safety audit they installed gates at the tunnel entrances in January 2006.



*Gates at the west tunnel entrance, installed January 2006.  
(Photo:- 18 September 2009)*



The previous year they provided a layby/car park on the eastern side of the road. When the reserve was established car parking was in the SKDC Lound Depot, and the Trust leased part of the Depot adjacent to the eastern part of the reserve as a car park. For the opening ceremony and subsequent open days we were allowed to more or less take over all the available space in the Depot. When SKDC sold the Depot they forgot that we held a lease on part of it. It was quite a battle to get the Council to build the layby as a car park, and thanks must be recorded to Quentin Davis, our local MP at the time. He nagged at the Council on our behalf, and without his help we would probably be without roadside parking.



*Car park under construction. May 2005.*

Time for some wildflower photographs!



*Bee orchids are common, but not easy to spot.*



*Pyramidal orchids can be found in the west cutting.*



*Common spotted orchids, in the west cutting.*



*Sweet violets, in the west cutting.*

The flora on top of the tunnel and in the west cutting is quite diverse, and being relatively sheltered is good for the more common grassland butterflies. Marbled White butterflies have been recorded on the reserve.





*Yellow rattle with a Bee orchid and other wildflowers, on top of the tunnel. 5 June 2014.*



*Part of the south facing west cutting, with masses of wildflowers. 2 August 2014.*





*If you know where to look there is a strata of claystone in the west cutting and fossils are easy to find.  
11 October 2015.*

#### **THREATS/OPPORTUNITIES**

As with any leasehold property the future is always insecure – but the lease with SKDC is not under any immediate threat, and has worked well so far.

There is, (as with all public open spaces), vandalism from time to time, with the gates often being a target. It is difficult to fathom why or who – but it happens virtually everywhere.



*Gate at the west tunnel entrance. 28 February 2016.*

Considering its age the tunnel is still in reasonably good condition, and being monitored by SKDC. Maintenance will be costly if/when needed!

In isolation the reserve provides a sheltered haven for a wide range of wildlife species. But more importantly it links through to Grimsthorpe Estate to the west and towards the wildflower meadows created as part of the Elsea Park housing development to the east. Math & Elsea Woods also lie to the east of the reserve. Maintaining the reserve as a mixture of grassland and scrub habitats is vital if the thousands of species found on Grimsthorpe Estate can 'find' the new wildlife areas, and this wildlife corridor could be added to and enhanced by adjacent land managers creating additional 'wildlife friendly' habitats, perhaps as part of agri-environmental schemes.



## **HORBLING LINE HISTORY**

The 16 mile single track Great Northern Railway line between Bourne and Sleaford opened for goods traffic in October 1871. A passenger service started on 2 January 1872 with five passenger trains a day. With just four stations between Bourne and Sleaford (Morton Road, Rippingale, Billingborough and Horbling, Aswarby and Screddington) the journey time was 50 minutes, making the average speed around 20 mph.

With poor connecting services the line was never well used by passengers, and closed for passenger traffic in September 1930, although special Sunday excursions between Bourne and Skegness continued occasionally until 1939. The line was more successful for freight traffic, particularly for potatoes and grain. The Sleaford to Billingborough section of track finally closed on 28 July 1956. However, the track was retained and was used for some years to store redundant railway wagons north of the A52 at Threackingham.

(information:- Lost Railways of Lincolnshire)

After the closure of the railway the green linear 'wildlife corridor' inevitably started to change. Some of the land was sold and converted back to agriculture. Some sections presented more of a challenge to convert, including the cuttings and embankments within the current reserve area. Scrub and woodland started to colonise these areas, creating an attractive area for wildlife. Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust archives report that during a site survey in 1982 there were some fine grassland areas where the track had been removed, with more than one pair of nightingales being seen and heard in the scrub areas.

At that time there was some threat that the land would also be levelled and converted to agriculture. A local campaign to save the area was mounted, instigated by Jason Wright, a schoolboy at Brown's School in Horbling. The campaign featured in the local press and a 140 signature petition was sent to the site owners, the Crown Estate Commissioners.

Eventually, the present reserve area was leased from Crown Estates to the Trust as a nature reserve in 1985. Initially Trust volunteers worked at establishing a path through the northern part of the reserve, and cleared some scrub.

The Bourne Area Group visited the reserve in the summer of 1986. The northern section of the reserve started with a shallow railway cutting; this was an attractive and wildflower rich area of grassland. Beyond that the former railway line ran along a scrub covered embanked section, with a footpath running along the track bed. The southern section of the reserve lies within a shallow cutting. Scrub had been cleared from grassy banks near the roadside, with the remaining part of the reserve being covered with scrub.

In April 1994 Stuart Crooks, Director of the Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust wrote to David Sheppard, Chairman of the Bourne Area Group. Stuart said that the Trust had tried contacting the Reserve Manager but he had not responded. The reserve had become neglected, with little or no work being carried out and with lease renewal coming up the Trust needed to show it was being looked after. Stuart said that he thought a lot of work was needed on scrub control and footpath maintenance. He asked if any Bourne Group members would like to take on the role of Reserve Manager, and asked if "one or two of you" could find time to report on the state of the site.

The 'two Davids' (Sheppard and Vandome) visited the reserve, neither of them had seen it since 1986. They could not find a way into the reserve due to the neglected paths, but managed to walk around it using the adjacent field edges. The grassland habitat in the northern section was still hanging on, but the southern section had completely scrubbed over.

Stuart had attached to his letter the current management plan, which had been drawn up in 1992. The plan said that "The reserve was established to protect and conserve the grassland and scrub habitats (the latter important for birds) which have developed on the old railway. These comprise a valuable wildlife conservation resource in the comparatively bleak and intensively agricultural South Lincolnshire fen edge area".

The plan went on to describe the reserve, its wildlife value and the management objectives:- "The primary objective of management is to achieve a sensible balance between the sites of ornithological interest (centred on the scrub) and its botanical interest (centred on the open areas), such that, within the limits of the reserve, both are at capacity without impinging on the other".

## RECOVERY PHASE

Although neglected the 'two Davids' thought it was worth having a go at.



On 9 May 1994 'we' started on re-opening the path along the northern section of the reserve. We were aware it was getting late for 'scrub bashing', so we kept an eye out for nesting birds and only used hand tools (loppers and grass knives). The above photos are before/after photographs taken looking north along the railway track.



By 15 May we had cleared a path along the whole of the northern section – except the roadside entrance, which we had left until last. Jonathan Johnson and Dave Vandome had done all of the work, with Jonathan getting the satisfaction of making the 'break through'.

Now that the reserve looked like 'someone owned it' for the remainder of 1994 and during the summer of 1995 management was concentrated on maintaining the visitors' route. The next priority seemed to be trying to rescue the grassland area in the southern part of the reserve. Clearance work in the cutting started in October 1995. By the end of December volunteers had worked a total of 179 hours during the eight days we worked there, finishing on Christmas Eve.





*South cutting, looking towards the road. 3 December 1995*

The wildflower rich grassy bank had been to the right side of the photograph where Adrian Gardiner was working.

Throughout the summer months once again management was restricted to keeping the visitors' route open. Clearance work continued during the winter of 1996/97, reaching the southern end of the cutting in January 1997.

It was hoped that the grassland habitat would recover naturally, but the scrub had ruled the roost for too long. Grass seed collected from Robert's Field Nature Reserve was spread over bare patches in the south cutting in July 1997 in an attempt to stop thistles completely taking over. It wasn't entirely a disaster zone, the cowslips we had seen in 1986 had survived, and we counted nine species of butterfly while we were spreading the grass seed.



*The survivors! Cowslip bank in the south cutting, spring 1999.*

On 31 August 1997 we strimmed the grassland area in the northern part of the reserve and raked off the cuttings, thus starting the annual 'hay' cutting regime which we still carry out.

On 4 October 1998 work started on widening the grass area in the northern part of the reserve, with over 200 hours being worked on the area by 14 March 1999. Volunteers included three members of 'Rotoserve' and the Bourne Wildlife Watch Group, who built the steps from the roadside and in the reserve. Further work to extend the grassland in the northern part of the reserve was carried out during the winter of 1999/2000 with 5 March 2000 being a significant date when the view into the reserve from the roadside was finally opened up. As we were packing up a couple of elderly ladies walked by, stopping to see what we had been doing. They were very pleased with the view. They were a mother and daughter, and the daughter could remember being taken by her mother to see the trains. They said it used to be lovely down there (along the trackside); there used to be lots of violets, and



lots of white ones. They recalled picking the violets and making posies that went on sale in London. One of the features on the reserve as we opened it up were the banks of violets, with lots of white ones!



*A small patch of sweet violets, spring 2000 in the south cutting.*

By the end of 2000 we had achieved a balance between the scrub and grassland which we thought met the objective of the 1992 management plan. Subsequent scrub management has been to retain the scrub and grassland structure. The grassland has been managed by hay cutting, and the paths and steps are maintained to keep the reserve accessible.

#### **BROWN'S CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL**

It was known that the campaign by Jason Wright, a schoolboy at Brown's School had played an important part in establishing the reserve, and it was by chance that Dave Vandome heard Brown's School being mentioned on BBC Radio Lincolnshire one day in May 2001. The station was reporting on a project undertaken by students into the name of the road on which the school was built – Sandygate Lane. Their investigation had found Roman and Danish connections, and this had made it onto the radio. Dave Vandome was impressed, contacted the school and asked Mr Gudgeon, the Head Teacher, if he wanted to use the reserve as an outdoor classroom? The Head was very enthusiastic, so on four days in June 2001 groups of children of all ages walked to/from the reserve. Lots of different activities were laid on, some of the older children mapped the cutting in the northern section. We dated some of the trees back to when the railway closed, and carried out simple plant identification. The final session was brought to a sudden end when a massive thunder storm sent the children back to the school – even that was an exciting event, everyone got soaked to the skin, but actually being outdoors during a thunder storm was a magic moment. The relationship between the school and the Wildlife Trust ran for many years, with Trust volunteers working with the school children to improve their wildlife area, and having many outdoor lessons on plant identification and the use of keys, amongst other things.

#### **PRINCE'S TRUST**

In February 2003 volunteers from the Prince's Trust spent a week working on the reserve, installing steps, planting a hedge and coppicing a large area of scrub. Prior to actually working on the reserve they had carried out a number of fund-raising activities, which had raised over £400; this paid for the step material, the hedge planting, and a seat for the reserve.

It was a fantastic team building exercise culminating in getting the seat into the reserve. The seat was rolled off the back of a flat-bed van on to the road. The only way to get it into the reserve was by rolling it along the road to a gap in the hedge, then across a ploughed (and very muddy) field to the reserve boundary. From there it was down-hill into the cutting, then a real struggle to position it. Rolling it was comparatively easy, but getting it in the right place and the right way up was very difficult; lots of reversing and shoving about! Unfortunately the seat eventually rotted away – but the memories will live on for a long time.

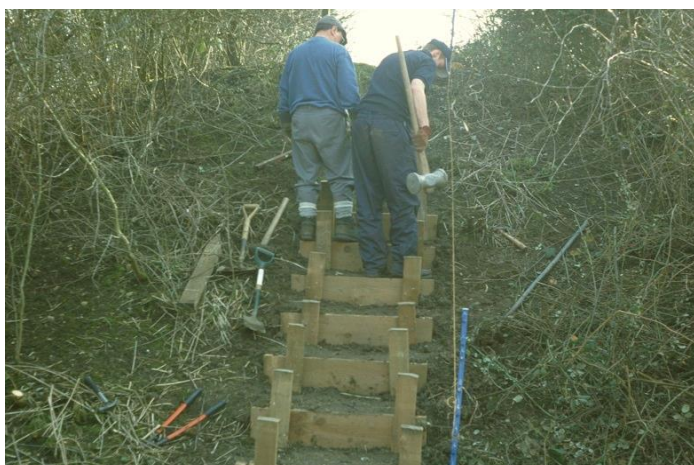




*Prince's Trust team marking out/planting the hedge*



*Completed hedge planting*



*Dave Mainwaring (left), assisting with building the steps at the northern end of the reserve.*



*Carved oak seat, in the southern section*

The hedge planted in 2003 by the Prince's Trust was laid in December 2010. On a bitterly cold day Flynn Pakey and Dave Vandome set about the task. On a much warmer day in January 2011 the hedge was staked and the top binding added.



*Flynn Pakey, 20 December 2010.*



*Ivan Crawford (Flynn's Grandad) and Norah Littler, finishing off the hedge, 2 January 2011.*

The reserve is a small haven for wildlife. The steps installed by the Prince's Trust allowed easier access to the northern part of the reserve and created a circular walk from the village, which has become very popular. Local farmers have used the presence of the nature reserve to enhance their land under the Higher Level Stewardship scheme (HLS). This government funded scheme aims to deliver significant environmental benefits to land in the



scheme. The land in the HLS scheme, the Trust reserve, and the historically important ridge and furrow field adjacent to the reserve makes a much larger area for wildlife, and provides linkage to other wildlife areas.



*View into the northern part of the reserve  
from the roadside.  
25 April 2011*



*Pyramidal orchids, yellow rattle and other  
wildflowers in the northern part of the reserve.  
5 July 2010*



*Grass strips along field boundary next to the reserve.  
22 March 2010*



*Ridge and furrow field, next to the reserve.  
22 March 2010*



## THREATS, OPPORTUNITIES – AND THE FUTURE

As with Toft Tunnel nature reserve Horbling Line is a leasehold property, but this presents no known threats. Acquiring the ridge and furrow field adjacent to the reserve would be a 'nice' addition!

There is an amazing double bridge part way along the northern section where a footpath is under the former railway, and a small stream or beck under the footpath. The brickwork is a work of art, but deteriorating.



*Bridge over footpath. 22 March 2010*



*Beck under footpath. 18 September 2017*

Unfortunately the bridge acts as a magnet for anti-social behaviour, and the beck also. Damage to the stock fence in this area is common, and the footpath way-marker post often vandalised.

As for the future:-



*The future may depend in some part by the next generation of young volunteers, like William, following in his Grandad's (David York) footsteps, working in the southern part of the reserve.*

## ROBERT'S FIELD

### HISTORY

The area was designated as a Site of Scientific Interest (SSSI) in 1951. Letters written in the 1950's and kept in the Trust's archive tell the tale of the desperate attempts to prevent the afforestation that destroyed much of the original grassland area. So, there is rather a lot of history attached to this reserve.

In July 1955 Miss Julia Laptain, writing on behalf of The Nature Conservancy (now Natural England) wrote: "This 10 acres of scrubland is probably the last remaining piece of unkempt, calcicolous grassland in southern Lincolnshire (and Rutland). Its loss would seem to be irreparable as it is a very definite habitat type and offers as much to entomologists as to botanists".



*Robert's Field, August 1956*

*Photo:- Ted Smith*

Unkempt, certainly, but extremely valuable.

In August 1956 the late Ted Smith, then Honorary Secretary of the Trust, described it as a piece of "rough calcareous grassland adjacent to oak-ash woodland, a type of habitat now extremely rare in Lincolnshire". He goes on to say "No fewer than 25 species of butterflies have been recorded and it is probable that at least half a dozen others occur. Those already recorded include the Chequered, Dingy and Grizzled Skippers, Brown Argus, Duke of Burgundy, Green Hairstreak, Pearl-bordered and Silver-washed Fritillaries and Marbled White".

By this time Chequered Skipper and Marbled White were already becoming scarce in Lincolnshire. Chequered Skipper, Pearl-bordered and Silver-washed Fritillaries became extinct in Lincolnshire. Marbled White and Silver-washed Fritillaries are now making a come-back but Duke of Burgundy butterflies are extremely rare in Lincolnshire.

But, in common with many other wildlife rich areas of grassland most of the site was eventually ploughed up and converted to woodland. The ploughed area was planted with oaks in 1957 but when these failed they were replaced by Scot's Pine in 1963. A small (1 acre) remnant of grassland was retained but gradually lost most of its rich butterfly fauna, the last Duke of Burgundy and Chequered Skippers were recorded in 1959, the last Marbled White and Silver-washed Fritillaries being recorded in 1972, for instance. However, the remnant of grassland did retain much of its botanical interest, and kept alive the Trust's connection with the site. In 1985 under a management agreement with the Forestry Commission the 1 acre remnant became a Trust Nature Reserve, but the site was denotified as a SSSI in 1987, having lost most of its wildlife value.





*The 1 acre remnant of grassland, hemmed in by the conifer plantation, 3 August 1993.*

*Photo:- Barrie Wilkinson*

In 1994 the Trust purchased the remaining portion of a long lease from the Forestry Commission, so gaining control of the rest of the 10 acre site.

## RESTORATION

The reserve was entered into the government funded Countryside Stewardship Scheme (CSS) in 1994. This 10 year scheme part funded the restoration of the grassland and hedges.



*Felling the conifers, January 1994.*

*Photo:- Don Wright*

The grassland restoration was carried out in two phases. Starting in January 1994 the first phase involved felling the 2,200 pines from the 3.3 acre plantation below the remnant of 'old' grassland, in the north-eastern half of the reserve. Tree roots were excavated, piled into heaps and burnt. The heaps continued to smoulder for 2 - 3 weeks. Waste timber from a building site was even brought in to speed up the process and eventually holes were dug to bury all the remaining debris. Later on the site was power harrowed to prepare a seed bed.



In July grass as a 'green' hay cut was taken from the 'old' meadow and spread over the top part of the cleared area so the seed could drop out. It was around this time that the Bourne Area Group started to get involved with the project.

On 16 July 1994 volunteers were spreading a hay crop from the 'old meadow'. Volunteers included six from the Bourne Area group, Kay & Richard Heath and other volunteers from the Spalding Area Group, and children from the Spalding Wildlife Watch group. In total around 30 people were working on the reserve.

*Spreading the 'green' hay crop, taken from the 'old' meadow at the top of the field, and spread where the conifer plantation had been. 16 July 1994*



Hay from other nearby sites was spread over the lower parts of the area. Germination resulting from seed dropped from the hay was variable.



*8 September 1994, early stage of the restoration – Dave Vandome digging up spear thistles, with Mick Lawrence from Gibraltar Point spraying the denser patches of them.*

*Photo:- Barrie Wilkinson*

The 'old' meadow was cut again in July 1995 and hay spread over the still bare lower part of the meadow. By September 1995 it was clear that the restoration process was well under way.

#### **WINTER WORK 1995 – 96**



In the wooded areas hazel trees were coppiced to provide stakes and binding for laying the roadside hedge. Coppicing in Bourne Woods, Tortoiseshell Wood and Dole Wood by Bourne Area Group volunteers supplied most of the stakes and binding material.

*Volunteers included four teenagers working for their Duke of Edinburgh Bronze Award (Graham Favell on the right).*

*31 December 1995*



*David York (left) and Adrian Gardiner starting to lay the roadside hedge.*

*14 January 1996*



*Part of the laid roadside hedge, staked and bound, with newly planted trees in the gaps.*

*4 February 1996*





*The main task for 4 February 1996 was planting a new hedge along the NE boundary of the reserve.*

550 shrub trees were planted in a day (and gapping up the hedge). 11 volunteers were on site, including the four D of E youths.

Hedge laying continued that winter until the end of February 1996, by which time we had laid 85 metres.

Contractors installed a stock fence around the phase 1 area, also in February 1996.



*Felling the phase 2 conifers and Willie Baumber on site installing the stock fence. The timber contractor lived on site so he could safe-guard the equipment. February 1996*

The grassland restoration process was repeated for the phase 2 area, the 4 acres to the south-west of the site. The 2,730 pines were felled in February 1996. The trimmed trunks were cut into lengths and stockpiled ready for transporting off the site. It worked out that the Trust received £0.80p for each tree.



*The stumps were dug out and bulldozed into rows, along with the brash. February 1996*

The rows of brash and stumps were burnt within two days. The field was then power harrowed, but there was still a lot of woody debris left.





*On 2 July 1996 around 20 children and 8 adults from Great Casterton Primary School spent a couple of hours picking off the wood.*



*Students from Bourne Social Education Centre and Linkway also helped with the task of clearing the debris.  
19 July 1996*



*On 24 July approximately 20 volunteers were on site, these were from Peterborough BTCV (British Trust for Conservation Volunteers) and members of the Spalding and Bourne Area Groups. We spent about 5 hours clearing the site, aided by the loan of a tractor and trailer from Charles Gilman, a local farmer.*





*Pile of woody debris, 24 July 1996.*

The wood pile!

This photo also shows the un-cut grass of the 'old' meadow at the top of the field with the rest of the phase 1 field cut/baled. The restored grassland contained a lot of false-oat grass – not a grass we wanted. However it does not tolerate cutting or grazing, so it was cut/removed by local farmer Mr Elsom before it dropped seed.



Seed was to come from a 'green' hay cut taken from the 'old' meadow, Little Warren SSSI Protected Roadside Verge (PRV), and a small wildflower meadow owned by Peter Fane on 'The Heath'. A total of 18 bales were produced.

Unfortunately the hay was cut rather late on the donor sites.

Most of the bales could be un-rolled down hill, then further spread out using pitch forks and rakes.

*Photo:- probably 24 August 1996*



*After the hay cut the phase 1 area was sheep grazed. A significant moment in time – the field had not been sheep grazed for over 40 years.*

*24 August 1996*



The results of the Phase 2 grassland restoration proved to be disappointing, producing a sward dominated by sterile brome. In May 1997 the whole of the Phase 2 area was sprayed with herbicide, and a second attempt to restore the area started. Hay was taken from the Phase 1 area, Little Warren PRV and the small meadow owned by Peter Fane in July 1997. This was spread over the site. By September 1997 it was clear that the second attempt had proved to be successful. The area was stock fenced in the winter of 97/98, and sheep grazed throughout 1998.

The restoration process concentrated on getting a good coverage of grasses. But, by using hay as a seed source many wildflower species were also sown. Initially the grasses grew vigorously, but by taking an annual hay cut some of the vigour reduced. Yellow Rattle, a plant that is semi-parasitic on the roots of grasses, so also helps reduce their vigour. Orchids took a few years to get established, but now the restored grassland areas are rich in wildflower species, including five species of orchid.

Summer 1997



*Phase 1 meadow and 'old' meadow, viewed from a similar place that Ted Smith took his photograph in 1956.*



*'Old' meadow, taken from a similar place where Barrie Wilkinson took his 1993 photograph. Wildflowers include birds-foot trefoil, rockrose and pyramidal orchids.*

## WINTER WORK

The roadside hedge restoration and laying continued:-



*11 adults and four children were working on the hedge, including a group from the A Rocha Trust.  
22 February 1997*





*The hedge had gaps in places. David Sheppard and Nikki Redding planting up the one of the gaps.  
22 February 1997*

In the top corner of the phase 2 area there is a small limestone quarry. It was heavily wooded and had been used as a rubbish tip. To restore the quarry to grassland was going to be a challenge!



*By this time Dave Vandome had his new 'toy', a chainsaw!  
Felling the trees was the easy part of the job.*



*Work party on 14 December 1997 clearing the brash. The timber was extracted and sold as firewood.*



*With the trees removed we could get a tractor/trailer in to clear out the rubbish. Tractor loaned from John Machin who also extracted the timber for us.  
28 December 1997*





*Work party of David Sheppard and Adrian Gardiner on the side of the quarry and Amy Sheppard on the left.  
4 January 1998*

There was a lot of glass in the quarry, and medicine bottles – by the hundreds. Seems like the contents of a chemist shop had been tipped into the quarry at some stage, we also found loads of ‘Senokot’ pots! All the rubbish was taken to another quarry which was being filled and capped on John Machin’s farm.

The hedge laying was completed during the winter of 97/98.



*On 25 January, 14 adults and 20 children (including Corby Glen Cub Group) were working to clear up after the hedge laying.*

Unfortunately for them we were using a fire site near the quarry, and they had to drag all the cut material up hill to the fire.



While we were working in the quarry and on the hedge Willie Baumber was on site installing the stock fencing.

*Willie talking to Barrie Wilkinson, while two of his team knock in a post.  
16 January 1998*





*Hedge section close to the County border and Lincolnshire Gate.  
'Spring' 1998*

The restoration process could not have been done without the funding from the CSS, but most of the work was done by volunteers. Between 1994 and winter 97/98 volunteers clocked up over 2,000 hours work on the reserve. Kay and Richard Heath and their 'Wednesday Team' from Spalding helped in the early years, but as can be seen, the project involved many people, and not just local Trust volunteers.

In addition, Trust members of staff had spent approximately 100 hours working on the project, with Barrie Wilkinson often on site to monitor/supervise the restoration. Local farmers also gave their time and lent machinery so we could carry out the work, they worked over 200 hours on the site. The Trust would like to thank the volunteers, members of staff and local farmers – we did it!



#### **POST SCRIPT!**

*\*\*\*\* Law!*

*In June 1998 a car left the road and ploughed through the recently laid hedge and new fence.*

The car insurance company paid for the fence repairs, and we managed to get the hedge looking OK, albeit a bit gappy!

#### **POST RESTORATION**

In 2004 the CSS agreement was extended for another 10 years, and under that scheme laying the roadside hedge for a second time started in 2008. Since 2014 the land has been in a Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) Agreement. Under the HLS scheme the hedge planted in 1996 was laid during the winters of 2015/16 and 2016/17.



*Start of laying the hedge ...  
4 February 2015*





*... and the start the second year of hedge laying.*

*Brian Littler (with hard hat) and Ivan Crawford.*

*15 November 2015*

Hedge laying creates a lot of waste material (to the left of the fence line), which needs collecting/disposing.

To avoid damaging the grassland we used a fire site in the woodland – at the top of the slope!



*Flynn Pakey, about to lay another stem.*

*22 November 2015*



*The hedge, nearing completion, staked and bound, with most of the stake tops trimmed.*

*20 December 2015*

Current grassland management comprises mainly of a mixture of hay cutting and sheep grazing, with little volunteer input. The quarry is usually strimmed annually, and the cuttings removed. Bracken in the small woodland is also strimmed annually.



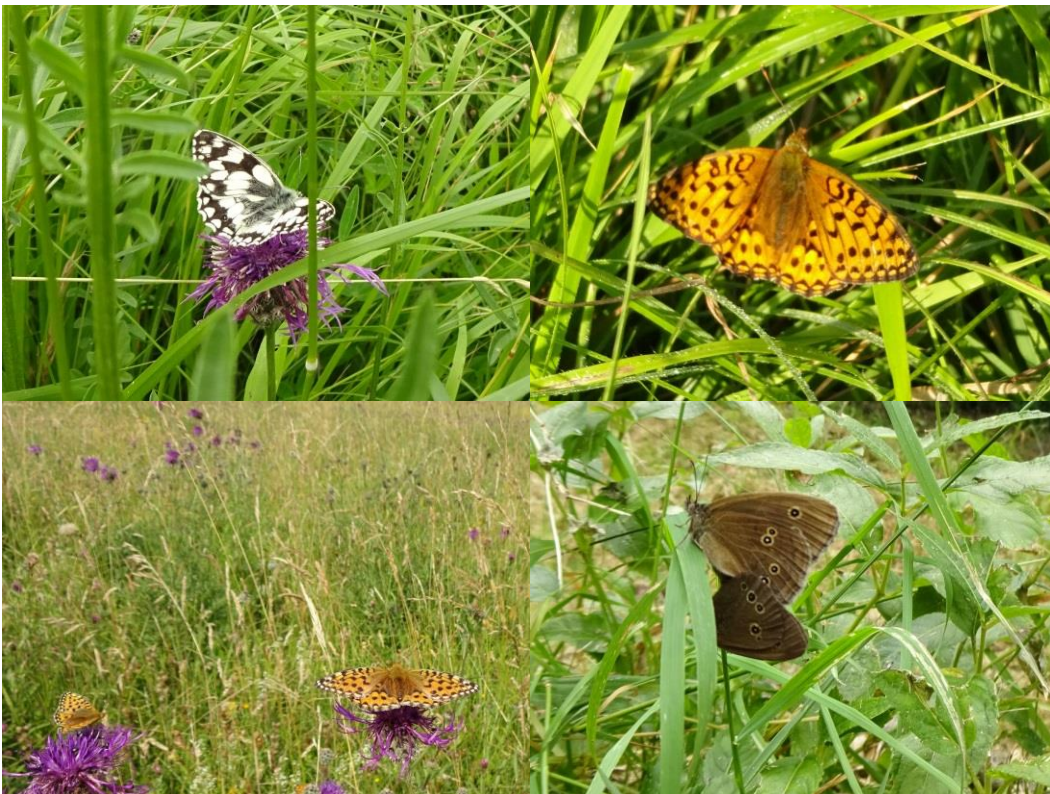


*There are usually some rotted off fence stakes to replace. This corner post has been replaced twice since the fence was installed in 1998.*

*27 December 2015*

But as would be indicated by the total of 42 man/hours being worked on the reserve for the 2017/18 reporting period - things have settled down considerably since completion of the restoration.

Botanically the reserve is stunning, with thousands of orchids in summer and over 120 species of wildflowers being recorded in 2016. But it is perhaps the butterflies that really indicate the success of this project with Marbled White, Dark Green and Silver-washed Fritillaries being seen in good numbers during June/July.



*Top left: Marbled White*

*Bottom Left: Silver-washed Fritillary*

*Top right: Dark Green Fritillary*

*Bottom right: Ringlet – less common than the fritillaries!*

## **THREATS AND OPPORTUNITIES**

The reserve is leasehold – but with over 900 years left on the lease there would appear to be little to worry about! The ‘normal’ threats of global warming and climate change will/must have some affect in years to come. The biggest concern must be its small size. When the reserve was designated as a SSSI in 1951 it was surrounded by other wildlife rich habitats – as it is still today. Although no record has been found about the proposed National Nature Reserve – it is tempting to speculate about what it might have covered:-

The reserve has Newell Wood to the east as its neighbour, with The Heath beyond that. There is good linkage to Holywell Wood and Pickworth Great Wood to the west, and Holywell Lakes and Mound are not far away to the north. To the south Roadside Nature Reserves nearly link up to the Little Warren SSSI RNR, which is one of the best verges in Lincolnshire.



## A new National Nature Reserve?



However, the greatest threat to this gem of a nature reserve is complacency. Sixty years ago this site was 'lost'. Getting 'it back' was costly – financially, in human labour, and in losses to wildlife.

*We should never need to see scenes like this again – photo taken on 29 October 1995, volunteers clearing the massive amount of blackthorn that had spread from the NE field boundary 'hedge'.*

The hedge had all but disappeared and needed replanting.

It is a different picture now – but it still could be lost again if we fail to learn from the lessons of the past.

Finally this chapter must include a tribute to John Machin, to whom the reserve is dedicated.



John and his family moved into Pettywood Farm as the restoration process started. He was sceptical at first when the conifers were felled, but soon saw the restoration as the right thing to do. As a farmer he ran a mixed farm, maximising both the arable and livestock potential of the land he owned. In the middle of his harvest in 1997 all of the farm staff were variously cutting, baling and carting grass for the Trust. Tragically he was killed in a farm accident. It is doubtful that the restoration could have been achieved without his help and support, and it is fitting that his memory should be preserved.



## STANTON'S PIT

The reserve is a 17 acre site of a disused sand pit and the adjacent spoil banks. Bob Stanton, who owned the land, was a long-standing Trust member and local farmer living at Witham On-The-Hill. Trish and David Stubley visited and photographed the site in May 1991. It became a freehold Trust Nature Reserve in 1996 when Bob gifted it to the Trust.



*View from southern end of the lake, looking northerly. Piles of sand still to be extracted.*



*Photo taken from the same view-point, looking southerly.*



*Sand martins nesting in the vertical banks, alongside the Bytham/Witham road.*

*Photo's:- Trish Stubley  
May 1991*



Bullimore's had been extracting sand from the plot on Bob's land for some years and by the early 1990's were about to restore the land back to agricultural use, as agreed in the original planning permission. Bob and Bullimore's were both keen to change the end use, and to restore it as a nature reserve. The idea was first mentioned in the August 1991 Bourne Area Group newsletter. Considerable obstacles were in the way, not least the change to the planning permission. Although sketch plans had been drawn up, Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) requested a full survey which was likely to cost £2,700. In the May 1992 Area Group newsletter Dave Sheppard reported on a 'great piece of good fortune' as Bill Earnshaw from Scunthorpe offered to carry out a full survey as a result of our appeal for help. The newsletter article continued:-

'On a cold, windy, but thankfully dry day in February (1992) Bill, accompanied by two rookie surveyors spent most of the daylight hours trudging around in the thick clinging mud. Bill did a lot of arm waving and kept writing apparently meaningless marks and numbers in his book. One of his helpers, Dave the stave (Sheppard) was forever being sent marching off in all directions with the surveyors pole while Dave the wheel (Vandome) was trying to keep the wheel free of mud so that it could record the distances'.

The resulting maps were excellent. Bill provided three maps, one with spot heights, another with contours derived from the first map. The third map is how the site would look after the earthworks needed to satisfy the minerals office at LCC. Bill only charged a modest fee, just to cover his expenses.

The necessary planning permission to restore the site as a nature reserve was obtained just before Christmas 1993 and the Trust had until December 1995 to complete the work. Bullimore's started restoration work in the summer of 1994, when the site had dried out enough to get their heavy landscaping machinery on site. Paths, bunds and drains were created, and the height of one of the tallest spoil banks was reduced.

The September 1995 newsletter refers to more work being done on the site by Bullimore's – part of the path had been eroded by heavy rain running off one of the spoil heaps, so additional drainage channels were needed. Also some bank stabilization was needed. There was concern about the steep quarry edge, and the close proximity of the Witham to Little Bytham road. The Trust negotiated a two year extension with LCC for to complete the restoration due to this concern.

In October 1997 Dr Gavin Lishman was formally appointed as Reserve Manger by the Trust's Conservation Committee. Gavin had been monitoring the birds in the area of the pit for several years, and also had been actively involved in its management. Unfortunately work commitments meant that Gavin had to resign as Reserve Manager a year later, being replaced by David Sheppard.

By January 1999 the perceived problems regarding the stability of the quarry edge had faded away; there was, in reality, very little erosion along the lake edge. The roots of self-sown and planted willows were also helping to alleviate this problem. However another problem had arisen:-



*Rainwater from an overflowing ditch had washed out several sections of concrete pipe under the access track near to the reserve entrance, threatening to cut access to the reserve – and the neighbouring farm! Bullimore's kindly agreed to carry out the necessary earthworks to make the track safe at their own expense.  
June 1998*



## HERITAGE LOTTERY FUND (HLF)

The Trust applied for and was granted £921,000 of HLF funding over a 5-year programme which started officially on 1 April 1998. Additional funding of £120,000 came from Lincwaste (Waste Recycling Group). The money formed the backbone of a Capital Works Programme, which allowed for a significant upgrade of Trust reserves. Not all Trust reserves qualified for the funding package, only freehold or reserves with a long lease were permitted, but Stanton's Pit was one of the 59 Trust reserves in the Scheme. In order to deliver the project the Trust employed a South Lincolnshire Warden. Draw-down of HLF money was conditional on matched funding. However, volunteer time was given a monetary value, and this was counted as matched funding. One day of volunteer time was worth £50, specialist volunteers were worth £150 a day. The Trust set a target of £673,000 over the five years, but the final figure was in excess of £800,000. The amount the Trust was able to claim was capped by HLF, but it demonstrated how much the work of volunteers is worth.



At Stanton's Pit HLF funded the installation of stock fencing and deer fencing to protect tree and shrub planting; upgrading the paths and car park; providing a new entrance and the provision of a tern raft. Barclay's Bank donated £4,000 towards the cost of digging the pond and providing the dipping platform.

Most of the work was done by contractors.

*Limestone covered visitors' route  
October 1998*



*New pond and pond dipping platform.  
11 January 2002*



*Fibreglass tern raft, covered with gravel, wood to separate territories and clay pipes to provide protection of chicks from avian predators.  
April 2000*

The tern raft inadvertently led to a boost in volunteer effort – it sank! The floatation tanks had not been manufactured to a high enough standard (the fibreglass was porous). Getting it back to land, and re-floating it after repairs was a major effort if all you had was a little rowing boat.

Unfortunately the raft was only ever used by geese or resting cormorants – and as a diving platform for local youths. Repeated vandalism eventually led to the raft eventually being re-located to Deeping Lakes Nature Reserve.



*Installation of the deer and stock fencing.  
May 2000*



*Deer fence protecting trees/shrubs on the raised bund, planted by volunteers.  
May 2000*





*After a particularly wet winter the taller of the two spoil heaps developed a land slip. Photo includes two metre long sticks to indicate scale.  
6 February 2003*



*The base of the landslip had part covered the visitors' route, and made vehicle access difficult.  
6 February 2003*



*New reserve entrance  
26 March 2003*

A new entrance was needed since the original entrance was no longer available to the Trust (behind the earth bank) due to the closure of the land-fill site to the north of the reserve.





*Unfortunately the landslide continued to slump over the visitors' route.  
March 2007*

The problem was partially solved by installing a retaining barrier made of railway sleepers and roadside barriers, but the mound is still on the move.



*Vehicular access was needed beyond the land-slip to install a bird hide.  
March 2007*

The hide had been a long time in the making. It started with a donation of the bricks from Broadgate Builders in 2001, and the concrete base laid in preparation for the brickwork – but our brickie decided he didn't want to do the work. As did the other two brick-layers who said they would do the work – then didn't.

South Lincs Warden Sarah Evans and some volunteers took on the challenge and finally built the brick-work in 2006 and Dave Vandome built the frame for the cladding.

The wooden frame was constructed off-site, the cladding added with the frame installed on-site. The ship-lap cladding and roof was built by volunteers. Unfortunately the hide attracted local youths who repeatedly vandalised it, and eventually it had to be taken down in October 2015.



*As part of the HLF project a picnic table was purchased. It was quite heavy – and chained to concrete blocks buried underground.*

In January 2007 it was stolen – complete with the chains and concrete blocks!



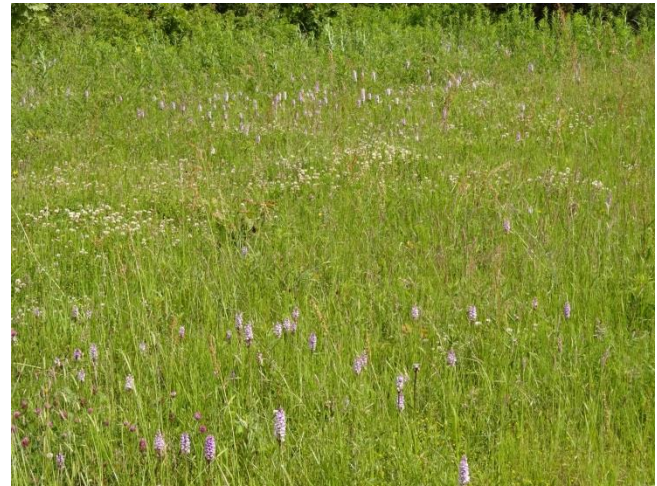
## RESERVE WORK

From the start it was thought to be desirable to 'let nature take its course', and since the early 1990's that has produced a mosaic of habitats, including species rich grassland and scrub. Management was largely confined to mowing the paths and grazing with sheep or cattle. Initially, many hundreds of trees and shrubs were planted, with varying success outside the deer fenced area due to the grazing pressure. But, in order to retain the grassland some form of scrub control is always needed eventually. Quite often children from the Wildlife Watch Group have worked on the reserve, clearing blocks of gorse. Ted Hitchcock took over from David Sheppard as VRM in December 2014, and when Ted had to resign in 2016 Phil Huggins took over.

After a bout of reserves ping-pong John Oliver, South East Lincolnshire Warden has taken over as the Trust member of staff responsible for the reserve. He has quite a job on here, but is making some progress.



*Clearing gorse, brambles and tree saplings from an area of species rich grassland. 6 November 2016*



*Masses of Orange Hawkweed and Common Spotted Orchids growing in the same area. 11 June 2017*





Perhaps the most valuable feature of the reserve – a fine stand of mature Wych Elm trees. They have either escaped Dutch Elm disease due to their remoteness – or they are immune to it. Either way, long may they thrive!



*Bee Orchids can always be found if you look for them in June.  
11 June 2017*

Sometimes there are thousands, sometimes just a few.

### **THREATS AND OPPORTUNITIES**

The main threats apart from the global issues must be keeping a balance between grassland and scrub. Grazing is an important control of some woody plants, but well established blocks of dense gorse or the larger trees within the grassland area have little wildlife value. Being a freehold property safeguards the reserve, and blocks of woodland to the south and north of the reserve would make a fine addition if the opportunity arose.



## DEEPING LAKES

The Nature Reserve consists of two amalgamated sites. 'The Lake', part of Deeping Gravel Pits SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest), which was quarried in the 1870's - 1890's and the Welland Bank Quarry, quarried in the 1990's. As the sands and gravel were extracted from the Welland Bank site it was being progressively restored to become a nature reserve. In 2003 'The Lake' was advertised for sale, and the Trust put in a bid to purchase the land. The acquisition made possible by grants (£165,000) awarded by HLF (Heritage Lottery Fund) and (£91,096) ALSF (Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund). The HLF funding package included employing a Project Officer for 18 months to set up the reserve.

The reserve was officially opened in 2004, but a lot of work had been done before then, including path creation, fence and bridge installation plus building the bird hides. As with other HLF projects matched funding from the Trust was essential, and this was achieved by counting 'volunteer hours' as payment. The Bourne Area Group started to work on the Welland Bank Pits part of the reserve in 2001, well before the start of the HLF project.

## QUARRY WORKINGS



*Extracting the raw product*



*Progressive restoration - landscaping*



*Part of the grading/washing plant*



*Indicating the size of the bucket!*

*(Photo's:- Geoff Burgion, Quarry Site Manager, July 1999)*

Geoff was responsible for all the landscaping and performed wonders when budgets were tight. The basic look of the site was created by him, working from the original drawings that the site owner David York had produced before the extraction work started. At its busiest the site employed around 10 people.





*How it was done in the 1890's – Ballast Pit workers, near Deeping St James Station (Photo:- source unknown)*

The site employed over 100 people including blacksmiths, carpenters and brick makers.



*Aveland Trees – hedge planting February 2001*



*View alongside the riverbank 1997*



*Tree plantation at the west end of the reserve, 1997*



*Some of the stock fencing, near the west end of the reserve, 1997*

Various mainly minor tasks were carried out by local volunteers in 2001/02, with larger work parties from Peterborough Bird Club on 2 December 2001 and 3 February 2002 when most of the 20,000 tree shelters were removed and skipped. Volunteers worked a total of 462 man/hours in the reporting year of 2001/2 and 481 man/hours in 2002/3.



## THE MAKINGS OF A NATURE RESERVE



*After the purchase, work started in the boathouse area of 'The Lake' on 6 May 2003.*



*There was a huge amount of 'stuff' that needed removing, so the first task was to open up the track to get a skip on site. We got the largest skip we could – and built up the sides. All the scrap wood was burnt, but the skip was soon full to the top. 25 May 2003*



*One of the wooden structures being demolished by Ray Bowell. We were lucky to have had a lot of help from the Peterborough Bird Club in these early years. Two seats, salvaged from the boathouse area on 4 June 2003, were repaired and later installed in the car park.*



The HLF project was greatly boosted by a stroke of good luck – BTCV (British Trust for Conservation Volunteers) based in Nottingham had also secured HLF funding for a conservation project, and Cathy Hurst (in green top) was appointed their Project Manager. Cathy 'adopted' Deeping Lakes as one of 'her' sites, and recruited a workforce of around 20 local volunteers who worked on the reserve one day a week.



*Their first task was to clear the way for the visitors' route along the edge of 'The Lake'. 30 September 2003.*



*In November 2003 Peterborough Bird Club volunteers started clearing the site of the main bird hide.*

Jill Francis (below, in red top) and other Barclay's Bank volunteers started clearing the spit of land in the 'gullet' area on 19 December 2003. Jill had organised a team building day, the first of many days that Bank workers were on site. Work to clear the spit continued with 'our' volunteers, the BTCV and Peterborough Bird Club volunteers.



*19 December 2003*



*2 February 2004*

Clearing the spit had been identified as a high priority task as it was known that Early Marsh Orchids once grew on it. Reproduced below is part of a letter written by Joan Gibbons in August 1966 to a Mr Ball at the Nature Conservancy. Joan was a well-respected botanist and author of several books. Joan starts the letter "I have just been to S Lincs and have found a wonderful place I knew nothing of at all before". She had spotted the overgrown pit on a train journey from Louth to London and subsequently tracked down the owner and visited the site.



Words of Lincolnshire 1954. . . of nests then . . .  
 The map I have 1946 which has a ballast pit - marked  
 on the W. side of the railway just north of Peakirk but  
 nothing marked on the East side, which is a larger ballast pit.  
 Most of the banks are overgrown with willows down to the  
 water's edge but at one corner on the East side there is  
 a gravel spit running out into the water & growing with  
 all the watery plants one could wish! (almost!) Mrs Porter

In the letter she writes “. . . on the east side there is a gravel spit running out into the water and growing with all the watery plants one could wish! (almost!)” She goes on to list some of the ‘watery’ plants, including Early Marsh Orchids.

A survey in May 2000 found the spit to be heavily scrubbed over and almost impenetrable with no signs of orchids, or any other wildflowers. However, seed dormancy in orchids can exceed 50 years – so it was reasoned that if the spit was cleared the orchids may return.



*Work to clear the spit was completed in March 2004.*



The next project was to cut back vegetation and re-establish a fence line at the start of the path to the bird hide. There were several work parties, including a return visit by Barclay's Bank.



Meanwhile, contractors were building the main bird hide, installing gates, fencing and the bridge.



*The bird hide was completed on 15 April 2004.*



*The corral was built on 5 April 2004 ...*



*... and the gate on the river bank in May (note the state of vegetation on the bank – it hadn't been cut or grazed for some years!)*



*The newly installed bridge, May 2004, and a new species for the reserve – a peacock, sitting on the fence rails! (escapee from the Exotic Pets Refuge).*



It is getting close to the official opening date - Volunteers were also kept busy:-



*A joint effort to install a post/rail fence, with materials paid for by Barclay's Bank, and another work party to finish the fence.*



*Ian Redding clearing out the ditch near to the bridge and Wendy Morris and Dave Mainwaring working the other side of the bridge. 27 July 2004*



*More ditch clearing, this time near to the reserve entrance.  
24 August 2004*



*7 September 2004*





*One of the last things to be done before the official opening day was to re-surface the car park using road plannings. Dave Mainwaring driving the roller.  
7 September 2004*



*The official opening was marked by a public open day on 19 September 2004. There were guided walks, sales and refreshments tents and a plant stall.*

Peterborough Bird Club and Deeping Heritage had stalls, and activities for children were also available. At one stage there were over 90 cars parked on the reserve, and over 250 visitors turned out on the day.

Peterborough Bird Club recorded seeing over 60 species during the day, including a peregrine falcon, which obligingly sat in view of the bird hide for long enough for lots of 'birders' to see it. During the day the local

press were on hand to record the Bird Club presenting the Trust with a cheque for £1,000 towards the cost of the bird hide. Lafarge donated £3,000 towards the cost of the information panels in the car park and bird hide. The BTCV paid for trees to screen the bird hide, willow screening by the hide and two seats on the river bank. In addition to the post and rail fence already mentioned Barclay's Bank funded the purchase of hand tools and replacement trees to gap up the roadside shelterbelt. By the end of the project 153 volunteers had worked a total of 3,992 hours on the reserve. Volunteers made a significant contribution to the success of the project. In addition to those already mentioned both the Deepings School and St Guthlac School, Crowland had students working on the reserve. Both schools provided around 10 students one day a week each for six weeks, the student ages ranged from 11 – 15 years old. Three work experience students (aged 14 – 16) also worked on the reserve, as did younger children from the Bourne Wildlife Watch Group. During the 19 months of the project work parties took place on 174 days.

After the open day the regular work parties continued. The work falls into two categories –

the routine stuff like fence, path and ditch maintenance, scrub control, grassland weed control, cutting and wildflower seed spreading – all things that have to be done every year.

and

the exciting stuff – projects, such as the sand martin bank, artificial otter holts and tern rafts.

So, for the remainder of this chapter some of the 'exciting' projects will be described, but before them, what about the gravel spit and the orchids?

In the summer of 2004 the spit was covered with wetland plants such as Purple Loosestrife, Yellow Loosestrife, Water Mint, Gipsywort and Skullcap, to name a few, it looked fantastic – but as expected no orchids. Orchids usually take 3 – 4 years to produce a plant from seed. The spit was cut in the autumn, and the cuttings removed/scattered in new areas to spread the seed.





*May 2007 – first Early Marsh Orchid*



*May 2009 – over 100 orchids*

The first Early Marsh Orchid appeared in May 2007, and since then numbers have increased. Furthermore, seed from plants on the spit have been spread in other areas of the reserve, and now there are thousands of them, and we have given up trying to count them. Now the spit once again “has all the watery plants one can wish (almost).” The spit is now considered to be the best example of relic Fen vegetation in the County. It is very precious, but by collecting and spreading seed from the spit we can extend the habitat on the reserve – and perhaps to other nature reserves in the area.

## PROJECTS



*In the summer of 2009 we hauled an old boat out of the water and gave it a fibreglass bottom.*

We sometimes use it, especially if we need to visit the island on ‘The Lake’ – we even named it after the former lake owners. The boat is at least 80 years old – so a little tlc was the least we could offer.





*In March 2010 we installed an osprey nesting platform on the island in 'The Lake.'*

Ospreys often visit the reserve during migration, so as the population continues to grow in the Rutland Water area we might get lucky – and yes, we did use the boat.



*Also in March 2010 we cleared a few moribund Elder trees to create quite a large clearing at the start of the visitors' route.*

The area was planted up with native shrubs, such as Hawthorn, Spindle and Guelder Rose, thus adding to the species diversity of the area.



*In February 2011 a hedge was planted along the fence-line*



*Jacob Boswell, a teenager living in Market Deeping had carried out a sponsored cycle ride around the Peterborough Green-wheel cycle route. He raised £120 for the reserve, which paid for the hedge plants, canes and spiral guards.*

In February 2011 cubs from the 1<sup>st</sup> Market Deeping pack planted the hedge.



Hedge planting has been carried out along most of the remaining field boundaries, restoring features seen on old maps. This and other hedges have subsequently been laid.



*This project started in February 2011 near the main bird hide. The apron of land had a scattering of Elder trees, which had little wildlife value. The project was to clear the trees and remove the roots. The land was bladed into the lake to create shallower water so that marginal plants and reeds could grow. 6 February 2011*

*Baxter & King kindly donated the use of the excavator. 9 May 2011*

The land was sown with a grass/wildflower mixture and a post/rail fence installed using old railway fencing posts and rails from the former railway at Dole Wood Nature Reserve. The railway closed in 1956, but the fence was made of good stuff, and will probably out live all of us! A bench seat was made from an ash tree on the apron and installed over-looking the apron



*Ivan and Flynn working on/installing the seat – Grandfather and Grandson teamwork. 20 March 2011*

Another project in February 2011 was to re-surface part of one of the islands in the eastern lake. The island had been covered with gravel as part of the pit restoration in the 1990's to provide a suitable substrate for breeding birds, such as Common Terns. Vegetation had to be cleared from the gravel before each nesting season. It was trimmed and cleared up with any new growth sprayed off in spring, and at first this was sufficient management. But gradually organic matter built up, covering the gravel, so we planned to add fresh gravel laid on a weed suppressing membrane. Lafarge kindly donated the gravel – all we had to do was to barrow it out to the island and spread it. A fleet of wheelbarrows, lots of buckets, and a causeway built mainly of pallets held down with concrete slabs to stop them floating off.

Job done, and it was a hit with the terns too!





February 2011

The artificial Sand Martin bank is probably our most ambitious projects to date. Sand Martins once nested on the quarry site in the vertical faces left by the quarry work. Most of the vertical faces were destroyed as part of the restoration process – and in any case, would now be under-water since the workings were continuously pumped dry. We did try cutting vertical faces on an island, left un-quarried for that purpose – sand martins were seen trying to excavate nest holes, but didn't use the faces, even if we made 'starter' holes. Similarly, we tried cutting a face on the sand heap behind the artificial bank, without luck. So, an artificial bank it had to be.







*Photo's above show the various stages of construction which was started in November 2011 and completed in March 2012.*

The holes are 1 metre long plastic pipes, blocked off at the far end. The void around the pipes is filled with approx. 30 tonne of sand. The pipes are part filled with sand, and birds excavate a small amount of it to create a nest site. The bank has been very successful, with over 60% of the holes having nests in them in 2017. The metal skirt is to prevent rodents reaching the holes. The holes are cleared out and filled with fresh sand during the winter months.

We had a lot of help to build it. Acrabuild Ltd was key to getting this project off the ground by laying the concrete base. Thanks also to Gemmix Ltd and E H Smith (Builders Merchants) Ltd for supplying the concrete and building materials – all for free. Local volunteers carried out the building work. We had to buy sand and cement, the roofing material and metal for the skirt. This came to around £1,000 which was paid for from money raised by Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust locally.

## **ARTIFICIAL OTTER HOLTS**

*One of the holts being installed, they are covered with soil/wood after installation.*



*31 January 2012*



*28 May 2012*

The story about the artificial otter holts is amazing:- We had the free use of a stall at the Market Deeping Show each year to publicise the reserve and the work of the Trust, and we had public open days on the reserve. We always had a donations box – but we did not raise much money. So Ian Sutherland, one of our volunteers, suggested that we have a 'Sponsor an Otter' fund raising project in 2011 – with sponsors receiving an e-mailed newsletter. As a result within a few weeks we had raised enough money to buy two artificial holts. We decided on a holt made from recycled plastic – expensive, but proven and durable. The flat-packed kits are made by Filcris, and cost at the time £236 (+vat) each. We also received a donation of a trail camera, which we set up and photographed an otter near to one of the holts. Subsequently we often see a female otter with young near to the holt, and assume it is being used regularly as a natal holt.





*Eighteen Army Cadets from Market Deeping (14 Troop) visited the reserve in February 2012. They presented a cheque for £237.60 to the Trust as payment for the purchase of 360 saplings, canes and spiral guards from Aveland Trees.*

*The Cadets had chosen to plant part of a hedge as a Community Project. Working in two teams they first had to clear the 60 metres of hedge line, then mark out the planting with canes. While one team was working on the hedge the other team were coppicing or pollarding some trees growing by the lake edge.*



*Presentation by Deeping St James Parish Council  
28 September 2012*



*Some of the volunteers with the award at Deeping Lakes  
21 November 2012*

On 28 September 2012 the Deeping Lakes volunteers were presented with a rose bowl by Deeping St James Parish Council for the East Midlands In Bloom 2012 Award for Best Wildflower & Conservation Area. They were also awarded the East Midlands in Bloom 2012 Judges Award, presented to Deeping St James Village for the volunteers at Deeping Lakes Nature Reserve for their work and commitment.





*Volunteers extending a pond and using the spoil to cover gravel.*

*4 June 2013*

The gravel had been left to attract ground nesting birds, but it has never been used. Top-soiling the gravel has extended a small, but very rich, wildflower area.

*Cheekily we asked Network Rail if there were any old sleepers they could let us have to divide the access track into a vehicle zone, and a pedestrian zone. They said they could and delivered them to the site, dumped along the track so we could re-position them.*

*19 August 2014*



We didn't have enough to complete the job – so asked for some more!

*We couldn't quite believe what turned up – a lorry carrying a front-loader with a trailer full of sleepers, and a gang of railway workers to help move them. 'If you don't ask . . . etc', or 'Be careful what you ask for'?*



*24 November 2014*



In September 2015 the islands in the eastern lake were re-worked to provide more available nesting areas for ground nesting birds, and to provide low lying muddy ground for waders.



*Drone photo: Steve Grimes in November 2015.*

The work took over a month, and it was somewhat ironic that we had to buy-in gravel to cover some of the islands!



*CLLr Roy Stephenson presenting the Group with a cheque for £1,595.50. Roy had been the Market Deeping Mayor and nominated the Trust as one of his charities.  
13 October 2015*

The money was spent buying three rafts/floating islands for nesting terns.



*Tern rafts supplied part built-by Filcris. We bolted two rafts together to make a larger nesting area.  
2 February 2016*

In 2017 we bought the recycled plastic materials and built another double raft from scratch.



The rafts were covered with gravel, and proved to be very successful. The gravel needs to be kept clean, so the rafts have to be brought back to shore and worked on annually.



... and so on. There is always work to do – either the routine stuff, or the new projects. We have a fantastic group of volunteers who turn out every week, do a lot of work, have fun and have made the reserve the way it is, and most people like what they see and enjoy what mother-nature (and lots of help) has provided.

*Getting ready for a Le Mans style start, barrowing gravel from the river to re-surface the visitors' route through the woodland at the west end of the reserve.*  
26 April 2016

There are many other projects which could have been mentioned, but at least the above gives a flavour of what we can do. We are a talented lot, and will tackle most things. Last reporting year (2016/17) volunteers worked over 7,000 hours on the reserve.

Deeping Lakes has been and continues to be a community project, and this was once again acknowledged by Deeping St James Parish Council at a presentation on 9 May 2017.





## MANAGEMENT

The aquatic habitats, due to their size and being difficult to manage, are largely being left to natural processes. 'The Lake' covers 78 acres, and apart from the spit in the Gullet area and the apron of land near to the bird hide is mostly unmanaged. The water bodies in the former Welland Bank Quarry are also large, reed beds may eventually require management, but nothing is planned. The smaller water bodies can be managed, and from time to time some of the vegetation has been dragged out to retain areas of open water.

Managing the marginal habitats is time consuming – self-sown trees would, if left, quickly dominate all the water bodies to the detriment of other vegetation. Each year the margins are strimmed and the cuttings removed. This is extremely time consuming, but has several positive effects:- Firstly, the self-sown trees are prevented from getting established. Secondly, it reduces the amount of reeds and rushes that spread into the grassland areas. Thirdly, it allows access to the water body margins so that *Crassula Helmsii* can be monitored/controlled.

*Crassula* has many different names – two of the printable ones are Australian Swamp Stonecrop and New Zealand Pigmy Weed. Whatever it is called it is a major problem throughout Britain. If left unchecked it forms thick mats of vegetation that smother out all other vegetation. It grows on lake margins, but can grow terrestrially and in deep water, where it too creates large masses of vegetation. It is almost impossible to get rid of – at best spraying with herbicide can keep it under control, but not kill it. *Crassula* can be found growing around most of the lakes.

The grassland habitats are managed by cutting and grazing. Some areas of grassland are extremely wildflower-rich and seed from these areas is routinely spread on the less botanically rich areas, usually as a 'green hay cut'. Some areas of grassland are left unmanaged, or managed rotationally, to retain longer grass habitats.

Woodland habitats take two forms:-

1 – Scrub habitats. These are managed by pollarding or coppicing to retain low growing shrub trees, usually in a grassland/scrub habitat. Retaining a mosaic of trees/grassland maximises the wildlife value.

2 – Woodland habitats. There are three blocks of 'woodland'. The first alongside the B1166, where trees were planted to screen the active quarry site. The second is at the western end of the reserve, and the third is between 'The Lake' and the railway line.

The woodland next to the railway is largely un-managed, it contains massive oak, horse chestnut and willow trees, and probably has received little management since the site was quarried in the 1890's.

The roadside shelterbelt has been thinned, and may require further work. Tall trees next to any road need monitoring.

The woodland at the western end of the reserve presents an interesting dilemma. It was planted in 1997 as part of the site restoration. Species of trees planted included oak, willow, ash, alder, field maple, silver and downy birch and 'native' black poplar. The original 'plan' was to leave it alone to sort itself out, but this soon looked to be a bad plan. Firstly the willows grew so quickly they threatened to shade out everything else. It was also found that the poplar trees were all Italian black poplar – so they were removed. Most of the alders were non-native grey alders (and one red alder) – so they too were removed. To cap it all quite a rich ground flora was spontaneously developing, including common spotted orchids and grass vetchling – quite a rare plant. The presence of the wildflowers was explained thus:- The first area to be quarried in the 1990's was outside the reserve boundary on neighbouring land. The restoration created a large fish pond, and the top-soil from that area was 'dumped' in the now wooded area. Before quarrying the land was a meadow – so the top-soil contained a seedbank.

The dilemma therefore is – how to keep wildflower-rich grassland within a woodland, and how to manage hundreds of trees where the oaks (and some others) will turn into massive trees? Managing the wildflower areas is relatively easy, just treat them as any other grassland area, but keep shading trees to a minimum. Some (very few) trees will go on to maturity. Others will be thinned out – but currently most of the trees are being pollarded. The cut material is being used when hedge laying, the non-willow trees providing the stakes, and the willow the top binding. The scrub coppicing and pollarding also produces material suitable for stakes.

Hawthorn and other shrub trees are spontaneously growing in the woodland, and some of these will be retained to give some structural diversity, and of course, a nectar source for insects and seed source for birds.



Hedges – Some of the ‘new’ hedges were funded as part of the HLF package. Jacob Boswell and the Army Cadets funded the hedge at the start of the visitor route to the bird hide, and other stretches funded by the Bourne Area Group. All of the new hedges have been planted where hedges were recorded historically.

Last winter (2016/17) the Norwich & Peterborough Building Society planted a hedge section alongside the track which they donated £100 towards.



*This winter (2017/18) we planted up the final section of hedge alongside the access track.  
23 February 2018*

Significant – since it is the last of the hedges to be planted, and also because half of the 440 shrub trees planted came from our own ‘tree nursery’.

The ‘grand plan’ is to lay sections of hedge every year, using home-grown stakes and binding, and to have a rolling programme so that all the hedges get laid on a rotational basis.

So far, we can easily generate enough willow to top bind the hedge, but we are not self-sufficient in finding enough stake material.



*During the winter of 2017/18 we laid around 160 metres of hedge, but 100 of the stakes were from another site.  
4 February 2018*

### **THREATS AND OPPORTUNITIES**

Opportunities are limited – the land is bounded by the B1166, the River Welland and the railway, so acquiring new land would be difficult. Re-working the islands demonstrates there may be scope for major projects within the current boundary.

Threats there a plenty! Vandalism and petty thefts have dogged the site since before it was declared a nature reserve. There have been attempts to burn down the bird hide, damage to fencing and seats, dumped vehicles and littering, including a load of asbestos. Annoying yes, but so far we have always bounced back – and the local community is on our side, which helps.



## WILLOW TREE FEN

Strictly speaking, Willow Tree falls outside the Bourne Area Group area but has been included for two reasons: firstly its size and importance, and secondly – volunteers from the Bourne Area have played a vital part in creating and managing the reserve.

**Description from the Trust's website:-** “Willow Tree Fen has been transformed from arable land growing beans and cereal to a more traditional fenland landscape of shallow meres, seasonally flooded pastures, hay meadows and reedbeds. At one-time the south Lincolnshire Fens were a wilderness landscape. However, very little of this wild fenland now remains. Occupying an area of 274 acres, the most significant remaining fragments of wild fenland are Baston Fen and Thurlby Fen Slips nature reserves. Whilst these two reserves are important for the protection of rare and threatened species of wetland flora and fauna, they are too small to support some of the larger fenland birds and animals, and possibly too small to cope with a changing climate”.

The purchase of Willow Tree Fen in 2009 increased Lincolnshire's wild fenland by 200%. Significantly, the nearby River Glen and Counter Drain provide wildlife corridors between Baston Fen and Thurlby Fen Slips and Willow Tree Fen. Its purchase was made possible with financial support from Natural England, the Heritage Lottery Fund, Lincolnshire Waterways Partnership, Environment Agency and members of the Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust. The Heritage Lottery Fund approved a grant of £800,000 towards the project. Other partners contributed towards the project which cost just over £2million.

Two members of staff were employed – these were the Community, Project and Education Officer and an Administrative Assistant. They commenced work on 20 July 2009 and remained in post until September 2012. Due to slippage the project was extended until March 2014, with the project being managed by two existing Trust regional wardens which effectively created an additional half time post. As with other HLF funded projects volunteers were vital, and provided matched funding. Initially opportunities for volunteer work was limited since most of the work necessarily was being done by contractors.



*Extensive building works were needed to re-habilitate the buildings. Ditch and fence work also needed contractors.*

*21 July 2011*

However, archaeological events, mosaic workshops and plant identification workshops did provide opportunities for volunteers to be part of the project, and generated useful publicity.

Over 60 events were held during the first three years of the project:- Open days, special events, talks to groups and guided walks (around 500 people) facilitated considerable involvement of local community in the design of the project. 39 people were engaged in six learning courses. The mosaic creation event involved 12 people over six days. Three archaeological events spread over 18 days involved 400 people. Regular volunteer workdays established on the reserve involved at least 46 people contributing 1,700 volunteer days. School, college and university students along with five 'career' volunteer placements also boosted the volunteer days. 16 educational visits to the reserve involving about 200 children and adults took place and Wildlife Watch groups (the junior branch of the Wildlife Trusts) regularly used the facilities on site.

So 1,700 volunteer days was an impressive total, but nothing like the 2,880 needed for the matched funding, which in part is why the two year extension was needed.





A lot of volunteer time could be made up by work in the woodland plantations.

These had been planted around 20 years ago and needed thinning out.

*This was our Christmas party, with mostly 'Deeping Lakes' volunteers, who did much of the work on the reserve in the remaining two years of the project.*

19 December 2012

But we needed projects:-



*Down one side of the grain store was a plenum chamber, from which pumped air could be forced under the grain to dry it. After some investigation we thought that the substantial plywood box could be sub-divided into a row of walk-in storage cupboards.*

8 January 2013

There were many problems on the site that needed attention; for instance, provision had been made to get water on to the site to create the wet grassland habitats – but nothing had been done to keep water on the land. Volunteers spent many days walking the site and mapping where water was running off. We found dozens of old field drain systems, all with water pouring into the ditches and drains.



*Each field drainage system had to be found and then dug out to stop water leaching back into the severed pipes.*

31 January 2013





*Volunteers building a new stock corral.  
6 May 2013*

*Sowing a grass/wildflower mix on land near the  
education area, which we had cleared, levelled and  
prepared a seedbed.  
14 May 2013*



*John and Christine Hill travelled every week from  
Grantham to work with us.  
They had built a 'bug hotel' out of scrap wood, and were  
adding the finishing touches.  
22 May 2013*



*To say there was a thistle problem would be an  
understatement! Spear thistles, some taller than the  
volunteers.  
10 July 2013*

Some could be dug up and removed to stop the seed from dropping; some had to be sprayed with herbicide.

We spent many 'happy' days thistle bashing!





*Installing steps up to the old railway bridge from 'The gas pipe field' – so called because ... it has a high pressure gas pipe under it!  
6 August 2013*

The field had been stock-fenced for cattle using three strands of barbed wire – but cattle caused too much damage to the collector drain and bund. The field had to be kept dry, firstly to allow access if needed to the gas pipe, but also because gas pipes can float or move in waterlogged fields. This project was to remove the barbed wire, install sheep fencing, and to provide access to the railway bridge.



*A separate work party, but at around the same time, was installing a new 14' gate on to the river bank. Digging the post holes was difficult – lots of stone in the gateway  
14 August 2013*



*Steps and kissing gate installed – we had to build a culvert to cross the ditch. Fence to the right of the gate still needs to be continued.  
20 August 2013*

This sort of work would under normal circumstances be carried out by contractors – but 'we' can do it too as good as or better than contractors. It takes us longer and sometimes it can take all day just to dig one hole – but we get there.





*On the same day – work best left to the contractor!  
Interceptor ditch and bund in the gas-pipe field.  
20 August 2013*

This work was needed firstly because we discovered that the ditch drained the wrong way, but also the bund wasn't high enough, and water over-topped it during the winter months.

*Interceptor ditch working for the first time, with the improved bund, and we found/blocked more old field drains.  
26 August 2013*



To link the interceptor ditch to the drain that runs along the Counter Drain we needed to trench and lay a pipe over the top of the gas pipe.

*Most of the trench could be dug by machine under close supervision; the bit over the pipe had to be done by hand.  
16 September 2013*



*More fence work – this time upgrading the fence between the reserve and Pinchbeck Slupe Nature Reserve. Cattle would often jump over the old fence.  
15 October 2013*





*Building a hibernation chamber for great-crested newts.  
3 November 2013*



*Checking the entrances before capping the structure with soil.*



*We bought some 'new' kit to help us work the arable field, which needs re-sowing every year. It needed a bit of TLC!  
8 December 2013*



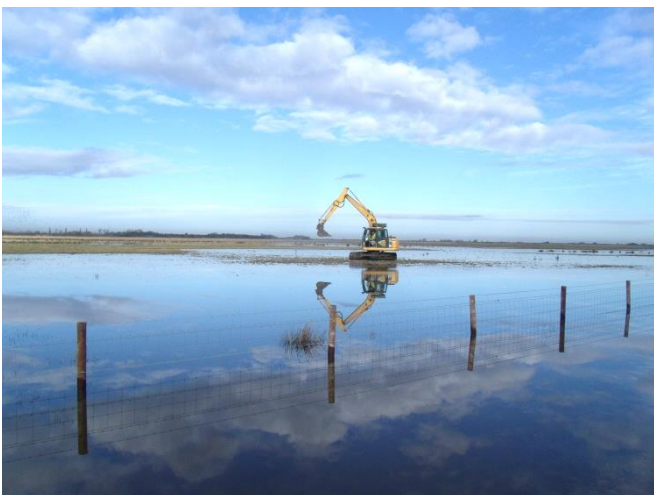


*Ten days later, a few adjustments and – as good as new (well, perhaps not, but certainly useable)  
18 December 2013*



*Planting a new hedge near the education area.  
21 December 2013*

The weather was foul, and this section had to be dug out and trenched due to the remains of a bungalow being in the way. The trench was filled with top-soil before planting.



*The excavator was back on site to work on the new bird hide base, but we had found another field drain that needed digging up. However, first it needed to get there.  
10 February 2014*



*Willie Baumber trying to keep to the higher ground.*





*Seemingly impossible to do, but we got a direct hit, and the drain ran no more!*



Volunteers working alongside Willie Baumber had built a raised area for a new bird hide.

*11 February 2014*

The retaining walls were constructed using railway sleepers, with sleepers also driven in as posts. Add 100 tonne of stone and cap it with limestone – it all sounds so easy, but it was a very challenging job.



*Working near the education area we built two bays for the bulk delivery of stone, using railway sleepers.*

*17 February 2014*



*Same area as above, just five days earlier – working in the mud and rain bolting on the sleepers.*

*12 February 2014*

How do you value volunteers again?

Above and beyond the call of duty!





*At the site of the new hide we bolt on the old viewing screens until we can get the bird hide built.  
18 February 2014*

Now we have fixed all the leaking drains and raised the bund we can keep more water on site, but have to raise the level of some of the paths. Too narrow to get the front-loader in – it has to be barrowed. First we built up the sides with rocks, and then spread down a 100mm thick layer of limestone ...



*19 February 2014*

... and do the same the following week.



*26 February 2014*



[illegible]

A large, rectangular wooden structure, possibly a stage or a large cabinet, is under construction in a dark room. The structure is made of light-colored wood and features a series of vertical slats or panels along its top edge. A person is kneeling on the floor next to the structure, working on the base. A ladder is visible in the background. The floor is covered with a white protective sheet.



105



So far, 13 volunteers have worked on the construction, working a total of 196 hours. The installation involves removing the temporary screens, levelling the limestone and fixing the base to the sleepers which involves another 13 volunteers working a total of 90 hours on 18 March 2014. The hide was dis-assembled and installed on the base a week later involving 12 volunteers working a total of 52 hours. We needed plenty of people to move and hold the walls in place as they were being fixed to the floor and to each other. In total 23 volunteers worked on the bird hide construction and installation, and the project took 719 hours to complete.



*To mark the end of the extended project Paul Learoyd (Chief Executive) and Dave Bromwich (Head of Nature Reserves) from Trust HQ visited the site and the volunteers laid on a buffet lunch.  
1 April 2014*

In the last year of the project they had worked 644 volunteer days and completely transformed the reserve, and rescued the project.



*The end of the project didn't mean the end of the volunteer work; the hide still needed to be completed and a side screen was built/installed using wood from the old viewing screens.  
16 April 2014*



During the following year volunteers worked a total of 382 volunteer days.



*The project was officially signed off at a grand gathering of members of staff, representatives of the various funding bodies, contractors and, of course, the volunteers.*

*20 June 2014*



*A public open day was held on Sunday 6 July with refreshments, activities for children, various displays and guided walks and a plant stall. The event was jointly run by the Bourne and Spalding Area Groups.*

*6 July 2014*



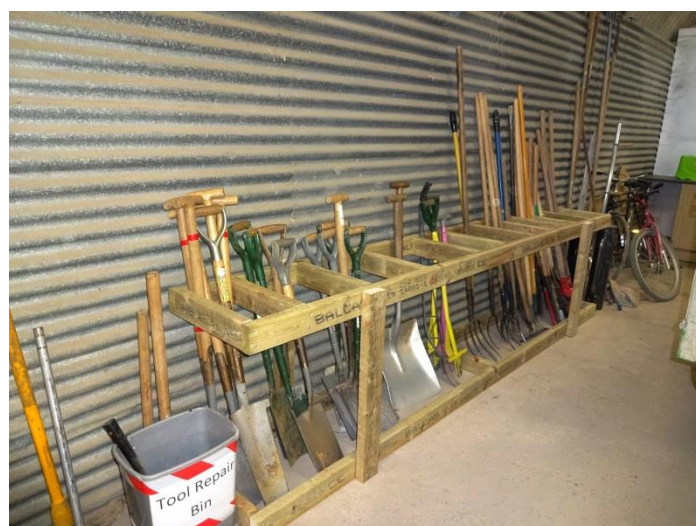


*With such a large area to manage there is always something to do, like installing post/rail fencing where there is a drop off to a ditch ...*  
*16 July 2014*



*... or repairing a collapsed drain ...*  
*3 June 2015*

*... or building a tool rack ...*  
*10 June 2015*



*... or pulling up ragwort ...*  
*22 July 2015*





*... and if it includes having a fire – even better!*  
16 December 2015

## MANAGEMENT

The grassland habitats are vast and largely managed by hay cutting or grazing with sheep and cattle. Ragwort and thistles are usually sprayed by a contractor or hand pulled by volunteers.

The woodland habitats are managed by coppicing and pollarding. Large numbers of trees are being adversely affected by the rise in water levels, so the character of the woodland will change with willows and alder likely to naturally replace dead trees. Ash die-back is also present.

A few mature willows are being pollarded each year by contractors, with volunteers clearing up after them.

Vegetation growing in ditches and drains is subject to rotational cutting by the Internal Drainage Board to keep them functioning.

## NEW AND EXCITING STUFF

During the autumn of 2016 wall netting was put on top of the barbed wire fencing so that fields can be sheep grazed as well as with cattle.



*On the long straight runs we could install 800 metres in a day.*  
2 November 2016





*But in the wetter parts progress was not so rapid.  
10 November 2016*



*This was a major task – ‘stock’ fence along the toe of  
the riverbank.  
22 February 2017*

The barbed wire was rusty/broken, and the posts had a bit of a lean! Could we sort it? Don’t know, but we will give it a go.

Whoever installed the posts had set them at least 1’ too high, so the cattle could push them over.



Even the straining posts had been set too high. The fence posts were just set in the ground, but the straining posts were set in concrete.





*It was a right mess – so the first job was to remove all the old wire. 22 February 2017*



*The next job was to re-set all the straining posts. Volunteers assisting John Oliver, the South East Lincolnshire Warden  
1 March 2017*



*8 March 2017*



*15 March 2017*

After that, lifting out the posts, digging the holes deeper then refitting the posts was relatively easy.





*Fitting new wire to the posts was also straightforward, except for having to make the wire ties that hold the wire to the posts.*

*29 March 2017*

*We are quite good at making seats, and there are now four of them on the reserve. This is one of a pair installed overlooking the long ponds.*

*31 May 2017*



*Later on we needed to fit some 'safety' rails in front of the seats, which proved to be much harder than making and installing the seat.*

*13 September 2017*



*One of the winter 2017/18 projects has been to build a number of artificial otter holts using waste materials.*

*15 November 2017*





*Another winter 2017/18 project has been to extend the pond by the buildings and install a new fence.  
29 November 2017*

So, eight years on there still seems to be no shortage of things to do!

### **THREATS AND OPPORTUNITIES**

Opportunities there are a plenty – more land acquisition, adjacent land being managed in a sympathetic way to name but two.

Threats there are a plenty as well – being a remote site means that vandals and unsavoury characters are drawn to the site, so much so that the barriers are kept locked outside office hours – so a great loss to visitors who cannot walk far. Also, hare coursers have damaged gates on two occasions during the winter of 2017/18. One driver in an attempt to evade the Police coming close to receiving serious injury as he tried to crash his way off the reserve.



*Three gates smashed, with the car jammed under the third.  
27 December 2017*



## PARTNERSHIP PROJECTS

From time-to-time the Bourne Area Group has worked on other Nature Reserves and Community projects. For instance in December 1990 a work party from Morton Girl Guides spent the day clearing out vegetation from the field pond in Tortoiseshell Wood.

*The pond had become very over-grown and shaded out. Photos taken towards the end of the day.*



The Guides were back in March 1991 clearing the visitors' route along the southern edge of the wood, clearing bramble patches and planting trees.

## WESTMINSTER HOUSE NEWT POND



Westminster House (now Barchester Wood Grange Care Home) was built on a former nursery garden site owned by Dick Sellars. Dick was a well-respected local gardener who often had display gardens at the Chelsea Garden Show. In its hey-day the plant nursery site featured a number of themed gardens and ponds. The ponds contained a population of great-crested newts. Like the rest of the site, the ponds had become derelict and very over grown, but a survey before work started on the care home found some newts. The site developers were obliged to create an alternative habitat for amphibians, so a new pond was dug by Baxter & King. The local fire brigade were drafted in to fill the pond. Volunteers from the Bourne Area Group systematically checked the overgrown ponds, moving animals to the new pond area before destroying the old ponds. A rock pile, a purpose built hibernaculum and a log pile were provided, and the margin of the pond planted with aquatic vegetation. Frogs, toads, smooth and



great-crested newts were found and moved to their new 'home'. Over 400 volunteer hours work was put into creating the new habitat. The pond work was completed before building work could start.



*October 1992*



The information board was provided by Westminster Health Care. The Bourne Area Group has a management agreement with the site owners to preserve the habitat suitable for amphibians, and this usually involves strimming during the winter months, and removing the cuttings.

### **RECTORY PADDOCK – MARKET DEEPING**

Market Deeping Town Council requested a site evaluation survey in 2005 and a site visit took place on 10 February, accompanied by Roy Dennis, Member of Market Deeping Town Council Amenities and Open Spaces Committee. The Town Council were keen to improve the public open space, but progress was slow.



*Nothing much happened until 2013. Area Group volunteers working with the Town Council laid a short section of hedge on the site in October.*



*In November 2013 the pond was cleared out, patches of grassland strimmed and wildflower seed spread.*





*The objective was to establish small patches of grassland with wildflowers – which may then spread.*

Seed bought in included yellow rattle, a plant semi-parasitic on grasses, which helps to reduce grass vigour. Seed was also collected from Deeping Lakes.



*In January/February 2015 a substantial field maple hedge was laid by Trust and local volunteers.*





*A swift tower was constructed by Trust volunteers and installed on site in April 2015.*

The project also involved local primary schools, with a competition to win a swift box.



*Wildflower patches were created, and despite the very coarse grasses being well established the wildflowers are gradually expanding.*

Having demonstrated that a few volunteers can make a difference a regular work party has now formed to work in the Paddock. The project is still on-going, with Trust volunteers helping when necessary. In February 2016 a short section of hedge was laid along the sites northern boundary.

In May 2018 the work of the Town Council and the volunteers was recognised by the group being awarded the Orsted Community Award, one of the prestigious Lincolnshire Environmental Awards for environmental excellence, which have been given every year since 1993. The awards are designed to recognise and celebrate the inspiring activities that are helping to improve the environment and encourage sustainability.

The Awards are a showcase: giving community groups, schools, businesses and farmers an opportunity to demonstrate that they are playing their part in the sustainable development of the county.

A very diverse range of people and groups enter the awards. Past winners have included village community groups that have created wildlife areas; schools that have grown their own vegetables, built recycled bottle greenhouses and bug palaces; farmers that have restored and planted hedges, and created wetlands.



## THE ORCHARD PROJECT – BOURNE

The Friends of Bourne Wood (FOBW) established a community orchard on land adjacent to Bourne Wood in 2012. The orchard is now fully planted with a diverse mixture of fruit trees, many of which are sponsored by local people or organisations.



*In January 2013 Trust volunteers laid a scrappy hedge along the Orchard's eastern boundary, and used the waste material to create a 'dead-hedge' to protect the hedge plants on the western boundary.*



*In January 2014 Trust volunteers installed a chestnut paling fence around the bee hives in the Orchard.*

## THE SPINNEY – LITTLE BYTHAM

The Bythams Spinney is situated on the road to Creeton just outside the village of Little Bytham. The site covers an area of approximately 5.5 acres and provides a combination of open and woodland space for the pleasure of local people. It is managed by a local charity: The Bythams Woodland Trust. The arable field adjoining the Spinney to the north has now been purchased by the BWT. It is being managed to encourage a diversity of plants (much as an old-fashioned hay meadow would have been), to bring in a greater range of insects and other invertebrates, which will in turn encourage a greater range of birds and other wildlife. Users of the Spinney are also allowed free access to the Meadow.



*In November 2013 Bourne Area Group volunteers ran hedge laying sessions with the Bythams Trust to lay the hedge along the railway cutting.*

Subsequently the rest of the hedges around the meadow have been laid by the Bythams volunteers.





*The meadow in June 2015.*

Seed has been bought-in for this project, but also bales of 'green hay' and seed collected from Robert's Field have also been used, with Trust volunteers assisting with the collecting and spreading of seed.

Other projects may arise in the future, but the above demonstrate how other local groups are working for wildlife, and how Trust members can contribute to fulfilling their plans.



## WILDLIFE WATCH

Nationally Wildlife Watch (or WATCH, as it was then known) was launched as a children's naturalist club in 1975 as the junior wing of the Wildlife Trusts. Initially in Lincolnshire afternoon field meetings (where parents were welcome) were run. At the Bourne Area Group Committee meeting of 11 November 1975 the Chairman Hugh Scarborough reported that the Trust's Education and Public Affairs Committee had proposed young people's study weekends at Gibraltar Point. The Committee agreed to sponsor a young person, if the idea went ahead. In 1977 Andrew Paddington and David Westbrook were the first youths from the Bourne area to attend one of the junior weekends, with Trish Stubley and Jo Everingham helping out at Gibraltar Point.

The first local WATCH Club was based at Gibraltar Point and was run by Martin Curry, the Warden. Martin was also the County WATCH Organiser, and he encouraged the formation of other groups. He attended the Area Group Committee meeting on 28 February 1979, and Miss Pywell volunteered to organise events. In 1980 Trish Stubley took over, and ran local events until 1984.

In May 1987 Martin organised the first WATCH leaders' course in the county. It ran over a weekend, starting on the Friday evening. Dave Vandome attended the course, and picked up a lot of information and ideas for running a group. In May 1988 Grimsthorpe Estate was the venue for a County WATCH event, and this seemed like a good 'launch' opportunity for a new Bourne group. An approach was made to Abbey Road Primary School, and Mrs Nichols allowed Dave Vandome, David Sheppard and Ayla Smith to talk after school to students and parents.

The County day went well, with 24 children and Mrs Nichols attending from Bourne and 12 children from the Pinchbeck WATCH Group. The first meeting of the new Bourne WATCH Group was on 10 July 1988 in Bourne Woods. Despite overcast skies and the threat of rain over 20 children turned up for a walk around part of the wood, with various activities along the way. The second meeting was held on Grimsthorpe Estate, Mrs Nichols was helping out with organising and transporting children. The Group had David Sheppard, Ayla Smith and Dave Vandome as registered leaders, and John and Jane Richardson, Jane Stokes, Ruth Hilton, Jenny Coley, Fran Broom, Ray Harvey and Trevor Watson as registered helpers.

Meetings were held once a month, and for the winter meetings the Group hired a classroom in the Robert Manning School. In November 1988 children were making models of different habitats. When they were finished they formed part of a display mounted in the Abbey Road School. The six habitats represented places the Group would visit in 1989.



*Julia Partridge being cheeky ...*



*... and the display in the Abbey Road School.*

In March 1989 the Group cleared out the Bourne Eau by the Darby & Joan Hall; the Council agreed to the clear-out, and provided a skip.





*The water level had been quite low – exposing all the rubbish in it. The bottom of the channel is concrete, so it was reasonably safe to work on.  
5 March 1989*



*An opportunity not to be missed. Jane Stokes organised a visit to Ash's Farm in Dyke to see lambs being born.  
19 March 1989*



The Forestry Commission had 'given' a small triangle of land to the Group to look after. Larch growing in the plot had been thinned out and we were carrying out a survey to see what else was growing in the area.

*We had a picnic lunch followed by a sponsored scavenger hunt to raise funds for a trip to Gibraltar Point on 20 August.  
14 May 1989*





*Later on in the year we pulled up brambles, cleared the 'lop and top' from the tree felling and planted 100 new trees.*

In February 1990 one of our indoor meetings was 'interrupted' by the Exotic Pets Refuge. Mark Williams, aged 11 and a WATCH member had suggested that the Group adopt one of their animals, he chose 'Bracken' a barn owl, because owls were always – watching.



*Some of the children, and Bracken.  
9 February 1990*

Our winter meetings had produced a World map showing some of the global wildlife concerns. The poster was used as a backdrop to a stall on Bourne Market selling bric-a-brac, raising funds for a coach trip to Twycross Zoo on 22 April.

The stall raised £160.



*Stall on North Street, Bourne, 7 April 1990.*



*Final outing for the poster – Dole Wood, 6 May 1990.*

Open Day. Emily Richardson and Catherine Hilton wanted to have a stall at the open day, they made many of the items for sale, and Emily managed to get other items donated. They raised around £50 and earnt themselves a Gold WATCH craft badge.





*Emily on her stall at Dole Wood, 20 May 1990*



*Brian Tear explaining the WATCH Gold Award scheme at a Group meeting in 'The Nature Wood' (our part of Bourne Woods). Brian was then a member of the Trust's Council, and had always championed the WATCH groups.*

The summer outdoor meetings were very varied. In June 1990 the Group visited Castor Hanglands led by David Carstairs the Warden. Mrs Nichols from Abbey Road School was still involved with the Group, again organising transport, Jane Richardson was now a registered leader. In July Farm Manager Richard Lidstone gave us a guided tour of Grimsthorpe Estate. The August meeting was a joint meeting with Peterborough WATCH Group in Bourne Woods. In September the Group were walking the public footpaths around 'Wherry's spinney' and the spoil banks left after construction of Toft Tunnel. In October the Group had a guided tour of Bourne Sewage Works.

The theme for the 1990/91 indoor winter meetings was recycling and re-using. The Group had been donated hundreds of clay plant pots, these were either painted or planted up with plants for sale at the Dole Wood Open Day. The Group also collected and crushed thousands of aluminium cans.



*Planting seedlings ...*



*... and crushing cans*

We also obtained some old packing cases, which we cut up and made bird boxes.

Crushing the cans was part of a National campaign by the Aluminium Can Recycling Association, but there were no recycling facilities in Bourne. The WATCH Group wrote to the Bourne town council and Lincolnshire County Council asking for them to provide a can bank.



# Youngsters 'can' help!

CAMPAIGNING youngsters in Bourne have got a can recycling bank for the town.

The Watch Group, the junior branch of the Lincolnshire Trust for Nature Conservation, wrote to Bourne town council and Lincolnshire County Council asking them to find room for a can bank.

Some of the young conservationists and pupils from Morton Primary School were at the Rainbow car park for the official opening of the can bank (pictured right) by Bourne town councillor Alan Jones and town clerk Mary Redshaw.

Members of The Watch group believe in practising what they preach and have been collecting used drink cans since the end of last year, to get the new can bank off to a great start.

The cans were washed and squashed. Watch Group member Julia Partridge wrote to the Aluminium Can Recycling Association for magnets to test the metal with and the cans were sorted into separate bags for steel and aluminium. She also got some posters and an information pack.

Julia explained: "The steel cans stick to the magnets, but the aluminium ones don't."

One of the group's youngest members, Amy Sheppard, won herself a Watch Gold Award badge for speaking to pupils at Morton Primary School about the project.

She also made a can "post box" for the school and has collected several thousand cans over the last couple of months.

One of the Watch Group leaders, Dave Vandome, said: "Recycling saves the energy needed to collect the ore and extract the metal from it."

After the opening, there was plenty of work for the children, putting ten sacks of crushed cans into the bank.

Amy said: "If everyone saved, washed and crushed their used drink cans, the bank would soon be filled."



Text from 16 June 1992, Lincs Free Press

Cllr Alan Jones of Bourne Civic Society and Mrs Mary Redshaw, representing Bourne Town Council, snipping the tape to open the new recycling can bank at the Rainbow supermarket. Amy Sheppard (7) holding the tape on the left of the picture. Bourne Local, 18 June 1992.

On Sunday 12 July the Group was back at Grimsthorpe Estate for the day. Before lunch we went 'on safari' around the 'Pots and Pans' area and collected things to be used to make a large collage after lunch.

Then we set about pulling up ragwort. The Estate Manager had asked if we could remove ragwort from the Gymkhana Field, a SSSI.



We started the task playing several games, like three-legged ragwort pulling, and blindfold ragwort pulling. By the end of the day we had cleared an area in excess of 10 acres.



*Blindfold ragwort pulling!*

The Group were again featured in the local papers in March 1993



### Watch Group clears overgrown pond

BOURNE youngsters have helped transform an overgrown area at Tongue End into a conservation site.

An old pond at South Fen Road, filled with 40 years of debris, had been cleared by the National Rivers Authority during the winter.

NRA fisheries assistant Chris Randall said they decided to involve Bourne Watch Group (pictured left) in planting wetland wildflower and grass seeds near the pond which will become a valuable spawning and refuge area for fish.

On Saturday, 15 youngsters and parents went to the site armed with tools to harrow the ground, clear weeds and rake the seed.

The Watch Group is the junior section of the Royal Society for Nature Conservation. Anyone interested in joining should contact Dave Vandome on Bourne 423362. (J756/28)

*Lincs Free Press*

Saturday 13 March 1993





*The area being sown with grass/wildflowers.*

From the winter of 1994/5 the Group decided to have outdoor activities, rather than use the Robert Manning School. So, rather more conservation and working on nature reserves became the norm.

During the summer the ragwort 'bashing' at Grimsthorpe became an annual event.



*In 1996 we had difficulty spotting any ragwort at all – and only managed to fill a few sacks from the whole field.*

Some of the other summer meetings included:-



*At Toft Tunnel John Aram, a well-known local geologist helps the Group to find and identify rocks and fossils.  
June 2001*

Ros Roberts had become a registered leader in April 2000.





*Finding out about Fungi with Vin Fleming as  
our guide in Bourne Woods.  
October 2001*

### **QUEEN'S GOLDEN JUBILEE PARADE – 3 JUNE 2002**

A parade of floats wound its way through Bourne to celebrate the Jubilee. The photos show some of the preparation work, the float just before the start of the parade, and some photos of the parade itself. 18 children took part in the parade, but not all of them could be fitted on the trailer, so some had to walk behind.







The children had decorated the float, making all the things themselves. Children on the float were:- Poppy Maxfield, Lydia Cook, Helen Roberts, Rachel Wright, Abigail Bellamy, Robin Leaper, Lucy Bannister, Rona Bradley, Catherine Bond-Harris, Hannah Gould. Children walking behind the float were:- Max Bradley, Joel Bradley, Merren Leaper, Graham Roberts, Jenny Roberts and Amy Sheppard, plus another Hannah and a John, whose surnames were not recorded. Liz Leaper, Ros Roberts, Adrian Bradley and Louise Bradley accompanied the children, with David Sheppard and Vaughn Roberts as marshals.

It was a fantastic day.



*In June 2002 John Aram once again was kind enough to help us identify rocks and fossils, this time at Stanton's Pit ...*





*... and in July 2002 we were pond dipping at Thurlby Fen.*



*Stanton's Pit, October 2002*

Barclay's Bank gave the Wildlife Trust £4,000 towards improving the nature reserve. Part of the money was spent on digging a new pond and providing a pond dipping platform.

*The Group are seen here planting up the margin of the pond with plants collected from other nearby nature reserves.*



*No comment!*

*Clearing out the ditch at Dole Wood had been one of the most popular meetings, so we did it every year – but eventually we realised that by clearing it the free-flowing water was scouring the bottom, making it deeper, and depositing a lot of soil downstream.*  
November 2002

So, clearing it is no more!







*The Group went to Gibraltar Point for World Oceans Day. 8 June 2003*

In the morning the Field Centre had organised craft activities, during which we made plankton nets, which we tried out in the afternoon. Might have been some face painting as well!



*October 2003 and a trip to Deeping Lakes, cutting down hundreds of willow seedlings growing in a dry reed-bed.*

There were 13 children working on the reserve, but for most of the time you couldn't see them – the reeds were taller than the children. Every few minutes a bundle of willows would emerge!



*Alan Ball giving a bird ringing demonstration in Bourne Woods. April 2004*

Alan caught 30+ birds while we were there and could show us and talk about the 9 species of bird he caught.

The Group leaders were now:- David Sheppard, Dave Vandome and Pam Carter.

*Working in 'The Nature Wood'. January 2005*

This had become an annual task, usually raking and carting off the strimmed vegetation plus some minor tree work to keep the glade areas open.







*Pond dipping, Deeping Lakes, 11 June 2012.*



*Small mammal survey, Deeping Lakes, 13 August 2012.*

So, 30 years have passed since the current Group started and with winter work sessions and summer visits to Trust Nature Reserves the Group continues to provide activities for children. The Group leaders are now Dave Vandome and Jill Francis.



*Identifying trees by looking at leaf shapes, Deeping Lakes, 12 June 2016.*

The activities stay the same – It's the children who come for just one meeting, or for many m meetings, that change.



## TAIL-PIECE

So, 2019 will be a year to look back and celebrate the last fifty years, but also to look forward. The contents of this book illustrates the past – who can tell what the future will bring. Chris Bladon at the end of the Grimsthorpe Nature Trails chapter added a list of volunteers who helped her run the shop. The list below has been produced from the records kept by Dave Vandome and names volunteers who have worked on the nature reserves since 1989. Like most records it probably is incomplete, but quite impressive never-the-less.

<b>Reserves volunteers</b>	<b>surnames</b>		<b>surnames</b>
Phil	Ackerman	Max	Bradley
Amanda	Ackerman	Betrina	Briggs
Emma	Adams	Lucy	Briggs
R	Adams	Edward	Briggs
Barry	Akan	Andy	Briggs
Tony	Allen	Pat	Broadly
Ian	Andrew	Laurence	Brown
James	Aston	Chris	Brown
William	Atkins	Geoff	Burgoin
Megan	Avis	Erica	Burt
James	Aylward	Norman	Burton
Deborah	Aylward	Sophie	Bycraft
Ian	Aylward	David	Caals
Tim	Bagworth	Pam	Carter
Richard	Balderstone	Tom	Catnach
Tom	Bannister	Elle	Chesterfield
Lucy	Bannister	Ethan	Chesterfield
Amy	Barker	Bridget	Chesterfield
Terry	Barnatt	James	Christien
Jason	Barnes	Connor	Clarke
Loretta	Barry	Susan	Clarke
Charlotte	Bean	Mark	Clipsham
Geoff	Bell	Ross	Cobbold
Matt	Bell	Roy	Cockrill
Dominic	Bellamy	A	Collins
Abigail	Bellamy	P	Collins
Chrisie	Bengston	Bryony	Connors
Abby	Bengston	Lydia	Cook
Emily	Beuken	John	Cooper
Peter	Beuken	Peter	Cooper
Sue	Binks	Callum	Cooper
Jayne	Blackmore	Francesca	Cooper
Catherine	Bond-Harris	Tom	Cooper Jones
Jacob	Boswell	Sarah	Cooper Jones
Paul	Boswell	David	Cope
William	Bowell	Terry	Cornellan
Ray	Bowell	Lynda	Cornellan
Connie	Bowes	Daniel	Cornellan
Jamie	Bowes	Jo	Costura
Margaret	Bradley	Steve	Cox
Brad	Bradley	Ivan	Crawford
Rona	Bradley	Mary-Ann	Creedy
Joel	Bradley	John	Creedy
Adrian	Bradley	Partric	Creedy
Louise	Bradley	Thomas	Creedy



Mark	Crick	John	Fuller
Edd	Cullen	Nick	Galer
Joe	Cutler	Harriot	Galer
Charlotte	Darlow	Alica	Galer
Andy	Davis	Ian	Gammons
Ron	Davis	Aidrian	Gardiner
Jessica	Davis	Liz	Gardiner
Richard	Dawson	Martin	Garfield
John	De Heveningham	S	Garth
Barbara	De Heveningham	Tim	Gates
Keith	Dickin	Mick	Gibson
Patrick	Donnelly	Jess	Gibson
David	Dorey	Rachel	Gledhill
Tom	Douglas	M	Gledhill
Joseph	Doyle	Karl	Golding
William	Doyle	Simon	Goode
Oliver	Drey	Lewis	Goold
Elle	Driver	Hannah	Gould
Karen	Driver	Pat	Gray
Kevin	Durose	Marcus	Gray
Ross	Edgar	Brett	Green
Hannan	Elliot	Michael	Green
Tom	Elliot	David	Grierson
Gareth	Ellison	Mandy	Grierson
Graham	Ellison	David	Griffith
Jan	Ellison	Martin	Grimes
Robert	Ely	Jonathan	Gutierrez
Julia	Ely	Tom	Hakin
Jo	Everingham	Jaquie	Hall
Roger	Favell	Stuart	Hall
Graham	Favell	Adrian	Hallam
Lynn	Favell	Sandra	Harding
Jasmine	Ferrara	Sharon	Harding
Antonio	Ferrara	Graham	Hardy
Jill	Ferrer	Neil	Harris
Clive	Finchham	Suzy	Harrison
Sandra	Finchham	Augustine	Harrison
Chris	Fisher	Tanis	Harrison
Vin	Fleming	Kerry	Harrison
Siobhan	Fleming	Tiffany	Harte
Ellen	Fleming	Linda	Harte
Wander	Fojt	Ben	Hartley
Alison	Foster	Lucy	Hartley
Elizabeth	Foster	Andrew	Hartley
Lindsey	Foster	Simon	Haynes
Nick	Fowler	Katie	Haynes
David	Fox	Mick	Healey
Jill	Francis	Alexanda	Heath
Katie	Francis	Kay	Heath
Megan	Francis	Richard	Heath
Matt	Francis	Mike	Heavens
Reuben	Francis	Toby	Heavens



Ros	Heavens	Chris	Kent
Nick	Hebdon	Andy	Ketteringham
Jason	Heywood	John	Kiery
Peter	Heywood	B	Kilbon
Marcus	Hicks	Carl	Killagon
C	Higgins	M	Knight
P	Higgins	Catherine	Knights
Tilley	Hilder	Luke	Lattimer Rogers
Sam	Hilder	Ian	Laucht
Jo	Hilder	Daniel	Laurence
Adrian	Hilder	Terry	Laurence
John	Hill	Margaret	Laurence
Christine	Hill	Brendon	Laurence
Tony	Hilleard	David	Leaper
Leanne	Hilless	Lauren	Leaper
Ted	Hitchcock	Merren	Leaper
Sarah	Hitchcock	Robin	Leaper
Shane	Hollis	George	Lee
Malcolm	Holly	Colin	Lessiter
Emily	Holmes	Donna	Lever
Colin	Holmes	Alistair	Lever
Kathy	Holmes	Terry	Lill
Peter	Honeyball	Gavin	Lishman
Derick	Hopkins	Carol	Lishman
Charlotte	Howard-Moran	Matthew	Lishman
Rob	Howells	James	Lishman
Phil	Huggins	Norah	Littler
Kim	Huggins	Brian	Littler
L	Hughes	Andrew	Longmuir
Savanah	Hughes	Joy	Longmuir
Vaughn	Hughes	Lizzie	Lunn
Leyton	Hughes	A	Mackay
Sarah	Hughes	David	Mainwaring
Andy	Hurst	Dot	Mainwaring
Neville	Hydes	Linda	Mainwaring
Mark	Hydes	Dave	Mann
Peter	Jackson	Ian	Mansfield
Mark	Jeffries	Ross	Mansfield
Amanda	Jenkins	Mike	Mansfield
Hannah	Jenkins	Keith	Martin
Jonathan	Johnson	Laurence	Martingale
Janet	Johnson	Steve	Matchett
Blake	Johnson-Kendrick	Neil	Matthews
Saxon	Johnson-Kendrick	Mike	Maunder
Jonny	Johnson-Kendrick	Poppy	Maxfield
Lucy	Johnson-Kendrick	Penny	Mayer
Jim	Jones	Michael	McGregor
Brenda	Jones	Simon	McKee
Linda	Jones	Neil	McKenna
Doug	Jose	Geoff	McQueen
S	Keetley	Anna	McQueen
Paul	Keithley	Barbara	Medley



Oscar	Mills	Margaret	Prichard
Isaac	Mills	Emily	Prue
Wendy	Morris	Bob	Purlant
Claire	Morris	Paul	Quemby
Callum	Morris	Mick	Quick
Abigail	Morter	John	Ramsdon
John	Mottram	Lindsey	Ravillious
Richard	Mumby	Emma	Rawlings
Edward	Mumby	Christopher	Reddin
Linda	Mumby	Ian	Redding
Mark	Mumby	Nikki	Redding
Marilyn	Muse-Hodgson	Howard	Redding
Ian	Nash	John	Redshaw
Mike	Newman	Samantha	Reed
Gladys	Nice	Paul	Reeve
Derick	Nice	Emily	Richardson
Libby	Norton	Ross	Roberts
Keith	Nugent	Anne	Roberts
Dorte	Nyhagen	Jenifer	Roberts
Adam	O'Hara	Vaughn	Roberts
Nichola	Orchard	Helen	Roberts
Derick	Osbourne	Tom	Robinson
Libby	Owens	Steve	Rock
Flynn	Pakey	Robert	Rose
Steph	Pakey	Andrew	Ross
Kevin	Pakey	Len	Rout
Brogan	Pakey	Leslie	Sale
Graham	Palmer	S	Saunders
Ben	Parker	Laura	Sclanders
James	Parker	Amy	Scotney
Michael	Parker	Malcolm	Scriven
Tony	Parker	John	Sellers
Gordon	Parker	Fred	Seymore
Nigel	Parker	Joe	Sharland
Harry	Parker	Rob	Sharland
Jenny	Parkes	Lesley	Sharp
Mathew	Parkes	Jeff	Sharp
Andrew	Paul	David	Sheppard
David	Pearson	Thomas	Sheppard
Mark	Pemberton	Amy	Sheppard
Garth	Perry	Liz	Sheppard
Marcus	Petz	Kate	Shinkins
Valerie	Philip	K	Simpson
Matthew	Philip	Zoe	Slinger
Tony	Pointer	Simon	Slinger
Mary	Porter	Helen	Slinger
Maya	Postance	Peter	Small
Sharon	Postance	Mike	Smalley
Mike	Pratt	Ray	Smith
Joshua	Presland	Ayla	Smith
Ben	Prichard	Sarah	Smith
Alan	Prichard	Tony	Spratt



Roland	Stevens	Rosie	Willerton
Ben	Stafford	Freya	Willerton
Graham	Starkie	Samuel	Willerton
Heather	Stead	Stephen	Willerton
Matthew	Stenton	Hayley	Willerton
Vince	Sterland	Marcus	Williams
Hannah	Stevens	Hazel	Williams
Joyce	Stevenson	James	Williams
Mike	Stott	Alex	Williams
Stuart	Strutt	Trevor	Williams
Trish	Stubley	Catherine	Williams
Karen	Stubley	Stuart	Wilson
Mark	Sutcliffe	Adam	Wilson
Ian	Sutherland	Nigel	Wilson
Ihsan	Syjad	Lucy	Wilson
Patrick	Taylor	Janette	Wilson
Ajay	Tegala	Stuart	Wing
Millie	Thorsley	Paul	Wood
Emma	Timmins	Colin	Wood
S	Timmins	Tom	Woods
J	Timmins	Roddy	Woodthorpe
Bob	Titman	Arny	Wragg
Sue	Titman	Sam	Wray
Christopher	Townsend	Lauren	Wray
Joseph	Townsend	Ann	Wright
Rut	Townsend	David	Wright
Stephen	Turnbull	Rachel	Wright
Anna	Turner	Jeff	Yates
Mick	Turner	David	York
Allison	Vincent	Michael	York
Sam	Vincent	Susanne	York
Jack	Wade	Gwen	York
Christopher	Wade	Carla	York
Trevor	Walker	Simon	Yuill
Jenny	Ward		
Andy	Ward		
Peter	Warren		
Tim	Wayman		
Joshua	Webb		
Cody	Webb		
Natalie	Webb		
John	Welham		
Nikki	Wells		
Greg	Whale		
Patrick	Whinn		
Lester	White		
Margaret	White		
Joe	Whitehead		
Robert	Whittington		
Y	Wiacek		
T	Wiacek		
Jessica	Wickens		



**groups**

Ist Mkt Deeping Cubs	JNNC
A Rocha Trust	Morton Girl Guides
Army Cadets Mkt Deeping	Norwich & Peterborough Building Society
Barclay's Bank	Peterborough Bird Club
Boston Grammar School	Prince's Trust
Bourne Community Service	Rotoserve
Bourne Heritage Hunters	Spalding Area Group
Bourne Social Education Centre	St Guthlac School, Crowland
Bourne Wildlife Watch	Stamford Community Service
Caravan & Camping Club	The Deepings School
Corby Glen Cubs	Thurlby Cubs
English Nature HQ	Uffington WATCH Group
Gt Casterton Primary School	

With thanks to all above, and apologies if your name missing from the list.

And finally . . . This 'history' has taken over four months to put together, and has been updated as new events occur. So, in order to publish this document a cut-off date has to be imposed, and that date is today, Thursday 24 May 2018. Anything that happens after today is for another history!