

Yare Valley Society Newsletter

Issue 37

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Report on AGM

We enjoyed quite a lively evening with many questions and comments from the thirty-five members present, who also seemed happy to vote the committee back in as it stood previously.

Mr Buhler's enthusiasm for his work on the new UEA farm site on Bluebell Road was infectious and a great deal of interest was shown in the proposals he described in his talk. We are very grateful to him for coming to talk and his invitation for YVS members to visit the site. (*Details for visit to be arranged in due course*). The interest members showed is some indication of the great value we all attach to the valley environment.

Elaine Tucker

Chairman's report 1996/97

For those members who were unable to attend the AGM in May, the following extracts from the Chairman's report give a flavour of activities over the year.

'... one way or another developers, large or small, continue to want to nibble, or even take large bites, out of the Valley and, in each case, we have to decide whether to oppose a particular planning application totally or to compromise in an environmentally sensitive way. So much, of course, depends on policies in the Structure and Local Plans which, fortunately, continue to uphold the environmental value of the Valley as they are updated. But we also depend upon the way they are interpreted by the local councils.

Most of the time we are in harmony with those councils via their planning departments and share with them in constructive ways of amending, or refusing, an application in order to protect the environment. But in the case of the bus route to serve the proposed hospital at Colney, Norfolk Planning and Transportation Committee has allowed factors other than environmental ones to take over. In its anxiety to provide regular and frequent public transport

for a hospital that is so poorly served by a road network, it has decided to promote, as a preferred option, a route across the Yare Valley using the quiet country track between UEA and Colney Lane. Such a proposal flies in the face of the environmental protection of the Valley that the same committee upholds in its Structure Plan. During the last year, we have said that so often, both in writing and at planning committee meetings, and find that at least some county, city and district councillors feel the same way as we do and say so. In this, as well as in other respects, we have much for which to thank County Councillor Alison King and City Councillor Judith Lubbock, both of whom are very faithful in upholding the aims of our Society.

The bus route is a very serious one as far as the environment of the Yare Valley is concerned ... and we are keeping a close watch on any developments which could affect an eventual decision on it by the local planning authorities. We shall certainly keep you informed and should be glad if you would do likewise about anything you observe or discover.

There are other issues that are also of concern, notably perhaps Bartram Mowers' declared need in a recent advertisement for more warehousing! But as you will see, there are some developments that are pleasing, especially the better management of the wetlands in several parts of the Valley, always provided of course that their natural countryside character is maintained and that they do not begin to take on the form of a park.

All these activities have involved a lot of wisdom and effort by your committee and I thank each member most sincerely for all that he or she has done. Our thanks are also due to Mike Freer for leading the recent bird watching walk in the Valley (which I hope may be repeated some time?) and to all those who so faithfully distribute our newsletters, as well as to all our member for their continuing commitment to the care of the Yare Valley. I should like to remember two members who died this year, John Mackew, a district and parish councillor, and Gordon Prest. We are grateful for all they did and achieved.

The Yare Valley is a precious and irreplaceable environmental resource for the people of Norwich and its environs. As a Planning Inspector observed a few years ago in a decision letter dismissing an appeal on housing development in the Valley, "... the importance of preserving such areas on the fringes of settlements increases rather than diminishes with time as the pressure for new development arises." Let us hope that we can persuade all planners to think this way. What is certain is that thirty years on from its inception, the Yare Valley Society continues to have a real job to do! If there is anything you can do, we should be most pleased to hear from you.'

If any member would like a full copy of the Chairman's report and or the Summary of Activities 1996/97, please contact Alison Ward (452330).

Treasurer's Report for 1996

For the first time in recent years, expenditure exceeded income, although only by £3. The reason for this was the low number of subscriptions paid during the year, representing 92 households and well below the membership of the Society. The position has improved during the early months of 1997, during which a number of outstanding 1996 subscriptions have been paid together with those for 1997.

Collecting subscriptions is always a time-consuming job for committee members (no-one enjoys asking for money!) and we are always grateful if members can send or drop in their subscription each year to one of the committee members.

Expenditure for 1996 was low at £95, largely consisting of newsletter, stationery and AGM costs. This has enabled us to keep the subscription level for 1997 at £1 per household

Steve Dawson

Possible bus route across valley

So far nothing further has been heard from the City Council about the removal of the extra width added, during the Anglian Water engineering operations, to the existing track between UEA and the river.

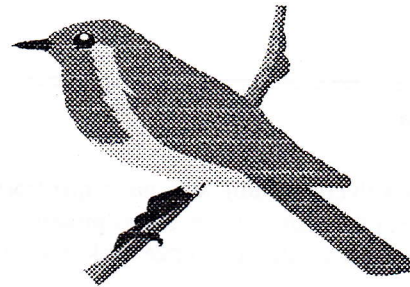
Elaine Tucker

Bird Watching Walk

On a crisp spring morning in bright sunshine, Mike Freer led a party of nine Yare Valley Society members each armed with boots and binoculars over the marshes at Marston Lane. The trees were coming into leaf in various shades of green, softening the areas of rooftop to the north and breaking up the ridge carrying the Southern bypass to the south. Like the area upstream towards the University,

the valley floor here is wide enough to form a haven of relative peace and quiet amid the urban reaches of the City. It is on occasions such as this that the real environmental value of the Yare Valley is felt.

Mike pointed out the birds and drew attention to their song. In two hours we identified some 30 species. He told us about the problems of combining a nature reserve with an amenity area where walkers with dogs can disturb the wildlife. Management by cattle grazing is adversely affecting the habitat for breeding birds such as snipe.



We saw both types of thrush. The fieldfares had yet to migrate and wheeled around the poplars and settled in groups on the marsh. A willow warbler (and later a dunnoek) obligingly perched on an easily visible branch and sang its heart out. A kestrel hovered near enough for us to examine its plumage in detail. A skylark sang high up to remind us that there are still some around despite the recent serious decline. The song of what sounded like a blackcap came from a thicket of blackthorn but it never appeared to confirm its identity. While we discussed the species we had seen, some goldfinches flitted among the willows. We thank Mike for an enjoyable and instructive morning.

Graham Hussey

Earlham and Bowthorpe Marshes

We are in touch with members who are particularly interested in this important area. If you also have an interest in it but have not told us, please do so.

Elaine Tucker

South Norfolk Local Plan Deposit Version

The Society has received its own copy and will peruse it carefully to see how it affects the Yare Valley. Comments have to be in by 1 August 1997. Everyone is free to comment, so should you wish to see the document for yourself, please contact Alison Ward or Elaine Tucker (458657). It may, of course, also be seen at the South Norfolk Council offices at Long Stratton.

Elaine Tucker