

Yare Valley Society Newsletter

Issue 40

July 1998

Extracts from Chairman's 1997/98 Report to the AGM

... The Yare Valley Society has had another busy year defending the beautiful valley it seeks to conserve. Being on the fringe of Norwich, it is not surprising that little if any time goes by without some kind of development being proposed along it. It is, of course, that very position that makes it all the more important to defend it vigorously from encroachment. For the Yare valley is a very special resource for the people of Norwich, clearly enjoyed by the numbers one sees using it from all over Norwich. It is a piece of easily accessible "country within the city" where people can escape the trials of urban life for a while in fume-free air and natural surroundings, with often barely a glimpse, even no glimpse of anything that jars. As one young woman walking her dog in the valley said, "You can walk for half to three-quarters of an hour and feel you are in the countryside. People need this." It is this that we seek to defend from the hands of developers!

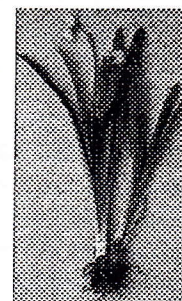
As one would expect, the planning authorities view the valley in the same way and by their policies seek to protect it from inappropriate development. Currently we are taking the opportunity to comment on these policies as statutory plans are revised.

Recently, Andrew Salisbury and I attended four hours of the Norwich City Council's Outer Area Planning Committee and were delighted to witness, as various items arose about the Yare valley, how caring and careful councillors were in practice about its conservation. We were there specifically about the proposed housing development by Bartram Mowers which was in fact refused unanimously, in spite of the architect's promotional video being shown immediately beforehand. You will be interested to know that there were 74 written objections to this development, 66 from individuals. So thank you to those who wrote - it is always worthwhile doing so. We are particularly grateful to City Councillor Judith Lubbock for all that she does for the Yare valley and who is on that committee. On this occasion, not only did she make it possible for me to say a few words but she actually brought the meeting to decision point when there seemed a possibility of deferment. Moreover, she had herself also collected a petition of 60 signatures against the development, in addition to the above letters.

We also owe particular thanks to County Councillor Alison King for the way she has consistently promoted our interests over very many years and is currently doing so especially in the matter of the possible new cross-valley bus route, which has yet to be decided. We are also very grateful for support from County Councillor Gordon Dean and City Councillor Ian Couzens as well as from Charles Clarke, MP for Norwich South who takes an active interest in the affairs of the Society.

During the year, we were pleased to add a co-opted member to our committee when Ron Bocking accepted our invitation to join us so that we could have, through his knowledge, a greater insight into the needs of the Bowthorpe and Earlham Marshes. In fact, not only has he provided this but he has also brought much enthusiasm and factual knowledge about other things.

... I would especially like to refer to **Joyce Leman** whom some of you might well remember for her Snowflake Days when she organised walks into Cringleford Carr to see the lovely swathes of these naturalised flowers. She was a keen and active member of our Society and we shall miss her.



As we approach the Millennium, the need for our work will no doubt go on. We continually look to you for support, as it is our grass-roots membership that counts in the end.

Elaine Tucker

Marking the Millennium

The question of whether the Society should undertake a project to mark the millennium was raised at the AGM and a number of suggestions were put forward. They included providing new waymarks or a seat on the Yare valley walk, floating platforms for birds on the UEA broad, purchasing land at Cringleford Carr and publishing a new guide to the Yare valley. The suggestions which attracted most support were the provision of a seat (or seats) and the guide to the Yare valley and the committee has been investigating the possibilities and costs of pursuing one of these projects. The AGM supported the idea of a voluntary supplement to the present

subscription for the project and the committee is looking into the possibilities of joint action with the Norwich Fringe Area Project or sponsorship.

John Ayton

Track leading from Church Lane, Eaton to Keswick Mill

The Society has recently received a letter from the Area Secretary of the Ramblers' Association as follows. 'Railtrack has erected notices at the level crossing half-way along the route, that there is no public right of way over the crossing. This track has been heavily used by local people for many years (probably for centuries) and Mr John Harris is collecting evidence that it is a public right of way, so that he can get it registered as such. This involves proving that there has been undisputed use of the route by the public for at least 20 years. The route to be registered goes from Church Lane between the Golf Course and the Scouts' Camp, over the level crossing, past Eaton Common, to the stream just west of Keswick Mill, which is the boundary of Keswick Parish. The part of the track between the stream and Keswick Mill has already been registered by Keswick Parish'. If anyone has suitable evidence, please contact Mr Harris on 01603 503207 and he will send you a public way evidence form to be completed and returned to him.

Alison Ward

Sculpture on the 'Strawberry Field'

Depending on your taste, you will either be pleased or disappointed to know that the works of art on the UEA farm (not yet in place as the Newsletter is being prepared, but expected soon), are temporary. They will be removed later in the year.

John Thurman

Planning Updates

Whilst **Bartram Mowers'** proposed housing development has been refused by the City (see Chairman's report), its 40 by 12 metre warehouse extension (also refused by the City) has now been allowed on appeal because in the opinion of the Inspector it would not detract from the valley scene. We agree with the City that this is a very disappointing decision for a sensitive site. Also, in allowing the appeal, conditions have not been imposed relating to outside storage, plant and machinery and extract ventilation that the City had suggested. However, there are no grounds to challenge the decision.

The Society has supported a Tree Preservation Order made protecting over 30 trees on **Bell School** land. Also, the size of a proposed building in the grounds has now been reduced in an amended application and will be considered by the City planning committee shortly.

Atlas Aggregates in Colney has removed its old plant but has levelled and consolidated its former large working area with sand and gravel instead of returning it to farmland as required by planning conditions. We are assured that the situation is now being investigated by the County Council.

The **surface water drain** from Colney Hospital into the valley is being relaid. We have been told that the land involved will be reinstated.

Elaine Tucker

Planning applications on the valley edge

The Yare valley is bounded by the residential areas of Eaton and Cringleford where houses and their gardens face or back onto the protected landscape. Planning applications for properties on the valley edge involving alterations, extensions or additional buildings require careful monitoring and we regularly help the local planning authority with comments and information. In some cases ownership of land may extend beyond the curtilage of the house and this may give rise to complications regarding the extension of gardens into areas that legally have a different land use. There have been cases where more than routine problems have been or are still being encountered. Although all planning applications are in the public domain, we do not report cases of private residences in the Newsletter. This part of our work, however, is important as it concerns a large proportion of the valley. It is vital that the valley is not encroached upon or spoiled by intrusive buildings, which individually may seem unimportant but cumulatively over time could have a significant effect.

Graham Hussey

Ground Water Abstraction at UEA

The University has applied for permission from the Environment Agency to pump ground water from one or more boreholes in the valley, to supply a major proportion of its water needs. The Society is very concerned about the potential damage to the aquifer and the possible knock-on effect to the marshes and wildlife. We have registered an objection with the Environment Agency (9 Cobham Road, Ipswich IP3 9JE). Trial pumping from an existing borehole, previously used for irrigation of the old strawberry field, starts on 20 July, under supervision from the Environment Agency. The results will be monitored and will help to decide whether an Abstraction Licence should be granted. Meanwhile, several members of the Committee have arranged to meet the consulting engineer employed by UEA, to ask some searching questions. You will be kept informed, but meantime it is not too late to register your views by writing to the address above.

John Thurman

Otters and other wildlife

Several sightings of otters have been reported following the piece in the April newsletter. If you do see one in the Yare valley between Harford and Bowthorpe, do let us know. If you spot a kingfisher, or water vole, or deer, we should also like to hear from you.

Alison Ward

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Articles, comments and letters for possible publication in the Newsletter can be sent to:

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