



# Yare Valley Society Newsletter

Issue 70

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## Membership and subscriptions

It is very pleasing to be able to report that we now have more than 400 paid up members of the Society. However we are always keen to welcome new members. If you have friends or neighbours who care about the Yare valley or regularly walk in the area, do draw their attention to the Society and encourage them to join.

The new year means that subscriptions are due from members who pay annually. The rates remain at £1 per family per year, £4 for five years and £10 for life membership. Please either give the money to your newsletter distributor or send it to the treasurer, Mrs Jean Ray, 9b Poplar Avenue, Norwich NR4 7LB.

## Diaries, calendars, PDAs\* to hand

Whatever you use, please make a note of the YVS Annual General Meeting which will take place on Monday 8 May 2006, at 7.30 pm, at Cringleford Playing Field Pavilion, (off Oakfield Road). After the business part of the meeting, Professor Peter Townroe will speak on the subject 'Right to Roam'. Professor Townroe is an economist and a planning inspector dealing with public rights of way.

\*Personal Data Assistant

## Riverside observations from 2005

July: Pair of kestrels with two young have taken to frequenting St Andrew's Church Tower in the late afternoon for several days.

August: On our landing at the quay like a crouched vulture stood a large heron just as another even larger one glided down onto the middle of our grass. Tall and at full height, it walked imperiously away towards the neighbour's fence which prompted the original to fly downstream to come up on the next door lawn facing No 2 who then paused in its walk, so that No1 flew back to our quay to land with just the river fence between them. Flirtation? After a short period of mutual stand and stare, No1 took off for a graceful flight just above the surface of the river and out of sight round behind the island soon to be followed by No 2.

Mid October: The water meadow was cut. The result is that the odd small bush and smaller trees are readily visible once more with deer sightings again from time to time.

Early a.m. St Andrew's Day: The rising sun has turned the sky a decreasing shade of pink from the east as five cormorants circle as they make their final approach to land with a splash in the 'pond' at our quay where the Yare divides to flow either side of the island. It is breakfast time as they bob up and dive again in the flow as Henry the Heron glides in at a low level to settle just round into the dyke to stand and watch. A recently denuded tree across the meadow stands stark and silhouetted against the lightening sky as a great cloud of longtailed tits settle into its high tops. With the stark cold of the morning, the gulls once again start to frequent the air space about this divide in the river.

*Thanks to Maureen and Colin Forbes for the above.*

## Letters

*Roger Kirk, a YVS member, has written as follows:*

### Giant Hogweed near Cringleford Bridge

I was a bit alarmed to see that there is a move to dispose of the giant hogweed near Cringleford Bridge. Surely this is no 'infestation' but a rather fine display that should be no problem to anyone. If left, with a little periodic selective attention it could easily be constrained within the area it presently occupies. I believe it can have unpleasant effects if touched, but the same is true of many a plant. It is surely the responsibility of us all to educate children to this effect. A discreet notice in the car park might draw people's attention to the matter.

Even more perplexing is the intention to mow the area on a regular basis. The rectangle occupied by the hogweed presently provides an excellent habitat for many creatures. If it is mown on too frequent a basis, the habitat will be lost. Once it becomes less effortful to traverse it will also almost certainly be taken over by those that periodically lay waste to the trees, the litter bins, the footbridges and the seat on the grass beside the bridge.



Finally fly-tipping in the car park is no longer a periodic occurrence; sadly it has become almost a daily (or nightly) event.

*Paul Holley, Natural Areas Officer, Norwich City Council responded thus:*

Giant Hogweed, which is native to the Caucasus Mountains, is now an increasing public health, environmental and economic problem in many parts of Europe and the USA. Here in the UK, it is actually an offence under the 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act to 'plant or otherwise cause Giant Hogweed to grow' in the wild, so Norwich City Council has a legal obligation to control the spread of this plant.

Giant Hogweed is a public health problem in that contact with it (sometimes even lightly brushing against the plant), will almost inevitably produce an unpleasant rash and in more serious cases burns and painful blistering, which has been known to cause permanent skin damage.

Giant Hogweed is also a serious threat to our native wildlife; the species is a very aggressive competitor able to out-grow almost all native plants, thereby reducing the habitat available for invertebrate, mammal and bird life. In areas where it has been allowed to spread unchecked, flourishing native plant communities and the animal life dependent on them have been replaced by Giant Hogweed monocultures.

The economic effects of Giant Hogweed can also be serious; it can prevent access to rivers by anglers, walkers and estate management staff, and it can lead to severe river bank erosion when it dies back in winter, having previously replaced the native vegetation which held the banks together.

Contrary to the view expressed by your letter writer, Giant Hogweed cannot 'easily be constrained'; a single flower head can produce 1500 seeds, which can be dispersed by wind, by water, or via contact with people or vehicles. The large concentration of the plant near Cringleford Bridge is a potential reservoir of seed that could easily enable Giant Hogweed to colonise new sites. Like many other UK landowners and local authorities, Norwich City Council is seeking to control the spread of Giant Hogweed before it becomes an even more serious menace, as it has done in some parts of mainland Europe. It is planned to replace the area at Cringleford currently occupied by the Giant Hogweed with native vegetation, assuming the planned measures to eradicate the Giant Hogweed are successful. The new vegetation community may well be managed by cutting, although this is likely to involve one or two cuts per year only, rather than mowing on a more frequent basis as has been suggested. In time, this type of management regime should produce a far more valuable and attractive wildlife habitat than that currently offered by the Giant Hogweed.

## **Land north of Chancellors Drive at UEA**

UEA has recently submitted planning applications for two academic buildings on land north of Chancellors Drive.

The Society has written to the City Planning department making the following comments on these two related applications:

'The Society has already expressed its concern about the continuing intensification of development at UEA. The strains on the local infrastructure increase with each development, and it must be the case that there is a limit to growth on the present campus. In our view, that limit is rapidly being reached. UEA has declared its intention to continue to grow, and although we support the notion of a dynamic and healthy university in Norwich we feel it important that the City and University enter into strategic discussions, as a matter of urgency, about long term planning for a second campus.

'We do not have any further comments about the proposed Academic Building, East.

'The plan for Academic Building, West, involves a very substantial building closer than any other building to the River Yare at UEA. No drawing was submitted to give an indication of the visual impact of this structure from the Colney Lane playing fields or from the riverside walk. We remain to be convinced that that there would be no undesirable visual intrusion from this five floor structure at these viewpoints, despite the intervening belt of trees. The preservation of an unspoiled valley landscape at this sensitive location is of the highest importance.

'Finally, we wish to raise the question of car parking space for the newly refurbished Sainsbury Centre which, when open, will be likely to attract more visitors than previously. The plans now submitted would involve the loss of the car park most frequently used by visitors to the Centre in the past. Is any remedy proposed? This is another issue illustrating the need for a coherent plan for the campus.'

## **SNDC's Local development framework**

Thanks to all of you who visited the exhibitions put on by South Norfolk to publicise the present stage of their Local Development Framework. And thank you, too, to those of you who filled in the forms to register comments regarding sites for development being proposed by landowners and developers.

Your committee also submitted a completed questionnaire, together with a map illustrating how much more of the Yare valley should be protected as 'river valley' than at present. We also completed several forms objecting to specific proposals for development within the valley.

All comments are now with South Norfolk who will be deciding on their own preferred options for future development and publishing them in the second half of 2006 – when there will be further public consultation.