



Friends of  
Holt Island  
Nature Reserve

WINTER 2012  
ISSUE 22

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#### DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Walking Festival 1 May  
Island and The Thicket. Meet on the Island 2 pm

Education Pack Launch 9 May  
All welcome. On the Island 4 – 5 pm

Family Fun Day 31 May  
A joint Norris Museum-FHINR event 11 am – 3 pm

Opening of the New Shed 27 June  
Celebrate with us at 12 noon

AGM 31 July  
Speaker Paul Howe 'The Amazing World of Bees'. St Ives Corn Exchange 7.30 pm

*The Friends Group is a voluntary organization dedicated to the promotion and protection of Holt Island, Wilhorn Meadow and The Thicket in St Ives for the enjoyment of all.*

# The Islander

NEWSLETTER OF THE FRIENDS OF HOLT ISLAND NATURE RESERVE [www.localgiving.com/holtislandnaturereserve](http://www.localgiving.com/holtislandnaturereserve)

## Chairman's Comments



PHOTOGRAPH © IAN JACKSON

▲ A beautiful mid-winter view of the Island – before the November and December floods.

**FLOODS** The picture left says it all. Like Canute before him, committee member Stephen Moller was unable to halt the ever-increasing levels on the Island just before Christmas. He is wading towards the new shed. See inside for what he found.

In this, the second wettest year on record, the Island has been submerged several times, and as I write is only now just beginning to recover from the latest inundation. It looks in a sorry state of course, but is living up to its wet woodland habitat status. We can take heart that from all the sludgy silt and mud, growth will soon rise to become the fresh green vegetation of spring. I can't wait!

**REASONS TO BE CHEERFUL** Here is a summary of the progress your committee, and our volunteers, have made over the last three months:

- The shed build has continued (in between floods) – see inside for pictures.
- We have installed a bike stand.
- The LocalGiving website has been revived and now shows all our current projects. Do take a look (see address above) and encourage your friends to see what we do.
- The weaving of the living willow hedging

has started – see back page.

- We have planned some exciting events for the New Year – see panel on this page.
- We have gained approval for additional Holt Island finger posts to be added to the four Town Council tourist sign posts to help visitors find the reserve.
- We have extended the opening period through October, including some Fridays. We hope that, with key holder support, we can repeat this this year.

**THICKET NEWS** We are also pleased to note that Cambridgeshire County Council is upgrading The Thicket Path this month. Work should already be underway and the path closed until 12 March.

**ASH DIEBACK** This deadly disease spread by fungal spores is spreading across Europe and is now threatening our lovely Ash trees. So far there are no signs of it on the Island and in The Thicket. However, I fear for the half dozen specimens on the Island, three of which quite prominent, and hope they may escape. I understand this is unlikely and so please come and enjoy them while you can.

IAN JACKSON CHAIRMAN

Ranger's Report



**WORK PARTIES** A total of five sessions during October, November and December contributed 145 Volunteer hours. One work party in December was cancelled due to flooding with water levels achieving those of 2003 (see below).

**SHED PROGRESS** In September we painted the top coats of the walls of the shed and fitted the doors and windows. After research at Fen Drayton Reserve non-slip Dino Grip strips were fitted to the veranda boards. Steve Moller continued his hard work painting and adding wood treatment, and Doug Kilbee added the double glazing to the windows and doors. Our latest news is that we have just removed the old shed to enable the boardwalk connection to be made (see below).

**MORE JOBS** Mowing and trimming around the boardwalk was completed in October and plans for opening up the osier bed viewing point will commence this winter, along

with planting some 'original' Harrison Willow donated to us by the Harrison family. This is the predominant variety used for willow production on the Island before production ceased in the 1970s.

**THICKET TREE PLANT** December saw a fantastic voluntary work party from local St Ives company PCME Ltd. They enlisted help from two local schools and together planted 140 Field Maple, 40 Oak and 140 Hawthorn whips. We were not able to plant Ash due to restrictions in force due to the concern about the spread of Ash Dieback disease. We thank PCME for their commitment to the environment. I plan to plant more trees in The Thicket in the spring.

VOLUNTEER WORK PARTY DATES		
January	6, 18	Work parties usually start at 10 am and finish at approximately 3 pm, although Volunteers can attend for shorter periods if more convenient. Stout footwear and waterproofs recommended. All tools and training provided, along with coffee and tea. Bring packed lunch. Please call Paul on 07810 637545 if you plan to attend.
February	3, 15	
March	3, 15	

PAUL CLAYDON RANGER



◀ Big day in The Thicket. Thorndown school pupils and staff from PCME Ltd prepare to get planting.

Birds Update

Of the 20 tit boxes on the reserve we have welcomed five successful families of Blue Tits and five families of Great Tits -- a very high success rate, especially for a relatively small site. **Adoptabox** sponsors of the successful boxes have been provided with individual reports and where possible photographs. I have surveyed all the boxes, and replaced or repaired them as necessary. All have been cleaned and disinfected, apart from Box 10 which currently has a family of field mice in residence!

There has been plenty of other breeding success this season. Numbers of warblers were down, due primarily to the adverse spring weather, but Blackbirds, Robins, Wrens, Chaffinches and Dunnocks have all done well, as has once again the Sparrowhawk! We were thrilled to discover a family of Tawny Owls earlier this year (see Islanders 14 and 20) but unfortunately they did not use our box. The following list of 55 species records all the birds that have been seen on, around or over the Island this year.

If you do spot a bird on the Reserve that is not on this list, then please let me know.

- |                     |                   |                          |
|---------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|
| Great Crested Grebe | Cormorant         | Mute Swan                |
| Mallard             | Greylag Goose     | Sparrowhawk              |
| Pheasant            | Moorhen           | Coot                     |
| Rook                | Black-Headed Gull | Collard Dove             |
| Wood Pigeon         | Tawny Owl         | Goldfinch                |
| Garden Warbler      | Swift             | Kingfisher               |
| Sand Martin         | Green Woodpecker  | Great Spotted Woodpecker |
| Swallow             | Wren              | Dunnock                  |
| Robin               | Blackbird         | Song Thrush              |
| Reed Warbler        | Crow              | Little Egret             |
| Muscovy Duck        | Sedge Warbler     | Blackcap                 |
| Jay                 | Chiffchaff        | Long Tailed Tit          |
| Siskin              | Blue Tit          | Great Tit                |
| Magpie              | Crested Duck      | Jackdaw                  |
| Starling            | Chaffinch         | Common Tern              |
| Canada Goose        | Kestrel           | Goldcrest                |
| Buzzard             | Tufted Duck       | Bullfinch                |
| Gadwall             | Heron             | Egyptian Goose           |
| House Martin        |                   |                          |

NIGEL SPROWELL FRIEND

The Build Continued ...

This sequence shows you the stages achieved by the Volunteers, and committee member Steve Moller, since the end of September. As you will appreciate, progress was interrupted by the flooding in November and December.

**WHAT DO YOU THINK?** Now you can see its size and potential, we'd like to invite you to give us your views please on two issues related to the new building. What should we call it? How should we use it? We have our own thoughts of course, but we'd like to hear yours too. Please email the Chair (see page 4) with your suggestions.



◀ Doors and windows fitted and sporting its 'Mangrove' colour the building now blends nicely into its setting. Surely the foundation base is high enough?  
 ▲ Veranda decking and walls now on!

◀ Uh oh! The December flood gave us cause for concern, but peaked at the level shown. No higher please ...



◀ Old shed now removed and site prepared for the boardwalk extension. The weary workers still smiling are: Roy Allen; Paul Claydon; Colin Knott; Adrian Lewis; Colin Saunderson; and Basil Belcher.

PHOTOGRAPHS © JAN JACKSON

**Living Willow Hedges**

You may have noticed that the willow wands first planted last winter along the backwater grass path now look rather bent and entwined. This is the first stage in creating the living hedges that we hope will grow and screen us from The Waits. The willow loves the damp conditions on the Island and grows rapidly. It will now send up shoots that will grow upwards, to then be turned back and entwined again. In this way, a beautiful, natural green screen will provide a sympathetic boundary along what would be otherwise a very open space. After all, the Island and its wildlife needs a bit of privacy.



PHOTOGRAPH © IAN JACKSON

**Mystery Animal**

The floods provide occasional unusual sightings. This animal is not normally seen in this situation. What is it? Send your guesses to the Chair (see below) and we will announce the correct answer in the next Islander.



PHOTOGRAPH © NIGEL SPROWELL

IAN JACKSON CHAIRMAN

**YOUR COMMITTEE**

.....  
 These are your elected committee members plus HDC representative. If you have any concerns about any aspect of the Island, please be in touch with any of the committee listed below:

**JILL BURT** Committee member  
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**ROBIN WATERS** Treasurer and Membership Secretary  
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MEMBERSHIP FORM

**Yes, I want to help protect, preserve and promote one of St Ives best kept secrets and become a Friend of Holt Island Nature Reserve.**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_ e-mail \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

- 1 Please find enclosed my/our subscription for the next year of £5.00 (individual)  £10.00 (household)  2 I/we wish to become a life member(s) and enclose a cheque for £50.00 (individual)  £100.00 (household)  3 Please find enclosed a donation of £ \_\_\_\_\_  
 4 Other organizations welcome to join on application

*giftaid it* By signing-up for Gift Aid you will enable us to claim an extra 25p for every £1.00 received.  
 I would like Friends of Holt Island Nature Reserve to treat all subscriptions and donations that I make from the date of this declaration (until I give notice otherwise), as Gift Aid donations. I confirm that I am a UK taxpayer.

Please make cheques payable to: Friends of Holt Island Nature Reserve and return to the Membership Secretary: Robin Waters, 18 Hemingford Road, St Ives PE27 7HG

The information provided will be stored on a computer and used exclusively for managing your membership of the Friends. It will not be disclosed or released to any other organization. By completing this form you agree to this action.