

ABOUT THE FRIENDS GROUP

How we started

Our group was formed in 2007 when there was concern that the original boardwalk, built in 1992-3, was in such a serious state of decomposition that it was unsafe, and the future

of the reserve was in doubt. Commercial estimates to rebuild it were beyond the means of HDC Countryside Services so a small number of interested people formed a volunteer support group.



The Friends wrote a constitution, formed a committee and set about recruiting members. We added our weight to the existing team of practical volunteers, and we made it known

to HDC that we would assist in any scheme to help overcome the difficulties of replacing the boardwalk. Eventually a solution was found, the new boardwalk created in record time and under budget, and the preservation of the reserve assured for the foreseeable future.

Our progress

The Friends group has gone from strength to strength. Our membership has grown as we have promoted the reserve and our activities, and we are pleased with the contributions we have made to help improve its visitor experience. We are still a relatively new group but we are proud of our loyal membership base and the links we are making with local businesses and schools. It is gratifying too to see increasing numbers of visitors over the summer months, both local and from further afield.

In particular

In addition to providing all the concrete needed for the new boardwalk and the funds to extend it to the main entrance, our particular achievements to date are the provision of wheel-chair friendly picnic tables with seating in the central meadow, plus a bench seat on the boardwalk, and assistance to create two new interpretation boards. We secured funding to create this Education Pack, and more recently for the replacement of the old tools' hut with a proper cabin, a new gate, and two more interpretation boards.



How we work

We organise ourselves around the seasons of the year. So, each quarter the committee meets to review progress and make new plans. We publish a newsletter, *The Islander*, to mark the season and to keep our members up to date with what we are doing on the Island. Socially, we organise a Spring Surprise Family Fun Day, plus four walks through the year for members and their friends: the Spring Step; Summer Stroll; Autumn Ramble; and Winter Warmer. Our AGM in July always features a popular guest speaker and is well attended.



We organise a popular ADOPTABOX fund-raiser, the proceeds from which helped fund the creation of a dedicated bird-feeding station on the Island. Sponsors of each nesting box are kept informed of its progress throughout the breeding season, and invited to a nest box guided walk in May. For those interested in birds, we monitor all sightings throughout the year and publish these in *The Islander*.

We are keen to develop our relationships with Schools and already the Eco-Ivo group at St Ivo School has attended our work parties in The Thicket. We are also committed to assist HDC with their Countryside Services work there, and in Wilhorn Meadow.

We want the reserve to be used for educational visits and this is why we have created this pack. We hope it will offer you plenty of ideas to form the basis of trips to the Island, and we look forward hearing of your experiences with it. If you would like your school or group to be more closely involved with the Island reserve, and are interested in becoming members, please contact The Friends group at ianjackson@ntlworld.com or HDC Countryside Rangers on 01480 451568



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This Pack was the original idea of Rangers from HDC Countryside Services, and could not have been created without their first draft of the text

I must also pay tribute to Coral Walton of Coral Design Management for her massive contribution to this project. At all times she has kept the project moving with her goodwill and enthusiasm and I am delighted to have had the opportunity of working with her.

Finally, I must acknowledge with thanks the financial assistance the Friends Group has received to enable the pack to be realized. Our funding has come from the Community Aggregates Fund (COMMA). Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE) delivered COMMA as part of DEFRA'S Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund which is designed to provide compensation and benefit for communities affected by quarrying. The Friends of Holt Island Nature Reserve and HDC Countryside Services also thank Cambridgeshire ACRE for their assistance and support.

Ian Jackson, Chair, Friends of Holt Island Nature Reserve, May 2012

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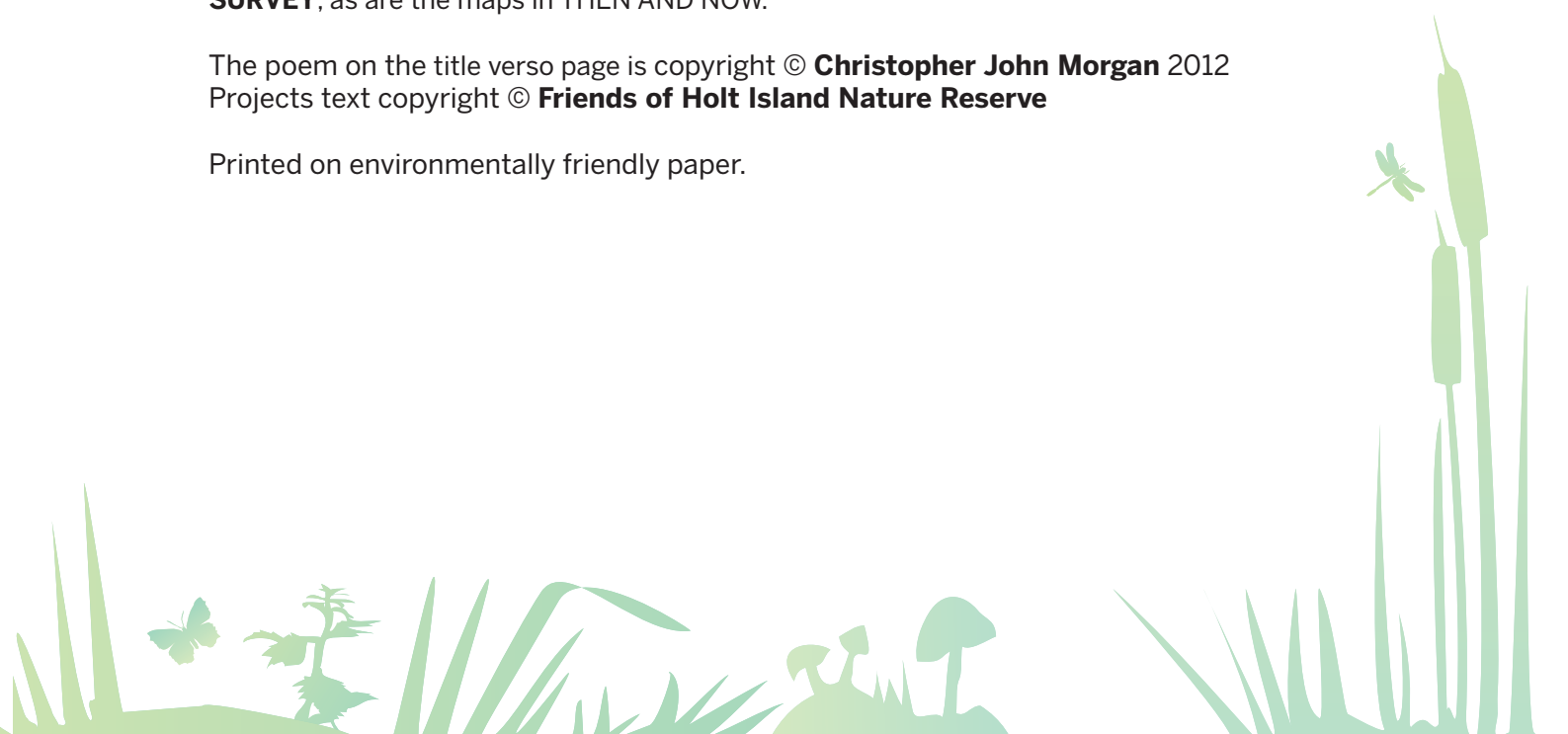
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FEEDBACK

We are very keen to know how you have got on with the Pack, both on the Island and indoors. Please feel free to get in touch with us and let us know what you/the children liked, and what you didn't like.

Please contact Ian Jackson, Chair, Friends of Holt Island Nature Reserve at ianjackson@ntlworld.com or HDC Countryside Rangers on 01480 451568