



Friends of
**Holt Island
Nature Reserve**

ANGLIA IN BLOOM AWARD 2016
*Best Conservation Project
in East Anglia*

CELEBRATING 10 YEARS 2017

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

Chairman's Anniversary Comments

SPRING 2017 ISSUE 30



Another successful Family Fun Day. We love seeing the Island enjoyed in this way by young families.

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FOREWORD

I write this on the eve of our official opening for the new season, with apologies to all our members for being away for so long. As I reported at last year's AGM, my other duties (Civic) and other Council activities have interrupted my work as editor of your regular newsletter. You will notice that the format of this special edition is not exactly that to which you are accustomed. In the absence of my usual professional designer I have attempted to create the look and feel of the normal format on my home PC, but I am more editor than designer. I hope you will bear with me. I felt it was important to send our news at this time as best I could and I hope that normal service will be resumed in due course.

FRIENDS CELEBRATE TEN YEARS!

This is a momentous year for the Friends. It hardly seems possible that ten years have passed since we first assembled in the back room of the Golden Lion at the instigation of Bridget Halford, the then HDC ranger, and vowed to assist the District Council's management of the reserve, promote it for relaxation and education, and improve the visitor experience. We also support work in Wilhorn Meadow and The Thicket.

What have we done? We helped create the replacement boardwalk and have provided picnic tables, benches, bird-feeding stations, bird and bat boxes, and identification and

information panels. We realized the value of the reserve as an educational asset and promoted it heavily to schools with an Education Pack and an outdoor classroom, *The Holt*, seen above. We consider it vital to help children to reconnect with nature. It is only by opening their eyes to the wonders of the natural world that we will inspire new generations to care for our environment and become ambassadors for its protection. David Attenborough does this through his amazing television programmes – we do it in St Ives with our Island reserve! And it is now acknowledged that close contact with nature is essential for a child's proper development, and for adults to truly relax and recover from trauma and stress.

We thank all our existing members for their support over the years, without which we would not have achieved our award-winning success.

WHY NOT JOIN US?

If you like the sound of what we do and are interested in becoming a member, or in getting more involved, do come along and see the Island for yourself. We are open on weekends and Bank Holidays. You'll find Membership Forms in *The Holt*. Holt Island Nature Reserve is special. Come and share with us the love of being outdoors in a special place in our town.

IAN JACKSON **CHAIRMAN**

ADOPTABOX 2017

Have chosen your nest box yet? The breeding season is well underway and we have 27 box numbers to choose from. Here's the form to look out for. It's distributed throughout the town – Corn Exchange, Town Hall and Library – or from The Holt on the Island.



We send you a photograph of the box, a map showing you where it is and a certificate to confirm your sponsorship. We monitor the box for you, or you are welcome to keep an eye on it yourself, and we send you news bulletins on all the boxes. At the end of the season you are invited you join a guided walk to learn more about the birds and their nesting habits. It's a great gift for a child. And all this for a tenner!



FAMILY FUN DAY

One of our most popular events on the Island occurs soon after we open at Easter each year and is deliberately held during half-term. We combine forces with the Norris Museum to attract as many families with young children as possible to both venues. This normally means both inside and outside in the garden at the Norris, but until it reopens again this summer, their contributions to the event will be held in the Methodist Church just opposite the Island on The Waits – conveniently close!

We invite a storyteller, and devise activities, projects and things to make with a theme. This year we are *Batty about Bats!* So, if you have youngsters at home and you are running out of ideas, come along with them for some fun – it's FREE!



U-TURN LISTENING POST

Any idea what this is? Nor did we until we were tipped off about it. It's an ingenious free-standing audio device with eight channels of commentary. It's completely weather- and vandal-proof and needs no power (the Island does not have an electricity supply). You simply wind the handle until the first commentary starts. Inside is a small generator rather like the one you will find on a bicycle. It produces just enough power for one channel at a time. You choose a topic you fancy from the contents list, wind away and listen in! It couldn't be easier!

We have prepared topics on: What to see and hear in spring; Bird calls and song; Plants that like their feet wet; Ideas for children; Batty about bats; The willow story; Getting involved. Now all we have to do is upload them and install the U-Turn. The channels can be updated and replaced so we can keep the U-Turn topical as the seasons change.



WHAT ELSE IS NEW?

- There's been a lot happening over the winter. Storm Doris flattened a few willows and so the reserve is looking a bit bare but this will soon change as the rapid spring growth fills in – especially the nettles! Talking of growth, look out for the new willow tunnel planted by the volunteers. It leads to the main bird-feeding station where a new viewing screen has been installed. The original tunnel became too tall and was dying back. The new one will be maintained to retain its shape.

- We are making films! The first is courtesy of David Brooks's new company X-Copters Aerial Media and is intended to showcase the reserve for promotion purposes. You can view it at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nwfiT-bhIU8>. Thank you Dave.

- The second is a series of short sequences obtained by Nigel Sprowell using outdoor 'Trail Cameras'. These are left on all night and respond to movement. They have produced some startling images revealing the secret life of the Island, and are certainly up to BBC Springwatch standard! Well done Nigel. We hope to post some of these on our volunteers' Facebook page, present them at the AGM, and as soon as we get the new website properly running, on there too.

- Which brings me nicely to a renewed plea for assistance. Is there anybody out there with WordPress skills who could help us populate the website already constructed?

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Family Fun Day Wednesday 31 May 11 am – 3 pm
Annual General Meeting with fascinating talk on bats and 'The Secret Life of the Island' footage
St Ives Corn Exchange Wednesday 26 July 7.30 pm

*Island open each weekend and Bank Holiday 10 am – 4 pm
Other times keys from Town Hall or One Leisure*