

Newsletter March 2021



Chairman's Report

A big part of the Holt Society's raison d'être is getting together – and that we have not been able to do. I hope that our members will have coped, but I know that some will have had a more difficult time than others.

This will be a short report because Covid restrictions prevented members getting together for any reason in 2020. We have abandoned plans to visit Ware Hall House for the time being and money paid in anticipation is being refunded. The Committee 'met' occasionally and communicated electronically as necessary. I am grateful to them for their support and positive thinking. During the year, Stephen Hume resigned as Planning Officer as other pressures made it difficult for him to continue. We are very grateful to Stephen for carrying out this vital part of the Holt Society's remit. Fortunately, Paul Plumstead has agreed to take on the role which I hope will be confirmed at the forthcoming virtual AGM. Our other 'new boy', Ken Jones, has taken on editorship of the Holt Society Newsletter. I am particularly grateful for this!

During the year, the Society has investigated concerns about alterations at Shirehall Plain, alerted planners to signage issues and expressed an opinion against the positioning of 'blue plaques' on the Old School House. We are currently looking at changes in the boundaries of the Glaven Valley Conservation Area.

The Holt Society has continued to develop good relationships with other organisations which are working for the benefit of the town. These include the Town Council, although plans to develop a heritage room in Nelson House have been put on hold. The Holt Owl Trail, in which the Society played a developmental role, has been completed and we can only hope that it will be enjoyed by many during the summer. We have also been consulted by Love Holt, a business-driven initiative to promote Holt. And we look forward to supporting Greening Holt, an ambitious plan to promote planting of trees and other green things within the town.

Although the Holt Society AGM will again be a virtual event, any member with a question or concern which they would normally have brought up at the AGM is invited to raise it on the voting form or contact me at:

tonyleech3@gmail.com (or on 01263 712282).

So, not that much to report but optimism that we can begin planning events for the second half on the year.

I thank all our members for your support and understanding during a very difficult period.

Tony Leech, Chairman

Holt's Green Edges (in four parts)

With current interest in the exciting Greening Holt project it is good to reflect that the town is already at least green at its edges with a number of semi-natural, visually attractive and biodiverse places within walking distance of the centre.

Part 2 - Holt Lowes

140 acres (56 hectares) it is hardly wilderness but feels wild and can look stunning – in the spring gilded with coconut-scented Gorse flowers and in late summer with purple Heather and the more walking through the well-managed country park onto Holt Lowes brings a sense of freedom. With its compact (and much less common) Western Gorse.

Heaths form on well-drained, nutrient-poor soils where trees have been prevented from growing. In Norfolk they have developed on sands and gravels deposited by retreating ice sheets and were probably once continuous from Norwich (Mousehold Heath) to the coast at Cromer. Now only small areas remain. The first trees were probably cut down by pre-historic people for settlement and primitive agriculture, and over the centuries, grazing and burning have prevented their regeneration. With the Letheringsett and Holt Enclosure Act of 1807, Holt Lowes became an allotment for properties in Holt whose annual rent did not exceed £10. Occupiers of such were permitted to graze there one head of cattle, or one gelding or mare, and to take 'flag, ling, brakes and furze' for domestic purposes.

During the 20th century, however, the grazing of domestic animals, particularly horses, fell sharply and in the 1950s myxomatosis decimated rabbit populations allowing trees to



become established so large areas of heathland turned into woods. Reversing these changes has been an ambitious task, supported by the Norfolk Wildlife Trust through grants from the European Union; large areas of woodland have been felled, the stumps ground out and some of the humus-rich soil scraped off. This has allowed seeds still in the soil to germinate and restore the heathland flora. Managed grazing, initially by cattle but more recently with ponies, has helped to maintain the changes.

Holt Lowes was one of nearly 300 places selected by Charles Rothschild for designation as nature reserves – a novel idea in 1915. Unfortunately, the First World War prevented implementation and National Nature Reserves did not become a reality until 1949 – when Holt Lowes missed out. It is, however, a Site of Special Scientific Interest. That interest comes partly from its wet areas where small tributary streams drain lime-rich spring water into the River



Glaven bordering the north-east margin of the Lowes. Here, several species of insectivorous plants, together with the Black Bog-rush and White-beaked Sedge, have one of their few Norfolk localities. Large stands of the delicate Wood Horsetail can be found in the wet woods along the river – and nowhere else in Norfolk.

The drier areas hold one of the largest population of Adders in lowland Britain. Although not everyone's most popular animal, they are rarely encountered unless sought. More

recently, Grass Snakes have appeared in some numbers having been absent for many years. Night-time in summer brings two more delights for the visitor; the churring of Nightjars, a summer migrant which nests on the heath, and the twinkling of Glow-worms, a wingless female beetle using light to lure a partner.

Part 3 Spout Hills & Part 4 River Glaven, will appear in forthcoming editions of the newsletter.

Holt Society committee

The committee as elected at last year's AGM, have all agreed to stand again. As such, they have been proposed for re-election en-block by Sue Wharfe and seconded by John Wharfe.

Position	Name
Chair	Tony Leech
Vice-chair/Membership Sec.	Keith Gosden
Hon. Secretary	Susan Williams
Hon. Treasurer	Geoff Davis
Planning Officer	Paul Plumstead
Committee Member	Steve Benson
Committee Member	Polly Binns
Committee Member	Ken Jones
Committee Member	Vacant

And introducing the two new members:-



Ken Jones



Paul Plumstead

Treasure's Report: summary receipts and payments account 1/1/2020 to 31/12/2020

<u>RECEIPTS</u>	£	<u>PAYMENTS</u>	£
Balance brought forward:			
01-Jan Barclays Bank	8,127.87		
212 Subscriptions	1,060.00	Signs for Holt Owl Trail - final stage	1,387.20
5 Donations	111.00	Drinks for Norfolk Maps Event	85.39
24 sales of 'Wartime & post-war Holt'	198.45	Annual web hosting charge	59.46
30 sales of 'Escapades in Holt'	114.35	Newsletter printing and postage	46.60
6 sales of 'Glimpses'	19.47		
Early Norfolk Maps Event - proceeds	238.00		
Ware House Trip - ticket sales*	150.00		
* to be refunded - trip now cancelled		31-Dec Balance at Barclays Bank	8,440.49
	<u>10,019.14</u>		<u>10,019.14</u>