

BERGH APTON CONSERVATION TRUST - AGM, 27 September 2012

Chairman's Annual Report

The exciting development of the year is that the Bergh Apton Conservation Trust's nature reserve (Church Plantation and Valley Marsh) was designated a County Wildlife Site (No. CWS 2222) this Spring, following site survey by representatives of the Norfolk CWS Partnership in August 2011. The purpose of the CWS system is to identify, protect and enhance the most important places for wildlife that do not have statutory designation; Church Plantation/Valley Marsh is now one of 1305 such recognized sites in Norfolk. For anyone interested, details of the scheme can be downloaded from the Norfolk Biodiversity Information Service (NBIS) at <http://www.nbis.org.uk.cws>, or there is a short summary of the CWS system at [http://www.nbis.org.uk/sites/default/files/documents/Designated WildlifeSites 2012.pdf](http://www.nbis.org.uk/sites/default/files/documents/Designated_WildlifeSites_2012.pdf). In addition, you can see a map of all the Norfolk sites, including us, at [http://www.nbis.org.uk/sites/default/files/documents/Designated WildlifeSites 2012.pdf](http://www.nbis.org.uk/sites/default/files/documents/Designated_WildlifeSites_2012.pdf).

More good news is that this autumn we will have the pond-dipping platform constructed. This is something that we have aspired to for some time. The platform, projecting out into the pond, will facilitate and enhance access to its wildlife and, we hope, will be attractive to children (and their parents). We have received a generous donation of £1750 from Bergh Apton Sculpture Trail 2011 and matching funding for the platform from Norfolk County Council (under their Countryside Conservation Scheme).

There are interesting developments in relation to the cricketbat willows. In November we were contacted by a company interested purchasing the remaining (over-aged) trees for their intended purpose of making cricket bats. We have had a site meeting and agreed a sale in principle but, because of the unusually wet spring and summer, they have not yet been able to come and extract the trees. Assuming it happens this will be a major upheaval and it may take some time for the site to recover. However it would be excellent in the longer term, as it would relieve us of a great deal of work – it took all winter to deal with the products of last summer's felling; it should also provide us with significant income, which would benefit future conservation activities.

The highlight of our annual programme was the reinstatement, after several years, of the day trip to a site of conservation importance. A small group of us visited the Little Ouse Headwaters Project, on the border between Norfolk and Suffolk on Sunday 1 July 2012 and were very grateful to be shown round by Dr Helen Smith and Dr Jo Pitt. This is a conservation charity run by volunteers that manages a huge area of conservation importance in the shallow valley which is the origin of both the Rivers Little Ouse and Waveney. They operate with very substantial Heritage Lottery funding and we found much that was instructive in relation to management of our own modest marsh area.

The fungus foray, led again by the ever-popular Dr Tony Leech, was very well attended and an acclaimed success (16 October 2011). The 'Christmas' party was held for the second time mid-January (14th). We reinstated our traditional 'Breakfast with the birds', which was kindly led by John Lester on 6 May. A goodly group of us had a delightful evening on 17 May when we were shown developments in the wildlife-friendly management of Bergh Apton manor grounds; we are very grateful to Kip Bertram for the tour and his warm hospitality. 'Breakfast with moths' scheduled for 27 May had to be abandoned, because John and Judy Geeson reported no moths were flying after weeks of prolonged wet weather. Bob Kerry led two more productive hedge

survey evenings on 14 June and 5 July). The midsummer barbeque and bonfire on the millennium field (23 June) was only partially rained-off this year.

The trustees met formally four times during the year: 1 November 2011, and 7 February, 19 April and 24 July 2012, and had an informal on-site management meeting on 11 November 2011. At the first meeting, Tony Davy, Stephanie Crome and Bob Kerry were re-elected chairman, secretary and treasurer, respectively; Sandie Schröder kindly continued as Membership Secretary.