

Main Work Party Reports

Mar 01 – Buckenham Woods – Causeway and path network - bramble and sycamore encroaching on to paths cut back. Permissible footpath alongside allotments cut back hedge along with a large buddleia at top of steps.
7 members

Mar 15 – Holly Lane Pond – Annual maintenance carried out. Trimmed back main roadside hedge. Scythed bank from road to pond. Swept road and all cut vegetation raked and cleared to spoil heap. No frog spawn seen. 8 members.

Mar 29 – Jary's Meadow – West side of meadow – raked and cleared area mown at AWP on 25th March. In the same area, encroaching bramble and blackthorn cut back. All cut vegetation raked and cleared to fire site and burnt. Some pruning of the apple trees carried out. 8 members.

Mar 29 – Walsham Fen – Area A1 – large spoil heap set alight and about 80% burnt.

Apr 12 – Howes Meadow – Cut, raked and cleared sections of the bank either side of stream. Area B – some work around planting. All cut vegetation cleared to fire sites/spoil heaps. 7 members.

26th April—Walsham Fen—Cut and cleared along two drainage ditches that lead to the main stream. To increase the water flow and help drainage, one ditch was dredged and a small channel dug to drain a particular wet area. Some blackthorn was cut back in the south west corner of the site to unveil a hidden spoil heap to use in the autumn. The spoil heap in area A2 was lit and left to smoulder. 10 members

Additional Work

Mar 03 daily to 11 – Howes Meadow – attention to main fire site finally all burnt.

Mar 11 – Walsham Fen - (prep for BVCG work party) Areas A1 and A2 and around large tussock in Area I mown. Some sallow in area A2 cut back.

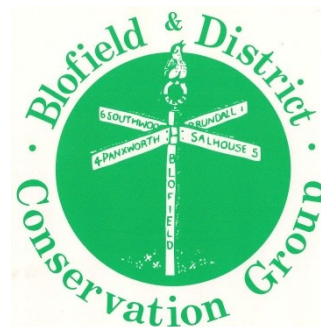
Mar 11 – Jary's Meadow – Attempt to burn fire sites some success but still more to burn.

Mar 11(pm) – Walsham Fen – Pond by Hide – reed and vegetation cut with long reach hedge cutter. Clearance of cut vegetation to follow at later opportunity.

Mar 12 – Howes Meadow – Fire heap nearly all burnt – small heap left smouldering.

Mar 24 – Pedham Rd Panxworth – BADCOG Trees. Trimmed trees, lower branches removed. Bramble cut down from around trunks. Some trees had signs of machinery damage some stunted on this windy site, most growing quite well.

Mar 25 – Jary's Meadow – Preparation for WP on 29th March. West meadow, a section which includes blackthorn mown. Burning of 2 fire sites and heaped spoil of one to dry out for WP.



BADCOG NEWS.

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Chairman's Update May 2025

We have now come to the end of the Winter Talks season, and we are all very grateful to both John Laycock for organising these talks, and to all of our guest speakers. The final talk took place on the 11th April and you can read about this interesting project over the page.

April is a significant month for our local Parish Councils as they typically hold their Annual Parish Meetings (APM) during this period. This year I was invited to speak about BADCOG's activities at two of these meetings, at both the Lingwood & Burlingham APM and at the Strumpshaw APM. Our BADCOG Display/Stand was on display at both meetings, drawing in an audience and sparking conversations, thus providing an opportunity to inform others about our various activities around the area.

With summer approaching, we will be turning our attention to churchyard management, at Blofield, Lingwood, Hemblington, Southwood and Limpenhoe. Providing the weather is kind, I always enjoy this time of the year and look forward to nice warm days. Once again, the Yarmouth Green Gym will be helping us out at Blofield Churchyard.

June is the time of year we do our annual orchid counts at Howe's Meadow and Walsham Fen. This year, the dates will be 23rd and the 27th June, but this will be confirmed closer to the time. Due to insufficient counters last year, the count at Walsham Fen could not be completed; however, we are hopeful for success this year. Interestingly, at Walsham Fen, the Milk Parsley that was introduced a couple of years ago, is still present and we hope over time will spread across the fen.

Within this copy of the Newsletter, you can read about the outstanding work Richard Bond has done, and continues to do, at South Walsham Community Wood. For anyone who hasn't been to this wood, it's well worth a visit and is a nice spot for a picnic. So well done Richard and to all who have helped along the way, and personally, it's always a joy walking through this bit of woodland.

**BADCOG evening meeting 11th April,
A talk about the work of the Papillon Trust.**

The invitation was:- 'Join us for a talk by a member of the "Papillon Project" who will describe the work of this educational charity which promotes sustainable living and environmental awareness for young people in Norfolk'.

Matt Willer is school's project lead and founder of the Papillon Trust which "creates and develops school allotments for a better future".

He told us what a difference it makes to secondary school pupils to have the chance to spend time in the open space at their school where they can help create plots in which to plant and nurture food and some flowers, build poly-tunnels, source water by using a hand made pump and explore many other outdoor activities.

He began to value such time in the open air when, as a boy, his school had links with horticulture. Working later as a history teacher at Reepham High School he saw the potential in an unused plot where an earlier allotment had been started but abandoned. Enthusiasm from pupils and the community saw this pilot project blossom. Starting off with just two student volunteers they constructed growing beds made from wooden pallets. News got round that an allotment area was being created, and a couple of parents started to volunteer to help with the project and members of the local community offered their skills. From those initial raised beds made from pallets came larger raised beds; a fruit cage; poly tunnels; a greenhouse; a chicken coop; an eco-building (outdoor classroom to accommodate a class of thirty); 'rope pumps' (used to harvest, over time, thousands of litres of rainwater); an orchard surrounded by a native hedgerow; a woodland area; a beehive area; a wild flower meadow; livestock area and the rest!

New materials were not needed as up-cycling was very much encouraged. Car tyres and discarded wood were used as edging for plots; frames of old school tables could be netted to protect fruit and vegetables and, surprisingly, a frame for cricket nets became a poly tunnel.

This relatively small plot at Reepham where work started in 2015 has now grown to be a 2.5 acre site.

The important aspect is community involvement says Matt. Adult helpers, be they parents or local residents, have taught children hedge laying, advised on carpentry skills, shown how to invert a motor bike wheel to make a simple water pump. One parent with skills in water management suggested collecting rainwater on pegged out triangular sails and channelling it down hill to collection tanks.

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Lincolnshire Farming and wildlife

Farming in Lincolnshire, with a lifelong interest in bird life on his land, Nicholas Watts comments this year:-

Lapwings, oystercatchers and a pair of shelducks have taken up territories on our wetland and redshanks followed them.

Last year shelducks nested nearly a mile away and then walked their young to the wetland. They were guarding this area as a place for their young to feed. They won't nest on wetland. They nest in a hole -

usually a rabbit hole. The female is brightly coloured like the male. When nesting in a hole she doesn't need to be camouflaged. Eggs are laid towards the end of April and both parents look after the young. Ducklings are also brightly coloured, but the family feeds out in the open rapidly taking cover if danger appears.

Nicholas has begun regenerative farming on one of his farms. The principles include minimising artificial fertilisers and chemical use, minimising soil disturbance, increasing crop diversity and keeping living roots within the ground where possible. Yields may well be less for a few years but, as the number of insects in the soil increases, yields should get back to normal.



Common Redshank

BADCOG WORK PARTY DATES

Work parties start at 10.30am and finish at about 1pm.

All welcome.

17th May—Jary's Meadow

31st May—Buckenham Woods

14th June—Hemblington Church

28th June—Lingwood church

12th July—Blofield Church

15th July—Blofield Church—The Gt Yarmouth Green Gym

[Check website for any changes and cancellations.](#)

Children play on the site, hide and seek being a favourite game. I love to see them enjoying a woodland just as I used to in my own childhood. It's surely better than endless computer games. The dog walkers have become firm acquaintances. They probably regard me as somewhat eccentric – only one of them has ever offered to help – but they tell me about their dogs, and sometimes their problems. Very occasionally I get a thank you.

The wood is a good habitat for birds and insects. Barn owls hunt along the length of the ditch (which I cut each autumn to keep clear). There are sparrowhawks, snipes, red kites. In the spring there are cowslips and primroses. Frogspawn appears in the pond.

Overall, despite the hundreds of hours I spend down there, it's a hobby which has given me much more than I have given it. A bit like BADCOG really!

Incidentally, one of the contractors who helped to plant the wood back in 2007 was one Ernest Hoyos. Anyone know what happened to him?

Richard Bond

A Tribute to Rex Hancy

Rex Hancy, a well-known Norfolk naturalist, has died at the age of 95. Born in South Norfolk at Ellingham in 1929, he went to Bungay Grammar school and did his National Service in the Royal Air Force in 1948. On completing his National Service, he went into teaching, first in London, then at Thorpe Hamlet Junior School, Norwich. With the school adjoining Lion Wood, Rex encouraged the children to have an interest in nature study and added to this by building a bird hide on Mousehold Heath. The detailed sightings gathered here were submitted to Michael Seago, editor of the Annual Norfolk Bird Report. Rex's many other records led to an invitation to compile the annual mammal report.

He and his wife Barbara joined the Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists Society and Rex also became well known on BBC Radio Norfolk, on the 'Nature Trail' broadcasting team for many years.

When Ted Ellis died in 1986, the EDP was keen for his 'In The Countryside' articles to continue. Rex and three others, Michael Seago, Percy Trett and Rosemary Tilbrook took on the daily column in the paper. Others came and went but Rex stayed with it for more than 20 years, until it was finally suspended. Among many other reports, his column mentioned the good work BADCOG was doing.

I was lucky enough to call on Rex at his home in Taverham last Autumn and had a long and friendly chat about wildlife and our water garden at Gooderstone, which he also highlighted in one of his articles. Rex was living alone and still looking after himself and as interested as ever in all aspects of wildlife and conservation. I was honoured to know him.

Ernest Hoyos

As time went on Will decided to give up his teaching job to start the Papillon Project in more secondary schools. Ultimately the project helps young people to feel more confident about themselves he says. It has been transformative for places and people. It provides a place of harmony, safety and escape for children, especially for a child who finds school difficult. Matt feels that the mental health of children who worry about the planet's future, 'eco anxiety', has been improved by their allotment experiences.

In a film made to record Reepham school's venture it was heartening to hear children speak about their enjoyment of so many aspects of the project and the good outcomes of the project for them.

There are now over 30 schools in Norfolk which have benefited from the initiative. In our locality Thorpe St Andrew High School has an area set in woodland and at Acle High School an abandoned project has been brought back to life covering about an acre.

Meanwhile some of the original pupils involved at Reepham High School are now working in ecology following their early enthusiasm.

Matt says that ultimately it is the community which make the projects sustainable long term; the good will of the community is all important.

Sotshole Broad Update

In the Spring of 2017 one of BADCOG's outings was a walk round Sotshole Broad. For those who don't know the site it was part of the Fairhaven Garden land separated from it by the Ranworth to South Walsham Road. It was sold to a private individual. It is a sanctuary for wildlife. It comprises 25 acres of not only a secluded broad but also a bluebell wood, tussocky alder carr woodland, grassland, wet scrub and dykes.

The opportunity has now arisen for Norfolk Wildlife Trust to acquire the site and are seeking the funds to do so. A venture you may wish to support. This will provide a further accessible wildlife site in our locality and one which will be well managed.



South Walsham Community Wood

Please come to help plant a new community woodland, they said. So in the winter of 2007 I went with my wife and two young children to a very muddy field in Burlingham Road, South Walsham. The idea was that parents and pupils of the local Fairhaven Primary School would help contractors to plant a four-acre site owned by County Farms (part of Norfolk County Council). I can't say it was a joyous experience. It rained, the soil was claggy and the tiny saplings were awkward to plant, but in they went.

Town Green Wood (for that was its name) was one of several woodlands planted at that time by County Farms on its large Burlingham Estate. After the planting, the idea was for local people to assume responsibility for looking after them, so volunteers were sought. In South Walsham there wasn't a stampede! In fact, at a meeting, I was the only person to put my hand up. But it occurred to me that it was a unique opportunity to shape a public space which might, one day, be an asset to the village. The site is at the unfashionable end of South Walsham in an area which over the last 20 years has lost its pub, post office and two shops. New affordable homes have been built nearby, with tiny gardens. It seemed to me that a community woodland might be a place where children could play and explore.

The first few years were quite boring. There was nothing much to do, apart from keeping brambles and ragwort from swamping the small saplings. But after about 10 years other tasks started to suggest themselves. The site is sheltered and moist. Of the 1000 trees that were planted pretty much all had survived, and were growing fast. The dense planting meant that some thinning was needed. I began by removing any trees that were deformed or too close to more healthy specimens. I then decided to remove the rabbit guards. They'd done their job and were starting to impede the trees' growth. It took a couple of years to take off 1000 guards. I then removed hundreds of plastic spirals in a new hedge bordering the site. Maybe I'm a bit odd, but I dislike the sight of old rabbit guards in the countryside, still there long after their trees have outgrown them.

The site is divided by a long ditch running from a pond. Willows were planted along each side of the ditch, with hardwood trees, mainly oak, behind them. What was happening was that the willows were shooting up and shading out the oaks. So I decided to pollard the willows – that is, to cut them off at shoulder height, keeping them small, so the hardwoods had more light. This worked well. The willows spouted more shoots, rather like you see along marshland roads, and I kept them small by pruning them each year.

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Another skill I learned was coppicing – cutting a tree, usually hazel, down to its base. It sounds drastic but so long as you protect young shoots from grazing deer it regrows very quickly. This I did in a hazel belt on part of the site. Just three or four each year, out of 30 hazels. Coppicing allows light through to the floor of a wood and encourages wildflowers. You also get some firewood and pea sticks.

It may sound as if I was doing all the work myself, but this wasn't the case. I persuaded friends, especially those with equipment I didn't have, to assist. So Paul (with chainsaw) did the initial pollarding and David (tractor owner) was kind enough to cut the paths. This worked well for a number of years but unfortunately both men died of cancer, Paul in 2016 and David in 2020. Paul's widow kindly gave me his chainsaw and the parish council agreed to pay a contractor to do the paths, so life carried on, but I still miss both my friends very much.

The ditch needed to be bridged at both ends so, using scrap wood from a builder, I made two small footbridges. These cost a total of £1.50 (I had to buy some nails and tacks).

I mentioned the long hedge. This needed to be cut back each year. The parish council lent me its hand-held hedge cutter. As I did the work it struck me that the hedge would have more of a chance if trees too close to it were removed. This I did, along its 200 metre length. This created another path which joggers and dog walkers soon latched on to.

Ah, the dog walkers. In the first 10 years dog mess was definitely a problem. I put up a couple of signs, removed any mess I came across and started to talk to dog owners about the problem. Very gradually that particular nuisance eased, though it has not disappeared completely.

Over the years the wood has definitely become a major hobby. My wife refers to it as my "preferred outdoor space" – doubtless a reference to the fact that she does most of our gardening. When I was working full-time it was much more challenging to get all the work done, particularly if it rained at weekends, but since I retired four years ago it's been great. The wood has definitely boosted my wellbeing. I appreciate the fact that I have a free hand down there. No-one has ever said "you can't do that". All I want is for the wood to be a pleasant place for future generations.

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Photo: Richard Bond (second right, standing) with other helpers when the wood was planted in 2007.

