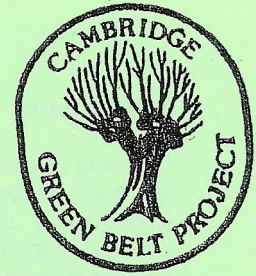


Friends of Roman Road and Fleam Dyke Newsletter Number One May 2001



Committee Meeting Summary

The first meeting of committee of the Friends of the Roman Road and the Fleam Dyke took place on 3rd May. Unfortunately, Richard Wombwell has decided that he is too busy to attend evening meetings, but we hope he will be able to give us the benefit of his knowledge and experience nonetheless. Rob Mungovan, the newly appointed Ecologist for South Cambridgeshire District Council will be invited to the next meeting, and will be a great asset. The committee needs a few more experts and enthusiasts. Any offers?

We have opened an account with Nat West Bank plc, and when all the paper work has been completed, we shall be able to bank your cheques. Many apologies for the delay. Do encourage your friends to join. Committee members have found that it is easy to recruit new members. Please help us increase our numbers. We want lots of helpers for recording and clearance work, but we also want more people to learn about the Roman Road and the Fleam Dyke, and to come and see what is there. The committee has made a start on publicising our new association, but we rely on you all to spread the word as well.

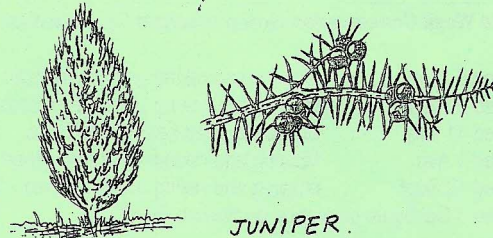
We hope you like the Logo. It was designed by Richard Sell, who lives in Fulbourn. He said, "It was a nice change from the thing I was working on.... As I recollect, the idea came after about ten minutes doodling, and the rest was tidying up." After Liz Kendrick mentioned a logo at the first meeting of the association, I found myself trying to think of images for a road and a dyke, but I am not an artist. It would never have occurred to me to make a logo out of a part of the road, and a part of the dyke, but that is what Richard Sell has done so beautifully.

Finally, our Chairman, Sam Agnew, not a man to be trifled with, suggested dates for committee meetings in July, November and February, and an Annual General Meeting on Wednesday 10th April 2002. You have been warned. Only copper-bottomed excuses will be accepted!

Julia Napier, Secretary

Fleam Dyke Junipers 2001

Fleam Dyke is the only place in Cambridgeshire for Wild Juniper. There are 11 mature Junipers between A11 and Bedford Gap many of which have been damaged by rabbits in recent years. 50 new shrubs obtained as cuttings taken in 1996 have since been planted either side of the A11 in two former Department of Transport plots. Some rabbit damage occurred in January 2001 when old rabbit guards were removed. New guards have now been put on but will need to be checked – friends please note.



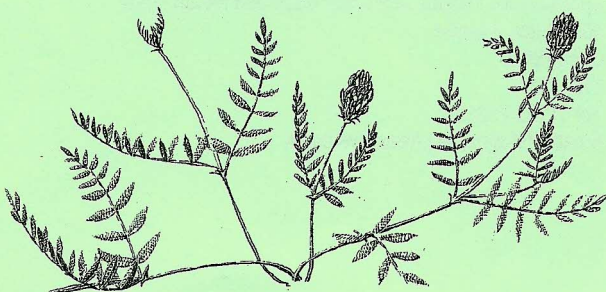
Fleam Dyke Scrub Clearance in 2000/2001

The Cambridge Green Belt Project has undertaken major scrub clearance in the ditch section between A11 and Bedford Gap, thanks to funding from English Nature and South Cambridgeshire District Council. This section contains the largest expanse of chalk grassland left on Fleam Dyke and aerial photographs show hardly any scrub in 1954. The clearance will protect the remaining chalk grassland at the top of the bank and down the slope in places from further scrub encroachment and shading, as well as from excessive rabbit scrapes and grazing. Some sections have been re-seeded with locally collected *Bromus erectus* protected by Jute matting, further seeding will take place in the Autumn. Some areas will be left for natural regeneration.

In the first season there will be abundant nettle and elder regrowth along the bottom half of the slope and Hound's Tongue, Wild Mignonette and Mullein on the upper slopes. These plants will be controlled by mowing but it will take many more years before chalk grassland wildflowers spread down the slopes. The ideal long term management would be sheep grazing, so if anyone can help find a possible sheep grazer please get in touch.

Volunteers to help monitor the vegetation changes on these banks would be very welcome and will need to start this season!

There are no plans for further scrub clearance of this scale on Fleam Dyke and the priority is now to widen the footpath along the top and create 'windows' in the scrub.



Illustrations by Sarah Wroot

Birds and scrub

Tall mature hawthorn and elder scrub does provide some habitat for birds but it does have limited value. Many species such as Blackcap, Nightingale, Garden Warbler and Corn Buntings prefer diverse scrub with good age range and areas of scattered scrub. Bird records are surprisingly poor for both Fleam Dyke and Roman Road. It is hoped that a much better picture of bird species on both sites will emerge after recording by 'Friends' in 2001. A large flock of 200+ Golden Plover was seen next to the Roman Road on April 18th. Merlin was reported on Fleam Dyke near Balsham. Please do send all your bird records to Julia Napier.

Butterfly Recording



Green Hairstreak

A special event was held on Sunday 13th May on Fleam Dyke to help volunteers find out more about surveying insects especially butterflies.

Again, records for butterflies are few and far between on both sites. The participants were rewarded with several sightings of the Green Hairstreak butterfly between the disused railway line and Mutlow Hill. This butterfly has declined in the county and this is one of its small colonies.

A special effort will be made this year to look for two other scarce butterflies: Grizzled Skipper and Brown Argus on Roman Road. Contact us if you would like to get involved. All butterfly records are welcome and we have special forms from Butterfly Conservation.

Events

Mid Week Conservation Group Practical Conservation Events Ring 01223 712410

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|-------------|--|
| Wed 6 June | Mowing and raking on Roman Road |
| Wed 20 June | Mowing and raking on scrub cleared areas on Fleam Dyke |
| Wed 11 July | Collecting seed near Fleam Dyke |
| Wed 1 Aug | Mowing and raking on Roman Road |
| Wed 12 Sept | Mowing and raking on Mutlow Hill – Fleam Dyke |
| Wed 3 Oct | Scrub clearance on Roman Road |

The Cambridge Conservation Volunteers will also be running practical conservation tasks on both sites on Sundays mainly after September. Contact Sharon Hearle for their task list.

Other Events

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| Sun 26 August | "Come and look for butterflies and flowers and birds on Fleam Dyke" Meet on the London bound layby of the A11 between Great Wilbraham and Fulbourn turns. Bring a picnic. Meet 2pm Tel Julia Napier on 01223 213152 |
| Sun 2 nd Sept | Wildlife on Roman Road 3 mile walk Worstead Lodge to Worts Causeway Meet at 1.30pm at the Babraham park and ride site to arrange lift sharing. |
| Sun 7 October | 'Have a go at Conservation' on Fleam Dyke Meet as 26 th August but at 11am instead. |

There will be an evening talk in the Autumn probably on Owls 3 or 4 different species seen on both sites

10th April 2002 Friends of Roman Road and Fleam Dyke AGM

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