

**Friends of the Roman Road and Fleam Dyke
Newsletter Number Four
February 2002**



Letter from the Chairman

**Sam Agnew, District Councillor
for South Cambridgeshire**

Dear Member,

I would just like to say how pleased I am with our progress so far in this our first year and to thank some of those who have done so much to help. We had an initial meeting on 1st February 2001 to talk about the possibility of forming a Friends of Roman road and Fleam Dyke. Then after some discussion and work on a draft Constitution, with help from the Friends of the River Shep, we held our inaugural meeting on 5th April. Since then, our elected Committee, consisting of Jane Fenton (Treasurer), Robert Finch, Sharon Hearle, Rob Mungovan, Julia Napier (Secretary) and David Seilly have met regularly to progress our aims.

We have:

- Published regular Newsletters, thanks mainly to Julia
- Held two extra Work Parties to mow and clear scrub, under the direction of Sharon
- Helped with the purchase of a super mower: the Bank Commander
- Achieved steady recruitment, now over 130 members
- Applied to the Lottery for funding, which you will see elsewhere was successful.
- Set up Banking arrangements, and held several Events for Friends
- Agreed plans for the future

So a very big thank you to all who have contributed to the above achievements. It has been a great pleasure to have been involved in this success in the initial stages of a long term plan to protect and extend surviving areas of chalk grassland flora and fauna on these two historically important linear routes.

Yours,

Sam Agnew

Professor John Parker,
left, Director of the C.U.
Botanic Garden,
presenting Sam Agnew
with the Certificate for
Awards for All

Photograph by
Matthew Power,
with thanks to the
Cambridge Evening News



Conservation Management on Fleam Dyke 2001/2002

by Sharon Hearle,
Cambridge Green Belt Project Officer



Scrub Clearance

The chief priority this year has been to clear scrub re-growth in large areas previously cleared of dense scrub. The main two areas have been between A11 and Bedford Gap, and the Disused Railway line and Mutlow Hill.

The most difficult shrubs to control are privet and elder. Both are quite resistant to herbicide, and privet has an annoying habit of creeping along the ground and throwing up suckers. There has been virtually no re-growth from any of the cut hawthorn stumps that were treated with herbicide. Another shrub that needs to be controlled is Mahonia, which is quite low-growing, but spreads along the ground. It is believed that this was widely planted in the 19th century to provide game cover.

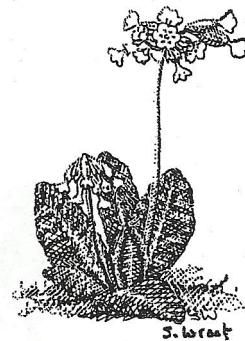
There are still long sections of footpath that remain overgrown by scrub. There have been volunteer events to clear scrub along the footpath between Dungate Farm and Bedford Gap. One of the biggest problems here is caused by over-mature hawthorns covered in ivy, collapsing across the path. There have also been work parties to clear the scrub between the start of the dyke at Shardelowes Well, near Fulbourn, and the first hedge boundary. (See Second Friends' Scrub Clearance Day) A new gentle access onto the dyke at the Fulbourn end has been created and the old steep steps have been blocked off at this point. The north facing bank is now protected by a new two-metre wide grass verge, thanks to the landowner.

Mowing Work and Fencing

Several days have been spent mowing open areas of grassland, together with raking and removal of cuttings. These open areas have grown in recent years as more scrub has been cleared. This year most of this grassland has been cut with a brushcutter, but in the future, the use of the Bank Commander Mower and, of course, the arrival of Norfolk Long Horn sheep will make this work easier. They will graze the Dyke from the A11 to the Bedford Gap. The first section of sheep fencing will be erected in early March. The remaining fence will be put up in July, after the arable crop has been harvested. It is expected that sheep will be introduced to the site in September.

Fleam Dyke

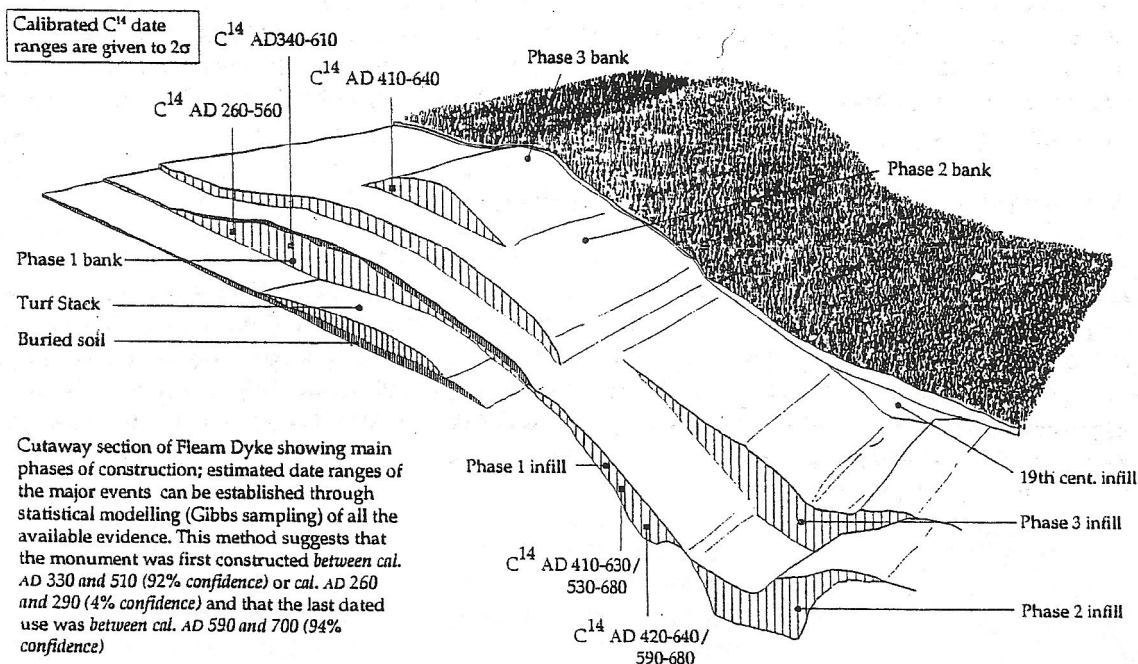
by Tim Malim,
Manager of the Cambridgeshire County Council
Archaeological Field Unit.



The massive earthwork monument known as Fleam Dyke consists of a 7-8m high bank and ditched barrier which ran for 5km from Balsham to Fulbourn. Possible extensions to it occur at both the south and north ends, and a further part of it might exist from Quy Fen to the River Cam at Fen Ditton. The main part of Fleam survives today as a footpath and parish boundary, but historically the northern part was also the boundary between Flendish and Staine Hundreds. The Moot for these Hundreds was at Mutlow Hill, a Bronze Age barrow which had clearly been an important landmark for many centuries before its use as an Anglo-Saxon meeting place. Apart from the 4,000 year old cremated burials for which it was originally built, rare third century BC Greek coins have been found close to the burial mound. It was reused in Roman times for a temple, and it is no accident that Fleam Dyke passes right beside it. Mutlow rests on the top of a hill, and overlooks the junction of several routeways (including the Icknield Way) where they meet and cross Fleam Dyke.

In the 19th and early 20th centuries, human remains and Anglo-Saxon weapons were reported as having come from Fleam Dyke and its name may derive from the Old English for "flight" or "fugitive". Proper investigations were undertaken by Cyril Fox and William Palmer, whose excavations and research in 1921-2 established three important points: that the construction was post-Roman, that no causeway had been left for access along the Icknield Way, and that an Anglo-Saxon estate charter of 974 mentions the Dyke as part of its boundary. The interpretation favoured by many during the later part of the last century was that the Fleam Dyke was built to defend the East Anglian kingdom in its wars with Mercia during the seventh century.

The widening of the A11 in 1991 gave the opportunity for further excavation using modern methods of investigation and scientific techniques to help with analysis. The results demonstrated that Fleam Dyke was a complex monument with no single period of construction, but instead at least three distinct building phases and a number of lesser episodes such as layers of turf-growth representing periods of stabilisation. Beneath the core of the bank, a buried soil survived with the shells of contemporary snails, which showed that Fleam Dyke had been built into an open landscape of grazed grassland and disturbed ground. A fourth century Roman coin was also found beneath the bank, but of more importance for dating purposes was retrieval of animal bone from key deposits so that a sequence of radiocarbon dates could be established. By mathematical modelling it has been possible to refine the range of dates which each individual sample spanned, so that we can say that the first phase of Fleam was built between 330- 510 AD and that the last phase of bank construction occurred between 450 - 620 AD.



Fleam Dyke is the most complex of a group of similar linear earthworks that ran from the wooded hills in the south to the wet areas of springs, rivers and fens in the north, effectively cutting off access to East Anglia along the Icknield way zone. Based on the dating evidence from Fleam it would seem these barriers were built by Anglo-Saxon immigrants to defend their core settlements in eastern Cambridgeshire, Norfolk and Suffolk against Romano-British counter attacks in the 5th century AD. Their ultimate line of defence was the Devil's Dyke, from Wood Ditton to Reach, built in a single episode and stretching for 11 kms. To the west of Fleam, two dykes, Bran and Brent, are also known; but it is only Fleam that seems to have so many phases in its construction. This could be because it was built, taken, then retaken and refortified a number of times during the fluctuating fortunes of war during the Dark Ages.

Finally, these Anglo-Saxon dykes are very large monuments, and it is probable that their construction has destroyed evidence for earlier, prehistoric boundaries running along the same line. The location of Fleam Dyke, running as it does through a Bronze Age barrow and Roman temple, to Shardelowes Well at Fulbourn (springs were often sacred sites and the focus for ritual activity), and possibly beyond to meet with the Wilbraham River at a Neolithic causewayed camp, strongly suggests a close association with the past. Such a relationship with sacred sites perhaps imbued the Dyke with a symbolic meaning which it is now difficult for us to comprehend, but which may have helped to give an added dimension to the more pragmatic defensive function of this boundary.

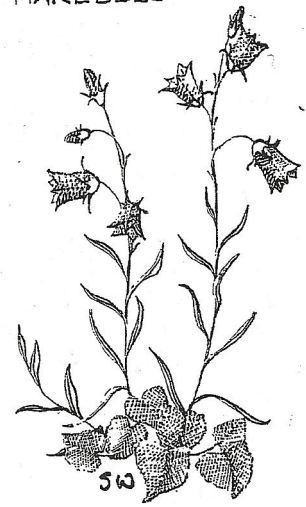
Reference: Malim T *et al* 1997 New Evidence on the Cambridgeshire Dykes and Worsted Street Roman Road. *Proceedings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society Vol. 85*, pp. 27 - 122.

And Another Success!

The Ultimate in Mowing Machines

What, better than the Bank Commander? Yes, indeed. Sharon Hearle's determined pursuit of quality mowing performance has secured the services of a Grazier. At our Anniversary Meeting, she was able to announce that in August or September, Norfolk Long Horn sheep will be brought onto the Fleam Dyke. This will require fencing and discreet gating, but it is the perfect way to manage and restore chalk grassland flora. Small low-growing flowers like harebells and squinancy wort are fully adapted to grazing. They spread by seed and by vegetative reproduction, so that grazing does not harm them, but long grass will soon wipe them out. However, there are two plants that are a danger to sheep, and other herbivores: ragwort and white bryony. We shall have a **Friends Work Party on 26th May** to deal with the problem, we hope. (See Events at the end of the newsletter)

HAREBELL



First Anniversary Meeting

This took place on Wednesday 6th February, but not in the Six Bells Pub, Fulbourn. A few weeks before, the Landlord had rung, full of apologies, to explain that they had overlooked the fact that the first Wednesday of each month is Jazz Night. Fortunately, the Gilmour Building of the Botanic Garden was available, and the Superintendent, Tim Upson, gave us permission to use it. We very much hope that no Friends made a futile visit to the Six Bells that evening.

The meeting was attended by about 60 Friends and friends of Friends. Professor John Parker, director of the Botanic Garden, opened the proceedings with a brief talk about the significance of the Fleam Dyke Junipers. Although it is known as the Common Juniper, *Juniperus communis*, it is in fact the only wild juniper population in East Anglia. The eleven surviving bushes (and our Millennium Seedlings) may be relics of a much larger population of junipers in the area, which were described by the great Cambridge botanist John Ray in the seventeenth century. Although the site and smell of junipers makes one think of southern France and the Mediterranean, our junipers are related to the Northern Juniper of north Germany. Professor Parker said that our presence had a particular relevance to the Botanic Garden, as some cuttings which were taken in the 1970's can be seen as small shrubs in the Garden.



Our main speaker, Dr Roger Clarke, then gave an extremely interesting talk on the Birds of Prey which may be seen in Cambridgeshire. An accountant by profession, Dr Clarke is a distinguished ornithologist and an active member of the Hawk and Owl Trust. He referred very modestly to his PhD in Hawk vomit but, as soon became clear, he has an amazing ability to detect from their regurgitated pellets not only what assorted small falcons have for dinner, but what the dinner ate before it was eaten. Thus the talk alternated between the exciting news that Common Buzzards have spread back into Cambridgeshire and first bred near Fleam Dyke in 1999, and the worrying thought that the Merlin seen by Ivan Scurll and Graham Jones on 9th May 2001 (Newsletter 2) may have dined on 14 small birds, many of them sky larks. It was good to hear that the Roman Road and Fleam Dyke can be substantially improved as hunting grounds for many of these beautiful birds by 'mosaic mowing'. This means that some areas are close-mowed for chalk grassland flowers, but other areas are left long for taller flowers and grasses, making perfect habitat for voles and other small mammals. Good news for hawks and owls; bad news for voles.

Dr Clarke illustrated his talk with his own photographs of these marvellous birds, including a remarkable photograph of a pair of Montague's Harriers performing the famous Food Pass in mid air, but it soon became clear that the place to go is not, unfortunately, Fleam Dyke or the Roman Road, but the Czech Republic, Kazakstan or India. Try to imagine seeing a flock of Montague's Harriers overhead in India, not just hundreds,

but three thousand or so, doing very nicely it seems on locusts. As those of us who heard the talk can testify, it was all much too interesting to be summarised briefly, so I have asked Dr Clarke to turn his lecture into an article for a future edition of the newsletter.

After a break for tea or coffee, during which everyone followed Sam Agnew's instruction to talk to strangers, Rob Mungovan, who is a Conservation Officer at South Cambridgeshire Council, introduced himself and invited people to ring him for information and advice: "I may not know the answer, but I can find someone who does." Then Sharon Hearle rounded off the evening with a short talk about chalk grassland flowers. Her characteristically expert comments on what was to be seen where and why, were often followed by a sad refrain along the lines of "this has gone from the Dyke/Roman Road", or, memorably, "the last Pasque Flower on Fleam Dyke was dug up in 1975". However, this depressing comment on selfish gardeners was offset by her announcement that she had secured the help of a Grazier who could bring along some even better mowing machines in the form of Norfolk Long Horn sheep.



Juniper News

Unfortunately, the top of the tallest Juniper on the Fleam Dyke, was partially snapped off in recent high winds. The remaining tree should recover well.

Juniper Guardian

One of our newest members is **Dr David Clark**, who acted as a voluntary warden of the Fleam Dyke from the mid-fifties onwards, keeping records steadily, and clearing scrub round the Junipers himself or making sure that something got done. He was appointed **Honorary Warden of Fleam Dyke in 1986**. I hope to publish more details in a later newsletter. He is, of course, delighted to hear of our existence, and only wishes that we had been founded forty years ago, when the effects of myxamitosis first became evident in the rampant scrub growth. Dr Clark is perhaps the most eminent and longest-serving voluntary worker on the Fleam Dyke, but others have over the years done their best to keep paths open and preserve the endangered flora. Two such forerunners of our present work, John Davison and Sean Wylie, have joined the Friends. To them, and to the other Trojans who struggled on almost alone against the invading scrub, many thanks. Perhaps there is something Homeric about Fleam Dyke, after all.

Juniper Magic

Recently, a rather unmusical performance of Hansel and Gretel drove me to buy the CD. It soon became clear why the real Engelbert Humperdinck had survived a great deal longer than his pop double. I also discovered with surprise that as the Witch puts her spell on the children, she waves a Juniper branch, *wacholderzweig*, though for ease of metre the words used in the text are "Hocus pocus, Holderbusch", which actually means Elder bush. But then the elder tree has magic associations as well. Were the once abundant juniper bushes part of the protective magic which Tim Malim refers to in his article?

And a Very Unmagical Item

Where should a considerate editor put the following, I wonder. Sharon writes:

"The Highways Authority have agreed to coppice a section of planted shrubs near the layby on the A11 between the A11 and footpath to Fleam Dyke. This work will, hopefully, prevent the nasty habit of human fouling that has occurred on this stretch of footpath."

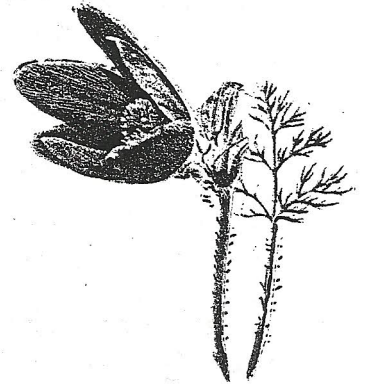
A Second Friends' Scrub Clearance Day

February 10th was bright and sunny, and no less than nineteen Friends and supporters turned up at Stonebridge Lane, including, to my astonishment, Roger and Stella Wolfe all the way from Ipswich. As Roger said, "I have been dying to get my hands on this lot for years." Many thanks to them, and to all the other helpers. A contractor had cleared an easier path up the north east slope onto the Dyke, and opened up a space on the south west side so that we could drag stuff down to the ditch and burn it. Everyone worked extremely hard, and the pile of brash grew more and more voluminous until Sharon had to call a halt to the cutting so that we could get it all down to the bonfire, and burnt. This was less easy than it may sound, as a strong west wind was blowing smoke up the bank in swirling gusts, and it was quite hard to keep one's feet while dragging a bundle of prickly branches down a forty five degree slope of loose earth.

By the time we left, we had widened the path for several hundred yards; substantially widened the main "window"; and extended an oval clearing on the west side, two hundred yards further along: an excellent result. The only problem is that there are another three thousand or so yards to go! Which is why we need more money in grants to pay for a long programme of clearance work. We shall not be able, nor is it desirable, to clear all the scrub on both sides of the whole dyke. For some parts of the Fulbourn to the A11 sections of the dyke, the plan is to open out semi-circular spaces, as we did on 10th February, and widen the path out for several metres along the top of the dyke. The benefit for walkers is obvious, with easier walking and new views across the farmlands. The few fragments of chalk grassland flora that remain will have a chance to spread.

Fulbourn Flower-Lover Wanted

Would anyone like to keep a record of what grows in this newly cleared area? Is there a Friend who regularly walks on the Fulbourn end of the dyke and has some knowledge of wild flowers? It would be very interesting to note what comes up. It will be fairly predictable, but there are violets and cowslips nearby, and a few plants of salad burnet. There might be other interesting survivors in the seed bank. At the Anniversary Meeting, Sharon was asked whether the Pasque Flower might reappear. Alas, no. We shall only see the Pasque Flower there again if English Nature authorises a Reintroduction Programme, which would be a very questionable enterprise until the habitat has improved.



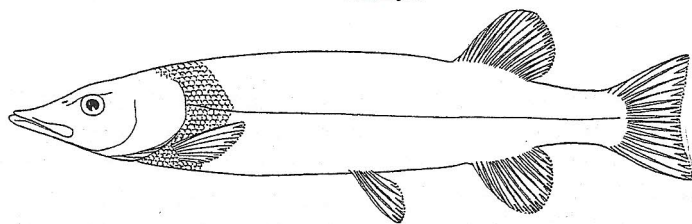
I love flowers, but I'm not good enough to be a proper Recorder

Nonsense. Grasses are hard, hawkweeds are legendarily tricky, and varieties of dandelion are solely for a particular kind of lunatic, but if you like flowers you can easily learn to recognise and name a great many of the chalk grassland flowers which we are trying to restore. Simple records are a great deal better than nothing. Give us a ring.

Assistant Team Leaders Needed

Nineteen people, some of them not very experienced, lopping and felling happily on Sunday 10th February, was a splendid sight. Would any member with experience of scrub-clearance work be prepared to attend a training day so as to be a qualified Assistant Team Leader? Please get in touch with Sharon.

Other Aggers



A Friend writes:

The term "agger" in Newsletter No 3, revived early boyhood memories, which are quite unconnected with Roman Roads. **Agger's Fishing Tackle Shop** was situated in mediaeval Sussex Street, until redevelopment in the 1930s. Unfortunately, the college authorities had scant regard for the domestic architecture of Cambridge. Look what happened to Bridge Street. The shop was a fascinating place, with a rod and line with an artificial trout suspended over the street. Inside were glass cases with monster specimens in them: Pike, Perch, Rudd and Bream. I remember the sign - **Agger's Noted Yellow Paste**, and the unforgettable small of boiled wheat, two favourite baits in those days. The shop relocated to the corner of Belmont Place and King Street at the time of the end of old Sussex Street. There my account ends, as we all went away to war. Nothing to do with our Society, just a brief glimpse of old Cambridge, which I hope may be of interest.

John Norman, 16. 12. 2001

For those other readers who like associations and derivations, the Oxford Dictionary of Surnames lists the local family names of Ager and Agar as derivations of the Saxon names of Algar and Edgar. The name Agger is not given, but may derive from the Old Danish name Aggi, which is listed in the London Pipe Rolls of 1195. This fascinating Dictionary was begun by P.H.Reaney in 1943, "to beguile the tedium of the quieter periods of fire-watching."

An Award for Us!

As you may have heard by now, we applied in December to a section of the Heritage Lottery Fund called **Awards for All**, and were granted £5,000, the maximum amount. The money was awarded specifically for "the hire of specialist heavy contractor work, and volunteer expenses". Since raising money to get work done on these important sites is one of our main aims, we are all delighted with this early success.

It is, of course, entirely due to you. Without members, there would be no society. The speed with which our numbers have built up is one of the main reasons for this award. Your membership is like a popular vote to "Do Something" about these neglected sites. Sharon Hearle has been making a visible impact on the problem with the Green Belt Project; money from English Nature and from South Cambridgeshire District Council has paid for other work, but much more is needed.

With spring and bird nesting coming so early this year, it will not be possible to put this money to work before September, but by then there will have been time for skilled contractors to quote for the work. A small amount of the grant may be used to buy protective helmets and tools for work parties, and to train Team Leaders to take charge of work parties. Please let Sharon know if you are interested. Many thanks to Jane Fenton, Sharon Hearle and Rob Mungovan who pooled their experience in dealing with conservation grant application forms, and secured this excellent result. A secondary benefit from such an award is that it gives us publicity. BBC Radio Cambridge were kind enough to give us air time at mid-day on Tuesday 5th February, which brought us several new members; and many of you will have seen the Cambridge Evening News photograph, taken at our Anniversary Meeting on 6th February, with Professor Parker, Director of the Cambridge University Botanic Garden, and our Chairman, Sam Agnew, triumphantly holding up the Award Certificate.

"Please, Sir, I want some more."

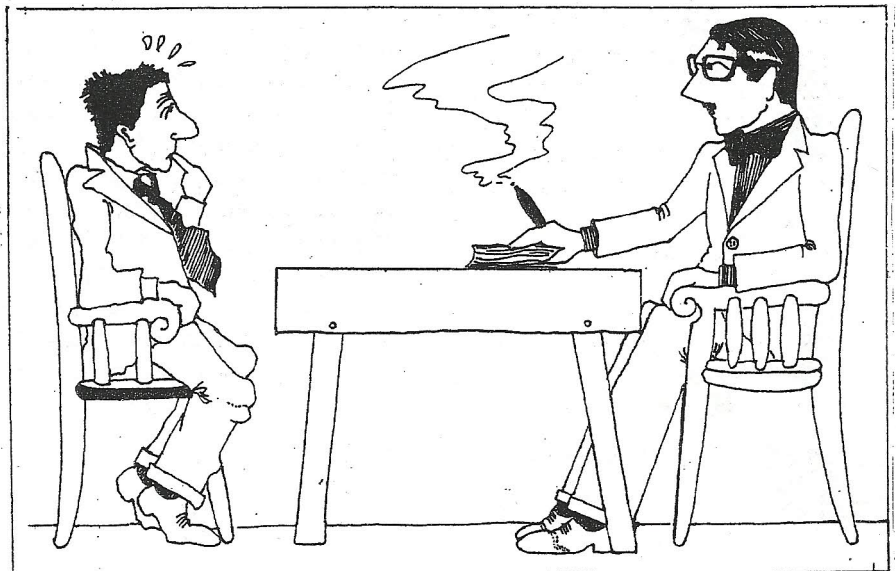
The trouble is that although £5,000 sounds like a great deal of money, it will in fact only pay for a relatively small amount of work, as those who attended our various work parties can testify. With over three miles of long-neglected SSSI in acute need of tender loving care, we shall have to ask for **more**. However, we may be good candidates for a much larger grant under the Local Heritage Initiative, so Jane and Sharon and Rob are flexing their form-filling muscles. What can members do to help?

More Members Needed

Fulbourn Parish Council and **West Wickham Parish Council** have joined as corporate members, for £10 a year. If you know anyone on other Parish Councils, can you persuade them to join us? We now have 131 individual members, which is wonderful: 200 members would be even better, and would definitely help us with our next grant application. If you have friends who walk on the Roman Road or the Fleam Dyke, can you extract a fiver from them? After all, it costs only 10p a week to be part of **The Fastest Growing Conservation Organisation in Cambridge!**

Recruit a friend !!!

"You mean to say that you have not joined yet? Pray, explain yourself!"



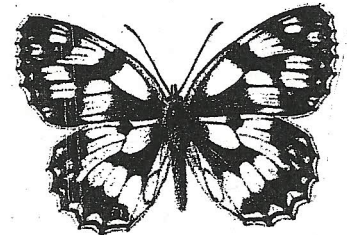
Butterflies on the Roman Road and Fleam Dyke Spring and Early Summer

by Julia Napier

The First Cuckoo?

I recently joined the UK Lepidopterists e-mail chat group and was welcomed with a shower of e-mails about sightings of Red Admirals. What a peculiar lot, I thought. Who else would want to sit down and send out e-mails saying, "Just seen a Red Admiral sunning itself on such and such." Then the penny dropped. This was the Lepidopterists equivalent of hearing the first cuckoo, and unlike those gently competitive letters to the editor of The Times in previous decades, there is an underlying menace in these early sightings. The climate seems to be changing, and we do not know how fast or how far it will go.

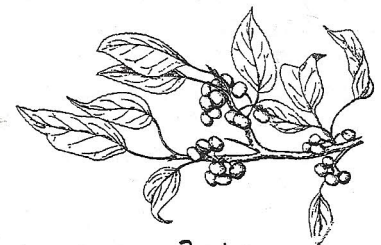
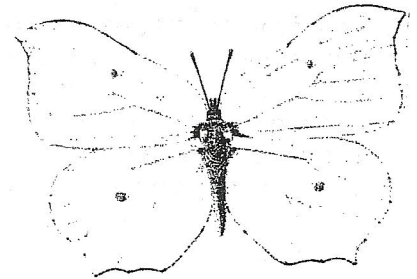
However, for butterfly lovers in East Anglia, it is rather good news. Several butterflies are more frequent than they used to be: in particular, the Comma, the Speckled Wood and the Ringlet. The Marbled White is coming this way. There is the possibility of a longer breeding season for insects like the Brown Argus, and butterfly lovers will not have to wait so long before seeing the first Red Admiral/Peacock/Tortoiseshell/Brimstone of spring.



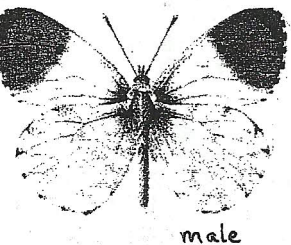
The first butterfly I saw on the Fleam Dyke last year was a Tortoiseshell, nectaring on the Mahonia, or Oregon grape. If you have time, do let me know which day this year you saw your first butterfly on the Fleam Dyke or the Roman Road, or indeed, heard the first cuckoo. Julia

Common Spring Butterflies

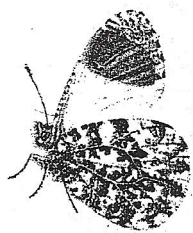
However, it is when we see the first bright yellow Brimstone, that we all feel spring is really on the way. Be careful, though, that creamy white butterfly that also went past was not a Large White, but a female Brimstone. Look for the hooked wing tip and the pale orange-red spot on each wing. Moreover, although the Brimstone seems a symbol of spring, they can be seen at almost any time of the year, emerging from hibernation on warm days in the winter. With eleven months of life, the Brimstone is our longest living butterfly, flying intermittently from its emergence out of its chrysalis, or pupa, in late July/August until the next summer. Unfortunately, I did not find time to go butterfly counting on our sites until 22nd May, when Sections 6 and 7 of the Fleam Dyke seemed to be a sort of straits of Dover, with a steady stream of handsome male Brimstones flying along the ditch at hedge level. The sheltered situation must have been one attraction. The other would be the presence of buckthorn and alder buckthorn, the food plant of the Brimstone caterpillar.



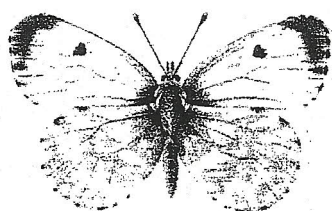
Buckthorn



male



male



female

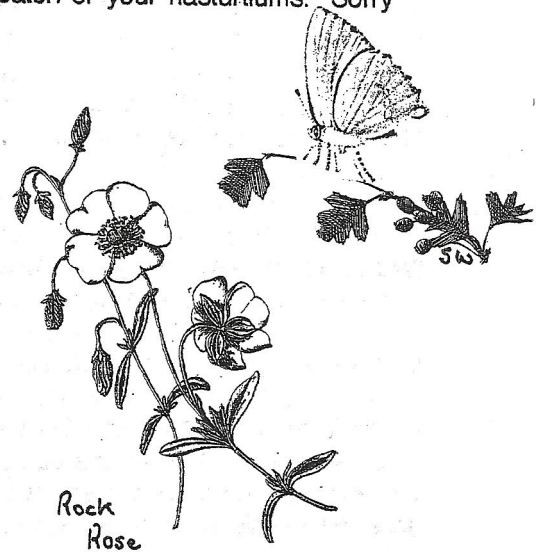
The other butterfly that was always visible on Sections 6 and 7 of the Fleam Dyke, on 26th May, was the Orange Tip. This is the real first butterfly of spring. It overwinters as a chrysalis, and lives only for few weeks in April and May. Again, it is the male which has the bright colours, with its orange wing tips. The female, which needs good camouflage as she searches for plants on which to lay her eggs, just has the beautiful green, grey and white dappled underwings of the species, and in flight looks very similar to the Small White. The presence of a good number of Orange Tips in the area is explained by the abundance of its main food plant: a mass of Garlic Mustard in the overgrown banks by the bridge over the old railway cutting.



Four days later, on 26th May, I went butterfly counting on the Roman Road, walking slowly from Worsted Lodge to Copley Hill. A quantity of Garlic Mustard on the south side of the road near Worsted Lodge accounted for the interest of Orange Tip females, and hopeful males. The females are astonishingly fussy about which leaf will be perfect for their baby. They spend ages inspecting one plant, and then suddenly decide it is no good, and fly off for several metres before fluttering around another plant, which for a moment seems to hold some extra charm. Given that they only lay one egg at a time, this seems to be a hard way to preserve genes. On the other hand, a single perfectly camouflaged green caterpillar, lying along the seed pod of a Garlic Mustard plant, runs less risk of being eaten by a bird than a companionable crowd of brothers and sisters. The single caterpillar is also less likely to be found by specific predators such as the icneumon wasp, which can wipe out 80% of a brood of Tortoiseshell caterpillars. There were not so many Brimstones on the Roman Road as on Fleam Dyke. Instead, there were quite a few more Small Whites, whose caterpillars feed on wild brassicas such as Garlic Mustard, Hedge Mustard and Charlock, until later in the summer they can find your cabbage patch or your nasturtiums. Sorry about that.

A Butterfly for Twitchers

The Fleam Dyke has only one unusual butterfly: the Green Hairstreak. Although it can be seen all over the British Isles, this butterfly is never seen in large numbers. Of all the British butterflies, it must be the easiest to identify. A nondescript little brown insect flies over your head, settles on a hawthorn or privet leaf, and disappears. You look again, and realise that it is still there, but that its folded wings are the exact green of the leaf. Look a little further, and two or three of them will be nectaring on nearby hawthorn flowers. In fact, the butterfly's wing scales are not green at all, but when its wings are at right angles to the sun, we perceive them to be green. All the Hairstreak butterflies take their name from the narrow band of colour on their underwings, but in the Green Hairstreak, this is reduced to a line of white dots. Our Fleam Dyke colony has only very minimal white markings.



On chalk grassland, the caterpillars feed mainly on Rock Rose leaves and Bird's-foot-trefoil, although in other parts of the British Isles they feed on gorse, broom and bramble. They pupate at ground level and overwinter as a pupa, or chrysalis. Most of the blue butterflies and the hairstreaks have some sort of symbiotic relationship with ants. The pupae of the Green Hairstreak can produce an audible squeak to attract ants, which then help to hide the pupa in the soil surface at the base of the plant. It may be that the ants are full of the milk of human kindness, but it is more likely that the hairstreak pupae produce a secretion which rewards the ants for their work. In East Anglia, the adults emerge in late April or May, and are on the wing for a month or so. They are to be seen in Section 6 and 7. Look for a green leaf that takes wing, a brown butterfly with a flash of green as it flies, a few little butterflies circling over a hawthorn bush, dark against the sky, or something circling round the stamens at the centre of a hawthorn flower. If you see them anywhere else on Fleam Dyke, or on the Roman Road, or if you see any other rarity, please do contact us.

The Midweek Conservation Volunteers packing up, after clearing a wide band of scrub from the south west facing bank of the Roman Road near Balsham:

Steve Hartley
Mick Bard
Carol Bard

Ron Hall
Justin Turkentine
Paul Stebbings
Rob Ward
and...



Mid-Week Conservation Group

Meet at the Barn, behind Bidwell's office, Trumpington Road

Mid-week days can change at short notice.

Please ring 01223 712410 if you intend to come, in order to check the meeting place.

April

Wed 10 **Roman Road** Mowing with the bank commander near Worsted

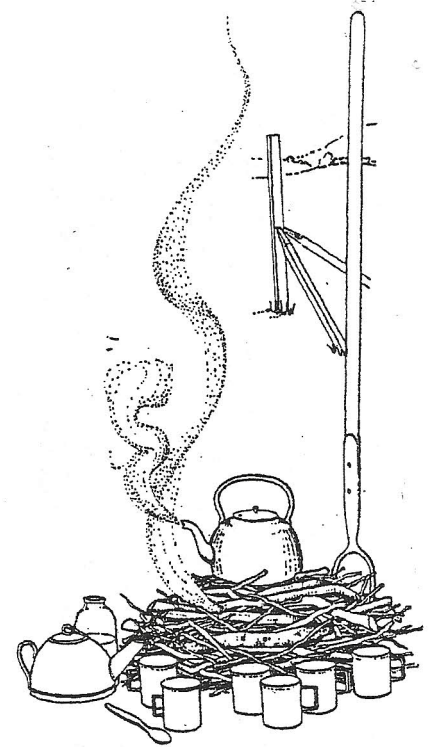
Lodge. Lots of raking, and early spring flowers

Wed 17 **Fleam Dyke** Mowing with the bank commander along the
A11 - Bedford Gap section. Also, weeding ragwort
and bryony in preparation for grazing in August

May

Wed 1 **Roman Road** Mowing with the bank commander near Worsted
Lodge. Lots of raking, and early spring flowers.

Wed 8 **Fleam Dyke** Mowing with the bank commander along the
A11 - Bedford Gap section. Also weeding ragwort
and bryony in preparation for grazing in August



Patrick Sadler

The Cambridge Conservation Volunteers will also be running practical conservation tasks on both sites. For further information, telephone Sharon Hearle 01223 712410

Other Events and Meetings for your diary

Sat 23rd March

Moss Foray: Fulbourn Nature Reserve and Fleam Dyke

Meet at 11.0 am at the entrance to the Reserve, off Stonebridge Lane. Beginners will be welcome. Bring a hand lens (x 10 or x 20) if you have one, and some paper packets for collecting samples. Wear suitable clothing, and bring a packed lunch. Moss Forays are not cancelled because of mere rain, only in the event of snow or frost. The Foray will be led by Bryophyte experts who are recording for the new **Cambridge Bryoflora Project**, begun in January 2000.

Wed 10 th April

Annual General Meeting

A shortish business meeting followed by an illustrated talk on **Butterflies of the Cambridgeshire area** by Dr Val Perrin, who organises the Butterfly Monitoring Scheme for Cambridgeshire vice-county.
7.30 - 10.0 pm at the Six Bells Public House, Fulbourn. Non-members welcome

Sun 26th May

Ragwort and White Bryony weeding on Fleam Dyke at the Bedford Gap.

These plants are poisonous for sheep. Meet at A11 layby at 10.0 am No skills required. Wear old clothes, walking boots or tough shoes. Bring waterproofs, gardening gloves, a small hand fork, if you have one, and a packed lunch. Please let Julia or Sharon know if you plan to come. (See below for phone numbers)

Sun 7th July

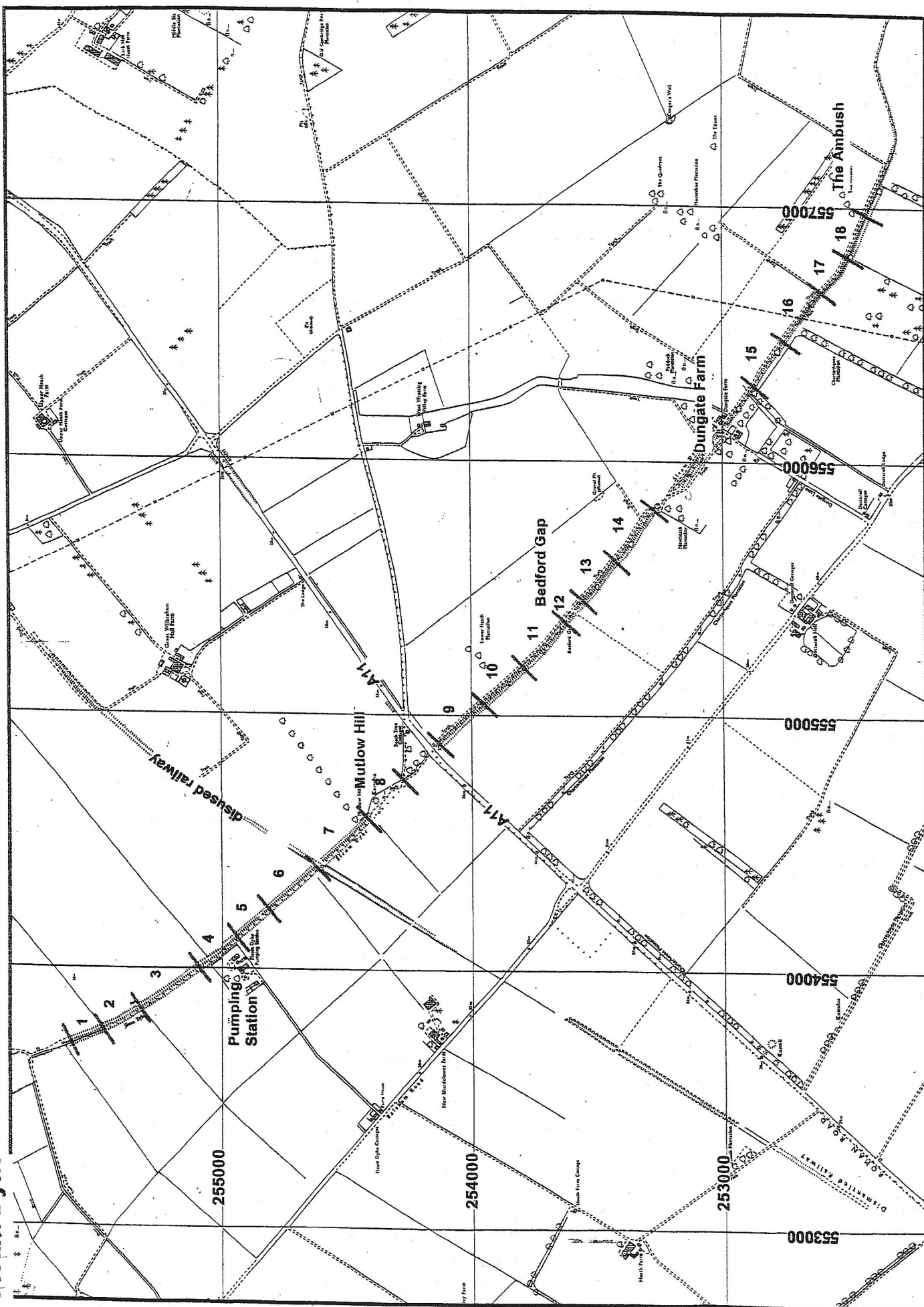
Chalk Grassland Flowers Come for an afternoon walk, and see some of the flowers which you are helping to restore in the company of one of our Flora experts. At this season, the Fleam Dyke from the A11 to the Bedford Gap is bright with flowers. The rock roses will be past their best, but there should be plenty of the small chalk grassland flowers: wild thyme, dropwort, and squinancy wort at the top of the banks. Lower down, there is a great deal of lady's bedstraw, greater knapweed and common knapweed etc. Beyond Mutlow Hill, the beautiful clustered bell-flowers should be in bloom. Wear suitable clothing, bring waterproofs or parasols as needed. Meet at 2.30 at the A11 layby.

Contacts:

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Fleam Dyke



Scale: 1:20000
Plot Date: 20/2/2002
By: Wildlife Trust

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