



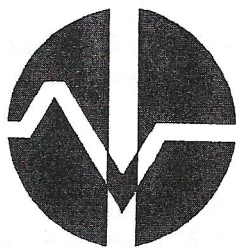
**The Friends of the Roman Road and Fleam Dyke
Newsletter Number Twenty one
May 2006**



The Roman Road, SW of Worsted Lodge, 25 March 2006



The north end of Fleam Dyke, 11 April 2006



Friends of the Roman Road and Fleam Dyke Newsletter Number Twenty One May 2006

Our Fifth Annual General Meeting

held at the Six Bells Public House, Fulbourn 12th April 2006

Present: Committee: Sam Agnew, Chairman; Michael Albutt, Treasurer; Naomi Brookes, Green Belt Project Manager; Nigel Copeman; James Fisher, Devil's Dyke Project Manager; Rob Mungovan, Ecology Officer, SCDC; Julia Napier, Secretary, Jane Robson, Membership Secretary; David Seilly, Work Parties; and 45 members of the Society.

1. Sam Agnew opened the meeting by praising the achievements of the Friends since 2005. A very informative and attractive leaflet about the Roman Road had been produced by Naomi Brookes and the artist and designer, Sarah Wroot. Articles from previous newsletters had been selected and turned into a handsome booklet with a great deal of help from Mike Albutt. The loss of some members had been compensated by the recruitment of others, often by word of mouth, so that we now have over 300 members, if all annual subscriptions are paid.

2. Report by the Green Belt Project Manager, Naomi Brookes

Naomi summarised the work of the year: cutting and raking off the good grassland areas of the Roman Road and the Fleam Dyke as usual, with the additional work of maintaining the newly cleared areas of the Fleam Dyke. She said that they have found that mowing and raking off in spring and in the autumn produces better results than the former winter cutting routine.

Many years of work on the section of the Fleam Dyke from the A11 to the Bedford Gap suddenly reaped a reward in August 2005 when Chalkhill Blue males and females were seen by several observers. Quite how they got there is a mystery. The nearest colony is on the Devil's Dyke, but the numbers were very high last summer, when the Butterfly Conservation count was done. (See Sharon Hearle's talk.) We very much hope that they will reappear this August. Please let us have sightings.

The end of the Fleam Dyke at Fulbourn has been completely cleared so that better steps can be put up. The existing steps are steep and rather worn. An alternative path has been used for some years, but this has meant that the farmer has been penalised for not protecting the wildlife strip for which he receives Wildlife Enhancement payments. The aim is to maintain blocks of scrub, with a varied structure of plants and shrubs.

A considerable length of the southern Roman Road has been completely cleared of all scrub and tussocky grass. The section of Agger (original Roman banked road) which is visible as you walk towards the Gunner's Hall-Hildersham path has been cleared by hand by Paul Stebbings and Mike Edridge using £4,000 from our Lottery Heritage Initiative grant. The rest has been cleared with heavy machinery which chipped the wood and strewed the chippings on the site to be collected two months later. The hedges on both sides have been cut back to a height of about 4ft and a minimum width.

The flowers which had regrown as a result of the LHI clearance in the winters of 2004 and 2005 were mowed and baled in mid August. They were strewn on bare soil where paths had been widened to open up the path running towards Gunner's Hall. This was an experiment in Green Hay Strewing.

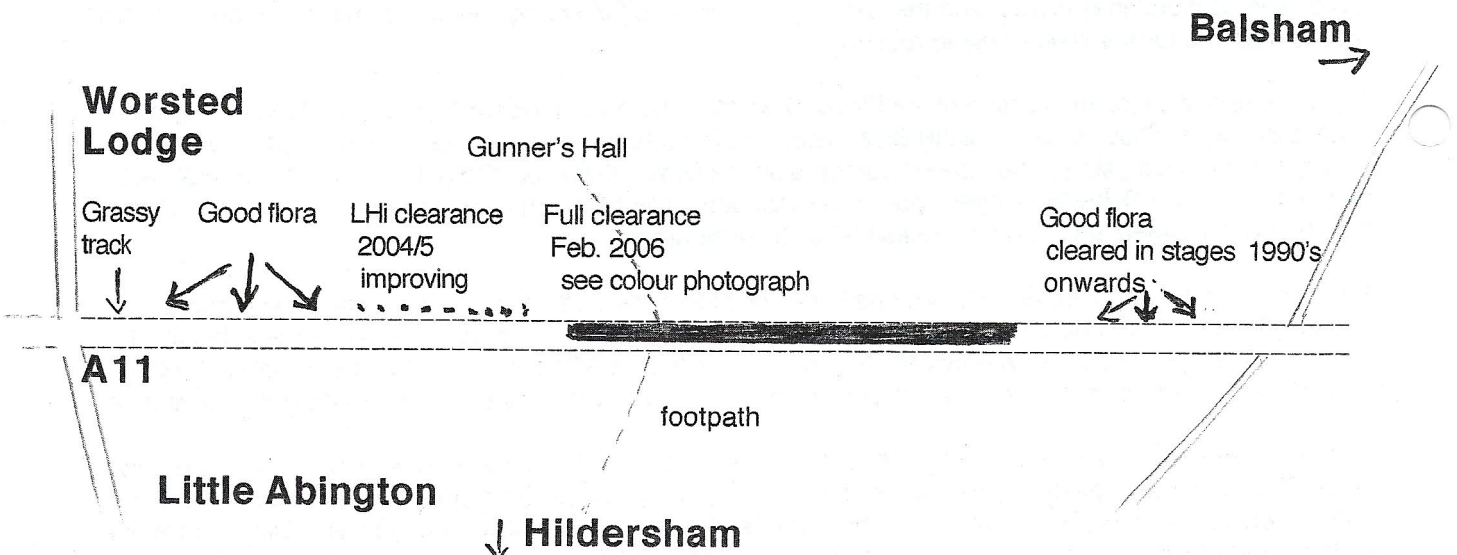
Naomi Brookes said she was aware that the initial appearance of the cleared section of the Roman Road was rather shocking, and perhaps rather too much had been done, but this machine had not been used before. The plan had been agreed with English Nature. She welcomed comments from the audience.

Comments

Questions were asked along the following lines. Who was responsible for the final plan? Who signed the contract? Why was there no supervision of the contractors while the work was being done? Why was so much done all at once? Roger Lemon, who carried out systematic butterfly surveys of the Road from Wandlebury to Horseheath in 2002 and 2003, pointed out that the cleared area represented the part of the Roman Road which was the best for butterflies, with 19 species of butterfly, often in good numbers. Val Perrin, Butterfly Recorder for Cambridge Vice-County 29, asked if clearance on the Fleam Dyke had taken account of the needs of the Green Hairstreak for trees and bushes to perch on. Other comments covered the substantial loss of invertebrates from such total clearance, and the concern of many people at the loss of a beautiful country walk which had hitherto been protected from wind by high hedges. Robin Vestey was surprised that so much scrub had been cleared all at once with no obvious benefit to the SSSI, creating a surface which had caused damage to the hooves of horses and the paws of dogs.

Dr Peter Grubb then spoke. He is expert in chalk grassland flora and restoration conservation techniques, and for this reason is an Honorary Member of the Friends. He pointed out that research on the Devil's Dyke in the 1970's showed that clearance of thick scrub will only result in rough grassland. He was concerned that so much clearance had been done on one day, that there had not been a careful survey of invertebrates before such an extensive clearance had taken place, and that there appeared to be no detailed plan for reseedling. He emphasised the fact that the numerous species of invertebrates have widely different requirements, which could be only supplied by creating a variety of structures - long grass, short grass, tall scrub, short scrub - within a given area all at the same time. He did not think that sheep grazing was necessarily the answer to the problems of management, as they can damage a site by over-grazing and dunging.

Martin Baker, Senior Conservation Officer for the Wildlife Trust, concluded that the Management Plan was not detailed enough and that there would need to be greater consultation with local naturalists and invertebrate specialists. He said he would be able to obtain funds for reseedling. Sam Agnew then proposed that there should be a meeting to discuss an improved plan, and perhaps a site meeting with Jo Darlington, Peter Grubb, Roger Lemon, Val Perrin and others. The meeting agreed that there should be no more clearance on either site in the immediate future.



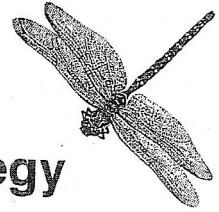
3. Treasurer's Report

Mike Albutt reported with characteristic brevity on the state of the accounts. Subscriptions paid by the Friends covered the office costs and the production of newsletters, leaving a small surplus each year. The Lottery Heritage grant was being spent for the purposes specified in the terms of the grant, and all work would be completed by the end of the year. The meeting voted to accept the accounts, and passed a vote of thanks to Paul Williams, who had very kindly agreed to be our auditor when Roger Clarke was taken ill in March. It was agreed that the subscription should remain at £5.

4. Election of Officers

The meeting voted that Sam Agnew should continue to act as Chairman and that the rest of the committee should continue as before with one addition, David Barden. David has a PhD in Chemistry from Cambridge University, and is working as a Journal Editor of the Royal Society of Chemistry. He is interested in all aspects of natural history, particularly Botany. (See *Nature in Cambridgeshire 2006* for a most interesting article on the Breckland flora he has found in the Science Park.) He has walked and cycled along our sites and elsewhere in the area, and joined the Friends a year ago. He is a regular helper on work parties organised by the Green Belt Project, and also by the Friends.

There was then an adjournment for a quick coffee or tea, followed by two talks.



The South Cambridgeshire Biodiversity Strategy

by Rob Mungovan,
Ecology Officer for South Cambridgeshire District Council

Biodiversity is a term used to describe the richness of the living environment around us. Species once considered to be common are facing increased stress upon their populations and the rate of species loss has never been higher. International initiatives exist to reduce the rate of species loss and at the national level lists of species and habitats have been produced that require particular measures to halt their decline.



South Cambridgeshire District Council is able to make a significant contribution towards the protection, conservation, enhancement and restoration of local biodiversity.

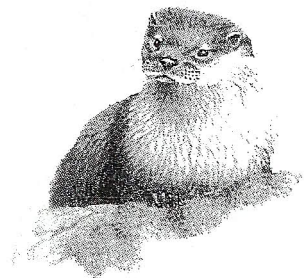
The South Cambridgeshire District Council Biodiversity Strategy therefore aims to outline how the Council will promote biodiversity conservation and enhancement throughout its daily functions, both regulatory and advisory, in order to produce an ecologically diverse and sustainable local environment for the district.

The Strategy strives to identify the biodiversity resource considered as typical of the district, and within the South Cambridgeshire Biodiversity Action Plan it proposes specific actions to secure their protection and enhancement. The value of partnership working with the development industry and the wider community alike is recognised in order to achieve effective biodiversity conservation.

The Strategy also aims to highlight how biodiversity issues are cross-cutting between the departments and functions of the Council, and proposes work areas where the adjustment of usual operations may lead to biodiversity gain.

At present the Strategy is still in a draft format having recently been circulated to parish councils across the district and a variety of bodies such as community groups and house building companies. The final version will be presented to full Council in the summer where it is hoped that the Strategy will be adopted as Council policy. At a later date (after the approval of the Local Development Framework – the replacement of the Local Plan) it is envisaged that the Strategy will be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). The strength of this is that as Council policy, and ultimately SPD, the Strategy will have to be considered during the determination of the planning applications. Where applicants refuse to consider the biodiversity impact of their proposals there will be a stronger reason for requiring higher standards or for the out-right refusal of applications.

Lastly, the support of local residents and parish councils will be important. As one officer in an authority that receives over 2,000 planning applications annually, I need to make sure that my time and effort is expended on the ones with the biggest impact or greatest potential for habitat enhancement or restoration. For that reason the Strategy should also be considered as something of a "how to do" manual. The draft version of the Strategy is available to view on the web at www.scambs.gov.uk/biodiversity_strategy



A Report by Sharon Hearle, Regional Officer for Butterfly Conservation in the East of England

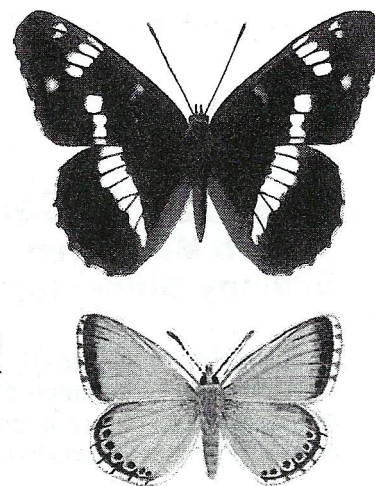
As the first half of the meeting had over-run, Sharon only spoke for a short time. She explained that her 'patch' included Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Norfolk and Suffolk, so there was a lot to do! She aims to work through local butterfly groups which can monitor the rarer butterflies, such as the Silver Studded Blue, and carry out conservation management of sites. She runs training days, such as the one on Moth Trapping with Paul Waring, and she recently organised a survey of the ants which are part of the life cycle of blues and hairstreaks.

The Herts and Middlesex Branch of Butterfly Conservation have produced a leaflet on Woodland Butterflies, with reference particularly to the White Admiral. There is a need for other studies in this area. We still do not know much about the needs of the small colony of Green Hairstreaks on the Fleam Dyke. There have been reports in the past of White Admirals near Hildersham and Linton.

There has been a 50% loss of Dingy Skippers on the Devil's Dyke; but clearance work for the Chalkhill Blue has had astonishing results over the last 15 years, with a count of 990 on the Devil's Dyke Transect walk. Since a Transect Walk includes only the butterflies seen within a 5 metre 'box' surrounding the recorder, there will have been many more Chalkhill blues not included in the count that day. Last year had been a very good year for Chalkhill Blues. Two more sites have been found near Peterborough, and the appearance of the species on the Fleam Dyke was very exciting and something the Green Belt Project had worked for since 1990.

Increasingly Butterfly Conservation are working to protect moths. Sharon asked us to look out in late June for the Four Spotted Moth which has been seen near Great Wilbraham and Ickleton on Field Bindweed. The search is on for the Chalk Carpet, which has not been seen on the Fleam Dyke since the 70's. It tends to rest with wings spread on bare chalk; and chalk pits, such as the ones at Barrington and Orwell, will be good places to look. The Small Eggar is now Nationally Scarce. The caterpillars live on taller hawthorns in a web the shape of a large sock, which are not hard to spot once you know what to look for. The colonies on the Cambridge to St Ives disused railway are threatened by work for the Guided Bus, so sightings of other colonies would be very welcome.

To conclude, Sharon emphasised the need for a Transect Walk to be organised for the Fleam Dyke, with particular reference to the numbers and needs of the Green Hairstreak.



A Fleam Dyke Transect Walk

Roger Lemon rose to the challenge, and kindly offered to organise this survey. Trish Agnew, Jo Darlington, Vince Lea, and Julia Napier offered to join him in the scheme which requires the recorder to follow a fixed route, ideally one a week, but at least once a fortnight. The route is divided into homogeneous sections. The records are sent to Val Perrin in September. He sends them on to the Butterfly Monitoring Centre. Over the last three decades these records have been extremely useful in monitoring the decline of our rarer butterflies, the movement northwards and eastwards of species such as the Speckled Wood, the Comma and the Brown Argus, and sometimes the revival of species which have declined.



Female flowers of Purging Buckthorn, a food plant of the Brimstone butterfly, drawing by Stella Ross Craig

Horseshoe Vetch, the food plant of the Chalkhill Blue

Drawing for woodcut by W.H.Fitch (see back page)



Some Reactions to the Clearances

Patrick Sadler, who like his father Alec Sadler, is a great lover of nature, wrote:



Dear Editor,

Fleam Dyke is a fairly secret sanctuary, nestling amongst a rich seam of thick undergrowth. It disguises itself naturally as nothing more than a thick hedge. Even close up as one rounds the corner at Shardelowe's Well, it is difficult to see where one is heading. An air of mystery surrounds the walker as they unsuspectingly fall upon the concealed entrance. Like a gem hidden away only to be discovered by those willing to find it - bending down and pushing through the Old Man's Beard and Ivy creepers to the steps that will take you onto Fleam Dyke.

But not any more. The secret door to the Dyke that beckoned, and sheltered the walkers from the biting wind and cast dappled shade in the summer sun, has been ripped out revealing the mysterious world behind it. Now it stands stark and cold, exposed to all.

Why? I already know the answers that will follow about chalk grassland, rare, valuable, flowers, fauna, letting in more light etc. However, I am concerned over possible unforeseen consequences following what appears to be quite ruthless activity. I am sure it was well intentioned.

Similar activity took place during the 1960s and 70s. Miles of essential hedgerow was grubbed up for all sorts of bizarre reasons. Sadly it was the trend of the day. The Dyke has long lost its original looks and purpose and now, in my opinion, serves a much more valuable one as a dense fortress of cover for wildlife and with the right balance of plants also.

Countryside by its very nature is unkempt and wild. Does it really have to be constantly interfered with? However, one gets the feeling that in recent years Fleam Dyke has been discovered by someone or some group. Like a new attraction! Fleam Dyke is many things to many people. For some it is science. For some it is history. For others it may offer spirituality and magic. Now, a large physical change has been executed in the name of only one particular element, chalk grassland flora. As a result, it would now make a good venue for Living History re-enactors to recreate early English battles upon. 'Imagine the barbarous hoards swarming over the ditch - fantastic. This could really bring the ditch alive again.' I suppose we all have the Dykes best interests at heart.

A lot of people would not have visited Fleam Dyke because of its location. You cannot drive there. This in itself is rare. Being moderately inaccessible and quite difficult to walk along kept its usage to serious walkers, family picnickers and the occasional determined mountain biker. The dishevelled appearance of the Dyke was also, I believe, its best protection. Sadly, I think the current mission to enhance and preserve the ditch has already inadvertently started to increase its use and erosion. Already I witness leisurely family bikers as well as mountain bikers now using the ditch. More disturbingly, motor-X bikes now easily access the Dyke, tearing up and down its unprotected sides - well done!

These new problems will be combated with the usual array of smart wooden posts and signs to keep bikers away and show everybody else where they can and cannot go.

Fleam Dyke is essentially a wild place that for many years lay untouched; but already it is being tamed under the urban umbrella of 'How the countryside should look'. How long will it be before a nice neat boardwalk will be installed in order to show us the way, or because public liability will deem the footpath unsafe for public use? A metalled road from Stonebridge lane to a car park at the bottom of the ditch could already be in the pipeline!

I am not against management of the countryside. I am though, unhappy about the countryside being toyed with under the name of conservation for the sake of it. One gets the feeling that it has become a prisoner for new recruits to the Conservation crusaders to test their weapons on. A balance with some areas of open space seems a good idea, but have any limits been set?

The main reason that such areas became very overgrown was the introduction of myxomatosis. Prior to this, a prolific rabbit population kept a natural lid on the vegetation. I think this illustrates how man's over-zealous activity can have damaging repercussions on the environment.

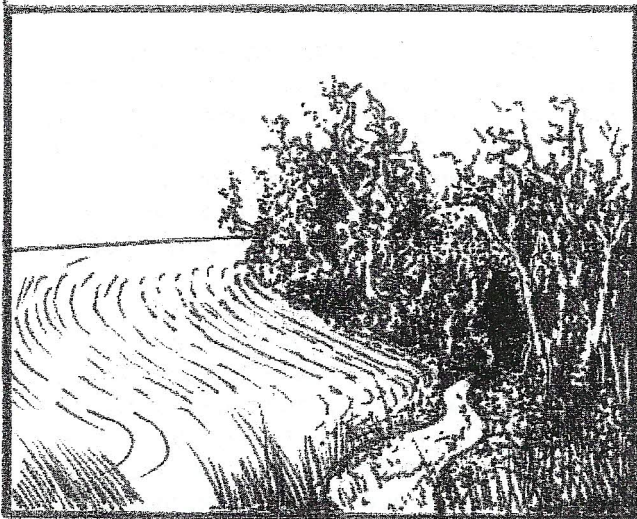
Fleam Dyke is one remaining place in my opinion that needs very little attention. Its best defence and preservation lay in its anonymity and fact that it was left alone. Management needs to be tender and subtle but most of all, slow - where all around have time to accept the changes - including me. They say first impressions count for a lot. What I saw was pillage. Management and creativity of the countryside is a skill, and should be sympathetic. In a landscape that is primarily devoid of cover, trees and hedges are a major asset and should not be ripped out lightly.

Fleam Dyke for me was a place to go because it offered imagination, mystery and adventure. Ironically, although man-made, it had become a very natural place to be. Every walk was different and I think this was primarily down to the fact that it was still semi-wild and was not covered with signs, handrails, steps and boardwalks. Too much urban dumbing down of rural areas has already destroyed much of the very essence it claims to preserve. It does not matter if a few brambles trail across the path, cut them back on your walk through.

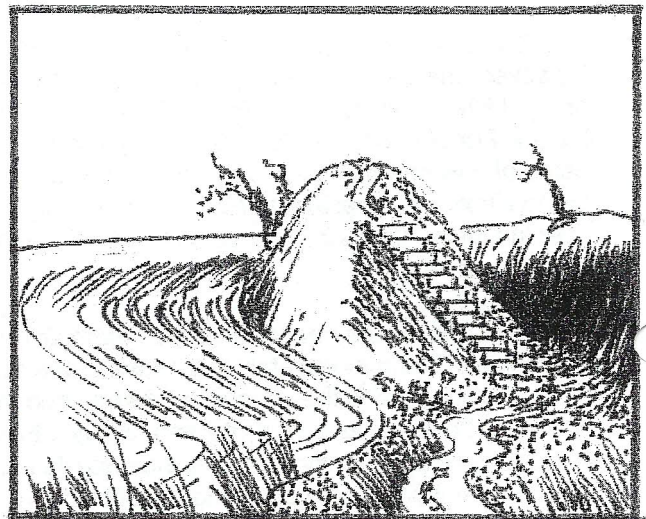
My personal interest lies in the fact that I was born within a few miles of Fleam Dyke and have been visiting it every few months for over thirty five years. Personally, it is like some ancient grandmother. It holds a lot of memories and dreams and deserves respect and sensitivity. I can only hope that it is left alone to rejuvenate and reclaim some of its mystery and dignity.

Yours sincerely

Patrick Sadler

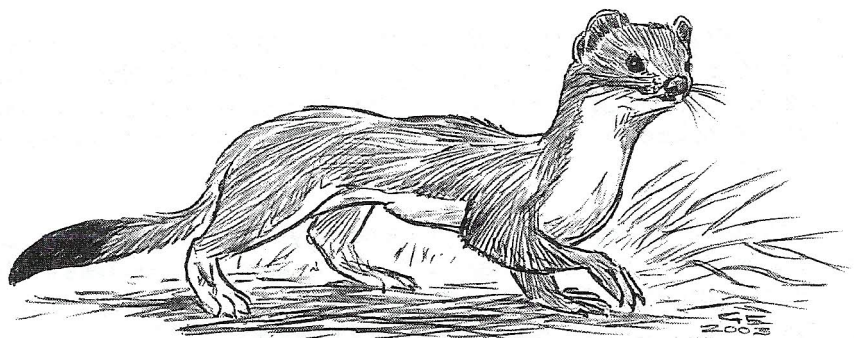


Before



After

If you were a bird or a beast which place would you head for?



Stoat drawn by Graham Easy

Carol Sinclair, wrote,

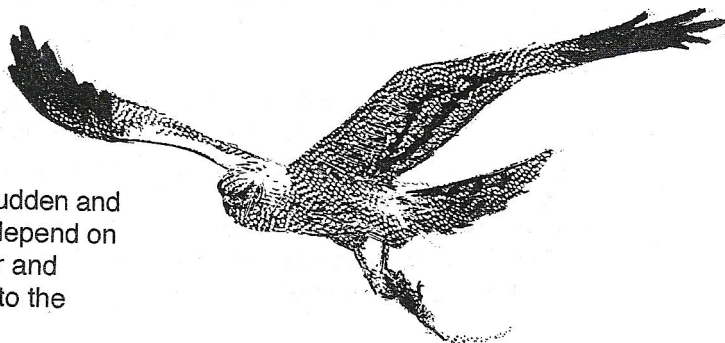
Hildersham
19th May 2006

Dear Julia Napier,

My daughter, Jo Sinclair, and I were very distressed to see the devastating clearance of the Roman Road shrubs near Hildersham. Do you know anything about this that could inform us as to why the clearance has taken place on both sides of the Roman Road.

Please find attached a list of birds that my daughter has noted over the years in or over these hedgerows.
Yours sincerely,

Carol Sinclair



Montague's Harrier

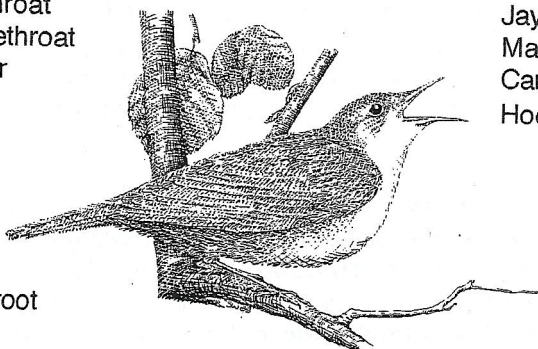
Bird Records from Jo Sinclair

Breeding and migrant birds will all be affected by the sudden and extensive loss of habitat. These include species that depend on the hedgerow environment directly for feeding, shelter and nesting, and those such as the birds-of-prey attracted to the peripheral area by this wealth of prey species.

19th May 2006

Long-tailed tit
Great tit
Blue tit
Coal tit
Bullfinch
Corn bunting
Yellowhammer
Gold finch
Linnet
Skylark
Lesser Whitethroat
Common Whitethroat
Garden Warbler
Black cap

Chiff Chaff
Blackbird
Song Thrush
Redwing
Fieldfare
Cuckoo
Turtle Dove
Sparrowhawk
Hobby
Montague's Harrier
Jay
Magpie
Carrion Crow
Hooded Crow



Whitethroat
by Sarah Wroot

Friends' Committee Meeting, 7th June

The committee met to discuss the way forward after the extensive clearance work done in the winter. Professor Peter Grubb was invited to attend the meeting in order to advise us. Roger Lemon was unable to come but Val Perrin the Butterfly Recorder for VC 29 had hoped to be there. Unfortunately, an email error meant that he came to the wrong place and had a wasted evening. My apologies. Julia

Several members of the committee expressed their concern that so much had been done at once, regardless of the loss of habitat for birds, small mammals and invertebrates, particularly butterflies. It was agreed that Professor Peter Grubb should draft a letter for our Chairman, Sam Agnew, to send to the senior officer responsible for Sites of Special Scientific Interest in Cambridgeshire. **It was agreed that no further clearance should take place on the Fleam Dyke or the Roman Road until a much more detailed plan had been prepared, in consultation with local experts.**

**Letter sent to Jim Gammie, Deputy Team Manager
at the English Nature Office in Peterborough**

21st June 2006

Dear Mr Gammie,

I write as Chairman of the Friends of the Roman Road and Fleam Dyke about matters of concern over the recent large-scale clearance of scrub from part of the Roman Road between Worsted Lodge and the Balsham-Hildersham Road. The stretch concerned is about 1km long (approximately from TL553503 to 545507) and covers both sides of the track, right up to the hedge. The scrub has been replaced with a uniform layer of comminuted woody material about 3cm thick on the soil surface. Concerns were raised at the recent Annual Meeting of the Friends, and by Friends writing to our Secretary, Julia Napier, and at the very recent meeting of the Friends' Committee.

Firstly, we are concerned that such a very large clearance, which was bound to cause disappointment and anger among those who have supported conservation on the Roman Road for years, should have been carried out without full consultation at the Steering Group for the Roman Road and Fleam Dyke. We accept that English Nature has a statutory responsibility for the condition of SSSI's and staff might feel bound from time to time to overrule other parties sincerely interested in conservation. However, do you not think it would have been appropriate on this occasion for the Conservation Officer to have brought his detailed plan to the Steering Group before acting?

Secondly, we wish to know why the plan for the area in question, agreed at a site meeting of the Friends with the former Conservation Officer, Donna Radley, was thrown out. Donna Radley will no doubt confirm that it was agreed to leave thicker hedges than have been left, a tall hedge on the north side for protection from the wind and a short hedge on the south side so as to admit plenty of light to the remnant chalk grassland plants along the track. The Friends gained the impression that clearance of the scrub would be staged, as has been the case with most of the clearance on the Roman Road paid for by the Lottery Heritage Initiative. Do you feel able to assure us that in future your Conservation Officer for this area will not change arbitrarily plans that have been agreed with the Friends?

Thirdly, grave doubts have been raised about the science behind the operation. We understand that it is imagined that it will be possible to establish 'chalk grassland' on the area cleared of scrub and that a Wildlife Enhancement Scheme has been agreed with local farmers, who will be obliged to maintain the grassland by flailing it. (We assume that what is meant by 'chalk grassland' is *Bromus erectus* grassland, type CG3 in the National Vegetation Classification.) It is noted in the Management Plan for the Roman Road that the fertility of the soil is raised appreciably under scrub and that this raises problems for the re-establishment of chalk grassland, a community characteristically developed on infertile soils. If nothing is done to reduce the fertility of the soil, then sooner or later the ex-scrub land will be covered by 'grassland on chalk' (*Arrhenatherum elatius* grassland MG1) rather than 'chalk grassland'.

For the last four and half years, the Steering Group managing the restoration of the Devil's Dyke has put into practice a system of 'hydro-seeding' *Bromus erectus* and *Festuca ovina* on areas cleared of scrub because it is known that in about a decade the *Bromus* will take the soil fertility down to about that found under old grassland. We have heard nothing about a programme to sow *Bromus erectus*, or any other proposed means of reducing soil fertility, on the stretch of the Roman Road recently cleared. Why was it that, when the management of the Roman Road was decided by the Conservation Officer, no notice was taken of lessons learnt on the Devil's Dyke over the last 30-odd years?

It is clear that until the woody detritus is removed and the fertility of the soil is reduced, there is no prospect of re-establishing chalk grassland, the vegetation-type for which the Roman Road was designated an SSSI. We are keen to learn what plans English Nature will be taking to the July meeting of the Steering Group for the Roman Road and Fleam Dyke concerning the future of the recently cleared area.

We are sorry to have to raise such serious issues but the problems are not of our making. We do hope that in future it will be possible for English Nature and the Friends of the Roman Road and Fleam Dyke to re-establish a close working relationship.

Yours sincerely,

Sam Agnew

Travellers enjoying R & R

For several months in the spring a family of Travellers settled on the Roman Road south of Worsted Lodge. (The earth bank or chicane at the Wort's Causeway end of the Road had gradually been eroded by other illicit users. It has now been repaired.) It seems that a family member had been taken ill, and was in Addenbrooke's Hospital. Isabel King and David Barden sent me reports which I forwarded to Naomi Brookes and Kate Day of the Cambridgeshire County Council. On 8th May, Isabel King wrote:

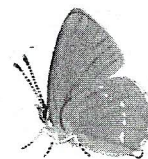
"I was up on the Roman Road on Saturday and the travellers are still very much hunkered down there. They've made a swing out of an old car seat and attached it to one of the trees using a large metal chain. They also have about 10 full refuse sacks stacked next to their caravans, presumably waiting to be disposed of at the local Council tip (as opposed to the local fly-tip? One lives in hope!). There is a fire which they appear to keep burning for a large portion of the day, using wood from the immediate vicinity, I suspect, and there is noticeable and, in places, significant damage to the wild flowers and grasses caused by their vehicles being driven up and down the Road. All in all, I feel that they are a cause for some concern, both in terms of the intimidation factor for walkers passing by their camp and, more importantly, the damage they are doing to the flora and fauna along the Roman Road."

This is, of course, by no means the first time Travellers have encamped on the Roman Road. This illegal activity consumes a great deal of time and effort by many of our civil servants. This particular incursion involved the Police; Kate Day, Cambridge County Council Countryside Services; the Social Worker for the Travellers; the officer in charge of replacing bollards and chicanes for Cambridgeshire County Council, Southern Highways Division; Naomi Brookes for the Green Belt Project, and Addenbrooke's Hospital, not to mention the increasingly angry Land Manager for the local Land Owner, who has to deal with damage to hedges and often clears up some of the mess. If you have not yet lost the will to live, black bags of rotting rubbish and dumped cars should be reported to South Cambs. Commercial Services, 01223 443484

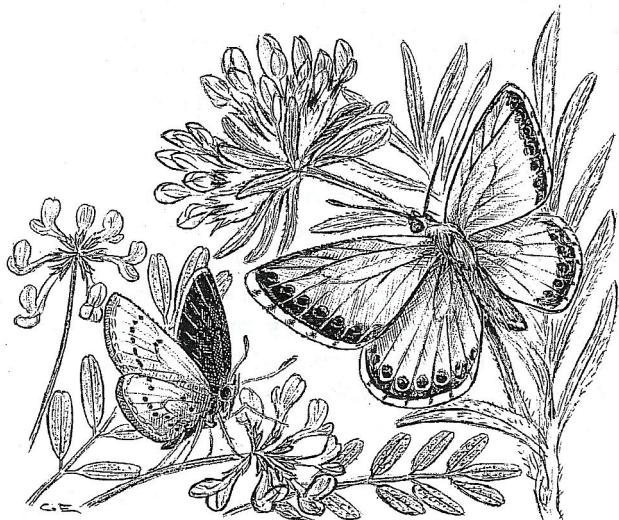
The Fleam Dyke Transect Recording Scheme begins

On 10th May, Trish Agnew, Vince Lea, Roger Lemon and Val Perrin met to mark out the route and look for Green hairstreaks. Julia joined them at the Disused Railway. The group saw 10 Green Hairstreaks: 7 between the Fulbourn end and the Disused Railway and 3 on the section next to Mutlow Hill. It is still not known what food plant the females are using to lay their eggs on in the sections between Fulbourn and the disused railway, where rock roses have survived. There is an established connection between the larvae of the Hairstreaks, the Blues and certain species of ant. Which ant hills are offering bed and breakfast on the Fleam Dyke?

Last year, in May, a Green Hairstreak was seen on the Roman Road near Wandlebury. This year one was seen near the Wort's Causeway end of the Road. More information next spring, please. Julia



Green Hairstreak

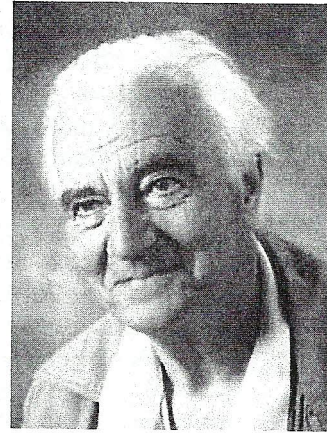


And, of course, we are very much hoping that the Chalkhill Blues which arrived on the Fleam Dyke in August 2005 will have bred.

Drawing of Chalkhill Blues by Graham Easy. He has shown them on their only food plant, the Horseshoe Vetch. They are slightly larger than the Common Blue. The male has silver blue wings, but the female, like all the 'blues' has brown upper wings, for camouflage while she is egg laying.

Max Walters (1920–2005)

The following tribute is based on the obituary by Professor Peter Grubb, student, colleague and friend of Max, in this year's issue of *Nature in Cambridgeshire*.



Max Walters was one of the pioneers who established in the Cambridge area in the 1950s the forerunner of the present Wildlife Trust (CAMBIENT, the Cambridgeshire and Isle of Ely Naturalists' Trust). He made a more sustained and inspiring contribution to CAMBIENT, to the Cambridge Natural History Society, and to the journal *Nature in Cambridgeshire* than any other person. He was wonderfully gifted at uniting the efforts of professionals and amateurs, spotting individuals who had a lot to give and inspiring people to achieve far more than they could have imagined possible.

From childhood, he was fascinated by plants, especially their variation and their relationship to their habitats. He came to St John's College, Cambridge, from Penistone Grammar School near Barnsley. He gained a First in Part I of the Natural Sciences Tripos in 1940, after which, as a pacifist, he worked in hospitals until 1945. He returned to take a First in Part II Botany. He was Curator of the University Herbarium 1949-73, and Director of the University Botanic Garden 1973-83. [Details of the many research projects in which he was involved, his many books and other significant publications, can be read in *Nature in Cambridgeshire, 2006* JN] When Max took on the Directorship of the Garden (1973-83), its future seemed rather uncertain, and it is a great tribute to his personality and style that the Garden was a happy place to work despite the threats in the background. Academic use of the Garden had declined and some people in the University were saying that the Garden cost more than could be justified. Max's approach was to take care of the scientific side and external relations, and leave the care of the plants to the staff. During his time the documentation and labelling of the collections were brought to a very high standard. Max did everything he could to get people of all kinds to come into the Garden and to emphasise its role in the education of individuals of all ages. He was instrumental in establishing the nine National Collections of specific genera, including *Alchemilla*, *Geranium* and *Lonicera*, held at the Cambridge Botanic Garden. He was a guiding force in three of the most important projects in plant classification and plant distribution in the second half of the 20th century (*Atlas of the British Flora* 1962, *Flora Europaea* 1964-80 and the *European Garden Flora* 1986-2000). The *Atlas* was the brain child of Max and of his great friend Frank Perring; it was enormously influential, its scheme of mapping species in 10-km squares being adopted for many kinds of organism in various parts of the world.

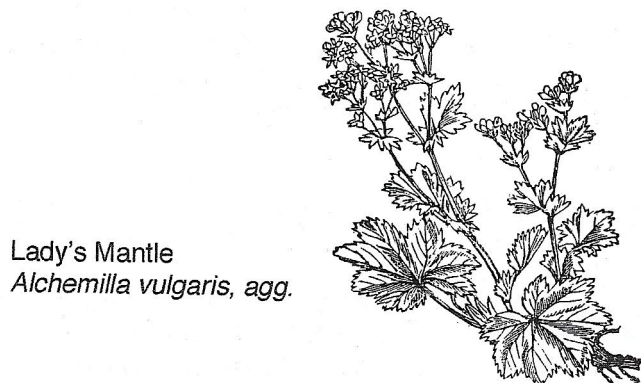
Max gave a huge amount of time and energy to the Cambridgeshire and Isle of Ely Naturalists' Trust, which he helped to found. With Tony Vine, he was one of two Joint Secretaries from its inauguration in 1956 until 1965, the Vice-President 1965-75 and President 1975-86. When he became Director of the University Botanic Garden, he persuaded the Managers of the Garden's Cory Fund to pay for the conversion of the stable block at the eastern end of 1 Brookside into quarters for CAMBIENT. Joyce Morley, the first paid Secretary, and the many volunteers worked there from 1975 until 1986, when CAMBIENT became The Wildlife Trust and new accommodation was found at Fulbourn Manor, from where the Trust has finally been able to move to Cambourne.

It was Max Walters who managed to raise £5,000 for the purchase of Haley Wood, CAMBIENT's first acquisition, and now one of the Wildlife Trust's best known reserves. Wicken Fen had a special place in his heart. His fascination with the place began on his first visit in 1939 under the eccentric and hugely inspiring Humphrey Gilbert Carter, and continued with his PhD work in 'Variation in *Eleocharis palustris* agg.' He was on the National Trust's Local Committee from 1949 to 1995 and he continued to advise and influence until 2004.

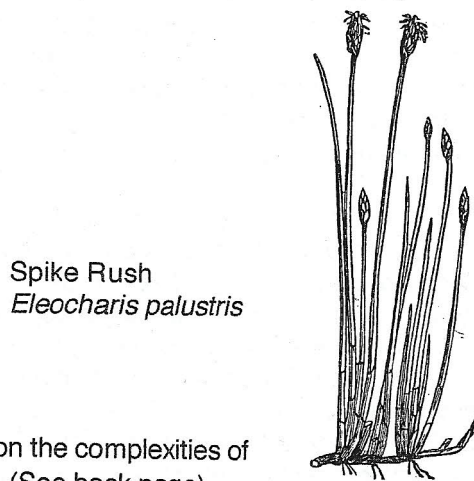
The USA Botany Group also received loyal support from Max for many years – all through the 1990s until 2002; in most years he either gave the opening lecture or took the opening excursion, often a walk along The Backs. He also liked to take the students to Magog Down and from the start had been a keen supporter of the Magog Trust – dedicated to conserving the chalk landscape south of Cambridge. When the Society of Friends of the Roman Road and Fleam Dyke was set up in 2001, he at once offered to pay a subscription, but the committee felt he should be an Honorary Member as he had already given so much support and advice to the Green Belt Project in respect of chalk grassland flora and the conservation of the Wild Junipers.

His first article for *Nature in Cambridgeshire* was about the Wild Juniper on the Fleam Dyke (No. 4: 22–23), and he returned to this theme in a two-part article 40 years later (No. 43: 2–6; No. 44) in which, among other things, he summarised the continuous efforts of individuals like David Clark, Honorary Warden of Fleam Dyke, and groups such as the Conservation Corps and the Green Belt Project to keep the bushes clear of invasive scrub. His and their efforts were rewarded in the finding of six seedlings by Sharon Hearle in July 2001, and more the following year by Iain Webb, the Green Belt Project Officer.

Max and Lorna Walters welcomed countless guests in their successive homes in the Botanic Gardens and later in Grantchester. As James Cullen put it in *The Times*, "The discussion might cover botanical subjects, but was just as likely to involve theology, literature, linguistics, film and poetry - especially T.S.Eliot's *Four Quartets*, which were very important to him." Many will remember Max for his great contributions to botany and to conservation alongside a sense that he was simply a marvellous person to be with.



Lady's Mantle
Alchemilla vulgaris, agg.



Spike Rush
Eleocharis palustris

Drawn by W. H. Fitch, a century before Max Walters had worked on the complexities of *Alchemilla* or the variations in what was then called Spike Sedge. (See back page)

Rambling on the Roman Road

by Janet Moreton

It was in the Autumn of 1961 that I first walked the Roman Road.

A new student in Cambridge, it was a great relief to leave the City for a half-day, and walk from the 'bus at Red Cross, up Worts' Causeway onto the old track. Here I continued between the bronze beeches, with a dry chalky path beneath my feet, and the last vestiges of summer flowers - Knapweed, residual Scabious, and Old Man's Beard in the hedges. At a high point along the way, I looked down uneasily over the flat fens, and at the restless wide skies - then such an unfamiliar landscape - now, after more than 40 years, happily my adopted place.

Later, I learned more about this historic route. Wort's/Worts' Causeway, which had been improved by the benefaction of one William Worts in the eighteenth century, led to the Roman Road, properly Wool Street, but also known as the *Via Devana* (seemingly a later invention). I learnt that the grassy agger fringed with wild flowers was once 36 feet wide, and 1 - 2 feet high, running in a partly enclosed green lane towards Horseheath. It passes north of Borley Wood, and south of Streetly Hall, becoming a track as it approaches Hare Wood. After this, it became obliterated in arable land, crossing a lane south of Withersfield. Over the county boundary in Suffolk, the agger continues in a tree belt (not presently a right of way) to the outskirts of Haverhill.

It was the 1970s before I had penetrated this entire length of the road. By that time, I was in employment at Abington, and a regular walker, a member of both the Cambridge Group of the Ramblers' Association, and of the long-established local group, The Cambridge Rambling Club. I learnt that public rights of way were recorded on a map at Shire Hall; that the whole length of the Roman Road at that time was recorded as a 'RUPP' (road used as public path); and that parts of it were numbered according to the civil parishes in which it lay. The boundaries of these parishes often lie along the road itself, being of ancient derivation, so one length of the road may have two numbers, and technically different sides fall within the responsibilities of different parishes. I remember reporting a wrecked car on one section, and phoning a parish clerk. "Which

side of the road is the car?" he asked.

Starting from Wort's Causeway, sections are numbered as follows:

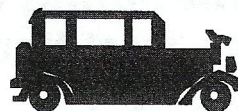
Cambridge City 111 - Fulbourn 12
 Stapleford 5 - Fulbourn 12
 Babraham 2 - Fulbourn 12
 Little Abington 1 - Balsham 4
 Hildersham 1 - Balsham 4

Linton 23 - Balsham 4
 Linton 23 - West Wickham 1
 Horseheath 21
 Horseheath 1

In the early days, the Road was very well used by all classes of user - indeed, because of the poor maintenance then of many footpaths, and a shortage of information on rambling routes, the Roman Road, as an obvious walking route, was perhaps even more popular than today. At the same time, motor cycles and cars used the route, especially in dry seasons. On more than one occasion, I observed a lazy car driver trundling along at 5 mph, with a dog lead out the window, and a dog exercising alongside. Both the alarm caused by such vehicles coming up behind, and the ruts made in the surface indicated that something needed to be done.

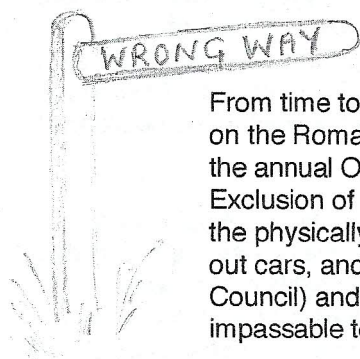
The 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act was passed. Under this Act, the sections of the route between Wort's Causeway and Mark's Grave were reclassified as byway by Cambridgeshire County Council on various dates between December 1986 and April 1987. The section from Mark's Grave to Horseheath was classified as a bridleway in March 1989 (following an objection which was referred to the Secretary of State), and the final section from Horseheath to the county boundary became a footpath in December 1986. Thus, recreational vehicles were prohibited from using that part of the way east of Mark's Grave. Then a Prohibition of Driving Order was made in January 1992, which banned motor vehicles from using the Roman Road from the Hildersham-Babraham Road, to a point 150 metres south of its junction with Wort's Causeway. Provision of bollards and barriers followed fairly shortly in order to enforce this Order.

As the years went by, guide books on walking in the locality began to appear, many of which included a route along the Roman Road. In 1970, Cambridge and the Isle of Ely County Council published a set of leaflets, with rather faint maps, "*Walks and Rides around Cambridge*". An early parish effort was "*The Footpaths of Linton District*" (1974) published by the Linton District Amenity Society. Cambridge City Council, jointly with the Cambridge Group of the Ramblers' Association, produced "*Country Walks around Cambridge*" in 1980.



Then in the late '80s and early '90s came a wealth of useful publications in response to the surge of interest in country walking and natural history. Cambridgeshire County Council produced the (free) booklets "*Enjoying the Cambridgeshire Countryside*" (1988, 1989, 1992), and "*Footloose and Carfree*", Vol. 1 (1994), Vol.2 (1996). Specific to the Roman Road were two of the series of leaflets (30p) on individual circular walks: "Roman Road (Wandlebury)", and "Roman Road (Linton)" both printed 1989.

The Ramblers' Association Cambridge Group produced books describing collections of walks. That for South Cambridgeshire (first published in 1987, reprinted, and with new editions several times to the present) of course includes the Roman Road.



From time to time there have been problems. In 1984, Council workmen erected a signpost on the Roman Road indicating the turn-off for Fulbourn Footpath 11 incorrectly, just before the annual Oxfam walk. Hundreds of walkers went the wrong way across a cultivated field! Exclusion of vehicles from the western section largely eliminated wrecked vehicles here, but the physically unrestricted byway section east of the Hildersham Road still suffers from burnt-out cars, and fly tipping (both of which should be reported to South Cambridgeshire District Council) and in wet winters waterlogged ruts on the Balsham section make the route impassable to walkers.

A long-standing problem is the arable section of the right of way between Hare Wood, and the Withersfield Road (Horseheath Footpath 1). The line of the agger has been long been obliterated by ploughing, but the law requires reinstatement of the right of way after cultivation. For many years, this was not forthcoming, and

in the 1960s-1980s the route was difficult to trace. In August 1985, a private gentleman, resident in Suffolk, took Cambridgeshire County Council to the office of the Local Government Ombudsman over failure of the County Council, as Highway Authority, to provide a bridge over a stream, and to oblige the landowner to reinstate the right of way. And the latest clearance of the section of the Roman Road between Worsted Lodge and the Hildersham turn has produced anguished comments not only at the AGM of the "Friends", but also amongst the rambling fraternity who, whilst seeing the need for some clearance, are disturbed by the adoption of so extensive a "scorched earth" policy.

A vast majority of ramblers are not dedicated athletes intent on using the countryside as an extended exercise track. As far back as 1969, The Cambridge Rambling Club planted trees alongside the Roman Road to commemorate a well-loved member. Most walkers are amateur naturalists, members of their local Wildlife Trust, and organisations like the RSPB, National Trust, Cambridge Preservation Society, Woodland Trust etc. They appreciate the work of the "Friends" and other conservation groups, and offer you their support. Over the years, voluntary work has been shown to be the way to make *rapid* improvement in countryside issues. Amongst older walkers and conservationists, the attraction of improvement schemes which come to fruition in a year or two, over those promised for a few decades in the future is obvious. I would suggest that pressure from ramblers in the past has led to measures that now protect the Roman Road and other ancient monuments and SSSI's like Fleam Dyke. For the latter, the Ramblers' Association led the campaign in 1990 for a bridge over the A11, but that's another story.



The Wood engravings used in this newsletter were drawn by W.S.Fitch 'and others' for the *Handbook of the British Flora* by G.Bentham, 1858, revised in 1887 by Sir J.S. Hooker. When I borrowed this book from Peter Grubb, I was only looking for good drawings, but I found that I was looking at illustrations familiar to the second great Hooker to direct Kew Gardens in order to illustrate a newsletter which remembers Max Walters, for many years Director of the Cambridge University Gardens.

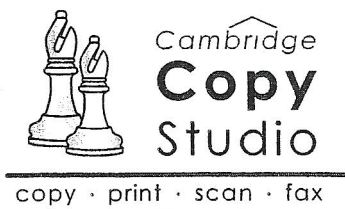
Julia Napier, June 30th

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Our thanks as usual to Peter and Mark Bishop of Copy Studio. If any Friends would like to advertise goods or services in the Newsletter, please contact David Barden at dbarden77@yahoo.co.uk We have been wondering whether we could pay for more colour printing in this way.



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