



Friends of  
Holt Island  
Nature Reserve

AUTUMN 2013  
ISSUE 25

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### FUND RAISER REMINDER

Sunday 27 October  
3 pm on the Island

Come along for a walk and a talk followed by a Fish'n'Chip supper and Quiz in Rumbles Restaurant.

£10 a head

RSVP [penthouse18@ntlworld.com](mailto:penthouse18@ntlworld.com)



Like us on Facebook

[www.facebook.com/HoltIslandNatureReserve](http://www.facebook.com/HoltIslandNatureReserve)

The Friends Group is a voluntary organization dedicated to the promotion and protection of Holt Island, Willhorn Meadow and The Thicket in St Ives for the enjoyment of all.

# The Islander

NEWSLETTER OF THE FRIENDS OF HOLT ISLAND NATURE RESERVE [www.localgiving.com/holtislandnaturereserve](http://www.localgiving.com/holtislandnaturereserve)

## Chairman's Comments



PHOTOGRAPHS © NIGEL SPROWELL

**MELLOW MISTS** This morning the sun slanted low through the trees, catching gossamer threads floating in the still air. Yellowing willow leaves dropped silently on to the grass path and a Robin murmured his sub song. Yes, the season has turned again. But what a summer we have had.

The excellent weather has increased our visitor numbers. Our AGM was well attended and we learned much about The Amazing World of Bees from our speaker Paul Howe, including his own unforgettable 'waggle' dance. We finally opened The Holt for business (see inside), we recruited two new committee members, and to cap it all we won another major award! It doesn't get much better than this.

**AWARD** The Anglia In Bloom competition encompasses six counties across the region and this year attracted ten nominees for the Biodiversity category. We may not be a big reserve but our efforts to raise our profile and improve the habitat are obviously being noticed in high places. This, coupled with the progress we are making to realise the educational potential offered by the Island, means that all of you – our members and supporters, boys and girls – deserve a big pat on the back for your enthusiasm, vision and generosity. As I write, a local school is organising for an entire



▲ Our new hut, The Holt, resplendent with bunting, commemorative plaque and official ribbon, awaits the opening ceremony. As you can see, duties were ably performed by our Mayor, Nick Dibben, and the Chairman of Huntingdonshire District Council, Barbara Boddington.

year of 80 pupils to visit the reserve (over three days, thank goodness) to do project work – that's also an award for us!

**NEW FACES** My appeal in the last issue for a Membership Secretary has been successful and I am delighted to welcome to our committee Graham Noyce, a long-time member and now in a more active role. Watch out for Graham's mails, especially those chasing your subs. We also welcome Marney Hall, who brings us much experience from a career in habitat management. We look forward to working with them both.

IAN JACKSON CHAIRMAN

**Ranger's Report**



**WORK PARTIES** Six scheduled sessions and a couple of unscheduled parties between mid-June and mid-September have resulted in a very pleasing 95 volunteer hours this quarter. The working groups focused on installing handrails on the access ramp to *The Holt*, making it ready for the grand opening of the interpretive room for the public to use during Island opening days.

**CUTTING BACK** We also carried out a 'blitz' on the vegetation growth around the boardwalk to allow air flow around the structure. This ventilation stops it being continually damp and reduces the decay of the timber. Viewpoints have also had a trim to retain the views over the meadows and down to the bridge for visitors to enjoy.

**THICKET PIPE** Down at The Thicket, Cambridge Water had to again repair a water leak. To get to the source they took a mini digger over the upper path and steps to dig

out access to the pipe and fix it. Unfortunately damage to the steps and path resulted and we are now waiting for it all to be reinstated.

**RECOGNITION** Anglia In Bloom awarded Holt Island the Biodiversity award for 2013, the second time we have achieved this in four years – see photograph on the back page. A huge thank you to all the volunteers for your hard work and to the Friends committee and members for your continued help and support in continually improving a wonderful local site for everyone to enjoy. I am now hoping that we can work together to bring the Thicket up to the level of the Island.

PAUL CLAYDON RANGER

VOLUNTEER WORK PARTY DATES	
October	13, 18
November	3, 15
December	1, 20

Work parties usually start at 10 am and finish at approximately 3 pm, although Volunteers can attend for shorter periods if more convenient. Stout footwear and waterproofs recommended. All tools and training provided, along with coffee and tea. Bring packed lunch. Please call Paul on 07810 637545 if you plan to attend.

**Celebrating The Holt**



The sun shone, *The Holt* glowed and we felt proud that almost to the day since it was first carried piece by piece over the bridge (see *Islander* 21), the opening day had come. The picture above shows the chatty throng relaxing after the formalities, while right, a rare group shot shows a mixed bunch of Committee, Friends, Volunteers and HDC Countryside Services staff. From left to right: Steve Moller (Committee); Jill Burt (Committee); Judith Arnold (HDC); Jenny Allaway (Committee); Colin Saunderson (Friend and Volunteer); Paul Claydon (HDC); your Chairman; Nigel Sprowell (Committee); and Dougie Kilbee (Friend and Volunteer)



PHOTOGRAPH © SHAWN PITCHER

PHOTOGRAPH © NIGEL SPROWELL

**Birds Update**

**FINAL FLOURISH** What a lovely summer we have had. As I write we are also enjoying a warm and sunny start to autumn. Whilst our resident birds have clearly benefited from the fine weather, the cold wet spring certainly disrupted the normal breeding pattern. Unfortunately the poor spring affected many of our African visitors, and I can now confirm that Sedge and Reed Warblers in particular were well down. Blackcaps fared better with several young broods and, unusually for us, we had a long-staying Willow Warbler. There is still a Chiffchaff to be heard on the Island, and it will be interesting to see if it overwinters. I think we had only one nesting pair this year.



▲ A young Long-tailed Tit at the feeding station

**FEEDING FRENZIES** The success story has once again been our tits. There are numerous juveniles visiting the feeding station and consuming vast amounts of fat balls and sunflower hearts. The Robins seem to have done well too with several youngsters seen around the bird table, along with Chaffinches and Dunnocks. We must also not forget the family of Long-tailed Tits that featured in our

summer newsletter. There have been several sightings of feeding parties – but not lined up waiting to be fed any more! The Great Spotted Woodpeckers that provided much entertainment for visitors earlier in the year have been regular visitors to the peanut feeder. Talking of peckers, new member Robert Palmer reports a Green Woodpecker seen regularly on his lawn recently just next to the Norris Museum, looking for worms, ants and grubs. Do you have any interesting sightings in your garden? Let me know!

**ADOPTABOX** Our spring fund raiser has had another fantastic year and as ever, we and of course the birds, are extremely grateful to our sponsors for their generous support. I will be sending a round-up report to all concerned shortly, once I have completed my end-of-season survey of the boxes. It is essential that I clean and lightly disinfect all the boxes at this time of year – you should do the same to your garden boxes – as many will be used for winter roosting by tits and Wrens and even mice and voles. Later our resident birds will be selecting their 'homes' for the spring, and off we will go again!

NIGEL SPROWELL FRIEND

PHOTOGRAPH © IAN JOHNSTONE

**Heritage Open Days**



In September we once again participated in the national HODS scheme, organised in St Ives by our Civic Society. It was great to be able to use *The Holt* to mount a special display of baskets and basket-making tools kindly loaned by the Harrison family; Charlotte Jordan, whose father Jack Harrison ran the local basket-making business, is shown left among the exhibits.

Sue Kirk above, a basket weaver from Kings Cliffe, also joined us again for a day and demonstrated her fascinating craft in the meadow area. We attracted over 150 visitors to the three-day event, and received many compliments.

Sue can be contacted at [www.suekirkwillowbaskets.co.uk](http://www.suekirkwillowbaskets.co.uk)

PHOTOGRAPHS © JILL BURT

*Anglia in Bloom*

The lights, the smiles, the glamour! Basking in the glory of the moment, Marney Hall, an In Bloom Judge, Jill Burt, Friends Committee Member, and Paul Claydon, our HDC Ranger, display the certificates and commemorative bowl for the Biodiversity Award. And, just so you can see the detail, here it is in close-up!



PHOTOGRAPH © ANGLIA IN BLOOM



**YOUR COMMITTEE**

.....  
 These are your elected committee members plus HDC representative. If you have any concerns about any aspect of the Island, please be in touch with any of the committee listed below:

**JENNY ALLAWAY** Committee Member  
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**ROBIN WATERS** Treasurer  
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MEMBERSHIP FORM

**Yes, I want to help protect, preserve and promote one of St Ives best kept secrets and become a Friend of Holt Island Nature Reserve.**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_ e-mail \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

- 1 Please find enclosed my/our subscription for the next year of £5.00 (individual)  £10.00 (household)  2 I/we wish to become a life member(s) and enclose a cheque for £50.00 (individual)  £100.00 (household)  3 Please find enclosed a donation of £ \_\_\_\_\_ 4 Other organizations welcome to join on application

*giftaid it*

By signing-up for Gift Aid you will enable us to claim an extra 25p for every £1.00 received.

I would like Friends of Holt Island Nature Reserve to treat all subscriptions and donations that I make from the date of this declaration (until I give notice otherwise), as Gift Aid donations. I confirm that I am a UK taxpayer.

Please make cheques payable to: Friends of Holt Island Nature Reserve and return to the Membership Secretary: Robin Waters, 18 Hemingford Road, St Ives PE27 7HG

The information provided will be stored on a computer and used exclusively for managing your membership of the Friends. It will not be disclosed or released to any other organization. By completing this form you agree to this action.