



Great Ouse Valley Trust
Our landscape for life

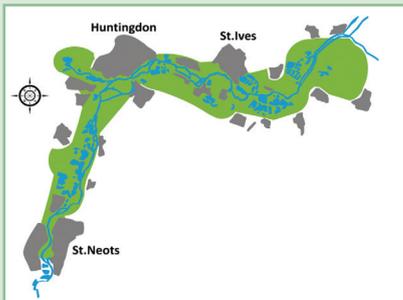
The Valley

JULY 2022

NEWSLETTER OF THE GREAT OUSE VALLEY TRUST

The Great Ouse Valley Trust (GOVT) is a charity with the objective 'To promote for public benefit the conservation, restoration, and enjoyment of the landscape, wildlife and heritage of the Great Ouse Valley and environs in the county of Cambridgeshire.'

The area is nationally recognised and valued for its wildlife, leisure, natural and heritage attractions which contribute to the county's natural green spaces.



Our Partner Members contribute knowledge, expertise, resources and energy so that together we can champion the unique appeal of the Great Ouse Valley.

To become a Supporter or make a donation, please visit our website. Here you will also find news of our current projects, our media coverage, planning issues and much more.

Like and follow us on Facebook and visit us on



www.greatousevalleytrust.org.uk

OUR HOUGHTON MILL AGM

Enjoyable and informative

Stuart Orme, Curator of the Cromwell Museum in Huntingdon, gave an exhilarating, illustrated talk on the many misconceptions about our Oliver, and also a brief history of the Museum itself, at our AGM in May. Combined with the atmosphere of Houghton Mill on a perfect Great Ouse Valley sunny morning and excellent catering, our AGM was a great success. We are grateful to our Partner Member, the National Trust, for allowing us to use this great venue.



PHOTOGRAPH BY IAN JACKSON

RESTORING NATURE

GOVT at the forefront of nature recovery initiative

As part of the Government's commitment, to 'Double Nature' we have teamed up with our friends at Natural Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire District Council, the RSPB, the Wildlife Trust, the NFU, Natural England, Farmers Wild Life Advisory Group and the National Trust, to develop a strategy for increasing biodiversity and improving access to green spaces in Cambridgeshire. We have been successful in obtaining 'seed corn' funding from Natural England to create a community engagement plan to double nature in the Great Ouse Valley. GOVT was lucky to secure funding via the National Lottery to implement the plan with a strong focus on community climate change initiatives.

This has enabled us to appoint Dr Jade Gunnell as our



Dr Jade Gunnell

consultant. Jade is an ecologist and naturalist with a Phd in Community Engagement strategy (Citizen Science). Jade has inspired us with her enthusiasm for the task. GOVT is currently running a trial project on a sample section of the Valley, the green corridor proposed between St Ives and Godmanchester. If successful the principles established will be applied to other areas in the county and will attract more funding to implement the proposals identified. We are excited to have helped facilitate this major new initiative in the Great Ouse Valley and will continue to update you on its progress.

DROUGHT!

Dead trees in the new community wood

On a less happy note, we have once again experienced a very dry spring and early summer. What rain that has fallen has been in the form of an odd shower, and many parts of our area have missed these showers altogether. It is already the driest period since the famous drought of 1976, but in specific locations it is actually much worse. The much-heralded, award-winning landscape proposals emanating from the construction of the new A14 have had a real problem. There has been a reported 94% loss of new trees as a result of the very dry summer of 2020. Hot dry summers seem to be a future now. This is a real challenge to our efforts to plant new woodland and hedgerows. How do we get the small trees established when there is no rain?

Volunteers have attempted to water our new trees using 25-litre containers - with some success - but our new Community Wood, with around 1,400 whips, is much more of a challenge. We have followed all the recognised strategies. The trees were fully mulched



PHOTOGRAPH BY GRAHAM CAMPBELL



PHOTOGRAPH BY CARLIE CAMPBELL

with wood chips back in February, and the exercise was repeated with fresh hay in June. However, the lack of rain has put the whole project in jeopardy.

Watering 1,400 new tree whips with the large containers is proving too much of a challenge, but help was on hand from the two-ton District Council water bowser.

George Allen, from Huntingdonshire District Council, provided full instructions on how to fill the bowser directly from the river at Huntingdon, and this allowed us to operate it on site.



PHOTOGRAPH BY GRAHAM CAMPBELL

However, the task is huge and the results so far a little disappointing. We just hope we can save a proportion of the trees which were planted with such enthusiasm by the community, and by many children from the local school last December, and pray for rain.

Would non-native trees fare better?

Climate change is having a major effect on trees across the country. Wetter, milder winters have allowed the development of new diseases that threaten our native species. Ash, Oak and Elm are especially at risk. Should we now be looking at planting non-native trees that are better suited to our new warmer climate? After all, Sycamores came over with the Romans, and Horse Chestnuts as recently as 1616. Many people are now controversially proposing the planting of trees and shrubs that are more common in Southern Europe and elsewhere - Walnut, Pittosporum (a neat evergreen shrub) and Arbutus (the Strawberry Tree), for example. Should we consider these for the Great Ouse Valley?

OUSE VALLEY WAY SUCCESS!

We help to fix the collapsing path

The Environment Agency design of the river embankment support work to deal with the collapsing footpath beneath the A14 between Buckden and Brampton, prompted by GOVT, has gained approval and is now in the National Highways programme of work. We now wait for progress to fulfill the works so that this important long-distance footpath is safe at this point once more.

We had walked the footpath along the river from Buckden Marina and the A14 overpass with representatives from our partner members, Buckden Parish Council and the Offord and Buckden Angling Society. This enabled us to identify various problems with collapsing banks and overhanging vegetation. This information, along with Environment Agency proposals for restoration was submitted to Highways at the County Council and hence to Highways England. There is now an allocated budget to deal with the issue. We hope that the work will be carried out very soon.

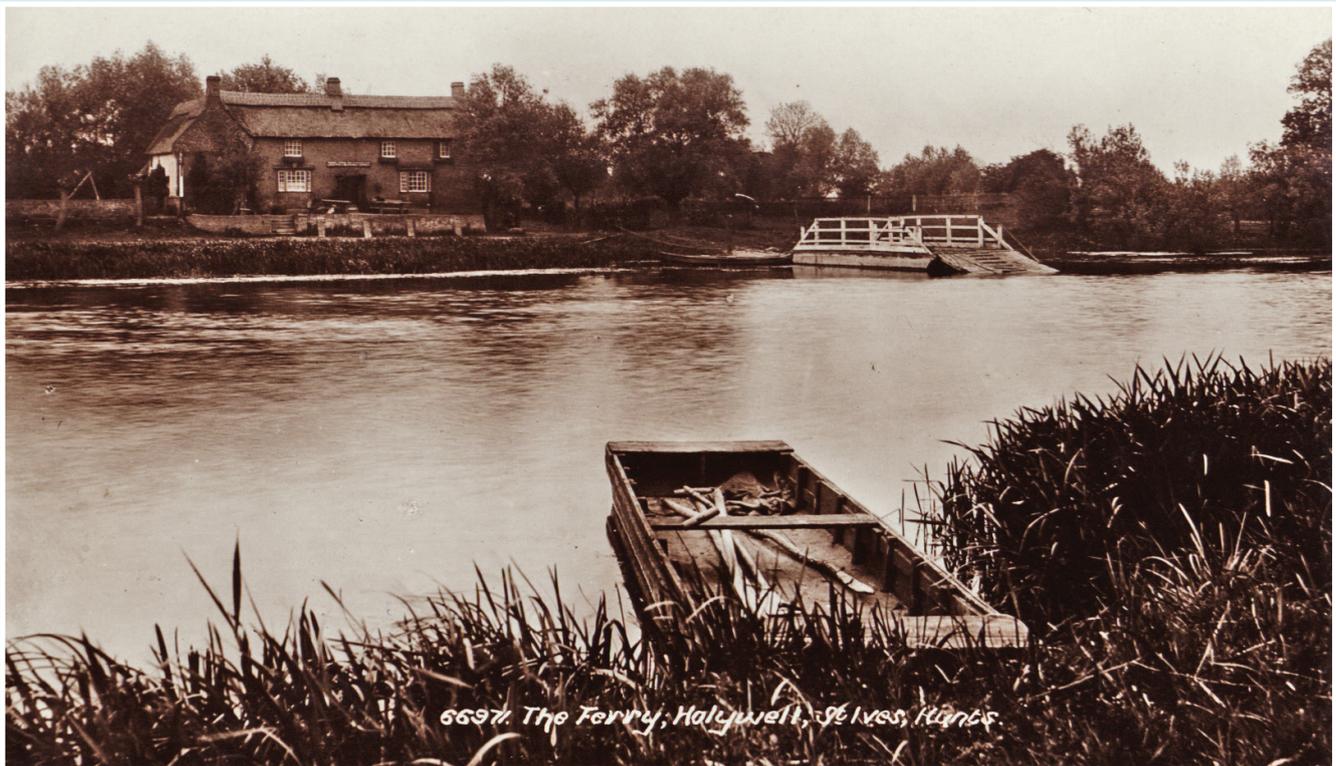
Meanwhile, the new chairman of Cambridgeshire County Council and GOVT supporter, Cllr Stephen Ferguson, recently walked the section from Paxton Pits to Huntingdon. In spite of the encroaching nettles he was full of enthusiasm for the wonderful landscape. The lack of rain has meant that the footpaths are not quite so overwhelmed with nettles and brambles as in last year. But we still look to our green volunteers to deal with sections as they are reported. Keeping our footpaths clear and accessible when there is so little funding will remain a challenge.

THE CROSSING POINTS

Bring back the old ferries?

Many residents in Great Paxton would love to see the return of a ferry across from the village to Paxton Pits Nature Reserve. There is also enthusiasm to restore a ferry at Holywell or Overcote. The ambition for this stretch of the river would be to provide a circular walk

starting from the Fen Drayton Lakes stop on the Busway, and have with an opportunity to take in a pint and/or lunch at the Old Ferry Boat Inn or The Pike & Eel Hotel. However, restoring a ferry is a major endeavour with many hurdles to overcome. And of course, there may be concern about the impact on local residents. The Trust is looking at the ferry options with our Partner Members. We'd love to have your views.



PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE HOLYWELL (TOP) AND OVERCOTE (BOTTOM) FERRIES, BOTH AT NEEDINGWORTH, COURTESY OF THE NORRIS MUSEUM

FISH PASS OPENS

Improving aquatic biodiversity

After years of work by many different parties the new fish pass at the old Godmanchester Mill site has finally opened, jointly funded by Huntingdonshire District Council, the Environment Agency, the A14 Legacy Fund, and our partner members Godmanchester Town Council and Godmanchester in Bloom. The Trust has been a member of the Community Liaison Committee since its inception. Apart from the key initiative to allow fish and especially eels to swim up the river to spawn, the project has also resulted in a major environmental improvement and a local tourist attraction. We hope that Kye Jerrom, the fish expert from the Environment Agency, will be able to give us a full illustrated talk on this fascinating subject at our next Partner Members meeting (date to be advised).



PHOTOGRAPHS BY GRAHAM CAMPBELL

HYDRO POWER FROM THE GREAT OUSE

Sustainable energy generation at Little Paxton

The opportunities to generate power from the river has been discussed over many years but has now taken on a greater significance because of the cost of energy crisis and the war in Ukraine. At Little Paxton a really exciting project is being planned by Waterside Green Energy, a Charitable Community Benefit Society. Follow the link for more information <https://watersidegreenenergy.org/>

NEW TRUSTEES APPOINTED

Meet the new faces

Peter Downes, one of our original trustees, has stepped down this year. Peter has been immensely helpful in our dealings with the County Council and various issues with regard to the Ouse Valley Way footpath. We wish him well in his retirement and all the other things in which he is involved, including the brilliant Bösendorfer piano concert series.

We welcome our new trustees Lucas and Michael here.

Lucas Tatek lives in Houghton and works for a global technology company. He has 20 years' experience as a project manager (PMI Certified to PMP) and liaises with many diverse stakeholders, agreeing and defining scope and deliverables and reporting progress. He intends to use his project management skills, but equally his muddy boots, to assist and help the Trust in their efforts to protect,



Lucas Tatek

preserve and enhance this precious environment, while at the same time increasing peoples' appreciation of it.

Michael Jones is managing Director of LH Jones & Son, boat builders on the Great Ouse in St Ives, a family business in its third generation of ownership, and believed to be England's oldest inland marina. Founded in 1946 by Laurie Jones, the company celebrated its 75th anniversary last year and prides itself on its reputation for dedicated service and customer satisfaction. Michael brings a wealth of experience of recreational boating in the Ouse Valley to the Trust and naturally has a deep love and understanding of it, and the challenges it now faces.



Michael Jones



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