

Boughton Fen Newsletter 2008



YOUR NEWSLETTER!

This is the first, of what will hopefully be, an Annual Newsletter detailing the activities being performed 'behind the scenes' by the Boughton Fen Committee and the progress of the work being performed on the Fen by the various working parties, specialists contractors and nature groups. The aim is to keep you informed of the work we are hoping to perform in the future and the ultimate aims we have for the Fen. This is not an insignificant undertaking and the success of this venture will only be realised with your involvement, so if you would like to help in any way then please come and join us.

To supplement this Newsletter information is regularly placed on the Village Notice Board, presented at Parish Council meetings and available on the internet website www.group4news.co.uk. We hope you enjoy this inaugural Newsletter and would be grateful for any feedback you may have and we look forward to welcoming you to any of our future activities or events.

The Boughton Fen Committee

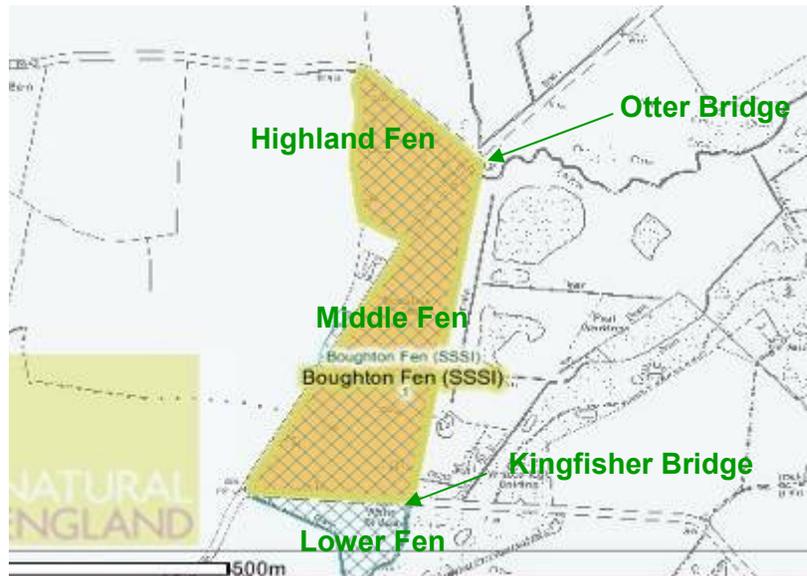
BENCHES ON THE FEN - BY GOLLY!

Dave 'Golly' Cooper, ably assisted by Frank Reid and Peter Agate, has erected a seat on Highland Fen for your relaxation and enjoyment. Two further benches are to be installed on Middle Fen, one near Otter Bridge and the other near Kingfisher Bridge. Having cultivated a path along Stringside Drain, these benches will provide welcome relief for the weary walker and will eventually be part of our 'grand plan' for a circular walk across the Fen.

We would like to thank Stoke Ferry Timber for their kind donation of timber for the first bench.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Following the formation of the Boughton Fen Committee (BFC), it quickly became apparent that names were required to help identify key areas on and around the Fen so that we all knew what each other was talking about. Some creative thinking has led to the adoption of a number of names and these are highlighted on the map below.



COMMITTED COMMITTEE - WHO ARE YA!

The Committee comprises six 'enthusiastic amateurs', working under the auspices of the Boughton Parish Council and collaborating with English Nature and other expert 'stake-holders' our committed aim is to return the 44 acre Fen, which is classified as a 'Site of Special Scientific Interest' back to a favourable condition. The Committee is chaired by Mark Pogmore and members are David Cooper, Angela Faherty, Allan Hale, Frank Reid and Kevin Fisher. We would like to say a **BIG** thank you to everyone who has helped and supported us through our first year. We look forward to your continued support with our second year and beyond.

ALLAN LIKES HIS BIRDS!

The Fen has been as interesting as ever for birds. The highlight of the summer was the first successful breeding of Marsh Harrier - four youngsters fledged. Nightingales were also successful with at least one of the three pairs present raising young. "Probable" breeders included such scarce species as Water Rail and Willow Tit. As usual bird ringing occurred on the Fen during 2008. From the start of the year until the end of October, a total of 737 birds of 35 species were ringed. The "most ringed" species was Swallow with 292, followed by 61 Great Tits and 48 Reed Warblers. Several of the ringed birds were caught again by ringers elsewhere in Britain, but there was nothing to match the Sedge Warbler that was found at Saint-Philbert-de-Grand-Lieu in France (636km to the south-south-west) last year.

THERE'S NO ACCOUNTING FOR ANGELA!

.....Oh yes there is! To ensure separation of the Boughton Parish Council funds from the BFC specific funds, separate bank accounts have been established. This has been no mean feat with banking bureaucracy posing a major obstacle. Angela has shown great tenacity in overcoming these obstacles and is now our 'Book-Keeper' and produces monthly financial reports, detailing our income and expenditure. Copies of these are available on request and are attached with the Minutes on the Village Notice Board.

GOING PUBLIC

In April of this year, we as a Committee decided to inform you all of our actions and aims with regard to the restoration of Boughton Fen. So on Saturday 5th April we held an open meeting in the Church and informed those present of the progress, the way forward and the future of the Fen. It appears that our presentation was very well received by all and generated a lot of interest in the Fen.

Any plans or work that is performed on the Fen will be subject to public consultation and agreement with Natural England and any other interested stake-holders. Please keep an 'eye-out' for future information.

FUN(D) RAISING EVENTS

To help generate much needed income to finance the work on the Fen, we have held two fund raising events, the first one being a very successful 'Dawn Chorus'. We met on the Fen at 4.30am on the 4th May and Allan led us on a very informative 'walk & talk' on the birds that inhabit the Fen and pointing out their early morning song. The main highlight of the event was not only being able to hear a nightingale in full song but also to actually see it – with the aid of binoculars for some! We then rounded off a very enjoyable morning with coffee and bacon rolls on Highland Fen. This event raised £159.20.

Our most recent event was Allan's 'Boughton Fen through the Seasons'. A marvellous and varied selection of photographs of the flora and fauna of the Fen accompanied by Allan's informative knowledge, which he so willingly shares with us. This event raised £358.05. This included donations on the night of £55.00 which will be used to provide the two benches along Stringside Drain. Our aim is to make these events both fun and educational and we hope to hold more in 2009. If you have any suggestions or ideas we would be delighted to hear from you.

HOW DO WE MANAGE IT ALL?

The BFC have developed and agreed a Management Plan with Natural England, an essential document that helps facilitate our entry into High Level Stewardship. This sets out our aims and objectives for the next 10 years and will be reviewed and updated on an annual basis to ensure concurrency. It identifies the key management of problem areas on the Fen, namely scrub encroachment and adverse water levels and how these may be best reduced or eradicated. Additionally, the Management Plan has a series of Appendices that identifies the various flora and fauna that can be found. Much of this information has been captured by specialist volunteer groups who have surveyed the site this year and it is hoped that they will continue these studies in future years such that we are able to measure the effect that our remedial work is having.

WE'RE HAVING A PARTY!

Not quite what you might think it is...but just as much fun. The BFC are hosting working parties on the Fen to target problem areas. These are to be held on Saturday **13th December**, Sunday **25th January** and Sunday **22nd February**, each commencing at 10:00am and working through to around 2:00pm. If you would like to help, please come armed with loppers, cutters, saws etc., stout footwear and robust clothing. The BFC will provide safety goggles and gloves and possibly a jacket potato! Contact Mark on 01366 500461 for more details.

SECURING THE CASH!

Towards the end of last year, some members of the Committee met with Natural England to discuss the future of the Fen and more importantly to secure a funding stream for its' upkeep. Since that first meeting, various discussions have taken place and this has culminated in Boughton Parish (the Fen owner) being offered the chance of entering the Fen into an Environmental Stewardship programme.

Entry Level and High Level Stewardship schemes are administered by Natural England and they aim to deliver significant environmental benefits in high priority situations and areas. Application to the scheme is via a Farm Environment Plan and Natural England has provided invaluable assistance in preparing our submission. In August 2008, following assessment and completion of the necessary paperwork Boughton Fen was placed into a High Level Stewardship scheme.

By entering into HLS we will receive a lot of guidance and a good funding regime. The scheme is based on a 10 year agreement and this will provide funding over this period of time. The funding will be spent on general maintenance such as scrub removal and control, reed cutting, along with capital items such as information signs, bird boxes, establishment of footpaths and seating areas.

WHATEVER NEXT?

Generally we leave the Fen to our summer visitors over the summer months, but we are now approaching the time of year when we can recommence work. The main thrust of our work will again be scrub clearance, with money still available to pay specialist contractors to clear some of the difficult areas. To complement this work we will host our own working parties to target other problem areas.

You will be pleased to know that Allan has promised to conduct another Dawn Chorus in May 2009, so if you missed out on the last one, or you enjoyed it so much that you would be prepared to go again then contact Angela on 01366 501335 to secure your place.