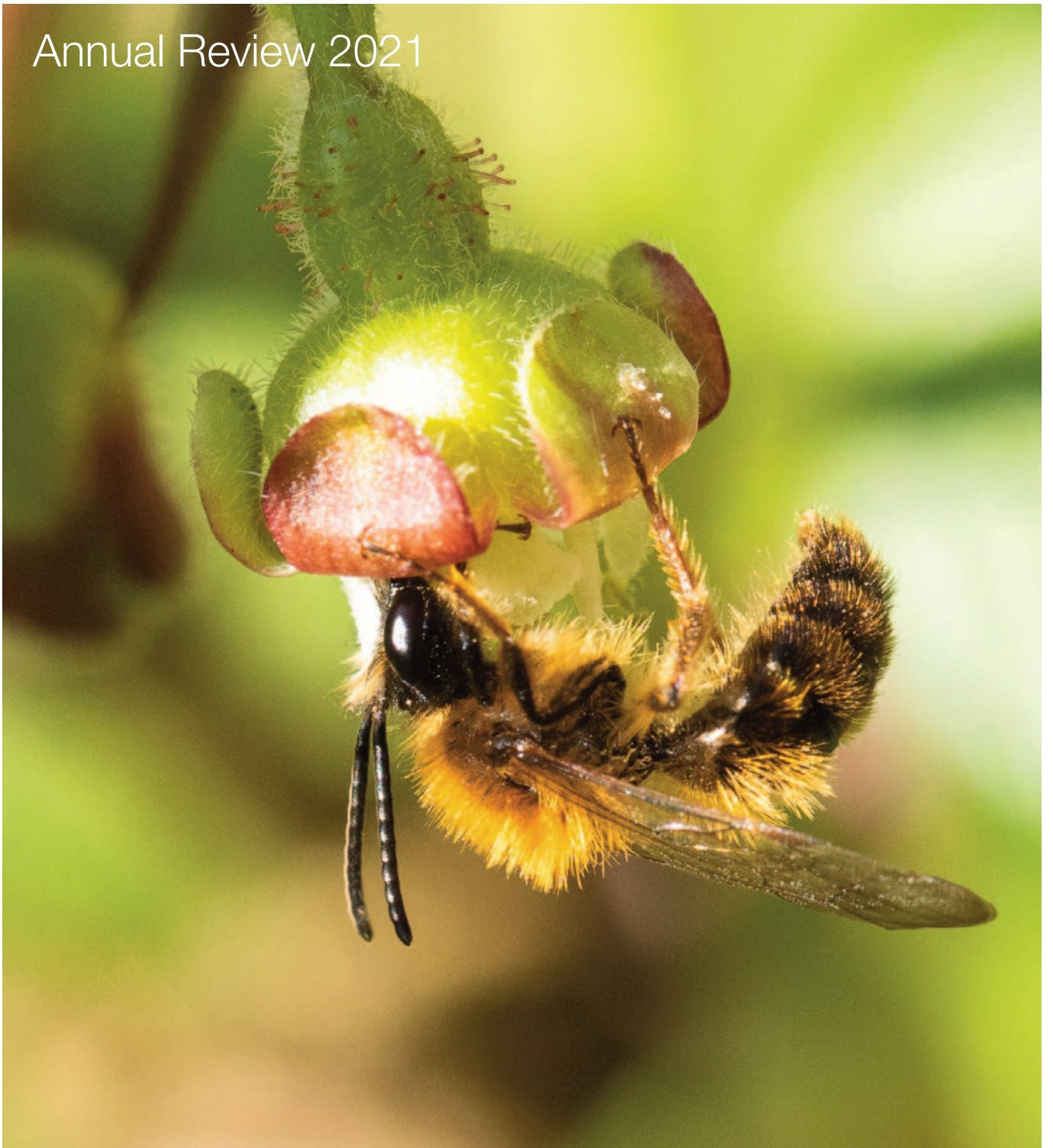




Langdyke
Countryside Trust

Langdyke Countryside Trust

Annual Review 2021



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*The majority of photographs are by
Sarah Lambert and Brian Lawrence*

Langdyke is an entirely voluntary organisation

An extraordinarily large number of people offer their services for nothing – carrying out a large number of vital roles.

Each week work parties on our reserves are manned - every Monday at Etton and on Thursday at Swaddywell, Torpel and Bainton. The work these people do keep our reserves in tip top condition.

And in the background an army of others do equally important jobs - organising membership, fixing and running events, keeping an eye on the accounts, doing surveys and negotiating deals that benefit the Trust.

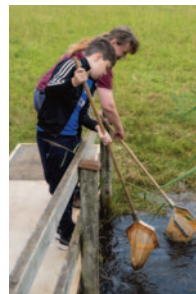
We are always on the lookout for more people who want to get involved. The tasks are varied and can be done from home or by spending time out in the countryside.

So if you can spare a few hours a month why not get in touch and offer your services. We can usually find a task that will suit your abilities and availability.

Please email **volunteer@langdyke.org.uk**



Our volunteers in action . . .



Helping nature flourish for future generations



Langdyke chair **RICHARD ASTLE** in his report for 2021 reflects on the growth of the trust and the fantastic work of the volunteers

We have been publishing an annual report since 2004 when we summarised our first five years of activity! I have copies of all the previous reports sitting proudly on my shelf!

And every year there is a groan from our editorial team when they realise it is time to start putting pen to paper again – it takes an awful lot of work to produce. But every year too, the production of the report offers us a chance to take stock and reflect on the results of all the many hours of administration, conservation and overall problem solving, opportunity seizing and above all nature-marvelling that makes up a typical Langdyke year.

Yet again the efforts of our volunteers – and it is worth reminding ourselves that everyone at Langdyke is a volunteer – are making a real difference for nature and for local people.

Our Conservation team continues to keep our beautiful reserves in great condition for nature; the People and Communities team have brought us a constant flow of excellent events and behind the scenes the Finance and Governance Team keep us solvent and well governed! Perhaps it is worth highlighting in this introduction two key

developments of the last year – the acceleration of the wider work of the John Clare Countryside partnership and the continued development of our own reserves.

The John Clare Countryside project has gone from strength to strength, aided by a major grant from

Government which allowed us, working through the Peterborough Environment City Trust, to establish a full-time project team, led by Langdyke's own Mike Horne.

This team has been very busy since last autumn organising countless work parties and events, planting

Bainton Heath
receives significant investment

hundreds of metres of new hedgerow and thousands of bulbs. Just one example of its work is the new hedgerow along the road between Glington and Helpston – something that will grow into a real feature of our landscape in the years to come. And the team is also taking forward plans for new heritage trails across the countryside as well as working closely with local landowners to develop plans for nature recovery across the wider countryside. And the project has its own website too –

www.johnclarecountryside.co.uk

You can read more in Mike Horne's article in this report.

The John Clare Countryside project involves many partners and embraces the whole area between Stamford and Peterborough.

Langdyke is, of course, very much at the heart of the project, but we remain equally focused on our own reserves, recognising that as well as this wider work, we need to maintain and expand the area of land we can dedicate to nature.

Our ambition is to double the amount of land that we directly control. A key success, therefore, was the new agreement we signed in March 2022 with National Grid, extending our lease at Bainton Heath for another ten years. The agreement also includes substantial financial investment from National Grid to help manage the Heath and improve opportunities to visit. You can read more about this wonderful site in Stuart Iron's article.

And we also have several opportunities under discussion to add to our land holdings – we hope to be able to make announcements about these at our Annual General Meeting on July 16, 2022.

We are incredibly fortunate to live in John Clare Countryside and have so many opportunities to enjoy nature in its gloriously varied forms. The last year has highlighted again just how much that natural world is changing – we continue to witness the dramatic decline of many once familiar species; despite all our efforts turtle doves face a real prospect of extinction locally and indeed nationally. There are far fewer lapwing and numbers of several forms of butterfly and moth decline year on year.

The ash trees in our woodlands are dying. But at the same time, we marvel at the arrival or return of birds such as great egret that are frequently seen along the Maxey Cut, or the peregrine falcons that terrorise local pigeons and nest on our pylons, and the Clifden Nonpareil moth that was once incredibly rare and yet last year turned up four times in my garden alone!

Nature is changing around us – sometimes positively flourishing, often sadly declining. That change results from years of habitat loss and the pressures of intensive farming and development as well as the increasingly dramatic changes to our climate.

Nature is used to change – it has been evolving for millions of years! But it isn't used to such rapid change and it needs help if it is to flourish for future generations. That is what Langdyke is all about.

Every year our charity grows – we have more members than ever before and a busier programme of events and activities.

But we do have to be careful not to grow too fast and overwhelm ourselves – it is very important that



Volunteer Bob Titman

our volunteers and all our members enjoy and take pride in their work for Langdyke.

One of the other opportunities that the annual report provides is to say a sincere thank you to you all – whether you regularly attend a work party, take minutes of meetings, process membership applications or simply support us through your membership – thanks.

And to finish where I started – well done to the editorial team, ably led by David Rowell – another annual report to be proud of!

Thank you!

Richard Astle
Chair, Langdyke Countryside Trust

Another busy year of events

It's been another full year for the Langdyke events team as leader CLAIRE NOBLE reports...

Over the course of 2021 we greeted ten external speakers, hosted 18 events, and brought more than 250 people together.

We launched a wildlife friendly gardening campaign, recorded glow-worm populations, delivered three family fun days at Swaddywell and two quizzes!

We were blessed with some fantastic speakers and guides covering a wide variety of topics from the origins of The Langdyke Countryside Trust to John Clare's link with local archaeology, the future of nature conservation, Nightingales at Castor Hanglands, the importance of trees in the landscape, past present and future and the Geology of John Clare Countryside.

Our external speakers and guides included; Enrique Moranmontero,

National Restoration Manager at Tarmac; Jeremy Mynott, author and emeritus fellow of Wolfson college Cambridge; Mark Cocker, award winning author and journalist; Garden Designer and Gardeners World presenter Adam Frost; Geraint Richards, Head Forester for The Duchy of Cornwall; Tony Kirkham, Head of Arboretum, Gardens and Horticultural Services at Kew Gardens; Christine Reid, Principal Conservation Advisor at The Woodland Trust and Dr Jonathan Larwood, Natural England, Senior Specialist.

Many of you joined us, together with our friends from The Wildlife Trust, for a wonderful family picnic at Etton Maxey pits. The Eastern reserves team created pathways through the wildflower meadow and wooded area

and Langdyke's Artists in Residence, Kathryn Parsons and Sarah Lambert provided a magical mini art trail. Peter Kirby and Rachel Price from the Wildlife Trust delivered bug hunting and pond dipping and Richard Astle, Langdyke Chairman hosted reserve tours.

And finally, it was a year of personal pledges. 82 people made a pledge to garden for wildlife over an area equivalent to three times the footprint of Peterborough Cathedral and 29 people joined us for a walk during COP26, discussing all things nature related and making personal pledges to reduce their carbon footprint including; eating less meat, reducing air miles and volunteering in John Clare Countryside.

We're always looking for new members

Membership secretary ANGELA TROTTER reports on her first year in office

In December 2021, I took over as Membership Secretary from Peter Leverington. Peter had decided to stand down after several years of loyal service to the Trust, including three years as Board Secretary and four years as Membership Secretary. Membership numbers increased dramatically as a result of Peter's efforts during his time as Membership Secretary and the Trust is very grateful for his hard work, ably assisted by wife Mavis.

At the time of the 2020 Annual Review, membership stood at 191 family and single member units. Since then, we have attracted 41 new members, partly as a result of events held during the year, and a campaign to target those people who have joined our Facebook group without also joining the Trust.

Unfortunately, since the 2020 Annual Review, 16 people have chosen not to renew their memberships. But the good news is that membership is still up overall and currently stands at 216.

If you have any friends, family or neighbours who you think might be interested in joining Langdyke Countryside Trust to support our work, further information is available on our website:

<https://langdyke.org.uk>

We now have an online membership application form, which is simple to complete: <https://langdyke.org.uk/.../about.../membership/1326-2/>

We have also produced an online gift pack, which makes a great present. It contains details of membership benefits and information about our main reserves. For more information



Walk for COP26 around John Clare Country

about this, please email Angela at membership@langdyke.org.uk

One important point - 156 of our 216 members (72%) have gift aided their membership donations, which allows the Trust to claim an additional 25 per cent of those fees from HM Revenue & Customs.

If you are a UK tax payer who has not already gift aided your membership donation and would like to do so, please email either membership@langdyke.org.uk or treasurer@langdyke.org.uk for further information.

Many thanks to all of our members for your loyalty. At a time when nature is in crisis, your contributions really help to make a difference by supporting the work we are committed to doing in our local countryside.

The ups and downs of nature

Another year of nature sightings in the region rounded up by **RICHARD ASTLE**



Netted pug - Naturespot



Merveille du Jour



Bainton Churchyard, Sarah Lambert

The new gravel workings at the Etton-Maxey complex proved very popular with passage waders in May 2021, including ringed plover, sanderling and whimbrel. While turtle dove were seen regularly at the feeding station at Etton Maxey Pits throughout the summer. Peregrine falcon were also often encountered, with at least two local nests, including one in the centre of Stamford.

An osprey flew over Etton (Angela Trotter) in July. There were no reports of 'booming' bitterns this summer but one was seen at Etton Maxey Pits on at least two occasions – this is a bird that is expanding its range greatly, following near extinction in the UK, so we hope very much that in time it will find enough suitable habitat to be a breeding bird locally, once again. John Clare certainly describes them as 'booming' from the fen edge around Northborough.

The Langdyke moth obsession continued throughout the summer of 2021, with the new Trust trap getting several outings as members borrowed it to try out their mothing skills! An evening at Swaddywell in May produced nearly 100 species, including the beautiful Netted Pug, the larvae of which feed inside the seed capsules of bladder campion.

White spotted pinion, a moth that feeds on elm and has therefore declined in numbers in recent decades, turned up at Swaddywell on August 14 and in two local gardens the same night.

Other garden highlights included the eighth Northamptonshire record of a Bedstraw hawk moth in Hugh Wright's Helpston garden in June and the wonderful Clifden Nonpareils in both Bob Titman (Deeping) and my (Helpston) gardens in September.

Kathryn Parsons discovered a small yellow underwing in Vergette Wood Meadow in early June – the first in the area for many years. Another small, but very pretty moth, the liquorice piercer was found on several occasions in the Hanglands area in June. And Pete Kirby discovered a six belted clearwing at Etton Maxey Pits on July 31.

Some species of butterfly seemed to be scarcer than in 2020 – there were fewer records of purple emperor for instance, although at least two observers found them at the Hanglands in July. Black hairstreak too proved elusive (they often are) although one was found at the Blacklands on June 23.

Other woodland species such as silver washed fritillary and white admiral were also scarcer than in recent years. That said there were 15 species of butterfly reported from one visit to Barnack Hills and

Holes on August 4, including chalkhill blue.

And the end of the season turned up good numbers of common blue butterfly across the meadows at Etton Maxey Pits, and small tortoiseshell and red admiral were out and about during September, with the occasional comma amongst them.

Glow worms were again found in good numbers along the Maxey Cut and South Drain this year. David Denham led three separate glow worm survey walks, and in total we found nearly 150 individuals, fewer than 2020, but still an impressive number! The stretch of road between the Cut and Drain, once again was home to the highest numbers in terms of density. It will be interesting to see what sort of



Kite Tailed Robberfly

numbers we find in 2022 when the larvae from 2020 will emerge as glowing adults (or at least the females will)!

We seldom mention flies in these annual round-ups, so it is nice to mention the kite-tailed robberfly found in Steve Zealand's garden on August 13. An equally impressive garden find was Judy Staines' speckled bush cricket on September 3!

Signs of water voles continued to increase, perhaps because our small mammal experts, Steve and Liz Lonsdale are so assiduous in their efforts to find them. New colonies were found in farmland ditches near Helpston this summer. Another interesting find was a

harvest mouse at Vergette Wood Meadow, a first for this reserve.

The young roe deer was in residence at Etton Maxey for many weeks during the summer, often found with the sheep, but finally disappearing in the late summer, hopefully to find a wider place to roam!

To judge by the Langdyke Facebook pages, a key feature of the natural world in autumn 2021 was the fungi that spring up across our area.

There has been a renewed national interest in fungi recently, following the publication of a number of new books, such as *Entangled* by Merlin Sheldrake, revealing just how dependent we are on the work of fungi (one of the five kingdoms of the living world – along with plants, animals and two other rather obscure ones – Protista and Monera).

Fungi break down organic matter and release carbon, oxygen, nitrogen, and phosphorus into the

soil and the atmosphere. Fungi are essential to many household and industrial processes, let's not forget that without them there would be no bread, wine, beer, or, horror of horrors a world without cheese.

Locally many members reported many different types of fungi from gardens, woodlands and nature reserves. There's something about our human desire to put everything in order

that makes it hard to accept sometimes that we can't put a name to everything, but many fungi are very difficult to tell apart without detailed knowledge and the use of microscopes.

There are, for instance, over 60 European species of the colourful waxcaps, many of them barely distinguishable from each other, several of which appeared on Langdyke reserves this year, including the lovely snowy waxcap at Swaddywell and Etton Maxey Pits NR.

Sarah Lambert found two enormous Oak Bracket (also known

NO bread
wine, beer
or cheese
without fungi



Slime mold, Royce Wood, Sarah Lambert



as Weeping Conk) on the oak at the entrance to Torpel Field and a Veined Shield at Castor Hanglands. This is quite a local species of very well-decayed dead wood. Wrinkled Peach was found again on elm in Royce Wood, Helpston as was a rather delightful slime mould, *Ceratiomyxa fruticulosa* var. *porioides* (it has no English name, sorry). Slime moulds are part of a completely separate kingdom of the living world! We often mention animals, plants and fungi, and slime moulds used to be classified as fungi, but they are now part of the kingdom of Protista!

Another little known but fascinating part of the local natural world are the galls. Galls are the nesting chambers made by a variety of tiny insects within the leaves and twigs of plants and trees. Oak Marble and Oak Cherry galls were found in Royce Wood during October – told apart simply because one is found on leaves and the other on twigs! These strange round formations are produced by separate species of tiny wasp, which emerge from the galls in the winter as asexual adults.

Another common local gall, is the Willow Rosette, which stands out often in quite large numbers on the bare branches of willow trees (particularly at Etton Maxey Pits NR) and is formed by a tiny midge. A

chemical interaction is caused when the midge lays its eggs that halts the lengthwise growth of infected willow shoots, the leaves however continue to develop and thus the characteristic "rose" forms at the tip of the affected shoot.

Several Langdyke members continued to search for moths right through the late autumn and winter. Some moths are specialists of these seasons, emerging late in the year, such as the Autumnal and December Moths. It is thought that these moths lay their eggs in mid-winter so that the caterpillar hatches just as the trees, particularly oak, bud and their young leaves contain less tannin, which is distasteful to the caterpillar. The beautiful Merveille du Jour is another autumnal favourite and was reported from several gardens locally in October.

Ivy Bees were seen at Northborough school and Swaddywell in October. This bee was only reported in the UK in 2001 and is rapidly spreading across the country. It feeds, as its name suggests, on Ivy flowers!



Garganey at Etton Maxey, Steve Zealand



Liquorice chaser - Grapholita pallifrontana

Pits area. The family at Ferry Meadows became something of a tourist attraction, requiring their own fencing to stop people getting too close to them. Matt Webb caught a wonderful image in March.

Badgers too were still active in late October, with two caught eating peanuts on a camera trap near Helpston.

Autumnal birds started to arrive in mid-October with Nathan Stimpson reporting both Fieldfare and

Family of Otters become a tourist attraction

Otters were much in evidence across the area throughout the year – particularly at Ferry Meadows, Deeping Lakes and the Maxey



Otter Matthew Webb

Redwing over his garden on October 13. There was a flock of 22 Whooper Swans over Helpston on October 16. A Rock Pipit turned up at the Etton Maxey Pits complex (Rectory Pit, near Etton) the next day.

Otherwise, it was a rather quiet season for birds. The Starling murmuration was a hit and miss spectacle, with several reports of large gatherings in October, but then very few in November and December, but it found new life again in February, with some huge gatherings over Etton itself in late February.

Other notable sightings included a Bittern at Etton Maxey Pits on November 17 (Dave Roberts), a male Goldeneye on Silt Pit on November 30 (Angela Trotter) a Barn Owl on the Cut on December 3 (Sarah Lambert), and a Merlin near Woodcroft on December 18 (Richard Astle). We were also treated to the annual visit of the beautiful male Smew, which has wintered at Bainton Pits for several years now and there was an amazing total of 46 Goosander on the Etton Silt Pit in February.



Oak

Winter can also be a wonderful time to take stock of the glorious trees that we have across the local landscape – Sarah Lambert is leading a survey of our veteran trees, and took a fabulous photo of a field oak.

By February early signs of spring were with us. My first moth turned up on February 9– a Pale Brindled-



Common toad

beauty and Malcolm Hillier recorded over 300 moths the same day at the Hanglands, including Spring Usher and Oak Beauty. Claire Noble recorded a Brown Hare at Etton Maxey Pits on February 11 and Paula Mason had bees in her garden on February 23.

By early March there were two Oystercatcher back on the Maxey gravel pits and Chiffchaff singing in the local woods (my first on March 13). Otherwise, though birds seemed to be quite slow coming back with only one Blackcap reported by late March. A pair of Peregrine prospected the tower of Helpston church as a nesting site but opted for another site in our area. Marsh Harrier were seen over Etton Maxey Pits on two occasions and Mandarin duck were seen at Ben Jonson Pit on March 3.

It was a very good year for Common Toad too with several hundred

reported from the Hanglands in mid-March, and a respectable 31 calling from Sarah Lambert's

Peterborough garden on March 14. Along Heath Road, Helpston the sad remains of several flattened toads suggest a good year for toads there too.

At Swaddywell, the annual counts produced very disappointing numbers of Great Crested Newts, something we are puzzling about and considering how we can redress. However, on a positive note, this year we had three clumps of frogspawn in one of the ponds there, up from just one clump last year. Frog numbers at the Hanglands are also still rising, with an estimated fifteen hundred adult frogs present in the various ponds this year.

Butterflies were on the wing by mid-March with Matt Webb recording

Small Tortoiseshell, Comma and Peacock at Ferry Meadows on March 26. John Parsonage was also reporting bats in his garden by March 10.

Other mammal sightings included a host of Hedgehogs re-emerging in our

1500
adult frogs
present in
various ponds

gardens, Roe Deer near Etton on March 11 and a Brown Hare at Bainton Heath on Marc 9. More spring moths were being recorded by the end of the month, although conditions were not great for our army of moth-ers, cold and windy nights don't encourage moths to emerge. But highlights included Yellow Horned moth at the Hanglands and in Helpston.

But perhaps the greatest spectacle of early April – as ever – were the woodland flowers. Primrose, Wood Anemone, Dog's Mercury and Lesser Celandine graced the local woods and of course the local churchyards, particularly Bainton, which held its own Primrose day on March 26-27.

The first week of April was pretty cold – perhaps that and the prevailing northerly winds were



Yellow horned, Malcolm Hillier

holding up some of the migrant birds. There were two Swallows in Etton on April 2-3, and a pair of Garganey, a beautiful migrant duck at Etton Maxey Pits, along with up to four Redshank, but still no sign of Wheatear or more Blackcap. But in the woods, the elm was in blossom and the Bluebells just peeping out!



Orchids at Swaddywell



Bluebells in local woods, Claire Noble

How we came through a tough year

Treasurer BRIAN LAWRENCE reports that our finances flourished despite the difficulties brought about by the Covid pandemic

As happened in the previous year, 2021 was affected significantly by the Covid-19 pandemic. The various lockdowns ordered by HM Government resulted in much of our planned work not being completed in the year. Langdyke Trust was more fortunate than many charities in that our income from membership subscriptions actually rose in 2022 and we therefore didn't have the difficulties suffered by other charities who saw their income fall sharply. Indeed, because work was deferred owing to lockdowns, Langdyke actually spent £8,460 less than income received so that the total cash balances at December 31, 2021 were £53,830. This amount represents £47,870 general funds whose use is unrestricted and £5,860 restricted funds which may only be used for the purposes specified by the donors.

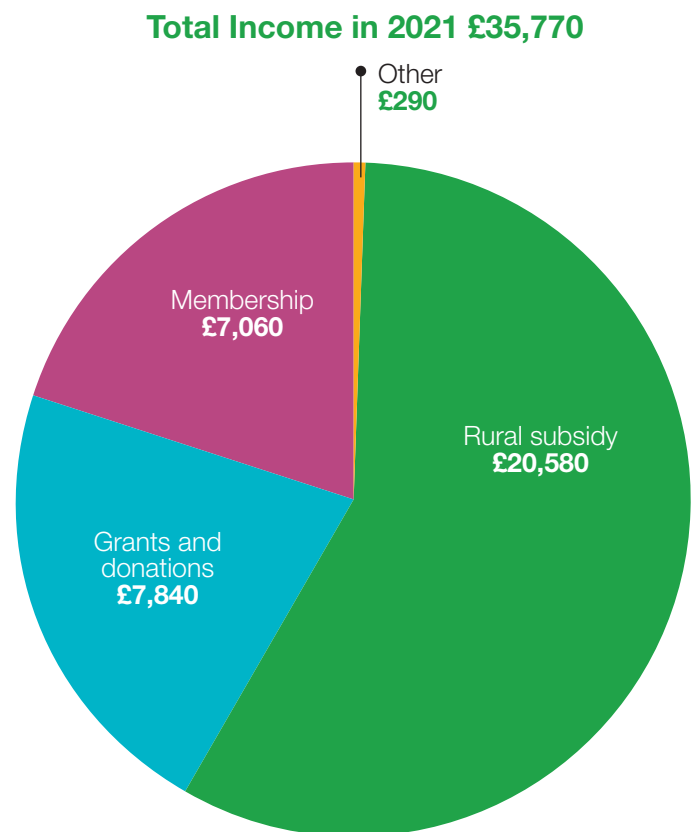
Income

Total income in 2021 was £35,770, an increase of £9,370 over the previous year. Although the major part of this income was down to the timing of the agricultural subsidy

payments from the Rural Payment Agency, it was pleasing to see that membership subscriptions increased by £2,040 on the year. This was the result of an increase in the number of members, and an increase in the number of members who Gift Aid their subscriptions. For members, who pay income tax, but

do currently Gift Aid their subscription, please consider using Gift Aid as you can increase the value of your subscription to Langdyke by 25 per cent without any cost to yourself.

The analysis of major heads of income is shown in the chart below.



Membership
rose in
2022

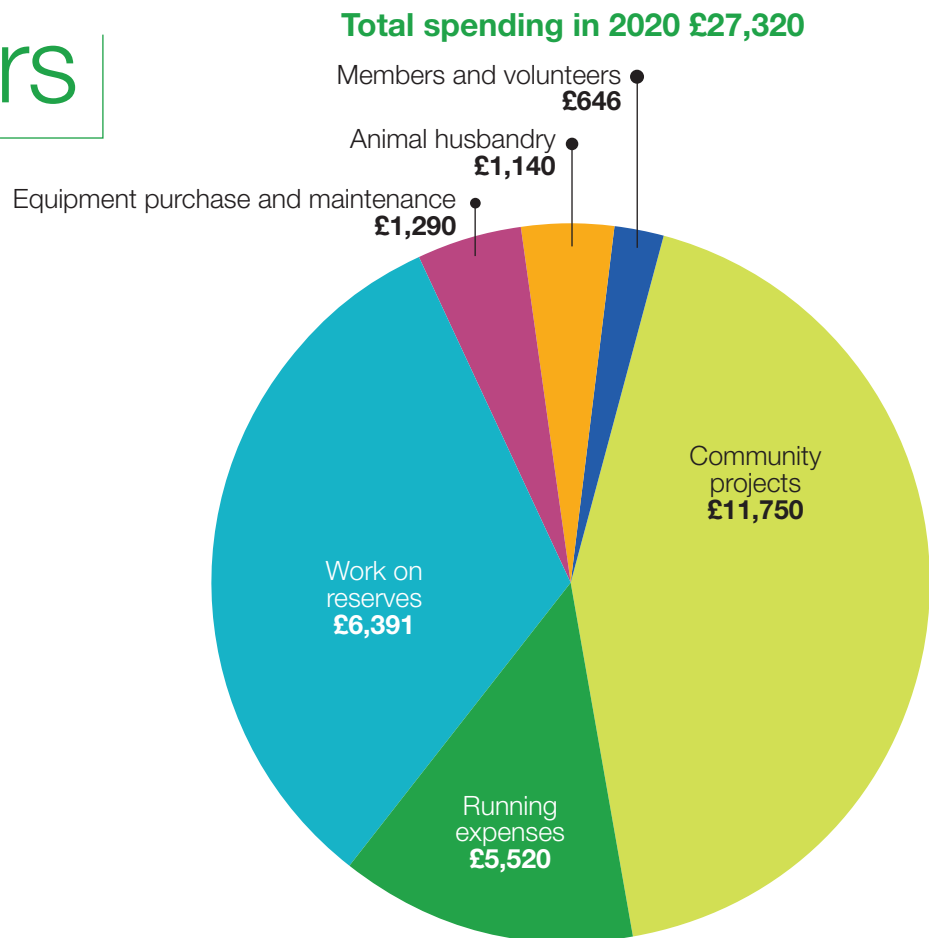
It is clear from the chart above that membership subscriptions and the attached gift aid refunds make up less than 20 per cent of total income whereas Government Subsidies for Agri-environment schemes account for over 55 per cent. With the changes in the way that Government will support environmental schemes under the new Environmental Land

Management Schemes, it is important that the trust continue to work towards receiving these new subsidies for enhancing the landscape and biodiversity in the John Clare Countryside. To this end we will be working with local landowners, parish councils, farmers and other interested parties to enhance the John Clare Landscape.

Trust is run entirely by volunteers

Spending

Spending in 2021 totalled £27,320 of which £10,000 was a grant to Peterborough Environmental City Trust for them to support the various parishes in the John Clare Countryside in preparing and implementing their own Nature Recovery Plans. This means that the underlying spend for 2021 was only £17,320.



In 2021, Langdyke Countryside Trust spent £11,750 on projects in the community, mainly the £10,000 on the Parishes Nature Recovery plans. Langdyke Trust also spent £8,910 on works on our six nature reserves. Although much of the work on our nature reserves is done using volunteers, and our volunteers do really sterling work, there are some jobs that are too large, complex or require specialist equipment which are done by using contractors.

The trust has a flock of sheep which are used to help manage the habitat and it is important that these animals are fed, and cared for so that they

remain healthy. They also require annual shearing, and although we have tried to sell the fleeces, we have not found a market for them, so the cost of feed, shelter, shearing, moving the flocks between reserves and other costs falls under the heading of animal husbandry.

The trust spends £3,660 (13 per cent of total spend) on running expenses. Included in this figure is £1,720 insurance premium, so you can see that the trust is very careful regarding spending on its running costs. Because the Trust is run entirely by volunteers, we need to engage consultants when we require

advice on specialist matters such as fund raising, Health and Safety, conditions of trees on our reserves etc and these costs also make up the running costs of the trust.

Moving forward

Although the Main Board had a number of ambitious plans for 2021, lockdowns meant that we could not actions all these plans in 2021, and they will therefore be brought forward to 2022. We will also be creating another scrape and putting in sluices at Etton Maxey Reserve, and working to improve the conditions of habitats for nature on all the Langdyke reserves.

Good things can come from bad times

The way our countryside is funded is changing. Langdyke board member JUSTIN TILLEY sets out some of the changes for our area...

Incentive for positive change often comes from adversity. The climate crisis has seen a new generation inspired to demand faster action to protect the environment; the Covid pandemic showed how our wellbeing is improved if we have nature-rich places close to home; and Brexit prompted Government to declare that farming would only receive 'public money for public good' and be encouraged to do more for our habitats and species.

The publication of the Environment Act has helped turn words into a legislated action, and there has been new money to help nature and climate action. But how will this help our local area?

Nature recovery

The Nature Recovery Network (NRN) concept captures the idea that stopping nature's decline isn't good enough – we need radical change to see habitats and species flourish throughout the country. The NRN promotes that existing nature-rich areas should be increased in size; be better connected by well linked habitats, and see new areas created in-between to act as stepping-stones.

The Langdyke reserves form the basic building blocks

of the NRN locally, with Swaddywell, Bainton Heath and Etton-Maxey Pits, alongside places like Castor Hanglands NNR. We need to work with landowning partners to see how adjacent land can be restored to wilder habitats to make those sites bigger; have better linked

hedges, field margins, and river corridors so wildlife can traverse the landscape easily; and see new areas of grassland, woodland and wetland created in between for both nature and people to enjoy.

We need
**radical
change**
to see habitats
and species
flourish



Pasque hills and holes

Having a Plan

Individual acts to help nature are important and worthwhile, but if done in a coordinated way, we can see much better results at a bigger scale. In the coming years each county will produce a Local Nature Recovery Strategy to map out where and how partnerships will restore and enhance the environment.

In the local area, the pioneering work of Parish Nature Recovery Plans has given opportunity for each

community to identify what they value about their natural spaces, describe what they'd like to see more of, and agree what they're going to do about making that happen. These actions add up to a huge amount of community driven action for nature across the Langdyke patch, underpinned by the John Clare Countryside project, which has provided funding and technical support to make this happen.



Butterfly: Marbled white, Castor Hanglands



Damselfly

New incentives

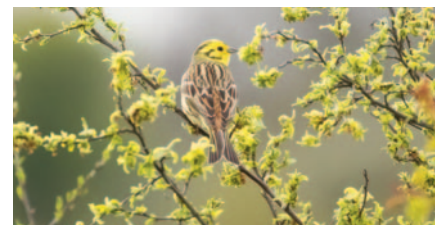
The change to the way we subsidise farming has potential to make enormous improvements for nature. New Environmental Land Management Schemes (ELMS) will give opportunity for land managers to work in a more collaborative manner through farms clusters, receiving payments to stop run off into rivers; protect, restore and create habitats, and better contribute to our net zero climate ambitions.

Developers and Local Planning Authorities are required by new

legislation to invest more in the environment. Development need to avoid and minimise any negative impacts from a project, but 'Biodiversity Net Gain' will mandate that all proposals will need to demonstrate how they're actively contributing to (and paying for) improvements for wildlife of that land. Whilst there are issues to iron out, it is a positive concept, and should lead to reduced damage and significant new funding for nature from development.

“ A brighter future?”

Many of these measures will take time to become effective, but in principle we'll have more opportunity as individuals, communities, land managers and developers to do something positive for the natural environment. Our collective challenge is to make sure that those opportunities are taken.”



Yellowhammer, Maxey Pits

Bainton Heath – another ten years

It's been one of our reserves for ten years already, managed with limited resources. Now, as STUART IRONS reports, the site has a new lease of life...

Bainton Heath has been one of our reserves for ten years following an initial lease agreement with National Grid plc, the site owners. During this time Langdyke managed the site as best we could with one or two volunteer work parties each year and organised a few guided walks for members and the public. There is no public access to the site.

The focus over the last ten years has been to record the wildlife. Until 2017 the reserve was a long running, constant effort bird ringing site with hundred of birds caught and ringed each year.

In 2011 we commissioned Pete Kirby to conduct an invertebrate survey. During the survey Pete recorded 849 species on invertebrate of which 64 are nationally scarce.

Since then, the number of invertebrates recorded at Bainton Heath has increased to 1028 species by continued recording by members and friends including several moth trapping sessions with Malcolm Hillier.

Pete's invertebrate survey is to be repeated during 2022. In 2012 LCT commissioned Jonathan Graham to conduct a mosses, liverworts and lichen survey and he found seven species of liverwort, 38 species of

moss and 40 species of lichen. Other surveys conducted include small mammals with Steve and Liz Lonsdale where six species of small mammal were recorded including water shrew. In addition, members have records of flowering plants, fungi, reptiles and amphibians found on the site.

**Invertebrate
numbers
increase to
1028**

Whilst Langdyke was able to conduct wildlife surveys and small scale management operations such as keeping a path open around the site, planting trees (suitably protected from deer browsing) and clearing willows and brambles from the south bank of the big pond we were unable to carry out more ambitious management projects.

Two issues in particular, were becoming a concern, firstly the increasing numbers of fallow deer are having a huge impact on the scrub and woodland areas of the reserve. The deer browsing has completely prevented natural tree regeneration and has thinned out the dense scrub

to such an extent that it has become unsuitable for nightingale breeding. Nightingales had not been heard on Bainton Heath since 2020.

Secondly, coarse grasses are becoming dominant in the open areas, outcompeting the smaller flowering plants, mosses and lichens which are an important feature of the reserve. However, the coarse grasses are the food plant for the caterpillars of a nationally rare moth called the concolorous moth. Bainton Heath is one of the best sites in the country for the concolorous moth so management of these coarse grasses must be done with care so as not to impact on the moth population.

With our original lease running out in 2021 and a new lease being required, it quickly became apparent that this was an opportunity to significantly improve the reserve both for wildlife and people.

Luckily the owners National Grid have come up with a generous funding package to support Langdyke's work for the next ten years.

Bainton Heath is an area of non-operational land for National Grid with no public access. We agreed that with additional capital and management resource, which are currently outside the scope and budget of Langdyke, environmental gain can be achieved.

A document has been drawn up jointly with National Grid which details targets to deliver enhancements to health and social wellbeing and biodiversity with Langdyke acting as agents. These activities are supported by a funding settlement and is subject to annual reporting and monitoring.

Increasing the number of educational and volunteering opportunities delivered



Big Pond



The scrub habitat showing signs of heavy deer browsing

by LCT, over and above the previous activity levels, provides an opportunity to increase the health and social wellbeing of local communities. We are committed to deliver an additional 72 visits to Bainton Heath each year by increasing the number of work parties and guided walks (a visit is defined as any engagement where a person is on site for two hours or more).

The Bainton Heath site supports a mosaic of habitats including woodland, ponds, grassland and scrub. These habitats are currently being managed for biodiversity, although the scope of the management is currently restricted by budgets. Discussions between National Grid and us have identified the potential for additional management works to enhance these habitats for biodiversity.

We have committed to regular enhanced management of the habitats present, over the course of the next ten years. The enhanced management practices will be based on the enhancement of habitat condition, as per the criteria published by Natural England, with regards Biodiversity Net Gain. The aim of the management is to restore the habitat on site to “open mosaic habitat on previously developed land” (OM). Currently the mosaic of habitats has matured to

represent a range of different habitat types (e.g. other neutral grassland, modified grassland and bramble scrub) that with management could be returned to their previous habitat types and condition.

The initial works required to increase the condition status of the woodland and restore the OM habitat at Bainton Heath include those listed below

- A series of deer exclusion areas with temporary deer proof fencing in selected woodland and dense scrub areas. These will be used to allow natural regeneration of trees in the woodland and diversification of scrub structure through coppicing. Additional planting may also take place in selected areas to increase species diversity.
- Restructure woodland (including creation of monoliths – standing dead trees with no branches) and increase diversity in species and age range.
- Remove non-native tree species, over time, as part of diversification. This may be managed decline or active removal. Decisions on retention of some non-natives (e.g. poplar) may be taken in light of other biodiversity benefits.
- Undertake tree works to improve the health of the standing stock where applicable. Action to make safe individual trees where necessary.
- A series of scrapes to expose bare ground to be created on a regular cycle. The cycle period to be determined by monitoring the rate of vegetation colonisation (eg on a five year cycle). The spoil from these scrapings can be used to create microhabitats of south facing bare ground.
- Removal of invasive non-native species such as Himalayan Giant Bramble and Buddleia.
- A baseline survey of vegetation structure by LIDAR (Light Detection And Ranging – using laser beams from an ariel drone to create an electronic 3D representation of the reserve) to accurately determine the current habitat %.
- Replace existing gate at SW corner opening onto the public footpath with a new gate and padlock and a new fence running along the length of the western perimeter adjacent to the public footpath.
- An area at the large pond for safe public viewing with suitable interpretation boards covering the history, wildlife and management of the site.
- Build an artificial otter holt.
- Erect owl, raptor and bat boxes in suitable locations.
- Veteranisation and the creation of monolith trees



Areas of bare ground amid the grassland habitat

Once these works have been conducted, they will require a series of management and monitoring tasks to ensure that they are delivering and continue to deliver the required environmental gains. These tasks include the following

- Carry out works to encourage natural regeneration of native trees in woodland area (e.g. place tree guards around seedlings).
- Coppice up to 0.5 ha of scrub annually to diversify structure.
- Monitor the deer exclusion areas for signs of tree/scrub regeneration.
- Monitor the created areas of bare ground for vegetation colonisation.
- Carry out works to maintain open ground and short species-rich grassland including removal of scrub, brush-cutting and ground disturbance as required.
- Monitor the artificial otter holt and owl, raptor and bats boxes for signs of occupation.
- Where possible allow natural processes to regenerate in the woodland however where

necessary whips can be planted and protected to improve diversity.

- Maintain a path around the site.
- Control invasive non-native plants.
- Maintain an open area, free from brambles between the 2 western ponds.
- Monitor spread of swamp vegetation in large pond and consider control if area is increasing.

We have detailed these actions into a management plan, which has been shared and agreed as suitable by National Grid. National Grid has provided a monitoring proforma that will be completed once per year as part of the typical inspection visits that National Grid perform each year to its leased land holdings. This monitoring proforma will be filled in annually for each habitat block identified on the site through baseline survey. The baseline survey information will be entered to form the baseline situation.

The actions taken will be detailed by the LCT and reported to National Grid each year. The reporting will include the number of visits for education purposes (ie guided walks or training courses) and spent implementing habitat management. A description of how the actions taken are contributing to the long-term goal of increasing the habitat condition of existing habitats or undertaking the creation of new habitats and steps to reach their target condition will be prepared.

**We invite
you to join
our weekly
work
parties**

So as you can see we are entering into a new and very exciting phase at Bainton Heath. It will require a lot of hard work over a long period of time but our work party volunteers are

prepared and looking forward to the challenge. If you would like to join us on our weekly work parties please contact me at **nebria@ntlworld.com**

Nature continues to thrive across our reserves

A lot of hard work goes into maintaining the nature across our land as DAVID COWCILL reports...

In year two of the UK's COVID response, and in line with popular perception of a need for access to the countryside for wellbeing, footfall at the publicly accessible reserves was greatly increased. Mainly this was without accident or incident, with the exception of some barbecue littering at Swaddywell. The social and observational outcomes were well documented with an increase in posting of good quality "what I saw today" photos and discussion on the LCT Facebook page.

Given COVID restrictions etc, members who would perhaps expect to travel to indulge in ornithology seem to have switched to (local) moth trapping! This also generated a second line of photo illustration and a series of lively "what species is this" dialogues.

Complementing the "Evening with..." Zoom programme, all these factors seem to me to show that LCT stepped up to the needs of the hour, and also affords some satisfaction and payback for all the volunteer hours that go into the management of the reserves. Thank you all.



Fieldfare at Etton Maxey Reserve

Etton Maxey Pit

It must be around ten years ago that the 3m high willow scrub was (mostly manually!) removed from the floor of the old gravel workings. The meadows woods and ditches have now matured and settled, and a satisfactory pattern of grazing and wet grassland management found - provided the water pump behaves itself.

The end of summer flail/cut was better timed this year in drier conditions and left a more natural mix of clear and tussocky areas. The Belted Galloway cattle returned in early summer to "muss up" the grassland with a rougher grazing regime - creating a better sward for invertebrate species.

Due to the quarrying history there is in fact a legal (planning) agreement in place with Peterborough City Council, defining some expected outcomes, and it is both reassuring and pleasing when our stewardship leads to the desired results.

We do not introduce anything to the reserve (except some grassland flowers on the paddocks) so it is particularly good to see steady (or indeed fluctuating) populations of waders - lapwing, little ringed plover, redshank, many ducks and more "exotics" - the marsh harrier, and a first for 2021 a bittern.

The starling murmuration was reasonable but not at 2020 standard - albeit the roost was itself in the reserve this year only on occasions. The common tern support was a failure as all rafts were colonised by Black Headed Gulls - even though terns initially settled on the rafts within hours of floating them out.

Otters have spread throughout the UK's cleaner waterways, and have been seen on the Welland and Maxey Cut for some time - but another 2021 first was a regular otter visit, captured on several trail cam photos, of a possibly young male coming into the



Poppies on Maxey cut bank

main lake. The impact on the carp will be of interest - there is an over-population from a general water-health perspective and what a brilliant natural way to manage it down (but not too far as carp fry also attract the egrets!).

The invasive crassula growth has spread throughout the main lakes, but not all the way into the ditches. It seemed to be pegged back by some hard frosts, but is now beyond mechanical control. Neither chemical nor biological control was considered desirable or feasible.

As part of a "live with it" approach, volunteers cut channels down to the underlying gravel bed, and this provided some feeding areas for the waders (as well as a 'muddy play' opportunity!). However also of interest the thick moist vegetation mat hosted frogs - not seen before in such numbers, so another example of a potential natural benefit and balance from an unplanned situation.

In another COVID consequence, several groups of Duke of Edinburgh Award participants from Stamford Endowed Schools, being unable to run their normal outdoors expeditions, were happy to change to a hybrid model of walking to the reserve, putting in a shift of nature conservation work, then returning to “camp out” for supper. Hopefully there will be a benefit down the line for the world of nature conservation as well as the clearance of the scrub area in the SW of the lakes.



Vergette Wood Meadow

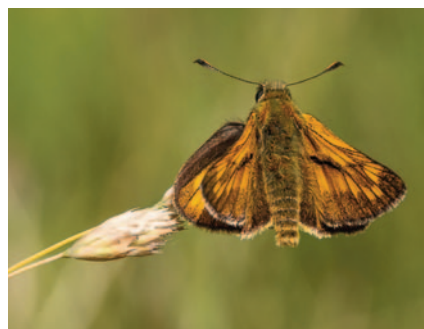
In mid summer, an access path was cut to enable members to experience the plethora of wild flowers and the insect life of the meadow. 153 different species of plants have been observed by Jean Stowe and her team over three years - showing how much natural resource is suppressed by arable farming, and the importance of Higher Level Stewardship schemes to conserve field margins.

The Sand Martin box had its first year of operation - but had to compete

with the natural banks of the ongoing quarry activity. An end of year clean-out showed that there had been some occupancy but there was no evidence of any successful brood outcomes.

The five elm trees saplings planted as a future avenue all survived some very dry periods - an encouraging start to a John Clare Country legacy.

Keeping the sheep out of the bottom of the hedge enabled it to thicken up again for the benefit of small mammals.



Etton High Meadow and Barn (EHB)

Initially EHB was “just” an overflow area for the sheep to avoid overgrazing on the reserves.

However it has begun to take on a more conservation role with more specific management regimes.

The orchard area is carefully cut (the trees are too young to allow in the

sheep), with an uncut area and a new wild flower seed area to the north. Pyramidal and the occasional bee orchid show in the main meadows, and the now mature boundary hedgerows have been augmented by internal hedge lines.

A small mammal survey found a now rare house mouse as well as the normal field mice voles and shrews.

The allotment area thrives and creates a small social community, enhanced by some selected planting in the peripheral banking. All in all, a small oasis in the arable landscape.

Swaddywell Pit

The grazing regime at Swaddywell has changed, with fewer numbers of the smaller Hebridean sheep. This has allowed more scrub to emerge (strangely now a rarer habitat than grassland) but requires more intervention in late summer to allow a balance of bare areas and meadow and the associated orchids to remain.

Overall this should benefit the insects and encouraging numbers of quite rare Grizzled and Dingy Skipper butterflies have been observed, and most importantly their food plant locations pinpointed for protection.

The variability of water flow into the reserve is of some concern - after a couple of very wet winters and capacious ground water flow, a couple of dry spring/summers has caused low water levels in the quarry bottom pond with consequently fewer crested newts.

This was compounded by strange events in the top pond by the cabin, when the lining of the pond appears to have become elevated and possibly pierced, once again causing low water level in the summer. Plans for rectification are in hand.

Several large areas of bramble on the north banks and the overgrown areas to the west of the quarry roadway has been cleared, as well as the roadway banking. A possible and pleasant consequence is the emergence of a second area of man orchid spikes. This complements the developing area of common spotted orchids in the dell under the North Bank - access to which is now safer with rails along the start of the circular pathway.

The small car park has been enlarged and flattened (a little!) to improve member's access.



Torpe

With no action from the Heritage and Archaeology Group Torpe has had a quiet year. Although the footfall on the public footpath (now much more navigable to Ashton) has increased, very few walkers seem to tarry in the field, perhaps looking forward to refreshment in Helpston?

2021 saw a near perfect hay meadow emerge, but a plan to take a hay crop fell through. It was flailed instead, but the arisings were collected (by machine) and removed (by hand - a thankless task for the Thursday work party volunteers). If anyone knows of a cut/ted/bale capability out there please let me know!

Frieda Gosling

Sadly, one of Langdyke's earliest members and the inspiration behind the Torpe Manor Field history project and many other initiatives, Frieda Gosling, passed away in March. Many of us will treasure fond memories of Frieda, not least of early Langdyke meetings in her kitchen, amply supplied with home-made cake. Our condolences to all her family and many, many friends.



Bainton Heath

Developments at Bainton are reported elsewhere. Perhaps one extra observation is to note that the long term permanent site bird ringing activity which has run for many years is in abeyance due to retirement of the bird ringer. Another very specialised volunteer opportunity awaits??



Nature improvement project surges ahead

It was been a hectic time for the newly formed John Clare Countryside vision project team as leader MIKE HORNE explains

We have been very busy over the last six months, and between October 16 2021 and April 21 2022 we've hosted 25 events, comprising of four Wellbeing Walks and 21 work parties.

In addition 376 people have taken part in our walks and events, and the JCC vision has been presented to an additional 132 people in eight groups (three parish councils, two wildlife groups, two corporate groups and one Women's Institute group)

From the 21 work parties, we've planted – to date:

1.2 kilometres of double hedgerow, 3,400 wildflower bulbs

550 wildflower plug plants

192 trees

we've created (or restored) **210 square metres** of wildflower meadow

Renovated **four ponds**

Renovated a **200 metre section** of the White Water Brook

Made **four ramps** to improve access to the Torpel Way footpath along the section of old railway line near Stamford, so that walkers can now more easily access the circular walk that Burghley Estate have created along the river Welland.



An access ramp



The New Year's Day walk

We've been working with the 19 parish councils - as well as private landowners, in the John Clare Countryside, and have been involved in identifying 90 projects. So far, 36 of those projects have been completed, 14 are still in the process of being completed and we are aiming to complete the outstanding 40 opportunities which will increase biodiversity in the John Clare Countryside during the next 8 months.

We've also been busy identifying dozens of Heritage sites within JCC that we want folks to visit whilst they are here, and we're going to be partnering with Sustrans (Who are 'The charity making it easier for people to walk and cycle') later this year, to investigate ways in which access can be improved to the John Clare Countryside without increasing the number of cars in the villages, and which, by happy coincidence, will also improve people's health and wellbeing by getting some gentle exercise and fresh air whilst out walking and cycling.

Our Verges Committee has been busy working with Peterborough City Council and Aragon to try and optimise the

availability of their special 'cut and collect' machinery that will be able to reduce the fertility of the many miles of grass verges that connect all of the villages by taking away the arisings. Our aim is to reduce the rank grassland and increase the number of wildflowers that grow along the roadsides.

By the time this is published we will have launched our website, so please take a look at:

www.johnclarecountryside.co.uk

We'll be adding our future events and news items to the site regularly.

To help celebrate the poet's birthday, the JCC team are going to be a part of the John Clare Festival this year, held at John Clare Cottage on Woodgate in Helpston on Saturday July 16 and Sunday July 17 July (**clarecottage.org**)

Hope to see you there!



Surveying

The JCC vision is being delivered right across the rural landscape as DAVID ALVEY describes here

During 2021 we established a very strong and productive relationship with many major landowners within the John Clare Countryside. The discussions have focussed on some initial projects that will help with delivery of the John Clare Countryside vision and lead to widespread nature recovery in the area not just on the reserves Langdyke Countryside Trust and our partner organisations own and/or manage.

Whilst the majority of 2021 has been spent in discussion, planning and fund raising for these projects two of the ideas have delivered results in quarter 1 of 2022.

Torpel Way Woodland Access

In partnership with Burghley Estate and Welland Rivers Trust public access paths through woodland and adjacent to the Welland River were cleared for all year round access. To improve access from the Torpel Way and the meadows area east of Stamford a successful bid for funding was made to ENRMF to install a gate through a fence line and ramps down the steep banks of the old railway embankment along which the Torpel Way runs in this area. The ramps were completed in April 2022 and the gate is scheduled for installation along with steps up the embankment in Summer of 2022. These two loops allow scenic circular walks from the edge of Stamford along the river bank of the Welland and provide views back towards Burghley House from the Torpel Way. As well as frequent sightings of Kingfishers along the river during construction one specific occasion the simultaneous appearance overhead of a Red Kite

and Buzzard was supplemented by an Osprey prospecting the river for fish. This access project complements and connects with the Welland River Trusts/ Burghley Estates work to re-configure the confluence of the Welland and Gwash rivers. Assistance with the seeding of the newly re-connected meanders of the Gwash into the ancient flood meadow and support to fund the planting of 9 specimen trees in the meadow south of the river add to this publically accessible landscape. Further work is planned during 2022 to continue to enhance the area for nature recovery and public enjoyment.

White Water Brook

A stretch of spring fed water on the western side of John Clare Countryside with the potential to rival the “chalk streams” in the south of the county of Cambridgeshire for its important rare habitat. Discussions with Burghley Estate, Walcot Estate and William Scott Abbot Trust at Sacrewell has initiated a project to restore and enhance the natural value of the 15 kilometres of this waterway and its surrounding ancient flood plain and tributaries. Running from north of Wittering airfield down to its confluence with the River Nene near Sutton it already has two SSSI and three county wildlife sites along its length. Connecting these up, enhancing the county wildlife sites and restoring the brook to a more natural channel replacing the lengths that have been straightened since the 1880's are key elements of this project. The potential importance of this catchment area is enhanced by considerable deposits of Tufa. A natural mineral deposit of spring fed

limestone streams that forms barrages and cascades which provide habitat for a range of rare species including the moss Curled Hook-moss *Palustriella commutata* which is recognised as a European habitat feature with rare invertebrates specialising in this habitat. Initial phase of work has now been completed to investigate the effect of adding riffles to raise the water level in the “sunken” brook and to add variety of flow rates to the stream to improve bio-diversity. A small Langdyke work party in October, cleared invasive scrub from a small length of one bank of the brook and added some of the cut down timber as features across the stream to add bio-diversity and promote the potential formation of more Tufa along a deeply incised and straightened length. This is just a small start to what is an exciting opportunity to restore a whole catchment to a nature rich and attractive landscape.

Wellbeing and MindSpace (Stamford)

Our partnership with the mental health charity in Stamford continued during 2021 with particular work on developing their outdoor resource at the MindSpace Garden located on allotments close to Mole on the Uffington Road into Stamford. A vegetable bed and three raised flower beds have been installed in a gravelled area known as the active garden with plans to incorporate an open structure to facilitate all weather use and provide a focal point for activities. The garden as well as providing members with the opportunity to actively garden provides a complementary outdoor space to their main centre of activity in

Continued overleaf

JCC vision continued

the Café of Broad Street in Stamford. A key part of the project is to support the “5 ways to well being” and with that in mind and the potential for it to provide a safe stepping stone into the attractive nature rich countryside Langdyke have and are creating across the John Clare Countryside much of the garden is intended to have a wildlife rich and relaxed feeling. The calm garden has had initial winding paths mown through the current vegetation. During the year willow screens have been planted to provide shelter and height to this area of the garden along with transplanted Teasels, ox-eye daisy, foxgloves and cowslips. The continued battle to remove the excessive population of brambles and abundant growth of bindweed and nettles continues and diverse habitat in terms of rotting timber, a dry hedge and the initiation of a large “bug hotel” have kept all busy in these early stages.

The five ways of enabling members to exercise wellbeing are:

- **Connect** – provide opportunities to meet others
- **Be active** – provide physical activities
- **Take Notice** – provide time and space to observe nature at close quarters and during changing seasons
- **Learn** – provide information on what members are seeing
- **Give** – provide the chance to help create a marvellous community space.

Our focus will continue to inform this year's projects and enhancements as the garden really takes shape.

Restoring colour to our road verges

An important part of the John Clare Countryside project involves creating nature friendly road verges as SARAH LAMBERT explains...

In November 2020, Langdyke Countryside Trust helped to set up the John Clare Countryside Verges Working Group, which brought together representatives from Peterborough City Council (PCC), The Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire Wildlife Trust (BCNWT), Peterborough Environment City Trust (PECT) and parishes across the area to seek ways of improving road verge management for biodiversity.

The group has achieved several notable successes in 2021, both on verges within villages, and on the most species-rich rural verges designated as County Wildlife Sites (CWS).

In January 2021, the group co-ordinated proposals from several parishes to change the management on several areas of grassland managed by Aragon for PCC.

In Barnack, the Parish Council used green hay from the nearby cemetery, which boasts an impressive flora including Man and Pyramidal Orchids, to diversify a small area of open space. They have set up a monitoring scheme to assess the success of this work .

In Glinton, Aragon responded positively to a request to change the mowing regime of the broad verge on the southern approach to the village. This allowed Bee Orchids to flower for the first time in many years. Glinton Parish Council have a management plan to further improve the diversity of this area and are in discussion with Peterborough City Council about implementation.

In June, the group met in person for the first time in the garden of Julie and Cliff Stanton at Bainton. After a productive meeting in glorious surroundings, we looked at the village verges, managed sensitively by Bainton Parish Council using a local contractor. They support a varied flora including a spectacular show of spring flowers including Primroses, Sweet Violets and Lesser Celandines, followed by summer flowers including Pyramidal Orchids. There was much discussion of practical issues, such as how to dispose of arisings from verges mown only once or twice a year, and ways of managing



A road verge orchid



Surveying a roadside verge

grassland to improve biodiversity without upsetting residents who may be more used to 'tidy' verges.

Plantlife have shown that lawns and verges mown monthly provide a particularly rich resource for pollinators, as they tend to contain good quantities of common low-growing wild plants such as Dandelion, Daisy, White Clover, Selfheal and Autumn Hawkbit, which flower for an extended period.

In April 2021 trial sections of two CWS verges on the limestone in Barnack and Bainton were cut in early April, to reduce winter growth, and to try and counteract the negative impacts of warmer, wetter winters and increases in aerial nitrogen. Unfortunately, the strange weather of 2021 meant that the effects of this cut were minimal.

Persistently wintry weather in March and April prevented grass growth, which meant that the additional cut removed little vegetation; a very damp May followed, which encouraged abnormally vigorous grass growth and by June it was impossible to distinguish the trial sections from the uncut sections.

In early July 2021 Sarah Lambert ran a training day at Windmill Farm CWS to introduce volunteers from Bainton and Barnack to a standard

rapid grassland monitoring system.

Teams of volunteers monitored the trial verges in July and August, and although analysis of the results is not complete, it was clear that some stretches of verge were in poor condition, particularly those with a northerly or easterly aspect, or where hedges or trees provided excessive shade. Other areas, particularly unshaded lengths with a south or west aspect where limestone is close to the surface, were in better condition, with good displays of key species including Pyramidal Orchid, Tall Broomrape, Field Scabious and Wild Liquorice. Low-growing species such as Salad Burnet and Hoary Plantain were rare, and often confined to lengths of verge cut more frequently for safety reasons. The JCC Verges Working Group had planned to repeat the verge monitoring annually throughout the three-year trial, but it was subsequently decided to use 2021 as a baseline and repeat the process after three years, when positive effects from the extra cut might be more detectable.

PCC are currently examining ways that finance from Biodiversity Net Gain can support management of CWS verges, and we anticipate that over the next couple of years it will be possible to conduct an

additional cut and collect on all CWS verges at a time of year appropriate to the flora. PCC are also investigating the replacement of current kit which is at the end of its life with machines which are better suited to enhancing the biodiversity of road verges. They have also produced advice for parishes and other landowners on aspects of changing the management of road verges which can be found at

<https://www.peterborough.gov.uk/council/planning-and-development/conservation-trees-and-hedges/natural-environment-partnership#road-verges-8-0>

2021 has been a year of steady progress, enabled by many organisations working together in a spirit of co-operation. Hopefully, this progress will continue in subsequent years, and will help to achieve a vision of flowery verges buzzing with insect life throughout the JCC area.



Another creative year for Langdyke

Our Artists in Residence have continued to be very active out in nature as KATHRYN PARSONS reports

At the end of 2020, Sarah Lambert joined me as a second Langdyke Artist in Residence. Sarah and I are both keenly aware of how important nature and creativity are for many people's happiness and wellbeing, including our own.

Simply looking at photographs of nature can reduce stress, while

using creativity as a pathway to becoming more connected with nature has many proven benefits.

This knowledge, our passion for nature, people and creativity is what underpins our work, and a year into the pandemic a desire to contribute to wellbeing and nature connectedness were key motivating

factors behind our plans. Sadly COVID restrictions and other related factors meant some things including the Nature:Connect workshops had to be shelved. However, much was accomplished by ourselves and others, despite the ongoing difficulties...



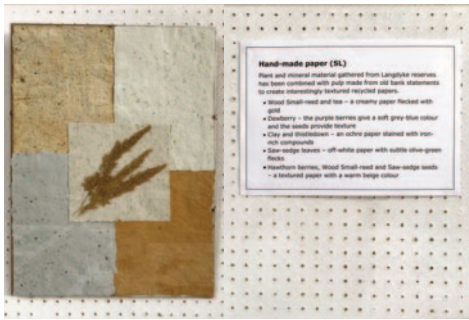
The Artists In Residence...

For Langdyke's Open Day in July 2021, we created an art trail specifically designed with wellbeing and nature connectedness at its core. Some of the activities on the art trail were inspired by John Clare's poetry, while others were invitations to look or listen deeply. We created site-specific Langdyke-inspired artworks for the trail too - sharing our own responses to the wildlife, landscape and local history. These included a display of Sarah's experimental cyanotype Swaddywell photographs created using plant

material and earth from the site. A "Treasure Tree" was hung with my miniature insect sculptures, made using materials I'd collected from Langdyke reserves, as a way to highlight the importance of these sites for moths and other insects. We were bowled over by the messages of thanks, which confirmed again just how significant nature and creativity are to people's wellbeing... and in response to several requests we left the art trail in place for far longer than originally planned!

In October, we were invited to exhibit a small collection of our Langdyke-

inspired artworks at the Maxey and Deeping Art Group (MAD) exhibition, at Maxey Village Hall. Our display included Sarah's handmade paper, cyanotypes and photographs and some of my larger insect sculptures, all created using plants from Langdyke's reserves in order to draw attention to the biodiversity on the reserves. To go alongside the artworks, Keren Thompson produced a fantastic information-based display about Langdyke. It was a very successful way to spread the news about the Trust's work, and we'd like to thank MAD for the invitation!



Throughout the year Sarah and I continued to blog about nature on the reserves and the surrounding area, on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Blogspot, spreading the word about our marvellous wildlife and the Trust's work. Sarah also

gave a fascinating talk about her work as an ecologist, botanist and photographer in March, as part of Langdyke's "In Conversation With" series. And in December Sarah launched an on-going community project to find and record the all the

ancient and veteran trees in John Clare Countryside! Spanning art and science, this was the first phase of a shift in focus for our work, as Artists In Residence, as we started to explore the wider landscape around Langdyke's nature reserves.



Other creative Langdyke events...

At the Open Day, many visitors took part in a wonderful creative workshop organised by Judith Good - it was a celebration of the magnificent Starling murmurations over the Eastern Reserves, which had enthralled and cheered many of us during the previous winter. Many dozens of cardboard Starlings were gorgeously decorated at this and subsequent Langdyke events. The whole flock were displayed at Etton Maxey in November - timed to welcome the real Starling murmurations back to the reserve!

Sadly pandemic-related factors meant that the Thank You Nature exhibition was cancelled. However, September marked the start of a series of "Langdyke Creative" get-togethers led by Judith Good and Charron Pugsley-Hill. Langdyke Creative met monthly throughout the winter. The opportunity to meet with others in the safety of the outdoors was much appreciated by a many hardy Langdyke members!

All in all, although COVID had an impact on what we were able to accomplish, 2021 was still a remarkably creative year!



Acknowledgements

Many thanks to all those who have contributed articles in this year's annual review and to all of the volunteers who through their offices make the Trust the success it is.

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Editor: David Rowell
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David Rowell



Great Crested Newt

We are grateful for the support we have throughout the year from our friends and partners in many organisations including Natural England, The Wildlife Trusts, John Clare Society, John Clare Trust, Tarmac, National Grid, Peterborough City Council, Milton Estates, Burghley Estate, the Internal Drainage Board and Welland Rivers Trust.



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