

ACLE LANDS TRUST: CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2021

For the last 12 months our management of the Trust Lands has been limited by "lock-down" restrictions. However, over the previous five years all the lands had been actively conserved to the extent that a "rest" was not a bad thing. Only essential maintenance and unplanned work was needed and this was carried out.

In **DAMGATE WOOD**, a few more mature Ash trees beside the footpath died as a result of ash-dieback disease and these were felled in October for public safety, the cost being borne by the Parish Council. The previous month a large Ash within the railway reserve had fallen into our land blocking the footpath and we used our chainsaw to clear it.

During November the Environment Agency carried out remedial work to Coleman's Drain to benefit wildlife. Jutting log barriers were constructed on the bank to slow the flow (good for the Water Voles) and an Otter holt was built in the hope that Otters might one day reside there.

We could not find any Japanese Knotweed in the area where our eradication efforts had been directed the previous summer, but we will continue to monitor the situation.

Along the footpath safety inspections of trees were carried out at least monthly and after storms. Encroaching brambles and nettles were trimmed regularly.

Cadent are planning to relocate a section of mains gas pipe from the railway reserve under our land in order to bypass the railway bridge. This major engineering work will at some time in the future necessitate closing the footpath, ostensibly for several months. We are negotiating with Cadent to mitigate the disruption. At present the site work has been postponed until 2022.

In **ROMAN WOOD**, the Bure Valley Conservation Group (BVCG) volunteers were able to mow and rake the wildflower meadow, two-thirds in late July and the remainder in September. Splitting the cut meant that a nectar supply was maintained and the breeding cycle of certain insects preserved. We intend the annual mow to be rotational in this way in future.

We cut the paths throughout the summer as necessary. Unfortunately, due to unprecedented usage throughout the lock-down period, sections were widened and new paths formed. Sadly our efforts to block damaging extra paths were maliciously negated by one or more unknown persons. Part of the wild flower meadow was trampled while exercising dogs. As one dog walker understandably pointed out "where else can we go?"

A large willow blew down across a path in September and we used our chainsaw to clear it.

In **CONSTABLE DOLES**, no grazier could be found to replace our small in-house herd of cows that ceased to exist after 2019. BVCG was available to work during the autumn ease of lock-down restrictions and they carried out a thorough cut & rake, as specified in our HLS Agreement to remedy the lack of grazing.

Two of the very large White Willows were blown down during September, falling across and blocking the Weavers Way alongside our boundary. Our chainsaw team did an exceptional job in re-opening the public footpath and cutting up the debris. BVCG were on hand to move the cuttings back onto the Doles and burn them there. In November Environment Agency contractors lifted the trunks straddling the Landspring Drain as part of their annual drain clearance operation.

The growth of willow scrub in the fen habitat (SSSI) was so dense that it was necessary to employ a specialist contractor to remove it during November (in accordance with our obligations under our HLS Agreement). The Parish Council met the cost of this operation.

We have kept the **WEAVERS WAY** around Acle cut & passable throughout lock-down.

Our grateful thanks to all who have helped us during this unprecedented year: the Parish Council for their financial and strong moral support and BVCG who undertook tasks at short notice. I thank my fellow Trustees who as always deliver whenever things need to be done.