



***A Chronology of Conservation Campaigning:
a synopsis of key dates in the history of
the 'battle for the bogs' at Thorne and Hatfield Moors.***



Helen R Kirk: March 2014.



THORNE AND HATFIELD MOORS CONSERVATION FORUM

Formed in 1989 Thorne and Hatfield Moors Conservation Forum acts as an umbrella for a wide range of like-minded organisations. Its extensive network is drawn from voluntary organisations and natural history societies, and it has observers from statutory agencies and local authorities. The rationale behind the creation of an organisation which could discuss and debate key issues relating to the conservation of Thorne and Hatfield Moors and then act as a separate entity whilst remaining collaborative made sense. The Executive Committee could act in a timely manner as it was not constrained by internal protocols which might prevent or water down the message if each organisation acted individually. Collective action was powerful and there was benefit from working together

The Forum has frequently been forced to take on a campaigning role, but this aspect of its work has always been underpinned by sound science, and research, survey and monitoring remain key activities. The Forum is administered by an Executive Committee.

Many of the founding members from the 'professional conservation organisations', generally employees, have since moved on, or are sadly no longer with us. The Forum has however continued to keep a local focus whilst still working with the national network; it undertakes and commissions surveys, monitoring and it publishes its findings extensively in a variety of media. See <http://www.thmcf.org/home.html>

The Forum has also embraced the more modern communication tool of blogging, interestingly it seems to be the campaigning posts which often receive more visits than the nature notes and associated photographs. See <http://thmcf.wordpress.com/>

The Forum aims:

- To conserve the biodiversity, and the geological, palaeoecological, archaeological and historic features of Thorne and Hatfield Moors and the wider Humberhead Levels,
- To promote Thorne and Hatfield Moors as a natural and cultural resource, at all levels.
- To encourage high quality research to provide a scientific basis for the conservation of Thorne and Hatfield Moors.
- To disseminate knowledge and understanding of Thorne and Hatfield Moors, and of the issues affecting them.
- To facilitate communication and co-operation between organisations that share the above objectives.
- To encourage understanding and enjoyment of wildlife and the countryside through education programmes aimed at the community.

Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?

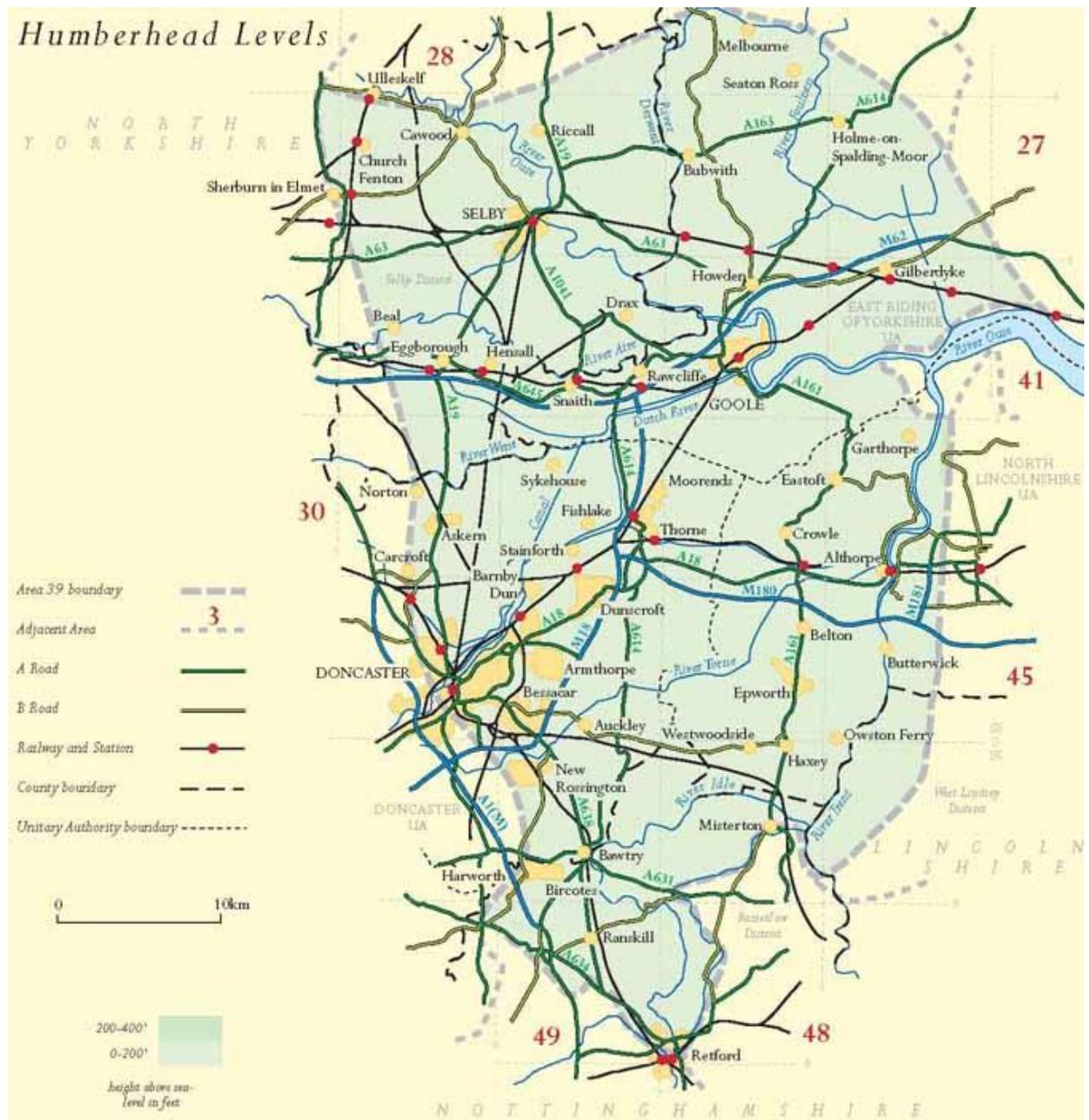
Follow us on: <http://thmcf.wordpress.com/>
& visit us at: <http://www.thmcf.org/home.html>

Thorne & Hatfield Moors Conservation Forum
P O Box 879, Thorne, Doncaster, DN8 5WU.

Execsec@thmcf.org

Please remember that the Forum is a voluntary group and do not receive funding other than that which we raise ourselves.

The Humberhead Levels

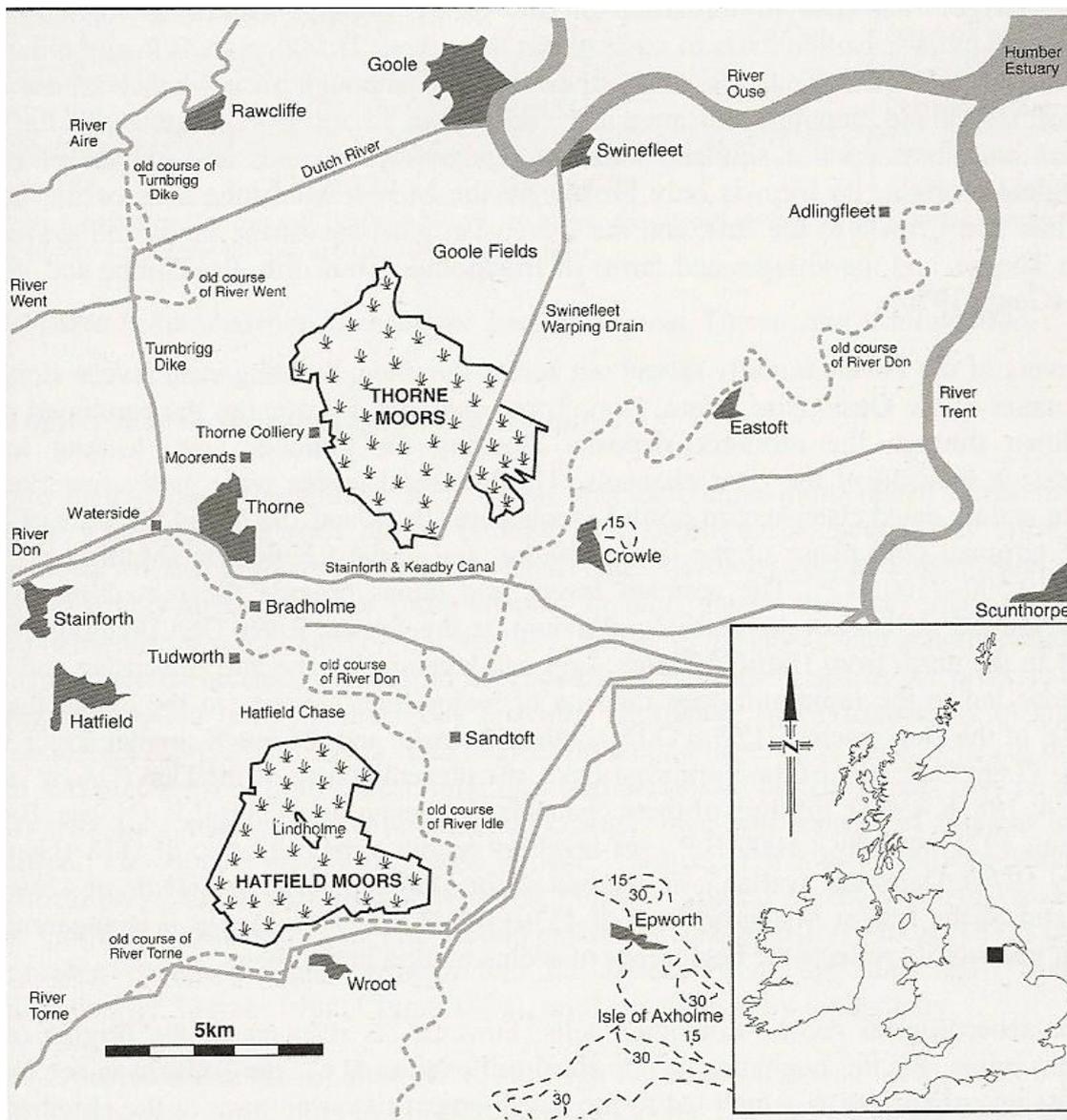


- An area of c.880 square miles (2275 sq. km).
- Cover parts of three counties, Yorkshire (south and east), North Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire.
- View from the highest point, Gringley Beacon 269' / 82m.
- The name was invented and coined by the seminal national study of the character of the English landscape in 1998.

Key Characteristics

- A flat landscape occupying the area of the former pro-glacial Lake Humber.
- Very low-lying, commonly at or below mean high-water mark.
- Surface geology of drift deposits, including glacial tills, clays, peat, sand and gravel and wind-blown sand, giving local variations in character.
- Broad floodplains of major navigable rivers draining to the Humber Estuary with extensive areas of washlands and some alluvial flood meadows.

- Rich high-quality land which is intensively farmed and includes substantial areas of warp land.
- Essentially flat, very open character with occasional rising ground formed by ridges of sand and outcrops of Mercia Mudstone.
- Very large open fields divided by dykes, with relatively few hedgerows or field trees.
- Peat bogs of international ecological and historical importance which were widely exploited for commercial peat extraction until 2002 (2005/6).
- Widespread evidence of drainage history in rivers, old river courses, ditches, dykes and canals.
- Important areas of historic landscape such as the more enclosed agricultural landscape at Fishlake, the remnant open fields of the Isle of Axholme and the unique 'cable' landscape of Thorne.
- Areas of remnant heath and large, isolated conifer plantations on poor sandy soils.
- Modern motorways on embankments and large installations, notably power stations, which are often prominent in the flat landscape.



Timeline

c.14,000 years ago post glacial Lake Humber
c.10,000 years ago Neolithic man (Hatfield trackway discovered 2004)
c. 4,000 years ago Bronze age (Trackway on Thorne discovered 1972)

1407 Inclesmoor map produced.

1626 Cornelius Vermuyden, Dutch drainage engineer is commissioned by Charles I to drain much of the wetland of Hatfield Chase. Recall also, that the Crown had inherited Hatfield subject to the maintenance of the rights of common, thus began the battle

Early diarists such as Geo. Stovin (born *circa* 1695), Abraham De la Pryme (1671 – 1704), Tomlinson (c.1882), eloquently in the delightful diction of the day describe the landscape before drainage created the agri-industrial landscape now surrounding the Moors.

1848 The Thorne Moors Improvement Company set up, authorised by the Thorne Moor Drainage and Improvement Act.

1821 Swinefleet Warping Drain cut, allowing flooding by river water and bringing in silt-rich deposits to improve the land for agriculture.

1856 Makin Durham, opens Durham's Warping Drain.

1880 small scale commercial peat extraction begins

1950s Planning consents granted for peat extraction on Thorne and Hatfield Moors. Some of the permissions ran until 2025. No conditions attached to any.

1963 British Moss Litter Company becomes Fisons, then Levington's

1969 Bunting takes on the WRCC when a proposal is submitted to dump fly ash on 'Thorne Waste'. WB's calling card included an unattributed 18th Century verse:

1972 Bronze Age trackway discovered on Thorne Moors.

1975 First recorded occurrence of *Bembidion humerale*, the Thorne Moors beetle in the UK.

In 1976 Bunting lost his application to have Thorne Moors registered as common land.

But in 1983 he also took his appeal to the High Court where Justice Mervyn Davies upheld his application & right of turbary was granted to *Periplaneta* his house in Thorne. Unfortunately the Judge refused to consider whether Fison's title to the land was based on fraud, as Bunting claimed.

1983 Bunting produces "*An Outline Study of the Level of Hatfield Chase*".

1985 NNR declared after (113 acres) purchased around 1975 after Fison's found guilty of illegal peat extraction on Snaith & Cowick Moors.

1987 Dutch system of strip milling introduced on Hatfield Moors.

1987 Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust purchase 290 acres (118 ha), which included the area they had been managing since 1971.

1989 Thorne & Hatfield Moors Conservation Forum founded.

1990s A series of surveys are undertaken, most notably of the invertebrates of the two Moors, although Fison's only provide limited access particularly on Hatfield Moors. The data obtained from these surveys were published and also formed the basis of *An Inventory of the Invertebrates of Thorne & Hatfield Moors*, by Peter Skidmore published in 2006.

1991 *Thorne Moors* by Catherine Caufield published, it is 70 pages which outline the campaigns as well as charting the socio-economic story of Thorne Moors. It includes brief allusion to the natural history interest but is effectively a tribute to William Bunting of Thorne. She dedicates the book to WB: "*Naturalist, Archivist, Rebel, Bad-tempered old sod and Inspiration*".

1992 The 'Peat Campaign' brings Fison's to the negotiating table, Thorne and Hatfield Moors "gifted" to the nation through English Nature but peat extraction continues unabated consequential of a leaseback agreement negotiated behind closed doors (eventually established when agreement became public in 1997).

1995 Wm Bunting dies.

1997 English Nature fails to oppose sand and gravel extraction on Poor Piece on Hatfield Moors. Following a challenge led by the Forum and supported by the RSPB, EN revises their stance.

Victory is short lived when later in the same year, 1997, English Nature decide to denotify 35% of Hatfield Moors and 5% of Thorne Moors of their protective SSSI status. In the opinion of NE they are no longer of SSSI quality

1997 Dr Derek Langslow (Chief Executive of English Nature) attends a Public Meeting at Thorne Grammar School at which around a reported 400 local people vent their feelings after discovering that the hydrological reports upon which EN based their assessment were funded by Fison's, the peat mining company.

A collaborative campaign is relaunched and the Forum funds and submits a series of reports which challenge EN and Fison's science. The public take the beleaguered moors to their hearts again and the Minister 'encourages' EN to review its decision.

House of Commons, Environment Transport and Regional Affairs Committee (Ninth Report) Session 1997 – 98 [scrutinise the conduct and work of] English Nature.

1998 Levington's bought out by American company Scotts to become Scotts (UK) Ltd.

2000 Thorne & Hatfield Moors SSSI designated as Special Protection Area (SPA) under the European Birds Directive. Nightjar is the special interest feature.

The NGOs maintain the pressure and in 2002 consequential of impact upon sales of peat and a bad public image of both the industry and Scott's (UK) Ltd, the successors to Fisons, agree to accept compensation for loss of earnings from peat extraction (£17.3m and a further £1.32m as payment for assistance with restoration management). This also removes the legal requirement for a restoration plan to be funded by Scott's (UK) Ltd.

2002 The Forum organise and host a two day Ministerial Conference "*Peat – the way forward, a future for the UK's peatlands?*" It brings together key stakeholders to discuss options for the future.

2003 SoS gives approval for Finningley airport

2003 Hatfield Moors registered as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) as Lowland Raised Mire under the European Habitats Directive.

In September 2004 amidst a media campaign, Scott's (UK) Ltd cease extraction on Hatfield and Thorne Moors as well as Wedholme Flow in Cumbria. Despite this, cuts are taken on Belton Moor in successive seasons to ensure permissions are extant on land they retained ownership of and extraction permissions on.

2004 Thorne Moors registered as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) for Lowland Raised Mire under the European Habitats Directive. Thorne Moors was first listed as a Candidate SAC in June 1995.

2004 Neolithic trackway discovered on Hatfield Moors.

2005 The Forum apply for and are granted Third Party Interest Status in a Public Inquiry in respect of and in support of North Lincolnshire Council's Enforcement Action relating to alleged illegal peat extraction on Crowle Moors.

2005 & 2006 Scott's (UK) Ltd continue to take cuts across peat fields over which they retain ownership and extraction permissions on at Belton Moor (Hatfield Moors).

2006 Stephen Westoby Warburton a founding member of the Forum dies. The Guardian newspaper describes the Northamptonshire farmer's son as "The Guardian of the Yorkshire Landscape".

2008 Long running campaign of local opposition with objections by Natural England, DMBC and many others to Tween Bridge Wind Farm (South Yorkshire), approved and signed off by the Secretary of State after a joint Public Inquiry (Keadby, North Lincolnshire) held in the East Riding of Yorkshire.

Local community pot from wind farm developers is £50,000 pa for 25 years (£1.25m). NE negotiate £50,000 pa for 35 years (£1.75m) for providing access across public land to E-On, whilst 'objecting' to the development.

2009 Entomologist and Honorary Life Member of the Forum Peter Skidmore dies.

To date the Reviews of Mineral Planning Permissions required by the Habitats Directive has yet to be concluded. The three Planning Authorities at Doncaster MBC (by far the largest area lies within this LA district), North Lincolnshire Council and the East Riding of Yorkshire Council have yet to complete the requirement.

The chronology has ended here because some of the issues now are ongoing casework.

What's so special a few interesting facts & figures about Thorne & Hatfield Moors

- Largest lowland raised bogs in the UK: 3,400ha (area of the SAC),
- About 7% of Britain was once peatland, but only 5.3% of this was lowland raised mire - far more was in the form of extensive upland blanket mire. Only 6% of that 5.3% now survives, and about a third of it - 4000 ha - is at Thorne & Hatfield Moors.
- SSSI, SAC, SPA, qualifies as a Ramsar Wetland,
- Best documented palaeoecological site in the UK.
- The recorded insect fauna of both Moors exceeds 5500 species (c.25% of the British fauna) with over 30 Red Data Book Species and over 250 nationally scarce species, including six known from no other sites in Britain. Three of the latter were new to Britain in 1992, and further species are added each year .
- In terms of its invertebrate fauna, Thorne Moors is the richest peatland site in Britain, containing the fourth largest assemblage of rare species of any British site irrespective of habitat . Hatfield Moor is in the top ten of such sites and yet is acknowledged as being under-recorded .
- The Moors are notable as the only British localities for the Red Data Book (RDB) category 1 ground beetle *Bembidion humerale* and the RDB1 pill beetle *Curimopsis nigrita*, both of which are rare throughout Europe. *Phaonia jaroschewskii*, a RDB2 Muscid is currently known only from the Moors.
- Birds: around 233 species recorded from Thorne Moors and 223 from Hatfield Moors. About 100 species breed across the sites.
- White-spotted Bluethroat bred for the first time in the UK on Thorne Moors in the mid 1990's.
- Botany: around 400 species recorded from Thorne Moors, c.287 on Hatfield Moors.
- Fungi: 283 species (up until 1987) were recorded in the Thorne Moors area. In the region of 106 species of Ascomycetes recorded from Hatfield Moors on a BMS Foray in May 2011.
- Lichens: c.62 species up until 1987 recorded from Thorne Moors.

- Mosses: c.130 species from Thorne Moors (inc. Crowle Moors), 121 from Hatfield Moors.
- Butterflies: c.31 species on Thorne and around 20 on Hatfield Moors.
- Moths: around 674 (372 macro & 302 micro) species on Thorne.
- In 1999, the first record of *Evarca arcuata* for Yorkshire, found on Hatfield Moors!
This small salticid spider is the wetland cousin of one of the black and white striped jumping spiders you might find in your kitchen or bathroom. This amidst the ongoing battles to save the sites!
- In 2012 a first for the UK was added to the list: *Streptanus okaensis* a small leafhopper!



Coenonympha tullia (Large Heath)

Is there a future for our peatlands?

Ongoing issues:

- *Forest sell off followed by the*
- *Great NNR give away to 'Big Society' quasi quangoes*
- *Open Access across all public NNRs*
- *Ensuring compliance with Habitats Directive*
- *National Eco-system Assessment*
- *Value as a carbon sink*
- *Sequestration potential for future generations*
- *Agricultural intensification & food security*

Commercial / Government valuations aka: the National Ecosystem Assessment

UK NEA conceptual framework

- *Drivers of Change*
- *Environmental change (e.g. rainfall, sea level)*
- *Socioeconomic changes (e.g. markets, preferences, demographic)*
- *Policies, governance*

The UK NEA classifies services into four types:

- *Provisioning services: the products we obtain from ecosystems such as food, fibre and fresh water.*
- *Regulating services: the benefits we obtain from the regulation of ecosystem processes such as regulation of pollination, the climate, noise and water.*
- *Cultural services: the non-material benefits we obtain from ecosystems, for example through spiritual or religious enrichment, cultural heritage, recreation and tourism or aesthetic experience.*
- *Supporting services: ecosystem functions that are necessary for the production of all other ecosystem services such as soil formation and the cycling of nutrients and water.*

The Precautionary Principle:

The precautionary principle in European law is now enshrined in Article 174(2) of the EC Treaty. The Environmental Assessment Directive (85/337/EEC, as amended) makes express reference to the need to assess the environmental impacts of development projects within the context of the precautionary principle.

If there is to be a future, then what will it look like?

- *A wilderness, big skies & wide open space?*
- *Domesday record of climate change over the millennia?*
- *Climate regulator?*
- *Resource for horticulture?*
- *Country theme parks?*
- *Developed for commercial use (eg. wind farms)?*
- *It all depends upon what YOU want*

*The law locks up the man or woman
Who steals the goose from off the common
But leaves the greater villain loose
Who steals the common from off the goose.*

*The law demands that we atone
When we take things we do not own
But leaves the lords and ladies fine
Who take things that are yours and mine.*

*The poor and wretched don't escape
If they conspire the law to break;
This must be so but they endure
Those who conspire to make the law.*

*The law locks up the man or woman
Who steals the goose from off the common
And geese will still a common lack
Till they go and steal it back.*

Rachel Carson (1907 – 1964), from 'Silent Spring'.

*Those who contemplate the beauty of the Earth find reserves of strength that will
endure as long as life lasts.*

*There is a symbolic as well as actual beauty in the migration of birds, the ebb and flow
of tides, the folded bud ready for spring.*

*There is something infinitely healing in the repeated refrains of nature – the assurance
that dawn comes after the night and spring after winter.*

Sir Harry Godwin.

*“Any fool can appreciate mountain scenery, but it takes a man of discernment to
appreciate the fens”.*

In memoriam of those before us:

William Bunting 1916 – 1995
Stephen Westoby Warburton 1950 – 2004
Peter Skidmore 1936 – 2009