



Registered Charity No 701627

Summer 2020

Holderness Countryside



A Lockdown hug from nature.....Andy Mason

Journal of the South Holderness Countryside Society

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No 137 - Free to members. Available to non-members for a minimum donation of £1.50

Chairman's Report

What a strange few months we have just had, and I expect things are not likely to get back to what we all considered 'normal' for some time. My attempt at 'social distancing' saw me on the church roof clearing gutters. I felt quite good about it until our resident botanist asked me to assure him that I wasn't scraping the lichen off the walls! No, it's all still there looking like a beautiful multi-coloured carpet.

I found that my weekends became my own again so once I had finished my shift at work I had chance to follow some of my hobbies instead of preparing for fund raising, talks, services; so a little candle making, poetry, reading, and preparing badgework for our Young Nats who were not allowed to meet. More on their progress later.

A challenge was set, at the suggestion of long term member Mr Alan Burnham, for our members to take part in a Nature Watch from our own back garden. Some of the results have started coming in and they make wonderful reading. It's not too late as the butterflies are thriving, mammals seem to have developed a confidence and curiosity during the lockdown with the lack of cars on the road, and as the world has slowed down a little humans seem to have had slightly less impact on the nature around us allowing it to thrive.

Our reserves have been monitored regularly by our dedicated members, safely and within allowable guidelines of course, and our thanks go out to them.

Membership subscriptions are due on 1st September and I would like to thank each and every one of you for your support, even throughout our difficulties in printing and posting out this journal, and for your future support to help to look after our reserves.



MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS ARE DUE ON 1st SEPTEMBER

Included with this issue you should find a membership form, which can be used, if you wish, to renew your membership which becomes due on 1st September.

In these difficult and unprecedented times The Executive Committee hope that you will feel able to renew but, if you are unable to remain a member, we thank you for your past support.

Please send your renewals to:

Denise Failey, Demswood, Boreas Hill, Paull, Hull HU12 8AX
Many Thanks

Win some, lose some – the ups and downs of growing trees

Peter J Cook

This Society has a 35 year history of creating a better place for wildlife by acquiring land and planting and managing tree plantations. In addition to the 10,000 trees and shrubs planted on the Hollym Carrs Nature Reserve we have planted many more in hedges, field corners, small private reserves, Ivy House and Toffling Hill. Different people plant trees for different reasons. I plant them to enhance biodiversity, not by the introduction of a tree species into a habitat, but to provide feedstuff for a range of dependent species. However, there are limits. Not all biodiversity is good!

At Hollym Carrs Nature Reserve the tree canopy that has developed over the last 20+ years now shades out the original diversity of plant species, which has been replaced by a richer diversity of species that would otherwise not exist on the site. The trees themselves are yielding interesting fauna and flora as epiphytic fungi, lichens and mosses, leaf mining insect larvae and gall-inducing insects. The list of these is growing year upon year.

Unfortunately though there are tree diseases causing losses. Ash die-back (*Chalara*) is affecting numerous trees at Hollym and there is nothing we can do about it. On recent visits I have noted fresh, strong growth from the bottom of the trunks of dead trees. The disease appears to have 'burnt out' among neighbouring trees so it is worth experimenting to leave 'dead wood standing' for the biodiversity that dead wood carries, and to see if this fresh new growth is resistant, or succumbs to die-back in the future. This experiment is also on the go at Ivy House (see below). This could be a means of achieving a natural under-storey to the woodland.

Another ailment to watch out for is the Oak Processionary moth, an alien species that is working its way northwards at a rapid rate. The caterpillars strip the leaves causing severe debilitation to the tree which depletes the feedstock for its dependent biodiversity. Masses of caterpillars process from tree to tree and congregate in silky web balls hanging from branches like tennis balls. They are covered in highly irritating hairs like Brown-tail moth caterpillars so avoid touching them.

A disease that should not affect any of our reserves is Sooty Bark Disease (*Cryptostroma corticale*) which is a fungus highly specific to sycamore. We have not planted sycamore but it is the dominant tree species across Holderness. On 2nd June I spotted two trees in Roos that looked as though they had been on fire and stopped to have a closer look. Flakes of bark readily peeled off to reveal masses of black spores. On 18th June I saw a post on facebook by Mrs Madge Moore of the Roos Woodland Group commenting on a conversation she had had with a Roos farmer, who had enquired about dead young sycamores in a plantation. Checking on National Biodiversity Network maps this disease occurs largely in the Midlands. These Roos records are very much farther North than known. Watch out for it, do not disturb the spores or bring affected logs into the house for firewood, for the inhaled spores cause very severe inflammation of the lungs.

We have experienced both ash die-back and Bleeding Canker (a disease caused by the bacterium *Pseudomonas syringae* var. *aesculi*) on Horse Chestnut, at Ivy House. The young ash trees have been coppiced to see if any new growth becomes infected by *Chalara* in the future, and we have destroyed the Horse Chestnut tree. It was a potential reservoir of disease that could have affected other trees in the neighbourhood.

Finally, to bigger pests. An apple orchard planted at Toffling Hill earlier this year was adequately protected from rabbits and roe deer. However, either rats or grey squirrels have used the protective tubes of some of the trees as a ladder and perch from which to gnaw the bark off branches at the crown. Currently only two out of a dozen trees are affected but we will have to find some sort of repellent. 12 Bore comes to mind.

Life During Lockdown

We were very fortunate to leave Spain in March after our late Winter birdwatching trip less than a week before that country went into total lockdown. Arriving back in the UK on 10th March we were soon, like most of the population, under our own lockdown restrictions. Fortunately we had plenty of things to occupy us and spent most of that month creating habitat piles from tree trunks and branches we'd had to have removed in November last year.

Then we heard about the Garden Watch which was being coordinated by Alan Burnham, one of the founder members of SHCS. This inspired us to look more closely at the species, particularly insects, which might be present in our garden. Not being able to travel for our birding hobby gave us much more time to notice what was going on around us.

As April progressed we began to notice the odd migrant appearing, with our first Cuckoo on the 16th, a male Blackcap on the 24th, Chiffchaff on the 26th and Swallow (flyover) on the 27th. Amongst the mammals seen, a Roe Deer walked past our kitchen window on the morning of the 24th, what a wonderful way to start the day.



Chiffchaff

Time seemed to pass quite quickly and soon it was May when we should have been on another birdwatching trip but no chance of that with the prevailing situation, but our disappointment was moderated by that which was happening around us in what turned out to be a glorious Spring.

Blackcap (female) (having a bath)



The Blackcap and Chiffchaff continued singing in our garden almost every day throughout the month and a female Blackcap was seen on the 6th so we hoped we might have a breeding pair. Meanwhile a Blackbird was already nesting and by the 12th a single egg had appeared in a Song Thrush nest only four feet from our front door. We also found two of our nest boxes were in use by pairs of Blue and Great Tits.

As May progressed a Willow Warbler turned up on the 14th and one was seen occasionally throughout the month and in June. Meanwhile, our feeders (mixed millet in some, sunflower hearts in others) were visited daily by Tree Sparrows (the millet) and Goldfinches, Chaffinches, Greenfinches, Great Spotted Woodpecker and Great and Blue Tits for the hearts. The hearts feeders were also being used by Magpies and Stock Doves some of which had worked out how to keep a "footing" on the port pegs. We had up to eleven Stock Doves every day most of which were cleaning up the food dropped by the birds using the feeders and a couple of Carrion Crows also came in most days to help with this task.



Willow Warbler

(the black on its breast is the under-feathers showing as it had just had a bath)

The sounds of various birds including Blackbird, Song Thrush, Blackcap, Chiffchaff, Robin and Wren calling were quite uplifting during a rather somber time for most people.

The Common Pipistrelle Bats returned to their nursery roost under our roof slates during May and, as usual, we did a couple of roost counts for the National Bat Monitoring Program in June, as we have been doing for the past 23 years, and for Bob Stebbings' Group for 10+ years before that (some members may recall both Bob and his wife Sheila

Walsh giving talks to our Society in the 1980s). We had a peak count on the 21st of 55, our second highest in 40 years (vs 58 in 2017).

Seven Long-tailed Tits flew in on the 31st of May, of which at least five were juveniles and some of them perched on a branch in the sunshine just outside our kitchen window; they reappeared several times during June.



Hirundines seemed very few and far between in late April and May, as, apart from the single Swallow on the 27th of April, 4 Sand Martins which briefly flew over on the 3rd of May and a single House Martin on the 23rd, the sky was mostly devoid of activity. The only noticeable aerial displays we observed were from two Common Buzzards resident in the area drifting over, usually attracting our attention with their loud mewing (Collins description of the call, not ours!) and Common Swifts, two of which first appeared on the 7th May and up to 10 were seen most days during the month. On the 12th of June on a damp overcast day we had a wonderful sight for around 2 hours from about 1.30pm when several Common Swifts, House Martins and Swallows were whizzing over our bungalow and trees foraging for insects sometimes less than 5 feet above the building.

Meanwhile Denise was busy throughout the lockdown taking record photographs of any insect she spotted in the garden for possible identification purposes and found several species which we hadn't seen anywhere before, probably because our passion for birding makes us less observant of other species around us. That we've not cut our grass so far this year and it is full of wild flowers and plants including Daisies, Buttercups, Red Campion, Burdocks and Cow Parsley and we have several square yards of nettles has possibly helped to attract the large number of insects seen.

We are very grateful to Alan Burnham who has not only coordinated the sightings of about 20 contributors but has helped us with the identification of some of Denise's photographed species, having been bombarded with numerous emails with attachments! A few examples of the species which we have seen follow, all photographed by Denise.



Tentredo mesomela
(one of the Common Sawflies)
(Body length: 10-13mm)

Bumble Bee Mimic Hover-Fly
(Volucella bombylans)



Spotted Crane-fly
(Nephrotoma appendiculata)
(Wing length: 13-15mm)



Green Shield Bug
(*Palomena prasina*)

Wasp Beetle
(*Clytus arietis*)
(Body length: 6-15mm)



Great Pied Hover-Fly
(*Volucella pellucens*)
(Wing length: 10-15.5mm)

As some of Alan's Garden Watchers were returning to work it was decided that 21st June would be an appropriate date to end the Lockdown Garden Watch and by then we had recorded 115 species, most of them insects and all in our garden except for 9 bird flyovers. Despite the unprecedented unfortunate circumstances, it has been an enjoyable experience which has made us even more aware of how wildlife can enrich our lives, though we would not wish to repeat it under the same conditions!!

Please note: Insect identification is not one of our strengths and therefore if any members more knowledgeable in that field find errors in this article please let us know.

Harry & Denise Failey

Bird Watching at Hollym Carrs

On 25th May I decided to record bird sightings at Hollym Carrs Nature Reserve. I received the old lists from Peter. Recording hadn't been done for a while so I am updating them as I go along. I log everything I see anyway in a book for myself anywhere I go birdwatching so Toffling Hill is in that book too. HCNR is an ideal site with many different habitats for nesting birds, the reserve is looking great and it is fantastic to hear the birds singing. This is my first recording for the society so hopefully as I improve my bird identification skills the records will get better.

Species	m	f	location	notes
Great tit	+		In reserve generally	
Swift			overhead	
Red leg partridge			Flying low in reserve	
Meadow pipit			Burnham meadow	Low to ground in cut down hedge line
Lesr w/throat			Opposite new ponds alongside footpath	Holding territory in hawthorn
shelduck			Flying overhead	
Sdg warbler			New ponds	
goldfinch	+	+	In silver birch	Nr brick pond bench
Song thrush	+	+	In reserve generally	
Blue tit	+	+	Nr vehicle track	Nesting in boxes
linnet	+	+	Bush nr smess pond	
Reed warbler	+	+	Smess pond	
bullfinch	+	-	Trees nr new ponds	
dunnock	+	+	In reserve generally	
sparrowhawk	+		Flying low over smess pond	
chiffchaff	+		Telegraph lines	
Wood pigeon	+	+	Across reserve	
blackbird	+	+	In reserve generally	
moorhen	+		Brick ponds	nesting
wren	+	+	Opposite brick ponds	In brambles Nesting nr bench
Reed bunting	+	+	New ponds	nesting
crow	+		overhead	
buzzard			overhead	

Charlie Eldred

During the lockdown period I had more time than most (I went into lockdown before 23 March) to study the fauna and flora of the small urban plot behind our terraced house in Withernsea. My list started with a frog seen on 7 March and steadily grew to 200 species over 3 months. I have recorded everything that arrived under its own steam and free-will, and nothing beyond the property boundary except for birds flying in air-space over the plot. ‘Everything’ includes lichens on concrete, mosses on the shed roof, critters found in the compost heap, microfungi and leafminers affecting leaves of garden plants, and wild plants left as food for wildlife or botanical interest. I have not recorded identification guesses so the total score would be higher if I were an expert on everything. Wild plants that I did not want (‘weeds’) were recorded before they went into the composter. So, my list is of ‘wildlife’ with anything sown or deliberately introduced such as the lawn turf species and garden plants omitted.

There’s been a few garden recording schemes mentioned on social media and for anyone who has taken part and has lists for their own garden, or patch of interest - how about submitting them to us for publishing as a “Post Lockdown” special issue of *Holderness Countryside* when all this is over? If each contributor could identify the boundary of their recording area we could map out recording efforts. I can help with grid references. The result could provide a valuable insight into how wildlife has thrived, or not, with reduced human disturbance, and make a nice booklet to have on the shelf.

Please contact me with your lists and photos. If there is enough interest I will frame some ideas for other members to develop with me over the remainder of this year.

We have seen footage of Roe Deer and Badgers on TV venturing deeper into urban spaces, but what about other species? Has the reduced disturbance by humans really resulted in more wildlife? I have heard more birdsong because the town has been much quieter. More people have taken exercise and have noticed things. The council herbicide quad bike came round about 6 weeks late and strimmer and mower gangs have been late to appear. My e-mail inbox and social media message board has been inundated with requests to identify things that people had never seen before, but I have been fortunate enough to see and name all the time.

Freedom to take exercise yielded some interesting observations for me too. The streets of Withernsea have had a fascinating display of plants, some of them rarely encountered under normal circumstances. Sea Pearlwort, hitherto quite rare here and confined to the sea spray zone of the promenade wall, has been found about a quarter of a mile inland, with its range extended possibly by road de-icing salt. On the other hand, Danish Scurveygrass, hitherto completely confined to road-salted verges inland has been found on Withernsea promenade in its rightful habitat – the salt spray zone. Lesser Sea-spurrey, Biting Stonecrop, Fern-grass, Water Bent, Buck’s-horn Plantain, Mullein, and lots more have popped up.

And so to pictorial record of two exciting finds this Spring:

Incurved Hard-grass (*Parapholis incurva*) from Easington. Previously known in the East Riding only at Chalk Bank on Spurn, and not seen this Century, this is a significant find for this rare grass.



Adder’s-tongue Fern (*Ophioglossus vulgatum*) from Hollym Carrs Nature Reserve. This species has declined across East Yorkshire over the last 20 years and this new site, on our reserve, is now one of very extant sites.

Business as usual?

Well that is what nature's doing. Astonishing that a virus (part of the natural world despite all of the conspiracy theories) can literally stop us in our tracks. Many people try to separate themselves from being part of nature, but it is obvious that we are all connected to it whether we like it or not.



Many of us choose to embrace 'nature' and this is what has motivated me to support environmental and nature conservation issues. To be part of the natural world, out in the open air enjoying the wonder of it is essential to me. Take that away and life is dull. People have long recognised the healing benefits of being in nature and it has been a life saver for many during this current health emergency.

During the most restricted time of the lockdown I took the cue to get out and do my daily exercise, exploring my local patch around Sproatley. With woodland, meadows and arable land around the village it was not difficult to get my 'nature fix'. I discovered some lovely walks and it really raised my mood. I do believe that aside from the horrors of this pandemic there is a silver lining for nature conservation in general. People are seeing more in their gardens and local patches. They are actively searching for quiet, remote areas to social distance and be surrounded by wildlife. It feels good!

A place I love is Hollym Carrs Nature Reserve. It has been over 30 years since the late John Carmicheal sat in my front room talking about creating a community woodland in Holderness. Years of fund raising and tree planting by dozens of local conservationists has resulted in this jewel of a nature reserve. We are proud of it and the reserve has so much to offer our local wildlife and visitors alike.



As soon as restrictions were changed, I had to visit the place and was there bright and early on a fresh May morning. The sun had not risen yet and dawn chorus was in full swing. Singing thrushes, blackbirds, chaffinches, woodpigeons and my first cuckoo of the year – marvellous. Many other birds joined in and it made getting up worth it. The smells of spring too were amazing – fresh leaves unfurling, even the sound of

the sap rising in the tree trunks next to me*. A delicious sensory experience and a privilege to take part in. The thought that this was a wheat field a generation ago makes it even better.

I was also checking the reserve as we have a duty of care for the habitats and the safety of visitors. I checked the entrances and site furniture. The paths were fine due to the dry spring weather and the trees were just coming into leaf. Not all people treat the natural world with the respect it deserves so I was on the lookout for any vandalism or dog fouling. Glad to say there was nothing.

The countryside has become much quieter in the past three months. The birdsong seems louder and lots of other animals seem more relaxed. No doubt people will go back to previous behaviours when allowed. Sadly, the reports of fires and litter at beauty spots tells us that. A different approach could be to build on what is positive and educate the public about why certain places do need to be left to nature and other places can be managed so that people feel connected to wildlife more as they have done during lockdown.

The original idea of Hollym Carrs was to create a community woodland. I believe we are well on the way to achieving this and John would be pleased with the results. Although we do not know what the future holds, we can only plan to keep pushing for people to value the natural world when we all return to 'Business as usual...' I know I will.

(* listen for sap rising when it is quiet in spring. Place your ear against a likely tree trunk. It sounds like gently crackling paper.)

Andy Mason (HCNR Chair)

Moth Hunt

Peter Cook was pleased to accommodate, at very short notice on 24th June, a request by Mike Coverdale to trap moths at HCNR that same night. Conditions were too good to miss after a couple of 'iffy' weeks. This June visit added one more session to the proposed 5 monthly sessions across a full season 'scan' of the reserve, One session more in September this year and the last one in April next year should give us a fair picture of what we have. Again it was a fruitful night's work with the 4 large moth traps taking 4 hours non-stop to empty and record, starting at 04.00! A total of 660 specimens were identified and counted by Mike adding 26 new species to the HCNR records base. Peter's job was to release the moths safely back into the undergrowth!

These sessions are carried out on an industrial scale, as you can tell from the photograph.



Young Nats Bit

The challenge for our Young Nats has been that, well, we can't meet! They are such a keen bunch that we really wanted to help to keep their interest in 'all things nature' during lockdown. A monthly scheme of work has been sent by email to each of our Young Nats to use in their own garden, or nearby nature area as part of their allowable exercise, and the results have been wonderful.

April's challenge was 'Wildlife up close and Plant Safari'. This included Try to find as many different: leaf shapes, leaf margins and leaf adaptations as they could. They were asked to make a display of leaves identifying each type and difference.



This month's work also included looking at the anatomy and life cycle of a frog.

We try to include serious research, written work and practical, foraging, exploring, puzzles, and of course some craftwork each month.

May asked them to look 'Up Close' at butterflies. The chart was one of the projects, to find for each type of butterfly it's host plant, what the eggs look like, the caterpillar and its chrysalis.

Butterfly	Plant	Eggs	Caterpillar	Chrysalis
Pheasant				
Small Tortoiseshell				
Orange-tip				



They also examined feathers; identification of type, their function, structure and to make an ink pen out of one.

It's certainly not easy work that they are set, but I think we have some wonderful Young Naturalists here.

This month is 'Flower Anatomy': pollen, seed, structure, monocot and dicot. Let's see what we get back from this challenge!

Birdsong

Whilst working outside, enjoying the early summer weather of the last few weeks, I was reminded of comments made by my mum; a keen bird watcher. Comments I could never understand no matter how many times she would tell me to listen carefully. Comments I was certain she had made up, just to help me become more interested in nature watching, or to turn those long walks in the countryside into a challenge and a learning opportunity. My mum the teacher, always was and always will be, even now at age 81.

Listen, she would say, it's asking for 'A little bit of bread and no cheese'! Really, I would think, sounds like a bird tweeting to me! But that Yellowhammer song of between five and eight notes, followed by one single long note, could actually be saying just that. It's all in the rhythm of the song.

Rather than the Yellowhammer, perhaps the bird for my mum should be the Great tit, and it's bouncy and repetitive call for 'Tea-cher, tea-cher'. Much more appropriate for her and many of her colleagues.

I was also reminded of the call of the long suffering Wood Pigeon, forever to complain 'My toe hurts Betty, my toe hurts Betty, my toe hurts Betty, ooh'. Poor Betty, that's all I can say, perhaps the Wood Pigeon is the Frank Spencer of polite avian society. However, this led me to thinking about how other bird song is described, and I am sure that we all know someone who could be described to be similar to a Greenfinch song, 'excited and twittering interspersed with drawn out, wheezy, nasal tones.'

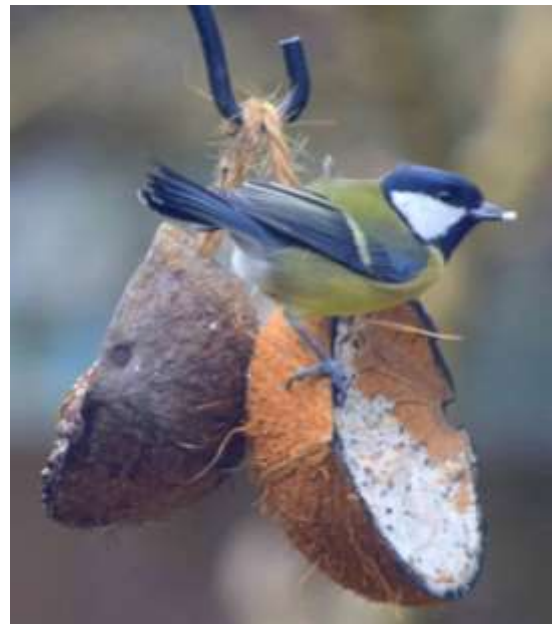


Photo: Great Tit, Paul Woolverton

Maybe I should start with something a little more basic for my birdwatching lessons. Perhaps the Chiffchaff, that sings its name with a jerky repetitive 'chiff-chaff-chiff-chaff;' or maybe the Kittywake or Curlew who similarly cry their name soulfully for all to hear.

Of all the joyous sounding expressions of either aggression against competition or noisy serenades to attract a mate, the Starling, a mimic, is certainly near the top of my list of favourites. Their characteristic 'clicking' notes can suddenly turn into a car or house alarm, or even the trill of a telephone. I have been sent running into the house on more than one occasion to answer a call to realise it was actually the starling in the tree.

Back to my Yellowhammer. The sun is well and truly over the yardarm. So perhaps instead it should sing, 'I'll have a gin and tonic now, please!'

Tracey Netherton

PUBLICATIONS

Holderness Countryside is the journal of the South Holderness Countryside Society, and is issued free of charge to members, up to four times per year. All Rights Reserved.

Items for publication may be emailed to the Editor (brian.gill60@btinternet.com). Please ring the Editor to discuss items in manuscript. The Society welcomes articles of general interest in the genre of natural and social history pertaining to southern Holderness. These must have educational value under the terms of our Charitable Objectives (see below). The views expressed are those of the contributor. Contributions are acknowledged along with the relevant articles. Other publications may be produced from time-to-time.

YOUNG NATURALISTS CLUB

The Young Naturalists' ("Young Nats") Club meets twice monthly at our Ivy House Centre in Hollym. Supervisors have Enhanced DBS certification. Members must be of primary school age, 5 – 11 years. Young Nats are taught and encouraged to take a more positive interest in natural history and to publish articles in *Holderness Countryside*. Articles should be sent to the Editor via email or a telephone call to arrange collection.

SCHOOLS

Copies of *Holderness Countryside* are distributed to local schools. Schools are permitted to photocopy extracts from the Journal for educational use within their school. All other reproduction in whatever form is subject to copyright.

MEMBER SUBSCRIPTION RATES

Single Adult: £12. Family: £14.
Corporate membership will be considered.

CHARITABLE OBJECTIVES

The South Holderness Countryside Society was first registered as a Charity No 701627 on 30th May 1989. Defined objectives of the charity are;

- (1) *Work principally within the area of Holderness, (East Riding of Yorkshire) for the region's natural and local history.*
- (2) *Educate the public in the natural and local history of the area.*
- (3) *Secure the preservation and protection and improvement of natural history.*

Management of the Society's affairs is by elected Trustees.

The restoration of Ivy House, our headquarters, was part funded by the National Lottery.



THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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OUR WEBSITE

www.holdernesscountryside.org

managed by Mrs Claire Ashton.

Please keep this site alive!

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[All membership payments to Denise please.](#)



SOUTH HOLDERNESS COUNTRYSIDE SOCIETY

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No: 701627

Please indicate by putting X in the box: NEW MEMBER RENEWAL

Type of membership	Annual Fee		
Single Adult	£12	<input type="checkbox"/>	
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Schools and Children's Groups	Free	<input type="checkbox"/>	Number in group <input type="checkbox"/>

Please would you consider making a donation towards the Society's work:

Total Enclosed

Cheques to be made payable to "SOUTH HOLDERNESS COUNTRYSIDE SOCIETY" and sent to:
Mrs Denise Failey, SHCS, Demswood, Boreas Hill, Paull, Hull, HU12 8AX

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YES NO

The South Holderness Countryside Society is committed to the protection of your personal data. The personal data you provide on this form will only be used by the Society for the purpose of administration of your membership and for communicating with you with regard to the business of the Society to keep you informed about news, events and activities. This data will be held until December 31st each year whereupon it will be securely erased from our records. Processing is also necessary for carrying out legal obligations in relation to Gift Aid. This data must legally be kept for a period of six years.

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