



Registered Charity No 701627

Spring 2021

Holderness Countryside



A Blue Tit in the Spring Sunshine.....Paul Woolverton

Journal of the South Holderness Countryside Society

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No 138 - Free to members. Available to non-members for a minimum donation of £1.50

WINTER 2021 NEWSLETTER

First, we thank all those of you who have renewed your membership subscription. Unfortunately we are unable to function as well as we would wish to do due to the 'perfect storm' of pandemic restrictions coinciding with a number of key people incapacitated by ill health. There's a prompt here for the need for 'succession planning' – see below. If you are one of a few people who have felt the time has come not to renew we understand and thank you for your support in the past. You know where we are if ever you would like to come back.

Society functions that have temporarily gone by the wayside include Young Nats. This is particularly unfortunate as so many youngsters were making good progress and enjoying their Saturdays at Ivy House. We have also had to dispense with indoor meetings. Ideas for restriction-compliant outdoor meetings to replace them were soon quashed by the introduction of tighter restriction goal posts. 'Holderness Countryside' has also taken a hit and this Newsletter is to part- fill the gap.

Management of the Society has continued throughout the year. Our governance record is open to public scrutiny on the Charity Commission website. Membership renewals have been managed by Denise Failey; accounts by Peter; maintenance of Hollym Carrs NR on individual basis by Andy, Charlie and Peter; maintenance at Toffling by Charlie, Rohan and Peter; maintenance of Ivy House grounds by Richard Netherton, and attention to health and safety hazards and public notices of access restrictions by Peter. We were able to get one issue of 'Holderness Countryside' published and distributed thanks to Gill Hart, Tracey, Freddie and Peter.

We have been as transparent as possible in our governance of the Society whilst not being able to hold an open AGM. A large proportion of our active membership is not familiar with online meeting platforms so meeting virtually would have been exclusive. All members were given the opportunity to stand for office by mail but no-one stepped forward. Fortunately all committee members were still within their terms of office. Tracey Netherton is still at the helm as Chairman, Freddie Kennedy as Gen Sec, Peter as Treasurer - all supported by each other and Margaret Kennedy, Jeff Marshall, Andy Mason and Charlie Eldred as Committee members.

We still own the land on which Little Terns return to breed every year and as a SSSI we have statutory duties to maintain it in condition. These are discharged completely through the Spurn Bird Observatory Trust which annually provides wardens and voluntary workers to ensure optimal habitat and minimal disturbance. We are grateful for them taking on this important work as we are quite unable to do it ourselves any more. The following is a summary report of the 2020 breeding season which was managed within the covid19 restrictions and despite limitations was very successful.

A personal note of thanks from the Chairman

The driving force and trench strut of the South Holderness Countryside Society for a long time has been Peter Cook. Despite everything over the last year, looking after himself and his family, he has been at the forefront of keeping our wonderful charity alive and running. As the gentleman he is, he thanks others for their support, I personally thank him. His knowledge, commitment and hard work has kept us running within strict required guidelines, and he has pushed to keep us moving forward despite difficulties out-with of our control.

Thank you

Beacon Ponds Little Tern Project 2020: Short Report

The first Little Terns of the year were seen by local birders on their daily exercise on the 23rd April, with two recorded.

We were able to start the Project this year on the 18th May, a month later than usual, so daily recording was done by wardens and volunteers after this date.

DeFRA/RSPB protocols were followed with regard to H&S, and we were able to install all fences and signage and install our second hide (this was dedicated solely to the use of one warden who has an underlying health issue). We were unable to repair and re-float our rafts (social distancing was unobservable in this instance), the absence of which meant no Avocets bred in the locale, depriving the colony of the 'early warning' cover they normally provide.

The highest Little Tern count of the month was four on the 28th. May's highest was on the 22nd, with 82 recorded.

The first sitting Little Terns were noted on the 3rd June (the same date as last year), with 10 birds seen sitting on nests during a spell of poor weather. This increased to 20 pairs sitting on the 7th. Unfortunately a Crow started taking eggs on the 8th, and took 9 nests - probably during the morning of the 9th before the morning shifts began. 11+ pairs were still sitting a day later while other birds re-laid quickly, with most sitting again in a matter of days. 24/7 wardening began a week earlier than usual to address this issue, other (licenced) measures having had no impact.

In July numbers increased considerably, with the first 100+ count of the season being made on the 5th. Nests increased and so did hatching throughout the first two weeks of the month, with 32 chicks inside the colony on the 19th. 24 chicks were ringed on a walk-through on the 16th while 8 chicks had already fledged that morning.

By the 9th August a total of 36 chicks had fledged with a further 6 to go, but all fledged by the end of the following week.

- **The total of chicks fledged in the 2020 season was then 42 from 27 nests, giving a Productivity of 1.56 – remarkably, exactly the same as last year.**
- Oystercatchers raised 5 young from 4 nests with three nests raising 1 young each and another raising 2 chicks. Productivity = 1.25
- At least 20-25 Ringed Plovers fledged from the colony, from at least 8 nests. Productivity = 2.5. (These numbers are conservative estimates.)
- Avocets failed very early on in the season, probably due to predation and the absence of the rafts.

We are greatly indebted to everyone who helped with the project, whether employed or on a volunteer basis without whom the project could not have proceeded. Our particular thanks go to our Project Administrator, Jonnie Fisk.

Richard Boon, Management Committee Chair

We thank the SBOT team for their hard work and congratulate them on their success.

Ivy House Woodland Management

Last year we found several young ash trees with the first signs of ash die-back disease. These were felled from the bottom with a view to seeing whether new growth would arise and subsequently be resistant to another attack. Several mature ash, oak and beech trees have branches overhanging the fence adjacent to the A1033 road and we removed what we could last year. However, there are larger branches at the level of the top deck of a bus for which we need professional help to remove. There is a very large crack willow tree with breaking branches, one of which hangs menacingly over our neighbour's garden. While evaluating these problems it was noted that 4 mature multi-limbed sycamore trees have the first signs of 'sooty bark disease' which is becoming increasingly prevalent across Holderness, and threatens to decimate our sycamore population. The spores of this fungus can kill humans if inhaled. Finally, over the last 3 or 4 years we have experienced branch-fall on large Lawson's Cypress trees, especially in high winds, with some branches left hanging as a hazard. We are unable to tackle all of these urgent jobs ourselves so we have tendered to local professionals. We have established that none of the trees is protected by Tree Preservation Order and that the grounds of Ivy House are not in a designated Conservation Area. The finished result will appear drastic and no doubt raise eyebrows, but we will replace the lost trees. Diseased wood will be removed off site and the remainder chipped and made into paths.

Succession Planning

In any well-oiled organisation it is considered to be 'good governance' to have a back-up for each key officer. The job of Treasurer to the Society is not onerous or time-consuming but if the post holder were to become incapacitated the Society could be plunged into "deep do-do". We should really be thinking about who would take the oars. Anyone with a little experience of business book-keeping, maintaining audit-trails on transactions, paying accounts on time, ordering materials etc. will find the job easy. If anyone would like to do this, or learn how to do it, please contact us. At the moment the job consumes an average of 30 minutes per month and about 2-3 hours in February when the books and spreadsheets are prepared for the Independent Examiner. When Young Nats are back into the swing there may be slightly more work to do. If you would like to help, please do not hesitate.

Gifts

In addition to generous monetary donations from our members we have received £1000 from the Sir James Reckitt Charitable Trust. This annual grant goes into our 'virtual teapot' for administrative costs. We also received £15 cash from Mr Paul McGilvray of Withernsea for caring for a tree until he was able to plant it in its final place. Then we received a very generous donation of a very good laser printer from members Dr Malcolm and Judith Seville. This will be brought into use when we print our next Holderness Countryside and for making hard copy of some important documents. The old HP laser printer is very expensive to run and its future will be reviewed when we have cleared our stock of cartridges.

**PLEASE STILL VISIT YOUR RESERVES BUT OBSERVE THE CURRENT
RESTRICTIONS
KEEP SAFE AND WELL.**

Squirrel Skirmish

Whilst on exercise and taking the air in Burton Pidsea back in June I came across an unusual sight. A large crow swooped down from a leafy Horse Chestnut tree to almost road level. A tiny grey squirrel was running for its life. Crow's beak almost touching squirrel's tail. I presume the squirrel was also in the tree and maybe got too close to crow's nest and upset mum or dad crow, somewhat.

I am glad to say that the squirrel escaped the would be assassin and managed to disappear into a nearby garden, and the crow flew back to the tree.



Photo: Paul Woolverton

I did not have a camera on me at the time, but the incident happened so fast, I would not have had time to switch it on.

I still feel very blessed to have witnessed it.

What a sight!

Gill Hart

Tree Sparrow Project



When the opportunity arose I went to HCNR to bird record and enjoy the wildlife and the quietness. I recorded 5 times between May and Oct when restrictions would allow. I intend recording the birds once a month on roughly the same date each month.

Whilst being in lockdown I have made bird boxes, hedgehog houses, bat boxes, bug boxes etc just to keep me occupied. Last year on a rare opportunity Peter and I put some of those boxes

up in the wood at Ivy House. Peter also took some materials to HCNR when he could to enable me to put up Tree Sparrow boxes I had made and refurbished.

On 31st October I went to the reserve to put up the boxes on posts and in the hedgerow overlooking the open fields. Potentially the boxes could hopefully attract 8 nesting pairs. I have since made another box with the potential to increase the numbers to 12 eventually but I haven't been to put this one up yet.

Tree Sparrows have declined in recent years by 95% so if one pair nest on the reserve this is a success albeit a small one. I hope to visit the reserve as soon as possible to continue the recording. Keep staying safe.

Charlie Eldred.

Hollym Carrs Nature Reserve 2020

This is by no means comprehensive but these are strange times.

What a year it has been! At the beginning of the year the weather was our main problem with gales and floods. This did hinder any work on the reserve in February.

Then the pandemic hit as we are all too aware of. All work on the reserve stopped and we were not allowed to even visit the site for at least two months. Nature just got on with it!

Just before Lock-down I had a go at some tree guard removal around the diverted footpaths but didn't have a chance to tidy them up until recently. Incidentally I noticed birds nesting in tree guards in June so would suggest we do not disturb them during the breeding season! Many tree guards have been removed so that the woodland begins to look more natural. Just need to get them off site now.



During June I managed to get down to the reserve to check it and make sure things were secure. I really enjoyed putting in a new bench and doing some tidying up. It made me feel like despite the restrictions and being furloughed I could help with local conservation. Also managed to do some pruning so that the hay could be taken away without losing it in the bushes.

The hay crop was taken off in July. There did seem to be a lot more people visiting the reserve on their local exercise walks. Parents were taking children to enjoy the countryside and nature. This is exactly what we wanted to encourage at the

reserve. Wonderful to see families taking picnics and teaching the next generation about how important wildlife and the natural world is.

On every visit during the summer months the site looked magnificent. Only problem being that trees have a habit of growing so some places have started to get a bit out of hand. We have a duty to keep areas clear and in meadow state so that we get our Stewardship grants and way-leave payments. Under the powerlines the blackthorn, hawthorn and some willows have taken over. This is a way-leave and linear meadow. I estimate we have 'lost' about 10% over the past 5 years. This needed sorting. Managed to remove a birch that was too close to the power lines and chop up a willow that had fallen onto the grassland. As the site is free public access we need to make sure any dangerous trees are carefully managed. This is not an excuse to fell trees but we can carefully prune to make safe.

Other areas also needed mowing and pruning too. When we were finally allowed out Peter and myself had some goes at mowing the footpaths and pruning back eye-strikes etc. Mainly for public access. Peter found a nice colony of Adder's Tongue and we have noted this area so that it is not cut or smothered with brash. This is an interesting point as you can do a lot of damage to a wildlife site if you do not have good records of what is present. Hence placing a great deal of emphasis on surveying for change on the reserve.

I returned to work in late July after furlough and it was extremely busy at Spurn. Lots of people also visited HCNR too. Most people behaved but a small minority did do some vandalism and lit fires. I tidied up quite a bit of litter on my visits.

Charlie did a bird survey and we had the moths surveyed too with a visit by Mike and Peter. It looks like there were a huge number of moth records taken that night.

We need to link up the survey work done so it can be added to the database.

Scrub and bramble umbrella is a constant issue but it is nice to see natural regeneration beginning to take place. We don't know where the natural climax will go as the site is slowly turning into a woodland. What is natural?



Yellow Brain Fungus (*Tremella mesenterica*) was just one of many weird and wonderful fungi we found during the autumn.

Peter and Charlie got together and put up some tree sparrow nest boxes on the east side of the Powerlines South section. This is in line with our Stewardship agreement and is a response to a flock of tree sparrows spotted around the slurry lagoon. Fingers crossed they might stay in the area and be impressed by the fantastic boxes made by Charlie.

I borrowed the Spurn tractor and flail in September to have a bash at the scrub and encroaching reeds on the meadow areas. Most of the reed has had a first cut

and a large part of the blackthorn under the powerlines was mashed. Will need another couple of days to clear off the brash. Covid restrictions and two more lock-downs has really slowed down any site work. Amazingly as I write we are getting into the spring growing/breeding season so there is little time left to complete the tasks we had planned for the winter. Again these are extraordinary times and it will get done eventually. Cannot wait to get a gang of volunteers down to the reserve again. We still have lots to do.

Saying that we invested in an electric chainsaw to carry out essential works on the reserve and it is an amazing piece of kit. There is more work to do on site and with careful support we may get it done before April.

The management plan needs updating and reviewing this year. I have started to look at how things have gone and what we need to add or discard. This will form much of the coming discussion. We had a Zoom meeting recently with the aim of sorting out our priorities for the next six months.

On the events and visits side it was another strange year, however Peter arranged a meeting of The Hull Nats in September and they had a great time on the site. We await their reports.

One date for your diaries this year is Friday June 25th 2021 when we are having a Guided Walk from Ivy House to Hollym Carrs Nature Reserve. Meet at Ivy House for 6.30pm to start walking at 7pm. More details will be published nearer the date as we come out of restrictions.

It has been a very strange year and looks like restrictions will carry on well into the Spring. Wildlife seems to be getting on with it. Let's just enjoy it.

Andy (HCNR Chair)



Time to take up an old hobby?

Lockdown. How have you all been coping with these interminable months of being effectively marooned in your own home? Television? Well, if you could find something remotely worth watching amongst all the American rubbish. Did you go ever so slightly crackers? You can get absolutely fed up with your own company can't you?



How about housework? It is only possible to polish the carpet a certain amount isn't it? Or, did you fall back onto a long ago, half-forgotten hobby: needlework; short stories; painting.



Many years ago I used to do a bit of woodwork, and, after being presented with some chunks of fruit-wood, Plum, Cherry, Apple, I set about sharpening my old tools and spent a number of odd half hours in my shed.....

Of course, one could take up water-colouring, or even painting by numbers, or colouring with colour pencils,(that's what my Miggy has been spending her time on. Music, of course, eases the soul. Bring out



your old banjo, and give it a whirl. Read a book, try a new author, or, how about write your own story. Most people, it is said, have at least one story in them. Put it on paper, you may be surprised.

My therapy was to get my old tools out again, every piece of wood had a shape within it, waiting to get out. Above all, don't give in. Freddy

Wood Carvers Poem

*I Saw This Piece Of Wood One Day
When I Picked It Up It Seemed To Say*

*There's Something Hiding Inside Of Me
Remove Some Chips And You Will See*

*I Looked To See What I Might Find
And Soon An Image Came To Mind*

*My Task Was Now To Set It Free
What's Hidden In This Piece Of Tree*

*With Loving Care Each Cut Was Made
Wood Peeled Off With A Sharp Edged
Blade*

*And As Each Chip Fell To The Floor
I Could See The Object More And More*

*By One Final Cut It Was Set Free
My Work Of Art For All To See*

*This Piece Of Wood Which Would Just
Lay
And See It's Body Soon Decay*

*Was Now Transformed And Given Life
With Careful Cuts Of Gouge And Knife*

*By Carving Something From This Tree
It Lives Again Because Of Me*

Treasurer's Report for the year 01/02/2019 to 31/01/2020

Detailed balance sheets for this period were despatched to members in February, immediately following Independent Inspection. There follows a brief commentary on our Income and Expenditure during the year.

Income

Total income from member subscription and donations was £1793, a slight decrease on last year. We re-established a system for claiming Gift Aid on donations and a retrospective claim brought in £578. Other grants and donations totalled £1300, and Environmental Stewardship on Hollym Carrs Nature Reserve came in at £2541. With other sundry items our total income was £6365, £1097 more than last year.

Expenditure

There were no capital acquisitions during this period. There was a further reduction in the cost of services and administration to £2122, generously part-funded by the Sir James Reckitt Charitable Trust. Expenditure on conservation projects was about £1000 more than last year due mainly to remedying under-spend through 2019. Work to continue our good compliance with Stewardship Agreements on Hollym Carrs NR will be increasingly important over the next few years and we have invested in some new equipment to help us to achieve this.

The cost of running Ivy House was only slightly less than last year due mainly to a reduction in the number of open meetings and use by Young Naturalists. Together with other sundry items our total outgoings was £5288.

Conclusion

We finished the year with a net surplus of £1077 which almost equalled our increased income for the year as a result of the Gift Aid claim, a surprise grant of £300 from Centrica and a late Stewardship payment. Our income and expenditure was well-balanced.

Peter J Cook, Treasurer
12 March 2020

Toffling Hill Nature Reserve - Report for the year 01/02/2019 to 31/01/2020

The main grass area was again cut and baled by the Fisher family and the paths around the reserve were maintained by regular brush cutting and mowing. Volunteers lifted both dropped and drooping hawthorn branches along the inside of the eastern boundary and a dead hedge was created along the tree-line. Gaps were filled with hazel and crab apple trees. A small arboretum of species of tree that attract bees, predominantly catkin bearers, was planted. A number of mini-Christmas trees salvaged by Charlie Eldred were planted but alas were uprooted, possibly by roe deer and rabbits. This small reserve is visited by Hollym residents and holiday makers to the nearby Garth Farm camp site.

Peter J Cook, 10/10/2020

Beacon Lagoons Reserve - Report for the year 01/02/2019 to 31/01/2020

The northern section of this reserve (Easington Lagoon) was leased from the Environment Agency on a 25 year lease which expired a few years ago. Another field of 22 acres is leased to the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust for management as part of the Kilnsea Wetlands reserve. The remaining 48 acres in our freehold has been managed informally for many years by the Spurn Bird Observatory (and friends) for the Little Tern Protection Scheme. Negotiations are underway to formalise this arrangement by leasing the 48 acres to SBO. Although most of reserve will still be in the freehold tenancy of the Society as the Official Custodians, the reserve will be managed better than we as a Society can manage it now, or in the foreseeable future. The Society will have sight of the Management Plan.

Peter J Cook, 10/10/20

The Young Nats Bit

In Mag 147 I told you all about the project work that was being sent out to our Young Nats to keep them busy and to keep them interested in the wonderful countryside in which we live.

Across the year we studied butterflies, feathers, flower anatomy, frogs, leaves, we became a wildlife detective and we looked at planting for wildlife and looking after bird boxes. This was a massive challenge that involved research, practical work, written work, and a huge amount of fun! The game shown here was part of the detective module in which the Young Nat had to make a set of track recognition cards and turn it into a game.



The final fun challenge was to follow a recipe to make 'scat cookies'! Yes, let's make something edible that looks like poop! We have looked at how to feed all other species of wildlife that visit our garden so it about time we looked at feeding ourselves.

By the end of these seven modules it became obvious that we had developed something special for our young lovers of nature and that completion of it deserved to be recognised. These modules have become our very first badge: The Conker Badge. It was named this after our very first recipient, Adam Hoey, who has a passion for all things nature, and we have fond memories of him collecting conkers at Ivy House – from little iddy biddy ones about the size of a pea to good fist sized ones. Well done Adam! You worked so incredibly hard all the way through last year and you are a worthy holder of your Conker Award certificate and badge.



The modules need a little more work to make them ready to be sent out in general. They need generally tidying up and being edited to look a little more professional rather than just my haphazard sheets. Acknowledgements and notes of thanks need to be included, as well as making sure that all the committee members are happy with the content and how they should be distributed, but once this is done I can start working on how we can make this more widely accessible. Each module is designed so that it can be completed in your local countryside, or even in your own garden if necessary, however small it is.

We may not have been able to meet at Ivy House for our usual sessions, but our Young Nats have still worked hard, and will 'ace' their natural science lessons when they get back to school.

Milk Drops and Mărtisor



As we are being warned about Arctic fronts and Siberian winds, we are already being given hope of the approaching warmth of Spring with the appearance of snowdrop in our gardens, woodlands and churchyards. Symbolising hope, the snowdrop also conveys sympathy, virtue, purity and optimism; so it seems rather obtuse that they are considered unlucky to bring indoors. This is because they grow often in abundance in churchyards, probably thanks to the Victorians planting the bulbs to decorate relatives' graves, so are considered to represent death. Yet in Russia they are celebrated. On March 1st the Russians celebrate Snowdrop day. Children pick bunches to give as gifts to parents and grandparents as a symbol of thanksgiving for the passing of winter. The same day in Romania is celebrated as the first day of spring, or Mărtisor, based on a Folk Legend of the origin of the snowdrop.

Native to Europe and introduced to Great Britain, Snowdrops are bulbous herbaceous perennials of the *Amaryllidaceae* family and have over 2500 named varieties, coming from a genus of approximately 20 species. Of all of these only two are generally cultivated: the *Galanthus elwesii*, or giant snowdrop, and *Galanthus nivalis*, or the common snowdrop. The Latin name *Galanthus*, translates as Milk flower, with the three petals looking like little drops of milk hanging from the stem. *Nivalis* is a Latin word meaning relating to or resembling snow. Apart from occasional small green marks, or perhaps a tiny blush of gold within the bloom, this modest, or shy, looking flower is pure white.

The snowdrop has many pseudonyms across the country, including Snow Piercer, Dingle-dangle, and Death's flower, Dewdrops, Drooping bell, Eve's tear, White bells, Candlemas bells, Mary's tapers and Fair Maids of February. They became fashionable in the Victorian era but, due to it being known under several different names, no one knows for sure when they were first introduced to the UK. The first records of plants in the wild date from 1778 – but botanist John Gerard is said to have described the snowdrop in his writings from 1597. There he called them 'Timely Flowering Bulbous Violets'

Check out the sonnet written by William Wordsworth, or the poem by Davis Herbert Lawrence, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, or Elizabeth Barrett Browning. A little bit of culture to while away the cold, murky, weather until the warmth of Spring breaks through. The snowdrop has the ability to melt the snow around it as it produces its own heat. The hope for new warmth comes due to its blossoming time as well as its heat.

On one of those rare, cold but sunny days, perhaps visit one of the Snowdrop gardens; Devonshire Mill near York, Bridge Farm House near Selby, or the beautiful Fountain's Abbey. If travelling isn't your thing, the churchyards of our area bring you all the beauty of the stately gardens – but free of charge!

PUBLICATIONS

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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 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.



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www.holdernesscountryside.org

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Please keep this site alive!

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