

Dedham Vale Society

A photograph of a flooded landscape. In the foreground, a wooden fence with a lattice pattern is partially submerged in water. The water is calm and reflects the sky and the surrounding trees. In the background, there is a dense line of trees, some of which are bare, suggesting a winter or late autumn setting. The overall scene is serene and somewhat desolate.

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Winter 2019-20

THE DEDHAM VALE SOCIETY



Founded 1938
Registered Charity No 246007
www.dedhamvalesociety.org.uk

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EDITION NO 87 CONTENTS

The President's Comments	3
Save Our Verges	4
The Berlin Wall at Manningtree Station	5
Ferriers and The New World	7
Twenty Years a Planning Secretary	10

EDITORIAL

Unlike last summer contributors have not been as generously forthcoming this time and the result is a distinctly slimline edition. However, there are still two very interesting articles within these twelve pages.

I am pleased to report that I have a successor, both as Planning Secretary for Suffolk and as Editor. Dolina O'Neill, who lives in Lamarsh, will take over in the summer. The next edition of the Newsletter will be a joint effort. Thereafter she will be on her own.

David Eking

Just as we were going to press we received the very sad and unexpected news that **Roger Drury**, our Planning Secretary for Essex and a regular contributor to this Newsletter, had died suddenly. A tribute to him will appear in the Summer 2020 edition but any member seeking details of his funeral should contact the Secretary or the Chairman.

Front Cover
Winter Wet in the Vale, photo by Paul Gallifant

THE PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS

A new decade brings new challenges for the Dedham Vale Society.

Top of the list is to encourage our Members of Parliament to ensure the recommendations of the Glover Report on National Parks and AONBs are enacted in the new Environment Bill shortly to go for detailed scrutiny. There are 27 recommendations of which two are central to the future of the Dedham Vale. The first is to make AONB Partnerships statutory consultees on planning matters within their areas. The second is to dramatically speed up and simplify the process of boundary reviews. It is absolutely scandalous that the Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB extensions have taken over 20 years to be approved and still await the signature of the DEFRA Secretary of State before they come into force. Our own proposed extension has been a live issue for over a decade but under the Glover proposals could probably be enacted in two years.

Elsewhere in this magazine you will read a fascinating article about Ferriers, a property in Bures belonging to Hugh Petre, a cousin of Lord Petre, recently retired as Lord Lieutenant of Essex and descendant of the owner in the

C17th. It has over 700 years of history much of which is of wide interest and international importance

I also have a personal interest being descended through my paternal grandmother from the Cressener family which owned the Ferriers for 135 years and, within its former estate, most of the land Sara and I own and farm today. It was a much bigger house in the C17th than it is today with correspondingly larger gardens and outbuildings as well as its farms.

Twentieth century agricultural buildings have been erected on part of this land which hitherto had been in the Ferriers curtilage. Unfortunately, these became separated from Ferriers house a few decades ago although the previous owners, who also owned the surrounding farmland had a "gentleman's agreement" with Hugh Petre's father not to develop or sell for development the agricultural buildings.'

However, when they died, the heirs, who had no personal interest in the farm, sold the whole to a developer who now wants to replace the buildings with executive housing for rent. Not only is the site completely inappropriate for housing, but in view of the interest from the USA in this

400th anniversary year of the Mayflower's voyage (which began at Harwich), it is essential that a detailed archaeological survey should be allowed in this wider curtilage area. A civilised answer would be for the developer to sell the site to the Petres and be landscaped as part of this ancient and historically valuable site. If this is not forthcoming, the Society will do its utmost to ensure that no inappropriate development is allowed.

This may be the last edition of our magazine to be edited solely by David Eking who has done a wonderful job for many years. He is also the Suffolk Planning Secretary, a key and vital role. We have recruited Dolina O'Neill of Lamarsh to succeed him and she will be involved in editing the final edition to be overseen by David. A warm welcome to Dolina and I shall have more to say about David when he finally retires and moves from the district.

Robert Erith



Corders House, Polstead in the snow (photo by Stephen Davies)

SAVE OUR VERGES

One of the greatest environmental disasters to hit Britain is the loss of wildflower meadows – down to 3% of their number at the end of WWII. Obviously intensive farming methods developed during wartime, but then extended into the years of peace have played a large part in the decline but there remains one area of hope – our 300,000 miles of verges. Whilst visiting the Scottish Isles last summer I was overwhelmed by the beauty and variety of the verges which appeared to be thriving primarily due to a healthy level of neglect.

The verges across Britain offer a huge range of soil types from dry chalk to acidic bog and this variety offers opportunities for cow parsley, ferns, foxgloves, primroses and blue bells to flourish – indeed in the “protected” lane I live on all these species can be seen within a few hundred yards.

However annually Highways and their appointed contractors wage war on the verges with their murderous assault on the countryside in the name of road safety! I have always believed that high verges and restricted visibility forces vehicles to slow and, thereby, enhances road safety. This does not impress those working in offices in Chelmsford and Ipswich who think the only “good” verge is one that doesn’t have a chance to grow above a few inches in height.

The verges should be cut twice a year, initially before wildflowers have got going and then after they have set their seed.

I fully accept that unrestrained growth on certain roads e.g. on corners or at junctions can constitute a hazard but I wonder why our Parish Councils can’t be consulted by Highways Departments to identify those areas that need attention.

An organisation called www.plantlife.org.uk campaigns on behalf of our decimated verges and seeks to create 120,000 hectares of grassland and to:

- save 100 of the most threatened species;
- create wildflower meadows across the nation; and
- protect our verges.

Plantlife provides an opportunity for the individual to contribute to their work in support of their objectives to enhance the countryside.

Not all is lost. Within the Dedham Vale there are pockets of wildflower meadows and an acknowledgement that all our gardens would benefit from a corner allowed to “go wild” thereby encouraging a wild range of biodiversity.

I will conclude by asking if any of you have noticed the excessive growth of nettles and docks along our verges?

This is thought to be caused by the release of nitrogen from car exhausts – perhaps we should ban cars from the Dedham Vale!!

Roger Drury



Modern Harvesting in the Vale. (photo by Paul Gallifant)

PERMITTED DEVELOPMENT IS USUALLY BAD DEVELOPMENT THE “BERLIN WALL” AT MANNINGTREE STATION

I walked from Dedham to Manningtree the other day to see the “Berlin wall” that has gone up outside the station. It was still quite a surprise. I stood beneath it wondering if it was actually bigger than the unlamented one in Berlin. I estimated it was 12 feet of brown steel piling right up against the farm track, marking the boundary of the new raised-level car park. The perplexing thing is that this enormous edifice was built, quite legally, by Network Rail in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty without planning permission.

I think all of us who use the charmingly Victorian Manningtree station recognise that something had to be done about the parking provision. Its parking, which a few years ago acquired another storey, was proving increasingly inadequate to cater both for residents of existing villages and the residents of the dormitory estates rising out of the land on either side of the river. I remember a conversation with our MP, who rang me from a meeting with Network Rail, about whether the Dedham Vale Society would mind if the park was extended over a narrow, dry gully with some willows growing out of it. I said we would not object, if asked, as the worse option was building a permanent car park on the other side of the railway line on the field that gives alighting travellers the sense that they have arrived in a rural location. The DVS did, however, object to the demolition of the unlisted stable buildings at the station which seemed to give an unhurried period character to the station, but we were ignored and these were swept away in the interests of parking half a dozen more cars.

I would point out in the case of the carpark that we did not stand in the way of progress, we attempted to guide it to the right place. Yet I still feel somewhat used, because Network Rail actively avoided the public consultation that could have made this development better. If this great wall of steel had been erected a couple of feet back from the track it would be possible to cover it up in time with a hedge or ivy might be induced to grow up it. Would two feet have mattered to the car park? As it is, this uncompromising wall of metal will now forever be the gateway to tourists arriving in Constable Country by train and walking to Flatford. The problem is that Network Rail and other “statutory undertakers” possess Permitted Development Rights, which mean they do not have to apply for planning permission. Permitted development means bad development because developers don’t bother to think. They used, at least until 2015, to have to inform the public of any proposal “likely to have a significant effect on amenity and the environment.” That provision appears to have been lost in the state of constant flux that seems to apply to planning legislation. We are

attempting to find out if it still applies – for the time very soon when a scheme emerges to replace the single lane of traffic under the railway tracks at Manningtree which causes delays every morning. If Network Rail can make a blot on the landscape out of a car park, how much more of an eyesore will they make out of a tunnel or a road scheme? Word reaches me of more inappropriate lighting in the vale – something that usually does not need planning permission. Schools, churches, village halls, private houses – few seem to have read the simple injunction to point lights downwards, use lights on the amber rather than daylight end of the spectrum and to shield outdoor lights to minimise glare and sky glow. The DVS moves on through the enormous tick-box exercise of getting the measurably dark skies of the vale recognised as a dark sky park. Sooner or later we will have to go on a public relations offensive and explain what bad practice looks like – often encouraged by lazy lighting consultants and badly informed insurers. I had been dreading this until one of our committee brought in a splendid leaflet produced by the Friends of the Lake District entitled “Protecting the night sky starts with you.” This cheered us up. We were not alone. Others were succeeding in the task. Expect a rash of DVS leaflets on simple changes to outdoor lighting to protect the night sky for handing out to thoughtless neighbours, some time soon.

Charles Clover



The “Berlin Wall” at Manningtree Station

John Constable, R.A. (1776-1837) pencil on laid paper
Shipping off the Kent Coast, 18.3cm x 25.8cm, in gilt frame



Provenance: M. Bernard, London; by whom sold in 1961 to the family of the previous owner.
A. Clayton-Payne & Co. Ltd., September 2017, purchased by the current vendor
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Please contact Jonathan Benson or Daniel Wright for more information 01206 754754

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Editor's Note: This fascinating article is exceptionally timely. It relates to an area of Bures Hamlet (over which we seek to extend the AONB) which is under imminent threat of housing Development which must be resisted at all costs.

FERRIERS AND THE NEW WORLD: WITCHES, WAMPUMS AND A VERY SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP

As the 400th anniversary of the voyage of The Mayflower and the Pilgrim Fathers' founding of the New World approaches, the role played by early settlers from Bures and Ferriers Manor, in particular, has been the subject of much academic and literary interest.

From the Great Migration to Plymouth Colony's First Lady, the Salem Witch Trials and even the spoils of *'King Philip's War'*, all have been linked directly to Ferriers and its C17th owners, the Waldegrave and Pelham families.

Two books charting the roles of these families in founding New England have recently been published: Rebecca Fraser's *'The Mayflower Generation'* and Michelle Marchetti Coughlin's *'Penelope Pelham Winslow: Plymouth Colony First Lady'*. Meanwhile, a documentary funded by the British Arts Council seeks to solve the enduring mystery of the missing Wampum Belts of the highly influential Wampanoag Chief Metacomet, known to the settlers as King Philip.



The Pelham Coat of Arms

Such were the significance of these royal symbols that Plymouth Colony Governor Josiah Winslow decided to present them to King Charles II as a 'trophy' of the wars against the indigenous Americans and their safe delivery was entrusted to his brother-in-law Waldegrave Pelham. The belts, however, never made it to Charles II with the last known location being Ferriers...

Early History of Ferriers

Edward II (1284-1327) sat on the throne when the earliest reference was made to property at Ferriers. It was then held by the Earl of Derby, John de Ferrers, who gave the estate its name. Ferriers subsequently passed through John's daughter to the Lords of Attleburgh, later held by the Cresseners of Hawkendon from 1411-1546 before being acquired by Anthony Waldegrave, the second son of

Sir William Waldegrave of nearby Smallbridge Hall. The present Ferriers House, which sits just a few metres from the earlier manorial barn, dates from Anthony's time with both properties passing via his son Thomas to Jemima Waldegrave, who married Herbert Pelham in 1626.



Ferriers by John Nash, 1964

As part of a thriving and affluent Bures community in the 1630s, Ferriers was part of a much larger and grander estate owned by the Waldegraves, comprising the exquisite (and still-standing) fifteenth-century Great Bevills and Smallbridge Hall, as well as Ravensfield Farm, Peyton Hall, and Bures Mill. The manorial court on the Ferriers property was used by the lord to settle civil cases with his tenants. It has been described by distinguished local historian Leigh Alston as, "*undoubtedly the finest and most complete example yet found.*" Alston has compared it to Widdington Priory near Saffron Walden, noting that at 45 feet long and 20 wide, the court hall produces "*a remarkable impression of space.*" Lit by diamond mullion windows with sliding wooden shutters, it includes a separate chamber and private staircase for the lord at one end and an external staircase for the tenants opposite.

The Great Migration

This grand setting at Ferriers was where Herbert Pelham, *'a formidable and wily figure'*, first proposed his plans to travel with his wife, Jemima, four young children and entire household to the New World. He called an open meeting at which, as the wealthy lord of the manor, he offered to pay the passage of any Bures residents who wanted to join him on the voyage; and in August 1638 this varied collection *'of good quality and estate'*, together with indentured servants, livestock, provisions and their *'beautiful and elaborate household objects'*, landed at Salem, Massachusetts as part of the Great Migration of 1620-1640, before settling in Cambridge MA. Jemima Waldegrave Pelham appears to have died before or on the voyage.



The Great Migration, 1620-1640

In truth, this was less of a voyage into the unknown for Herbert Pelham than for most of the Bures contingent. He was already a significant landowner in Massachusetts, having been one of the early investors, known as the 'Merchant Adventurers', in Massachusetts Bay Colony – to quote the excellent Rebecca Fraser, *'he was now putting his money where his mouth was and...going to take up residence on his land in New England'*. As an ardent supporter of Oliver Cromwell's Parliamentary Party and a strong upholder of Puritan teachings, he was naturally inclined to the philosophy of the early settlers. Several were friends and relatives – perhaps most notably his kinsman, *Mayflower* passenger and Plymouth governor Edward Winslow. A regular visitor to Ferriers in the 1640s, Edward and fellow *Mayflower* passenger William Bradford were considered the two most important first settlers, as they were the authors who created the 'Pilgrim narrative'. Herbert's brother William, one of the first planters at Sudbury, was also established in New England – as was his sister, Penelope, who married one of the most famous Governors of Massachusetts, Governor Richard Bellingham. Herbert was also related to many important colonising families, such as the De La Warrs.



Penelope Pelham, born at Ferriers and baptised at Bures Church in 1633

These powerful family ties were further enhanced when Herbert's daughter, Penelope, married Edward Winslow's son Josiah, who himself would become governor of Plymouth Colony. With her gentry background (her third-great grandmother was Anne Boleyn's sister, Mary) and position as Plymouth's 'First Lady,' Penelope was one

of the colony's most influential women as well as an extraordinary individual in her own right.

The Salem Witch Trials

Given Herbert's financial advantages, family connections, and undoubted intellect, it is no surprise that he was soon established as a leading settler of Massachusetts. He was even appointed to the highly prestigious position of Harvard College's first treasurer. Owning four homes and around 1,000 acres of land, he was among Cambridge Mass's wealthiest inhabitants, 'perhaps even the most wealthy'. The 400 acre 'Pelham Island' in Cambridge, MA, still bears his name.

Less fortunate were some of Herbert's fellow travellers from Bures. The village, and the Essex-Suffolk borders more generally, were at the time renowned for 'witchcraft' largely due to the activities of the self-appointed 'Witchfinder General' Matthew Hopkins, who lived in nearby Manningtree. The arrival of a group of immigrants from Bures apparently stoked an existing fear of the supernatural, ultimately feeding into the mass hysteria which led to one of early Massachusetts's most notorious episodes, the infamous and brutal 'Salem Witch Trials' of 1692 and 1693.



Salem Witch Trials 1692-1693

In 1932 an American psychiatrist Percy R. Vessie published a paper about New England witches in which he linked the Bures settlers directly with the introduction of Huntingdon's disease to the United States; according to this theory the symptoms endured by the Bures families, involuntary jerks and ticks brought on by the disorder, were the reason they were labelled as 'possessed by the devil'. This now disputed thesis gained sufficient credence for it to form the basis of the 1988 novel, *The House of Stairs* by local author, Barbara Vine – a.k.a Ruth Rendell, Baroness Rendell of Babergh.

Penelope Pelham Winslow had a further intriguing link to the Salem Witch Trials - her sister-in-law, Elizabeth Winslow Brooks Corwin, was stepmother to one of the most persistent judges, Jonathan Corwin, whose house in Salem still stands, operating as a museum called the 'Witch House'.

Whatever the truth, a direct link between Bures and the 'Salem Witch Trials' is well-established and indeed visually

represented in some seventeenth-century markings on the plaster of an attic eave at Ferriers. These rare surviving apotropaic symbols, used to ward off witchcraft, were burnt with soot from a candle onto the plaster and comprise a series of letters and numbers. Easiest to decipher is the 'VV' signifying the 'Virgin of Virgins,' Mary. In a curious coincidence, apotropaic markings are also found at the house built by Penelope Pelham Winslow's son, where she spent her final years.



The Apotropaic 'Sooty Graffiti' on original 17C plaster Eave at Ferriers

The Wampum Belts

Despite being an illustrious and successful figure amongst the early settlers, matters of estate at Ferriers brought him back to England in 1646, along with his children (with the exception of Penelope) and his second wife, Elizabeth Bosseville Harlakenden, widow of Roger Harlakenden of Colne Priory, Earls Colne.

After resettling at Ferriers, Herbert took on a slew of important civic roles, including representing Essex in Cromwell's Puritan Parliament. Upon his death in 1674, the house passed to his eldest son, Waldegrave. In 1677, Waldegrave was entrusted by his brother-in-law, Governor Josiah Winslow, with the prestigious task of delivering to King Charles II *'the highly symbolic war trophies of King Philip's regalia' in the form of the elaborate wampum belts 'which had once adorned Philip's now decapitated and pathetic body'*. According to a letter sent by Governor Josiah Winslow to King Charles II on June 26th, 1677, these belts were *'wrought with black and white wampum in figures and flowers, and pictures of many birds and beasts'*.

Waldegrave, however, appears to have defaulted on his mission, as the belts were never delivered: *'Entrusting this task to Waldegrave Pelham was a mistake. Josiah's ne'er-do-well brother-in-law never delivered the famous regalia of the Wampanoag chieftains. It vanished and has not been seen again'*.

The last known location is believed to have been at Ferriers: *'where Philip's belt lies today remains a mystery. Perhaps, they are buried in the ground near the old Pelham Manor in Essex'* - certainly the Pelhams were accustomed to conducting burials at Ferriers, with the graves of Herbert's daughter, Jemima, and other family members said to lie by the small pond in view of the house.

The significance of the Wampum Belts is underlined by

the US Government's continued lobbying of its British counterparts for their return (most recently resulting in John Major's government instigating an unsuccessful search).

But perhaps 2020 will see a breakthrough in the mystery. The story of the belts and the question of their whereabouts is the subject of a forthcoming documentary by Wampanoag scholar Paula Peters, funded in part by the British Arts Council. Moreover, an exhibition Peters has worked on entitled 'Wampum: Stories from the Shells of Native America,' which includes a replica, is due to tour the UK in 2020.



18th image of Philip, King of Mount Hope, in full royal regalia including Wampum Belts

Ferriers Today

The importance of Ferriers is not restricted to its role and influence in the founding of New England. As William Geoffrey Probert states in his fascinating History of Bures, this Manor has been *"so closely and for so many centuries connected with [the history of] Bures"*. Certainly the manorial court would have been a prominent focal point for Bures village life over the centuries.

Another local historian, Alan Beales, has added considerably to the depth of knowledge about Ferriers and its broader history on the ever-illuminating Bures website. As Alan points out, the current owners themselves have historic ties to Ferriers. Jemima Waldegrave Pelham's cousin, Mary Waldegrave, married current owner Hugh Petre's direct antecedent, John, the 1st Baron Petre, in 1570. With the Waldegraves and Petres both part of the Essex Catholic gentry of the time, there were likely regular visits between the Waldegraves at Ferriers and Lord and Lady Petre at the family seats at Writtle Park and Thorndon Hall.

It is deeply encouraging that the critical importance of protecting and preserving these heritage sites has been recognised in the new guide for *Heritage in Neighbourhood Plans*, published by the National Trust which places great

emphasis on ‘*identifying and safeguarding local heritage*’ and through the development of a local plan ‘communities ...have an opportunity to create a vision for the future...agreeing what is special and how local character and heritage can be preserved’.

It is difficult to overstate the importance of organisations such as the Dedham Vale Society (DVS) and the Dedham Vale AONB & Stour Valley Project (the Project) in campaigning to ensure these guidelines are upheld. Heritage buildings possess enormous historic value through their correlation with the important events that occurred within and around them, such as the religious, social and political upheavals described in this article – they represent the history and culture of our local area and need the protection of National and Local Authorities encouraged by these and similar amenity organisations.

If you are interested in the 400th Anniversary Celebrations of the Mayflower, essential further reading includes:

- Rebecca Fraser’s book ‘The Mayflower Generation’ – a Times History Book of the Year is available from Waterstones, Amazon and all good book shops
- Michelle Marchetti Coughlin book ‘*Penelope Winslow, Plymouth Colony First Lady: Re-Imagining a Life*’.
- www.mayflower400uk.org

Wampum: Stories from the Shells of Native America - a collaboration between The Wampanoag Nation, ‘The Box’ Museum in Plymouth and the British Museum – will tour Lincoln, London, Southampton and Plymouth, 3 April-24 October 2020.

After Note

In 2019 an application was made to develop the dilapidated C20th farm buildings adjoining Ferriers, including one building less than 6 metres from the grade 2 listed manorial barn, into three 5-bed executive-style rental properties, entirely inappropriate to the historic setting in the countryside. DVS and the Project formed part of a local, national and international effort objecting to the proposed development, highlighting the unique historic importance of Ferriers and the impact the development would have on the proposed extension of the Dedham Vale AONB. As the inspector recorded in his judgement rejecting the Gladman application for 98 houses off the Colchester road “*the landscape around Bures, is not ordinary countryside of no value but is of high sensitivity and is locally valued*”. The support of CSCA and many others has, for the time being, led to the withdrawal of the application - although we understand that a new and virtually identical application is imminent, so please watch this space:

<https://publicaccess.braintree.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?keyVal=PN5YDHBFMU200&activeTab=summary>

TWENTY YEARS A PLANNING SECRETARY

We moved into Thorington Street in the autumn of 1996 and, despite long military experience of never volunteering, in the Summer 1998 edition No 43 of this Newsletter the Committee was “delighted to welcome David Eking as the new Planning Secretary for Suffolk”; the then Chairman, Jeremy Cohen, having button-holed me outside our house within months of our arrival. I have been at it ever since.

The basic task is to monitor and, where necessary, comment on/object to any planning application in or adjacent to the AONB which would adversely affect the appearance or tranquillity of our exceptional landscape. I have looked through the back numbers of the Newsletter at my twice yearly notes – the first set are in No 44 (Winter 1998)- and find that very little has changed over the last two decades. Twenty plus years on I am still commenting regularly on small scale housing developments nibbling away at the open countryside of the AONB, infilling and over large extensions which damage the landscape and the conservation areas of our historic villages, light pollution and unsympathetic conversions of redundant farm buildings.

This last is described in a very recent application, in a splendid example of current “planning speak”, as a “Contemporary re-imagining of the modern agricultural vernacular”. It seeks to replace a skeletal former barn with a large modern house. To an unkind observer the new building looks very like a concrete barn – it is entirely grey!

This is but one minor example of the routine work.

In the first two decades of the 21st century the Society has been involved against several major threats to the Vale. Sometimes we have succeeded, for example in curbing the excessive flying from Wissington Airfield and preventing the “Buntings” proposed development of a theme park at Great Horkesley (not actually in Suffolk but all too near enough to be a very real threat to this side of the AONB). Elsewhere we have failed, noticeably over the large factory developments at the Konings site at Leavenheath and the major housing estates on the edges of East Bergholt. Other work for example over electricity pylons, getting the lines put underground or avoiding new ones overhead, may yet bear fruit. An increasing trend over the last decade has been that even where planning rules and policy would normally have led to a refusal of permission applications have been approved by the Development Control Committee for purely political purposes. The East Bergholt development appears to be a signal example of this.

I have also on occasion had to resist delusions of grandeur and attempts to use the Society to pursue individual obsessions but, on the whole, the locals have always been on our side.

The other aspect of the Planning Secretary’s duty is working with the local planning authority, in our case Babergh

District Council. When I started it was called simply the "Planning Department" headed up by a Chief Planning Officer. Over the years it has gone through numerous changes of name although the Chief Planning Officer has survived, all be it with the addition of "Sustainable Communities" to her title. At the turn of the century email was only starting to become the normal means of communication and any website was primitive. Now I never write a letter and no longer have to visit the Council Offices to study the plans (a great help as the offices are now in Ipswich!). The Planning website is now good and plans can be studied in great detail on the computer in my study. Problems, however, remain. The Local Plan which sets out the conditions for development in the district is seriously out of date (much dates from 2006 with some addition and revision in 2010) and often fails to reflect the central government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). A revised new joint (with Mid Suffolk DC) plan is in preparation but it is a slow and ponderous process.

The other difficulty is the staffing of the department. Although there are some people who have been there as long as I have the majority are much newer, often inexperienced and stay only a short time. It is easy to understand that recruitment and retention for a small rural district under acute financial pressure is difficult. Nevertheless it does result on occasion in incompetence. For example in drafting the new joint Local Plan they managed to omit altogether one of the parishes in the AONB, Shelley, and I receive regularly notification of planning applications for places many miles from the AONB. Both these errors are, I am sure, the result of a simple lack of

knowledge of the local geography and the distinction between the two AONBs in the District.

As if all this was not enough when I finally retired from paid employment I took on the editorship of this Newsletter from Paul Gallifant in the winter of 2007. He had produced an excellent magazine since the end of the 1980s, endowed with his near professional black and white photographs. While we have never equalled his quality we have been able, with modern technology, to expand into colour and maintain the vital twice yearly contact with every member. I shall be sorry to leave the Vale and I shall miss the challenge of extracting copy from often busy contributors. I do, however, freely admit to getting considerable pleasure from the best editions among the twenty five I have edited.

David Eking



Where "Buntings" would have been. (photo by Paul Gallifant)

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Dewed Cobweb. (photo by Stephen Davies)