

# NNTV newsletter

Norfolk National Trust Volunteers [www.norfolkntv.co.uk](http://www.norfolkntv.co.uk)



***Summer 2011***

## Felbrigg – 3 July 2011



An absolutely stonking hot day at Felbrigg had us looking at a very large field full of ragwort. Always a very depressing task but very necessary, we set about removing as many of the ragworts as possible.

Some Ragwort facts.

1 Ragwort is one of the injurious weeds specified in the Weeds Act 1959. This gives MAFF, (The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food) the power to serve notice upon the occupier of the land requiring them to take action within a specified time to prevent the weed from spreading.

2 Ragwort is highly toxic to horses, cattle and sheep and is one of the most frequent causes of plant poisoning of livestock in Britain.

3 Younger animals are more susceptible than mature animals.

4 Ragwort is biennial with a rosette stage in the first year and flowering in the second year.

5 Each plant can produce up to 150,000 seeds with a 70% germination rate.

6 Ragwort seeds can lay dormant in the soil for 20 years.

7 Ragwort is deep-rooted and a plant will regenerate if not completely removed.

After spending a number of hours under the baking sun we broke for lunch only to be soon surrounded by a herd of noisy cows. Luckily Richard came to the rescue and peace was restored.

Rupert

## Oxborough Hall – 17th July 2011

The 17th July saw the NNTVs visiting Oxborough Hall with one of its more unusual tasks. The sea-faring members boarded a punt on the hall moat in order to remove the ever encroaching reeds that constantly constrict the open water. This task was completed using a variety of tools including a pair of sissors.

Once finished both sides of the moat walls were checked for weed growth and any found were removed. For those of us in the punt it was a fun experience in trying to manoeuvre around the moat by free handed paddling, our inexperience showed as we spun in circles.

The landlubbers concentrated on weeding the formal gravel paths on the outer edges of the hall as well as removing a tree branch from the river, using a small tractor to pull it out, which was then chain sawed. At lunchtime we were even able to eat our food in the relative luxury of the gardeners rest hut, a nice change to sit in old comfortable armchairs and under cover from the rain showers.

As this was Father's Day a lot of activities were present including radio controlled aircraft which we had to marshal, steam traction engines, Meccano, model railways and Ken Wallis with Little Neilli an auto-gyro from the James Bond film 'You only live Twice'.

John K and Nigel



## Why do we Rhodi Bash?

There are over 1000 species of *Rhododendron* worldwide. They are known and admired for their spectacular burst of flamboyant flowers and are therefore often popular in parks and ornamental gardens.

The subspecies *Rhododendron Ponticum* is infamous for being highly invasive and it is usually this species that is singled out for removal by conservationists. The plant is native to Southern Europe and South-west Asia and was introduced into Britain as an ornamental shrub in the mid 18th century. It thrives in acid soil and wet climates. In addition it has a two-pronged method of invasion: seed dispersal and suckering. A mature shrub can produce several million wind-dispersed seeds each year and its spreading branches can re-root and sucker where they reach the ground. The result is often an impenetrable tangle of branches which outcompetes native species for light and nutrients. Past cultivation practices have compounded the problem by using *Ponticum* as rootstock onto which other rhodis were grafted. The *Ponticum* would then sucker from below the graft and overcome the intended species.

The leaves on some rhododendron (including *Ponticum*) also contain toxins which are both unpalatable and poisonous to many herbivores from sheep, deer

and cattle down to leaf-eating insects (although certain weevils and borers are tolerant). The shrubs can therefore not be controlled by grazing and often cause habitats to be impoverished of wildlife. (Anyone who has done Rhodi bashing has probably noticed how few insects and small mammals they see despite the disturbance.) In part these shrubs are therefore responsible for the worrying demise in our native biodiversity including many wildflowers, butterflies, beetles and dormice.

And, one last nail in the *Ponticum's* coffin, is actually the flowers themselves. Whilst extremely attractive to pollinating insects – their proliferation can result in monopoly – inhibiting the success of native plants to reproduce.

So . . . providing it is *Ponticum* (and not a prize azalea in your next door neighbour's garden) cut, chop, uproot and burn with impunity. And next time you are doing so you can be happy in the knowledge that you are providing an opportunity for the return of some of our own native favourites.

Laura

## Sheringham Park – 31 July 2011



A beautiful hot summer's day in Sheringham – so what better thing to do than make fires? Today's task was more rhodi bashing – clearing a sight line and glimpse of the manor house from one of the park's elevated woodland paths. The area we were clearing was a small gully between two strips of beech and sycamore wood. It was severely overgrown with bracken, sycamore saplings and *Ponticum rhododendron* (the invasive one) – which was blocking intended views of the house.

A great turn out allowed us to form two teams of choppers, loppers, luggers and burners. With human chains we seemed to make light work of an originally daunting task and were happy to view glimpses of the house from the top by mid afternoon. A reluctance to cut away our source of shade was overcome by competition for the best stoked fire and we were rewarded with bottles of sparkling water to cool us down.

Now that the area is cleared of its main foliage the warden Ed can return with machinery to remove root balls and stumps. In the meantime woodland birds can enjoy easy access to food and visitors can enjoy views of the house again.

Laura



Bearded Tit © Mike Rae



Lapwing © Mike Rae



Hobby © Mike Rae



Red Admiral © Mike Rae



Barn Owl © Mike Rae



Hares © Mike Rae

Many thanks to Mike Rae for supplying a selection of his photographs. To see more of Mike's photos and order prints please go to [www.mikerae.com](http://www.mikerae.com)

## Heigham Holmes – 28 August 2011

The day started fine and sunny as we arrived at the swing bridge. The task was concentrated on the other side of the water and involved brush cutting and pollarding a number of willow trees.

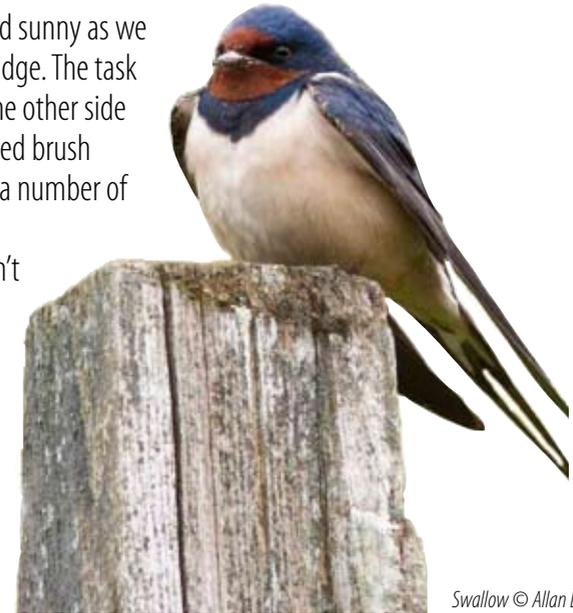
The brush-cutter wasn't working so a trimmer had to be used to clear the banks of reeds, these were then racked into a large pile, the willow branches were also stacked ready for removal later. The

area has to be cleared so that wildlife do not find it attractive to live in.

The bridge is set for renewal in September and will involve construction on the river banks.

During the day we spotted Cranes in a distant field, a Hobby chasing Swallows and a Marsh Harrier. As we were finishing the heavens opened and the rain poured down resulting in a slightly soggy end to the task.

Nigel



Swallow © Allan Drewitt



Hobby © Mike Rae

## Mileage allowance

There is some confusion as to how this is calculated. Marguerite has kindly given an explanation which is detailed below. I would point out that this is an opt out arrangement ie if you are a paid up member and you drive to a task it will be assumed that you wish to make a claim. Those members who do not wish to do this must tell the task organiser on the day.

There is a set mileage to each site and for example Blickling is 30 miles. Set rate per mile is 32p and up to three paid up members for each car can claim eg, For 10 members we claim for four cars. The Task organiser is not included as this is dealt with by a separate claim.

From the amount we receive for each task based on the above we then deduct £10 to

go to our funds to cover refreshments, gas etc. The balance of the claim is divided up equally between ALL car drivers (but not including the task organiser). It does not matter if they travel alone or with a car full or how far they travel. Just that they are a paid up member and drove to the task.

## New arrival



*Congratulations to Sally and Roger on the arrival of Thomas Ian Higgins born 21st August coming in at 7lb 30zs.*

## NNTV Clothing

There is now another chance for members to order NNTV clothing. The range includes a T-shirt, Poloshirt and Sweat shirt all in National Trust green featuring a NT logo on the left breast and 'Norfolk National Trust Volunteers' on the back.

Members may buy one or all three if they wish and will receive a £7 subsidy towards their total order.

Chest sizes (to fit)  
XS 34"-36" SML 36"-38"  
MED 38"-40" LRG 40"-42"  
XL 42"-44"

Prices (all include VAT)

T-shirt £8.23

Polo shirt £12.28

Sweat shirt £13.45

Contact: David (07799) 365737