

Chairman's Report Friends of Lye Valley AGM 2023

By Judy Webb 7th August 2023

FoLV is nearly ten years old – the IGM was held on 14th August 2013. The first volunteer work in the Valley started with the BBOWT Wild Oxford project on 18th August 2014. Since then, lots of work has led to great improvements in the habitat, as shown in Judy's talk (now available as a [PDF on the FoLV website](#)).

Volunteering

Weekly work parties take place on Wednesday mornings in all weathers. Numbers vary from four to ten people, starting at 9am and with people staying for as long as they want. Volunteer hours per year are now approaching 1000. Jobs include scything, raking, chopping scrub, digging up problem plants, moving plants around, collecting and spreading seeds, dam repair, dam building and making signs. Oxford Conservation Volunteers give help for two sessions each year, and we have also had one corporate volunteer group. GoodGym volunteers also spent an evening cleaning rubbish out of the Valley.

Good management means the number of rare plants is increasing; for example, there were 1689 marsh helleborines at the latest count.

Education

There are currently three students studying in the Valley:

- 1) Studying our slow worm populations for an undergraduate project
- 2) Studying our rare soldier flies for an undergraduate project
- 3) Learning plant recording – assisting Judy for experience

Professor Adrian Parker from Oxford Brookes once again brought his students to learn how to take cores from the peat, along with techniques for recording and peat analysis. We await further results from his study.

Developments

The Warren Crescent Development (10 houses adjacent to the North Fen) is nearly complete. We remain concerned about its effects on the hydrology of the fen. Water testing in the fen is due to start (monitoring any impact).

A firm of hydrogeologists is paid to study and report to the City Council on the fen's water catchment and prospects for more housing development. They have dip wells and data loggers in North and South fen sections.

We await a decision from the planners at the City Council on the two-house proposal up the slope from the South Fen SSSI unit.

We remain opposed to any further loss of green spaces within the fen water catchment and encourage house owners to install water butts, rain gardens and soakaways from roof downpipes (there are leaflets about this on the website).

Walks and Talks

We had a picnic and a walk to see the flowers at Rock Edge in May – led by Judy.

We had an afternoon of talks and walks in Lye Valley and the Bullingdon Centre in July, also led by Judy.

Publicity

Committee members ran a stand at the Headington Festival in early June, where they talked to festivalgoers and handed out leaflets.

The FoLV Facebook page and Twitter feed are regularly updated. We now have 1786 followers on Twitter. Thanks to Tony Gillie for keeping these up to date.

We publish three Wildlife Newsletters each year, written by Judy. We also produce FoLV calendars.

Judy expressed thanks to all the committee for their support over this last year; to Stephanie Jenkins for hosting the FoLV website; to our local City and County councillors; and to the Freshwater Habitats Trust for grant funding for log dam repair and further remedial work in Lye Brook.