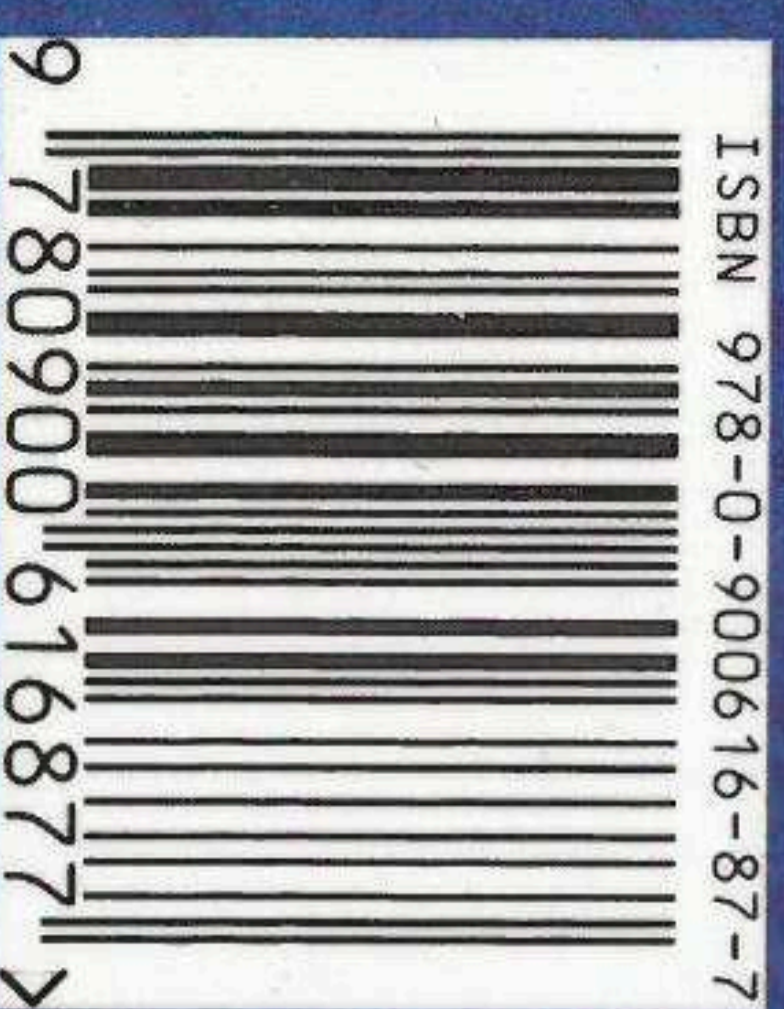


*Hikey Sprites
What are they?*

Well if you really want to know, this booklet will answer all, well some, of your questions.

Ray Loveday has spent two years tracking down these elusive creatures and presents here the results of his research.

A 'must have' for the enthusiast of things Norfolk.



 £4.00

HIKEY SPRITES The Twilight of a Norfolk Tradition

*Hikey Sprites
The Twilight of a Norfolk Tradition*


Ray Loveday

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Ray Loveday

Published by
E. Ray Loveday, 54c Potterygate,
Norwich, Norfolk, NR2 1DY.

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ISBN 978-0-900616-87-7

Copies of this booklet may be obtained from the publisher at the above address
at the cost of £5 including postage.

Typeset in Bembo, Delphin & Stuyvesant

Printed and Designed by
Geo. R. Reeve Ltd.

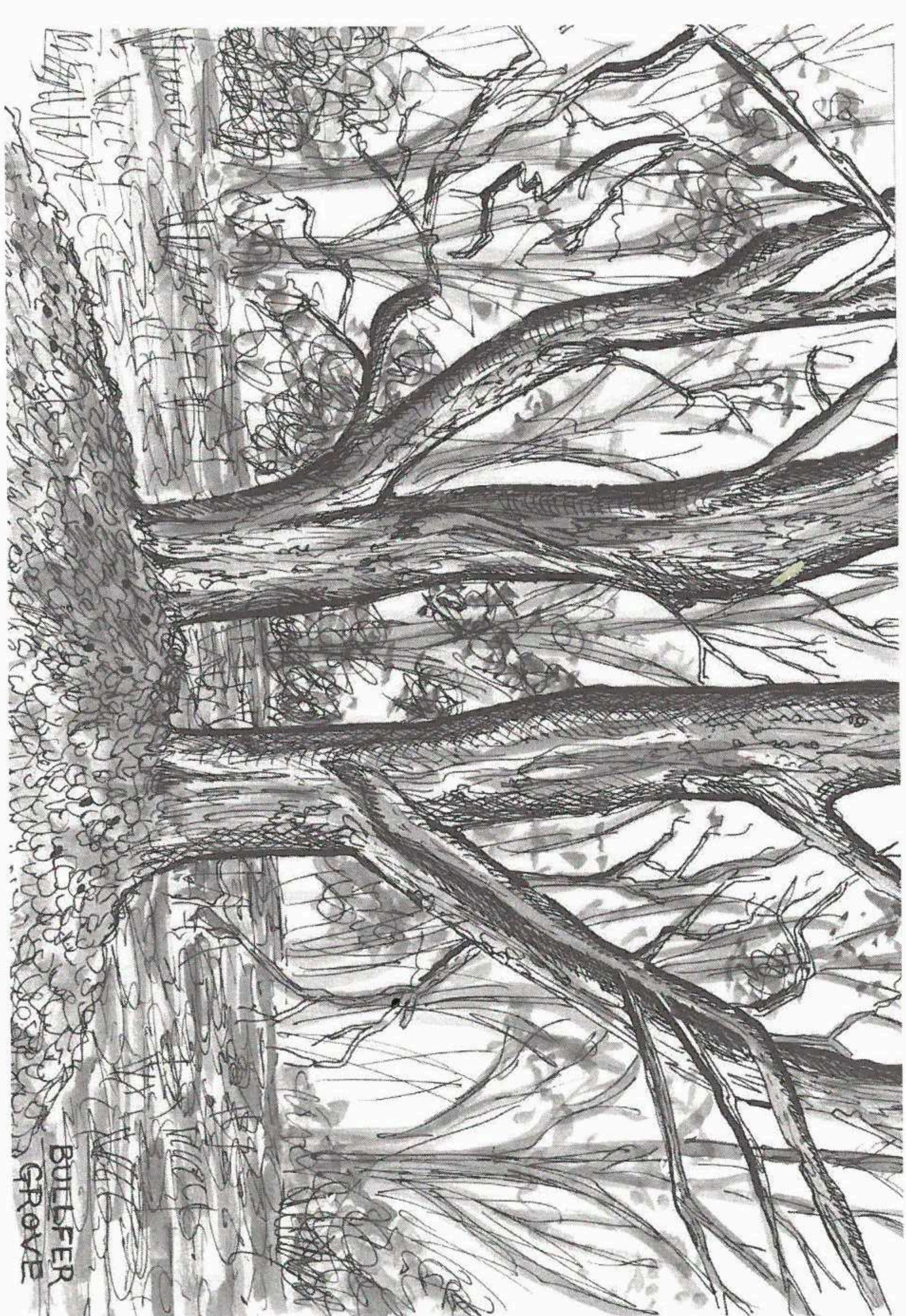
9-11 Town Green, Wymondham,
Norfolk, NR18 0BD. Telephone 01953 602297

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Preface

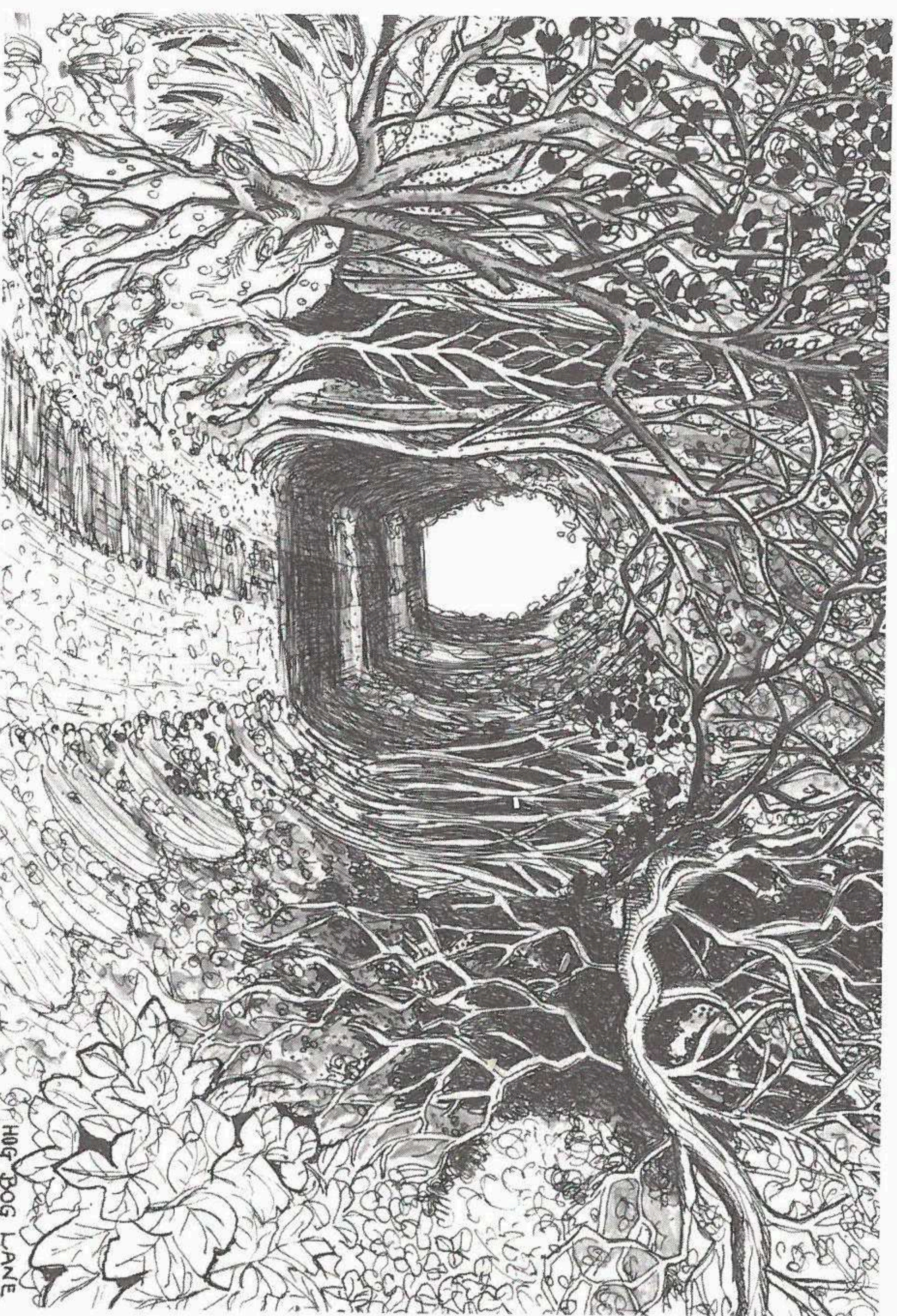
NEVER WIDESPREAD, THE HYTER SPRITE, that elusive member of our Norfolk folklore canon, is now in danger of extinction. This booklet sets out, just in time, to record some memories that remain of the Hyter Sprite tradition. Compiled from the recollections of many, mainly elderly, Norfolk people, it will hopefully offer a helping hand to the Hyter Sprites and give them a foothold into the future. May it also, at the same time, promote a greater knowledge of these, usually overlooked and often misunderstood, entities. There is fact and speculation in the following pages. If you disagree with the speculation I hope you will, at least, accept the validity of my research and find something of interest.



Dedication

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED TO THE HUNDREDS of Norfolk folk who answered, with patience, understanding and support, my many questions on the Hyter Sprites. I owe them all unqualified thanks and gratitude. My chats with these good people, mainly in their seventies and eighties, were a delightful and unexpected by-product of this project. To those who took the trouble to write or telephone I owe special thanks. To the handful of people who found my questioning annoying or intrusive I offer my sincere apologies.

In this work I have used forenames only in order to respect my informant's anonymity. Ages, addresses, surnames were often offered and have been recorded, but ages only are used in this account.



Introduction

IN APRIL 2008 I BEGAN MY QUEST to find out what remained, in the local oral tradition, of the Norfolk Hyter Sprite. It soon became clear that the name Hyter Sprite is a somewhat academic, bookish term, most people preferring Hikey Sprite or one of twenty or so other variants.

My fieldwork continued for eighteen months, during which time I met well over a hundred and twenty Norfolk people with Hikey lore. This book records the status of the Hikey tradition, as I uncovered it, in the first decade of the twenty-first century. My research continues so maybe you, my reader, can add to it with a snippet or two of information. How did my quest begin?

In 1980 a letter appeared in the Eastern Daily Press on behalf of a researcher Daniel Allen Rabuzzi appealing for information on the Hyter Sprites, a name I had not heard of until then. I asked my parents, then in their seventies, if they knew the word and both declared they did. In their childhood in Swaffham and East Dereham their parents had warned them of the intervention of the Hikey Sprite if they misbehaved. Neither my brother nor myself had heard them mentioned in our childhood. This break in the tradition, which was not uncommon, I will explore later.

Mr. Rabuzzi subsequently came to Norfolk in 1981 to undertake fieldwork and published his findings in an article entitled 'In Pursuit of Norfolk's Hyter Sprites' in the journal 'Folklore: volume 95' in 1984. This is an excellent review of the subject and is essential reading. My fieldwork, begun twenty-five years later, was to see if anything of the tradition had lingered on until 2009. While there had been a marked, but expected, decline in the tradition in that period, I uncovered more than I thought possible. This book puts on record my findings.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the Folklore Society and the Eastern Daily Press.

The Quest — My Methods

I ALWAYS FELT MY BEST METHOD to garner information would be direct contact. Throughout the year I attended country, village and church events, flower shows, craft fairs, ploughing matches, open garden weekends, agricultural shows, etc. The Worstead Festival in 2008 brought me into contact with several people with Hikey lore. Church and chapel coffee mornings, held on market days, were also rewarding especially Acle, Aylsham, Fakenham and Dereham.

In the early months of the project I placed appeal letters in several free papers, but had only a couple of replies, informative ones however. I placed cards among the advertisements in many village shop windows, but had no response. Village shops though were great places to meet people and it was there that I made many contacts, both with staff and customers.

Late in the project a letter was published in the E.D.P. appealing for information which produced five interesting replies. Later many people I asked about the Hikey Sprites, revealed they had read about them in the E.D.P., those very letters. An appearance on Radio North Norfolk failed to produce information but again created interest, Hikey Sprites were being talked about.

Face to face worked well. I would listen for a Norfolk speaker then, at an appropriate moment, introduce myself as someone keen on old Norfolk words. The response was almost entirely warm and friendly. Asked if they had spent their childhood in Norfolk produced the reply, "Born and bred and proud of it!" I began by asking which Norfolk word would they use for a snail. Several versions were given; dodman, hod-me-dod, dodaman and hob-nee-dob. I continued, with a little informal quiz — mawkin? pishmere? sally? bishybarnybee? Confidence and rapport established, I then asked the vital question, "Have you heard of the Hikey Sprites?"

Many people answered straight away, others only after a period of deep reflection. Some expressed pleasure that they had been able to tap something, long languishing in the recesses of their minds. Nigel, met at the Norfolk Show, was typical. "I thought nothing about it 'til you spoke," he said, "it stirred something in my mind". Two people thought they were alone in knowing about the Hyter Sprites. As Nicky said over the telephone, with

obvious satisfaction, "I didn't know, 'til I read your letter in the North Walsham Times, that anyone else knew about them".

Others remembered the word, I was certain they did, but could give me no further details. Many were touchingly disappointed that they were unable to help, most seemed happy to have had the encounter with me. Everyone who had something to say directly or indirectly, or by letter or telephone, have contributed to this book. They are the real authors and I am grateful to them.

My sources were almost entirely primary, only one or two were influenced by material they have read, two offered pure speculation, these have been omitted. Of my informants women slightly outnumbered men.

Figure 1.

THE TWENTY-TWO VARIANTS OF THE NAME	SUPERNATURAL CREATURE SOMETHING MYSTERIOUS	NAME KNOWN NO OTHER INFORMATION	NATURAL PHENOMENON	PEOPLE NICKNAMES	26
HIGH SPRITE	8			1	8
HIGHTY SPRIGHTY		1			2
HIKE SPIKE	1				1
HIKE SPRIKE	1				1
HIKE SPRITE	1				1
HIKER SPRITE	1			1	2
HIKEY				6	6
HIKEY PIKE				1	1
HIKEY SPRITE MAN	1				1
HIKEY SPIKE	1				1
HIKEY SPIKE	1				1
HIKEY SPRITE	50	6	4	6	66
HIKEY STRIKER				1	1
HIGHTY TOIGHT	1				1
HYDRA SPRITE	1				1
HYPER SPRITE	1				1
HYTE SPRITE	11	1	1	1	14
HYTER SPRITE	4	1	1		6
HYTY SPRITE	5			1	6
HIGHTY SPRITE	1				1
IKEY SPRITE	3				3
SPRIKEY				1	1