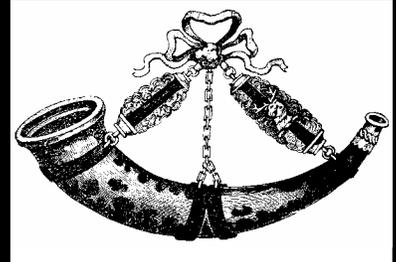


Letter from Dibbinsdale



Autumn 2007

"Letter from Dibbinsdale" is a newsletter for the people who use the reserve and those who seek to support its conservation and management.

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Many thanks to our retiring Chairman.

Neil Fuller has stepped down as Chairman of the Friends of Dibbinsdale. Neil finds that he cannot involve himself as much as he would wish because of work commitments.

On behalf of the Friends I would like to thank Neil for the work he has done on behalf of not only the Friends also the Reserve and local community. In his time 'in charge' he has gained valuable funding for the reserve and helped represent the interests of all those using the park.

Many thanks and good wishes

Pete Miller, Ranger

AGM at Dibbinsdale

Friends of Dibbinsdale LNR

Owing to the resignation of the Chairman, there will be an extraordinary AGM with the primary purpose of electing new officers of the Friends

This will take place at the Rangers Office
On :- Sunday 25th November

At :- 12 pm

Those members of the Friends wishing to be considered for posts as officers for the group should contact Peter Miller at the Rangers Office (0151 334 9851) and put their name forward before the meeting if possible (candidates need to be proposed and nominated)

Should it be requested, Peter will also do his best to inform those wishing to find out what is involved in the office.

News in Brief

- **New Management Plan.**

Christine Smyth, a Parks Development Officer based in Westminster House, will be writing a new management plan for the reserve. This will update a previous management plan that was written in 2000.

- **No Newsletter in hard copy (pamphlet)**

As part of a departmental saving, the newsletter that was printed containing an events diary for the winter activities undertaken by the rangers will no longer be available as a 'hardcopy'. It is available on line from: www.wirral.com. If you would like to see 'Whats On' please call or see The Ranger

- **The Brotherton Trust** has just donated £1000 to the reserve. This sum of money has been regularly donated for some years now by the trust based in Harrogate. The Trust wishes that the money be spent on the buying of equipment for educational use. Their continued commitment to the reserve is greatly appreciated

- **Apologies to park users.** This year part of the reserve has experienced a problem with regard to the cutting of grass.. In short the schedule for grass cutting on Spital Field has not been met. The matter is being looked into with regard to how to overcome this problem in the future. The Friends will be taking this up with council representatives.

Sylvia's Obsession –The Willow

I enjoy this time of year, - approaching winter, -for one reason only,shortly it will be Spring, which I will see heralded in by **Pussy Willows** in bloom. How I love the sight, Dibbinsdale is really beautiful at that time of year .The willows, with their familiar catkins blossom from late January until late May. We have 16 native varieties, which flower at different times.

Pete (Dibbinsdale's countryside Ranger) asked me last weekend where he might obtain some willows for weaving. I have used Willow to construct a seat and a gate , but have not really had experience of weaving.It would be great if Pete has the time to revive some of the arts of growing and using willow.



Cyd and Eddie

The two white farm yard geese that have taken up residence on Woodslee Pond have been affectionately named Cyd and Eddie by local children. They have laid eggs, although no chicks have come on the scene as yet. They are definitely a very attached couple.

They appeared before Christmas last year and have stayed ever since. How they got here and where they came from I do not know. Perhaps more curious is why they choose to stay on Woodslee Pond. The fringe benefits are that they get regular visits from a large number of families with young children bearing gifts of bread. They have an island made of a wooden pallet to sit on and make a safe home and when things are quiet they mooch around the edge of the pond eating grass

They also have to contend with bouts of antisocial behaviour, litter, fires and fireworks that go off around the pond at night, but this doesn't appear to put them off.

Those interested in knowing what happened to 'Little and Large' (An extremely large mallard and a very noisy smaller hybrid duck) need fear not. George, who lives in Central Avenue, informs me that he is alive and well floating around in his pond. He is compared, quite unfavourably, to a 'Brabason'. A large prototype aircraft of the 1950's that could not take off.

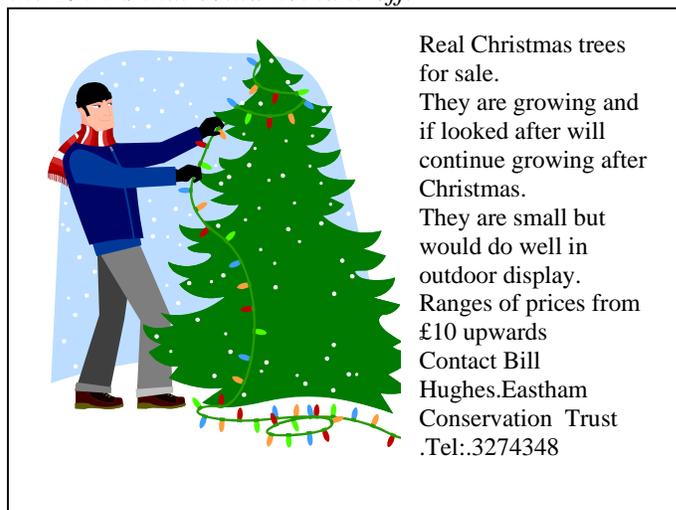


In 2002 I had the opportunity to develop a piece of land at The Welsh College of Horticulture. It was at that time an area of mown grass with a desolate patch of scrubby willow bushes, some dead, some barely alive, together with brambles, nettles, docks, in a very boggy area, with a few attractive native wild flowers, Willow Herb, Flag Iris.

Working with four 'Friends of the Celyn' We have planted a Willow 'Fedge' i.e a living Willow hedge. Two tunnels : one large ,one small, Two arbours, one with a seat, a windy path and a progressively attractive bog garden.

We are intending to practice the old arts of coppicing and pollarding, with our different willows; and of course making more seats and gates. Sylvia Briercliffe

Sylvia met me at Eastham Country Park where we were doing willow weaving and making things with willow sticks (hedgehogs) I told her that we were trying to grow willows that might be more useful than the ones we had obtained so far, so that we could do craft work with them. If you would like to get into willow' art and craft' ,please contact me.



Real Christmas trees for sale. They are growing and if looked after will continue growing after Christmas. They are small but would do well in outdoor display. Ranges of prices from £10 upwards Contact Bill Hughes. Eastham Conservation Trust .Tel.:3274348

Wetland Wonderland ?

Update on how the project is getting on

The application was successful and funds were acquired in June 2007 for the Ladybridge Wetland Scheme (Phase 2) See the last issue. The scheme then needed the consent, or approval of Natural England and The Environment Agency to proceed. Natural England sent their approval through in late August and EA sent on their approval by early October. The scheme could now proceed before winter flooding rendered contractors work impossible.

United Utilities were consulted with regard to the course of the main sewer that ran underground through the reserve.. Peter Reid of UU sent through plans of the course of the pipe. Griffiths of Newton Hall Farm sent through their estimate which was accepted. The second week in October was agreed.

It only left the marking out of the pools on the ground for the work to commence. The exact course of the sewer was crucial to this. Its course was between two manhole covers at either end of the wetland. The only problem was that the man holes at one end were completely covered by vegetation and finding them proved problematic. All was resolved with some advanced map work involving compass bearings and Sarah Morton, Eastham Ranger, whose eyesight was better than mine. The task day as part of Mersey Basin Week provided volunteers from Levers who marked the outline of the pools with what might be described as 'crop circles'.

Griffiths duly arrived at the crack of dawn Monday 8th October and deployed what seemed like a convoy of excavators and equipment. Robbie Griffiths who led the contractors described it as 'mob handed'. The job was discussed, health and safety forms filled in, signs and path closures put in place and we were off. Mob handed is not a fair description of the efficient and professional way the firm undertook the work. With on site discussions throughout the following days on subjects related to sensitive areas, angles of slope, run offs and gradings of banks, all was achieved ahead of schedule.

The slow process of collecting plant material to colonise the mud strewn pools when finished had begun many months earlier. Rushes, Purple Loosestrife, Common Reeds and Flag Irises had been propagated and assembled in the walled garden to wait transplanting. This was thanks to the work parties of volunteers from a combination of sources but mostly the Environment Agency and Unilever Research earlier in the summer.

The Pest Control Officers finished off the volunteer conservation task days here splendidly. The plants were dispatched and rehoused by them close to the new pools within days of the contractors job finishing. Result !



Excavator digging out pools. The dug material raising the banks for water vole burrows



Meanwhile other excavators are putting down path material at the bottom of the meadow



Planting up into the mud. The Pest Control Officers 'sunk' pots of rushes, reeds and other marginal plants on the edge of the new pools

The management of the new pools next year will involve the eradication of Himalayan balsam and the introduction of more useful vegetation. Marginal plants will be transplanted from other parts of the reserve to here. The main plant species will be common reed. These will spread into the pools and provide a very rare habitat for wetland wildlife. Care has been taken to protect the 'toad' pool in this area..



The flag stone weir at Babbs Meadow

Volunteers Diary

This summer was a successful year for volunteers. The contribution that was made to the management and conservation of the park was immense. Many thanks to all those who have helped.

The work of the Pest Control Officers ,Unilever and the Environment agency has ben mentioned. The unseen work of those who use the park on a daily basis is also appreciated..

One of the last groups who made an enormous contribution were the task force from The Environment Agency led by Dawn Grundy.

They were able to construct a weir, along with other tasks, from old flag stones, that has helped ‘save’ Babbs Meadow reedbed..The weir that they made now acts as a safety valve to control water coming out of Babbs Meadow.The flood waters were in danger of putting so much pressure on the bund hold back water in the reedbeds that the bund would collapse.It is reminiscent of the Dutchman’s finger in the dyke fable. The new sluice, or weir gives the floodwaters an escape without bursting the dam. The dam is vital to keeping water levels in the reed beds high in summer. Nice one , EA !



In Memory -Ron Wainwright

Ron Wainwright died on Thursday September 13th. Ron was a true friend of Dibbinsdale and in particular held a lifelong love of Woodslee where he was born in Woodslee Cottages and where he lived until he married Norma and moved to Eastham returning later in life to live in Uplands Road, close to his birthplace.

I too was born at Woodslee Cottages and although eight years younger than Ron I have known him for all my life and our paths have crossed regularly over the years, despite his frequent periods working abroad in various aspects of engineering.

My memories of Ron and his brothers Fred and Reg and his mother and father Dick and Nellie go back to my childhood but my most enduring memories are of the period of the early fifties, which is referred to now as a period of austerity, but in the little community of Woodslee it certainly never felt like that to us. My most abiding memory is of climbing trees with Ron who as an older boy saw it as his duty to teach me such things and always encouraged me to go just that little bit higher much to the distress of my mother who on a regular basis would be screaming “Ronnie Wainwright get our Neil down that tree.” Not that it ever stopped us.

Ron had a keen interest in and developed an extensive knowledge of nature, and as we were surrounded by it in Woodslee he taught me at an early age to recognise birds, birds’ eggs, how to fish and many such things. In later years I would see him around Woodslee showing his son Tony all of the same things he had shown me.

Despite his travels around the world Ron was a true Bromborough lad and was a hard working and energetic supporter of the Bromborough branch of the Royal British Legion where he was highly respected and had many friends. The many friends that Ron had in Bromborough and the Legion was evidenced by the large numbers of people that attended his funeral at the Church of St. Barnabas Bromborough. Like all of us Ron was not perfect but he was a good friend and an amiable and likeable man and I always enjoyed meeting him and talking to him, as did most people, and as you can imagine most of our conversations turned to “the good old days” – and they were.

Ron always revisited Woodslee and the nature reserve on a regular basis and in later years he was delighted to have moved back and live close to his birthplace and where he could walk his dog through the woods every day. I know he felt that he had come home.

Neil Fuller 19 October 2007

Events diary at Dibby
Sunday 2nd December
Dibbinsdale Local History Walk and Talk
1.30 pm- 3.30pm
Meet outside Dibbinsdale Hotel

Sunday 9th December
Holly Hacking (cut your own holly for
Christmas and buy our home grown
Christmas Trees)
10.30 -2pm Meet at the Rangers Office