



Friends of Dibbinsdale

Supporting Brotherton Park & Dibbinsdale Local Nature Reserve

Email: friends@dibbinsdale.co.uk

www.dibbinsdale.co.uk

Letter from Dibbinsdale

Summer'13

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



Photo: Carl Huxley

Profile: Grey herons are large, striking birds often spotted standing motionless at the water's edge. Having found a suitable location, herons stand and wait patiently for the right moment to stab passing prey with their dagger-like beaks. They also wade through shallow water searching for small [fish](#) and [amphibians](#). Herons [fly](#) with their head drawn back and feet trailing behind. The wing beats are slow and their curved wings form an m-shape. Herons are tree nesting and the nearest nesting colony is at Thornton Hough. They are often found fishing on the Mersey and the Dee estuaries.

We would like to invite all members who wish to stand as members of the Friends Committee at the next AGM in late summer.

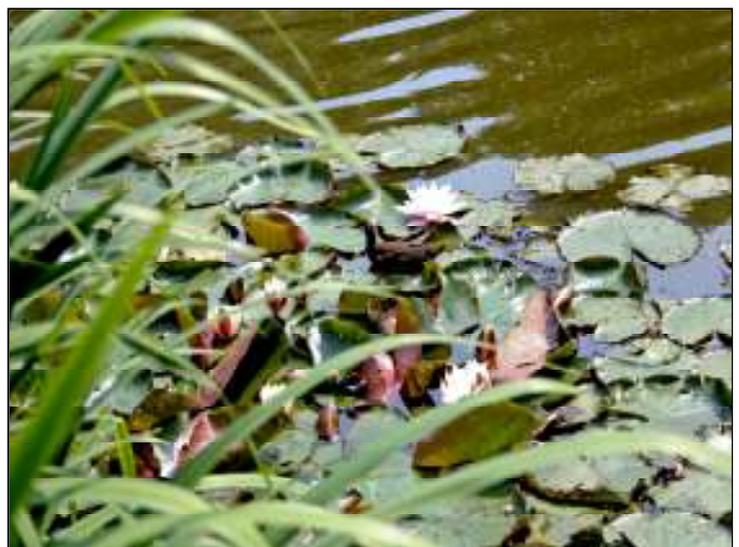
(Chair person, Treasurer, Secretary, membership secretary, and Committee members)

All interested are asked to lodge their interest with the Secretary of the Friends via the Rangers Office, Woodslee Cottages, Dibbinsdale Local Nature Reserve, Bromborough



Summer sizzler.

As the heat wave continues into July, perhaps the coolest place is paddling in the River Dibbin, or Woodslee Pond.(wildlife only !) The heron(left) and moorhen (below) are the expert paddlers. The hot weather has its effect on the oxygen levels in the water, as well as the growth of algae. As a consequence of this , Alan has deployed a pump to push oxygen into the water. The on going use of 'parcels' of barley straw immersed in the water also help to reduce algal growth. In the picture above you can just make out the floating islands, now one year old, that act as wildlife refuges. Over the winter two areas of the pond at either end were fenced off below the water line so that the water remains undisturbed for fish and wildlife





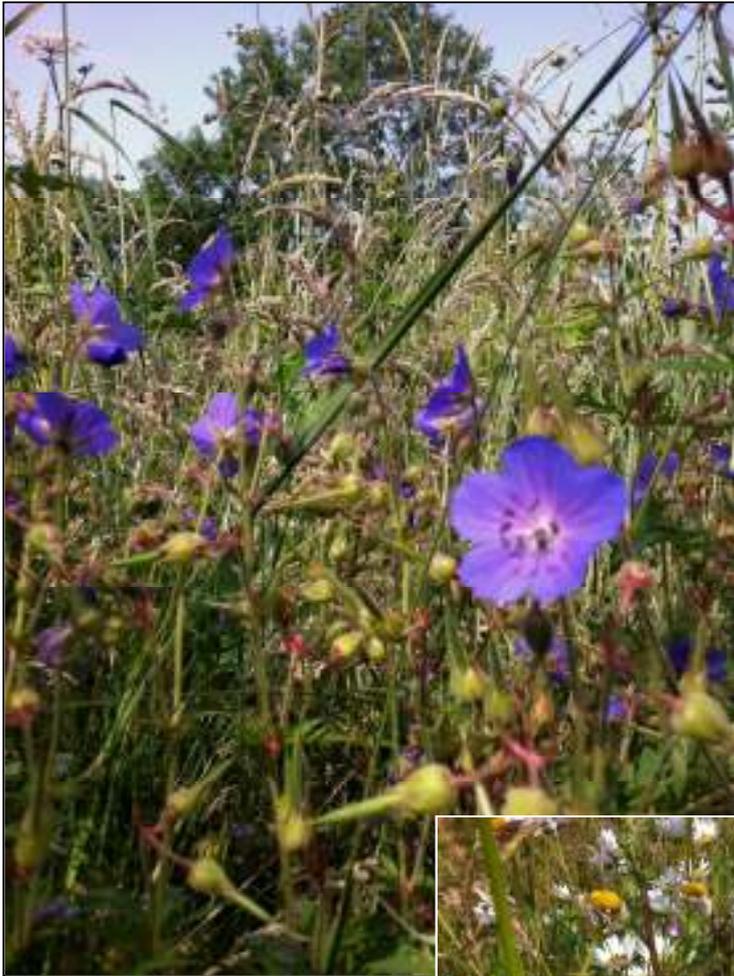
Hi! I'm Kimberley and have recently been offering a hand at Dibbinsdale to gain some experience in conservation and wildlife. I've enjoyed identifying and photographing various plants and flowers

and have gained a lot more knowledge of them, especially as the biodiversity here is boundless! I hope you like some of the pictures I took on one of my volunteer days working on the meadow. It shows how the meadow that was created 2 years ago is making good progress with over 30 varieties of wild flower. I have researched some information about some of the flowers that I would like to share with you.



Red Campion- *Silene Dioica*

Silene Dioica, derives its name from Silenus, the drunken, merry god of the woodlands in Greek mythology, and it is easy to see why. The Red Campion, like the god it takes its name from, enlivens woods and hedgerows with an array of abundant flowers of red and pink. Although the plant is unscented, hairy and slightly sticky it is difficult to ignore the generous addition of colour it provides to meadows or rockery. Due to the long flowering period right through till Autumn it is difficult not to admire the distinctive wheel-like flowers which open during the daylight, especially as wherever there lies Red Campion, a myriad of butterflies and bees are sure to be close by due to the strong attraction to the vibrant splash of colour.

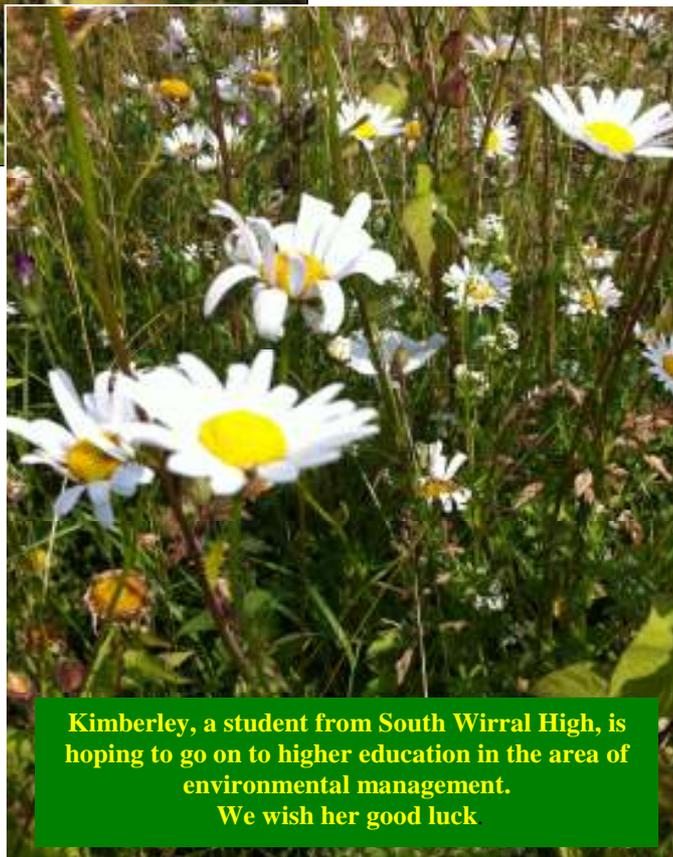


Meadow Cranesbill-

Geranium pratense

The Meadow Cranesbill, taking its name from the 'beak' over the seed cluster which closely resembles that of a crane, is one of Britain's most distinctive flowers. The dark veins on the richly coloured purplish-blue petals guide bees towards the nectar and as a perennial these bees can rest assure the Meadow Cranesbill will return year after year to provide a rich energy source of nectar.

Flowering from May to September, peaking in the earlier months, it is native to most of Europe and Asia and provides such an attractive environment that the Royal Horticultural Society have given it the prestigious award of Garden Merit (AGM), for plants of outstanding excellence.



Ox-eye Daisy –

Leucanthemum Vulgare

In earlier years, the Ox-eye Daisy was used in medicines to cure a variety of ailments. These days, however, it is more common to come across the Ox-eye Daisy flourishing in grassy areas, gracefully spreading a blanket of white and gold through meadows and fields. With a central golden button of disc florets surrounded by an outer ring of white florets the Ox-eye Daisy appears to be the epitome of summer time glee; an expression of natural innocence as the dainty flower encapsulates the image of summertime meadows from June to September. It appears similar to the common or lawn daisy, *Bellis Perennis*, yet as the largest native member of the daisy family however it is important to note the distinctive toothed spoon shape and long leaf stalks which set them apart.

Kimberley, a student from South Wirral High, is hoping to go on to higher education in the area of environmental management. We wish her good luck.

Big Dig comes to Dibby

Alan with other volunteers digs a metre by metre hole on Woodslee field to discover a fragment of Bromborough's past. Archeologists from Chester, part of the Big Lottery Dig, have organized the project that looks at finding out more about Bromborough's past. The finds in this test pit No 20 were various. Two bricks for securing the goalposts were the main item found in this pit, along with bits of clay pipe, pottery, and a small metal ornament. Pit no.21 nearby found fragments of Roman glass!



Bricks found in the clay

New bench donated by The Friends

A new bench has been installed close to the main car park. It has been provided to cater for wheelchair user use. Volunteers built the bench, prepared the site and anchored it in position. Happy picnicking!



Volunteers (left to right) Dave, Sarah, Carl, Ron, Kim, Pete and Clive

“Balsam and Knotweed are history”?

Could this ever be a true statement at Dibbinsdale? This year still sees the balsam popping up in tiny groups of plants here and there by the river bank.

The trouble is that if allowed to seed down, those individual plants will become an army of flowering heads in following years. The programme of balsam pulling and removal continues. Volunteers will carry on the fight along side Alan. A firm called Elm has also been contracted to work on the removal of invasive plants on a grant. The news is a little different with the Japanese knotweed. Alan has acquired a gismo that can chemically inject the knotweed when it is discovered. The best time for this is at the end of the season. The price is eternal vigilance!



Forest Schools at Dibbinsdale



Forest schools is a Scandinavian approach to education using the outdoors to inspire creativity and learner led exploration. 10 Wirral Rangers, including Alan at Dibbinsdale, have been trained to deliver the forest schools experience at their sites to interested Wirral schools in the forthcoming year. The coordination of the project and further details of the range of skills and activities involved, as well as the cost, can be found contacting Wirral Rangers at Birkenhead Park on 0151 652 5197



Treated wood planters and ash flag posts

Developing an Environmental Education Area

In anticipation of the Forest Schools initiative, volunteers have been working with Alan in the walled garden at Dibbinsdale to create an attractive and stimulating 'outdoor classroom' for future public use. Some of the tree trunks cut by the Merseyrail group were recycled to make a fire site (below). Wooden planters have been built to enhance the area. Ash posts have been sunk in the woodchip area to hang decorative flags. Seating under a mature pine tree is to follow along with seat posts around the fire site.



Merseyrail volunteers at Dibby



Cath Johnston, Environmental and Energy Manager for Merseyrail, leads a team of Merseyrail employees and volunteers improving their local environment. On a day of volunteer work the team worked with Alan on a variety of conservation and management tasks.

Some tree work was undertaken at the bottom of the 39 Steps area close to Spital Fields. Here Alan felled some small beech trees close to the Willow Carr wetland. The improved light and moisture to the woodland floor will enable an understorey of woodland plants to colonise the area. This will complement the bluebell already here



Here the Merseyrail volunteers work with Alan to remove Rhododendrons close to the river bank. The work in removing the rhododendrons is a slow process. The bushes have established in the shade of the red sandstone overhang along the path leading to St Patrick's Well, over the last 100 years. The whole root ball also needs to be taken out so that the bush cannot re-grow within the ancient woodland. Usually the volunteers like to get rid of the cut material with a controlled bonfire. The heat from the fire has the added benefit of inhibiting balsam seed growth, however in the recent heat wave it wasn't just the balsam that was wilting!