

News in Brief

Friends AGM

The Annual General Meeting was held in August at the Visitors Centre. At this Ron Warne was re-elected Chairman and Don Davies the Treasurer. Peter Miller was elected as Secretary along with George Bryant, David Rome, Liz Woods, and Shaun Brady as committee members. For information about future plans of the group, minutes of meetings and Friends membership details either contact the Rangers Office 01513349851, or email the group at : friends@dibbinsdale.co.uk
All new members are welcome as well as those wishing to renew membership.

Balsam update

The years balsam attack is at its end. Thanks to the Cheshire Wildlife initiative and Lyne Byrn, along with many hours off sweat and toil from volunteers and Alan Smail of Wirral Rangers Service . There has been great progress in the removal of balsam from the Dibbin water course.

Planned winter volunteer tasks

A range of winter volunteer tasks are being planned by Alan that will include hazel coppicing, scrub clearance, rhody removal and a variety of woodland craft sessions

AWAC Thanks

Many thanks to the Association of Wirral Angling Clubs for their support for the Woodslee Pond Improvement Project.They have invested £800 for the purchase of tench and perch that will be introduced into the pond waters this autumn

Dibbinsdale Woodland Task Day

Saturday 10th November .10.00am – 1.30pm

Join the Ranger at Brotherton Park & Dibbinsdale LNR for a woodland management tasks day. We will be coppicing hazel as part of our ongoing woodland management and looking at ways we can use the timber produced. Work will be followed by hot soup in the volunteer centre afterwards.

Suitable for ages 14+. Meet at Brotherton Park & Dibbinsdale LNR Visitor Centre (SJ 346828).

For more info, Tel: 0151 334 9851 or Email: alansmail@wirral.gov.uk



Overgrown woody growth (above) was removed last year.

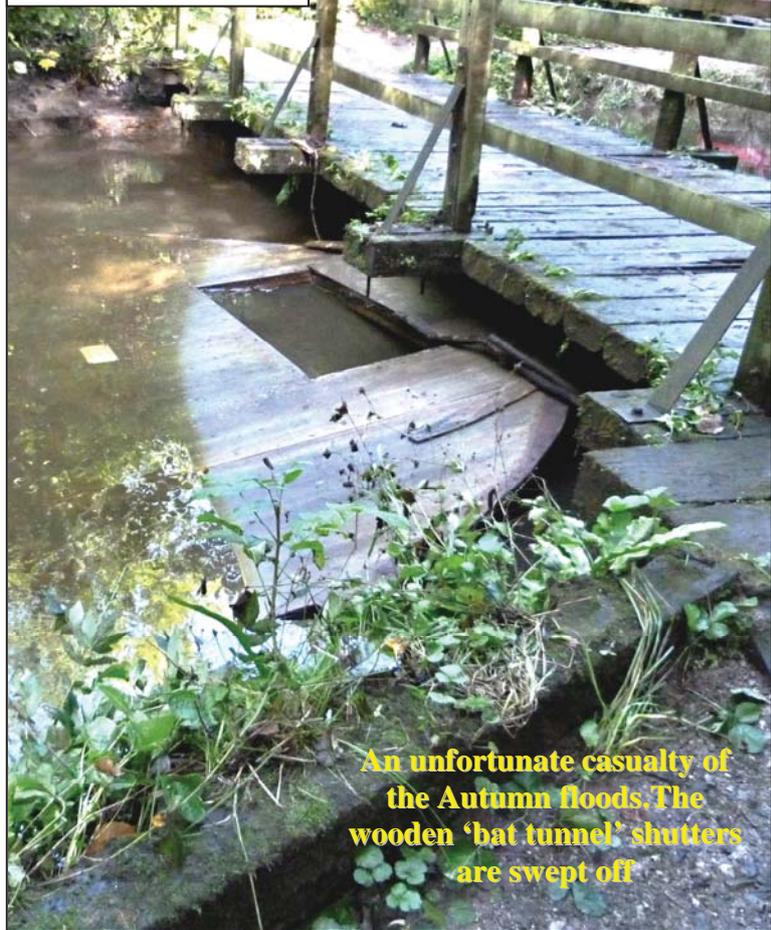
New regrowth from stumps and grassland landscaping work (right) The area has improved its wildlife habitat value and will also look more attractive as fresh rhody growth



Babbs Meadow Rhododendron Review

A new lease of life was breathed into the rhody thicket at the bottom of Central Avenue

Autumn Flood Damage



An unfortunate casualty of the Autumn floods. The wooden 'bat tunnel' shutters are swept off

Friends of Dibbinsdale Winter Warmer

Saturday 8th December 11.00am – 3.00pm

Come and join us in the walled garden and courtyard at Brotherton Park & Dibbinsdale LNR. We will have a traditional woodland craft demo and wreath making, decoration making and a BBQ and fire to keep you warm. Bring the family and take a stroll around the reserve.

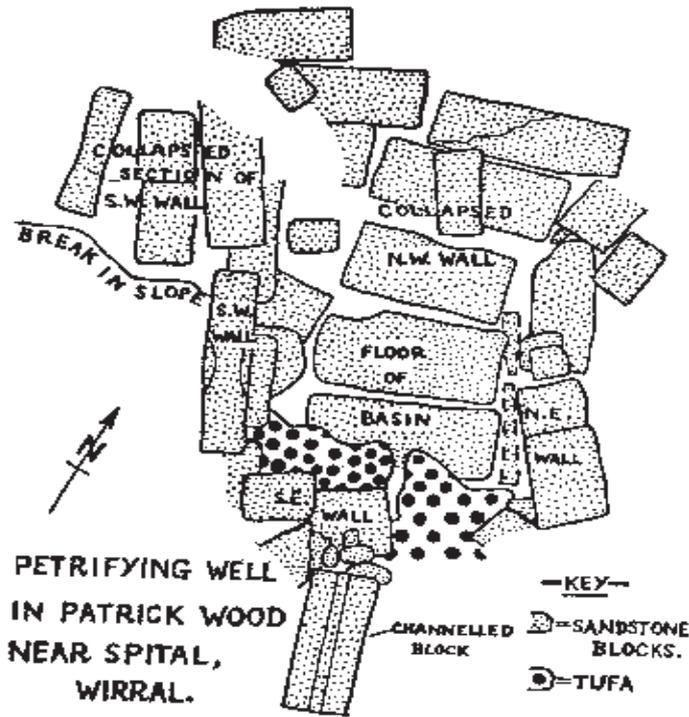
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Bat and night walk

Terry brings in his captive owls to show those who took part in the event in the visitors centre.

Local History Archives-Dibbinsdale Local Nature Reserve- The Petrifying Well



The Petrifying Well can be found close to the Otters Tunnel. It lies hidden in woodland called Patrick Wood. This is private land owned by Cheshire Wildlife Trust and special permission is needed to enter.

The water that rises to the surface here holds limestone. When this limey water covers objects it leaves coats of limestone on them. They are 'turned to stone' - or petrified. The earliest known mention of the well is in the " Gentleman's Magazine" for December 18th , 1762 : " In a wood in the township of Bromborough there is a well whose waters petrify moss, leaves, etc., after lying in it for some time, in a beautiful manner ".By the beginning of this century, the existence of the well was well known locally. There was no path to it. The steep, slippery and wet wooded slope put people off. It seem unlikely that many knew of its exact position. A channeled stone, overturned on the slope above the well, had apparently been one of a number intended to lead water from the spring into the basin.

Petrifying springs usually occur in limestone districts. The occurrence of one in a Bunter sandstone area, poor in lime, was sufficiently unusual to arouse the interest of a Liverpool geologist, the late E.G.Hancox, B.Sc, who investigated it in 1932. He found that the calcareous water actually welled up over a fairly large area. In July, 1954, the well was cleared of the silt and debris which had gathered since 1932. It was found to consist of a misshapen basin, roughly five feet square, composed of red sandstone blocks, and cut into the hillside. The whole structure was considerably ruined. It was possible to make out the plan of the structure, and to see that it had been floored by three large sandstone slabs.

The well was in such a hard place to get to. The reason for this may have been that it might have been connected with the medieval leper hospital. This lay across the valley, about half a mile away, roughly on the site of the outbuildings of Spital Old Hall .

(Now developed into a housing estate 'Blair Park'). The cure for leprosy " was sometimes sought in medicinal waters "The fact that the water 'turned things to stone' may have seemed special to those who lived in the Middle Ages. Their knowledge of medicine at that time was very poor

Aerial Picture of Patrick Wood



Archaeological Survey of Merseyside

Ref -WIRRN /Poulton -cum-Spital /33838(SJ 3369 8318)

Re Spital Old Hall- Site of Medieval Chapel and leper hospital

The site of the 12th Century Chapel of the Blessed Thomas the Martyr is well attested in medieval documents. Founded between 1174 - 1184 the chapel was endowed with lands ,half the site of a mill, a fishery and part of the wood (Tait 1920,126). The earliest reference to the leper hospital associated with the chapel is circa 1270 - 80 when the 'leper houses' on Poulton Millway (Spital Road, leading to the mill of the Abbey of St Werburgh of Chester on the Dibbin) are mentioned in a document of William Lancelyn (Tait, 1923, 329)A reference in the Wirral Forest Court Rolls states that William Lancelyn erected three houses at Poulton near the Bebington house of lepers before 1286, and in the period 1270 - 83 the same William granted the Abbott of St Werburgh three butts of land in the territory of Poulton as the site of a grange and cottage. It appears from this evidence that a significant nucleus of medieval settlement existed around the chapel site.

Woodslee Pond Restoration Project Environment Agency work with Volunteers to build rafts

Andy Eaves and Trevor Oldfield of the Environment Agency fisheries arrive to help volunteers build their special water filtering wildlife refuge pond raft - and they bring all the materials themselves



Alison fills the rafts perimeter floatation pipe with plastic bottles for extra support (above) Andy and David join the pipe to the wooden raft frame (right) The coir filled raft used to absorb algae in the pond



Andrea and George plant up the raft with pond plants before it is floated into the pond (below) Iris and water mint is used and grass seed sprinkling on top



Liz and Alison inspect the raft and help tie on extra floats underneath(right) Trevor goes into water to manually pull the three rafts into place while the volunteer look on (far right) The raft act as a refuge for wild life . Over time the vegetation on top will colonise it



Woodslee Pond Project- Habitat development



New pond platforms for disabled use are replacing old ones. Better surfacing is also being installed. (left) Griffiths, a contractor, scrape off the old pond perimeter path to make it wider and more even. Work is also done at the pond entrance to make access easier for disabled(right)

A place for fishermen and wildlife
Over the autumn the Environment Agency will return to undertake another pond netting. The removal of pike (see right), a predatory fish, and the introduction of tench and perch will help achieve a balanced fish population. Improving the amount vegetation in the water is also a priority. Oxygenated water that is algae free will create a healthy pond environment.





Friends of Dibbinsdale

Supporting Brotherton Park & Dibbinsdale Local Nature Reserve

Email: friends@dibbinsdale.co.uk

www.dibbinsdale.co.uk

Letter from Dibbinsdale. Autumn '12



Autumn is upon us and Bodens Meadow has had its annual grass cut. Did any one notice the summer ?



HMS Duckling is launched

On a sunny day at Woodslee pond the Wednesday volunteer group, along with Alan the ranger and Andy and Trevor from the Environment Agency launch the latest pond technology equipment – a raft (see inside)

Floods sweep through the reserve in September(right)

River levels reach their highest since 2001. The first bridge has an unwelcome lodger as water born logs are carried downstream by the flood.(see back page for other picture)

Woodslee Meadow restoration(below)

Tim and David battle to rake off this years hay meadow. Wild flowers are planted in the meadow as part of an on going development of the old Woodslee House site



The Friends welcome Christopher Brotherton Ratcliffe to the reserve at 11am on Tuesday 9th October Christopher represents the Brotherton Trust who have supported the reserve for many years