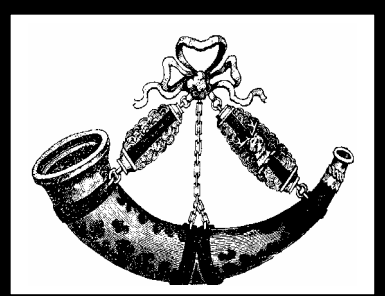


Letter from Dibbinsdale



Spring'08

"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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Green Flag for Dibby
I would like to take this opportunity to let you know about the Green Flag Awards we are



Cyd (left) with members of Heswall Centre

currently entering Dibbinsdale Local Nature Reserve into. The Green Flag system is an audit taken to assess the condition of a park or open space, judged by a panel that come and assess how the park meets its quality criteria. It's a bit like an MOT for Parks. What it means for the benefit of Dibbinsdale is a commitment from the council to meet the criteria set by the Green Flag organisation. Many aspects are included in the management plan to achieve the award. These are things I know the Friends of Dibbinsdale are working hard to achieve themselves. Improvements to the footpaths through the reserve for example. The council's commitment to The Green Flag Awards for Dibbinsdale is an important way forward for the reserve into the future. Just like the MOT on a car, it is a continuing evaluation of the condition of the park. What we have done for Dibbinsdale is a bit like a prospectus for a business. For 2008 we are setting out what we are hoping to achieve in overall terms in improving the facilities of the park. We will engage in this exercise in 2009 and in future years until we meet the Green Flag criteria.

Our application for the award may be successful this year but if not we will build on the experience gained for future application. The phrase "Rome not being built in a day" is significant. Our investment in the reserve will be built up over time. The Green Flag gives us all, Friends of Dibbinsdale included, a positive way forward and a goal for the future of this beautiful place.

Please take an opportunity to have a look at what we are hoping to do in our Green Flag Management document that has been produced and let us know what you think.

Malcolm Ingham. Head Ranger

Saving Cyd the goose

I would like to tell you how the goose that we rescued from Woodslee Pond is getting on. The poor lonely creature lost its mate in December and was pining away making very sad noises. After we caught it with Sarah and Pete the rangers, it was taken to Bidston Urban Farm to meet up with a new gander they have. I work at the farm on every Thursday and we do conservation tasks to help out. I am part of Heswall Day Care Centre. There are now three geese in a little enclosure at the farm behind the café. So Cyd the goose has new friends and is well looked after.

Jonathan Dodd. Heswall Centre

Memorial Bench

Many thanks go to Mike and Marion Ball for the bench they have kindly donated to the reserve. The bench is in memory of their son Alan who died in 2005. The hardwood bench can now be found in the courtyard of the Brotherton Centre at Woodslee Cottages. Last year the family and friends planted some trees close to the main car park

Breathing Spaces update

Work was begun last autumn as part of the national lottery grant called Breathing Spaces to make improvements to the wetland habitats of the reserve. Pools were excavated adjacent to the River Dibbin at the bottom of the meadow called Bodens Hey. A new path at the bottom of the meadow was also part of this work. The pools have been worked on over the winter. Marginal plants like irises, rushes and reeds that have been grown on in the walled garden have been transplanted on the edges of these new pools. The idea is that the plants will eventually colonise the new pools and act as a natural filter to flood waters of the Dibbin. In doing so, the vegetation will provide valuable and rare habitat for wildlife. Lots of different volunteer groups have participated in the planting work. Most notably (in numbers certainly) were the local scouts of Bebington. Phil Goulding, their leader, obtained trees from The Woodland Trust and one cold winter Sunday they planted a range of hedgerow trees to screen the new pools. They were tiny tree 'plugs' so tread carefully if you are visiting the new pools.



Phil Goulding and team of scout tree planters

Heritage Trail

A Heritage Trail of the reserve is being put together for the Friends of Dibbinsdale by Peter the Ranger. The present leaflet and self guided trail of the reserve is out of date and a little unattractive. There are 10 posts that mark the present trail. What is being researched and written is a leaflet that ties into these marker posts and gives more modern interpretation and adds to them. The trail seeks to represent a combination of the local history and natural history of the park. With the on site trail will be educational /recreational information in the form of a CD Rom that will be available from the Friends. It is hoped that this will be ready in the summer. Many thanks go to Susan Nicholson of Bromborough Society who has tirelessly provided useful information for future use with this regard. Thanks also to Ian Norris, retired lecturer at Carlett Park, who has contributed a mine of information on the Geomorphology of the reserve.

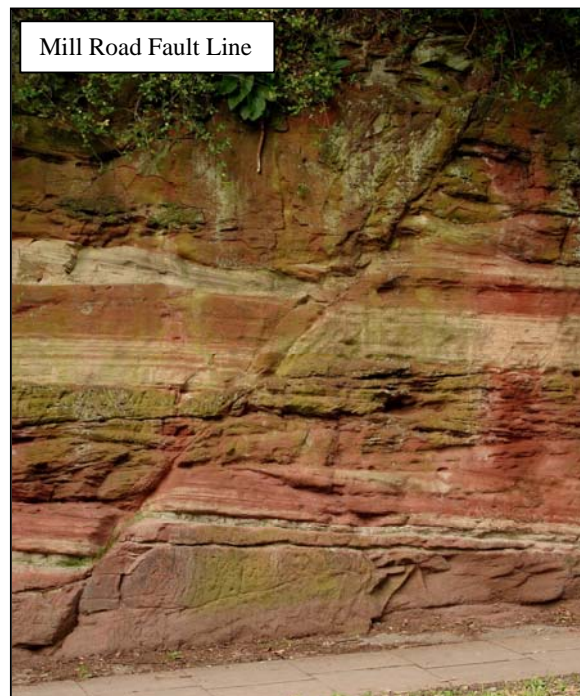
Assurances

A meeting was held following a complaint by the Friends about the lack of grass cutting in 2006-2007 on Spital Field. Assurances were given to the Friends that a range of work would be undertaken to improve the grassland for park users. Allowing the long grass to grow last year (it was unusually wet) meant that special machinery was needed to cut the area and thereby reinstate the cutting regime. This will not happen in 2008 the Friends are told by Parks and Open Spaces bosses. Improving the playing surface, by making it less uneven, for 5 a side footballers is another commitment the council has given. The Friends of Dibbinsdale bought the goalposts that are there.

Work on Spital Fields

Work was begun in February to cut back the brambles that are encroaching the amenity grasslands on Spital Field. The brambles will need regular cutting to keep them in check. Andy the flail driver has attempted to cut curves into the thicket so that it will form small micro climates that face south. This will make sheltered areas that catch the sun- ideal for the fox that lives behind Dibbins Hey.

Brambles are a very good wildlife and habitat plant. Nature's Barbed Wire' is a favourite of a range of small mammals. Hedgehogs love the protection it gives them when hibernating, as do small mice and voles. The flowers and fruit are of interest to insects and birds too. It was important to do the cutting in February before the birds started nesting in them. So there is no wish to get rid of the bramble border all together- just stop them taking over the world. Let's hope the summer has a bit more sun this year and we should see a good range of butterflies feeding here.



Mill Road Fault Line

What is Green Flag

Brotherton Park and Dibbinsdale LNR is being entered for a Green Flag Award along with 9 other Wirral parks. Christine Smyth (below) is assisting with the application. Christine is a member of Wirral Council's Park Development Team.



The scheme began in 1996 as a means of recognising and rewarding the best green spaces in the country.

Awards are given on an annual basis and winners must apply each year to renew their Green Flag status. Each site is judged on its own merits and suitability to the community it serves. Judging is carried out in two stages: a desk assessment and a site visit. Two judges will make a visit during April or May and applicants are informed by letter of the outcome in July

A management plan for Brotherton Park and Dibbinsdale LNR has been written addressing the Green Flag's eight judging criteria. The plan is now available in draft form as a printed copy. We are very interested in your comments to help make the plan better. If you would like to make a comment on the plan, verbally or in writing please see Peter the Ranger

Our new Rights Of Way Officer

I must firstly thank all the groups, societies and individuals of Wirral for the overall welcome and friendly nature of all concerned.

During my childhood in South Gloucestershire my interest in walking, cycling, conservation, mountain ridge walking and the great outdoors developed. I joined The RSPB at the age of 10 and then at high School whilst I was heading for university to study Biology or Geography to become the next Tony Soper or David Belamy (so my school friends thought) I decided in the 6th form to go to London and join the Police!

Thirty years later (having married a girl from Irby 20 years ago) I found myself relocating on Wirral. I had been a tourist to Wirral for many years so I do know what a lovely place it is. Having lived here now for 18 months that view has not changed.

For about 20 years whilst in the Police I spent a lot of time enforcing rights of way, in fact I wrote the policy! Part of that work involved liaising with rights of way officers, so having re-located the vacant Wirral Rights Of Way Officers' post was a natural choice.

Six months into the job, my visions, plans and ideas are just beginning to develop.

The longer term plans are currently being built into the ten year Rights Of Way Improvement Plan from April 2008 – April 2018.

Within that I have inserted some very ambitious plans for Wirral. These include:

- 'Access For All' upgrades to the route from Heswall to Thurston via Dungeon Wood, and another such route on Bidston Hill.
- Missing links project that aims to have certain roadside improvements to link footpaths or bridleways to help with road safety.
- The East Coast route to Eastham Country Park that I aim to link to The Wirral Way at Hooton to form The Wirral Circular Trail.

I am thrilled to have this role within Wirral Council and I would like to think I will be around for many years to see many of my plans come to fruition. I always welcome any concerns, questions and comments from any rights of way user either as an individual or as a group.

I had my first user group meeting in December and hope to have them each July and December. In addition to that I hope to produce a newsletter in April, July, October and January.

Please do not hesitate to e mail or call and I will try and deal with any issues concerning the Public Rights Of Way network within the Borough of Wirral.

Robin Tutchings. March 2008. Tel: 0151 606 2480.

e mail: robintutchings@wirral.gov.uk



The Friends would like to thank Robin for the support he has given the Reserve in enabling important footpath work to be undertaken recently

News in Brief

The Asbo Mouse

While doing a litter pick around the park our attention was drawn to movement in a 'Newcastle Brown' beer bottle. To our surprise this turned out to be a field mouse. It was stuck in the bottle, slurping the remains of some beer left in the bottle (See picture) It seemed happy doing so. One of nature's binge drinkers perhaps? We took this picture and rescued it. We pulled its tail and it came out of the bottle, staggering into the undergrowth quite drunk.



Alan Ryan. Heswall Centre - Picture **Phil Burchall**

Alan and Phil with their team from Heswall Day Care Centre come twice every week to help in the reserve

New Friends of Dibbinsdale Committee

In December 2007 at the the Friends AGM a new Chair person and secretary were elected. Neil Fuller and Ann Davis stepped down and Peter Connell and Sheila Eccles were elected.

Anyone wishing to make donations, or renew membership of the Friends are asked to contact Peter, or Don the Treasurer.

Those people wishing to become more involved in the running of the Friends, or seek to do voluntary work are asked to speak to Peter the Ranger

New Footbridge make over

Bromborough Rake Station staff member Gary Briscoe, set the ball rolling when he asked his manager, Dave Kyle, about possible funding for some paint to cover the graffiti on the footbridge over the railway into Marfords Wood. Dave came up with some black masonry paint and this was handed over to Pete the ranger who organized Heswall Centre to do a clean up and the Community Service to do the painting.

Gary is a keen defender of the reserve and Dave refers to him as "our Bill Oddie". Gary got Pete to put up two nest boxes outside the station kiosk. Merseytravel now have their own bird centre, enthusiast and true Friend of Dibbinsdale. Gary works all shifts at the kiosk and is the person to ask about bird activity around the station

concourse. We have tawny owls flying onto the bridge at night for example.



New Rangers Office make over

The Community Service has also been involved in some renovation work in the Rangers Office in Woodslee Cottages. A new lick of paint and some new notice boards goes a long way to make the place a bit more inviting. Thank you to Lesley and Keith in particular for their work with Community Service doing this.

Events in early summer

Sunday 20th April 1.30pm – 3.30pm
Wildflower and Woodland Walk
Come and enjoy an afternoon walk around Dibbinsdale Local Nature Reserve and enjoy more about its woodland flowers. This event is suitable for all the family to enjoy. Suitable clothing and footwear are recommended. Sorry no dogs.

Booking essential ☎ 0151 334 9851 or [book on-line](#)

Sunday 4th May 10am – 4pm
South Wirral Pubs and Paths
Join the Rangers for a circular walk through Port Sunlight and Bromborough Pool Village with a pub stop for lunch before returning to Dibbinsdale Local Nature Reserve. Suitable clothing and footwear are essential, and don't forget some money for the pub! Sorry no dogs.

Booking essential ☎ 0151 334 9851 or [book on-line](#)

Sunday 8th June 10am – 4pm
Balsam Bash
Come for a practical conservation task day by the River Dibbin within the Dibbinsdale Local Nature Reserve, help the Rangers and volunteers remove the encroaching balsam and bring along a picnic to enjoy on the grassland. Suitable clothing and footwear are essential.
Booking essential ☎ 0151 334 9851 or [book on-line](#) petermiller@wirral.gov.uk