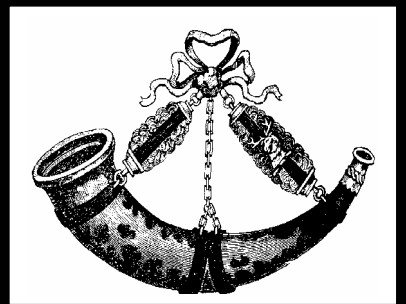


Letter from Dibbinsdale



Summer'08

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

The Quiet Revolution

Not only is the third meadow cut being undertaken, part of Countryside Stewardship, as we are going to print, but the meadow is looking very good. The idea in cutting it (and the removal of the grass in bales) is that the meadow will become better for wildflowers (insects, birds and small mammals) because of it. The conservation of the meadow means preserving it as a grassland and maintaining 'biodiversity'. It is a unique and precious habitat that supports its own special types of wildlife. If trees are allowed to develop here, this would be lost. What has been encouraging to see here on the meadow this year is the number of wildflowers associated with grassland putting on a good show. The most iconic of these is the meadow orchid. We thought this had disappeared under a mountain of brambles and thicket. The meadow in early summer has looked splendid with huge clumps of light purple Lady's Smock, followed by the pink Ragged Robin and yellow Birds Foot Trefoil. The variety and the new colours will only improve with on-going management. Dibbinsdale's quiet revolution.



An orchid found in the meadow this June

Dibbinsdale Local Nature Reserve, Woodslee Cottages,
Spital Road, Bromborough, Wirral, CH62 2BJ .
Tel : 0151 334 9851
Internet web site address:-www.dibbinsdale.co.uk
Email address :-petermiller@wirral.gov.uk

Grant Award for Leaflet

The Friends of Dibbinsdale made a successful application for funding from the Community Foundation of Merseyside- The Green Machine. £500 has been donated to help print a new site leaflet. The leaflet is a Heritage Trail that combines the local and natural history of the reserve. The existing self guided trail posts will be added to and new graphics and text will be put on the leaflet.

Part of another grant previously obtained provided lecturn style noticeboards (see picture below) These will also be incorporated into the Heritage Trail.



Jonathan, Dave and John from Heswall Centre

Dibbinsdale Loses Out on Green Flag Award.

Dibbinsdale failed in its application for a Green Flag Award this year. The award is assessed on a number of criteria that involve aspects like community involvement and health and safety. The good news is that the council has pledged resources to meet those criteria for the coming year.

Here is a message from Malcolm Ingham, Head Ranger:

"Unfortunately Dibbinsdale missed out on the Green Flag this year, it will be put through as an MOT for next year. It still looked good on the judging day and I wouldn't have been surprised if it had got it. Thanks for all the effort anyway. We can now begin to plan for next year and think about where you'll put the flag!! Well done to you all, a great effort and much appreciated. Thanks"

Community Support Officer give advice

Merseyside Police's Community Support Officers have given valuable service to the reserve since they were formed, helping to make the reserve a safer place for all to use. Recently Dave Evans, who is assigned Dibbinsdale as part of his Community Support Officer 'beat', has had meetings with The Friends and Pete the Ranger. The Friends made a request to Inspector McKeown at Bromborough Police Station for advice on safety and security about the park- a type of audit. One of suggestions that was made was that there should be a log of incidents that the Community Support Officers have attended left with the ranger for members of the public to see. The idea behind this is showing the public that something is being done on their behalf. It is hoped that the police's recommendations will be passed on by the Friends to Wirral Borough Council's Parks and Open Spaces for their consideration. This will be valuable because security forms part of the Green Flag audit.

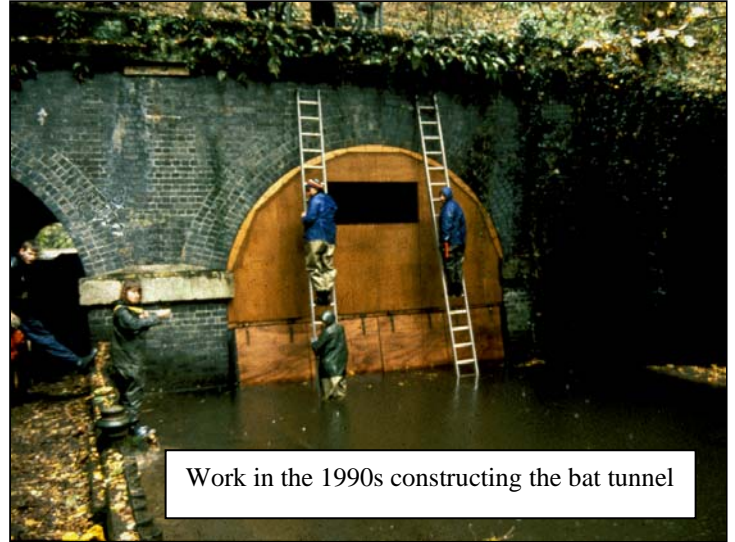
Anyone who sees unlawful, unsafe and antisocial behaviour in the reserve is requested to inform the police on their 'hotline' 0151 777 2552, or phone 999 if urgent. The Council also have a dedicated 'parks police' called Community Patrol on 0151 6665265.

Learning Disability Week

Eastham Conservation Trust, who support the students from Eastham Centre who do horticultural work in the walled garden, had an open week in June. Plants that the students had grown were put on sale along with light refreshments. The garden was put on show to the public for the week.

The walled garden and nature centre are now open to the public (when Eastham Conservation Trust and the ranger are on site - 10am – 3pm- closed Saturday) It is advisable to ring 0151 334 9851 to check.

Recently Eastham Conservation Trust has applied for the valuable and prestigious Griffin Award run by Vauxhall Motors. If successful, this will be used mainly to help with improvements to the buildings used by the volunteers.



Interest in Bat Tunnel

The 'Bat Tunnel', or The Otters Tunnel as it is also referred to, was designed as a roost for hibernating bats. It was built in the 1990's and the hoarding at either end of the tunnel was designed to provide a suitable hibernating roost for bats. Unfortunately the fabric of the structure is nearing the end of its working life. How useful the tunnel has been for bats is unknown. What to do in terms of repair or improvement is also uncertain. The tunnel itself belongs to Railtrack.

Merseyrail has been contacted by the the ranger to see if they can help. There are resourcing issues involved, as well as getting permission from the relevant authorities (of which there are many !) Bats are a protected species, as is the fabric of the tunnel ! One of the ideas being considered is putting 'bat boxes' up within the tunnel, so the monitoring of the bats can be undertaken in the winter.

When there are more developments to this story we will let you know. Ed



Gerald busy in the walled garden and Billy



An Alien Invader at Dibbinsdale

Each summer, visitors to Dibbinsdale Local Nature Reserve can see large stands of Himalayan Balsam growing along the marginal areas of the river. In the area around Babbs Meadow, a vast swathe of purple can be viewed from the cliff tops near to Woodslee Pond.

Himalayan Balsam (*Impatiens Glandulifera*) is an alien plant originating from the western Himalayas. It was introduced to Britain in 1839. It escaped from gardens and spread to river banks and areas of damp ground. Himalayan Balsam grows in dense stands stopping the growth of native grasses and other plants. In autumn it dies, leaving the banks bare of vegetation and liable to erosion. Although some birds eat the seeds, Himalayan Balsam is generally thought to be bad for biodiversity. Bees are drawn to its strong nectar; this is detrimental to other plants and flowers in the area which would normally be pollinated by the bees.

The plants can grow to a height of up to three metres in a very short time. Each plant can produce 800 seeds, which are contained in explosive seedpods. These seed pods burst open when touched and can spread the seeds up to 7 meters away from the plant. Seeds can float downstream and create new colonies.

The plants die in autumn each year and can only return if they have seeded. Every year efforts are made to reduce its coverage and halt its spread. The seeds can remain viable in the ground for two to three years, so it is important to repeat the removal process every year until it has gone.

When Himalayan balsam has been removed, native plants and grasses can return naturally or be encouraged by planting up the bare areas. There are three methods of removing Himalayan balsam. Grazing infested areas with sheep or cattle will control the spread of Himalayan balsam by the removal or trampling of the seedlings. However this method is not really suitable for the River Dibbin. Plants can be sprayed with herbicides in spring after all the seeds have germinated; this method will introduce unwanted chemicals into the water course but is useful in inaccessible areas.

The preferred method at Dibbinsdale is cutting, strimming and pulling. The plant must be cut close to the ground, below the lowest node or it will re-grow and flower later in the season. Cutting should be carried out no earlier than mid June to prevent rapid re-growth to the flowering stage and possible increase in seed production. Cut or pulled plants can be safely left on site to decompose.



New growth in the new pools this summer

New pools update(Ladybridge Project)

Over the summer work has progressed targeting emergent balsam around the new pools below Bromborough Rake Station. Over winter and spring just gone reeds,rushes,reed canary grass,flag iris and other marginal plants were transplanted here.It is these native plants we are giving a chance to grow here by ‘bashing the balsam’and stopping them out competing the ‘useful’ vegetation. (i.e plants that will support our British wildlife best)

Other native wetland plants, brought from other areas of the reserve, will be brought here in the months ahead. It will act as a positive focus of wetland conservation. ‘Nature abores a vacuum’ is a phrase well known to gardeners and conservationists alike.When established, the native wetland plants will not be so threatened by our more exotic ‘aliens’. That’s the theory, anyway !



Young Himalayan Balsam

News in Brief

Planning Permission Granted

There was an onsite Planning Permission meeting at Spital Dam in mid June. A developer wishes to construct a children's nursery at Spital Dam next to the Sewage Pumping Station.(this is opposite the entrance to the reserve at Spital Dam) Photographs of the road underwater adjacent to the dam were shown the planning meeting. Mention was made of the busy nature of the road.Mention was also made of the soil dumped on the site that would prevent it being explored as an archeological site (Spital Mill) These arguments and objections have been considered at a later planning meeting at Wallasey Town Hall and planning permission has been granted.

Ranger Moves On

Sarah Morton, one of the South Wirral Ranger's team,has moved on to take up a post as a Biodiversity Officer with Cheshire Wildlife Trust. This is based in mid Cheshire. Sarah has often helped at Dibbinsdale over the last three years in her career as Eastham Ranger. Peter, the Dibbinsdale Ranger, needs qualified ranger support at times to do his job in the reserve, so it is hoped a successor to Sarah is found quickly.The Friends of Dibbinsdale wish her good luck in her new career and thank her for all the work she has done.

Plants for sale

Heswall Centre and Eastham Centre have been growing plants in the walled garden for Eastham Conservation Trust to sell.

Those people interested in buying any or indeed bringing plants in for exchange, see Pete the Ranger



Mike from Heswall Centre

Dibbinsdale has new website.

If you log on to

www.dibbinsdale.co.uk there is a new and developing web site that will be added to over time. The newsletters will be posted on this as well as information about the wildlife and management of the reserve.



For schools and educational groups as well as walking groups there will also be information to help you use the site

Dibbinsdale's 25th Anniversary

This October sees the 25th anniversary of Dibbinsdale becoming a local nature reserve. There is an actual date upon which the site was official declared a reserve.

Is there any appropriate celebration to mark this landmark ? If you have any ideas , please speak to Pete the Ranger.

Forthcoming Events

Sunday 20th July 11am – 3pm

Wind in the Willows

An activity day for all the family to enjoy at Dibbinsdale Local Nature Reserve. Centred on the theme of Kenneth Grahame's famous book there will be a riverside trail and readings from the book taking place throughout the day.Booking essential ☎ 0151 334 9851 or book on-line

Friday 22nd August 8pm – 10pm

Night Walk at Dibbinsdale

Discover the bats and other nocturnal life at Dibbinsdale Local Nature Reserve. This event is suitable for all the family to enjoy. Sorry no dogs. Please bring a torch and suitable clothing and footwear.Booking essential ☎ 0151 334 9851 or book on-line

Sunday 21st September 12noon – 4pm

Bromborough Heritage Walk

Join the Ranger for a circular walk from Dibbinsdale Local Nature Reserve and through Bromborough Village exploring the history of the area from the Middle ages to modern times.This event is suitable for all the family to enjoy. Sorry no dogs. Suitable clothing and footwear are essential and a packed lunch is recommended.Booking essential ☎ 0151 334 9851 or book on-line