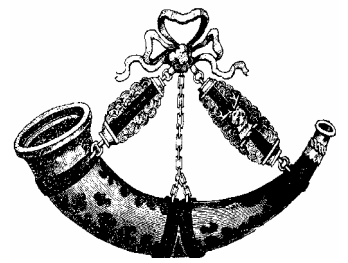


Letter from Dibbinsdale



Winter'10

"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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*Happy New Year
to everyone involved in the reserve*

Ranger Service Changes

Peter Miller, Ranger at Dibbinsdale since 1998, is leaving the service after 37 years with the Council. He has been offered Early Voluntary Retirement and his last official working day is 31st December. The Council has sought to reduce staffing costs in an attempt to manage in this financial situation.

Vicky Hose, Senior Ranger of South Wirral is also leaving on this date. Taking over from Peter is Alan Smail who is at present the Ranger at Eastham. Taking over from Vicky is James Locke who has been working as Senior Ranger at Wirral Country Park, Thurstaston. It is hoped that South Wirral Ranger Service will be business as usual, although with one member of staff down there will obviously be less cover.

We wish to express our thanks to Vicky and Peter who are leaving and hope they are happy in what they seek to do in the future. James and Alan are warmly welcomed and I'm they can count on our support.

Local Government Changes

With staff of parks and open spaces leaving through the whole Council there will inevitably be a period of change. The Head of parks, Dave Cowling, and Malcolm Ingham, Head Ranger, are also leaving. This situation will remain until the end of the year while planning to do with the service being put out to contract takes place. Dave Green, Head of Technical Services,

and in overall charge of the whole Department, is leading a process of seeking to contract out to private business the whole of the Ranger Service. When this takes place is dependant on a contractor being in place and an agreeable contract being struck. The definition of what the contractor is asked to do in the contract is one that will determine the quality of the service. Dave Green has a timetable of 12 to 18 months before the hand over takes place.

The remaining ranger staff will be guaranteed employment in any transfer to a private company. At this stage, there are no contract proposals on the table. How the consultation process develops will establish this into the New Year. It is hoped that The Friends of Dibbinsdale will be part of that consultation when it comes.

Profile of our new Ranger

Alan Smail has lived in Bebington for most of his working life. He has a wife and two teenage children. Alan has recently had a career change before becoming a ranger and once ran his own printing company. Alan went to what was once Bromborough Secondary School in Acre Lane. He was a school mate of Ian Hughes who was the ranger here before Peter. Alan has taken qualifications in Countryside Management at Reaseheath College from where he has recently graduated. Whilst at college, Alan worked on a placement here at the reserve with Peter. He became a seasonal ranger and then was appointed full time ranger at Eastham Country Park where he has been for more than two years. In this time, Alan has had an extensive working knowledge of the reserve, working side by side with Peter on a range of nature conservation tasks. Alan has a wide knowledge and interest in conservation. Recently he has undertaken surveys of the bat population in the reserve for example.

Review of the reserve

For the rest of the newsletter we would like to look at some of what has been achieved over the last 10 years.



Bodens Hey Meadow Restoration

Autumn 2004
Saw the first work by Unilever volunteers on Bodens Hey Meadow

Summer 2006
Saw the first cut and bale of the meadow under Countryside Stewardship



Balsam Bashing

Autumn 2006 saw the first of very many attempts at getting rid of Himalayan balsam. A scheme in 2010 continues this battle and Japanese knotweed is added to the 'not wanted' list.



Summer 2007

Work with Learning Disability Day Centres

Heswall Centre and Eastham Centre work on moving woodchip (used on paths and barriers) Leaf collection and path clearance is an annual exercise

Walled Garden Development

Horticultural work in the walled garden has seen many changes over the years including potting sheds, organic gardening, tree propagation, composting and water recycling

Tree donation Scheme

Trees are distributed to the public for free to encourage nature conservation and biodiversity. (Hazel, Rowan, Birch and Cherry)



Winter 2007



Summer 2008

Reed bed development



Winter 2003

Merseybasin campaign, Levers, MEP member and Rangers meet to discuss wetland management at the Ladybridge. Babbs Meadow reedbed sees major renovation



Summer 2005

Water vole and wildlife monitoring

As part of wetland management saw research into a variety of subjects including water vole populations, the flora of the reserve (a Wirral Wildlife project), small mammal trapping and tree surveys. The management plan of the reserve is updated in 2000. A conservation management plan is developed



Autumn 2008

Pathwork and access

All weather paths and improvements to access have continued on a regular basis throughout the last ten years.

Woodslee (left)
Bodens Hey
Meadow (right)
Main Car Park
(below left)



Autumn 2007



Winter2005



Summer2009

Green Flag Award made to Dibbinsdale

Improvements to the development of the reserve and an audit of the facilities offered to the public lead to a Green Flag being awarded. A second one was given in 2010



Spring 2005

New Heritage Leaflet created

A range of new leaflets and trails are introduced. Woodslee Tree Trail, Wild flower trail and Heritage Trail



Spring 2000



Autumn 2007

Pollution Control 'SUDS' Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems

Serve Wirral Volunteers help create two ponds that act as a filter bed near Central Ave



Autumn 2009

Environment Agency monitor rupture of the main sewer

Friends Fund Raising

The Friends of Dibbinsdale have raised more than £100,000 over ten years . Here Neil ,previous Chairman, fills in grant application



Autumn 2004

Flood relief in the Willow Carr wetland
New bridge is built



Spring 2007

Visitors Centre Refurbishment

The Brotherton Centre is renovated and updated with new display. River Studies are aided by a newly created wall map and mural. New educational resources are made available



Spring 2007

Tree Planting and arboretum

Hundreds of trees have been planted in the last ten years. Ben Chapman and Ann and Don Davies of the Friends plant trees with Pete near the car park

An arboretum close to the main car park has been developed over the three years. Ornamental trees and trees with a high wildlife value have been planted in phases. Trees are planted at the bottom of Bodens Hey Meadow (below) to form a screen beside the new path.



Winter 2008



Spring 2001

Pond Rafts at Woodslee

Pond management over the years has addressed issues from deoxygenation of the water to creating pond islands for the ducks

Winter 2001



Bird Box Building Programme

A five year programme of bat and bird box repair and creation

An environmental education and field study programme with schools

Work with schools and colleges exploring the environment and habitats within the reserve. River and pond studies along with tree work



Summer 2000