



Friends of Dibbinsdale

Supporting Brotherton Park & Dibbinsdale Local Nature Reserve

Email peter.miller40@ntlworld.com

www.dibbinsdale.co.uk

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Letter from Dibbinsdale Summer 2021

Tree of the year

New 'variant' in the reserve
No its not a Covid related story!
To celebrate 30 years of Tree Wardens, The Tree Council awarded 30 Dutch Elm disease resistant trees. This is one of those commemorative elms which was applied for and planted on behalf of Wirral Tree Wardens by The Friends, Dibbinsdale Volunteers and South Wirral Rangers.

In January this year South Wirral Rangers planted this new variant elm tree (*Ulmus 'New Horizon'*) on Spital Field. It has been specially bred to resist Dutch Elm disease. Arthur aged 8 is 1metre 32cm tall. It will be interesting to see how tall the elm will be when he is 30 years old.

The elm trees planted near here on the old Spital Tip site in the 1980's have slowly succumbed to the Dutch Elm virus disease and died. They have been replaced by new trees of different varieties. These seem to have established well on land adjacent to the railway line.

Good luck to our new elm, Arthur, South Wirral Rangers and a special thank you to Wirral Tree Wardens for resourcing the tree to commemorate their anniversary



**30 elms for 30 years
Dutch Elm Disease
resistant Elm Tree(*Ulmus
'newhorizon.'*)**

In memoria-Don's Bench



Ann and Jane,
Don's wife and
daughter..(and
dog, of course)

The Friends have had installed by Alan, the Ranger, and the volunteers at Dibbinsdale a bench to honour their treasurer Don Davies who died last year. Don had been active in the Friends since 1978 and has been a valuable and irreplaceable servant to the reserve. He will be greatly missed.

The bench is located in the reserve on Spital Field behind his house.

Daffodils have been planted around the bench and at the entrance at Dibbins Hey



Spring floods

February brought a flood of biblical proportions. The result was a devastating dislocation of the reserve as bridges and paths were impacted. The main damage was to the bridge near the reed beds. (shown right). The structure had been moved off its anchor supports or piers by flood water. It needed substantial repair, akin to rebuild. This has now been completed.

The bridge at the bottom of Bodens Hey meadow, leading to the Otters Tunnel, is in the process of repair. The decking or planking has been in need of replacing. The steel supports have been painted.

The causeway leading to the Ladybridge and the bridge itself, at the bottom of the path from Bromborough Rake Station, still need minor repair. In heavy rain the River Dibbin floods across the causeway and access is impacted (the path can be under a foot of water) The causeway needs to be built up in height to prevent this.

The council has sourced contractors to undertake these repairs. The work has begun so lets hope we will see improvements soon.



Landslip

At the same time as the damage to the bridges there was a landslip in Patrick Wood. This was on the escarpment adjacent to the path that approaches the Otters Tunnel. The geology here is of loose sand with upwelling limestone water coming up through it. This escarpment is home of the Petrifying Well and a site of archaeological importance. A medieval chapel with red sandstone blocks is located in the landslip area. It may have been built because of its proximity to 'medicinal waters' of the well. At present it is not known what impact the landslip has had on the remains of the chapel.

It is not known how serious or dangerous the landslip has been. We understand that reports including from a structural engineer are in hand. There is no access into Patrick Wood so public safety is not at risk.

History Archive Corner

In search of memories of Bromborough People

The Friends of Bromborough Library have begun a project looking at Bromborough people past and present. The basis of the project is interviews of people in the community to record their stories. For example, one of the first interviews is to be of Ann Ellis, who was the miller's daughter of Spital Dam. The stories will then form an archive held in the library and possibly published at a later date. The collective stories would then form a developing picture of life in our community.

Supporting this project, with an input from the Friends of Dibbinsdale, a search for possible 'stories' related to people associated with the reserve is going out to our members and park users.

So if you have a 'story' we would like to hear from you via the email on the front page. Editor

Woodslee Pond

The condition of Woodslee Pond has long been a subject of interest and activity of the Friends, volunteers and rangers. The pond is fished by anglers and also plays a role in the wildlife of the reserve.

There have been conservation and fishing initiatives on the pond over many years. The pond has been dredged, the fish stock replenished, fishing platforms built, benches made, algae controlled, floating islands created, marginal plants introduced and general maintenance and cutting back. All these efforts over time have produced a favourable pond ecology that favours fish, invertebrates in the water and wildlife in general.

What you will notice now if you walk round the pond is the accumulation of pond weed and the small amount of open water. This is not favourable for fishing but favours life in the pond. Clearly a balance must be struck and hopefully this will be achieved post pandemic.

News in Brief

Plans for children's playground

Plans are being drawn up by The Friends of Poulton Lancelyn group for a playground on Spital Field. Permission has been given by Wirral Council to do this on their land provided the group fund its creation. A meeting was held with Peter Miller, chairman of the Friends, and Chloe Stenhouse, Chair person of the Friends of Poulton Lancelyn, to discuss what progress they have made and what their thoughts were regarding its development. The Friends of Dibbinsdale were invited to a 'stakeholders' meeting at a future date.

Wirral Wombles Activity

Mike of Wirral Wombles has undertaken regular and extensive litter collection in the reserve. We remain thankful for all the work of park visitors picking up rubbish that others have left. You can find out more on the Wirral Wombles Facebook pages

New volunteers

Three new volunteers have joined the Friends and volunteers at Dibbinsdale. They are Jane, Linda and Tracey



Nature Notes

Mandarin Ducks on Woodslee Pond

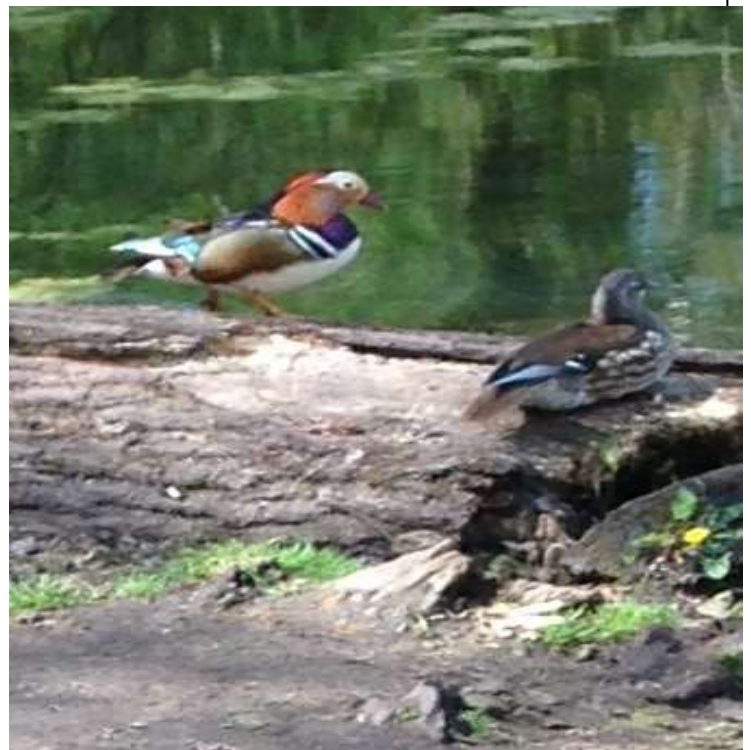
I came across the pair on May 1st 2021, They were sitting in the sunlight calm, in the perfect setting of Woodslee Pond.

It was a great moment for me to come across this pair of beautiful ducks in the local nature reserve. The afternoon sun showed off the colours of the male's feathers perfectly.

For me it was surreal, time stood still as I used my camera to capture this perfect moment. It will stay with me for some time to come.

The mandarin duck (*Aix galericulata*) is a perching species native to the East Palearctic. It is medium sized 41-49cm (16-19in) long with a 65-75 cm (26-30in) wingspan. It nests in trees (Wikipedia.org)

Linda Edwards



The Walled Garden Renaissance?

It seems rather appropriate that the walled garden should have reverted to becoming a tree nursery again after over 40 years. In the post covid period the garden has looked rather neglected and overgrown. Vegetable beds that were used by the service users at Eastham Centre had started to rot and fall apart. The fruit trees that had been planted as part of an orchard in the last millennium had shed their fruits that now lay decaying in the tall unmown grasses beneath them.

Dibbinsdale volunteers have now started to turn back the ravages of time in the garden. A tidy up on a grand scale has begun. Some of the raised beds that were in the worst condition and the tons of soil within them have been removed. New pressure treated timbers have been used to create new raised beds and wild flowers have been planted within them.

In the usable old raised beds sapling trees have been healed into trenches in the dug and weeded raised beds. An amazing 16,000 trees have been given a temporary resting place for the summer season. Here they will be watered and kept alive before finding homes elsewhere on Wirral. These will be used as a resource for future tree planting next year in the wider Wirral landscape. The young trees have been donated by the Forestry Commission Nurseries at Delamere Forest. These were part of unwanted stock.

The walled garden has begun another chapter in its restoration. Hopefully when fully restored it will continue to play a valuable role as a tree nursery, orchard and recreational space.

