



Friends of Anderton and Marbury (FoAM)

NEWSLETTER

Spring 2010

Spring Finally Arrives

From the Chair

As I write this, we are busy planning our 11th AGM and the quiz and supper which will follow the meeting.

Four years ago, we amended our constitution so that no one serves in an officer role (Chair, Secretary and Treasurer) for more than three years. Introducing this rule has served us well, resulting in an influx of new people and ideas. Jim Jeeves will have completed his three year term as Treasurer and we'll be looking to appoint a new Treasurer at the AGM. Jim will remain on the Committee but I would like to thank him for his work as Treasurer over the past three years.

There will be some other changes to your Committee at the AGM. These do not involve the other officer roles and so are not arising through application of our 'three year' rule. Firstly, Paul Hill is standing down from the Committee. More than a year ago, Paul let us know that he wished to take a well-earned break from the Committee, as he was finding it hard to devote much time to FoAM due to work and other Charity commitments. At that time, I asked Paul if he would stay on for another year to help with the 10th Anniversary celebrations, which he generously agreed to do. That year is now up and all of us who know Paul recognise that he has made a tremendous personal contribution to the group since its inception and our success owes much to him. Thanks again Paul for all your effort supporting the group and we hope you enjoy your break from our Committee.

Another change to our Committee will be the loss of Hilary Woodhead as Membership Secretary. Hilary and Noel have decided to move from the area and, as a result, Hilary will be unable to continue on our Committee. Thanks also go to Hilary for the time she has spent looking after this important task.

If you are interested in the activities of FoAM and would like to become more involved in the decision

making and planning process, why not put your name forward. You can do this by speaking to any member of the Committee or by contacting me (01606 44728 or by email hillcliffe223@aol.com)

I was pleased to report in our previous Newsletter that we had successfully completed the project to provide a sand martin bank and interpretation panel at Haydn's Pool. On 7th April, we held an event to celebrate completion of the project and were very pleased to be joined by Cheshire West and Chester Cllrs Richard Short (Portfolio Holder for Culture and Recreation) and Malcolm Byram (Marbury Ward). We were also joined by Sarah Bird, representing Chester Zoo who generously sponsored the project and by John McClean and Ian Molyneux from Brunner Mond plc, who donated stone used in construction of the bank. My thanks go also to Vernon Lundy, who had the original idea to build a sand martin bank and to all those who helped with the project, particularly Ray Hartwell, Paul Hill and Ranger Dave James.

Alan Redley



Councillors Richard Short and Malcolm Byram unveiling the Sand Martin Panel

Extracts from Mary's Journal

Jan 28th Elna, Frances, Maria, Jim and I went with Pete to Bandshed Wood. We tried litter-pickers, but we had to handle larger items and haul them onto the trailer. Maria heaved herself into waders and ventured into the water, testing the depth with a pair of cromes. When she felt secure she hooked out assorted rubbish (fencing rails, traffic cones, metal sheeting, bottles, cans etc.). After more than an hour in the water Maria withdrew to warm herself.



Mar 17/18th Chris summoned all volunteers to the Horse Field to remove rubble exposed by harrowing. What heinous crimes had we committed to deserve such punishment? Six of us loaded the bucket on the tractor half a dozen times with "anything larger than a tennis ball". By lunchtime the tennis balls were getting larger and we stopped looking. Two tractors got stuck in the Scrape Field whilst harrowing, requiring the contractors to fetch in the machine with caterpillar tracks that had deep ploughed in the autumn. Seven of us scattered buckets of wildflower seed across the Scrape Field. It seemed like gold dust, as the cost of the seed for one field was £3000.

24th Everyone donned wellies (waders for Robin) to complete turfing the Sand Martin Bank. Chris used the tractor bucket to lift turf and dump it by a bridge we had built across the moat with a pallet and planks. There were enough of us to form a chain gang transferring the turf onto the bank. Robin was positioned in the moat to reach the parts that others couldn't reach. As we laboured sand martins were circling over the pool and the first swallows arrived.

31st Ian, Liz, Jim, Dave and I carried bundles of reeds to the Sand Martin Bank. Liz, Jim and I had a simple task, cutting the reeds into measured lengths and tying in bundles. It was the frozen fingers that made it difficult. Ian and Dave managed to attach a grass skirt to conceal the gabions. Dave got cold, wet feet – his waders leaked.



Get Snapping!

Don't miss the opportunity, as the woodlands are at last showing signs of new life, to take that photo which could be a winner in our 2010 photo competition. Our 3 categories are wildlife (flora and fauna), landscape and fun in the park. Anyone can enter. Check out the rules on our website or at the Rangers' Cabin. With the competition in mind you may be interested in our photo workshop – see details below.

Wildlife Photographic Workshop Monday 21st June

An evening workshop led by professional photographers Tracy and John Langley in Anderton Nature Park. Booking essential. There will be a small charge.

Contact: Alan Redley 01606 44728

Your Newsletter

FoAM welcomes comments, ideas and articles for inclusion in future issues of the newsletter. Email items to Joanne Redley at hillcliffe223@aol.com or hand them in at the Rangers' Cabin marked for the attention of Joanne.

**Deadline for articles for the Summer issue:
7 July**

Many thanks

News from the Rangers

Anderton Country Park

We have just finished the last of the clearance work at the entrance and have also finished thinning one more of the copses, with just a final one remaining.

My aim is to improve the picnic area by the side of the canal at the marina to bring it to the same standard as the other picnic areas by the canal. We have continued thinning and removing trees to improve access for mowing under the canopy.

If you haven't seen them already, look out for the recently installed fantastic new sculptures.

Furey Wood

Work continues at Furey Wood to bring it to the same standard as the rest of the woodlands. We have spent a day with the volunteers litter picking which resulted in a full trailer of debris. Although this has improved path areas to the riverside access from town, much more work needs to be done.

One of my main concerns is that there are one or two potentially dangerous trees needing attention. I wouldn't normally carry out the work at this time of year but it needs tackling now for health and safety reasons. Work on bridges and footpaths also needs tackling now.

Dave and Blue

Carey Park

At Carey Park we have been working in the areas where the dingy skipper butterfly is regularly seen, clearing scrub to expand these areas, hoping to provide more opportunities for the to spread.

Barnton Tunnel Top and Bandshed Wood

Litter poses a major problem in these areas - we have cleared two trailer loads - and also undertaken a lot of health and safety work to repair and replace fences.

There are one or two dangerous trees to deal with. I am also hoping to have a leaflet drop to all houses that back on to the sites to try to stop fly tipping and to (try to) get the community a little more involved and appreciative of these recreational spaces.

Dairy House Meadows

We have been carrying out clearing of some trees and scrub around the pond areas to encourage frogs, newts and toads.

Pete Schofield

The Flashes in spring

Thanks to its industrial history, the storage of lime-waste on the Flashes has created an area of unique grassland that supports many interesting and important species. During April and May look out for the rare dingy skipper butterfly often found sunning itself on the pathways of the central bund.



Dingy Skipper

Take time to notice the low-growing dense clusters of yellow-flowering birdsfoot trefoil; the foodplant for the larvae of the skipper butterfly.



Birdsfoot Trefoil

Keep an eye out throughout spring and summer for the common blue butterfly as well. The male of the species is an easy one to spot as it's a beautiful blue shade; the female is plain brown but may have a faint blue-ish hue around the base of the wings. This is another species that thrives on the birdsfoot trefoil found around the site and which are all here because of the site's use as an industrial skip!



Common Blue (Male)



Common Blue (female)

Steph Hefferan

FoAM Projects Update

Sand Martin Bank Completion in Anderton Nature Park

This month saw the completion of this ambitious and innovative project in Anderton Nature Park. With support from the volunteers and the Rangers, we have successfully designed and built an artificial Sand Martin Bank at Haydn's Pool. Its completion was celebrated on Wednesday 7 April.

This bank was designed and built as a result of a generous contribution from Chester Zoo. Roger Wilkinson, Head of Field Programmes and Research, has described our project as 'impressive'.

Brunner Mond also made the project possible by contributing an invaluable quantity of stone.

An interpretation panel has been provided at Haydn's Pool to help visitors understand the purpose and development of the project.

This project is another great example of local volunteers working with the Rangers and other organisations for the benefit of wildlife, and to encourage bio-diversity in the Woodlands.



Counsellor Richard Short with Ranger Dave James and Alan Redley, Chair of FoAM

Particular thanks should go to Vernon Lundy, who had the original idea, to Ray Hartwell for his design and working drawings and to Paul Hill who secured funding.



Vernon Lundy explaining the background to the project

Although this seemed an almost impossible task, good planning, a strong sense of determination and a lot of hard work from the volunteers helped us complete the task within 18 months. Everybody who has been involved with the project should be extremely proud of themselves.

It's now over to the sand martins!

Anderton Park Sculptures

For some time Dave James had envisaged a sculpture in the area of the car park at Anderton Nature Park, which would provide a link between the Boat Lift and the nature park itself.

With the help of Ann Bates from Action Weaver Valley, INEOS Enterprises generously offered to sponsor and fund a project involving local pupils to devise such a sculpture.

Local artists Tracey Cartledge and Karen Allerton, who are experienced both in working with schools and community groups, and in producing public art, were selected to undertake the work.

Comberbach Primary School agreed that its Year 6 pupils could become involved in the project. Their participation included visits to Anderton Boat Lift, a river trip supported by British Waterways and a visit to the Salt Museum to explore the local impact of salt mining. Several workshops were held in school to produce models and images representing the industries associated with the area and the nature park, both in the past and today.

This artwork formed a major focus in developing the sculptures and Tracey and Karen have managed to incorporate many of the images in the final pieces.

The two magnificent finished sculptures have been installed in the path leading to the Boat Lift.



A grand opening is planned for 21st May, when we hope that pupils will attend, as well as others who have been involved in the project and its sponsorship.

Plaques installed at the bases of the sculptures show that many different organisations were involved in this successful partnership project: INEOS Enterprises, Cheshire West and Chester, British Waterways, Weaver Valley, Comberbach Primary School and FoAM.

Frances D Findlay

Charcoal & Woodland Skills 26th – 28th February 2010

I signed up for a three day BTCV Training Course at Finger Post Lane, Norley, which was led by Don Whiting - a Country Crafts Demonstrator. In all, 18 people attended from various backgrounds covering a wide range of ages. The Rangers' accommodation is a unique World war bomb proof building set in these woodlands. Day one started by signing in and introducing ourselves, followed by Health & Safety issues on the use of tools and processes we would be using. All of the activities were to be done outside.

Four main activities were involved

1. The processes and making charcoal

This was done first of all in oil drum and secondly in a full size charcoal burner. Wood had to be collected from the wood pile, sawn and split into small pieces for the oil drum, larger bits for the other burner. The first layer covered the bottom of the oil drum, then layer upon layer until full. It was then lit and once it was well alight the lid was placed and left on. When the smoke changed from black and white to pale blue, it was turned upside down and all round the base was then sealed with soil.

The large burner was filled and lit in the same way and the lid replaced, as it is much too large to be turned over. Chimneys are attached to fittings around the base as before. As the smoke changes colour the lid is sealed with soil, and when cold the lid is taken off and the contents removed (a very dirty job).

2. Woodcraft

Each one could chose to produce an item from a selection of samples on display, using hand tools only. Items made ranged from spoons, spatulas, mallets, carvings. Tuition on the use of pole lathes for those interested in this tradition. A Pole Lathe is in the process of being constructed in the Rangers' compound at Marbury Country Park, this being an old woodland skill for turning

wood into the making of furniture. It is hoped that small items can be produced for display in the park; larger items may follow.

3. Making additional willow bed

This involved harvesting long lengths to be cut into pieces about 12 inches long and planted 8 inches deep with buds pointing upwards. They plan to have enough willow beds to harvest on rotation for basket making and larger projects. Willow is a very fast growing wood.

4. Hazelwood

This is used for making hurdles and weaving fences. This involved the art of splitting thicker pieces, the skill is using a bill hook, twisting it in order to keep the split central (I failed to master this in the short time available but with practice it could be perfect). The making of hazel fencing involves weaving lengths of hazel between posts and twisting then bending round the end posts and weaving into the straight runs. The ends should be cut just past a post on the back face of the fence. An example can be seen at Little Woods, Waste Lane, Oakmere, which we completed over the weekend.

Robin J Baker (A Volunteer, Marbury Country Park).

Completion of Wildflower Meadows at Marbury Country Park

We have now completed the final stages of the creation of the wildflower meadows in Marbury. The two deep ploughed areas have been harrowed, but not without some drama!

The first tractor got stuck and Ranger Chris took the Marbury tractor to try and pull it out but realised that the ground was extremely sticky and gave up before he got stuck as well.

Reinforcements were called in from the farm and a second tractor came but fared no better and there were now two tractors embedded in the mire. Nothing else for it but to call in the 'big beastie', the caterpillar tractor that had been used to pull the deep plough last autumn. At one point all 3 tractors were strung out on the field. Only the might and strength of the caterpillar

tractor and of course the expertise of the tractor driver, succeeded in clearing the fields.



Both areas have been seeded by volunteers and Chris Moseley and the first green shoots have been spotted. Watch these spaces!

A Time for Thank You but Sad Goodbye

With the winding up of the Mersey Basin Campaign, FoAM has had to say goodbye to one of its keenest supporters.

Ann Bates, through her responsibilities at Action Weaver Valley for the past 10 years, has actively promoted and supported many of FoAM's projects and events.



Ann pictured with Janet Ward of INEOS Enterprises when FoAM presented Janet with a picture to thank INEOS for sponsoring a project at Haydn's Pool.

We wish Ann every success and happiness in her new post in Oldham and are envious that they now have the benefit of her vast experience, skills and expertise.

We would also like to say how very much we will miss Ray Hartwell, who has decided it is time for him to retire as a volunteer at Marbury. You will see from previous issues of the newsletter how much Ray has contributed, not only as a willing volunteer, but in giving his time to the design and manufacture of much of the Big Wood furniture, and to our latest successfully completed project, the Sand Martin Bank.

We send our very best wishes and warmest thanks to Ray.

Forthcoming Events

Sunday 25 April Spring Walk in Marbury

A gentle walk of one and half to two hours to spot the Spring flowers.

Meet: 10.00 am at the Rangers' Cabin, Marbury Country Park

Contact: Mary Jeeves 01606 77688

Saturday 1 May Dawn Chorus Walk

Our ever popular event for everyone interested in birds. An early start needed!

Meet: 5.00 am at the Ranger's Cabin, Marbury Country Park

Contact: John Gilbody 01606 882065

Sunday 16 May Celebrate National Moth Night

Join the regular moth trappers on the morning after National Moth night and find out what was attracted to the traps the previous night. Croissants and orange juice available for breakfast.

Meet: 9.30 am at the Rangers' Cabin, Marbury Country Park.

Contact: Paul Hill 01565 722938

Saturday 22 and Sunday 23 May House and Garden Plant Sale

A chance to find something unusual for house and garden. Bring and Buy – all surplus plants welcome. Proceeds to go to FoAM.

Time: 10.00 am – 4.00 pm Rangers' Cabin, Marbury Country Park

Contact: Mary Jeeves 01606 77688

Saturday 19 June Wildflower Walk

Dave James and Mary Jeeves will lead a walk in Anderton Nature Park to identify the many summer wildflowers.

Meet: 10.00 am Anderton Nature Park car park

Contact: Mary Jeeves 01606 77768

Monday 21 June Wildlife Photography Workshop

See details elsewhere in the newsletter.

11th Annual General Meeting of The Friends of Anderton and Marbury

Notice is hereby given that this meeting will take place on Monday 17th May 2010 at 7.30 pm in Comberbach Memorial Hall.

Jim Jeeves has completed his term of office as Treasurer and nominations for a replacement will be sought at the meeting. Hilary Woodhead and Paul Hill will also be leaving the Committee. Nominations for membership of the Committee are sought from members of FoAM and should be sent to the Secretary.

Copies of the Accounts will be available at the meeting.

John Gilbody Secretary

Buffet and Quiz

The meeting will be followed by a Buffet and Quiz, starting at 8.15 pm. Individuals and teams of up to 4 people are invited to take part in the quiz. There will be no charge for the Buffet, but booking is essential by Monday 10 May (to know numbers for catering!).

Contact: Joanne Redley tel. 01606 44728 or email hillcliffe223@aol.com or Frances Findlay: tel. 01606 44727 or email frances.findlay@tesco.net