



Friends of Anderton and Marbury (FoAM)

NEWSLETTER Autumn 2012

Welcoming a stunning, colourful Autumn

From the Chair

It hardly seems possible that we held two picnic events this summer without getting wet. We had good weather for our annual Picnic in the Park in July with a record number attending. We are indebted to the Weavils and Northwich Folk Club for entertaining us so well. Thanks also to the volunteers and Rangers, Dave James and Amanda Pritchard, who helped make the event possible.

Fortunately the rain held off again for a couple of hours to allow seventy children to bring their teddies and their families to the Teddy Bears' Picnic in August. They enjoyed listening to stories, playing games, making creatures in the woods and hunting for treasure. Thanks to all those, especially Joanne Redley and Ranger Chris Moseley, who made the event such a success.



the crocodile

There are two events with a festive theme coming up in December. The first is a fund-raising Coffee Afternoon in memory of a former resident of Marbury who died earlier in the year. The second is our popular Christmas Decorations event, which provides the opportunity to create decorations from natural materials gathered in the woodlands.

You may have seen a display of sunflowers on Marbury Lane, but it wasn't created for the visual effect. A special mix, including sunflower seed, was sown in May to provide winter food for birds. It is hoped that flocks of finches will descend to feed when the colder weather arrives.

Many people are curious about the history of Northwich Woodlands and in particular, Marbury Country Park. Now there is the chance to get answers to some of those questions during guided walks led by FoAM member Sadie Robinson. This new venture is already proving successful.

FoAM committee members recently had discussions with the Rangers about raising the profile of Northwich Woodlands in the town centre. Artist Katayoun Dowlatshahi is exploring ways to bring greater awareness of the Woodlands into the town as part of her work on regeneration projects. She has invited FoAM and the Rangers to join in activities and discussions that may contribute to the design of the town's buildings and public areas, particularly highlighting the extraordinary flora of the area.



a rare helleborine on Ashton's Flash

We see our contribution to this project as a valuable opportunity at this early stage in the planning process.

Mary Jeeves

Extracts from Mary's Journal

Jul 25th It was warm and sunny, but mercifully less humid than the last few days. There was one last field of flowering ragwort and the rangers were keen to clear it before there were seeds floating over the surrounding meadows. There must have been at least ten of us on Dairy House Meadows with sickles, lazy dogs, forks and bin sacks. There was some relief from the tedious back breaking toil in the form of friendly banter and sightings of wildlife, including a tiny froglet, ringlet and small skipper butterflies. There were also a few cinnabar moth caterpillars, which feed on the ragwort.



Aug 29th I joined the group working on fence repairs. It meant removing staples and barbed wire from the old fence posts before they could be removed and replaced. During wartime activities the track must have been at least twice its present width. Making holes for the posts proved nigh on impossible without the tractor powered post driver, but only extreme physical effort completed the connection of the fence to the newly installed kissing gate.



Sep 6th Six volunteers went with Dave to remove hay that he had cut earlier in the week. The first stop was on the lane close to Brine Pump Cottages. The term hay might be a bit misleading as it consisted largely of brambles, nettles and hogweed. We raked it up and loaded it onto the trailer. It may well need another cut, but already a lot of bare earth has been revealed. This will be ideal for the sowing of more wild flower seeds.



Mary Jeeves

More News on Barn Owls

I make no excuses for including this update on our barn owls.

When Andrew Duncalf, from the Mid Cheshire Barn Owl Group, and Alan Garner checked the barn owl box on Dairy House Meadows on 15 October there was an adult male roosting in the box. Andrew was able to give us the history of this bird, which he ringed in 2009.

This male barn owl, ring number GC51762, was originally ringed at Queastybirch Hall Farm (near to Junction 10 on the M56), the eldest bird of a brood of four. Andrew recaptured the bird at Claycroft Farm, off Cogshall Lane, on 14 April 2010. It has seemingly been in the local area since then, and is the likely father of the chick ringed in the box on Dairy House earlier in the summer.

We will all be hoping that this is just the start, and that this breeding success will continue next year.

Alan Redley



our male barn owl

News from the Rangers

Marbury Country Park - Winter Work

As autumn falls across the Park the sound of chainsaws start to ring out. This can get visitors to the park concerned that all trees are under threat! I would hope regular visitors can start to see the benefits of the felling programme I undertook over ten years ago. This includes the creation of wildflower meadows on the terrace and outside the swimming pool, plane and yew trees saved from being swamped by silver birch and, as Alan Garner wrote in the last newsletter, the expansion of the scrub woodland to benefit several bird species.

As the clearance of the rhododendron has virtually finished (after 10 years) we can now start to

Ashton's and Neumann's Flashes

Chris, Dave and I sat down with a pen and paper and started to list out the tasks we want to complete over autumn and winter. It's not a short list! Our team of volunteers definitely won't be bored, but we may need more cake to maintain energy levels!

The birch trees on the centre bund between Ashton's and Neumann's are overdue some thinning. This will create brash to build habitat piles or dead hedges and also fuel for the charcoal burner. We'll also hopefully create a few more glades to encourage more bird's-foot trefoil to grow, which in turn attracts the dingy skipper butterflies in early summer.

Although the sheep will be back grazing on Ashton's later this autumn, the scrub has really taken hold over the summer and so you may spot some people working on there over the next few months cutting and removing some of the larger scrub. We need to keep the trees and shrubs to a minimum or otherwise we risk them crowding out the orchids and other wildflowers.

Did you notice the sunflowers in the field near Butterfinch Bridge over the summer? These and the other annuals that were sown with them should provide an excellent bird food source for the next few months.

concentrate on other woodland management within the Park such as increasing the extent of the scrub woodland area, removing laurel from the ancient woodland and hedgelaying.

If anyone has any concerns about the felling programme over the winter please feel free to contact me. I can assure all users of the Park that I have the Park's interest at heart and won't fell trees for no reason.

Chris Moseley
Marbury Country Park Ranger



the seeded field near Butterfinch Bridge

A mature beech tree in between the field and the reedbed is to undergo some quite extreme crown reduction in the next month or two. The tree has a number of detrimental fungi attacking it and it has recently shed a few big branches. The aim is to reduce its height and then keep a close eye on it. It would be a shame to fell such a magnificent tree, so hopefully this work will give it a longer life expectancy.

We do need to do a bit of felling work on squirrel damaged sycamores and birch, plus a diseased turkey oak.

My week is still split between Northwich Woodlands and a number of sites in Chester; we're not sure for how long this will be the case.

Amanda Pritchard

Your Newsletter

We welcome comments, ideas photos and articles for inclusion in future issues of the newsletter. Email items to Joanne Redley at jarhillcliffe223@aol.com or hand them in at the Rangers' Cabin marked for the attention of Joanne.

**Items deadline for the next issue:
Friday 4th January. Many thanks.**

Volunteering

If you would like to find out about volunteering, please contact the Cheshire West and Chester Rangers at Marbury Country Park on 01606 77741. You do not have to be a member of FoAM to volunteer, but we hope you will want to join us anyway.

Anderton Nature Park and Carey Park

The Hebridian sheep are back on Carey to help graze and control the amount of bramble and hawthorn (scrub) developing on site. Carey is seen as one of the most important wildlife sites within the Northwich Woodlands and is a Site of Special Scientific Interest more commonly known as a SSSI. This designation is for the unusual flora associated with the lime rich industrial waste.

As in previous years, the sheep have been lent by the Cheshire Wildlife Trust. This year there are 38 ewes and lambs nibbling away and more will follow in November. Late November they will have a change of scenery and go to Ashton's Flash to tackle the scrub there for about six weeks.



If the sheep don't remove the scrub, the Rangers and volunteers will!

Follow up work will be to remove and chip up bigger scrub and small trees to stop areas of the lime beds turning into scrub woodland.

Wood Fuel Allotment.

Just like any other allotment you pay a small amount £10 and I will grant you a licence to cut specially marked trees in a young plantation. The plantation at Carey Park is in need of its first thinning. We are using this location as the trees are small enough to handle and cut with a bow saw but large enough to make decent logs.

You can take on one or a couple of rows in the plantation as long as it is for your own personal use. You need to be a member of FoAM and undertake a short induction on site in the felling and removal of the trees. The licence will run from November 2012 to March 2013 inclusive.

Interested? Contact David James at Marbury on 01606 77741

Dave and Blue

Marbury Bat Watch 8th September

At 7.30 on a cool, dry and only slightly dampish underfoot evening, a group of interested novices joined the Bat Watch organised in conjunction with Cheshire Wildlife Trust. This was one of the events marking the Trust's 50th anniversary. The walk was led by experts from the Wildlife Trust and a local Bat Group, who were wonderful guides.

We had a briefing, which explained the importance of Marbury as a bat habitat. The park is home to nine of the resident British bat species, two of which, noctule and soprano pipistrelle, are on the UK priority list for conservation. Very importantly we were all given individual bat detectors and shown how they worked.



Mike Freeman's introductory talk

The light was fading as we set off through the woodlands but it was possible to quite clearly see the bats as they began to fly. We even detected one and were able to see it feeding on the wing, taking quite large insects. Our experts told us that one pipistrelle,

our smallest bat, can eat up to 3,000 insects in one night!

The bat detectors worked like small hand held Geiger counters and could be tuned through a range of frequencies, so that different species' calls could be picked up. Some also had a visual display and the really professional ones could work on several frequencies at once. As the light faded the detectors took over from eyesight altogether.

The experts were very quickly able to link the echoes on the detectors to the bat species and tell us exactly what we were finding. We were lucky and there were lots of bats about, although not the variety of species that might have been expected. Like so many other things the weather this year hasn't helped our bat populations. Walking alongside the Mere we detected two kinds of pipistrelle and noctule bats but not the Daubenton bats the guides had expected to find. We were assured there had been lots there a few nights previously.

Our guides answered questions of all kinds and shared their knowledge. The walk gave me a totally different perspective on Marbury woodland and an appreciation of how lucky we are to have such a rich habitat on our doorstep.

Anna Cooper

In Memory of Bronislaw Dullek

Bronislaw (Bruno) Dullek was a member of the Polish Free Army. When he first arrived here in the UK during WW2, he was based in Marbury Park. He was a regular visitor to Marbury Country Park with his family and he supplied us with a rare photograph showing a group of Polish soldiers in front of the hall during the second world war. Sadly Bruno died in August aged 87. It was his wish that FoAM should benefit from any donations at his funeral. We are very grateful that his family have carried out this wish.

Bruno's granddaughter, Holly Mawdsley, plans to raise more money for FoAM in his memory at a Festive Coffee Afternoon 1pm Saturday 8th of December in Lostock Gralam Church Hall. She has already contacted local businesses for donations for the raffle, refreshments, etc. The FoAM committee has offered its help in organising the event and hope that many FoAM members will support it on the day.

Project Update - Interpretation Panels for Marbury Country Park

We get lots of requests from visitors for information about Marbury Hall. Following removal of the old interpretation panel, which was worn out, there is no longer anything at the site of the Hall for visitors to look at. Although we have the Heritage Explorer booklet to hand out, this doesn't fill the gap left by having nothing at the site.

We have been fortunate to obtain a grant from the Member's Grant Fund of our Ward Councillors (Norman Wright, Malcolm Byram and Don Hammond) towards the cost of a new panel for Marbury Hall. This panel will be installed at the site of the Hall and will give visitors an introduction to its history.

The Member's Grant also includes a contribution towards the cost of panels for the Bird Hide at the Mere and in Big Wood. These panels will be aimed at helping non-experts and children to identify the birds they might see from the hides.

Our volunteers have been busy researching information for all three panels and working with Chris Moseley on the panel designs. We hope to install all three panels by next spring. In addition to the grant from our Ward Councillors, the balance of the cost will be met from FoAM's own funds.

Alan Redley

Haydn's Pool Second Island

As reported in our previous newsletter the summer produced a rapid growth of vegetation on the island and it was vital that this was cleared in preparation for the breeding season next spring. A small group of volunteers braved the murky water to reach the island and, in a surprisingly short time, painstakingly pulled and dug out the offending weeds. A job well done!



before!



after!

The Boardwalk

Cheshire Wildlife Trust have completed a recycled plastic boardwalk linking their Marbury Nature Reserve to Marbury Country Park. The project funded by WREN (Waste Recycling Environment limited), has also funded the creation of a path around the woods and a picnic area overlooking the lake and vital habitat management work on the reed bed and reed edge. The boardwalk and route around the reserve will be officially opened in spring. For the

moment it's closed to prevent disturbance to the bitterns who overwinter in the reed bed.

Reserves officer Sam Bright said: "It's a great project and completing it has been a lot of fun if a bit wet at times. We've had the help of some great volunteers. I can't wait till this beautiful reserve will be opened to the public in spring."

Don't forget the ***Photographic Competition*** closing date is ***31st December 2012***

I have been told that this could be a good year for Autumn Colours so take your camera with you when visiting the park. Details either from the website at www.merseyforest.org.uk/foam, the Rangers' Office, or me at jmjeeves4867@btinternet.com

Jim Jeeves

The Well Heeled Dog Club

Q&A's about dog training

The club meets for classes every Saturday at Marbury Park; in each edition of FoAM newsletter I'll be covering a Q&A.

Hi Mike,

We've recently introduced a new puppy to the family. We love him dearly but the play-biting is getting to be a bit too much and it's bothering the children. We've tried telling him 'no' and walking away but he just comes back for more. Is there anything we can do to stop him? Thanks, David & family.

A: The behaviour that all little puppies display is instinctive, so the key to stopping the things we don't like them doing is to ask ourselves, 'Why are they doing it..?'

Puppies only play bite because it's their way of experimenting; it's like us learning to use our hands - in their minds they're saying "Does this hurt..? Does this make you play..? Does this get your attention?" The best way to stop the biting is to make a short, sharp yelp sound (like a puppy would). You then need to freeze, draw your hands towards the

middle of your body and turn slowly away (like a puppy would). He'll understand this behaviour because it's doggie language. What they don't understand is things like finger wagging, smacking or sentences e.g. "nooo... don't do that it hurts".

Your puppy may well try biting again to check that he's understood your reaction correctly. If he does then yelp louder, fold your arms and turn away for a count of 10. To help children I call this playing the 'still-game'. If he jumps up at your legs then shuffle backwards into him; dogs can't jump up and walk backwards at the same time.

It's important that you all do the same thing, in the same way, when training a puppy - this means mum, dad & kids too.

If you've got a question you'd like me to cover, email: mike@thedogclub.co.uk



Future FoAM Events

Saturday 3rd November

The Shapes and Colours of Autumn

Come and enjoy the park at one of its most beautiful times of the year. A leisurely, 1 – 2 hour walk.

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

For information contact: Mary Jeeves 01606 77688

Sunday 16th December

Christmas Decorations

Join us to create some stunning decorations from natural materials gathered in the woodlands.

From 10.00 am – 12.00 pm in Marbury Lodge

For information contact: Joanne Redley 01606 44728

Guided walks "Marbury History"

Many people ask about the history of Marbury Country Park. Now there is an opportunity to get answers to some of those questions. FoAM member Sadie Robinson has carried out research so that she can conduct short guided walks in the park with the aid of old drawings, maps and photographs. The walks will include a visit to the site of the hall, its gardens and other features. Sadie will tell stories about the lives of the people who lived and worked on the park throughout the many changes in ownership. She will also describe how that all came to an end and a country park was created. You may have memories or other information that you could contribute on the walk. With a bit of imagination people will be able to share the views that others had in years gone by.



1819 etching of the Georgian Mansion



1850 etching of the remodelled Hall

The walks will start from the Rangers' Cabin/Marbury Lodge area at 2pm on Sundays and last for about an hour. Please see the website for specific dates. Contact: Mary Jeeves 01606 77688

This newsletter is published with support from The Mersey Forest