

# FRIENDS OF THE CARRS NEWSLETTER



Autumn 2011

## Chairman's Message

When the spring newsletter was being prepared we were looking forward to the completion of the new bridge to replace the wooden bridge and, in conjunction with the Environment Agency, to the repair of some of the river banks. That work is now all completed of course and what positive comments it has produced from members of the public! The new bridge and restoration of the adjacent river bank has been an undoubted success and looks very smart with the stonework already blending in with the surroundings. Elsewhere repair work has been carried out on three areas of river bank using "natural" methods and so far the results seem very good. Vegetation is returning, the willow that was planted is growing and the overall appearance has been greatly improved. Again we have been receiving very positive comments. Of course the work has still to be tested by the worst of the winter weather but all the indications are that it will achieve its aims. All we need to do now is find some funding for the further river bank repair work to be undertaken!

Elsewhere the trees planted in the spring are, on the whole, doing well and although there has been some loss the tree cover should show a significant increase in future years. During the autumn it is hoped to replace the trees that have not survived. In addition some wild plants, including Orchids, have been planted and on last inspection appeared to be doing well.

The on-going battle with the Himalayan Balsam was stepped up this year and a comparison of the map showing the Balsam coverage this year compared with 2006 shows just how much progress we have made - even if at times it does not seem so. Thanks to the efforts of a number of groups, schools and members we have probably cleared more this year than in any year in the past. Once again we supplemented the hand pulling with some limited use of weed killer and also made use of two strimmers purchased by the committee (see over page). With the tools now available to us I would hope that in future years we can rapidly reduce the Balsam cover.

Finally I would like to thank you all for your continued support. The work of The Friends tends to fall on the shoulders of a small group and we really need more people to be involved. Our AGM is almost upon us. Is this an opportunity for you to become more active within The Friends? Please give this some serious thought and let me know if you think you can give us some help, even if it is only a limited amount.

Colin Shepherd, Chairman

## Dates for your diary 2012

The final event of 2011 will be a Nature Walk led by one of the Rangers from Cheshire East Council starting at 2pm followed by the Annual General Meeting at 3pm.

Nature Walk and AGM 16<sup>th</sup> October 2011

The provisional dates for the events planned for 2012 are:

Litter pick	21 <sup>st</sup> April 2012
Balsam Bash 1	20 <sup>th</sup> May 2012
Balsam Bash 2	24 <sup>th</sup> June 2012
AGM	14 <sup>th</sup> October 2012

We do hope you will come and join us.

## Bridge Repair



The repair to the new bridge which had taken considerable time in the planning was finally finished this Spring together with works to the river bank to prevent further erosion damaging its supports in the future.

Willows have been planted along the bank in some areas badly affected by erosion. Their roots matt together and help to prevent the soil being washed away. They also help to deter dogs from damaging these vulnerable areas further.

## E-mail Addresses

This newsletter can be supplied by e-mail. If you've received this newsletter by post, but have an e-mail address please let us know so we can save some valuable money by contacting [colin.shepherd@friendsofthecarrs.org.uk](mailto:colin.shepherd@friendsofthecarrs.org.uk). You will then receive the newsletter regularly together with reminders of the latest events.

## 2011 Events

### Litter Pick 7<sup>th</sup> May 2011

Many thanks to all the volunteers who joined us on the Litter Pick Day to help spruce up The Carrs ready for the summer.

### Balsam Bashes June/July 2011



The fight against Himalayan balsam was continued this year on several fronts. The Committee decided last year to concentrate efforts on the upstream area and that approach continued this year. Clear improvement was seen from last year and provided encouragement that we are winning. The area between St Bartholomew's and the first bridge is now almost clear of the weed, and that between the first and second bridges is not far behind.

Balsam is not a problem confined to The Carrs alone of course and the Bollin Valley Trust and the National Trust at Styal have also been very busy bashing the balsam.

On The Carrs strimmers were brought into action and proved remarkably effective in clearing heavily infested areas although this has to be done while the plants are young. Weed killer was used on heavily infested areas away from the river bank. However for less severely affected patches hand-pulling remains the best approach as it allows the underlying vegetation to survive.

And we had a great response from the people of Wilmslow. There was not just one, but two Balsam Bashes with the second added in July to aid complete clearance of an area by removing any regrowth.

Children from Lacey Green School joined members of the Committee to clear a large area near the white bridge. Gloves were donned, sleeves were pulled down to protect arms from the nettles and the children dived into the undergrowth to pursue every last stem of balsam. There was intense competition between girls and boys as to who could remove the largest amount of balsam. It was eventually declared an honorable draw.

Regular dog-walkers contributed by pulling a few balsam plants each day during their walks.

Next year we hope to be able to move downstream towards Twinnies Bridge where there is still heavy infestation.

### Batty about Bats 6<sup>th</sup> August 2011

This event again proved hugely popular with over 60 people meeting Ranger Martin James at dusk on The Carrs. The weather was cool and damp and as Martin explained this was not what bats like. Bats use a great deal of energy in their hunt for food and need to be sure that they will find sufficient insects to make it worth their while emerging from their torpor. A warm, dry evening just as dusk falls is apparently the best time to see them. However the bats seemed happy enough with the temperature and started to appear even while Martin was warning we might not see any! Bat detectors were available and were passed round for everyone to test out. A good time was had by all and several very talented bat impersonators discovered among the children. A great success all round.

For further information about all these events and more pictures please see our web-site [www.friendsofthecarrs.org.uk](http://www.friendsofthecarrs.org.uk).

### Cheshire East Council gives support

Back in the spring your committee took the decision to buy a strimmer to help with removing and controlling the Himalayan Balsam. At the same time we made an application to Cheshire East Council for a grant towards the cost of a second strimmer. In late May we were advised that our application had been successful and that we had been awarded 50% of the cost of purchasing a second strimmer and associated equipment plus a small range of personal protective clothing. Two strimmers really improves our chances of controlling the Balsam and, perhaps, helping other groups along the River Bollin tackling the same problem. We are very grateful for the support of Cheshire East Council and the confidence they have shown in us.

### Committee Members

Colin Shepherd (Chairman)  
Ann Brown (Secretary)  
Ian Baillie (Treasurer)  
Julie Armstrong  
Graham Beech  
Barbara Cook  
Emma Houghton  
Alison Gallen  
Paul Jabore  
Chris Tonge

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