

FRIENDS OF THE CARRS NEWSLETTER



Spring 2011

Chairman's Message

First a belated Happy New Year. In my comments back in the Autumn I referred to the slow progress we were making with two projects, the new play area and the replacement of the wooden bridge (bridge2). One shouldn't tempt fate! By Christmas the play area had been installed, albeit in a slightly different location to the one we would have preferred, and is in use. As I write, work is taking place on installing a replacement bridge with restoration work to the adjacent river bank. This may well be finished by the time you receive this newsletter. What a change!

As if the above were not enough 2011 seems to have started with a bang. As well as the work on the bridge we have just planted out over 100 saplings throughout The Carrs. This tree planting follows on from the planting of wild flowers late last year and which should give us some cheerful colour in the spring and summer. And whilst all the above has been taking place we have received a further £340 grant from Waitrose through their Community Matters Scheme. Our thanks to them.

Finally towards the end of 2010 agreement was reached between ourselves, Cheshire East Council and the Environment Agency on the stretches of river bank that most needed repair and protection. . This work is due to start on 28th February and should be completed by the time you receive this newsletter. Four areas have been identified and, all being well, work at these locations using natural soft engineering solutions will start in March, may have started in fact by the time you receive this newsletter. Work on the river bank will be a major step forward with what we all know is going to be a long term project.

I get breathless just thinking about it all!

Colin Shepherd, Chairman

Bridges

As I write the second bridge over the Bollin is being replaced. After several years of discussion over the best method to prevent erosion of the banks damaging the foundations of a new bridge, work finally started in January 2011. The unsightly bags of stones that had temporarily protected the bridge supports from the threatening bank erosion were finally removed and the riverbank lined with stone blocks to provide a more lasting and better looking solution. We were delighted to see that this work passed the test of the winter floods with flying colours. The bridge will soon be passable again

ready for the Spring. Thanks to Cheshire East Council for their persistence in bringing this to what we hope will be a successful and long lasting conclusion.

Awards

We were lucky enough to be selected again this year as one of the Waitrose charities of the month, this time in October 2010. We received £340 to add to our funds. The Committee are very grateful to Waitrose for their continued support.



Colin Shepherd and other Committee members rest after their tree planting

Dates for your Diary 2011

As in previous years there will be another Clean-up Day to spruce The Carrs up ready for summer and not one, but two Balsam Bashes to attempt to consolidate our efforts in previous years. The bat walk was such a huge success last year that we have arranged another one, this time starting a little later in the evening so that hopefully the bats will make their appearance during the walk rather than right at the end! The year's events finish with the AGM and a nature walk led by one of Cheshire East's rangers.

River Clean up and litter pick	7th May 2011
Balsam Bash 1	19 th June 2011
Balsam Bash 2	24 th July 2011
Bat Walk	6 th August 2011
AGM and Nature Walk	16 th October 2011

Watch the web-site (www.friendsofthecarrs.org.uk) or the notice boards on The Carrs for further news of these events. We do hope you will come and join us.

2010 Winter Events



The Committee have not been idle during the winter. Two dozen small oak trees were transplanted from Lindow Common - our thanks to the Ranger Service for their help with this - and also a further 100 saplings of five different varieties were provided free by BTCV and planted out. Most of the planting has taken place in the Twinnies Bridge area in an attempt to improve the wild life corridor from Styal Woods but not all the trees were planted here and evidence of the new trees can be found throughout The Carrs.

Some of the trees had only just been planted when the rains came in February and flooded The Carrs. We feared the worst, but on inspection only about a dozen out of more than 100 planted had succumbed.

We have also installed bird boxes throughout the woodland surrounding The Carrs. These should provide nesting sites for many birds.

Wild flowers (primroses, wood anemones, ox-eye daisies, foxgloves and purple loosestrife) were also planted in the autumn. We wait to see if they survived the poor winter conditions.

Events 2011 .

Since the early days of The Friends we have held an afternoon Balsam Bash in the summer in an attempt to bring this invasive non-native species under control. With hand pulling of the plant and limited cutting we have made some progress in reducing the plant at the Parish Hall end of The Carrs. The Balsam is however widely, and thickly, spread across The Carrs and it has been clear for some time that if we are to make any further progress and achieve a worthwhile result we need to find better means of tackling the problem. Accordingly last year

we used herbicide for the first time, as an experiment, in selected areas of river bank. The results were mixed as was the use of work parties provided by outside parties. However the impact of the herbicide suggest that it has a role to play in tackling the Balsam and we will probably use some again this year in controlled areas. In addition this year we are holding two Balsam Bash days (see dates elsewhere in this newsletter) so that we can revisit on the second day the areas worked on the first date and, hopefully, remove the plants missed the first time. Your committee are also investigating the possibility of hiring some strimmers for one or two weekends using the grant money from Waitrose. Using strimmers would enable us to clear much larger areas which can then be revisited at intervals during the summer to hand pull any re-growth.

Talks are also being held with the National Trust at Styal Mill to see if there is scope for us to work together to tackle the problem of the Himalayan Balsam and if opportunities arise from this we will let you know. One opportunity will be the Balsam Bash day being held at Styal on 22nd June to which we are all invited (10am onwards, Quarry Bank Mill car park). The "Balsam Problem" runs throughout the River Bollin catchment area from its source to its confluence with the Manchester Ship Canal with many groups trying to tackle the issue. Recognising this discussions are under way between a number of groups and the Environment Agency to see if there is scope for us all to come under one umbrella organisation so that we can more effectively deal with the control and eradication of not only the Balsam but also other invasive species. It is likely to be some time before anything significant comes from these discussions, but this whole issue is now higher up people's agenda and in future will be tackled with more vigour. There is good reason to be optimistic.

Annual General Meeting

At the AGM of 17th October 2010 Barbara Cook was elected as a new member of the Committee. Emma Houghton from Bollin Valley replaced Richard Doran as representative of Cheshire East Council. The Committee now consists of:

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

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