

FRIENDS OF THE CARRS NEWSLETTER



Winter 2021

Chairman's Message

Nature and the countryside are wonderfully varied and unpredictable. This is what makes the work of Friends of the Carrs so challenging and so rewarding. The Carrs Country Park (yes, this is what it is, it says so on the signpost at the top of Grove Street!) gave us a gloriously spectacular autumn of gold, copper and bronze



and then suddenly we were into hard frost and bare trees, and just as suddenly we were walking through floods trying to find the footpath.

We have to go along with this as much as we can, helping, encouraging, controlling, and even removing. We do the small-scale things, litter-picking, unblocking drains, balsam bashing, for example, whilst ANSA does the big things, felling dangerous trees, cutting the acres of grass, emptying the many bins. The teamwork between FOTC and ANSA has been good over the last couple of years, and we have been working closely with them on the Carrs Development Plan. ANSA, in the form of Ruth Morgan, their Head of Parks, coming up with the big ideas like creating zones of interest (recreation, play, picnicking, education), but always listening to FOTC as we cover the practical details (river bank erosion, litter, access to the woods, dog control, visitor behaviour) from our local knowledge and experience.

At the forefront of our considerations has been the recognition that it *is* a country park and that we must do our best to identify, protect and encourage the wildlife in it. This has been behind the decisions to reduce the grass cutting and leave trees where they fall, to plant up and protect wildflower areas, and to keep the Carrs as litter-free as possible. It was difficult to miss the seemingly constant tree work in the Carrs, and some were sorry to see so many trees felled or lopped, but the benefits were clear after the recent gales as very little damage was done, the remaining trees seem healthy and ready for next Spring. Where, in the place of vast swathes of neatly trimmed lawns, rough grass was left to grow and broad walking routes were cut, we saw so many more wild grasses and flowers, and visitors

said (for a change!) how much they appreciated the results.



We have really missed getting together with volunteers and tackling the many jobs we need to do. The Himalayan Balsam was able to flourish whilst we were short-handed, and we struggled to keep on top of the litter, so we were looking forward to the New Year and had already begun to make plans for the return of our regular activities, such as the dog show and the volunteer working parties, the bat walk and morning bird walk, and we hope that we will be able to have these in spite of the threat of last-minute changes in Covid restrictions. We will be removing the rather unsightly chestnut paling fencing along the river bank now that the bank has recovered from erosion by dogs, and planting new wild flower and bulb areas. There are big plans for the future, too, to restore some of the more historical aspects of the park: the Henry Boddington arch at the entrance to the Carrs has been restored, trees have been cleared and logs mark out the route of one of Wilmslow's first roads, Mill Lane, which ran from the back of the old school (the site of the present Parish Hall) along to the river where the mill used to be. ANSA are looking, too, at improving access to St Olaf's church and Sir Henry Boddington's stone



and memorial oak tree. Let's hope for good weather in 2022 and an improvement in the pandemic situation so that we can all enjoy the Carrs to the full.

Ian Baillie, Chairman

Dates for your diary 2022

The AGM took place on 18th October 2021.

At present we have only tentative plans for public events this year, but we are optimistic that public events will be able to take place.

Please watch the web-site www.friendsofthecarrs.org.uk or the notice boards on The Carrs for details. We will also be able to include details in the Spring newsletter.

2021 Events

Sadly, of course, we have been unable to run any public events this year, but your Committee has not been idle. Regular Committee working parties, led by Emma Houghton and Ian Baillie suitably socially distanced have been held throughout the year. Thus far Emma and Ian have done a lot of work, including footpath drainage, tree pruning, fence removal and rhododendron control. Groups from Mersey Rivers Trust led by the capable Sal Potts have been busy controlling Japanese Knotweed in the park over the autumn, and work removing the invasive rhododendrons is taking place as I write in January 2022. Not to mention the endless litter picking. Thanks are again due to ANSA for their sterling work in keeping The Carrs tidy and relatively free of litter.



Sal Potts hard at work in the river



Working Party tackling the willow along the riverbank

Comings and Goings

We were very sorry to say goodbye to one member of our committee this autumn, Ruth Downs. In her place we are delighted to welcome Christopher Dodson to join us on the Committee this year. Christopher has been a Town Council member for many years so his experience will be invaluable.

We are sorry to be losing the invaluable services of our Treasurer, John Booth, although we are delighted he will remain on the Committee and will be able to focus his attention on the more hands-on issues in the Carrs. John has worked miracles with our very limited financial resources, finding money in all sorts of mysterious corners, keeping us solvent and managing our accounts with patience and firmness amidst all the bureaucratic complexities of the banking system. Emma Varga is taking over the role of Treasurer, and we have every confidence that our finances will be in safe hands. We wish her well in her new role.

The Boddington Arch



The 'Boddington Arch' at the entrance to The Carrs on Chancel Lane tells us that the land was given to the people of Wilmslow for their enjoyment by Henry Boddington in 1925.

The arch has recently been restored by ANSA and there are plans in The Carrs Development Plan to improve the area around the arch to make the entrance more prominent and the obvious pedestrian approach to the park. We thought you might find the extract from our website on the history of the arch interesting.

Originally, and with the exception of an area around the Parish Hall held as glebe land by the Rector of St Bartholomew's church, much of the land currently comprising The Carrs formed part of the Pownall Hall estate owned by Lord Stamford until he sold up in the years 1841-1859. After a succession of owners, Henry Boddington, of brewery fame, acquired the property and from that time the development of the area as a public open space began.

Henry Boddington knew that the area was a favourite resort with local residents and had been in

discussion with Wilmslow Urban District Council (WUDC) in 1925 regarding a grant of the land for public enjoyment. Sadly, and despite the inscription on the entrance arch, he died in the September of that year before any agreement was reached. It was left to his widow to carry out Henry Boddington's wishes the following year although it was not until 1930 that the official handover of 'The Boddington Playing Fields' was completed. At that time the council paid the princely sum of £62.10s (£62.50) for the entrance gate now commonly known as the Boddington Arch with its inscription that reads 'Given by Henry Boddington JP of Pownall Hall for the recreation health and pleasure of Wilmslow and her children for ever 1925'.

If you'd like to know more about the history of The Carrs try looking at our website www.friendsofthecarrs.org.uk

Nature Notes

It has been interesting once again to witness the seasonal changes in wildlife on the Carrs. The presence of Goosanders on the river has been boosted, probably by Scandinavian migrants, with small groups on the river upstream and downstream of the Carrs. It is the largest of the British saw toothed ducks and can often be seen diving for small fish.

The dippers descend from the upper reaches of the Bollin. One of their favoured fishing grounds involves perching on the exposed riverbed stones just below the churchyard. This small bird can walk under water to rummage for food on the river bed. It can only do so thanks to a translucent eyelid.

Finally the Kingfishers, a rare and protected species, are still evident on our stretch of the Bollin although apparently only surviving rather than thriving. They struggle to cope with pollution and floodwater and we seem to have more than our share of both. They are difficult to spot, perhaps perched on an overhanging riverside branch, but only really conspicuous in flight occasionally seen as they flash upriver under the footbridge in the middle of the Carrs.

Our Candy Floss Trees

Did anyone notice that in autumn the path from Hawthorn Lane begins to smell like a candy floss stall? You weren't imagining it! It's due to two Katsura trees aka the Burnt Sugar or Candy Floss Tree on the right hand side of the path going up towards Hawthorn Lane. They look rather like beech trees, but on closer inspection the leaves are heart-shaped.



It's in Autumn that the trees reach their full magnificence when their leaves turn a beautiful butter yellow and begin to emit a delightful fragrance – a smell of fairgrounds and bonfire night. It can be difficult to determine where the scent is coming from. Strangely if you pick a leaf and sniff you'll be disappointed. It smells of nothing, but take a step back and you'll be enveloped in a cloud of caramelized sugar.



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