

# FOTC AGM 2024

## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Thank you for attending this open annual general meeting of the Friends of the Carrs.

I am going to talk about our year, the events and the achievements that we have seen since last October.

The Carrs Park is now a recognised major asset in the town, and as such is the scene of a number of important community events: Wilmslow Town Council's Cinema in the Park, travelling theatre performances, a bat walk, a dog show (now organised by the RSPCA), and a Bioblitz organised by the Mersey Rivers Trust.

I have deliberately mentioned other organisations' involvement because so many people as well as Friends of the Carrs are helping to make the Carrs a key asset in the town and to develop what the Carrs has to offer : Wilmslow Town Council (and here I have to say a big "Thank you" for their support, both financial and moral), Cheshire East Council, Cheshire Wildlife Trust, Wilmslow in Bloom, Wilmslow Clean Team, United Utilities, Wilmslow Civic Trust, the Bollin Valley Rangers, and many others.

And now to the achievements. I'll start with the one disappointment this year, and that is the very modest returns on all the wildflower plugs planted by the children of Lacey Green Primary School in 2023. I hope it's just wildflowers being wildflowers and playing hard to get. We had a similar experience with our own small wildflower patch between the first and second bridges which seemed to take forever to produce any results, and it is now flourishing magnificently and was praised by the Bioblitz botanist who led the guided walk through the park in July. We have held regular monthly Working Parties and had several volunteer groups helping us

thanks to the efforts of Emma Houghton and the Bollin Valley Ranger team, and we have cleared paths, established new walking routes through the park, solved drainage and flooded path problems, bashed balsam, trimmed willow on the riverbanks and cleaned up the park after the summer picnickers. We were also delighted to see the return of fish (and some pretty big ones at that) and waterfowl after the pollution of the river upstream in Lyme Green. And we have done very well this year in terms of equipment, having managed to acquire a brush cutter and a generous £2,000 grant from United Utilities to buy kit for our work – litter pickers, gloves and bags, chest waders, loppers, slashers, safety wellies and mattocks, all of which will help us keep the river and the riverbanks clear and healthy.

The differential mowing continues to attract praise from users of the park, and we are now getting to the point where Ansa's Grass Cutting Team are finding out what matches visitors' needs and how much their restricted mowing contributes to the flourishing of wildflowers in the park (the humble dandelion has provided us with some spectacular displays).

And for the future? Well, Sal Potts and her colleagues at Mersey Rivers Trust continue to struggle on and make progress with the Wetlands Project, and it looks like we'll be seeing contractors in the Carrs next year, digging out scrapes for the benefit of the wildlife that is attracted to the kind of environment that we have in the Carrs, and next year will see the centenary of the memorial arch marking Henry Boddington's gift of his parkland to the people of Wilmslow, for which Wilmslow Historical Society are planning events in the park. The history of Wilmslow is, sadly, disappearing under all the new developments, but we are recovering traces of that disappearing past, such as a carriage track, the site of the old mill, and we have plans for the remains of St Olaf's church. So, in a strange sort of way, the future of the Carrs is in the past.

On a final note, I'd like to express my personal thanks to the members of the Committee for their work this year and to the Bollin Valley Rangers and our friends in the Mersey Rivers Trust for their advice and support.

Ian Baillie