

The Friends of King's Norton Nature Reserve

Newsletter 24 - Autumn 2010

Registered Charity NO 1122293

www.fknnr.org.uk



November 2010 and the leaves on the Oak trees on the Local Nature Reserve turn colour. This photograph facing west features the bottom of Pinehurst Meadow. BH.

The Newsletter of the FKNNR

£2 to non-members

Correspondence by email preferred: Kingsnortonlnr@aol.com
Newsletter 24 55 Wychall Lane, Kings Norton Registered Charity No. 1122293

The Friends of King's Norton Nature Reserve

Chairman's Notes

Welcome to the autumn edition of our Newsletter. The Reserve is full of wonderful colours and rustling leaves to kick around on your walks. This last weekend saw our monthly Guided Walk exploring alongside the Rea on our by now year-old woodland walk, and around the back of the reservoir, where our clearance work earlier this year is certainly starting to bear fruit. The autumn colours were magical. The scrapes that were created by the Environment Agency in the summer to the west of the reservoir are flowing with water, and we have started to plant up the edges with marginal plants transferred from elsewhere on site. There will be much more to plant there, including a number of trees, so watch out for dates to come and help us! While we didn't see a huge number of birds on our walk, various carrion crows, jackdaws, magpies and jays were hanging out around the reservoir site as usual and we watched a small group of goldfinches feeding avidly in a path-side alder, while the reservoir was graced by a good number of teal. Don't forget that there will be another guided walk on Saturday 27 November. The December walk will be combined, on 1 January 2011, with the, by now traditional, New Year drinks.

The Tuesday 'Workouts' have taken place every week though one or two have come to an early halt owing to wet weather. Last week, for example, five of us turned up as it started to rain, and transplanted yellow flag iris from behind the reservoir into one of the new scrapes. By the time we had done this the irises were well puddled in and the planters were very wet and muddy. Somehow, however, we all thought it had been fun ... Most of the recent 'Workouts' time has been spent on cutting back brambles, the annual balsam bashing, restoring dead hedges and other general maintenance work. We have welcomed one or two splendid new volunteers who are willing to come on a regular basis, to get wet and mucky and who make a real difference to our achievements. We are expecting a number of corporate groups to join us over the next few weeks, and on Saturday 27 November members of the South Birmingham Ramblers will be coming to help us with our conservation and maintenance work. The Friends will of course be more than welcome to join them, so watch out for full details on the web site or the notice boards. The morning will start at 10.30 am and finish around 1.00 pm.

The big event of the past few months, the Friends' Open Day on Saturday 11 September was – by everybody's reckoning – a hugely successful community occasion (see later in this newsletter). I am grateful to all involved in the planning and execution of the day (especially those who got up early to help with the setting-up, and to those who ensured we had no traffic jams along the cycle path), to all the stall holders and our stalwart catering team, to the providers of the marquee, tents, loos, to the Wychall Farm Junior Wardens who kept the site clean all day and to the Parks Rangers. It was a wonderful day, and I am truly proud of the organisation of the event.

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We are also grateful to Kings Norton Ward Community Chest and the Successful Neighbourhoods Fund (Northfield Cluster) for financial support. Special thanks are also due to Anne Price for organising not one but two tombolas, and most of all to Graham Layton for overseeing the day's arrangements.

The Open Day proved a very useful vehicle to engage with the residents of the Wychall Farm estate, who we see as vital to the future support of the 'extension' upstream from Popes Lane. With support from the Successful Neighbourhoods Fund, and the hands-on help of Wychall Farm Family Club and the Junior Wardens, we were able to target advertising for the Open Day into every household on the estate (many thanks to the indefatigable Maria Challenor), with the result that some 60 people visited on the day, and we have at least one new member/regular helper from that area as a result.

SNF funding was also provided to support a Weekend 'Workout' on the extension area between Popes Lane and Wychall Road on 9/10 October, again targeting Wychall Farm residents to seek their active help. This was a less successful exercise in terms of engaging with the local community but proved very successful indeed in clearing the area of a vast amount of rubbish, some of which dated back many years. My thanks are due to all those Friends who turned up; our numbers were boosted by wonderful support on the Saturday from the Street Champions apprentices led by Mark Burton by a couple of Chinese students from the University of Birmingham on the Sunday and by two energetic guys complete with skip supplied by Veolia Environmental Services at Lifford Lane for both days. Having the skip meant that the rubbish collected could be weighed, and believe it or not we collected the magnificent total of 2.4 tons of assorted grot! The prize probably goes to the double bed complete with leather bed-head that was lurking in the Japanese knotweed. Further work on this area in the near future will include tree and bulb planting.

Finally, a sales pitch! The Friends have produced some beautiful Christmas cards this year to support our work on the LNR. Brian Hewitt took all the pictures on the LNR, and you can see them on the web site (www.fknnr.org.uk). They come in packs of six assorted cards, for a price of £1.80 per pack. I am holding the stocks at 55 Wychall Lane, and will be happy to sell you a supply. But hurry, while stocks last! Ring me on 624 3865 or email (55wychall@blueyonder.co.uk) to make a reservation and arrange collection. We have also acquired some new T shirts (£9, light blue), polo shirts (£11, light blue) and zipped fleeces (£18, navy) complete with the Friends' logo. These offer Friends a very smart way to show your support for our work. The fleeces in particular are wonderfully warm and comfortable. Again, if you are interested in making a purchase, do please get in touch with me, and I can advise on sizes etc.

Amanda Cadman Chairman

The Friends of King's Norton Nature Reserve

Wildlife Watch: observations reported on or about the LNR over the past three months. Please send to Kingsnortonlnr@aol.com



The occasional dry and warm weather and sunny spells continued to bring out the butterflies and two further species (Holly Blue and Red Admiral) were added to the LNR total for 2010 making 15 in all (*see last Newsletter for details*). Photos left and on the back cover show a Gatekeeper and Comma Butterfly (respectively).



To the left again is a photograph of one of our nest boxes on a tree in Pinehurst Meadow. Note the enlarged hole.

Such activity shows that the residents, probably Blue or Great Tits, may have suffered predation at the hands (or beak) of a Greater Spotted Woodpecker. Pinehurst is a good place to see these woodpeckers and both Nuthatch and Green Woodpecker.

The Saturday walkabouts continue to reveal some good wildlife sightings and it would be unusual if something interesting was not observed especially as an accompanied walk may now take us behind Wychall Reservoir along the North Ride created by the Working Party stalwarts. (*Ed Note: Some areas here are still too difficult to access unaccompanied so please do not attempt it alone*). For example Water Rail and a Buzzard were disturbed there recently. The new scrapes are also being used by Heron, Kingfisher and Grey Wagtail, a sure sign that suitable food is now being washed into them. Two Buzzards were seen circling over the area on the 12th October followed by two Ravens on the 17th.

The usual Mallard and Moorhen, the later raising a brood of 3 young well into October, occupy the Reservoir itself. Up to 6 Heron have been seen at any one time. Teal arrived at the site towards the end of September and the maximum recorded number stands at 22. The trees along the cycle path have produced a good crop of berries and seeds this year and sightings of Goldfinch and Bullfinch are now quite common as well as a mixed flock of up to 24 Blue and Long-tailed Tits. Sightings of Jay and Sparrow Hawk have increased likewise and the area is being used by very many Corvids (Crow, Magpie and Jackdaw) as a nighttime roost site.

The Friends of King's Norton Nature Reserve

The above sightings appear to the regular observer to indicate that the habitat and food sources have increased over the past four years. We would like to think that these improvements may in part be due to the management of the site whereby a variety of different conditions have been created i.e. log piles, dead hedges, reed beds, etc, which in turn have increased the number of invertebrates and small mammals. Some future surveys may prove this to be correct.

Whilst on the mammal front the reports of Muntjac Deer have continued with up to 3 being observed by the railway embankment. We continue to receive reports relating to Red Fox and a lot of Grey Squirrels and domestic cats (*Ed: another sign of an increase in voles and mice!*)

A Landrover Fund now requires your support

WANTED - a vehicle similar to those shown below.



The Working Party activity on the Nature Reserve has been intense this year and we are grateful to a growing band of keen individuals. However, tools and equipment have to be taken to and from the site and this is having an effect on the condition of several private cars. We now need a vehicle fit for purpose e.g. a Landrover, ATV or swamp buggy! which can navigate all the LNR and access specifically the rear of Wychall Reservoir and which can also tow our trailer of equipment and materials. Do you know of one we could acquire? Is there a sponsor out there? Do you have the clout to get us a good deal? Please let the Chairman know if you do.

In any event we have started a specific Landrover Fund so that we can increase our resources to buy, run and maintain such a beast. Target £10,000. Donations are now being accepted – Cheques made payable to the FKNNR should be sent to the treasurer at the address shown on page 14. Thank you.

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Ranger Changes:

Since the publication of Newsletter 23 we have welcomed Adam Noon as Park Ranger based at the Lickey Hills. He (and Emma Woolley, who was already on the staff there) now provides Ranger services right across the Northfield Constituency and we cannot expect to see much of them here on the LNR. This will be due primarily to the fact that they will concentrate their activities on bringing the benefits of open spaces and wildlife to a younger generation through their work with schools and other groups.

We are enormously grateful to Adam, however, for being with us on the Open Day (together with Matt Barker who came back to see us from the far reaches of Sutton Park). Adam, to demonstrate his comprehensive wildlife skills, ably assisted with the Duck Race (see attached photograph), which raised cash not only for the LNR but also another Northfield charity.

We have also welcomed Sue Amey as our new Constituency Parks Manager. She was formerly in charge of Ranger services in Hall Green Constituency covering, amongst other places, Kings Heath and Cannon Hill Parks. She now has responsibility for both Northfield and Edgbaston Constituencies and is based at Woodgate Valley Country Park.



Facebook: Kings Norton LNR is feature on Facebook courtesy of Ged Hickman. Please check it out.

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The Open Day 2010

The Open Day 2010: As ever the falconry displays provided the high point of the day, but pony rides and animal petting, wood-working displays and duck races kept our 500 + visitors very happy, and it was notable that people turned up and stayed for a good length of time. Sadly there were no entries for the schools competitions – a big disappointment – and for some reason the face-painters did not turn up. But we were incredibly lucky with the weather again! While there was a bit of a downpour just as the second Scout tent went up, all the helpers were able to shelter, and there was no further rain to speak of until the heavens opened c.5pm when I went to lock the site moments after the marquee guys had departed. No vehicles needed to be winched out this time, though the ice cream man caused some headaches when he drove on to wet and sloping ground on arrival: nothing that ten or twelve shoulders to the van couldn't remedy!

It was a wonderful day, and I am truly proud of the organisation of the event.
Amanda Cadman



Lanner Falcon (*Falco biarmicus*)



The young Tawny Owl
(*Strix aluco*)



Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*)

The stars of the show on display:

All of the birds shown above together with the ubiquitous Harris Hawk were flown on the LNR to demonstrate the falconer's skills. The variation in hunting techniques of Falcons and Hawks was well demonstrated. The displays were accompanied by a talk on the bird's conservation status and the requirements for future population conservation and habitat protection.

Special thanks go to 'Heart of England Raptors' from Hatton Country World.

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The Friends of King's Norton Nature Reserve

The Open Day 2010



The Kings Norton scout tent is put to good use (above) and below with the Street Champions and hanging baskets to the fore AND not forgetting the catering tent (next page) and those homemade sandwiches.



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The Friends of King's Norton Nature Reserve



Bats and pond dipping (above)

The Friends of King's Norton Nature Reserve The 2010 Open Day

Those three wise men from the east – from the Rea Valley Conservation Group - display their treasurers followed by that wonderful pink-eyed hedgehog.



The Friends of King's Norton Nature Reserve

Before and after



The 26th August 2004 and a fallen tree blocks the view across Wychall Meadows in the direction of Camp Lane. The tree was subsequently cut up and removed by the FKNNR together with all the litter and Himalayan Balsam, which was established in and about it.



The same meadow in September 2010 is used for an array of tents on the Open Day. Community action works!

The Friends of King's Norton Nature Reserve

Some of the communication to us from near and far. More is wanted!

I thought people might like to see this message and its vote of confidence in our work. I have replied, suggesting we might put a bit in the Newsletter about his litter picking haul. Amanda Cadman.

Date: Fri, 8 Oct 2010
To: Amanda Cadman <55wychall@blueyonder.co.uk>
Subject: RE: Weekend Work Out

Hello Amanda

I saw the notice yesterday and I hope to turn up at some stage over the weekend. My wife is unwell and it is subject to her needs and demands. I have a dodgy back and like to concentrate on litter picking, if I can. I'll bring my own litter-picker. I was on the reserve yesterday doing the path from Popes Lane, passed the reservoir, picking up litter. I always record what I pick up. Yesterday it was 249 items, which is an average figure I guess. It included 16 cigarette butts, 2 carrier bags and 8 cans, the latter being duly recycled. Cigarette butts were down and I guess that is due to the poor weather and perhaps leaves hiding some. Dog mess seemed reduced considerably. Apart from one bag of dog mess left on the fence and possibly two plastic drug packets, I found no real worrying items (shotgun cases, condom packets, condoms, pant liners, syringes) that I have in the past. I came to the AGM this year and enjoyed the info and the slide show. Although I am a care-worn 57 year old, there didn't seem many much younger than me, how do you get younger people involved? I couldn't make the open day, I'm sorry. I really enjoy receiving the magazine, well worth the subscription, which I must get round to paying. I am sad about the state of the reservoir at the moment, with so many cutbacks it seems we will never get it dredged without funding it ourselves. Finally, can I thank you for the work you put in, I think you are great.

Cheers,
Richard Cutler

Editor's note:

Richard has been doing a tremendous job as a lone worker for several years now. We do receive many verbal comments on the cleanliness of the LNR and that is partly due to the efforts of Richard and also of several of the regular responsible dog walkers. The 'Friends' have removed a vast amount of rubbish in the past 5 years and it does reflect in the appearance of the reserve. However, we need to keep on top of the situation and just note Amanda's comments earlier in the Newsletter. Initial work in the "extension" area resulted in the removal of 2.4 tons of human derived rubbish. Lets get on top of the problems caused by rubbish, illegal tipping, incontinent dogs and graffiti once and for all. I wish

The Friends of King's Norton Nature Reserve

An email to chairman - KNNR. (Reproduced as it was received).

This email is to tell you of my recollections as a 10 year old having just moved into a new home in Ingoldsby Road off Popes Lane in June 1953, we were the 2nd family to move into the new houses. After living in cramped rooms with both parents and a brother and sister in Sparkhill, the house and the open fields and views were wonderful.(my sister still lives at 27 Ingoldsby Road). There was the remains of farm buildings close by and fruit trees still growing, we had uninterrupted views right over Kings Norton golf club. We got used to the steam trains either passing by or shunting into the sidings opposite the house.

But as children, our special place was what is now your nature reserve at the wychall reservoir. We called it the jungle then, where we played most days throughout the year, we had swing ropes from the trees over the lake, we played also wide games and in the winter time the lake used to freeze over and we would play our version of ice hockey with sticks and a polish tin until the would be almighty crack when the ice split from one side to the other, creating panic and very fast exit by all, i have many fond memories of the place.

I walked along the cycle track past the reservoir from Popes Lane this week for the first time in 50years and could not believe the changes that have taken place, the main thing was that the reservoir has lost its water supply which used to be the River Rea, the reservoir is much shrunken in size to what it once was. The vast amount of litter about and the grafitti must be a constant problem for you.

Before all the houses were built, litter and grafitti and the dumping of materials all sorts into the river was unheard of, there was no vandalism. There were a lot of mature trees and shrubs, there were a lot of wild flowers in the river bank although at that time i did not know what they were called. The side of the lake nearest the railway line was always over grown with scrubby bushes and other low lying vegetation, there was a lot of bird life in this area, i recall song and mistle thrush nests, nests of Blackbird, Robin, Wren, Stock Dove, Wood Pidgeon, Gt Spotted Woodpecker, Willow Warbler, there were nesting Reed Bunting, Sedge Warbler and Reed Warbler in the Phragmites which was more extensive than now, there was also more reed mace which with the phragmites and the scrubby bushes was a roosting area for Field Fare and Red Wing, the lake was also used by many water fowl, like Mallard Teal and tufted Duck, there were others but i was not that knowledgable at the time. I Met a gentle man on my walk who was in your group and after i had finished talking with him he gave me you web site address, from which i down loaded your newsletter no14 - 2007, i was amazed at the large ammount of activity taking place on the reserve, i wish you all well in your activities and hope that you do not get disheartened by the mindless vandals who try and undo your good work.

Best regards, Frank Hollis.
Now living in Nuneaton.

The Friends of King's Norton Nature Reserve

Finance – Yes, we want your cash!

They say cash is king and we certainly need more in order to develop the Nature Reserve and help us better manage this superb local asset. This is becoming all the more important as the Local Authority concentrates its resources and manpower into those areas where it has statutory responsibilities. Parks and open spaces do not fare well in such times. There have been many requests in previous newsletters with the theme of extracting cash from the membership and it may seem that in times of recession and austerity that we should ask for more. However, we do need your support more than ever. The obvious request is for membership subscriptions to be paid by the due date of the 1st of June each year and for you to pay by standing order lest you forget! But how else can you help? Everyone could assist us in many varied ways.

- Gift aid your subscription if you are a taxpayer. Charity number 1122293. We then claim an additional amount from the Inland Revenue.
- Send us an additional donation (especially Gift Aid).
- Ensure that a sum is bequeathed to us in your will.
- Recruit a friend or a neighbour as a FKNNR member.
- Opt to pay automatically a proportion of your gains if you sell items in market places such as 'ebay'.
- Have a 'car boot' or 'garage' sale for our benefit.
- "Giving through the SA return" – If you wish to donate any small tax repayments due to you to a charity then please nominate the FKNNR and enter our unique code DAU70QG onto your tax return.
- Identify potential sources of grants to assist in meeting our objectives.
- Sponsor specific projects as an individual or better still find us a business or benefactor who would be willing to support our nature conservation activities (see page 5 above for the Landrover fund).

Thank you, Phil Evans, Treasurer.

Subscriptions: *All to note: Thanks to the 165 who have renewed already. There are several outstanding membership renewals from 2010 and 2009! Please send a cheque to (+ donation? or ask for a standing order/Gift Aid form from) the Treasurer, 21 Woodglade Croft, if you wish to continue your membership but please let us know if you do not. Please gift aid your subscriptions if you pay tax – this will provide additional resources for the 'Friends'. We do appreciate all financial support that helps protect and enhance Kings Norton LNR.*

The Friends of King's Norton Nature Reserve

FKNNR Diary Dates - Please spare one or more hours of your time to assist us in progressing the LNR Management Plan.

Date	Location	Details
7 December	River Rea – North Bank	Create view area, hedge & bulb plant
14 December	BW Meadow	Tracmaster, clear bramble
21 December	Wychall Reservoir Rear	Clearance/path/hedges
1 January	Merecroft/Old orchard area	Walk, tidy up & new year drinks
4 January	Wychall Reedbeds	Prune trees/Reedbed Maintenance
11 January	Beaks Hill Triangle Meadow	Tidy up, tree work & dead hedge
18 January	Wychall Reservoir Rear	Clearance/path/pools/Bird boxes
25 January	Sheila's Meadow	Tracmaster, clear bramble, Bird boxes
30 January	Wychall – New scrapes	Tree planting
1 February	Wychall Reservoir Rear	Clearance/path/pools
8 February	BW Meadow	Tracmaster, clear bramble
15 February	Wychall (Popes Lane end)	Clearance/Prune/log piles
22 February	Pinehurst Meadow	Clearance/path/hedges
1 March	Camp Lane entrance path	Coppice Willow & Dogwood
8 March	River Rea North Bank path	Redo path, coppicing.
15 March	Wychall – New scrapes	Clearance/path/tree planting
22 March	Old Orchard area	Prune trees/Dead hedges

Tuesday Work Outs (TWOs Working Parties) – 10.30 to 13.30 hrs.
All dates – weather permitting. Instruction provided.

For working party days - please meet on site and wear stout waterproof footwear and old clothes. The appropriate equipment & materials will be provided.

Please support our Tree Planting Day on Sunday 30th January 2011 (start at 10.30 hours).

FKNNR Monthly Guided Walks

Once a month every month at 10.30 to 12.00 a.m. Meet at the corner of Wychall Lane & Meadow Hill Road (The BW Meadow entrance).

For all walks - please meet on site and wear stout waterproof footwear and oldish clothes (It can be wet and muddy!). We will alternate the walks between the South side of the LNR and the River Rea/Wychall corridor.

January 1/ January 29/ February 26 / March 26.

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Newsletter 24 55 Wychall Lane, Kings Norton Registered Charity No. 1122293

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A 2010 photograph below from Pinehurst Meadow taken by Brian Hewitt. A Comma butterfly (*Polygonia c-album*) – an excellent sign that we are slowly getting the habitat right for a wide variety of species.



The FKNNR, 55 Wychall Lane, Kings Norton, B38 8TB
Honorary Officers, Committee Members and Advisors
(* Denotes Trustee of the Charity No 1122293)

Chairman	Amanda Cadman*	0121 624 3865
Secretary	Graham Layton*	0121 458 4712
Vice Chairman	David Human*	0121 458 1300
Treasurer	Phil Evans*	0121 628 6769
Membership Secretary	Alistair Howard	0121 415 3082
Education		
Newsletter Editor	Phil Evans*	0121 628 6769
Trustee	Alan Bakewell*	0121 603 1127
Committee Members		
	Suzanne Ashley, Anne Price, Brian Hewitt, Val Saunders	
	Peter Cage, David Hampson, Elizabeth Parker, Nicola Human.	
	Co-opted: Ged Hickman.	

Environmental Agency Hotline	0800 807060
City Parks Department Call Centre	0121 464 8728
Northfield Rangers	0121 447 7106
West Midlands Police	0845 113 5000 ext. 7826 6363
Community Police	07769 882113
Anti-social behaviour Hotline	0121 303 1111

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