

# The Friends of King Norton Nature Reserve



[www.fknr.org.uk](http://www.fknr.org.uk)

## Newsletter 13 – Summer 2007



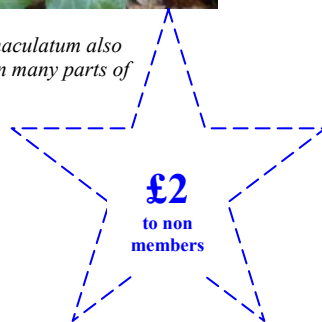
*A plant species given specific protection in England – Arum maculatum also known as 'Cuckoo-pint' or 'Lords & Ladies'. It grows freely in many parts of Kings Norton Local Nature Reserve*

### ***In this issue:***

- Chairman's notes
- Working parties & other activities
- Wildlife Focus – sightings reported recently
- Open day programme
- Dates, Notices & other information.

### ***Support the LNR Open Day on Saturday the 15 September.***

Get to know the area and the work we have managed to do in the three years of our existence. Let us guide you around Kings Norton Local Nature Reserve. There will be a range of activities for all the family so do bring your friends and family and give us your views on the way forward. **See centre pages.**



# The Friends of King Norton Nature Reserve

## **Chairman's Notes**

Summer on the LNR seems almost to have past us by, after the fantastic spring we had. Suffice it to say that, having overflowed the reservoir on the afternoon of Friday 20 July (yes, THAT day of the monsoon season), the Rea is now just a trickle that barely moves. What a fickle watercourse we have!

The Saturdays in July and August seem to have been filled with occasions when we attended events with our display stand, showing people where we are and what we are aiming to achieve, selling bird seed and nest boxes and distributing large quantities of leaflets about the LNR to potential new members. We have been at CoCoMAD (Cotteridge Park), St Nicolas Festival (on the Green) and the Three Estates Festival (Cadbury College), as well as at the Farmers' Market, and we have recruited a number of new members and an enthusiastic Green Gymer or two.

**AND NOW it is our turn to show off on our own ground!** On Saturday 15 September, between 11 and 4, your Local Nature Reserve is holding an **Open Day**. **See the centre spread.**

I offer grateful thanks to all who have already contributed to the planning of the day, to CNSW and the Community Chest for financial support, to Geoff Gower of City Events, and to the Open Day Committee and especially to Graham Layton who has masterminded the logistics for the day. But it could all have been a disaster. The grass here is scheduled to be cut and collected annually on a programme to reduce the fertility (and thereby increase the wildflower potential) of the area. After much rain the grass was eventually cut and left to dry and shed any remaining seeds. The hay collection was delayed by more rain, and then suddenly the cut grass became quite dry on top. Thanks are due to whoever summoned the Fire Service when – was it the casual dropping of a cigarette end, or a deliberate fire setting? – Within ten minutes half the field by West Hill Road had been severely charred by fire. The next day, another fire, another visit from the Fire Service and half our Open Day area was black. Time has been a great healer, however, and we hope all will look spruce for the day.

The stalwarts of the **Green Gym** have met weekly (apart from one very wet Tuesday) and have scythed meadows, cleared pathways and re-defined dead-hedges, picked litter, and created a couple of small

# The Friends of King Norton Nature Reserve

amphibian ponds in the damp meadow below Merecroft Dam. We have named this Sheila's Pond Meadow in memory of Sheila Hughes, who lived alongside and always thought this area could be enhanced to take advantage of the almost constantly high water table and run-off from Merecroft. The area is developing nicely, and will benefit from a second corporate workday in September from the Bank of Ireland Group - again they will plant wild flowers and again they will provide generous funding for plants and tools.

At the June meeting of the City-led LNR Management Committee our long-term vision, outlined in the last Newsletter, was accepted. While it is recognised that much work will need to be undertaken to ensure the feasibility of our aspirations, the Committee welcomed our ambition to seek to develop the Rea corridor, and especially the area at and above Wychall Reservoir as a wetland wildlife and education centre. We look forward to telling you more about our dreams at the Open Day.

Finally, we invite you to join in our **Big Autumn Clean Up** along the Rea and the reservoir on Friday/Saturday 21/22 September between 10.30 and 3.30 to ensure that the site can continue to be enjoyed in a spick and span condition before the winter. The recent wet weather, as you will be aware, has washed down a lot of debris for us to remove. Please come and give us some of your muscle power! You will be welcome whatever your age and whatever your physical ability. So do please come along and 'muck in' with us, for as long or as short a time as you can manage. It's great exercise in the fresh air, it's filthy, it's fun, and it won't cost you anything. There are even free lunchtime refreshments available on the Friday in the Camp pub, courtesy of the new management.

Many thanks to them for their generosity, and to Alan Bakewell who has organized the event.

Thank you for your continued support of the Friends' efforts to improve our patch for wildlife and for the local community.



*One Toad disturbed near Sheila's ponds*

Amanda Cadman

# The Friends of King Norton Nature Reserve

## The British Waterways [BW] Meadow

It is all too easy to lose sight of the fact that some of our members do not have detail local knowledge of the geography of the Local Nature Reserve [LNR] or may not be familiar with some of the jargon we lapse into on occasions. The following summary is therefore intended to outline some features of just one part of the LNR i.e. the British Waterways or BW meadow on Wychall Lane.

Why British Waterways?	Because they actually own the land. A feeder stream bisects the land from the River Rea. This is used occasionally to top up the local canal.
Local status	It is not a formal part of the designated LNR.
BW interest?	They will not relinquish land if there is a future possibility of selling it for development.
Why are the FKNNR interested in it?	The land links two parts of the LNR. It provides a green connection between the Merecroft & Pinehurst areas across to the River Rea corridor.
Lease/licence	The FKNNR have taken out a renewable 364 day grazing licence. This allows us to manage the land as a grassland area.
Grazing?	The land was grazed by horses up until 1989 but antisocial behaviour problems caused the grazier to relinquish the grazing rights.
Responsibilities	The FKNNR must look after the boundary fence line.
Included in Management Plan?	Yes. A designated compartment no. MW04 in formal LNR plan since it was hoped to include it in the original LNR designation.
Water	As well as the canal feeder, the outflow from Merecroft Pool forms a small stream flowing south to north across the site. It dives under the canal feeder into a culvert to the River Rea.
Access?	Yes. A Public footpath runs from Wychall Lane (corner of Meadow Hill Rd) to West Hill Road. Access is via a kissing gate on Wychall Lane and the path is unfenced along its course in the meadow. The footpath appears on the 1844 Tithe Map.
Conservation.	Classified as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) in 1982 and identified in the Birmingham City Council Nature Conservation Strategy (1997).

## The Friends of King Norton Nature Reserve



A magnificent show of Dryads saddle *Polyporus squamosus* on an old tree stump in the BW meadow at the end of June 2007.



In the same meadow at the end of July, working party activity uncovered another

## The Friends of King Norton Nature Reserve

piece of dead wood with Dead Man's Fingers *Xylaria polymorpha* growing from it.

**Wildlife Watch:** observations reported on or about the LNR over the past three months.

It is always interesting when members of the 'Friends' let us know about the wildlife activity they have seen in Kings Norton. Throughout August there were many observations of a Buzzard being harassed by two or more crows and then there were many Green Woodpecker sightings. We now know that the Woodpeckers have successfully raised one youngster. However, it was not good news on the wildfowl front with the combination of cold wet weather and mink activity meaning that very few young ducks have survived this year and despite several attempts coot and grebe nests were all washed away. However, we can report one success – a Moorhen with two young still surviving at the end of August. Other regular reports continue to include many of Lesser Black-backed Gulls, Grey Heron and Kingfisher at both Merecroft Pool and Wychall Reservoir. In fact the Herons at Wychall are continually remarked upon with a maximum of six being recorded at one time.

On the small mammal front we now know that all the meadows to the south of Wychall Lane have populations of Short-tailed Vole and that the BW meadow contains Common Shrews since a local cat appeared with a dead one! Foxes with cubs have been recorded in Popes Lane and in Pinehurst Meadow. There have been further sightings of Fox and Muntjac Deer around Wychall Reservoir.

The wet weather appears to have been good for amphibians and working party activities continually disturbed frogs in Wychall, Pinehurst and Sheila's pond meadows. The last location contains many toads as well so our amphibian ponds may be useful in helping protect both species.

Professional ecological surveys are now being undertaken across the Wychall Reservoir site in order to give us more accurate base line data. These data will enable us to progress our development plans for the site as set out in the last newsletter. We believe we have the basics in place for a proper 'Wetland Reserve' and hopefully we shall soon have the information to inform our 'Friends' and our other supporters.



One Frog disturbed near Sheila's ponds

The Friends of King Norton  
Nature Reserve

**Nature Reserve Open Day**

**Saturday 15th September**

**River Rea cycle path near Wychall Lane**

**11am till 4pm**

- \* events
- \* activities for all
- \* live displays
- \* birds and animals
- \* guided walks
- \* crafts
- \* refreshments

6

**CNSW** Community Networking Unleashing the Potential

**SUPPORTED BY Birmingham City Council**

Project Part-Financed by the European Union  
**European Regional Development Fund**

Detach this centre fold, if you so wish, and come along and support us on the 15<sup>th</sup>.

The Friends of King Norton  
Nature Reserve

**Kings Norton Local Nature Reserve Open Day**  
**Saturday, 15<sup>th</sup> September 2007**  
**Programme of Events**

<u>Time Start</u>	<u>Time Finish</u>	<u>Event</u>	<u>Location</u>
11.00	11.45	Bird – Ringing (weather permitting)	Meadow at corner of Wychall Lane and Meadow Hill Road
11.15	12.15	LNR Guided Tour (Wychall Res)	From main marquee
11.45	12.45	Junior Wardens Litter Pick	Start from “children’s activities marquee”
12.00	12.30	Falconry Display	Falconry Stand, adjacent main site
12.15	12.45	Duck Race	Start location on the Rea by FKNNR gazebo
12.15	13.15	LNR Guided Tour (Merecroft)	From main marquee
12.45	13.15	Scything Demonstration	Adjacent main site
13.15.	14.15	LNR Guided Tour (Merecroft)	From main marquee
13.45	14.15	Duck Race	Start location on the Rea by FKNNR gazebo
14.00	14.30	Falconry Display	Falconry Stand, adjacent main site
14.15	15.15	LNR Guided Tour (Merecroft)	From main marquee
14.45	15.15	Scything Demonstration	Adjacent main site
14.45	15.45	LNR Guided Tour (Wychall Reservoir)	From main marquee
15.15	15.45	Bird – Ringing (weather permitting)	Meadow at corner of Wychall Lane and Meadow Hill Road
15.15		Raffle Prize Draw	FKNNR stall
16.00		Close	

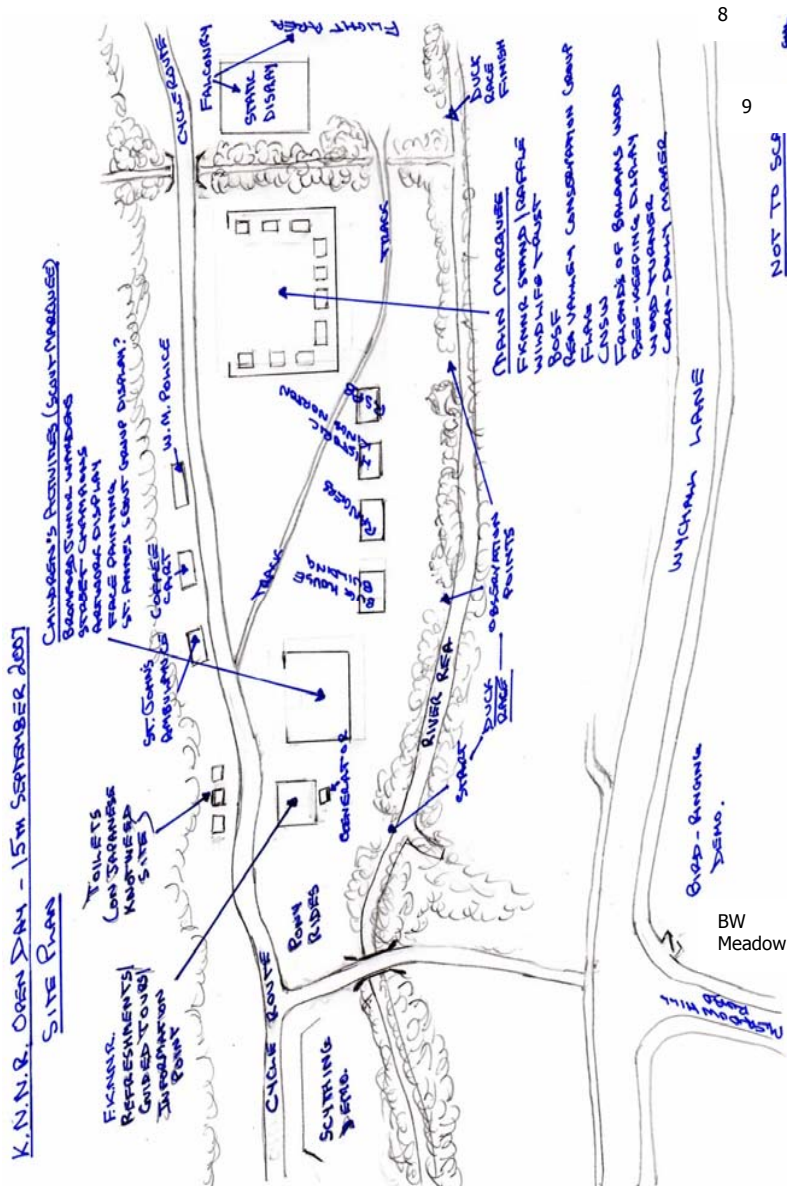
All finish times are approximate  
Activities ongoing throughout the day:-  
Ranger Service besom-making.  
Bug-house building  
Children’s Artwork display

Children’s Face-painting  
Animal petting  
Pony rides

# The Friends of King Norton Nature Reserve

# The Friends of King Norton Nature Reserve

## Your local Nature Reserve invites you to....



...a free event about safeguarding sixty green acres in your locality!

11 am till 4pm: a full programme of events and activities for all ages including:

- Wildlife Trust
- Ranger Service
- Street Champions
- bees and birds
- animals
- craft exhibits
- guided walks
- face-painting
- local group exhibits
- off-road car parking

for more details contact :  
**0121 624 3865**  
 or email :  
**KingsNortonLNR@aol.com**  
 website: [www.fknr.org.uk](http://www.fknr.org.uk)

Visit us on 15th September in the meadows - but of course the reserve is yours to enjoy at any time...



# The Friends of King Norton Nature Reserve

## Working Party Progress

Our conservation work over the summer period has not been interrupted very much by the wet weather; in fact we have been extremely lucky each Tuesday (apart from one) with our 'Green Gym' activities. These activities have occurred throughout the LNR with a good deal of effort going into the meadow grassland to the south of Wychall Lane and particular spots along the River Rea cycle path.

The focus of most tasks during the period mid March to mid August is maintenance – this means keeping bramble and nettles in the places we want them, scything the grass to encourage other native flora, keeping paths open and the inevitable litter picking. Attention must also be paid to the removal of non-native invasive plants and we have plenty locally as in the case of Himalayan Balsam, Japanese knotweed and Ragwort. The recent appearance of Giant Hogweed on Kings Norton playing fields is also a cause for concern. Several days were spent 'Balsam bashing' along the Rea but observers will still notice that we are over-run with the plant at many locations especially Wychall Reservoir.

Attention has also been directed towards the results of anti-social behaviour by a few (we think!) especially during school holiday periods. Graffiti is a problem and is removed as soon as it can be. We are working with the local Police to try and eradicate this – so if you see such behaviour please report it to Kings Heath – digital photos would also be welcomed by them.

Routine maintenance on the LNR must be undertaken in a way, which causes the minimum of disturbance to all wildlife, especially nesting birds, even when the weather does its best to destroy a lot of our past activity. Our new reedbeds and wild flower areas took quite a battering during July and the River Rea dumped a lot of debris upon us when it was in flood.

We are occasionally asked why we coppice or pollard trees when an objective is to let nature take its course in a "Nature Reserve". The answer is related to the Management Plan for the area, since without management we cannot encourage the wide variety of plants and animals that an English LNR might contain and which is the result required of a designated LNR. In addition, we are also well aware of the impact that lack of attention and budget cuts impart to areas which do not rank high in terms of available finance or political priorities. So it is down to the community to play its part, like it, or not. Thus, over time, we shall attempt to eliminate the 'invasives' and replace a fair percentage of the sycamore and poplar trees with oak, hazel and beech, etc. and we hope to do our bit to meet Citywide and National Biodiversity Action Plan [BAP] objectives. So please come and join us – an hour of your time will make a real difference.

*Phil Evans*

# The Friends of King Norton Nature Reserve

**FLOODS:** The heavy rain on the 20 July caused the highest water level in the River Rea and Wychall Reservoir for about four years. Some photos on that evening are shown below courtesy Shirley Bakewell. The first shows a very full Reservoir in the evening with the cycle route impassable due to the flood. The second was taken further down the Rea in the Wychall Meadows where the two cycle paths join. The lone litterbin is at the path junction – not usually in the River!



The Reservoir inflow point on the morning after. A relatively clean area since all the usual rubbish had been washed into the Reservoir.

# The Friends of King Norton Nature Reserve

**Rangers & Wardens:** We wish good luck to Beth Ashley, formerly Northfield District Assistant Ranger, on her appointment as Ranger at Plantsbrook LNR in Erdington. At present we are relying on Ranger support from the Lickey Hills. We await the recruitment of a new Assistant Ranger for Northfield – and now aspire to have a dedicated Ranger of our own for Kings Norton LNR. We are also campaigning for a Northfield Environmental Group to bring together all environmental interests in the constituency to ensure some 'joined up thinking' about our local green spaces, especially along the Rea. We also welcome Matthew Osland-Barker to the FKNNR and his experience, as a worker in the local community will be an asset to the 'Friends' plus his knowledge on zoology, fungi and school children. *(Are these the same or related subjects? Ed).*



In the last Newsletter we asked for a caption to accompany the photo of Brian Hewitt collecting bird sounds. Hear goes ... "Well do you think this hat will fit over my ears". Thanks Jean.

**Help the 'Friends' to stay in touch with you:** *Have you emailed us yet? Please send us one 'hello' message, so that we can maintain up to date address lists & email data. Recent mail outs have been returned to us from several email addresses – obviously our records need updating but only you, the members, can help us.*

We now have a live web site at [www.fknnr.org.uk](http://www.fknnr.org.uk). Do visit it and let us know what you think!

**Join our 'green gym' working parties:**

Every Tuesday, as much time as you can spare between 10.30 and 13.30. One hour of your time makes a real difference. Please let us know in advance on [KingsNortonlnr@aol.com](mailto:KingsNortonlnr@aol.com) or by ringing a committee member. Next dates: Every Tuesday in September, October & November.

**Tools wanted:** *If you have any unwanted garden or workshop tools then please let one of the Committee know or phone 0121 6286769.*

**STOP PRESS:** Our best bat night ever at the start of September and a good composting site visit. Reports next newsletter. Also possible winter work by the City at Wychall Reservoir - we await details from the City Engineers.

# The Friends of King Norton Nature Reserve

## Diary Dates

Date	Location	Details
4 September	BW Meadow	Green Gym: Clearance work
11 September	Wychall Meadows	Green Gym: Prep Open Day
15 September	Wychall Meadows	Open day on the LNR
18 September	Pinehurst Meadow	Green Gym: Clearance work
21 September	Wychall Reservoir/	Big clean-up days
22 September	River Rea	
25 September	Sheila's Ponds	Planting: Corporate Day
2 October	Wychall Lane/Rea	Green Gym: Clearance work
9 October	Wychall Lane/Rea	Green Gym: Clearance work
16 October	Merecroft	Green Gym: Dead hedges
19 & 20 October	Pinehurst Meadow	Big clean up and some planting.
23 October	BW Meadow	Green Gym: Clearance work
30 October	Wychall Lane/Rea	Green Gym: Planting
10 November	The Green & Church	Farmers' Market & Christmas fayre.

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

Please spare one or more hours of your time to assist us in progressing the Management Plan. Help is also required to staff our information stand at all the local promotional events please contact the Chairman if you can assist us with one or two hours of your time and enjoy talking to people.

**Tuesday Working Parties (The 'Green Gym') – 10.30 to 13.30 hrs**  
*All dates – weather permitting. Instruction provided.*

**Support the LNR Open Day on Saturday the 15 September**

## Corporate Day: Bristol & West



## The Friends of King Norton Nature Reserve



**Corporate Day:** *On 1 May 2007 we hosted a group of volunteers from Bristol & West/Bank of Ireland – their 'pink' team! ~ adjacent photos. Here in their own words is their contribution to own in-house magazine:* <sup>14</sup>

"Give Together what does it mean to you? To Pink Team it meant the opportunity to donate our time & effort to a community project that we felt would benefit and also enable us to work together as a team. As you are aware we went to Kings Norton Nature Reserve on the 1 May 2007. The working party were: Nicki, Elaine, Pete, Laura, Louise, Karen, Jo, Noeleen

We arrived about 9.45 and had a briefing with Amanda who gave us some background to the reserve and what the volunteers were hoping to achieve. Projects they are currently working on include: Restoring reedbeds, installing bird/bat boxes, involve young people and much more.

We cleared scrub and overgrown laurel, raked and prepared the ground for planting and seeds. We planted around 800 plugs of wildflowers, a selection of them were: Herb Robert, Figwort, Cow Parsley, Tufted Vetch. We also scattered seeds, some were wild poppies. All the plants then had to be watered in; this meant quite a few trips to the lake with a watering can and a few scared ducks waiting for Nicki to fall in.

After a hard morning, working in the fantastic sunshine! we broke for lunch in our very own shady glade (to protect our delicate skin!), this had to be one of the best picnics ever and the highlight was Louise's raspberry and double cream sponge cake.

During the day we had some visitors from the local police force, at one point it looked like they were looking after a community service group (Naomi Campbell we weren't!) The local police regularly patrol the reserve

## The Friends of King Norton Nature Reserve

in an attempt to keep the recent spell of vandalism to a minimum. 8 very tired but extremely happy Pinkies left for home at 4.30.

Pink team were very lucky with weather, the sun shone all day, and we feel our contribution helped to transform an overgrown area of the meadow into a natural ray of colour for all visitors & animals to enjoy year after year. We have had an email from Amanda at the Nature Reserve thanking us for all our hard work and effort and for matching the £500 they had spent on the purchase of the wildflowers and seeds.

A big thank you goes out to everyone at SIB who supported Pink team on the day so we were able to spend this time helping transform our patch of the meadow."



# The Friends of King Norton Nature Reserve

**The FKNNR, 55 Wychall Lane, Kings Norton, B38 8TB  
Honorary Officers, Committee Members and Advisors**

Chairman Amanda Cadman  
Secretary David Barraclough  
Vice Chairman David Human  
Treasurer Phil Evans  
Membership Secretary Jil Bromley  
Education Matthew Osland-Barker  
Newsletter Editors Amanda Cadman & Phil Evans

Northfield District Ranger, Post vacant 0121 447 7106

**Committee Members**

Jon Anson, Suzanne Ashley, Alan Bakewell,  
Brian Hewitt, Graham Layton, Peter Cage, David Hampson,  
Jenny Bodycote, Nicola Human.

*Environmental Agency Hotline 0800 807060*  
*West Midlands Police 0845 113 5000 ext. 7826 6363*  
*Community Police 07769 882113*  
*Anti-social behaviour Hotline 0121 303 1111*  
*Street Champions 0800 0730528*



A gatekeeper butterfly poses in the BW Meadow on the 31 July 2007 (a sunny day!).