# The Friends of King's Norton Nature Reserve Newsletter 22 – Spring 2010 Registered Charity No. 1122293

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Will the Hawks return to the FKNNR Open Day? Now planned for the 11<sup>th</sup> September 2010.

The Newsletter of the FKNNR - £2 to non-members.

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# The Friends of King's Norton Nature Reserve

The footpath beside Pinehurst meadow. Plenty of snow to the left in the grazing meadows

Winter Photographs from Brian Hewitt



Another pleasant day and Merecroft Pool reflections catch the eye.



The corner of the British Waterways Meadow and a view towards the 'TrinleX Tower"

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### Chairman's Notes

The New Year was seen in on the Nature Reserve with a guided walk around the site being followed by the by now time-honoured barbeque and mulled wine in the Old Orchard by Merecroft Pool. Many thanks to those who brought extra food and drink (particularly the Sloe Gin, JP!) which, with more people than we might have expected on a very cold day, was very much appreciated and added to the cheer of the occasion. And what a winter we had! As you can imagine, all that snow and frost meant that we were rather held back in our work across the LNR, though it certainly was fabulously beautiful and gave us all some lovely walks and impressive photographs.

You will recall that the Friends were involved in a major tree-planting session at the beginning of December as part of the BBC's Tree O'clock record attempt, had pledged to plant over 200 trees and in fact with all the help we were able to plant 553 trees within the allotted period. Sadly, we discovered a while later that a fair number of the trees planted to the north of the river along Wychall Lane had been pulled up and left lying on the ground, so a major replanting had to take place — many thanks to Maz Hewitt and Jean Perring for re-planting them; we hope they will now grow undisturbed.

As a result of contacts made during the Tree O'clock event, twelve students from Aston University made a special visit on 26 February to help us with our development work at the north side of the reservoir. They were a fantastically energetic and engaged party of young people who were able to make a real difference during their three hours with us, and clearly enjoyed their work despite the cold weather. We very much hope to see further parties of students from Aston here and we are keen to develop further long-term relationships with other groups of young and energetic volunteers to help us to improve our Local Nature Reserve for people and for wildlife.

Another group of students, this time from the University of Birmingham, visited the LNR during March to carry out survey work as part of their degree course under the supervision of Dr Mel Bickerton. This is the second year of such research being undertaken on site and their results will be fed into our records. A student from the University of Worcester is undertaking a water quality survey around the LNR.

Our Park Ranger, Matthew Osland-Barker, is working on site with a number of local schools these days, in particular students from Baverstock School who have been involved with a number of projects across the site, all within the terms of our Management Plan. We are enormously grateful to the students for their contribution to our work. Now might be an appropriate place, too, to register our concern for the future of Birmingham's Park Ranger Service, where we know there are to be significant reorganisations and some

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redundancies, with all staff currently awaiting news of their future. The City Council's previous direct funding to the Ranger Service for the provision of schools activities has been withdrawn, meaning that schools will now have to pay directly for such outdoor activities unless, as in the Baverstock case, that activity is fulfilling the terms of a site Management Plan.

I was able to raise my concerns about this during a visit to our LNR by members of the City Council's Leisure, Sport and Culture Overview and Scrutiny Committee who came on 16 March at the invitation of Councillor Geoff Sutton. They were able to see the Tuesday Work Out action on British Waterways meadow, talk to our regular volunteers and see the Tracmaster power scythe, bought for us with the Ward's Community Chest funds, in action (it is proving to be hugely effective, and a real boon for us). They walked across to Merecroft Pool, showing concern that the income from the grazier was <u>not</u> being ring-fenced by the City to support work on the Reserve, and also visited Wychall reservoir site, where they were concerned at the amount of junk in the water (it's very difficult to get at since there is not enough depth for a boat) and learned a little about the work to be undertaken on the dam.

The Work Out volunteers have spent a good deal of time on footpath and dead hedge maintenance, especially in the Beaks Hill Triangle area, and we have also spent time developing the bird hide area of Pinehurst Meadow. Please don't forget that the Tuesday Work Outs take place (weather permitting) every Tuesday between 10.30 and 13.30 and are vital to the enhancement of Kings Norton LNR. The regular team is dedicated and effective, but we are few in number and urgently need some additional pairs of hands if we are to keep on top of the work required. Whatever your physical capacity there is always a range of jobs to do, the camaraderie is great, and there is a great feeling of satisfaction to be had when we look at what we have achieved. So do please come and join us and help to enhance your neighbourhood while you exercise your muscles in the fresh air.

By way of spreading the word about Kings Norton LNR and, where appropriate, seeking volunteers to help us in our work, I have attended, with our display board, a volunteer fair at Aston University, a sustainability day for Civil Service West Midlands, a coffee morning run by Fit4Life in Hawkesley and the Seniors Club at St Nicolas Place. Peter Cage has recently undertaken a major up-date of the website and we think it is looking very good now; do please use it to keep up to date with our activities. Anne Price is working hard to publicise the Reserve to the wider public and Graham Layton is ensuring that our four notice boards are up to date. Brian Hewitt is very kindly designing a new leaflet to advertise the Reserve and I hope that this will be available by the time of the AGM.

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On Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> April we held a big Clean Up event along the Rea, with a special concentration on starting to remove generations of rubbish from alongside Popes Lane. I am so grateful to those who turned up and got stuck in. They collected twenty-eight black sacks-full, endless car tyres and several large items including the kitchen sink (I kid you not – it was a double sink, double drainer, complete with taps). What an amazing effort! Thanks to Alan Bakewell, Mark Burton and the Street Champions' clean-up team the rubbish was removed from site very promptly and the Champs' clean-up team came back on 20 April for a further major attack on Popes Lane, removing another truck-full of assembled grot. The area still needs a great deal of work to clear it, but we have made quite an impression on the rubbish that had lain there for many years, constantly being added to by passers-by. Thanks too to Network Rail for the new palisade fencing which now separates their land from Popes Lane itself.

The Environment Agency has now started work to raise the height of the dam at Wychall Reservoir and to develop a spillway to deal with the possible effects of a 'once in a thousand years' flood event and to stop any overflow engulfing the houses on Wychall Lane. See later in this Newsletter.

With this Newsletter you will receive formal notice of the Annual General **Meeting** on Monday 17<sup>th</sup> May. Do please come to the meeting to hear about our recent activities and future plans and to let us have your views and This is your local Charity, working to improve your neighbourhood for people and for wildlife, and we need your feedback please! And please bring a friend or neighbour too and encourage them to join the Friends to support our aims.

We are now planning for an Open Day to be held on Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> September 2010. Please put the date in your diary now and please give us whatever help you can both beforehand and, especially, on the day itself. We will need a small army of volunteers to help with setting-up, stewarding, running the Friends' stall, and helping with catering and duck racing. And we need prizes for the tombola!

Finally, you may like to know that historian George Demidowicz is giving a talk to Kings Norton History Society on Mills on the River Rea on Monday 24 May at 7.30 at St Nicolas Place. With the remains of Wychall Mill on our patch, and memories of Hurst Mill on Camp Lane, I believe this will be very much of interest to all of us.

Amanda Cadman Chairman

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

The winter period presented the wildlife observer with plenty to see especially in January. The highlight being 25 Goosander on Merecroft Pool on the 30<sup>th</sup>. These were seen in the company of a Heron, a Kingfisher, 17 Mallard, a Moorhen, 6 Lesser Black-backed Gulls, 20 Black-headed Gulls and 4 Coot guite a gathering in clear water surrounded by ice. The period also witnessed the passage of migrant Thrushes with both Fieldfare and Redwing being reported throughout Kings Norton. A small flock of 12 Redwing were present on the area proposed for the LNR extension.

Spring arrived on the March with the arrival of the first Chiffchaff and he was swiftly followed by an influx of Willow Warblers and then Blackcaps. Frogspawn was present in most water bodies by the 20<sup>th</sup> March.

There have been no direct sightings of mammals reported so far this year (apart from Grev Squirrels) although those Working Party members who venture off the main routes regularly observe the tiny hoof prints of Muntjac Deer in mud and soft ground. Such was the deer activity over the winter that very many young saplings have had their bark chewed off between 3 and 9 inches off the ground. Kings Norton LNR now has a deer problem!

Butterflies have been active for several months now. Observations include Peacock, Speckled Wood, Orange Tip and Brimstone. Our activities near the reed beds at Wychall have resulted in the spread of Garlic Mustard Alliaria petiolata (also known as 'Jack-by-the-hedge) and this is the food source for the caterpillars of the Orange Tip. Lets hope for even more of these Butterflies.

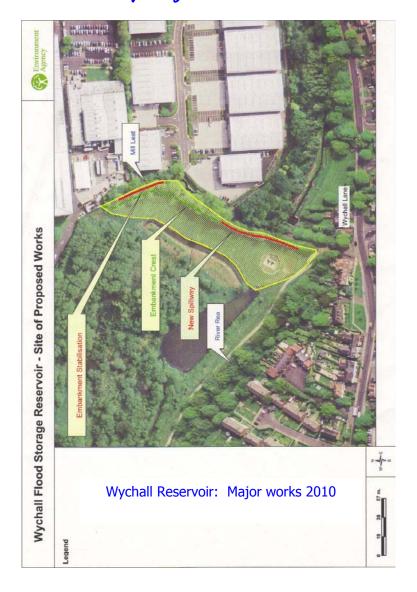
	Wychall on Sunday 31 <sup>st</sup> January	2010:	10.30 to 12.30 hrs.	
2	Mallard	4	Magpie	
12	Teal	20	Carrion Crow	
6	Lesser Black-backed Gull			
2	Heron	1	Dunnock	
2	Moorhen	2	Robin	
6	Long Tailed Tit	2	Wren	
4	Great Tit	3	Blackbird	
4	Blue Tit	1	Stock Dove	
1	Pheasant (♀ on dam)	6	Wood Pigeon	

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#### **Environment Agency Work**

Wychall Reservoir - A Flood Storage Reservoir.

Extracts from the Public Presentation by Colin May, Technical Specialist, EA.

- Wychall Reservoir was formerly a canal feeder reservoir constructed in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century.
- In 1989 Birmingham City Council raised the reservoir embankment to protect properties from flooding from the River Rea and constructed outlet control culverts and reinforced concrete overflows.
- The management of the reservoir passed to the EA in November 2007 under the Critical Ordinary Watercourse (COWS) transfer scheme.
- The reservoir is registered under the 1975 Reservoirs Act.

The 1975 Reservoirs Act requires the reservoir undertaker (Operator) to appoint a Panel Engineer to carry out inspections and make sure the reservoir is safe from: -

- Breaching
- Preventing an uncontrolled escape of water threatening lives and property downstream.

The Engineer makes a report in which he may make many recommendations for example about operation, best practice, maintenance and public safety. Most importantly he can make "recommendations in the interest of safety" which are enforceable in law. It is these "recommendations in the interest of safety" which the EA is about to carry out.

An inspection carried out in 2007 by Mr Jack Meldrum, a Reservoir Panel Engineer, led to two main concerns over: -

- The ability of the bank to resist over topping erosion during a probable maximum flood (PMF) on the unprotected embankment face.
- The steepness and stability of the downstream embankment face against possible collapse.

Studies have shown:

- A PMF will overtop the existing bank with a flow of 250 cumecs at a depth of 0.6m.
- The material forming a steep section of the bank is at risk of collapse in fact some of this bank has been eroded by the Mill leat.

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Measures are therefore required to reduce the risk failure of the dam through overtopping of the unprotected bank and to reduce the risk of the embankment being washed away: i.e. Spillway construction and reservoir bank reinforced with armoured turf and sheet piles.

Measures are also required to reduce the risk of the embankment from collapsing and this will be achieved through the reprofiling of steep sections of the bank by introducing flatter slopes.

Whilst the above works are essential to protect the integrity of the reservoir for flood defence purposes we have reiterated to them the fact that the LNR containing the reservoir is also there for the benefit of people and wildlife. The FKNNR has therefore been in consultation with the EA to ensure that the works also improve the habitat. We have been impressed by the way the EA has addressed this issue and they have been enthusiastically supportive of our measures to secure:

- Scrape habitats in the reservoir basin fed from the Mill leat;
- A wildflower meadow on the dam;
- Trash poles to trap large debris downstream of the inlet weir;
- The residue from tree surgery (chippings and planks) to be used within the LNR;
- Five trees to be planted in mitigation for each tree removed;
- Additional tree removal (Crack Willow) throughout the LNR;
- Access to the north side of the reservoir (new gates in fence line);
- Information Boards.

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So the works are now underway in the dam area. We need to wait for the autumn for most of the environmental enhancement works but we are confident that the overall result will be a much-improved Local Nature Reserve. We shall continue to monitor progress.

NOTE: Sadly Jil Bromley, who has been our **Membership Secretary** since our inception, has decided to stand down from that role at the Annual General Meeting, due to increasing pressures on her time elsewhere. I am enormously grateful to her for all she has put into this vital support for the organisation, and I know she will continue to be a keen supporter of the Friends. We owe her, and Nicola Human, thanks for taking the initiative to organise a door-to-door petition to gain neighbourhood support for the proposed LNR designation when public consultation meetings were taking place. So, thank you Jil for all your hard work, and all good wishes for the future. And so if anyone out there could help us to maintain accurate membership records, currently using Excel, do please consider standing as Membership Secretary. Please contact me for further details.

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### The Friends of King's Norton Nature Reserve

#### The Friends of Kings Norton Nature Reserve

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on Wednesday, 20<sup>th</sup> May 2009 at 7.30 p.m. at Kings Norton Tennis Club, Grange Hill Road, Kings Norton.

**Present:** Amanda Cadman (Chairman)

Jon Anson, Sue Ashley, Elizabeth Chattaway, Pat and Paul Dovey, Gwen and Phil Evans, David Hampson, Brian Hewitt, Nicola and David Human, John Jelfs, Diane Kelly, Jean and Graham Layton, Peter Marsh, June McCoy, Matthew Osland-Barker, Jean Perring, Anne Price, Geoff Ray, Dave Sharpe, Claire Simpson, John Smith, Margaret Sutton.

Apologies: Shirley and Alan Bakewell, Jenny and John Bodycote,
Jil Bromley and Elizabeth Parker

#### 1/09 Welcome and Apologies

The Chairman, Amanda Cadman, welcomed members to the meeting and received apologies.

#### 2/09 Minutes

The minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> May 2008 were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

She also thanked Kings Norton Tennis Club and John Anson for their hospitality, and Nicola Human for organising the evening's raffle.

#### 3/09 Chairman's Report

The Chairman presented her report for the year ending March 2009, which dealt with the development of the Reserve over the past year; the success of the Open Day in September 2008 and other events; management and publicity activities undertaken. She expressed appreciation of the professional and other support received from officers of Birmingham City Council, other organisations and individuals.

The Chairman referred in particular to the preparation of the Management Plan for the Reserve for the period 2009 – 2013 by the City, in which the Friends had actively contributed, and which would shortly be available for public consultation. The Plan included the proposal to extend the Reserve to include the area of land between Popes Lane and Wychall Road.

She also reported that it was planned to implement a membership campaign. The practical achievements of the Friends during the year had been notable but the site was

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large, and more volunteers to work on site and at promotional functions were urgently needed. She encouraged existing members to offer assistance and to recruit new members.

In response to a member expressing regret at the decision to cancel the Open Day in 2009, Phil Evans explained that the cost of organising the event, both financially and in terms of volunteer time, was substantial. The funding sources of previous years were no longer available, and few additional members had expressed a willingness to help in preparing for the event. Deferring the Open Day until 2010 would provide the opportunity to better prepare for the event.

Nicola Human acknowledged the amount of work that had been carried out on the Reserve, but observed that uninterrupted disabled access around the Merecroft Pool part of the reserve was still not available. The Chairman replied that this issue of accessibility had been addressed in the draft Management Plan.

In response to a question regarding the problem of foul water entering Merecroft Pool, David Hampson reported that the Severn Trent Water authority had identified 5 houses with illegal connections to the surface water drains, and were taking steps to remedy the situation.

It was moved by Anne Price, seconded by Nicola Human and agreed that the Chairman's Report be received.

#### 4/09 Treasurer's Report and Accounts for the Year ending 31st March 2009

The Treasurer, Phil Evans, presented a report on the accounts for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2009. By comparison with the amount of £8,561 brought forward at the start of the year, the sum of £5,114 was carried forward into 2009/2010, which figure comprised £3,837 in restricted funds and £1,277 in unrestricted funds.

The Open Day had incurred a deficit of £370, primarily due to an anticipated source of funding being unexpectedly unsuccessful.

The accounts had been audited by Mrs M A Swann BA, ACCA, since the auditor appointed at the last Annual General Meeting, Mr J Bodycote, had been unavailable at the appropriate time.

It was moved by June McCoy, seconded by Peter Marsh and agreed that the Treasurer's Report and the Accounts for the year ending 31st March 2009 be received.

#### 5/09 Membership Secretary' Report

Since the Membership Secretary, Jil Bromley, was unable to be present, Phil Evans reported that there were 194 members at the end of April although a few subscriptions

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for last year remained outstanding. Gift aid forms and the payment of subscriptions by standing orders provided a significant benefit to the Friends' income. It was, however, desirable to continue to seek new members.

The report was received.

#### 6/09 Education Liaison Officer's Report

The Northfield Ranger, Matt Osland-Barker, reported on the environmental and conservation work in which he had been involved with students from St Thomas Aquinas School and from Baverstock School on the Nature Reserve. Both schools were keen to continue the association in the Autumn term.

Nicola Human reminded the members that pupils of Kings Norton Junior School had also undertaken activities on the Reserve and would be willing to participate in the Open Day. It was suggested that The Fairway School might be also interested in participating. The Friends had also recently worked with the Kings Norton Brownies on an environmental awareness-raising event.

The report was received.

#### 7/09 Membership Subscriptions 2009/2010

It was unanimously agreed that the present subscription rates of £7 per household or £5 when one or more of the householders is of pensionable age should remain unchanged for the year 2009/2010. All subscriptions were due on 1st June annually.

### 8/09 Elections to the Executive Committee Election of Officers

In accordance with the Constitution, the five Honorary Officers - Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer and Membership Secretary - were elected biennially. The terms of office of the present holders expired this year. Each of the present holders was willing to stand for a further term if nominated. No other nominations had been received.

Accordingly, it was proposed by June McCoy, seconded by David Hampson and unanimously agreed that the following persons be elected to the offices indicated for the period 2009 – 2011:-

Chairman Amanda Cadman
Vice-Chairman David Human
Secretary Graham Layton
Treasurer Phil Evans
Membership Secretary Jil Bromley

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#### 9/09 Election of Members

The Constitution provided that one-third of the Executive Committee, other than the Honorary Officers, should retire annually by seniority of election. Alan Bakewell, David Hampson and Brian Hewitt were therefore due to retire this year. There was an additional vacancy for the balance of the term of office 2008 – 2011.

David Hampson and Brian Hewitt were willing to stand for re-election if nominated. Accordingly, it was proposed by Jon Anson, seconded by Peter Marsh and unanimously agreed that David Hampson and Brian Hewitt be re-elected to the Executive Committee for the period 2009 – 2012.

Anne Price also indicated her willingness to serve on the Committee. Accordingly, it was proposed by Nicola Human, seconded by Gwen Evans and unanimously agreed that Anne Price be elected to the Executive Committee for the period 2009 - 2012.

No nominations were received for the additional vacancy.

On behalf of the Executive Committee, Phil Evans expressed his appreciation for the considerable time and commitment, which Alan Bakewell had dedicated to the Friends organisation and activities. He had been instrumental in setting up the original group, the Friends of Wychall Reservoir in 2001, and had been consistently and actively involved in supporting the establishment of the Local Nature Reserve, in addition to other community ventures such as Street Champions and Historic Kings Norton. It was understood that whilst he no longer wished to serve on the Committee, he would continue to be actively involved in the Friends' activities.

It was unanimously agreed that the Chairman formally write to Alan to express the Friends' appreciation for his work in establishing and supporting the Nature Reserve and the Friends' organisation.

#### 10/09 Election of Auditor

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Phil Evans reported that John Bodycote was willing to continue to act as the independent examiner of the Friends' accounts, in accordance with the requirements of the Charity Commission.

Accordingly, it was proposed by Phil Evans, seconded by Amanda Cadman and agreed that John Bodycote be elected as auditor for the forthcoming year.

The meeting ended at 8.16 p.m.

After the formal meeting, the Northfield Ranger, Matt Osland-Barker, gave a presentation on the draft Management Plan 2009 – 2013. The Chairman spoke on the draft Vision Statement, copies of which were available at the meeting, and invited any observations on the draft statement to be submitted to her by the end of the month.

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### The Friends of King's Norton Nature Reserve

### FKNNR Diary Dates

Date	Location	Details
4 May	Wychall Reservoir	Clearance/Litter pick – Reservoir rear
8 May	Dawn chorus walk (05.30 hrs)	Meet Burman's Drive, Wychall Lane
11 May	Merecroft/Beaks Hill Meadow	Clearance/paths/dead hedge
18 May	Wychall Reservoir	Clearance – Reservoir rear
25 May	BW Meadow	Tidy up/Tracmaster work
1 June	Day out	Another LNR
8 June	Pinehurst Meadow	Tracmaster work/Hide construction
15 June	Wychall Reservoir	Clearance – Reservoir rear
22 June	River Rea – North Bank	Balsam Clearance/paths/pruning
29 June	Wychall Res cycle path	Balsam Clearance/paths/pruning
6 July	Old Orchard/Beaks Hill Road	Prune trees/Ponds/Paths/Dead hedges
13 July	River Rea – North Bank	Clearance/path/planting
20 July	Wychall Reservoir	Clearance – Reservoir rear
25 July	All LNR (Meet Burman's Drive)	Saturday Balsam Bashing
27 July	River Rea – South Bank	Prune trees/Clearance/Tidy Hazel
3 August	Wychall (Popes Lane end)	Clearance/Prune/log piles
10 August	Pinehurst Meadow	Tidy up/Tracmaster work
17 August	Sheila's Meadow	Tidy up/Tracmaster work
24 August	Wychall Reservoir	Clearance/path/hedges
31 August	BW Meadow	Tidy up/Tracmaster work
7 September	Wychall Lane Meadows	Open Day preparations

For working party days - please meet on site and wear stout waterproof 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 LNR Management Plan.

Tuesday Work Outs - 10.30 to 13.30 hrs.

All dates - weather permitting. Instruction provided.

Please support our Saturday Work Out on 25<sup>th</sup> July 2010 (Balsam Bashing - start at 10.30 hours).

### FKNNR Monthly Guided Walks

The last Saturday 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.

May 29/June 26/July 25/August 28.





Working party activity at Merecroft in 2009 and in Burman's Drive in 2007.





Activities on the LNR – New Year's day gathering 2010 (left) and on the right the dawn chorus walk of 2008.

#### **Subscriptions**

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All to note: There are numerous 2009 subscriptions to the FKNNR now overdue. Thanks to the 100 who have renewed already.

Please send a cheque to (+ donation or ask for a standing order form from the Treasurer, 21 Woodglade Croft, Kings Norton, if you wish to continue your membership. Please gift aid your subscriptions if you pay tax – this will provide additional resources for the 'Friends'. We do appreciate all the financial support that helps protect and enhance Kings Norton LNR.

There are also several outstanding membership renewals from June 2008. If you have not resigned we will now come knocking on your door for cash!

A further note relating to tax self assessment and "Giving through the SA return" – If you wish to donate any tax repayments due to you to Charity then please nominate the FKNNR and enter our unique code DAU70QG onto your return.

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## The Friends of King's Norton Nature Reserve



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\*
Secretary Graham Layton\*
Vice Chairman David Human\*
Treasurer Phil Evans\*

Membership Secretary Jil Bromley
Education Matthew OslandNewsletter Editors Phil Evans\*
Trustee & Sage Alan Bakewell\*

Committee Members

Jon Anson, Suzanne Ashley, Anne Price, Brian Hewitt, Peter Cage, David Hampson, Jenny Bodycote, Nicola Human.

Environmental Agency Hotline 0800 807060
City Parks Department Call Centre 0121 464 8728
Northfield Ranger 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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