

**The Friends of Kings Norton Nature Reserve**

# **Newsletter 53 – Autumn 2022**

Registered Charity No: 1122293

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Heron on a roof top by Brian Hewitt



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Newsletter 53

55 Wychall Lane, Kings Norton Registered Charity No. 1122293

## The Friends of Kings Norton Nature Reserve

### Chair's Report as presented to AGM 11 July 2022

It's very pleasing to be able to report that for the first time, due to Covid and Storm Hannah, the Friends have been able to undertake all the activities that we were doing regularly several years ago. The Friends now have a Facebook following of over 550 and still growing. When these followers convert into paid-up members of the Friends they are, of course, helping to support our activities. Maintenance-wise our Tuesday WorkOuts have rarely been missed as fortunately the weather has been kind to us in the last year. Unless you never go on the Reserve you will no doubt have seen the development of Wychall Reservoir dam is well under way. Having spoken to an engineer last week it seems that the completion date may be further away than initially planned.

We have removed all the primroses from the bank of the dam for this work to go ahead. They have been replanted in various sites across the Reserve. It is intended that wild flowers will be replanted on the bank once the work is finished.

As a reward for all our work at the workouts we had a couple of days off when we visited local nature reserves. This year we went to Tiddesley Woods (near Pershore) and to Penorchard Farm which is a site of meadows by Romsley. Both of these are run by Worcestershire Wildlife Trust (*see Margie's report on our outings elsewhere in this Newsletter*).

We resumed our annual spring day in early May which comprised the Dawn Chorus Walk, various stalls and the highlights of the Duck Race and tombola much enjoyed by children and adults alike. With a short break there was an evening Bat Walk which this year was attended by 50-plus people. It is a long but very enjoyable day if you take part in all of the activities.

This year we have seen the retirement from their committee roles of Stephanie Hyde as Membership Secretary and Graham Layton as Secretary. Stephanie has held her role since 2017 and we thank her very much for her time, efforts and skills in maintaining the membership list and subscriptions. We must thank her particularly for taking on this role when other commitments prevented her from attending the Tuesday WorkOut.

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Graham Layton has been Secretary since 2008 and after such a long stint has decided to retire from this role, though hopefully we will still see him at the Tuesday WorkOut. Graham's commitment and skills in carrying out this role have been excellent and he will be sadly missed.

There were no offers to take up the Secretary role at July's AGM, but happily Gill Ambler, who is a regular WorkOut volunteer, has offered to take on the role of Secretary. Thank you so much, Gill, and we look forward to your joining our Committee. Our Treasurer, Brian Lee, has kindly taken on the role of Membership Secretary. Much of the activity in this role is now automated through Member Mojo software, which appears to be working very effectively. We are so grateful to Brian for taking on this additional role.

As ever we are keen to welcome new Tuesday WorkOut volunteers and Committee members – Ideally some younger and fitter than the rest of us. If anyone is interested, please contact me or Amanda Cadman to discuss – you would be most welcome.

In summary therefore Kings Norton Nature Reserve remains a valuable local resource – much enjoyed by local residents and kept in good order by the Friends.

Andrew Nabbs

### An apology

There was mention of a kingfisher in the bird report In Newsletter 52, and we rather lazily pulled up an image of a kingfisher off the internet. One of the Friends kindly informed us that we had, in fact, shown a picture of a Tasmanian Azure Blue Kingfisher. Oops!



Common kingfisher  
hovering  
by Joefrei

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### Birds on the Reserve

Buzzards and Ravens are becoming such a common sight – I saw five Buzzards circling over my house on Monday morning (early August) and five Ravens over Cotteridge Park. I also spotted a local badger just down the road one evening – I knew they were on the allotments behind us, but had never had the good fortune to see one.

Like last summer, I have made very few visits to the Reserve, but here are a few observations made in late spring:

19 March

Buzzard & Raven at Lifford Reservoir; 4 Shoveler (3m, 1f) back at Merecroft Pool, plus Sparrowhawk. Chiffchaffs everywhere, but today's star bird was my first Rook 'cawing' as it flew over Kings Norton canal junction.

28 March

Two Kingfishers on the River Rea. First Blackcap of the year.

15 April

First Willow Warbler of the year (heard only) Wychall Reservoir and a Reed Bunting singing. One Great Crested Grebe at Merecroft Pool, my first on the reserve since 2019.

I continue to share birding highlights via my Twitter feed (<https://twitter.com/aplatt>) so do check it out for the latest local bird sightings.

Adrian Platt

Goosanders on  
Merecroft pool  
by Keith Reilly



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### **Volunteer activities – the Tuesday WorkOut**

We are fortunate to have a stalwart band of volunteers who give freely of their time on Tuesdays to help with our conservation work on the Reserve. There are about a dozen regulars, who take on jobs appropriate to their physical capabilities! Work has been getting back to normal in recent months, regaining some of the ground lost during the pandemic, when we could not work in groups, even outdoors.

Each week we tackle a different part of the Reserve, according to the season and our Management Plan. A flexible programme for several weeks ahead is published on our website Diary page, and is emailed to our volunteers. We have only cancelled a few times due to weather this year – in one case due to extreme heat!

We start at 10.30 and are usually tired out by 12.30, but are outshone by our professionals, Ian and Dave, who brew up their tea on a camping stove and return to continue their labours after lunch; we all stagger home to lie down. Ian and Dave do conservation work at other Reserves during the week. We are most grateful for their efforts and advice, and still mourn the loss of colleague Derek, who succumbed to Covid. We planted a tree last year in his memory.

Our tools and equipment are stored at Pinehurst in a rented garage; every Tuesday I fold down the back seats of my car, and with help from Jean or Peter we load the tools, also sometimes a wheelbarrow, plus the 'A-board' to signify where we are working, with a supply of leaflets for passers-by. Occasionally we take the trailer, which needs someone else's car with a towbar.

Some other materials are stored in a shed near the grazing meadows, thanks to the generosity of the owner, who also paid for repairs when the sheds lost their roof in the storms. Luckily we were alerted and saved vulnerable items before they got wet.

At certain locations we use our Tracmaster power scythe to cut the undergrowth. This was purchased many years ago through the City Council's 'Community Chest'. It has a small Honda engine to drive the wheels, two gears and reverse, and a 36" cutter-bar at the front. A number of us have been trained in its safe use, and

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operate it in turn. It is prudent to wear ear-defenders as it rattles along, making short work of brambles and long grass, which our labourers have to rake up. Each September we take the Tracmaster to the Fields Millennium Green at the top of Primrose Hill, where we clear a large swathe of meadow for them, with help from their own volunteers.

The grass and other material is removed to compost- and brush-piles, in order to reduce the fertility of the meadows and improve the chances of wild flowers setting seed. Indeed we spent much time last year scything and scarifying patches of our meadows, and scattered a special wild-flower mix – but we have yet to see the fruits of our labours.

There are other areas which are suited to a wetland habitat, which we still need to maintain, keeping small ponds open, and clearing yet more reeds at the right time of year. Then there is the 'perennial' problem of Himalayan Balsam, which is very invasive, has pretty pink flowers, grows over ten feet high, and needs to be pulled before the seeds develop, as they spring in all directions.

The cycle route and access has been closed at 'Burmans Drive', owing to the civil engineering work of the Environment Agency. This is to widen and strengthen the dam spillway, and was forecast to be complete by the end of October. The work was required by an independent inspector, after the failure of a dam at Whaley Bridge in Derbyshire in 2019, though Wychall reservoir is on a much smaller scale. There is hardly any water visible in the reservoir here most of the time, but the dam is still required to withstand a once in a 1000-year flood event. Flood water enters from the Rea over a concrete ledge near Popes Lane flowing to the swallow hole at the dam. We tried to relocate the primroses and other wild flowers from the dam wall, with a view to replanting them when the landscaping is finished.

The Environment Agency is expected to benefit the Nature Reserve and the wider City in general with extra tree planting to compensate for those cut down, as well as doing other good works, though on a more modest scale than we had anticipated. We hope they will use their excavation machinery to create an area of open water at the outflow of Wychall Reservoir, though

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negotiations are at a delicate stage. Sadly our barrier of hurdles and coir matting has not created the lagoon we had expected, and the reeds have taken over again.

During lockdown the Reserve was much used by dog-walkers and other folks, with more and more discovering its benefits. We do our best to maintain access along the pathways, through woodland walks, cutting back vegetation, improving hedge-lines. Last winter we spent a considerable amount from our funds (£50 a bag!) laying stone chippings on the muddiest paths. The City Council had to cut down several diseased poplars and other trees, and we were able to use barrow-loads of wood chips in other places.

Sadly there were several fires on the Reserve during the very dry weather; we hope damage will not be long-lasting. There have been plastic garden chairs and a bike dumped on the Reserve, several lifebelts thrown into Merecroft, but perhaps not so much litter. Maybe things are improving.

We are an ageing group of volunteers; some of us had only just retired when the FKNNR came into being fifteen years ago. Of course it is often retirees who feel they would like to use their leisure time to benefit the community. Soon there will be another octogenarian in our group. But maybe with flexible working hours, others might find the outdoor life attractive?

It has been heartening to see new faces and younger helpers recently, but we are anxious to recruit more. In David Human's recent survey, a number said they would like more activities at weekends – but it needs another entire group of volunteers to run it. Though we could happily support it, we are doing as much as we can at present. If you would be willing to be involved in the organisation of, say, monthly Saturday WorkOuts on the Reserve, please do contact one of the Committee members to discuss what is likely to be involved.

It is often rewarding when, in our labours, people stop to appreciate our work, and we are grateful to you, the members, for your support, whether in financial, practical or administrative form.

Brian Hewitt

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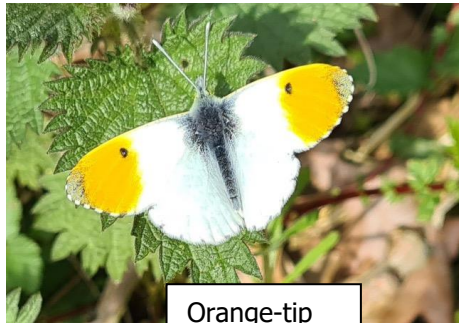
### Butterfly Bill

We have grown used to receiving a wonderfully detailed report from Bill Edge in our Newsletters on the butterflies and moths he has seen around the Reserve during the past few months. Sadly, and much to his regret given the wonderful weather this summer for butterfly-spotting, Bill has been unable to prepare a report for this Newsletter, having had to undergo fairly major surgery earlier in the summer. He has, however, provided some wonderful photographs of butterflies and moths taken on the Reserve.

All through the wonderful weather Bill dreamed of being able to wander round the Reserve, sure there would have been some new species to record, but complications seem to have dogged him since the surgery. We send Bill our very warmest good wishes for a speedy and full recovery, and thank him for the magnificent photographs he has sent us for this edition.



Lime hawk moth



Orange-tip butterfly



Pebble prominent caterpillar



Bee Fly



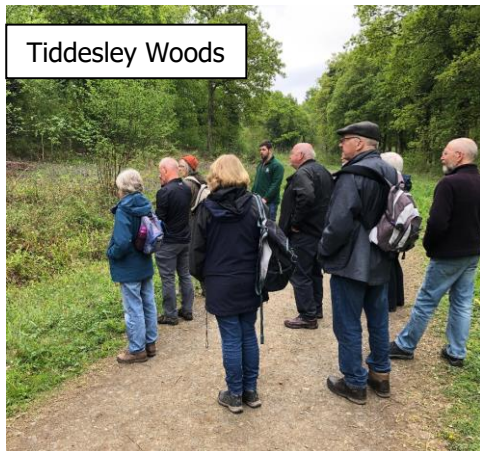
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### Our early summer outings

The state of the 'nature' in our Kings Norton Nature Reserve is actually very recent, some of the habitat having changed more than once in living memory, and all of it probably over the last two hundred years. But elsewhere are nature reserves with relatively untouched or unchanged habitats from very distant times, and with designations as Sites of Specific Scientific Interest (SSSI). Two of these, both run by the Worcestershire Wildlife Trust, were the locations of our outings this summer: one woodland, one grassland.

I felt a bit guilty going for the first one. I hadn't been able to make the regular Tuesday work sessions for a few months and now, here I was, on the first Tuesday back, going off on a jolly rather than getting myself down to some serious work. Anyway, casting that aside, I met up with six others at the corner of Meadow Hill Road, where we decided which two cars to take.

Tiddesley Woods are not well signposted, so our car overshot a vital turnoff, took a bit of a turn around Pershore, and eventually got there with the help of phone calls to the other vehicle. Postcodes are useful to get to the general location in rural areas, but not specific enough for the final mile. Anyone paying a visit, and those with

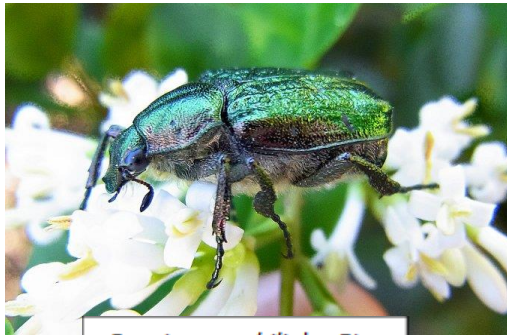


wood-burning stoves, might be interested to do so on a weekend when logs are available for purchase (see Worcestershire Wildlife Trust website for dates), and should check a map beforehand – the car park for Tiddesley Woods reserve is on the road to Besford Bridge.

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We were joined at the car park by fellow volunteers Ian and Dave and by founding Kings Norton Reserve member Phil Evans and his wife Gwen, so we totalled 11 when we met up with our guide, a staff member of Worcestershire Wildlife Trust who generously devoted his morning to leading our walk, imparting knowledge on the management of this and other Worcestershire reserves and showing interest in what we did on our reserve.

The car park lay between orchards. To one side were obviously old trees, part of the reserve, (but not the really 'ancient' part of it) and to the other were newer trees, with sheep grazing amongst them. The older trees are home to a rare beetle, the noble chafer (*Gnorimus nobilis*), whose larvae spend up to three years chomping away in their decaying interiors before emerging in metallic green splendour to potentially be seen along the wildflower verges of the orchards. Our visit in early May was a bit too early for them. But we had admirably timed it for the bluebells, which soon spread out before us as we proceeded into the woodlands proper.



*Gnorimus nobilis* by Siga

To allow for bluebells and other open woodland species, much of the woodland is coppiced right down to ground level, different patches in different years, with newly coppiced sections fenced off to prevent deer nibbling away at the early tree re-growth. The post and wire fencing, high enough not to be jumped, and secured well into the ground, obviously took much labour, including that of the reserve's volunteers.

Tiddesley Woods are ancient woodlands, dating back to the last ice age some 6,000 years ago, with the Abbots of Pershore Abbey and other local nobility owning them in relatively recent times and using them for deer hunting. However, the Forestry Commission took possession in the 1950s and for a short spell set about

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cutting existing trees and planting conifers. Rescued from this fate by the Trust, the conifers have gradually been themselves cut, and a wider variety of broadleaved trees planted in their place.

We walked mainly on a broad stoned drive through the woods, with smaller paths leading off. The woodland or forest edge had at times a wide verge with wildflowers, whilst at other points a wider swathe of bushes lay between the verge and the trees. Maintaining these different levels of growth, what our guide referred to as 2-storey and 3-storey maintenance, was one of the jobs of the reserve volunteers, as well as sometimes that of contractors, who were also employed for heavier work or specific tasks.

The purposes of the verges and bushes were to support a wide range of wildflowers and other plants which, in turn, support insect and bird life. Some of the early wildflowers were blooming but, alas, none of us present were very good at naming, which did not stop us really enjoying their presence. And always there were the lovely patches of bluebells.

Our route took us uphill to what was possibly the highest point, but we then returned the way we had come to be sure of our timing, rather than take the circular route all around the woods. Further ahead of us, and downhill in another direction, the edge of the woods apparently met up with the Bew Brook Wetland Project, also under the Trust, and thence to the Forest of Feckenham. Looking at the map later I realized that the reserve lies between the Bew Brook and the River Avon and must slope down on either side to them. The intention of the Trust, as they acquire more patches of land for nature reserves, is to provide increasing linkages and corridors for wildlife across the country.

The next stage of the day for us, of course, was a pub lunch. We set off expectantly to a nearby recommendation. Dammit – closed on weekday lunchtimes. Pub phone app-bearers got to work. Off we went in convoy again. En route we turned into another pub car park – also closed. Finally after a longer time we arrived at the phone-app suggestion, which was indeed ready to restore our well-being. Opting for a joint order as the speediest solution, we took our drinks out into the sunny garden and were soon served

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with five bowls of the best chips any of us had ever tasted, and two huge platters of sandwiches. Sitting round the table together, in May sunshine, it was the perfect end to the morning's walk, whilst already our leaders were mulling over the next outing.

And so it came to be that we went to Penorchard Meadows reserve in late June. For those who know Clent Hills, Penorchard Meadows are on the lower slopes of the Hills, behind the little church of St. Kenelm where you turn towards the National Trust's Clent Hills Nimmings car park. Our convoy of cars turned up a very narrow lane somewhere near said car park and parked up in a line, but the turning is difficult to see and the official website suggests parking at the church car park and walking through the churchyard.

We were honoured to have not one, but three guides, from amongst the regular volunteers who work monthly at the reserve. We started our walk just above the location of a water storage reservoir which is built into the hill and is completely covered so that it just appears to be a rather non-descript slope. (Much later in the walk we encountered the outlet pipe running through a tree-lined gully.)

Soon we entered not orchards, which I personally had been blithely expecting because everybody had been talking just of 'going to Penorchard', but the rich semi-natural grassland meadows which are the basic important feature of the reserve – meadows which have been never ploughed, or fertilized, or heavily grazed. Thus they contain rare and important grasses and a wealth of meadow flowers. Right from the start we had been seeing common spotted orchids in abundance, and over time we saw more and more meadow species. And this time we had the experts and several app-bearing folks with us.



Common spotted orchid  
by A Cadman

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Whilst I personally could name ragged robin and knapweed, others were naming greater birds-foot trefoil, cinquefoil and dyers greenweed.

Some of the time we were on paths alongside meadows, or through patches of trees, but much of the time we made our way through the middle of knee- to waist-high grass and flowers, which was slow going, but very bucolic, especially on such a sunny day. Ian and Dave, and in his time Derek, have been regular volunteers there, helping to clear bramble, scrub and trees away that have over time encroached on to the meadows. We saw some recently cleared patches which had not yet re-grassed themselves, and nearby the thickets still to be cleared – heavy work indeed. We have our brambles at Kings Norton, but not to the Penorchard extent.

After our walk, of course, came lunch. This time we knew the name of a pub that was definitely open and thence we directly repaired. But, having enjoyed two outings in close succession, the topic of another one was not part of the discussion. Having widened our knowledge of nearby nature reserves, it's now down to work every Tuesday until next spring.

Margie Hall

Greater birds-foot trefoil  
by A Cadman at Penochard



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### **Annual General Meeting 2022**

With the return to “normal life” following the pandemic, it was possible to hold the Annual General Meeting at the usual time of year. It took place on 11th July at the Triplex Social Club in Eckersall Road, Kings Norton, and 26 people attended, taking advantage of a very pleasant summer’s evening.

Having welcomed those present to the meeting, the Chairman, Andrew Nabbs, reported on a number of items of note since the last AGM in October 2021. The main body of his report is set out separately in this Newsletter. The Chairman referred to the proposed resignation at this AGM of Stephanie Hyde and Graham Layton from their respective roles as Membership Secretary and Secretary. Steph had held her post from 2017 to 2022. He thanked her for her time, effort and skill in managing the membership list and subscriptions, and particularly for taking on the role when other commitments prevented her from attending the TWOs. Graham had been Secretary since 2008 and for personal reasons he now felt it necessary to relinquish the post. The Chairman praised his commitment and skill in managing the role. He would continue to be involved with the Friends at WorkOuts and other events, and in repairing and maintaining the notice boards.

On a wider issue, the Chairman advised that the Friends were keen to welcome new volunteers at the Tuesday WorkOuts or as members of the Committee – ideally, people who were younger than the present participants! The Nature Reserve remained a valuable local resource, much enjoyed by local residents, and he thanked all who supported it either as volunteers or merely by regularly using it.

The Treasurer, Brian Lee, presented the accounts, showing income and expenditure for the year to 31st May 2022. Most of the Friends’ income came from subscriptions, donations and Gift Aid. This year there had been a small income from the Welcome to Spring event, so the overall figure was slightly up, at £2,695. With the relaxation of the Covid regulations and therefore in contrast with the previous year, bulbs, seeds and materials had been purchased, hence expenditure was at £3,891. Total funds carried forward were down to £7,171. With the support of the Friends

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Committee, Brian had introduced Member Mojo software, which facilitated the management of the membership records. New applications for membership were now online, the system monitored and automatically dealt with renewals and outstanding subscriptions, and members were able to manage their own data.

The Membership Secretary, Stephanie Hyde, was unable to be present and the Chairman presented her report. Membership at 220 was up slightly from the previous year. 73% had signed up to Gift Aid, which enabled the Friends to claim additional funds from H M Revenue and Customs, and 65% of members were now paying by standing order. Bearing in mind that under the current system subscriptions became due on 1st July in each year, at 4th July there were 42 subscriptions outstanding but in practical terms members paid by standing order throughout the year. Steph was standing down at this AGM but took the opportunity to thank all members for their help and support in enabling the FKNNR to maintain and develop the Reserve. The Chairman expressed his thanks to Steph for her work in reducing the number of outstanding subscriptions. The new system would make it easier for subscriptions to be paid and monitored.

The Volunteer Co-ordinator, Amanda Cadman, confirmed that volunteers had been working to maintain the Reserve more or less throughout the period of the pandemic, either in ones or twos, and later in groups of six when this became permissible. With an increase in walking and cycling activity, the amount of litter had also increased, but so had the number of people collecting it, and she expressed thanks to this unknown band of litter-pickers.

Several new volunteers had joined the regular WorkOut force in recent months. Amanda commented that the Friends were aware that a number of younger members would like to work on the Reserve but could not manage Tuesday mornings. We would therefore be looking into possibly starting regular, perhaps monthly, Saturday or Sunday activities, but with a separate team of organisers to bring tools to the site etc.

She appended the statistics for person/hours attending WorkOuts in the past year, and she thanked Val Saunders for collating and returning the figures each month to Birmingham Open Spaces

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Forum as part of the City Council's Active Parks project. The evidence provided through the project was invaluable in persuading the City Council of the huge value of Birmingham's green spaces for health and recreation.

She expressed thanks to all who volunteered regularly to undertake practical work on the Reserve and/or supported the Friends in other ways, such as transporting tools, organising work schedules, maintaining notice boards, maintaining the website, introducing new software systems and producing and distributing the Friends' Newsletter. She fully endorsed the Chairman's appreciation to Stephanie Hyde and Graham Layton for their administrative work and guidance over the years.

Finally, she also reported that with the paring down of the Council's Ranger Service over the years, it was not possible for them to give the "Friends of" groups the support that had been given in the past. Since the Rangers no longer had the capacity to provide a Management Plan for the Reserve, a small group of the Friends Committee had produced an informal Plan 2019 – 2023. Whilst it had not received official approval from the City, it was clear that the Rangers welcomed its existence.

The Education Liaison Officer, Hannah Chidzik, was unable to be present at the AGM and the Secretary, Graham Layton, presented her report circulated at the meeting. After her appointment in October 2021, Hannah had contacted local education centres (mainly pre-school and primary-school age) to introduce the FKNNR and to discuss possible ways in which the Nature Reserve could be used as an educational resource, with the help of the Friends. Both Kings Norton Nursery and the Fairway Primary Schools had given a positive response to her approaches. For various reasons, such as time restrictions, Covid concerns and the availability of suitable representatives of the Friends at the time, it had not been possible to organise any practical activities over the eight-month period. However, at the request of the Fairway, Amanda Cadman and Brian Hewitt had recently given a presentation on the Reserve to a whole-school assembly, which had been well received by pupils and staff alike, and which could prove useful to open liaison with other schools.



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In addition, in order to cultivate interest in nature and the Reserve, Hannah and a fellow Committee member, Margie Hall, had developed a colouring activity for primary-age children as part of the Welcome to Spring event in May. They had distributed 500 colouring sheets with a wildlife theme to three local schools. Entries were to be submitted at the event, where they would be displayed and the entrant would receive a small prize. Although the response was small, it was agreed that the activity was worth developing for next year's event.

The Secretary, Graham Layton, reported that the subscription amounts of £7.00 per household and £5.00 for senior citizens or concessions had remained unchanged for several years. The Treasurer and the Friends' Committee had recently reviewed the policy and in view of the present healthy state of the charity's funds, they had recommended to the AGM that there should be no change in the policy. Accordingly, it was agreed by the AGM that for the year 2023 – 2024 a minimum subscription of £7.00 per household or £5.00 for senior citizens and concessions should be requested and that, if necessary, the eligibility of individual cases for the concessionary rate be determined jointly by the Chairman and the Treasurer.

The Chairman and the Secretary reported on the election and appointment of officers and members to the Friends Committee. Despite the advertisement to all members over several weeks prior to the AGM, no-one had offered to stand for election to either the office of Secretary or of Membership Secretary. Albeit for different reasons, both office holders felt that they needed to resign, although Graham Layton had indicated that he would carry on other work for the charity. Both posts are important to the smooth conduct of the Charity's affairs, but nevertheless no-one at the AGM offered to stand for either post. Both posts remained vacant at the time of writing this report, in late August. (Both vacancies have now been filled, with Gill Ambler volunteering to serve as Secretary and Brian Lee, already serving as Treasurer, additionally taking on the Membership Secretary role. Both are warmly thanked for filling these vacancies)

In accordance with the constitution, one-third of the Ordinary Members of the Friends' Committee shall retire annually by

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seniority of election. The members due to retire in 2022 were David Fernie, David Hampson and Brian Hewitt. Each was willing to stand for re-election if nominated and therefore they were re-elected to serve as Ordinary Members for a term of three years expiring in 2025.

Although Hannah Chidzik had been appointed Education Liaison Officer at the AGM in October 2021, she was not a member of the Friends Committee. Similarly, having resigned as Secretary at this meeting, Graham Layton was no longer a Committee member. In order to facilitate the discussion on promoting the Reserve to schools and to also retain experience in matters generally relating to the FKNNR, it was agreed that they should both be appointed as Co-opted Members of the committee for a term of one year expiring 2023.

The final item at the AGM was a presentation by David Human, a member of the Friends' Committee, on the results of a recent survey of users of the Nature Reserve. The purpose had been to establish the demographic of users and other relevant aspects of their use, with a view to identifying how to encourage greater use by younger people. There had been 76 responses which was considered a fairly good return. The data confirmed a number of assumptions (such as 68% of users were over 60 years old) and the reasons for them using and valuing the Reserve. It also provided indicators as to ways to encourage greater community involvement. The Friends Committee would consider the outcomes at its meeting later in the year.

In conclusion, the Chairman thanked David Human and his daughter Rosie for preparing and managing the survey, and he also thanked everyone for attending. The meeting closed at 8.37p.m. and, after a brief refreshment break, Brian Hewitt presented a slideshow on recent developments on the Reserve, its wildlife and the work of the volunteers during the past few months.

Graham Layton

**Guided Wildlife Walk  
Saturday 15 October 2022  
at 10.30 am**

By popular demand as a result of the recent survey of members, a Saturday morning wildlife walk around the Reserve will be led by Amanda Cadman and last as long as the walkers want!

Meet at the corner of Wychall Lane and Meadow Hill Road (Waterways Meadow entrance). All walkers are asked to wear stout waterproof footwear (some parts of the Reserve can be wet and muddy even in a drought). Binoculars are recommended.



Newt (Sheila's Meadow 30 August) by Brian Hewitt

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### Volunteer Activities

Brian Hewitt has very kindly given us a report on volunteering activities this time, so I can take off my Volunteer Co-ordinator hat, and try to think of what recent activities have not been covered elsewhere in this edition of the Newsletter.

Thanks to an excellent turn-out on Saturday 2 April (27 people including our local Councillor) we had a very productive Community Litter Pick. Much of the Reserve was known to be quite clean, in fact, so we concentrated on the 'downfall' from Catesby Business Park, and indeed started to tackle the mess at the top, since the owners of the Business Park seem to be unknown and clearly not interested in clearing up the rubbish. In total we collected 31 bags of general rubbish, 13 blue bags of recyclable bottles, cans etc., several plastic containers, a traffic cone, a car tyre and two helium gas canisters! In fact we were so enthusiastic about clearing the rubbish up on Catesby Business Park that we arranged a further litter pick up there on Saturday 30 April and cleared every scrap of rubbish! Thanks to all who volunteered for these clean-ups, and to Highways for collecting all the bags and larger items.



Litter with local Councillor

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Andrew has already mentioned our Spring Event on 7 May when, in addition to the now traditional Dawn Chorus Walk (led by Adrian Platt) and Botanical Walk (led by Mary Green), Duck Race, willow weaving, hurdle-making, pond-dipping, treasure hunts and tombola,



we offered photographic and colouring-in competitions for young people. The highlight of the day was the evening Bat Walk (led by Chris Sherlock), which attracted fifty people. All very much enjoyed, and we still have loads of tombola prizes labelled up and waiting to be won; so we need to organise another suitable event to bring them all out again!

On Saturday 4 June Ian and I led a Guided Walk around the back of Wychall Reservoir which was well attended and apparently enjoyed by all. We had a stall at the Kings Norton Farmers' Market on 11 June, where we were able to chat with passers-by and once again brought out the table-top treasure hunt. Our youngest volunteers kindly handed out LNR leaflets around the market. On Saturday 16 July we held a Community Balsam Bash around the back of the reservoir. The weather was hot, and we worked hard for a couple of hours to make some inroads into the sea of Himalayan Balsam there – but there is always more, and there are areas that we simply cannot get to. I long for the day when a safe natural predator is found to reduce the impact of this fearsomely vigorous seed-producer!

Amanda Cadman

## The Friends of Kings Norton Nature Reserve

### What do you think?

Friends will recall that earlier this year we and other users of the Reserve were invited to complete a survey which had been devised for us by Rosie Human, daughter of Committee member and Management Committee chairman David Human. The survey set out to establish the demographic of users of the Reserve and other relevant aspects of their use, with a view to identifying how to encourage greater use by and involvement of younger people. We received 76 responses, considered to be an encouraging outcome.

David gave a PowerPoint presentation of the results of the survey at our Annual General meeting in July. While we were not surprised to hear that the most common age group of members is "over 60 years old" it was salutary to realise how much ground we need to cover to encourage younger age groups: of 75 responses to the age question 51 were over 60, 19 were aged 50-60 and the response for all younger age groups was only in single figures! Forty per cent of respondents indicated that they visited or passed through the Nature Reserve every week, and over half of the respondents indicated that they had used the Nature Reserve more since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. Walking for leisure was the most popular activity on the Reserve, followed by exploring and watching local wildlife. The Reserve also formed part of the regular commute for a number of respondents. They spoke about enjoying "an abundance of wildlife", "a quiet oasis very close to home" and "the feeling of being far away from the city".

Unsurprisingly concern was raised about the prevalence of litter and the need to provide (and regularly empty) an adequate number of bins. Requests were made for improvements to paths, disabled access and signposting, for more benches and an increased social media presence. Refurbishment of the bird hide at Pinehurst was requested. Concern was raised about the work currently being undertaken at Wychall dam and about the quality of the water of the river Rea. These last two items are beyond our control of course, though ensuring generous communication about the Environment Agency's work on the dam is very important. The Friends' Committee will look at the other issues raised to see what

## The Friends of Kings Norton Nature Reserve

issues need to be addressed (having already refurbished the bird hide, for example).

Over half of those who responded (56%) were interested in joining more wildlife walks. We used to run them every month, but interest seemed to wane. Clearly a few more walks should be organised! See the advertisement at the end of this Newsletter. Several respondents (40%) expressed an interest in joining our conservation work (and indeed we have recently had a number of new volunteers join the Tuesday WorkOuts; is this a coincidence?). It is clear that while there remains strong support for our weekday activities, a substantial number of respondents would prefer to work on the Reserve at the weekend, presumably because they are at work during the week. If we can find a group of Friends to take responsibility for organising weekend work we propose to trial a monthly weekend working party later this year. Support for community events (33%) and physical activity groups (25%) seemed encouraging, but the suggestion of introducing activities for children only elicited an 8% response. Perhaps that simply reflects the age range of those responding. Certainly we want to encourage children to enjoy the Reserve and to learn more about the wildlife on their doorstep.

Refining the question on support for the Friends, volunteering to do conservation work remains high at 68%, but 32% of respondents expressed a willingness to join the Friends' Committee, and 25%, clearly not yet members of the Friends, expressed an interest in joining us.



All in all this has been a very valuable exercise, and certainly gives your Committee a good deal of food for thought.

Amanda Cadman

## The Friends of Kings Norton Nature Reserve



Open Day 7 May

### Contacts

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Environmental and Ecological Consultant: Mathew Wall

**Committee Members:** Amanda Cadman, David Fernie, David Hampson, Margie Hall, Brian Hewitt, \*David Human, Jean Perring, Paul Saunders, Val Saunders, Brian Wells. Co-opted: Hannah Chidzik and \*Graham Layton.

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Environment Agency Hotline	0800 80 70 60
City Parks Department Call Centre	0121 464 8728
Lickey Hills Rangers	0121 445 6036
W M Police Neighbourhood Team	101
Anti-Social Behaviour Hotline	0121 303 1111, option 5

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

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