

## **Inkberrow Millennium Green Conservation Management report for the AGM for the year ended March 2007**

Once again much of the work carried out on the Millennium Green has been ongoing management in line with the management plan and our agreements under Entry Level Stewardship, with English Heritage and Worcester County Council. Over the summer management was mainly concerned with grassland and control of thistles, docks and nettles, plus silt removal from the moat and ponds. Winter work is mainly related to hedges, scrub, coppicing, trees and keeping brambles in check. Throughout the year the site is checked regularly for damage and obstructions and repairs made as necessary, particularly to the boardwalk rails, posts and netting.

### **Grassland**

Our area of quality grassland behind the seat on the slope in field 1 continues to flourish with a sequence of flowering from Birds Foot Trefoil and Cowslips in Spring right through to Knapweed and Scabious in high Summer. Our small Marbled White butterfly colony continues to thrive and as this species is increasing in Worcestershire our colony may well flourish and spread around the village. It was nice to find a species of Quaking Grass in field 2 to add to our flora list. Our present management seems to be improving our grassland but unfortunately we were not able to find any sheep to graze the grassland in the second field this summer. This lack of grazing in field 2 will have a less advantageous effect on species diversity in the areas of quality grassland. Ideally it should be grazed from July onwards after the main flowering and seeding period. We are however more hopeful of getting some sheep again for 2007.

The nettles around the fruit trees and on the slope below the Millennium Seat were sprayed again this year by a contractor, with the selective weed killer (Grazon 90). This along with cutting of nettles which reappeared has greatly reduced the nettles; and the docks sprayed and eaten by the sheep in 2005 have not reappeared in great numbers. The overall improvement of the grassland in this field has been maintained, despite the lack of sheep, partly due to rabbit grazing which has kept areas of turf short. At least one work party was devoted to pulling thistles on the best grassland in both fields. The docks near the entrance in field 1 were again cut a number of times over the summer and although this is a thankless task they did seem to be weakened by the late summer this year. Nettles around the moat were cut or pulled at least twice (some areas three times) over the summer which along with cutting and strimming the grass seems to have improved the grass on the west and north banks of the moat.

The cutting regime in the first field was much the same as in previous years, the flat amenity areas being cut first at the end of May. The rest of the less good grassland on the slopes was cut once over the summer as deemed ready for cutting and subject to Chris Bonehill being available. He went over some nettle and dock infested areas near the entrance a second time while he was on site. The amenity areas were cut again in late summer. The best of the MG5 grassland nearer the top of the bank and on the steeper slope was strimmed by Alan Farnsworth in late summer and some of the best of this was spread on the slopes and on the silt deposited in the second field. Chris Bonehill also cut the area by the tall hedge just through the gate in the second field. All this grass cutting once again resulted in a lot of man hours being spent by relatively few people, during the week as well as at regular work parties, raking up and dumping the cut grass. Overall the summer maintenance took around 150 man hours.

Entry Level Stewardship now provides about £100/year but this covers little more than incidental expenses and the cost of grass cutting is about five times this amount.

**Pond 1** is now in good condition with a deeper section in the middle after a little de-silting. The vegetation round the edge was cut back where required in the Autumn.

In **Pond 2** the invasive Acorus (sweet flag) has been almost entirely removed by the de-silting; any bits that appear will be removed but it does not thrive in deeper water so hopefully that problem is solved. We are left with a much deeper pond with quite steep sides in places, and at present there

is not much tall vegetation round the edge except in the exclusion area. Some shrubs (hazel and dogwood) have been planted and a small temporary barrier made by the steepest part of the bank. Elsewhere as plants are re-established around the edge (partly naturally and partly by the planting suitable native species) the edge will be improved. Native aquatic plants will be re introduced from pond 1 and other local ponds. A couple of trees had to be removed during de-silting and these were cut up by volunteers and most of the timber stacked out of the way to form habitat piles and rot down slowly. The barriers to the exclusion areas by both ponds were refurbished in the Autumn.

**The moat** is still leaking in the south east corner – in fact it continues to get worse. However the level has risen over the winter due to the heavy rainfall and since de-silting should remain wet all round. Brambles and tree seedlings etc were cut round the outer bank in the autumn.

### **Copse**

Bramble and small sycamore, ash and hawthorn seedlings have been cut back again this winter leaving just a few good specimens to form future trees. This will allow more light in to improve the ground flora. Some woodland grasses which seem to be spreading in the copse were also cut. As the ivy on the ground in the copse was getting rather thick some patches were removed last year to see what affect this would have on the ground flora – so far nothing striking. In general the stream is flowing well after a number of branches and other obstructions were again removed. The barrier between the copse and the exclusion zone by pond 1 was rebuilt into a dead hedge with stakes to restrain its spread.

### **Island**

After last years work on the island it has not been touched this year. The primroses and bluebells were very good in the spring.

### **Scrub**

Little work is done on scrub areas which are in the main left to look after themselves and form shelter for wildlife. Brambles etc are being cut back round the edges in both fields to prevent spread into the grassland.

### **Hedges**

The 'new' hedge by Gore's field continues to do well and needs little attention now. It has been checked and trimmed as necessary. The best management for this hedge will probably be to let it grow for a few more years then have it laid. The various trees along the hedge (black pear, wild service, oak, field maple) are all doing well and the black poplar is doing better since the high and vigorous growth of blackthorn around it was cut down.

The original blackthorn in the new hedge behind the Millennium seat continues to do well but the hawthorn is still weaker and some of the newer blackthorn (which replaced the vandalised plants) are surviving but not doing as well as hoped.

The lower part of the hedge between the two fields has now grown taller and needs little attention. The hedge line above the gate has had no further work done on it (Feb 07). The best hawthorns are being kept for their appearance, flowers and berries but some more tangled bits may be removed in the next few weeks. The hedge by the road will be left to grow to at least two meters as part of the Environmental Stewardship agreement.

### **Wet Flush**

After cutting back quite a large part of this area last year it is being left alone apart from checking to see no trees are growing in it. There have been some problems with the small pond due to removal of a pipe. Work is in hand to raise the level of the water and improve its outline. The boardwalks were also cleared.

The winter work parties will have put in nearly 200 man hours by the end of March. This includes a couple of week day work parties with the specific aims of clearing up the trees removed from near pond 2 during de-silting and a site maintenance day. With a work party of 6 or more we seem to get a disproportional amount more work done than with a small turn out. At present we have a D. of E. student helping as we did for a time last year.

## Butterflies

Full records of butterflies were not kept this year but again all the species seen in earlier years (apart from Painted Ladies) were present. Their numbers were in keeping with those seen elsewhere in the area.

The table below is a partial record of the Butterflies seen on the Millennium Green during Summer 2006. Can anyone add to these? (Yes means that they were seen on site at some time).

<b>butterfy</b>	<b>when</b>	<b>comments</b>
Brimstone	March, April, May	Good numbers
Speckled Wood	May	A few
Gatekeeper	yes	
Large White	yes	
Small White	yes	
Marbled White	yes	Reasonable numbers
Meadow Brown	yes	
Skipper (Small?)	yes	
Red Admiral	Sept / oct	
Blue (Holly)	April, May	A few
Orange Tip	April /May	Good numbers
Small Tortoiseshell	yes	A few
Ringlet	yes	
Green Veined White	yes	A few
Peacock	yes	
Blue (Common)	yes	
Small Copper	Sept	
Painted Lady	no	

## Nest boxes and birds

During the last year many of our original nest boxes have been damaged by woodpeckers. Eight new boxes have been erected thanks to the generosity of John Harris who built them and supplied them at less than cost price. We now have sixteen boxes in the two fields. This is rather high density and we can only expect two thirds of them to be used.

We have a relatively small number of breeding birds on site but these did include breeding chiffchaffs and lesser whitethroats and probably blackcaps. Spotted flycatchers were present for several weeks and a welcome and now rare willow warbler sang for a time in May. Nuthatches do not seem as common as they were in the early 2000s. Mallards and moorhens bred on the island as usual and the green woodpeckers continue to flourish.

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*Work party organisers*