

## **Millennium Green conservation management report March 2010**

Over the year we had the assistance two Duke of Edinburgh Award boys (Jack Parker and Louis Evans). We gained Betty as a new recruit to the volunteers but were sorry that Margot had to retire - she made a great contribution over a number of years.

### **Spring / Summer 2009**

As usual the summer work was mainly concerned with the grassland and keeping thistles, nettles and docks under control. Volunteers have once again put in about 190 man hours as well as the work by contractors.

#### **Field 1**

Chris Bonehill has adapted his cutting to help us meet the HLS requirements. The amenity area by the picnic tables was cut in June and again later. The other flat area by the ponds was cut in July. Hay from these areas was raked up by volunteers. Chris Bonehill (contractor) cut the slope above the moat and the lower slopes below the upper seat (the areas he usually cuts) in late July. He managed to get the equipment to bale it and he later removed the bales. This gave us more time to deal with nettles, thistles and docks in this field as well. Cyril Johnson cut docks and nettles in the area in ELS a number of times. Graham Mowbray strimmed round the moat banks, and the boardwalk edges and seats more than once. He also 'persecuted' the remaining Acorus in pond 2. At the end of August Alan Hainsworth (contractor) strimmed the best MG5 grassland slope as far as the upper seat, and the previously uncut area with anthills below it. This grass had to be raked up by volunteers but this task is manageable. Some of the best wildflower hay was spread lower down the slopes. A small area of grass was left uncut as marbled white butterflies thrive best in long grass. (A different area will be left next year). Some marbled whites were seen but in general it has been a mixed year for butterflies due to the weather. All the recorded species were seen, including painted ladies, and the burnet moths had a good year. Minor repairs were carried out to the netting on the boardwalk. Evidence of badgers? digging up wasps/bees nests was seen in both fields. We have complied with the HLS requirements in terms of cutting but due to the wet August and no follow up grazing some of the grass remained too long. However we can see ourselves as working towards the targets.

#### **Field 2**

Neil McLean was finally able to spray the nettles in field 2 at the beginning of June which was rather late due to unsuitable weather; however spraying the fully grown nettles with Grazon 90 seemed to work well. John Hopkins was then able to put his sheep in field 2 by the start of July – 9 at first but it seems to have settled at 6 and these have remained there over the winter eating some of the less palatable grass and getting it down to the levels required. Hundreds if not thousands of thistles and nettles were pulled or cut; this prevented thistles seeding BUT since the wet August there was quite a problem with new growth of both and more spraying will be needed next spring. We managed to meet the HLS requirements except that some of the grass was a bit long in September. Tim Patrickson and Rod Talboys repaired the side rails of the steps and Tim made an excellent job of clearing the boardwalks.

### **Autumn / Winter 09 – 10**

Between October and March well over 200 man hours have been put in by volunteers working mainly on the copse, island, round the ponds and moat, on hedges and cutting back and clearing bramble and scrub throughout the site.

#### **Field 1**

John Tilt (Grafton Wood warden) strimmed and coppiced some hazel on the island in late November on a voluntary basis for which we gave a donation to the Grafton Wood funds. The next work party was spent clearing up and sorting out stakes and binders in the rain in preparation for hedge laying. There were a number of wet Sundays in the autumn!!! Preparations for building the bridge to get to the island required repair of the float (carried out

by Cyril Johnson) and borrowing builders planks from Ray Leavesley (arranged by Graham Mowbray).

The hedge near the picnic tables was laid and gapped up with new (mixed native species) whips in January by John Kirk (contractor) for a very reasonable price. This hedge laying met part of our HLS agreement and the capital grant will cover the cost.

Alongside the usual cutting back of brambles, maintaining hedges and clearing round and removing debris from the ponds and moat we have also removed some scrubby elders from the stream bank near the picnic table, coppiced the sycamore again and cut back some of Glen Allison's overhanging hazels. The existing alder should grow better now and two more alder whips have been planted in the cleared area plus two at the back of the silt heap by the stream in field 2. Brambles and unwanted saplings have been cleared from the copse.

Rod Talboys repaired the upper gate between the fields where the posts had rotted.

Chris Bonehill (contractor) eventually sorted out the drainage problem where the water from Gore's land comes onto ours. Although we have kept the wet area in our field there seems to be a better flow of water into the moat.

## **Field 2**

Sheep grazing over the autumn and winter has removed excess grass and prevented the further spread of bramble and scrub. Tim Patrickson has continued to work on opening up the grassland in the NE corner of the site. As part of our HLS agreement we have to produce a scrub management plan for this field by the end of May. This is in hand and will be done by a professional. The trustees meanwhile have looked at the scrub areas and decided which areas they would like to clear and what it is feasible to deal with once cleared; this should be built into the plan. We have removed the two scrubby elders on the big amphitheatre slope and the partly dead bramble clump by the millennium seat which will enhance the potentially good quality wildflower grassland in this area.

All the bird boxes were cleaned out at the end of February. Fewer than half had been used but this reflects the situation elsewhere due to the unsuitable Spring weather. Two of the three new woodcrete boxes were used and have stood up to woodpecker damage.

## **Higher Level Stewardship (HLS)**

We got confirmation in the Spring that Inkberrow Millennium Green met the criteria needed to enter this scheme which will give enough income to cover a good deal of the day to day running costs of the site. It has meant some minor changes to the management of the grassland but we were already meeting most of the management requirements under HLS. The main aspects are management to improvement of the wild flower grassland and protection of the archaeological features.

Another part of the agreement is for **Educational Access**. We are working with the school and other local children's groups. A 'Farm Facts' leaflet is supplied as part of this agreement for distribution to any interested group who might like to visit the site. A Teachers Information Pack is available on CD for schools and other youth groups. So far one group from the village school have spent a wet morning on the site as part of their study of birds.