

Conservation management report on Inkberrow Millennium Green for AGM March 2015

Summer 2014 - this covers the period from April to September 2014

Much of the first three months was spent cutting brambles, nettles, docks and thistles and generally maintaining the site. Alan Farnsworth strimmed round the N and W sides of the moat in July and we raked up and removed the grass. By July we were mainly removing thistles to prevent seeding. We have also started to improve **the little stream valley** down from 'Gores' to the drain hole. Cyril Johnson has cut up both sides twice with the scythe and we have raked up large amounts of grass, nettles and thistles. At the end of the summer Tim Patrickson strimmed up both sides as well. Next year we hope to establish a path along each side as the water plants and their attendant butterflies are worth looking at. I did the 15 minute **Big Butterfly Count** again – see table below. Gareth Thomas reported a good number of marbled whites near the upper seat in field 1 in July.

I found **Himalayan balsam** in upper part of the main wet flush area in field 2 and have, I hope, removed it all before seeding. No more has appeared in the NE corner where it was removed the year before. (How does it get there?)

The areas in the second field where we have **cleared scrub** continue to be a problem owing to regrowth of nettles and brambles, seeded thistles and burdocks. These have required repeated cutting but in most areas we are slowly winning. The silt heap which also has a lot of nettles was again cut by Cyril and the cut material raked up. This area is also slowly improving with lots of cranesbill flowers and more grass.

Chris Bonehill cut the **paths** around field one five times to the agreed plan. As the strimmer was out of action I asked him to cut round the picnic tables as well which he did four times. Chris also 'topped' the silt heap in September when he did the last path cut, as well as around the picnic tables and the seats.

Before the hay was cut we collected **flower seed** for later spreading and Mark spread yellow rattle seeds to reduce the vigour of the grass. As yellow rattle is an annual the almost over abundance in one relatively small area this year will probably not occur next year.

The hay was cut, tedded, rowed up and baled in late July by Anthony Steele at the end of the hot weather. It was well dried and he tells me he made 8 very large bales (15 of the big round ones were made last year). He says the hay is not top quality as it is made after the grass has 'gone over' and that the site is difficult so he could not use his large machinery. He also mentioned that there was one ragwort flower in the grass near the gate into Gore's field. **However he is prepared to 'give it another go' next year.** He left some of the awkward areas uncut but he did it in exchange for the hay at **no cost to us.** Cyril cut the largest 'left' area between the picnic tables and pond 2 around the stump and we have raked up this grass. **The stump** has since been moved to the edge of the field so next year all this area can be cut for hay. Leaving most of the grass on the amenity areas to be taken as part of the hay crop and just cutting paths and a wider area around the picnic tables has partly solved the problem of raking up hay and dumping it on site while still meeting the HLS requirements.

Alan Farnsworth **strimmed the good wildflower grassland** on the upper slopes in mid September and this was raked up and dumped in a variety of places mainly along the hedges and fences at the edges of the field.

Four of Nick Langdon's **sheep** returned to the second field in late August and he said he would be bringing more in the next few weeks but they never came.

By the end of the summer we had met most of the **HLS** (Higher Level Stewardship) requirements. Some of the grass in field 1 has grown too long after the hay was cut and the grass in field 2 is still long but will be grazed down over the winter.

There were three **school visits** again over the summer studying ponds and habitats and being 'nature detectives'. The one in May enabled us to meet the minimum of four visits for the 2013 -14 HLS year. We have two for the 2014-15 HLS year; unfortunately the Pershore U3A group cancelled their visit due to lack of support for their natural history group and the brownies did not respond to my offer of an evening visit.

Once again over 100 man hours of volunteer time were put in at Sunday morning work parties, mainly by the few regular volunteers, and almost another 100 man hours on other days cutting nettles etc and raking up cut grass. We have no DofE help at present since Connie Grant completed her gold award early in the summer. We need to recruit **new volunteers** from the village as some of the present work force is 15 years older than when they started!

Winter- this covers the period from October 2014 to March 2015

After finishing off the summer work we started the winter work programme by removing some of the **excessive vegetation from pond 2**. Mark Robbins bravely donned the new **waders** while the rest of us removed what he brought to the bank and what we could reach with rakes. A huge amount was removed although the visual impact was not great. We will need to have another go next year. In November saplings and some willow herb and bramble were removed from the wet flush areas in the second field and the boardwalks were cleared. On the 23rd November we cut back the **roadside hedge** and prepared for the visit from the **Duckworth Worcestershire Trust** on Monday 24th.

This visit went well overall – the main focus of their work was **coppicing hazels** and cutting bramble in the copse. They coppiced even more hazel than expected as there were 2 staff and 7 or 8 volunteers. They worked from 10 to 3 with a couple of breaks which is over 40 man hours of volunteer work for free. We could not manage the site without this sort of assistance and they also bring a degree of expertise and advice. Our own volunteers spent most of the day coppicing another big hazel stool near pond 2 and making stakes and 'binders' for repairing the barriers.

We had hoped to manage without having a **fire** but there was too much brash left in the copse for it all to make habitat heaps. The copse has looked a bit bare over the winter but the wildflowers should benefit in the spring and the hazel stools will quickly grow back. The best stakes and poles were kept, and the brash was burned on the usual fire site. This meant moving a lot of material during the rest of the week so we could have the fire the following Sunday. Thanks to all who rose to the task.

December and January were spent using the stakes and binders to **repair the barriers** around the ponds, clearing along the stream by the copse, cutting brambles, coppicing part of the willow by pond 2 and **cutting the hedges** by the picnic tables and by Gore's (Carmichael's) field. At the beginning of February the **fruit trees** were checked and pruned as necessary, wire guards repaired and the nearby fence lines cleared of brambles. Later in February Rod Tallboys brought his ladder and he, Gareth Thomas and Gill Chiverrell cleared out the nest boxes whilst the rest worked on the **tall old hedge** between the two fields. The aim here is to keep some as tall flowering and fruiting hawthorns but to remove some of the tangled growth and to prevent further trees falling over. Some ivy has been cut to reduce weight in the tops. The cut wood is left by the fence as habitat piles and dead timber is made safe but disturbed as little as possible. Work on the tall hedge continues in March.

Nick Langdon removed the four **sheep** around New Year because the ewes were due to lamb in January. He promised to bring four more back and eventually six arrived at the beginning of March. The grass is at present rather longer than we would like even though the four sheep ate an amazing amount of grass in the time they were there! If the six recent arrivals stay into April they should eat some of the coarse grass down before new growth really gets going.

In the middle of February Neil McLean came with an assistant (Jack) to **cut branches off trees which had been identified as being a possible hazard or obstruction** to traffic. One leaning ash part way down Church Hill was removed and lower branches overhanging the road were cut off the oak and hawthorns near the moat. A field maple tree in the copse which is partly rotten but worth saving was cut back and made safe. The large branch overhanging the upper kissing gate between the fields was cut back but not removed entirely as the wood is sound and the tree had already shed part of this branch last year so it was felt that the tree was now well balanced. In the Autumn Cyril had attempted to reach this branch but it was too high: he did cut branches off a tree by the gate and one by pond 1 which had been identified as dangerous. A holm oak on Church Hill was also found to be dangerous and Neil will be returning to make this safe.

There have been **no visits** so far this year but the Horticultural Society plan a visit in May.

Over the winter Rod has redesigned the art work for our two existing **information boards** and new boards were printed by PSW. New 'windows' have been fitted and the entrance board 'done up' by Cyril and I. Cyril has also cut down, refurbished and re-sited the notice board at the entrance. I have the keys to all the boards and Tim has one to the notice board. The design for the new **flower-rich grassland board** is now complete and has been ordered along with a green metal lectern, similar to the archaeology board, from Border Signs and Graphics.

All this work has meant that this winter too has involved many volunteer man hours – over 250 in all. This means that over the whole year volunteers on various tasks have put in getting on for **500 man hours** – this must be a record. **However the Millennium Green is looking very good with the entrance in particular improved; it is also a safer place.**

Wendy Johnson
(Work party organizer)

March 2015

July 22nd – big butterfly survey

15 min walk from entrance to Millennium Seat plus what seen on return route

Butterfly	Entrance to seat upper path	Return by lower route	Total
Green veined white	2	3	5
Gatekeeper	32	10	42
Large skipper	1	3	4
Large white	2	1	3
Meadow brown	46	24	70
Peacock	9	3	12
Ringlet	5	4	9
Small skipper	1	6	7
Small tortoiseshell	3	1	4
Small white	11	9	20
Marbled white	2	1	3
Sixspot burnet moth	1		1
Total	115	65	180

WEJ July 2014

Bird Report for 2014-15

The small scale nature of our varied habitats attracts a reasonable number of bird species but with relatively few breeding species. Eight of our fourteen bird boxes (excluding the island boxes) were used by Great and Blue Tits successfully. The woodcrete boxes remain sound and the wooden boxes have had little or no damage or predation in the last two years.

Nuthatches remain the most interesting of our resident birds, and are often the most vocal.

Our main Summer visitors will arrive in early April with Chiff-chaffs and Blackcaps remaining on site. Other Summer visitors include White Throats, Garden Warblers and very briefly Willow Warblers. In May occasional Spotted Flycatchers occur feeding over the pond area.

Overhead Buzzards, Ravens and even the odd Kite occur along with our noisy Rooks, Crows and Jackdaws. This last mild Winter produced far fewer Field Fares and Redwings, although a Great Grey Shrike nearby fitted in with other county records for this fine Winter visitor.

Gareth Thomas

March 2015