

Issue 87 WATERCRESS Summer 2011

NATURE DAY

The ever-popular 'Nature Day' is being held on **Saturday 9th July** from **2pm-5pm**. All the favourite activities will take place, including bug hunts, pond dipping, insect 'tattoos', 'Splat-the-Rat' and the now famous 'Duck Race' on the River Ver. There will be a small charge for the duck race entrants, the insect 'tattoos' and 'splat-the-rat' to cover the cost of the prizes and materials. Identification charts, colouring-in sheets and all necessary equipment is provided, so just turn up and have fun. We shall set up a 'Field H.Q.' again this year with a microscope and laptop computer to aid identification. If anyone would like to help on the day, especially supervising the pond dipping and bug hunts, please contact the Editor. Pond dipping can get messy (that's half the fun!) so please get your children to wear suitable clothing. If they are joining in the bug hunts, there are a lot of nettles and brambles around the Reserve so old clothes and long sleeves and trousers are a good idea.



Kathryn Holt, from Trestle Theatre's Story Tent, has very kindly agreed to come along and run one of her storytelling sessions where parents and children come to imagine, play and create together. This always proves to one of the most popular events of the afternoon. Don't miss it!

The Association will be providing some simple refreshments (teas, coffee, squash, cakes and biscuits) in return for a small donation.

EVENING BBQ - 7PM

This is a separate event in the evening, strictly for WWA members only. Please bring a picnic chair or rug if you like your home comforts. The BBQ will be lit around 6.30pm for a 7pm start and will be available all evening. Bring along whatever you wish to cook, plus your drinks. Water, paper plates, cups and cutlery will be provided. We will be running a bat watching session at dusk using the Association's bat detector (otherwise known as Steve!). We usually end up having a sing-song round the camp fire, so if you have a guitar or accordion, please bring it along and liven things up a little.....

AGM REPORT

The Annual General Meeting was well attended with over 30 members turning up to hear about the work of the Association. The Association continues to thrive, with over 200 household members supporting it. This really is quite an achievement. Nearly 20 years have passed since the humble beginnings of the WWA and it is a credit to all the volunteers, past and present, who have given their time and enthusiasm to keep the project going. There are still four members of the original committee still serving on the current committee – long service medals are definitely in order!

Steve Simpson (Chairman) opened the meeting with an overview of the year. He then went on to thank retiring committee member Alison Hill for her contribution to the committee since 2006. He noted, especially, her input into setting up the WWA blog on the original website. The website has now been updated but the original site is archived at the British Library for posterity. For more about the Library's web archive project, follow the link to:

www.webarchive.org.uk

This was followed by reports from the Reserve Manager, Treasurer and other officers. The committee for the year 2011 was then duly elected. After a break for refreshments Donato Cinicolo gave a fascinating talk on the art of hedgelaying. This was particularly appropriate as he went on to lead a hedgelaying training day the following weekend at the Nature Reserve. A report follows later in this newsletter.



IMPORTANT NOTICE

Please note that the online contact address for the Association has changed from

steve.simpson@dacorum.gov.uk

to

info@watercresslnr.org.uk

WILLOW WORKSHOP AND HEDGE LAYING EVENT



Hedge before laying

After some initial concerns that we were trying to cram too much into one day, this event turned out to be one of the most successful that the WWA has organised. The weather was perfect, the hedge laying training day was thoroughly enjoyed by all who participated, and the willow weaving activity was very popular for young and old alike. And to top it all, the Association laid on a BBQ to feed all the workers and helpers.



during.....



and after

TALES OF A BARBEQUE CHEF



"When Sheila offered me the chance to help with the barbeque at March's working party, I was delighted to accept the offer. I love getting busy in the kitchen and it gave me the opportunity to do something a little different for the WWA.

Overlooking the fact that the clocks went forward that morning meant I missed setting up the barbeque itself, but I arrived in time to start cooking. It was a laugh having to wear a blue and white apron and straw hat. You could have sworn I was your local butcher! I was ably assisted by Derryn, who was dressed the same. It was just as well we were there to help each other too, for we ended up cooking several trays of sausages and other barbeque fare for Donato's topiary students.

After the rest of the working party had been served, the obvious finale to our efforts was for Derryn and me to try our own cuisine. The sausages themselves were exceptionally good; locally sourced from a traditional butcher, with a texture and flavour that has sadly been lost from supermarket brands. I'd gladly be chef again, if only to try those sausages one more time!"

Robert (WWA volunteer)

Thanks for that, Robert. We'll gladly take you up on your offer. And I wonder if you knew that you and Derryn cooked 90 sausages in total!

Editor

WORK PARTY NEWS



Following the appeal for help to update the Herb Garden, Cathy and Nick from Ramsbury Road volunteered to have a go. They have already made great progress as can be seen from the photo above.

Both the Herb and Butterfly Gardens are high maintenance areas, so if you can spare an hour or two a month to help out with the weeding, please contact the Reserve Manager, or pop along to one of the monthly working parties where you will be made most welcome.

The two new meadows are doing really well. The Tussock Meadow (nearest to the Mere) had progressed to just brambles and nettles. Earlier attempts to create a meadow failed, but this time it was cleared, weeded and a specialist grass mixture sown. The tussock forming grasses are combined with wild flowers like knapweeds and vetches that can compete with competition from taller vegetation. This mixture has been devised to create areas of grassland that, once established, require little or no maintenance. This type of tussock grassland can form a good habitat for insects, small mammals, birds, amphibians and reptiles, providing nesting sites during spring, food during summer and autumn, and shelter during winter. It will need to be weeded from time to time in the early years to make sure that the brambles do not return and to ensure there is no encroachment from surrounding areas. Docks and thistles will need to be removed occasionally, and half the area cut every 2-3 years on a rotational basis. This is to leave the remaining half as a wildlife refuge.



The second Meadow (to the left of Emma's spinney) had become completely dominated by Hogweed and Nettles. The meadow mixture (EN1 – a special pollen and nectar meadow mixture) used here is designed to create a flower rich grassland with particular emphasis on species known to be important sources of pollen for bees, butterflies, hoverflies and other insects. Unwanted weeds will be removed and the whole meadow will be cut once in late summer.

WWA COMMITTEE 2011

Officers

SteveChairman
HowardReserve Manager and
Membership Secretary

Mandy.....Treasurer
Janet.....Secretary

Members

SheilaNewsletter Editor

PatMember
DerrynArchivist
PennySocial Secretary
SamWebmaster
Margaret.....Management Plan Advisor
JackMember

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Work party dates

Sunday 31st July.....10am to 1pm

Sunday 28th August.....10am to 1pm

Sunday 25th September.....10am to 1pm

All tools and gloves are provided. You don't have to come along for the whole three hours, as any contribution, however short, is always welcome.

Hot and cold drinks, and delicious home-made cake is always on offer and the refreshment break (usually around noon) is a good time to get to know the volunteers. If you've ever thought about coming along to help, but are not sure if it is the thing for you, why not just pop down and join us for a coffee and chat?

NATURE DAY – 9th JULY –2pm to 5pm

BIRD HIDE CODE

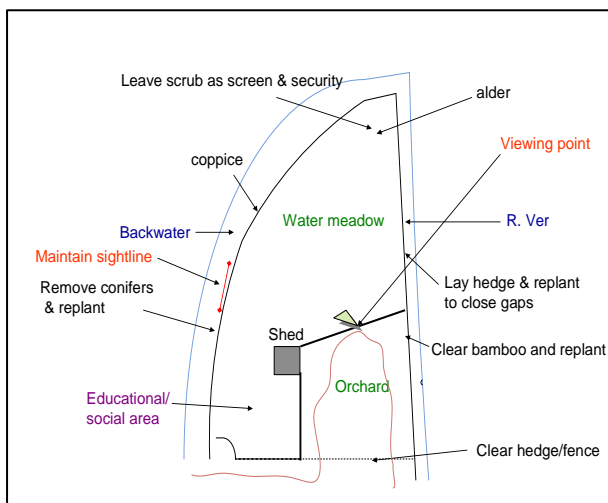
The code to enter the bird hide is xxxx . Please make sure that the windows are closed and the door is shut on leaving. Thank you.

ALLOTMENT UPDATE

Agreement has been reached on the final plans for the development of this space. Margaret has formulated the plan and the timescales for this work. This will be added to the Management Plan that is already up on the WWA website

www.watercresslnr.org.uk

The diagram below shows a very simplified idea of what is planned. This area has been inaccessible to the general public for over forty years, so it probably won't mean much to anyone outside of the committee! But there will be an opportunity to have a look around on 'Nature Day' if you are interested (and have a cup of tea at the same time). Thanks go to Margaret for all her work on this. Now we can crack on and start implementing all the ideas.



The first job was to get rid of the huge pile of accumulated rubbish that had been gathered and stored, and a skip was hired for this purpose. It took the whole of the June working party to achieve this but the job is now done. Thanks go to everyone who came and helped, on what turned out to be the hottest day of the year so far. The 'educational and social area' is really starting to take shape – and is proving to be a delightful spot for our volunteers to sit down and have their well-earned refreshments.



Nearly finished.....

GATHERING POINT



The sculpture - "Gathering Point"- constructed by Pauline O'Dell has sprouted and turned into a living willow sculpture. WWA committee members wondered, during the construction, if nesting birds would be attracted to the site. Surprisingly, on 27th June, a family of swans appear to be doing just that and looked to be settling down in just this spot. A 'gathering point' it most definitely is becoming.

PICTURE CORNER



The fascinating willow weaving activity that we held in March turned out to be a great success and one that we will definitely repeat again. Thanks go to Pauline O'Dell, and Chris Blanch and her helpers from St. Albans Art Development Team for their help in putting on this event. It was brilliant! Thank you, all.

Valerie (one of our volunteers) sent in this picture of a parakeet on the bird feeder in the Pyghtle. They are becoming quite a feature in the area. They have also taken to perching in the Oak tree next door to the Editor's garden and squawking and chattering endlessly (a bit like the Editor!) and it is driving her madder than usual.....!

