

Beckford Nature Reserve

2009 is drawing to a close, and it's time to reflect on our activities since purchasing the Nature Reserve in March 2008. We have now been in existence for some eighteen months and at the time of reading we will have held our first public AGM to share reports and progress with those who attend.

We owe an enormous debt of gratitude to Anne and Nick Clarke, who took responsibility to maintain the Conservation Area after Huntsmans vacated the site in the late 1980's. They enlisted an army of volunteers to assist them, and their interest and enthusiasm for the project has been a thoroughly good basis for what could be achieved for the site. We also greatly appreciate the help of John Clarke from the Kemerton Conservation Trust, whose help and advice amongst others has been invaluable in formulating a structured maintenance plan.



To bring us up to date on current projects, the long awaited path for disabled access has been constructed at the Rabbit Lane end, and the adjacent areas have been seeded with a restoration mix. A duplicate sign mapping the Reserve has been installed just inside the gate at the appropriate height, and sketch plans for a hide at the end of the path have been drawn up, details yet to be finalised. The existing hide was given a much needed coat of wood preservative in September.

Our first autumnal working party was cancelled due to wet weather and high winds being forecasted, however some very keen volunteers still came to dig up sycamore saplings, and lay wood chippings on the paths. Other volunteers on the following Saturday found a window of opportunity from the rain, to achieve excellent work in completing the steps on the north west side corner of the Reserve, making safe what was a very hazardous section of path. Some of the steps leading from the footpath have been replaced and improved; all materials for these steps have been recycled from the site.

A section of trees on the north edge of the lake were coppiced to encourage wild flowers, the nesting of solitary bees, and other insects, and some brambles on the western end of the lake were cleared in the hope that the dappled light will encourage the spread of primroses from higher up the Reserve. Another area of brambles was cleared on the side of the public footpath. It was decided to forego coppicing the alders on the island at this stage, as a pair of swans were showing interest in nesting there. Once again many thanks to all those volunteers who braved the weather, and thanks to Jane and Mark for providing much needed refreshments afterwards. It is very encouraging to note that some very young volunteers have shown interest in the Nature Reserve and may join our working parties in the future.

We had a full house for our Lancashire Hotpot and Mince pie quiz night in November, everyone enjoyed it, and some of us even went home with generous prizes! Thanks must go to Jennifer and Angie for their sterling work in organising this fun event, and another quiz is planned for February 19th. Due to an increase in numbers for the 200 club we are now giving five prizes each month. If anyone is interested in joining please call Jennifer Berriman on 01386 882029 or e-mail j.berriman@sky.com