



## Noak Bridge Nature Reserve Society NEWSLETTER - Spring 2001

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**OPEN DAY!**



**SATURDAY, 23 JUNE 2001**

Our day to celebrate the upgrading of our Reserve! Basildon Countryside Services will be providing a ranger-guided walk, information and a walk or special event for children. Come along and see the changes and purchase bird nesting boxes and other items. Our Fun Day will be well publicised and other local reserves will receive invitations for their members to attend. Your committee members are planning the event and we **urgently require VOLUNTEERS** to assist us on the day and possibly before. We will need lots of willing hands! Of course, we hope to see all of our members on the day, enjoying the summer flowers in bloom and the dragonflies and butterflies gracing our ponds and meadows.

A date for an *official* Open Day will be chosen later in the year when the upgrading (delayed by the weather and foot-and-mouth outbreak) is complete. We will be inviting special guests on that occasion and there will be entertainment, a ranger-guided walk on the new nature trail, and refreshments. Further details will be sent to you as soon as a date has been agreed. Meanwhile, please call any of the following committee members and leave your name and telephone number if you would like to help on Saturday, 23 June.

**Betty Haynes 531365**  
**Ralph Chapman 531333**

**Janet Bircham 526344**  
**Peter Hobbs 271037**

## **WELCOME, SPRING!**

Spring is here at last, or so we are led to believe! We could do without all the rain though, but the trees are in blossom, birds are now nesting and everything is so nice and green again.

At last I was able to wander round the nature reserve; it looks lovely at this time of year. I was a bit dismayed to find that some owners of dogs have not yet learned to clean up after their pets, but we are getting there. I have not been able to do a survey so far this year, so has anyone heard the cuckoo or seen anything of interest in the reserve? If so, come on now and share it with us. When you are walking through the reserve and you see our new ranger, Liz, do stop and say hello.

**Betty Haynes, Chairperson**



## **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

Our Annual General Meeting will be held on Wednesday, 4 July 2001 at Kenilworth House, Noak Bridge at 7:30 p.m. An agenda is attached to this newsletter and we hope you will be able to attend. We would like to have some new committee members or volunteers to help at events and fetes. Business will be kept to a minimum and afterwards you will be able to talk to Luke Bennett and Liz Appleton our nature reserve rangers who will present an up-to-date report on the reserve and future plans. Last year, Luke provided a very interesting and amusing countryside quiz!. Maybe he can be persuaded to entertain us again!

### **Committee Nominations**

If you would like to serve on the committee or would like to nominate someone else to serve (with their permission, of course), please come along to the meeting or contact one of the committee members.



## **MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS**

Membership subscriptions for 2001 are due on 1st June for all members. Please use the form at the back of this newsletter to send your contribution to Mr. Ralph Chapman, Treasurer. If you would like Ralph to call on you, please telephone him at 531333. Memberships are our only source of income to enable us to provide information, newsletters, posters, communication with other reserves and other administrative services.



## WORK PARTIES

Hi Ho! Hi Ho! Its off to work we go!

Hi! from the Noak Bridge Nature Reserve Society work party enthusiasts. We meet on the last Friday of each month. We already have (had) Bashful (Luke), Happy (Peter), Doc (Weed), Grumpy (Ralph), Sneezy (Janet, well, she did have cold) and Sleepy (Betty) so named because she has not been able to help of late because of her injury, (not due to work party efforts). We now also have a Snow White (Liz) to take care of us! We would like to see our merry band expand - we promise not to use the remaining dwarf's name!

To date we have made and installed nest boxes, made and installed benches, cleared and painted steps and installed handrails to same. We have also cleared open areas to encourage wildlife and flora. This was done using croppers, bandsaws and jungle knives. It gave you the feeling of hacking your way out of a jungle. All these jobs give you a lot of satisfaction when completed. Better than sitting in front of the tele! If you would like to join us, please contact Grumpy at 01268 531333. If Fridays are not convenient please still contact Grumpy as we may perhaps arrange a work party on another day. A list of the planned Work Party tasks is attached to this newsletter.

**Ralph (Grumpy) Chapman**



## Countryside Events 2001

Noak Bridge Nature Reserve will host the following events:

**Saturday, 23 June 2001**

**Open Day**

**Sunday 5 August 2001**

**Dragons and Damselflies Walk**

**Sunday 16 December**

**Yuletide Walk**

**Norsey Wood Open Day**

**Sunday, 14 October 2001**



### **Good-bye, Luke Bennett**

We are sorry to be losing Luke Bennett who has been our ranger for more than a year, taking over from Steve Prewer who was our mentor when the Society was formed in June 1999. Luke has been very supportive and enthusiastic and we shall miss him very much. We appreciate all his hard work in planning and implementing the improvements to our reserve and his advice and support to the committee. We look forward to seeing him as a special guest at our Open Day in June.



### **Welcome, Liz Appleton**

We are very pleased to welcome Liz Appleton as our new ranger. She succeeds Luke Bennett at a very crucial time as the reserve up-grading progresses and our Open Day is in the planning stages. Liz has introduced herself to you with two articles in this newsletter and I'm sure she will receive a warm welcome from you at the Open Day. Your committee is very pleased to have her on board!



### **VOLUNTEERS! VOLUNTEERS! VOLUNTEERS!**

**Don't forget we need your help to make our OPEN DAY a great success! Call:**

**Betty Haynes 531365**

**Janet Bircham 526344**

**Ralph Chapman 531333**

**Peter Hobbs 271037**



**Countryside Services**  
**Liz Appleton, Ranger**

My first day as the new ranger for Basildon District Council Countryside Services started rather unusually. On arrival at Wat Tyler Country Park I found the gate locked. A kind volunteer let me in and after dipping my boots and spraying the wheels of my car I was allowed to enter - the first time I have been disinfected before starting a job!

The outbreak of foot and mouth disease has meant that my induction could not go as planned. The programme of activities prepared for me, including a Nifty Fifty walk at Noak Bridge Nature Reserve had to be cancelled. I was able, however, to attend the March meeting of the Noak Bridge Nature Reserve Society committee, and meet the committee members.

As the new Ranger, I will be continuing the hard work that Luke Bennett, Will Farmer and the rest of the team have undertaken. The main aim of my role is to carry on the management of several key sites managed by the Countryside Service, including Noak Bridge Nature Reserve. This will allow Luke to focus on the development of a new Country Park at Wickford. Responsibility for the site now rests with me, but the handover will continue over the next 2 - 3 months. Some of my first tasks are to oversee the work on the new easy access trail, lead the regular monthly work parties and assist the Society in the planning of the Open Day.

Prior to working for Basildon District I was employed as a Ranger on the South Downs in Sussex, and I have also worked as a Ranger in Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Hampshire. Coming to work here is very exciting, with the superb range of wildlife habitats and species, some of which are unique to this area.

If you would like to talk to me about Noak Bridge Nature Reserve, I am based at the Information Centre at Norsey Wood, where you can contact me on 01277-624553.

Liz Appleton  
March 2001

## Countryside Services

### Project Update

Work on the easy access trail started as planned at the end of January. The route through the scrub was cleared and excavation commenced. Unfortunately, the extraordinary wet weather meant that the works were flooded and the heavy machinery could not get on site without causing damage or becoming stuck. Work had to cease.

The recent outbreak of foot and mouth disease means that the site has been closed since the beginning of March. This is in line with guidance from MAFF. Whilst new cases of the disease are still being detected across Britain, as well as more locally in Essex, we are still trying to prevent the spread of the disease to wildlife. The virus can affect deer, hedgehogs, rats and elephants (not that I have heard any reports of wild elephants on the Reserve!). Whilst dogs cannot contract the disease, they can carry the infection, making it all the more important to keep them under close control and not let them run free. On present advice from the Government, it is anticipated that the Reserve will remain closed for at least 2 weeks after the last outbreak is confirmed anywhere in Britain, and possibly longer.

With the continuing rain, the contractors have not been able to carry on with the work. Once the ground has dried out work should continue, with strict disinfecting procedures in place. One part of the access work that can take place is the installation of the motorbike-proof but wheelchair accessible, barriers. I am contacting contractors and aim to have the new barriers as soon as possible.

The monthly work party had to relocate to the Norsey Wood workshop and members made bird boxes to attract species such as robin, flycatcher and sparrow to nest. Just how long we will be excluded from the site cannot be predicted, however, I intend to try and keep the work party usefully employed and carry on with the planned works as far as is possible in these extreme circumstances.

Liz Appleton  
March 2001

**20 April 2001**

**The Reserve is now open and work will proceed, weather permitting.**



# **NOAK BRIDGE NATURE RESERVE SOCIETY**

## **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**Wednesday, 4 July 2001  
Kenilworth House, Noak Bridge  
7:30 p.m.**

1. Welcome - Mrs. Betty Haynes, Chairperson
  2. Minutes of AGM held 21 June 2000 - Mrs. Janet Bircham, Secretary
  3. Adoption of Minutes
  4. Matters Arising from Minutes 21 June 2000
  5. Chairperson's Report - Mrs. Betty Haynes
  6. Treasurer's Report - Mr. Ralph Chapman
  7. Membership Secretary's Report - Mr. Ralph Chapman
  8. Election of Committee Members\*
    - (a) Chairperson
    - (b) Treasurer
    - (c) General Secretary
    - (d) Membership Secretary
    - (e) Communicator
    - (f) Events Co-ordinator
- \*Current members are willing to remain in office. Nominations for new members will be appreciated. Ex officio committee members:  
Basildon Countryside Services (Luke Bennett, Liz Appleton)
9. Countryside Services Report - Will Farmer
  10. Open Forum
  11. Refreshments

**NOAK BRIDGE NATURE RESERVE CONSERVATION WORK PARTY PROGRAM  
APRIL - DECEMBER 2001**

- April 27: **GATE & FENCE BY DITCH** - installing these safety features as part of the Easy Access Trail works.
- May 25: **MAY MOP UP** - clearing up the year's rubbish in preparation for the Open Day on 23 June. Litter pickers, bags and gloves provided.
- June 29: **FLORAL SURVEY** - a survey of the plants growing on the Reserve. An opportunity to brush-up on your plant identification and build the record of the common and unusual plants found in this area.
- July 27: **PATH CLEARANCE** - clearing overhanging and overgrowing vegetation around the site.
- August 31: **BOXES & BENCHES** - maintenance and replacement of resting places for humans and birds alike.
- September 28: **FENCING** - repairing the post and wire fence along the top of the sound barrier.
- October 26: **WAYMARKING** - installing waymarks to guide visitors around the Reserve.
- November 30: **SCRUB CLEARANCE** - continuing the clearance work from last year.
- December: **NO WORK PARTY**, but don't forget the **Yuletide Ramble 10.00 a.m. - 12.00 noon on Sunday 16 December**, followed by mulled wine and mince pies.

Work parties are held on the last Friday of the month from 10.00 a.m. to 12.00 noon. Meet at the main gate, Eastfield Road. Everyone is welcome to come along and join in. We offer a couple of hours healthy exercise and a chance to help local wildlife. Please wear appropriate clothing with stout footwear.

This program is provisional and may need to be changed due to weather, conditions etc.

For further information contact Liz Appleton, Countryside Ranger on 01277 624553.