

COLEORTON & NEW LOUNT VOLUNTEER GROUP.



NOVEMBER UPDATE.

It is now some time since the last update (March 2013) so there is much to tell:-

The work programme for NOVEMBER - DECEMBER 2013 is as follows:-

- Tuesday 29th October - Coleorton Wood – Non Ranger Day**
- Saturday 2nd November – New Lount - Ranger Day**
- Tuesday 12th November – New Lount - Ranger Day**
- Saturday 16th November – Coleorton Wood – Non-Ranger Day**
- Tuesday 26th November – Coleorton Wood – Non-Ranger Day**
- Saturday 30th November – New Lount – Ranger Day**
- Tuesday 10th December – Coleorton Wood – Non-Ranger Day**
- Saturday 14th December– New Lount – Ranger Day**

We are now well into that period when woodland management is the order of the day. There is a great deal of work which the group can carry out over the next 5 months and we will be working to complete as much of it as we can. We also have great deal of “other work” which we can do in the Rangers’ workshop including boardwalks, picnic benches and some new ideas that the team is considering; the following is the provisional programme for workshop sessions:-

- Wednesday 13th November**
- Wednesday 27th November**
- Wednesday 11th December**

These sessions will be held at the Ranger’s Workshop at Snibston Discovery Park; they usually start at 9.30a.m. and finish around lunchtime (1.30p.m.)

1. Management Committee

Chairman: John Macdonald
Treasurer: Jane Elson
Secretary: Brian Bartram
Operations: Mick Specht
Social and Fundraising: Madeline McCormick.

2. Social & Fund Raising will be organised by:-

Jane Elson
Madeline McCormick and
Vera Macdonald.

Woodland Management will be organised by:-

John Macdonald, Brian Bartram, Mick Specht and LCC Rangers.

Progress at Coleorton Wood.

A number of significant events have taken place since the last update:-

The Parish Council has had a management plan drawn up for the wood and the group is now working to this plan.

The Parish Council has also successfully applied for two Woodland Improvement Grants for the wood; the first is an East Midlands Bird WIG targeted at improving the woodland habitat to attract specific species of bird, such as Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, Willow Tit and Willow Warbler. This gives funding for thinning the woodland, coppicing the shrub, hedge management and managing the rides.

The second grant is a Woodland Access Grant which gives funding for removing the rabbit fencing, supply of picnic benches and bench seats together with some other aspects of woodland management.

The management plan includes all of this proposed work and the group has been working to this plan for the last few months. The following is a summary of some of the work carried out so far:-

We have enlarged the picnic area in the wood although the enlarged area will require further attention to transform it into a genuine grassed area. The two picnic tables in this area have also been reconditioned so that both are now usable for picnickers.



Revised picnic area.

Following the Parish Council getting the wood registered as a QEII Fields in Trust the group constructed a brick plinth on which the QEII plaque has been fixed. A Royal Oak sapling to mark the occasion has also been planted behind the plinth and a special Field Day was organised by the Parish Council on Saturday 18th May, in which the group participated.

The group has also assisted in changing all the signage at the wood to both improve the quality and to reflect that the wood is now owned by the Parish Council.



QEII Plinth and the new signage.

We have been able to arrange a better regime for the mowing of the rides, whereby the contractor does not mow the sides and leaves more area where the wild flowers can grow, flower and seed. This has significantly improved the numbers of flowering plants in the wood, and together with a much improved summer there has been a noticeable increase in butterflies in the wood. On Friday 9th August the Leicestershire Moth Group carried out their first moth survey of the wood. This was a very successful event with an incredibly large number of moth species being identified.

Since March the group has also completed laying the hedge which we started the previous year. The pathway beside this laid hedge will become a new ride as part of the new management plan; another section of the existing ride will be closed as it is really too close the neighbouring garden. The removal of the original rabbit fencing is also included in the management plan and we have already started to remove some of the fencing; this is a section in the Post Office field. We will leave some of the fencing where it still serves some purpose such as that which protects the central brook area of the wood.

The group has also made and installed two new bench seats that are also included as part of the management plan. One of these benches has been located in front of the pond and the second one in the small area of open grassland above the picnic area.



New bench seat in front of the pond.

Now that the autumn/winter season is well underway we have been busy strimming and raking off the ride edges and to date we have completed the areas we want to strim in the Post Office field. We are strimming only one side of the rides before the winter and we will strim the other sides in the early spring; this will give the invertebrate eggs and larvae the chance to over-winter and may improve the success of some of these species. We have also started cutting back and coppicing the shrub borders which are required in this year of the management plan. We have found that some of these "shrubs" have been left for so long that they are best described as "trees" and we have left some large stumps to be removed by chainsaws.

The management plan also requires that somewhere between 30% and 40% of the trees will be removed across the entire wood to thin the wood down to where it should be. This work will be carried out by contractors and the Parish Council is currently seeking a contractor for this work. It is hoped that this thinning will take place in January 2014. The group has removed all of the bird nesting boxes from the wood so that this work can proceed and we will clean the boxes and put them back up immediately after the thinning has taken place.

Finally the Leicestershire Fungi Work Group carried out a survey of the wood on Sunday 20th October and recorded over 60 different species of fungi, commenting that the list was an "***excellent and varied list with some quite uncommon species, though no great rarities***".

3. **Progress at New Lount Reserve.**

During the early spring period the group completed the removal of shrubs from the BMX bumps area and this has remained clear of shrubs throughout the summer.

Throughout the summer period the group has re-established the second picnic area. The area has been cleared of a few more of the trees and shrubs and has been strimmed. The small piles of earth have been levelled off and the three picnic table have been dismantled, reconditioned and re-assembled in the picnic area. A small path has been made leading into this area to encourage visitors to use the new facility. The group will need to continue to keep this area clear of shrubs and will also need to strim the area frequently through the summer period.

The excellent weather through the summer period resulted in everything growing exceptionally well, which unfortunately included the Ragwort in the two grassland areas at the top of the pit bank. The group has cleared all of this growth despite it being extremely difficult work in the high summer temperatures.

The exceptional summer weather also encouraged extensive growth in the species rich grassland areas, some of which was very welcome, but some was not so welcome, such as birch saplings, and the Rose-Bay- Willow Herb.

Following the summer growth, half (the southern half) of the SPG area has now been strimmed and raked off in readiness for the winter and it is proposed to strim and rake off the other half early in the spring.



New path into the second picnic area before the tables were relocated.



The summer growth-burst in the Species Rich Grassland area.
(The red object is a Cinnabar Moth in flight)

The workshop group has also made two bench seats for New Lount and these have been installed near the top ponds in the open grassland



Some of the Macdonald clan enjoying the new bench seat.

The group has also cleared the tops of the two sealed mine shafts so that the Rangers can carry out the shaft surveys that are required of them. These two concrete areas will need to be swept fairly regularly to keep them clear. The group has also cleared the areas at the front of the site as well as the areas beside the main road onto the site.

We have now strimmed and raked off the bottom open glade as well as removed a small number of trees in this area. Some of the stumps will need to be treated again in the spring as they have started to re-grow. All the waste material was piled onto the snake nesting pit so this should prove to be a better environment for the snakes next summer. We have strimmed and raked off one of the other open glades and we have one remaining to clear. The two open glades on the pit bank will need further clearing to get rid of some of the bramble and get it back to a much more acceptable level.

4. **Workshop Session.**

The group has been very busy in the workshop having completed the last two bench seat (now at New Lount), reconditioned the 3 picnic tables (also now at New Lount), repaired the notice board at New Lount (someone took the Perspex), made 6 Willow Tit nesting boxes, made 4 owl nesting boxes, made 2 Kestrel nesting boxes and almost completed 2 new picnic tables. We have also started to prepare the materials for the extended boardwalk at New Lount, which will be installed in the summer period. We have picnic table to make for Coleorton Wood and we are looking at a special "Insect Hotel" with interpretation board to go at New Lount.

5. **Social and Fund Raising Programme.**

The Petanque Evening at The Kings Arms, Coleorton in June was well attended and proved to be a very enjoyable evening.

In July Agathe spent the month in Coleorton and we had a very enjoyable evening at the Kings Arms towards the end of July saying "Hello & Goodbye" as she was due to depart back to France. Wayne brought his new-old car along which created a great deal of interest especially from the motor-heads amongst us.

On August Bank Holiday Monday some members of the group assisted the LCC Rangers at the Annual Wood Fair at Beacon Hill, and event that was very well attended and enjoyed some great summer weather.

The weather in September was not so kind and we had to cancel the BBQ & Bat Night twice before submitting to poor conditions for both bats and BBQ's, which was a great shame as the numbers wanting to attend were very high.

The numbers wishing to attend the Country Dance evening at the beginning of October were very disappointing and unfortunately we had to cancel this event to avoid making a loss.

Towards the end of October the group had a Table at the WI Tabletop Sale at Rothley and made a small profit of just over £30 at this event.

In the last week in October Newbold held its very first Scarecrow Festival and the group entered a scarecrow of "Ranger Dave" which was exhibited at the entrance to New Lount Reserve.



Ranger Dave receiving some female attention.

Future Events:-

On Saturday 14th December, which is a work session at New Lount Reserve we will have our annual "Christmas in the Woods" with the help of both the Rangers and Jane.

On Friday 20th December we are having a Wine & Minced Pies at Jane's, which is the last social event before the New Year.

Jane has recently circulated some suggestions for social events in 2014 and it promises to be a very social year.

6. **RCC Village Achievement Awards.**

The group entered the awards in the Community Category and were very pleased to be voted winners of this category, with the results being announced at the AGM Meeting of the Leicestershire & Rutland RCC on 19th September. This award is a village award for Coleorton and the group was entered as the village's entry for this year. The group was also awarded a cheque for £250 which we have decided to use in the purchase of new tools. We organised a special lunch break at the work session on Saturday 2nd November to celebrate the group winning this award and invited both Councillor Geraint Jones (Chairman of NWLDC) and Andrew Bridgen MP.

7. **Membership.**

We have had a number of new members since the last update and attendances at both Tuesday and Saturday sessions have been good. With some detailed plans now available for both sites, together with the grant funding that has been secured for the two sites we have much to do and would benefit from as many members as possible to help us get through all the opportunities we now have.

If you are interested in helping in any way do contact us at coleorton11@gmail.com