

COLEORTON & NEW LOUNT VOLUNTEER GROUP.



by Tom Raffle aged 10 years

NOVEMBER UPDATE.

It is now some time since the last update (May 2014) so there is much to tell:-

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

- Saturday 1st November – New Lount - Ranger Day**
- Tuesday 11th November – Coleorton Wood – Non-Ranger Day**
- Saturday 15th November – Coleorton Wood – Non-Ranger Day**
- Tuesday 25th November – New Lount – Ranger Day**
- Saturday 29th November – New Lount – Ranger Day**

- Tuesday 9th December – Coleorton Wood – Non-Ranger Day**
- Saturday 13th December – New Lount – Ranger Day**

We have reached the end of the spring/summer period, which has seen some very warm weather and the group making good progress with site maintenance. We have now started work on the autumn/winter period, which promises to be a very busy period. There are a number of items to progress in the Wednesday workshops, for which we have the following dates:-

- Wednesday 12th November**
- Wednesday 26th November**
- Wednesday 10th 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: Jane Elson

2. Social & Fund Raising

Jane Elson
Ann Bartram
Vera Macdonald

Woodland Management will be organised by:-

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

Progress at Coleorton Wood.

Through the summer period the group has carried out a great deal of site maintenance work in the wood, which has mainly been targeted at retaining good access throughout the wood. We have carried out a number of sessions where volunteers have been round the wood taking down overhanging branches and removing any obstacles from the paths. The enlarged picnic area has also been kept strimmed and we have noticed a number of visitors using this area. The group has also cut the hedge at the bottom of Pitt Lane and tidied up around the car park to give a tidy appearance to the entrance to the wood.



Removing overhanging branches and obstructions from the paths.

The pond has had a very successful year in that it has retained a good volume of water and was again the nesting location for a family of Moorhens; this being the second year these birds have nested around the pond. The group has had two sessions in which the channel into the pond has been cleaned out to maintain a good flow of water into the pond. We have also cleared the area immediately in front of the pond to give good visibility for visitors. As required in the Management plan, we have taken down some of the old rabbit fencing around the Post Office Field and this has been removed from the site. We have carried out a survey of the rabbit fencing on site and drawn up a plan of which areas of fencing will be removed. We have also drawn up a plan for the site perimeter hedges and will start on this work over the coming months. Some of the hedges are suitable for laying, but others will need to be cut back and in-filled as necessary.



Removing rabbit fencing in the Post Office Field

The group had the opportunity to work with groups of employees from The Raddison Blu Hotel at East Midlands Airport. The hotel runs a programme of employee community volunteering and chose our group for this programme. We had a number of their employees working with the group at both sites throughout the month of September and they made a very positive contribution to the work carried out. Many of the photographs in this update feature Raddison Blu employees.



Some Raddison Blu employees (and Mick) ready to volunteer

The group is now progressing well with the autumn/ winter programme in the wood. The strimming of ride edges is complete as far as we need to do just now as we only trim one side before the winter, leaving the other side to over winter before cutting. We have also started coppicing and thinning those shrub areas that are required as part of the Management Plan and we expect to complete this work over the following weeks.

The Parish Council have been successful in getting the contractor to start on the thinning of the wood and this work has been progressed throughout September and October. It looks likely that not all the wood will be thinned before the winter and the work is now likely to be completed in the early spring of 2015. There will be some work for the group to tidy up in some areas, to ensure good growth of shrubs. Most of the brash from this operation will be left to rot down and everyone is asked to take care when walking through the wooded areas. Prior to this work starting the group took down all the bird nesting boxes and they will be cleaned before they are put back up in the early spring of 2015.

On the 6th June the Leicestershire Moth Group carried out a survey of the wood and was very pleased with the large number of species found this year, which was well over double the number recorded in 2013.



The Elephant Hawk moth one of the many moths recorded

On the 19th October the Leicestershire Fungi Study Group carried out a survey of the wood and their comments on this survey included – *'It was a really interesting mix of fungi, some of them unusual and with very few previous records in Leicestershire and Rutland and requiring many hours work at the microscope to name them'* Considering the work which was going on in the wood at the time this is obviously a good indication that there is a wide variety of fungi in the wood.



Leotia lubrica - 'Jelly baby' one of the less common fungi recorded.

Progress at New Lount Reserve.

We have also spent many of the summer work sessions at New Lount carrying out general site maintenance. We have kept the two picnic areas strimmed and ensured the tables are in good condition. It is noticeable that these facilities are now being utilised better than they were, the bird feeding station is an obvious attraction. We have also carried out a number of site surveys to remove any obstructions or overhanging branches from the site paths. The group has washed the front gates and the metal fence in this area, as well as strimming the area to give a more presentable appearance to the entrance of the site. This work included strimming the edges of the main road into the site as well as the car park area. We have also cleaned all of the interpretation boards across the site, which has made some impact, but they really need to be replaced. We have also cleared most of the plants growing in and around the two sets of steps.



Most of the vegetation has been moved from the steps.

The area around the top of the first set of steps has been cleared and the bench is now easily accessible. It is hoped that this will create an area where visitors can sit in quiet and watch the second pond in front of the bench.



The new view from the bench at the top of the 1st set of steps

The group spent a number of sessions pulling ragwort from the grassland areas on the pit bank. The weather during these weeks was very hot, which made the work extremely hard work, but we are making some impact to the amount of Ragwort which grows each year.



Ragwort clearing

Much of the time has been spent in extending the small boardwalk near the top pond. We have extended this boardwalk as far as the pier on the top pond and we will extend it further in spring/summer 2015.



'Working' on the small boardwalk!



The extended boardwalk

We have also started on the autumn/winter programme for the site. To date we have strimmed most of the path edges throughout the site and we have strimmed and raked-off the species rich grassland area. LCC country Parks Department have asked the group to thin a specific area of planted woodland on the pit bank side and this work will start in the next few weeks; once we have completed the strimming of the open areas.



Strimming the Species-Rich Grassland

On Sunday 7th September a number of members from the Derbyshire RSPB visited the site and were joined by a number of our volunteers. They recorded a number of birds, dragonflies and butterflies, but more importantly they were very knowledgeable in these topics and our volunteers very much enjoyed having the opportunity to survey the site with individuals that could talk about all the species that were found.



The Small Copper butterfly one of the species recorded by the RSPB

At the end of October both Brian and Mick attended their chainsaw training at DART Training, which by all accounts was a very demanding course. It is great to be able to report that both passed their subsequent assessment, which means the group now has two qualified chainsaw operators. Thanks to the National Forest Company and the Parish Council we also have a chainsaw and the essential equipment required to be able to maintain and use the chainsaw. This will give the group a great advantage and will enable us to complete some of our work much more efficiently; we will of course have to take great care from a safety point of view. Well done to Brian and Mick!

3. **Workshop Session.**

The group has been very busy in the workshop working on the complete refurbishment and redesign of a very large notice board. This is now completed and we have started to install the new notice board at New Lount. We have also been working with LCC Country Parks Department on the design of a new interpretation board for the site, which will be installed in this new notice board. (The process of design and printing may take a few months to complete). The 'Insect Hotel' has now been installed at New Lount and the workshop group will look at manufacturing another for Coleorton Wood.



The 'Insect Hotel' not quite 5 star!

We have also been preparing the materials for the extended boardwalk at New Lount, which we have been installing over the summer period. We have manufactured two bench seats for Coleorton Wood and have the timber to make two picnic tables, which should be completed well before Christmas.

4. **Social and Fund Raising Programme.**

The Table-Top Sale at The Beaumont Centre, Peggs Green on Saturday 14th June was well attended, both by tables sold and numbers of the public attending, and we realised over £100 profit.

On the 28th June the group had a stall at Heritage FM Radio's event in Coalville, which was also very well attended by the public.

The Bat Night & BBQ on Friday 5th September was oversubscribed and the weather was very much in our favour. The large number of people attending thoroughly enjoyed the evening and a very large number of bats were recorded, with at least four separate species across the site.

The darts evening held on Friday 3rd October was also well attended and was enjoyed by all present. It was Peter who came out on top of the darts competition; John managed to record the lowest score.

The group has another Table Top Sale organised for Saturday 8th November 2014 at Swannington Village Hall. All the tables are sold so we are expecting this to be a very successful event.

5. **Membership.**

We have had a number of new members since the last update and attendances at both Tuesday and Saturday sessions have been very good. We have a great deal of work available to us at both site and would welcome new members.

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