

Gunton Woodland Community Project



NEWSLETTER



January/February 2008

We would like to wish all our Members a very Healthy and Happy New Year

2008 is a special year for us as it marks the completion of ten years of effort to arrest the decline of Gunton Wood and it is most gratifying to realise that some of our present work party volunteers were involved in that very first one (on 28th March 1998) when we started to clear Japanese Knotweed from the Stubbs Wood entrance, and then had to get the fire brigade's approval for a massive bonfire to get rid of the rubbish mountain!

Perhaps we can be forgiven if we indulge in a little nostalgia as we remember some of the highlights of those passing years ... 1998 – built toolshed, first 300 trees planted; 1999 – cleaned out well, first garden party; 2000 – reached agreement with Church to manage their part of Gunton Wood, Tesco agreed to Nature Reserve; 2001 – seat near gate stolen, all paths chipped; 2002 – wild flower meadow established, main gates installed, Paul Heiney inaugurated Information Boards; 2003 – Lord Tollemache presented Queen's Award, first fete on School playing field, reconstructed wildlife pond; 2004 – Gunton Wood declared a Nature Reserve, coppicing and hedge laying course; 2005 – Sea Cadets planted Trafalgar Oak; 2006 – 5 bar and kissing gates installed in Foxburrow; 2007 – Environment Agency 'fished' our pond ... and, of course, there is much, much more. Then there were all those outings to Beth Chatto, Wyken Hall, Fairhaven, Pensthorpe, Stody Lodge, Old Vicarage, Keukenhof, Gooderstone And here we are 10 years later with work party numbers at their highest levels ever.

Gunton Wood is a model project, showing what can be done when a group of local volunteers have the will to make a difference to their local environment. It has been a great achievement and a credit to you all.

Celebrations are being planned so all woodland workers (past, present and future) should try to keep the 27th and 29th March free more details later.

The Woodland Scene

Coppicing Course Wednesday 28th November brought fine weather, as requested, and 15 members spent an enjoyable day under the hands-on instruction of BTCV trainer Alison Marchant, with the assistance of Tanya Fletcher. All participants are now experts at the art of coppicing and hedge laying – and they have certificates to prove it! An excellent lunch provided by Carol, Rosemary and Val was much appreciated by everyone; all in all a very successful day.



A briefing session

The Dam Grown men are never happier than when they are paddling in water and messing about with sand bags. Added to this, the challenge of the exact positioning of



Gently does it

quarter-ton greenheart piles (recovered from beach defence work) attracted an unusually large gathering of the "heavy gang" on Saturday 12th January for the reconstruction of the Gunton Wood Dam. [This builds a head of water in the ditch which then flows through buried pipelines to feed our wildlife pond.] The meticulous planning of our Chief Project Engineer Colin Fitt paid off and the job was completed (almost) without a hitch.



The final result

Footnote The spectacular spillway that follows a heavy rain storm is encouraging thoughts of a hydro-electric power scheme. We think we can crack the underground turbine hall, but connecting to the grid is a bit more problematic...

Work Parties We are delighted to see as many as 25 or even 30 turning out for our regular Thursday morning sessions could it be due to the selection of cakes and biscuits on offer? (it's always somebody's birthday). Following all the rain, chipping is top priority, but unfortunately chips are sometimes in short supply. There's always brambling to do although we now have to take care we don't damage the bulbs that are poking through. Our large numbers tempt us to try to make an impression on the brambles at the North end of Foxburrow Wood to see if the bluebells will re-appear. And we have more plans for Foxburrow, if circumstances permit.

In Gunton Wood, *Winter Aconites* are now in bud, you can see the first flush of *Snowdrops*, and no less than six *Song Thrushes* were heard recently marking their territories for the start of yet another season.



Aconites and Snowdrops

Social Events



Snape 19th December 2007

Not many people might associate the East of England Co-Op Juniors with a lavish stage show but there was universal acclaim for their Christmas production at Snape and almost everyone on the homeward bound coach voted for a return visit next year. With a cast of 100, and more than 1000 costumes, most of which were hand-made by parents, plus first class orchestral backing, the show was up to West End standard. Added to this, our excellent seats in the spectacular concert hall brought us close to the stage where the enthusiasm of the young dancers was infectious. We would like to thank David very much for organising such a memorable start to the Christmas festivities.



Paris 2nd to 5th May 2008

There's just one seat left for this Springtime excursion but there may, of course, be a late cancellation so David will keep a waiting list. The deadline for full payment (£247 pp less £40 deposit) is 10th March and David will be in touch with all participants regarding insurance forms and individual preferences for the Sunday visit to Versailles. Admission to Monet's Garden at Giverny on Saturday is included in the price. We have ordered bright sunshine and blue skies so start looking for your digital camera and that French phrasebook!

11th Annual General Meeting Wednesday 12th March 2008

As usual, the meeting will start at 7.30pm with tea and coffee served from 7 o'clock onwards. This is your chance to catch up on past developments and future plans and to raise any issues that you think we should consider. Our speaker will be announced later and we are hoping that the talk may be of particular interest to many individual members. The formal Notice of Meeting will be circulated in the normal way.

Gunton Wood Calendar (and Notelets)

Conversation overhead in the shopping precinct "last week we went to February and had a great fish pie. We think we might try August next time". No prizes for a translation! The 2008 calendar was our most successful so far and we had to make several reprints with a final total of 240 copies. The pub theme was so popular that we are being pressured to find 12 more for next year, so if anyone has any suggestions, or any ideas for alternative themes, please let us know.

We are also intending to print more Notelets, this time with Gunton Wood pictures. Please contact Rosemary if you are interested in details of timing and prices.

GWCP Website

Our "new look" website is up and running, thanks to Peter Farrington, and you can now download the PDF (portable document format) files using Acrobat Reader, which most computers have. There are also links to other sites such as "Birdman of Gunton" and "The Woodland Trust" for those who have time to surf the web.

Digital Projector

Unfortunately, our digital projector, which was gifted to the Group, has developed a problem that has spoilt the last two presentations made to local groups on the Gunton Wood Project. If we are unable to effect an economic repair, we propose to invest in a new machine, using funds which were donated to us for this purpose by Exxonmobil. We also require a proper sized screen for these illustrated talks, which are proving very popular.

RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch 26th – 27th January 2008

If you are at home for this weekend, why not help to build up a picture of how our birds are faring across the UK. It takes just one hour to record the highest number of each species that you see landed at any one time. You can submit your results on the RSPB website or ask Barry for a Birdwatch Form for FREEPOST mailing.

Nature Notes *Engineering Lessons from Nature*

We know why a woodpecker bangs its head against a tree like a demented dervish. It's to uncover insects and sometimes just to generate noise as a territory marker. But how does it avoid suffering serious brain injury? Well over time its anatomy has evolved in a most remarkable way. Its beak widens where it is attached to the skull, spreading the force and, just before strike, powerful muscles contract transmitting the impact to the back of the skull bypassing the brain. The skull itself is made of spongy bone and cartilage to absorb energy and the nostrils are covered with feathers to keep out the dust. The woodpecker also has very powerful leg muscles which rock its body backwards and forwards throwing the head against the tree with a whipping motion and enhanced acceleration. Only recently have these anatomical features been understood and modelled so when you buy that low inertia, high impact, flexible headed "woodpecker hammer drill" from the toolshop (they should be on sale soon) don't forget to thank Mother Nature who first showed us how to do it.

