

Gunton Woodland Community Project

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NEWSLETTER

May - November 2012

Mo and John Dickerson
return from their
3000 mile bike ride
around the North Sea



Apologies for another much-delayed Newsletter, due to circumstances beyond our control.

The Summer of 2012

This has been one of those years that would be best forgotten if Mother Nature had her way. A warm spell in early Spring encouraged fruit blossom which was then clobbered by a cold snap before it could be pollinated. The result? Not a single plum, apple or sloe survived. Then, when we wanted rain we had a drought, and when we needed sunshine all we got was deluge after deluge as the weather forecasts switched overnight from hosepipe bans to flood warnings. All of this has had significant effects on our tree populations. The heavily mildewed English Oak has produced very few acorns and Beech mast is scarce forcing grey squirrels to resort to searching for conkers which are normally well down their shopping list. This may lead to a population crash next year which would be no bad thing! On the plus side, the Horse Chestnut leaf miner moth is less this year, Birch and Willow are holding on to their leaves while Ivy has a massive flowering which is great news for the birds, most of which have had a rather poor nesting season due to the weather. On the ground, neither our Bluebells nor our Orchids showed particularly well but, as they say, there is always next year to look forward to....

National Tree Alert

Ash trees make up some 15 to 30% of our forestry stock and the entire population is now under threat from a fungus called *Chalara fraxinea* or Ash Dieback disease. This is widespread on the Continent and has caused up to 90% losses in Denmark. It was recently discovered in a consignment of nursery trees sent from Holland to South-East England and now it has been found in up to 11 locations in East Anglia, two of which have been named as Lower Wood, Ashwellthorpe, an ancient woodland near Wymondham, and Pound Farm, a fairly new woodland near Framlingham. More cases are being reported daily and everyone is urged to be extra vigilant.

What to look out for? Leaves suffer from wilting and black-brownish discolouration. Lens-shaped lesions appear on the bark. Whole trees develop withered tops and shoots. If you see an ash with suspicious symptoms contact the Forestry Commission by email or phone 0131 314 6414. Whether we can prevent a repeat of the Dutch Elm Disease disaster of the 1970's is in the balance and the next few months will be critical.



Gunton Wood

Waveney Norse's Arboricultural Manager, Paul McDowell-Veitch, conducted the annual tree inspection with David, Colin and Barry to identify which trees will need attention this season. The good news is that significantly fewer will need felling compared with other years. However, we will have to move the "Marks and Spencer" seat from its horse chestnut location due to safety issues. We are also developing plans to enhance the woodland feel of the main footpath by reducing its width and removing years of accumulated wood chips.



Warren School

Pondlife seems to be holding up well with a healthy population of baby newts, most of which are believed to be common, not great-crested. But when a misguided member of the public dumped half a dozen goldfish in the pond we had to ask the Environment Agency to come to our aid again with their electro-fishing gear. Two were caught and they returned again last week to catch 3 more. In September, it was a pleasure to help a group of youngsters from Warren School in their pond dipping activities which they clearly enjoyed judging by their follow-up "thankyou" letters.

Late Summer rains and equipment breakdowns caused havoc with our usual grass cutting activities on the wild flower meadow. Eventually, the Council were able to cut it with a rotary mower but soon the meadow was covered with a heavy mulch which was almost impossible to rake off. However our stalwart band of volunteers were not to be beaten and perseverance finally paid off..



The Rakes' (slow) Progress

Nature Reserve

20th June2nd August

We always thought that the absence of duckweed from the lower pond was too good to be true and, sure enough, it changed from clear water to a thick layer of weed in just a few weeks ... As you know, there's only one thing that men enjoy more than getting muddy and that is, messing about in boats. So we spent several happy days trying all sorts of ideas from nets to leaf blowers until we finally succeeded with an ingenious hinged boom to offload tons of the stuff.

Elsewhere on the Reserve, the Lower and Upper Meadows were cut and raked off, the thorn hedge near the Filling Station was hand weeded and our brand new Honda strimmer did sterling work clearing around the new fencing and the upper pond. This tool is going to be a great asset as we will be inheriting more jobs from Waveney Norse who are having to reduce their workforce as part of Budget cut-backs.

Foxburrow Wood

Following the September tree inspection there are about 10 significant trees that require felling or major reduction, 6 of which will have to be tackled by Waveney Norse. The remainder will be included in our GWCP Saturday morning work party programme starting in November. We also hope to continue with the 5-year coppicing plan on the large hazel stools which, so far, has been very successful. As Foxburrow Stream is frequently blocked by fallen branches clearing them continues to be a regular job. A few gaps have recently appeared in the natural boundary hedge on the A12 and we plan to fill these by extending the timber rail fencing that we started in 2010.

One of the Waveney Norse jobs that we will probably inherit is clearing the footpaths from Gunton Church Lane to the Eastern edge of Foxburrow Wood, yet another task for our new Honda strimmer tool.

Gunton Meadow



Max at full speed

At the request of Matt Gooch of Suffolk Wildlife Trust we mobilised a 32-strong work party in mid-August to clear the meadow which had received its annual cut the previous day. The weather was very hot and copious supplies of water, followed by mid-morning coffee and cake were required to keep the troops happy. Soon it was lunch time when Rosemary and Carol produced a wonderful selection of rolls, pasties, pies, sponges and chocolate cake.

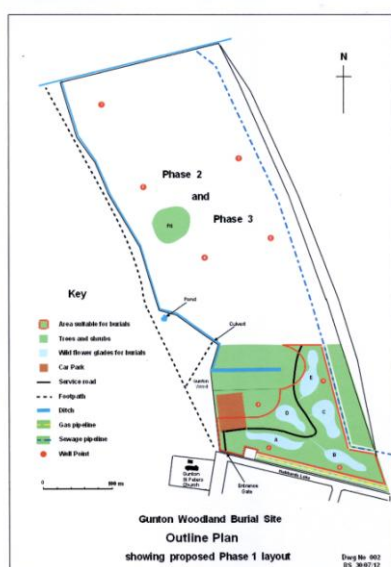
It was just as well that the work was almost complete as many felt like sleeping after that feast. Needless to say, Matt Gooch was delighted with the result. Not only did we rake off the grass we also collected a huge amount of litter plus a total of 8 abandoned Tesco trolleys which the store was asked to recover.

Nobody worked harder that day than 3 year old Max Denny, and as you can see, he very quickly mastered the gentle art of how to lean on your rake !!



Max shows how you're supposed to do it

Gunton Church Memorial Wood



After obtaining approval "in principle" for the proposed Phase I development from the Environment Agency, shown in green on the map, a Planning Application for the entire field was submitted to Waveney District Council in July. Because, at this stage, it was not possible to fix the locations of the wild flower glades (where "green burials" will take place) in Phases 2 and 3 the Council responded that the Planning Application should be limited initially to the Phase 1 area. Furthermore the Archaeological Service of Suffolk County Council have insisted on an exploratory dig in view of the proximity of the site to the Saxon tower of Gunton St Peters Church. Accordingly, in early November, it is planned to dig longitudinal trenches in each of the 5 glades in Phase 1 as part of the archaeological investigation.

When this work has been completed it is intended to resubmit the Planning Application, which if approved, will mark a major step forward for this important project. But unfortunately, these recent events have caused an unavoidable extra year's delay in the timetable. We remain optimistic as it is clear that the project commands a high level of local support.

Excursions

Floriade Holland 10th – 14th May 2012

This was an ambitious 4 night trip with the World Horticultural Expo at Venlo in Holland as its main focus. We were based at the Hotel Walram, Valkenburg, where we did find some of the accommodation to be slightly disappointing, but as compensation, the food was of a consistently high standard. Our first full day involved a trip to a family-owned vineyard, a most interesting visit enriched by a superb buffet lunch, with of course, plenty of wine tastings. Then two fascinating afternoon train rides took us down into a network of caves under the town.

An early start on Day 2 took us to Floriade where a cable car ride gave us a bird's eye view of the huge exhibition, with exotic pavilions, trade stands and stage shows from all over the world. Unfortunately our timing was not ideal so we missed the main floral displays. But, even so, there was much to marvel at and explore.

For our third day we took a river trip in bright sunshine from Maastricht to Liege, with much to see and a 12 metre lock to negotiate. After exploring the riverside market we found our coach for the return journey which included a cable car ride to view Valkenburg from above.

Next day it was back to earth for the long drive home, where pouring rain greeted us. Our driver Neil was great, as usual, and we all thanked David and Rosemary for their superb organization.

Because of cancellations due to health reasons there may be a few places available on next year's trip to Switzerland 3rd - 9th June. Call David on 01502-515944 if you are interested.



A Floriade group

Beth Chatto Gardens, Elmstead Market 14th June 2012



Beth Chatto Gardens

It was 10 years ago when the Group made its first visit to the Beth Chatto Gardens and we looked forward to revisiting this fascinating garden which serves as a great example of what can be grown under drought conditions. All agreed the flowers and foliage looked splendid and it wasn't long before the coach boot was full of new purchases from the plant nursery. For lunch we transferred to the Boathouse Restaurant in nearby Dedham, perfectly located on the banks of the River Stour. Unfortunately our large party rather overloaded the catering staff and there was some delay, but the lunch was worth waiting for. In the afternoon a few visited the Sir Alfred Munning Art museum while

others explored the village or took riverside walks before it was time for the journey home. Many thanks to Ray and Molly for planning a most interesting day out.

Lavenham and Melford Hall 30th August 2012

Once again we enjoyed a fine weather start for our day trip to the heart of medieval Suffolk, although this did turn to heavy rain later in the day. Our first stop was Monks Eleigh where we were treated to delicious cakes, scones and coffee and after a rummage through many interesting shops we re-boarded the coach to Lavenham for an hour's stroll around the village with its wonderful array of Tudor houses. Next stop was the cathedral-like Holy Trinity Church at Long Melford, a magnificent building dating back to the 15th Century. Then it was lunch time at the Cock and Bell Inn on the Main Street which everyone agreed was one of the finest lunches that we have had on any of our trips. By now the rain was very heavy but we managed to stay dry while the coach transferred us to Melford Hall, a National Trust property with strong connections to Beatrix Potter. All too soon it was time for the homeward journey after a very full day for which we gave our warm thanks to Ray and Molly.

The Big Red Bus Trip to Aldeburgh 7th October 2012

This was a bonus trip that was slotted into our planned programme of excursions. One of our members, James Denny, has a most unusual hobby. He collects buses, not Dinky toys, real ones. So one bright Sunday morning, James plus wife Liz and little Max took his big red double decker (built at Eastern Coachworks, Lowestoft and star of a famous Doctor Who episode) together with 49 passengers on a trip to the seaside. Most of us ended up sitting on the seawall at Aldeburgh eating fish and chips in glorious sunshine. And as an added unexpected treat,



The Red Bus, a blue sky and GWCP at Aldeburgh

after a stroll along the sea front, we discovered a spectacular vintage car display, with lots of gleaming chrome, immaculate paintwork and even leather straps around the bonnet of every famous make of car since the year dot. It was very impressive. The drive home was just as much fun and the bus behaved itself perfectly. Well done, James! Also many thanks to Ray and David for organizing everything. It was a great day out.

2013 Calendars

This year's Calendar showcases twelve more fine photographs taken by Edwina Beaumont, this time of flowers and fungi found in Gunton Wood. Most of the print run of 230 copies have already been taken but a few still remain so please place your orders ASAP with Rosemary on 01502 515944 to avoid disappointment.

The cost this year is £4.50 per calendar.



Front cover

Queen's Diamond Jubilee Party Saturday 2nd June 2012

Once again, GWCP's traditional luck held. The only fine day in the entire week was the day that we picked for our celebrations. The School playing field was filled with gazebos, games, stalls and bunting and the Gunton



An early afternoon panorama before the crowd arrived

Woodland community turned out in force to enjoy the fun. After a BBQ and champers for the loyal toast, there was boat racing, hobby horse polo, a coconut shy, tug-o'-war, a huge raffle with great prizes and a sumptuous cake/pickle/jam stall. The

lucky number winner, Anita Swatman, planted a Jubilee Tree and she was then presented with a plaque signed by Martyn Lewis representing the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service. Although planned as a non-profit event, everyone was so generous we made a surplus of £480 for Group funds, a wonderful bonus after a very successful day.

Lowestoft Sea Front Air Show 23rd and 24th June 2012

GWCP provided 50 collectors for the show, and the Saturday attendance was encouraging. But on Sunday the rains came and people stayed away so the organisers reluctantly decided to cancel next year's display. The Airshow Committee still honoured their pledge to support local groups so David and Sue Holland plus David and Rosemary Briggs attended the Hotel Victoria reception to collect our £600.

Olympic Torch Relay 5th July 2012

On 5th July the Olympic torch was due to reach Lowestoft along the A12 and we were requested to provide 17 stewards to line the route from Weston Road to Dene's High School. Large crowds turned up to cheer and there was a wonderful party atmosphere. The Olympic Torch Crew congratulated us on one of their best receptions.



Some of the GWCP stewards

Teddy Bears' Fun Day 16th September 2012

All the churches in Lowestoft and district combined to promote a *Churchfest* event during the second half of September and, as part of this, Gunton St Peter's and GWCP joined forces to put on a superb show for Teddy Bears. The Church was decorated with bears of every shape and size while wonderful cakes, biscuits and drinks were also available. Meanwhile, in the wood, the Teddies were having the most exciting afternoon of their lives. They could ride John Moore's zip wire from the tree tops, or take David Briggs' train, or try the slide, the seesaw or the swingboat, all of which had been beautifully hand crafted by Dick Armstrong. Everything was taken care of. The nurse in the first aid tent gave them a thorough medical to check on injuries sustained on the high wire and we even saw an adult getting his Teddy examined first to see if it was fit enough to ride the wire! Cedric Smith engraved their Certificates with names in copperplate and the Rev'd Trevor signed them for posterity. Big Daddy

Woody Bear from Pleasurewood Hills joined in the fun and told us afterwards that he had had his very best time ever. One hundred bears braved the zip ride and, throughout the afternoon, more than 400 grown-ups and children came to join in the fun.



Here are just some of the happenings at the Teddy Bear's Fun Day. Unfortunately we don't have space to show more

Autumn Litter Pick 27th October 2012

Two dozen hardy souls braved the rain and hail to litter pick the area around Foxburrow, Leisure Way and the Green Belt as a joint GWCP / GPRAs operation. Chris Songer's gazebo was a life-saver, Tesco provided the goodies and Rosemary and Jackie did the honours. Nearly 30 sacks of rubbish, plus a broken kayak, were collected which was a great effort in view of the conditions. Thank you to all who helped.

Finally, we have to end with some very sad news. We have recently lost two of our long standing members who both lost their fight against cancer.

Peter Rowland was one of our regular Thursday morning volunteers who did much to help us in those early days.

Brian Trust worked with our Saturday morning crew whenever he was able to.

We will miss them both very much and send our sincere condolences to Ann, to Barbara and to their families.