

# Gunton Woodland Community Project

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## NEWSLETTER

June, July, August 2011



### Our Woodland Summer



Bluebells in Church Wood

Once again the weather made us a hostage to fortune. The driest Spring for generations seemed to be never ending and many Thursday work parties were given over to watering our youngest trees to try to keep them alive. As expected, the bluebells were 3 weeks early and although it was a spectacular show, all too soon they lost their colour and withered due to lack of rain. The wildlife pond also suffered badly and early season pond dipping forays by Gunton Primary School had to be curtailed. We thought that the orchids in the wildflower meadow might thrive due to lack of



Common spotted orchids

competition but after the first rain shower the grasses exploded into life and quickly obscured the purple carpet of flower spikes. And our small collection of bee orchids were even more elusive this year .... We couldn't find any!!

But at last the rains came, the pond made a remarkable recovery and throughout August everything stayed very green instead of the dessicated yellow that we have experienced in other years. In fact, it was the end of August before we got round to cutting the meadow and taking the "green hay" to the Nature Reserve as an experiment in propagation. The unusual weather pattern has had one beneficial result .... berries! We have never seen so much fruit on the rowan, the guelder rose, the holly and the blackthorn. If the Autumn migration of our feathered friends *en route* from Scandinavia to Spain gets side tracked to Gunton Wood they are in for a treat.



Culvert clean-out

Principal jobs for our "heavy gang" have included moving the large pile of concrete rubble from the lower meadow of the Nature Reserve (aided by a SWT JCB) and completing the clean-out of the drainage culvert at the South end of the Church Field. After we discovered that this was 90% plugged with something as hard as concrete, this turned into a marathon extending over several weeks using the Mark 4 modified version of Colin Fitt's reaming tool.

### School Visits

Just before the end of the Summer Term we again welcomed three classes from **Poplars School** for their Year 4 annual visit. Barry kicked things off with a 10 minute "Horrible History" of Gunton Wood which took in the Romans, the Anglo-Saxons, the Vikings, the Normans, the Civil War, Horatio Nelson, Lowestoft porcelain, the Fowler family and the birth of GWCP. Then each class, in turn, either visited the Church, or went on a woodland tour with David or tried their hand at pond dipping with Barry. This was followed by a picnic, more bug hunting and a brief spell at the playground, all in glorious sunshine. A few days later we were delighted to receive 65 illustrated thankyou letters which tell their own story .....



David showing a group from the Poplars the damage done by the leaf miner moth to a horse chestnut



It was the best day ever. Thank you for the information, it really helped my life. I did think the red needle gaw was disgusting looking. I didn't even know that trees could get diseases. The pond dipping was fab, I was the one that caught zero everything. I had an action packed day. I did not see any birds, all I saw is pigeons... Then we heard Hannah scream and so we rushed over and saw a really big spider. And then me and Emily screamed. I caught a big frog but it turned out to be a stone. Thank you for teaching us the wonders and exotic nature in our nearest wood. The walk with David was brilliant. I caught 3 tadpoles and a baby newt. If something wanted to be changed it needent be because its alright just the way it is.



A few days later we did a repeat performance for 8 Special Needs students from the **Warren School**. It was a first visit for all of them and they had a wonderful time, as did we when we read their carefully written letters of thanks.

## Big Lottery Fund

We were delighted to receive a grant of £2447 from the National Lottery, under their Awards for All scheme, which would enable us to get formal certification for two of our members to use a chainsaw (to the standard of NPTC CS 30 and 31), and also to purchase a chainsaw plus a set of personnel safety kit and clothing. In July Colin Fitt was duly certificated and David Briggs will soon be undertaking the first part of the Training Course. Chainsaw capability within the Group has become increasingly important as some of the forestry tasks are now beyond the reach of our ageing volunteers if we continue to restrict ourselves to using only hand tools.

## 1000<sup>th</sup> Work Party



34 smiling faces and 4 happy doggies

On 9<sup>th</sup> June 2011, yet another milestone was reached when we met for our 1000<sup>th</sup> work party. Since we started in 1998 we have logged more than 29,000 hours and I'm sure that if David Cameron with his Big Society had known he would have been the first to congratulate us. Anyway it was a good excuse to see off a few bottles of bubbly, so WELL DONE EVERYONE and here's to the next 1000 ....

## 2012 GWCP Calendar

*Our "New Look" GWCP calendar for 2012 will be on sale early in November at a cost of £4.50 each. To avoid disappointment place your order ASAP by phoning Rosemary Briggs on 01502 515944.*

## Outings

### **Excursion to Arundel-South Coast 6<sup>th</sup> May to 9<sup>th</sup> May 2011**

Our regular driver Neil Ripley welcomed 49 members and friends aboard the Belle coach for a smooth drive to Arundel, stopping for refreshments at Hylands Park near Chelmsford. After visiting the well preserved castle and gardens and a quick look at the pretty town centre we checked into the Avisford Park Hilton, our home for the next 3 nights and an excellent choice. The following day we boarded the ferry from Portsmouth to the Isle of Wight where some members toured Osborne House while others investigated East Cowes. Unfortunately road restrictions prevented our planned coach tour of the Island so we stopped at a Craft Centre / Antiques Farm before re-boarding the ferry. Glorious sunshine made our Sunday visit to Exbury Gardens all the more enjoyable where the carriage and train rides and wonderful flower displays made it a day to remember. All too soon, it was Monday with that "going home" feeling but not before we squeezed in a tour of Petworth House with its National Trust treasure trove of art work and furnishings. It was a great trip and everyone thanked David for his superb organisation.

### **Gressenhall Workhouse and Farm Thursday 18th August 2011**

The weather forecast was a little "iffy", and there were 3 late cancellations due to illness, but spirits were high as the coach left for Gressenhall near Dereham. On arrival, the welcome scones "on the house" were very much appreciated and the rest of the day surpassed all expectations. The fully dressed guide describing workhouse life, the re-enactment, the variety of farm animals and above all, the wonderfully presented lunch all combined to ensure this living museum is a great place to visit. Our warmest thanks go to Ray and Molly for making it happen.

### **Snape Christmas Spectacular Friday 16<sup>th</sup> December 2011**

We have reserved tickets for the 4 pm matinée performance at Snape Maltings, the coach leaves Gunton St Peters Church at 1pm sharp and pick ups through South Lowestoft can be arranged. The inclusive cost is £23.00 pp, cheques payable to GWCP at the time of booking to David Briggs or any Committee Member, in order of receipt.

### **Proposed Trip to Floriade, Holland 10<sup>th</sup> May to 14<sup>th</sup> May 2012**

This ambitious 4 night excursion has been offered first to our work party volunteers and to our other regular supporters. A large number have expressed interest by returning their forms, so we have booked a 49 seat coach. You will soon receive a Booking Form which will be accepted on a "first come, first served" basis.

### **Residents Association Trip to "Christmas at Thursford" Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> December 2011**

Gunton Park Residents Association have a few seats left for the matinée performance at an inclusive cost of £47.50 pp. All are welcome to participate. Please contact Mrs Toni Almond, GPRAs Secretary, 01502 561989.

## Sea Front Air Display

Once again we played a major part in helping with the bucket collection at the Lowestoft Air Show. We managed to provide no less than 47 members, each filling a 2 hour slot in the schedule, all helping to collect over £115,000 which, hopefully, ensures that the show goes on again next year. As usual, David did all the organising and liaison work with the Air Show Committee. *Thank you to all who helped.*



Brenda, Paul, Jenny, Mac, Barbara, Jackie, Frank, Brian with nice, full buckets

**Sorry, no room for Nature Notes, this time!**

*The Gunton Woodland Committee*