

Editorial

A great deal has happened at Foxglove Covert since the last newsletter. Happily many things have been good, but sadly, some things have been less so.

The Christmas party at the Bolton Arms, Downholme, was certainly good. Actually, that is not really true, because it was absolutely marvellous, as Sue Harper will report later.

The Volunteers enjoyed a visit to Hedleyhope Fell and spent days recovering from the strenuous work done that day (!). Marion Hannaford has contributed an article about a great day out.

At the other end of the scale we had have the weather. Since the start of 2008, we have had three major storms. On each occasion we have lost many trees, and some parts of the reserve have been devastated. The storm at the beginning of March punched a huge hole through the conifer belt to the west of the discovery trail, which was a very sad sight indeed. All this impacts on the work of the reserve, as time has to be spent on clear-up operations. As usual, the Volunteers tackle such tasks with alacrity, and considering the scale of the work involved and the amount of effort required, it is amazing that it is all done with such good humour. It obviously brings out the best in people. Thank you to you all.

As a result of the devastation mentioned above, I have asked Graham Newcombe to put pen to paper and jot down our proposals for remedial action. As a forester, I am sure that his contribution will be more sensible than my proposal to plug the gap by creating a huge windbreak using the colossal number of logs that are now on the reserve.

Finally, we have got some great news for the future, and when you read the piece from Tony Crease, I think that you will agree that it will involve a great deal of hard work. As I have already mentioned, we are lucky to have a really great bunch of Volunteers, but, there is always a need for more people, so if you feel that you would like to help, please do come forward. You will be made most welcome.

Friends, Volunteers, etc.

As many of you will know, I have recently taken over the function of co-ordinating the Friends, Volunteers, and 100 Club, as well as becoming the editor of this publication. Up until last April, all of this was done by Sam Hackett. Sam and his wife Alison decided to 'up sticks' and move to Suffolk. Before leaving, Sam wisely put

together a set of handover notes, which have proved invaluable, and for which I thank him. Sam did an enormous amount for Foxglove Covert and we owe him a great debt of gratitude. Happily Sam remains one of our Friends, and pops in to see us whenever he is in the locality.

Ray Harper

Foxglove Covert Christmas Dinner

The Christmas Dinner held at the Bolton Arms, Downholme on the 29th December, proved to be a resounding success.



It was well attended, with excellent food, convivial and appropriately festive surroundings, and good company. The wine flowed while ringers, volunteers and friends of Foxglove Covert



chatted together merrily, and the meal was consumed.

Ray Harper who had organised the event, proved himself to be a 'master of organisation' by bringing with him a list of people's choices from the menu, previously picked. As

anticipated, some people had forgotten what they had ordered, including HE WHO SHALL REMAIN NAMELESS!

The highlight of the evening was exceptional musical entertainment provided by Tony and his band - not of 'merry men' - but 'merry men and one woman'! We all clapped to tunes and sang along to a range of popular songs, bringing the evening to a close.

Without doubt, a thoroughly good evening was had by all, leading us to ask "When is the next 'do'?"

Sue Harper

Foxglove Covert LNR

Wet Meadows Project

Plans are well advanced for the new wet grassland area which will ultimately be approximately 1¾ hectares in size situated on the SW corner of the Reserve. A topographical survey has been completed and the final design (left) has been produced by Simon Warwick of Ripon who has a great deal of expertise in this field and was the driver behind the Nosterfield project north of Ripon.

Jez Kalkowski of Defence Estates has painted an artist's impression (below), the original is on view in the Field Centre.

The design enables most of the existing wet flushes to remain intact. Water will be pumped from a spring using a ram pump and this will then flow into the highest point of the wetland creating a 'header tank' effect which will fill the remainder of the system. Surplus water will run off into existing becks.

Left: Schematic Layout of the new Wet Meadows by Simon Warwick

Below: Artist's Impression by Jez Kalkowski



No large water bodies will be created but instead a series of interlinked field drains and bunds giving almost 2km of wet margins separated by raised grassy banks.

The site will be on two levels, the west side being higher than the east by about half a metre. We hope to construct a hide on the south side with views over the entire area and the moorland beyond. Access to the hide will be from the existing south moorland gate and a narrow linear phragmites bed will be planted to screen people as they walk along the path to the hide.

We need to raise around £70k for the project and Emma Wyldes is giving us a huge boost by running the London Marathon for us on April 13. All proceeds will go to the wet meadows fund.

It is hoped we will have sufficient money to start the project in Sept/Oct this year. Please give generously where you can and if you have influence over anyone else who is able to contribute please use your powers of persuasion!

Tony Crease

Emma Runs for Foxglove!

In support of the project Mrs Emma Wyldes, a mother of two young daughters married to a Warrant Officer on the Garrison, will run the London Marathon on April 13th. Emma is seeking sponsorship for her run the proceeds from which will be donated to the Reserve and the wetland. It is hoped that some local business people and individuals able to offer support will get behind this worthwhile community project which now attracts over ten thousand visitors annually and offers a unique learning opportunity for 2500 school children.

If you would like to sponsor Emma please use the sponsor form, enclosed with this issue, or contact the Reserve staff. Anyone wishing to contribute to the appeal should contact the Reserve staff on 01748 831113 or 07754 270980.



From left to right, Simon Warwick, project designer, Jez Kalkowski, who painted the water colour, Major Tony Crease of the Foxglove Covert Management Group, and Emma Wyldes, who is running the London Marathon for Foxglove Covert.

Winter Storms

Britain has a severe wind climate compared to most of the world, including the rest of Europe. Once again, Foxglove Covert has suffered the effects of winter storms. The Conifer Woodlands surrounding and protecting the reserve have lost numerous mature trees to high winds. Teams of volunteers have spent many hours recently sawing and removing the trees that have blown down. A debt of gratitude is owed as the work is back breaking and potentially dangerous. Habitat piles have been created from the sawn timber and brash. These piles create excellent habitat for a multitude of mammals and insects but there is a limit to how many the Reserve can take and in some compartments the excess will have to be removed from site altogether.

The loss of yet more trees on the western side of the reserve is the subject of much debate amongst staff and volunteers. Further loss would seriously compromise the protection this belt of trees affords to the Covert. A shelter belt provides protection from the wind for up to 40x the height of the trees.

Work is needed urgently to commence a replacement programme for these fallen trees. Over the summer a Woodland Plan will be developed to identify the best way to undertake this work. A phased planting programme is required to ensure the sustainability of the woodland around the reserve. It is hoped this replanting can commence next winter at which time we will, no doubt, be calling for volunteers to assist. Our thanks to all who have given of their time so willingly over the past four months.

Graham Newcombe

Volunteer Visit to Durham Wildlife Trust Reserves - 12th February 2008



As a follow on from Durham Wildlife Trust's visit to Foxglove in October last year, 12 of Foxglove's volunteers went on a trip to DWT reserves at Low Barns and Hedleyhope Fell. The Wildlife Trust kindly loaned us their minibus for the trip and we set off on a beautiful, sunny day. Andy Maclay, the Wetlands Reserve Officer had tea and biscuits waiting for us when we arrived. He then went on to give us a superb guided walk, explaining some of the management of Low Barns and telling us what species they

had recorded there.

The reserve looked beautiful in the morning sunshine and everyone agreed that the alder wood looked like it had come from a Harry Potter style film set. The old alder trunks were rising, gnarled and mossy, from the frozen, flooded old river bed.

We got back in the bus for a short journey to Hedleyhope Fell where we had our lunch in a spectacular setting looking down the length of the Fell. Not a breath of wind disturbed us and the six wind turbines which line the side of the road were still. Craig Best, HHF Wildlife and Community Officer, showed us around two different areas of his site.

The first was a walk along the newly installed access path which shows off good views as far as Penshaw Monument in Sunderland. From here we could see the large areas of heather, bilberry and bracken which make up the main body of the Fell. We then went to the burial site where 250,000 sheep were buried during the foot and mouth crisis. Because this area has poor soil and sparse vegetation it is now a haven for ground nesting birds and Craig was enthusiastic about telling us the history and management of this area.

Although we had gone on the trip expecting to do a task, there was so much to see on both the Reserves that we didn't get round to doing any work! Maybe next time! All in all we had a lovely day out, helped along by exceptionally warm, still weather. Reciprocal visits from both sets of volunteers are planned for later this year. We look forward to it.

Marion Hannaford

Forthcoming Events

Sunday April 13th.

London Marathon. Emma Wyldes is running for the Foxglove Covert Wetlands Project. We have enclosed a sponsor form, and would be grateful if you could sponsor her, and also get your friends to do the same. It is vitally important that we all try to raise as much money as possible, in order to achieve our goal. Please sponsor her.

Sunday April 20th.

Collection for Foxglove Covert at Catterick Market. If you can spare some time please come along and help us raise some money. Please contact Foxglove Covert for details.

Wednesday April 23rd.

Visit to Foxglove by Volunteers from the Durham Wildlife Trust (Low Barns and Hedleyhope Fell). All Friends and Volunteers are welcome to join them and make them feel at home.

Saturday May 3rd.

Dawn chorus walk. 5am. Start. Breakfast provided at £5 per person. Please book in advance.

Saturday May 17th-Sunday May 18th.

Bee keeping course at Foxglove Covert

Friday June 6th.

Moth evening at Marne Barracks.

Saturday June 7th

Wild flower walk, at Foxglove Covert, beginning at 13:00.

Thursday July 31st-Sunday August 3rd.

Bird ringing course at Foxglove Covert

Friday August 29th

Moth evening at Foxglove Covert

Saturday December 13th.

Volunteer work day at Foxglove Covert

In the near future, probably in late April, the next phase in the water vole re-introduction programme will take place. If you wish to know more about this, or come to the next release, please contact Ray Harper. If you came to any of the previous releases you will know that they are endearing little creatures.

Volunteers work at Foxglove Covert every Tuesday. If you have not been before, and would like to join us, you will be made most welcome. If you work during the week, you are welcome to join those who come in on Saturdays.

Recent Events

A coffee morning was held at Richmond Town Hall on March 6th, which raised about £200. Many thanks to the Friends and Volunteers who came along and made the event such a success.

100 Club

The winner of the most recent draw was Mrs Jean Ross.

We are always trying to increase the membership of this club, and would invite anyone interested in joining to contact Foxglove Covert and either join there, or leave a message for Ray Harper. Membership is just £10 per year, and a draw takes place every quarter. Please support the 100 Club if you can.

We would like to thank **Castle Print**, Richmond, for their help with the cost of printing this special colour edition of Undergrowth announcing the launch of the Wet Meadows Project. Maximum effort is now required in raising the money to enable us to bring this exciting new development at Foxglove Covert to fruition.