

Friends of Towerhouse Wood and of Moorend Spout Newsletter for spring 2012

Moorend Spout

We are making progress in our application to North Somerset Council for planning permission for the installation of our ponds in the field. This can be seen on the NSC planning website (application number 11/P/0599/F). Nailsea Town Council submitted this as our agents on 28th March 2011 and we received the permission from NSC on 19th October, with conditions. We were required to submit a 10-year management plan for which we updated our already existing 5 year plan. This has now been submitted and we await approval. We were also required to agree to commence our project within 3 years and to sow a stabilizing grass on the spoil heaps to prevent erosion. We were also required by the Environment Agency to provide details of the profile of the spoil disposal against the bank of the Land Yeo. The plans have now been submitted by Helen Iorwerth on our behalf and these have been accepted. When these matters have been finalized we hope to engage a contractor to bring a mini digger on site to dig the necessary holes. The timing of this will be constrained by the soil conditions, since the site can be very wet and using an excavator could then be difficult.



Sue Jones (Wessex Water's Ecological Clerk of Works), Rosemary Dennis, Terry Smith and Hilary West accepting the award of £300 under the Watermark scheme.



Aaron Provis and Helen Iorwerth with one of the new ponds close to the carr.

In common with many community groups, NEWT is hoping to plant a tree in February to celebrate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. At present we favour a Black Poplar, which is a native tree, to be planted in the south-east corner of the site. This will probably be a fairly substantial tree and we will probably have difficulty in delivering it to the planting site. We will appreciate any offers of help with the transport of the tree from the road onto the field.

We continue to landscape the stream flowing from the carr towards the boardwalk. This has now formed several cascading ponds and should be a very attractive feature when it is re-vegetated. We are still

trying to discover the source of the water feeding this stream. Some appears to come from springs in the pools within the carr, and the water flowing in Jacklands Tunnel may also make a contribution. The water seems to disappear into the ground to the west of the boardwalk, and probably feeds into the adjacent rhyne.

We now understand from National Grid that the area to the west of the carr and including part of the carr is within the area designated to be within the proposed corridor for the installation of the new 400kV power lines. It seems that they are obliged to conduct an environmental impact assessment of our site, to establish that wildlife will not be adversely affected. We have requested to see a copy of their report when this is produced.

We have been in discussion with the Environment Agency (EA) on the condition of the retaining wall lining the bank of the Land Yeo, which seems to be falling towards the river. This mortared brick wall seems to be quite old and may even date back to the time of the construction of embankment at that point which was probably in the 14th century. Although NEWT owns the river as far as the centre, we hope that the EA will take responsibility for the repairs needed, which could be quite costly. We do not anticipate that the river will break through the embankment for many years since the earth works are at least 5 metres wide at that point.



Bank slippage on the Land Yeo



Ian Chambers and Tony Carroll constructing the seat near to the board Walk

Last year we had two hay cuts made by Robert Young. The first cut which was especially large, was baled and removed. The second cut would not dry due to the prolonged period of rain and most was left on the field. We are persevering with hay cuts since we need to reduce the nutrient status of the field, to encourage the flowering plants and to suppress the grasses.

We are grateful to Ian Chambers and his helpers for the installation of a seat under the Ash tree close to the boardwalk. We will try to introduce other seats on the site when our finances allow this. We would also like to improve the path to the south of the carr, which at present is in a very wet area.

Gill Brown has again found Otter spraint near the waterfall. The prolific growth of Watercress in the Land Yeo caused the water to over flow and this has now been cleared by David Urch and Mike Woodley with some help from the EA who have treated it with herbicide. The excessive keeching of Jacklands Rhyne by the internal drainage board in 2010 seems to have caused the loss of the Whorl Grass, quite a rare plant. The Ragged Robin planted last year seems to be still growing.

We still hold our working mornings starting at 10am on the first Saturday each month, meeting on Pound Lane at the entrance to the public footpath leading to Moorend Spout (opposite Ravenswood School).

For further information please go to our website www.newt.btck.co.uk or to the BBC website www.bbc.co.uk/thingstodo.



Mike Woodley and David Urch removing Watercress from the Land Yeo

Towerhouse Wood

We have continued to pull the Himalayan Balsam from the garden of Mrs Thearle close to Spilsbury Wood and we have discovered another garden near to the Failand Road which also

harbours large amounts of this alien. We are glad to see that the site in Spilsbury Wood that we cleared in 2009/2010 now has very few Balsam plants, so it does seem to be possible to eliminate this by perseverance. We are especially grateful to David Clay and his team for help with this work.

The path leading up the hill from Freda Henry's stile has always been steep and slippery, and in wet weather this path is best avoided, taking alternative routes up the hill. However, Jon Burgess (Woodland Trust) has now obtained a grant from the Forestry Commission (FC) to improve this path and other facilities in the Wood. It is hoped that we will be able to build a stairway from Freda Henry's stile up the hill with about 40 steps. These will be constructed with wooden risers about one metre wide, and the surface will probably be of loose gravel. We are investigating the way to fasten the stakes, and this may depend on the proximity of the stone to the surface. We also hope to make steps on the path leading uphill from the pond. The money from the FC could also be used to update the interpretation board which could be repositioned near to the intersection of the two public footpaths in the NE corner of the Wood, where we could also install new way markers. This work will be supervised by Nigel Osborne and Jon Burgess, and insurance will be provided under the cover of the Woodland Trust.



Path leading from Freda Henry's stile. At this point the path is not steep. To the north of this area the path becomes quite difficult in wet weather



Dormouse found by Gill Brown in Towerhouse Wood. Gill is licensed to handle these delightful mammals

The grant for this work covers 50% of the cost, and the remainder has to be 'earned' by donated time by volunteers. It is also hoped to install a kissing gate where the stile at present has a plaque in memory of Freda Henry. We will be most grateful for any offers of help towards these projects. At present we hope for assistance by volunteers from the NatWest Bank in central Bristol and from Timberland at Cribbs Causeway. The projected start date is May of this year.

Piers has shown us some natural rocks that he has carved in memory of his son's untimely death last year. These have images of the kinds of animals to be found in the Wood and he intends to leave these as a trail for children to follow.

Piers is trying to discourage a motor cyclist who likes to tour the Wood, and ways to make the Wood less accessible to motor bikes are being considered. Jon has organized the removal of an Ash tree that had fallen over the path running through the centre of the Wood. If it is thought that some of these paths are being overused, such trees may be left in place in the future.

In October 2011 Gill Brown found three juvenile dormice in one of the nesting boxes. This finally proves that dormice are present and breeding in Towerhouse Wood. Gill hopes to put ten more boxes in the lower part of the wood before the spring