

FRIENDS OF NORTHCLIFFE



July 2009

Northcliffe News

EVENTS

SOCIABLE WALKS

Tuesday 22nd September and Friday 16th October
Meet at 2pm at the Cliffe Wood Avenue entrance for a gentle walk around Northcliffe Woods lasting no more than an hour. Please bring suitable clothing and footwear.
For more information contact June Carter on 590172

PLANNING MEETINGS

Thursday 24th September and Tuesday 10th November
7pm at the Kirkgate Community Centre, Shipley
Members and prospective members are welcome at all the meetings.

NORTHCLIFFE ALLOTMENTS SOCIETY

Tuesday 1st September
'Growing Fruit' – Talk by Hilary Dobson, Chairman of the Northern Fruit Group. Saltaire Methodist Church, commencing 7.30 pm. Non-members of NAS welcome for a fee of £1.

BRADFORD URBAN WILDLIFE GROUP

Thursday 24th September, 29th October, 26th November
(Subjects to be announced)
Illustrated talks held at Shipley Library at 7.30pm

RSPB AIREDALE AND BRADFORD LOCAL GROUP

Friday 11th September Ghana; Birding West Africa
Friday 9th October Lowland Heathland
Friday 13th November Galapagos
Illustrated talks held at Shipley Library at 7.30pm

For further information please visit our website at:
www.friendsofnorthcliffe.co.uk

To see a colour version of the Newsletter go to the web-site, **Events and News** page,
Keyword is: woods

Front Cover

Great spotted woodpecker by Keith Scott.

(Acting) Chair's Chat

All Change

There were several important changes at the recent Annual General Meeting. As anticipated, Jenny Cassidy stood down as Chair as did Margaret Walker as Treasurer, Colin Wood as Conservation Officer and Keith Scott as Newsletter Editor. All have made a vital contribution to the work of the Friends over the years. Jenny has been Chair for an incredible ten years, leading efficiently and enthusiastically. Margaret was Treasurer for even longer, performing a vital and often unheralded task. Colin put in a lot of work organising conservation activities and Keith maintained the high standards of the newsletter. (help!!...new Ed!!)

New faces

I am pleased to welcome Joan Stevens as Treasurer. Joan has stepped up after several years as a Committee member and am sure will do a great job. Lisa Chadwick will take over as Newsletter Editor. I'd better be careful what I write here since Lisa is my wife (well remembered!!!...Ed.) and also has editorial authority! (You bet ya!! Ed!!) Those who have been members for several years will know that Lisa was our first Editor. In the absence of any other nominations, I accepted the position of Acting Chair, to fill the position for a year or until a replacement can be found, whichever is sooner. Again, some of you will know that I was Chair for a few years back in the last century. I am pleased to report that all other Committee members have agreed to continue.

The Future

If Friends of Northcliffe is to continue to make a difference, **we urgently need your help**. We are particularly seeking the following officers. **Conservation Officer** - to organise practical conservation activities and liaise with Council. **Events Officer** - you've guessed it! - to organise events. **Promotions Officer** - to promote FoN and encourage people to join. As we go to press I learn that, due to health reasons, Joan Stevens will have to step down as **Treasurer**. We wish Joan a full recovery and hope that somebody will step forward to fill this position. If you think you may be able to help or would like to discuss the roles in more detail please contact me.

Communications

We have started to produce occasional short email updates to provide news of events, wildlife sightings and other topical items. If you would like to receive such updates or have information you would like to circulate please email:

friendsofnorthcliffe@blueyonder.co.uk

The 'Norman Rae Meadows'

I hope you have all managed to get out onto the Norman Rae Playing Fields and seen the transformation from an area of closely mown grass to a diverse meadow with sinuous paths. This is something we proposed many years ago and we are delighted that Bradford Council has taken this step.

Stopping cutting had almost immediate effects. By mid May there were impressively large areas of cuckoo flower (which is the food plant of the orange-tip butterfly) and the dandelions, grasses and common sorrel added colour and variety. Peter Boyd of the Conservation Management Centre was commissioned by the Council to carry out a survey and on 15th June recorded 14 flowering plants including heath bedstraw, lesser stitchwort and bird's-foot-trefoil. As time goes by, we would expect the number of plant species to increase. Other species likely to benefit, include insects, such as butterflies, and mammals such as voles, mice, foxes and bats. In addition to the wildlife and aesthetic benefits, the management will save fuel and labour costs.

The area links up with the meadow across High Bank Lane, which was first managed as a hay meadow about 10/15 years ago and now shows a wide variety of plants including well over a hundred orchids. Personally I'd like to see the area leading up to the lay-by and viewpoint managed similarly to create over a kilometre of meadow. I also think small areas adjacent to Avondale Road and Old Spring Woods, where cuckoo flowers have previously appeared, would also benefit. The next, crucial, step will be to take an annual hay crop after the flowers have set seed. This will help to maintain and increase the diversity.

2009 is certainly a turning point in the management of Northcliffe (and, hopefully, other parks and grasslands in Bradford). In ten years time we will look back and find it difficult to believe how this area used to be managed. (and how much carbon was use! Ed.)

If you have any comments (positive or negative) on the management of this area, please contact andy.ross@bradford.gov.uk.

Events

As you will see elsewhere, this Autumn, we are organising a couple of 'sociable walks'. These are aimed particularly at those who like company on their walks. If they are well attended we will organise more. (bring your friends..Ed)

Rae Gala to continue (we hope!)

Since we organised a Gala in 1995 to celebrate the 75th anniversary of Sir Norman Rae's gift of Northcliffe the event has grown and is now well-attended and a key community event for the people of Shipley. However, this year's Gala was in serious danger of being the last, since many of the organising committee wanted to take a well-earned break. I am delighted to report that, following Jenny Cassidy's appeal at the Gala, several people offered to help. We will be organising a meeting of the organising committee, probably in September. If you would like to attend please contact June Carter.

Hugh Firman, Acting Chair

Rae Gala 2009

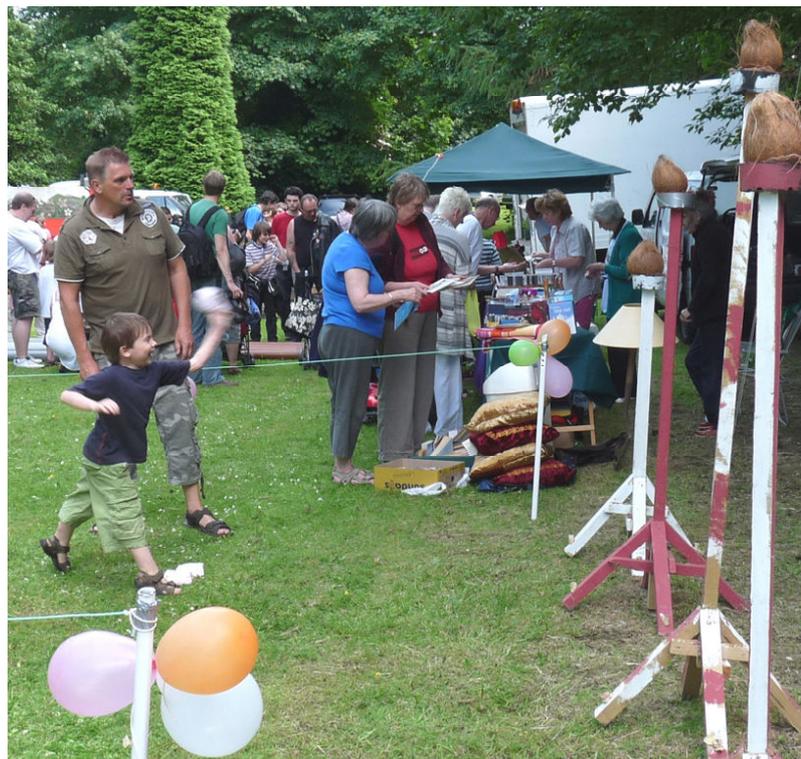
We are delighted to report on yet another wonderful Rae Gala, which was held on Sunday 14th June 2009, in beautiful sunshine. The Gala was opened by one of our own members, Joan Milligan. Joan has been a regular dog walker in Northcliffe for many years and spoke of the pleasure she gains from the friendships she has made over the years, and the beauty of the woods and fields. Amazingly, Joan has grown more than one thousand trees from the seeds she has gathered in the woods. Thank you, Joan!

After the official opening, our retiring Chairman, Jenny Cassidy, appealed to the gathered crowd for volunteers to arrange future Galas. The response was amazing; therefore, we seem assured of the continuation of this great Shipley event!

Central to the entertainment was Hall Royd Band, who were on top form, playing throughout the afternoon. We had a team of local dancers, called 'Four Hundred Roses', who were delightful in their beautiful costumes. It was intended that we should have a team of break dancers, but they failed to turn up. Fortunately, there were two young men in the crowd who offered to entertain us with their break dancing, which we all enjoyed. Thank you, boys! Another aspect of the afternoon which is so enjoyed by everyone, particularly the children, is the contribution which the Model Railway Society makes, with train rides for the children and tea and cakes served by the ladies. (Exceedingly good cakes...thank you. Ed) There were Donkey rides, ice cream, Indian food and beautiful plants for sale. Other attractions were side-shows, hedgehog rescue, owls, ferrets, cake stall, Bradford Urban Wildlife Group, WWF and brick-a-brac. If we have missed anyone out, we do thank them for their contribution.

We should remember Sir Norman Rae, our benefactor, who left this beautiful area of fields and woodlands to the people of Shipley. (Here. Here!! Ed)

June Carter



A Thank you from Four Hundred Roses:

Thanks, Joan, for inviting us to perform at Northcliffe Gala.

Please give our thanks to everyone involved who helped to make it such a lovely event. It would have been worth it just for the yummy cakes, let alone the chance of a once-in-a-lifetime "photo opportunity" on the model train!

Love, Sue



Sunrise in Old Spring Woods

On Saturday 2nd May thirteen sleepy Friends and friends (and one wide-awake dog) gathered at the end of Lynton Drive for a guided walk led by Lisa and me. The idea was to experience that quintessentially English spring highlight which most of us normally experience horizontally; the Dawn Chorus.

The loud and melodic blackbirds were the first to start with their fluting song, which is often underrated. Pretty soon the robins joined in. We walked slowly through the woods, stopping every so often just to listen. En route we heard the varied calls of wrens, great tits, wood pigeons, crows, Canada geese and a garden warbler (or was that a blackcap - they are very hard to distinguish), willow warblers and finally the characteristic call of the chiffchaff, conveniently named after the call it makes. Two foxes were also seen. An added bonus was the spectacular bluebell display. Towards the end of the walk we heard the unmistakable calls of young tawny owls and everybody had good views of the family.

As we headed out onto the Norman Rae Playing Fields we had fleeting views of a roe deer, just as we did at the same point last year. We walked up to the bench at the top of the Playing Fields and finished the walk with a late (6am!) breakfast. As we were eating we had good views of a green woodpecker and eventually people drifted off to work or bed. Lisa and I pottered for another few hours, meeting several people out for early morning strolls. We had good views of treecreepers and jays and a couple of goosanders flew over.

Definitely worth getting up at 4am for!

Sunrise in Northcliffe Woods

On Saturday 18th July I was joined by Jane Liddle, a fellow committee member of the West Yorkshire bat Group at 4am in search of bats. Why 4am? Early morning is one of the best times to find bat roosts because bats often fly around together or 'swarm' for some time before returning to their roosts.

After the torrential rain of the previous evening, we were thankful that the morning, although overcast, was dry but we were concerned that many bats would have taken one look at the weather during the night and decided to stay inside their favourite tree. However, within a few minutes we saw a common pipistrelle feeding. Over the next hour a few more bats also circled round but we did not locate any swarming bats or roosts.

Better luck next year!

For more information about bats please see www.westyorkshirebats.org.uk.

Hugh Firman

Conservation News

On the evening of Thursday 26th June ten of us gathered in Northcliffe Woods to tackle the Himalayan balsam menace. After two hours we had made a real impression, clearing a large area around and above the pond, all plants upstream of the pond and a large number downstream. Much more remains to be done and a key task for our new Conservation Officer will be to work with Bradford Council and voluntary groups and try to eradicate this invasive but beautiful plant.

Hugh Firman

Northcliffe Nature Notes and Lynton Garden Ramblings

I've so enjoyed the glorious Northcliffe meadows this year!!

The sea of grasses; waves rippling; awash with glorious colour.

Such a profusion of flowers already, the seed bank just waiting for the chance to bloom.

They have looked so glorious in the glowing evening light and in the bright sunlight on my way to work; definitely brightening up the start of my day!! Well done Council, for taking the brave decision to stop mowing; and for reducing the all important carbon! Thank you.

I've just been for another evening walk in those glorious meadows. It's so heart lifting!! They remind me so much of the meadows I so miss from my childhood; which I used to love to walk through, feeling the grass between my toes!!

I also love to see the donkeys at the top of High Bank Lane. They look so happy in their own meadow, knee high in flowers!

Recently whilst enjoying the open gardens of St. Peter's folk, as part of their 100th birthday celebrations, we were walking down High Bank Lane, when a pair of oyster catchers flew noisily over our heads!! They too seemed to admire the meadows as they flew over and on past the golf course.

I have heard them before, on an evening, from home, hardly believing myself. So it was wonderful to see them and to confirm my suspicions.

Also, in the meadow, on the bends on High Bank Lane, below the Golf Course, were an incredible number of orchids this year!!! I don't think I've seen as good a show anywhere!!!

Long awaited baby owl update!!!!

I spent many an evening listening to and watching the exploits and adventures of our little fluffy owlets!! They very obligingly moved down to our end of the woods, and for a few weeks could be found at the end of Lynton Drive or just at the top of the steps leading from Avondale. Just as well as I spent many a late night in the woods on my own not able to tear my self away!!!

Who needs a TV!! Although I did enjoy my (recorded) episodes of Springwatch, after I had returned from my own live Springwatch adventures!!

Isn't it amazing how **they** know when I'm compiling the latest edition of Northcliffe Nature Notes!!! They come flocking in from far and wide!! Feeling a little left out of the limelight...Mummy and Daddy owls have just put in a very loud appearance outside our bedroom window!!! In fact, there was more than one potential Daddy calling, hence the cacophony!!!!

This last week, whilst sat having a nice relaxing cuppa, on a morning, in the back garden (jungle!!) various young upstarts wanting a share of the limelight have joined me!! A gorgeous flock of mixed baby tits. The oooooooh soooo cute powder puff lemon ball blue tits along with young coal tits and great tits in a mixed flock!! Also, a female blackcap, with a gloriously rusty fox coloured cap, (not black, just to confuse us!) but

beautiful, caught in the sunlight. Green and goldfinches too, and our favourite female blackbird, 'scruffy'. I am afraid she has a genetic feather defect and is losing her feathers. She is permanently moulting, but is doing ok; her flight feathers are intact. She just has a permanent 'bad hair day'...but hey....'glasshouses'!!!!

This time of year there are never enough dark hours to get enough sleep!! I hate the thought of missing anything!! So I can't bear to go to bed before it's dark!! I get woken up about 3am by the birds!! By 4am the sun is bursting in through our window. Some days it's impossible to resist!! Hugh manages to be blissfully unaware of course! So I'm rather relieved at times for a rainy morning when I can get a lie in!! I love the sound of the rain.

Another favourite haunt of mine is the area near Shay Lane and Black Hills. I often go there for a walk after work. There's a lot to be seen. The meadows along Lee Lane were absolutely glorious; a sight to behold! Glimmering gold. A lovely sight so close to home. I didn't make my annual pilgrimage up to Swaledale this year, because I spent so much time enjoying these meadows!!

I often see interesting birds of prey flying past, whilst relaxing in the lay by near Black Hills Scout Camp. I've seen woodcock fly past regularly. It's a favourite place of mine to relax after work. I love to watch the rooks and other members of the crow family gathering in huge numbers on a winter evening. This time of year the swallows entertain me with their incredible acrobatic air display swooping so close to the car I thought they would fly in one window and out the other!

I have seen two hares in the fields near by, also.

Late one evening whilst watching yet another stunning sunset, I heard an unfamiliar bird call...a little like a curlew with a soar throat! Curious, I tried to home in on the call. I finally deduced it was hiding (and no doubt having a good snigger at my expense) in a dense hawthorn thicket!! but a little further away I realized a pair of little owls were flying from wall to wall, aha...that would be the call of a little owl then. I didn't know that!! So those hoarse, little squeaks in the thicket would be little, little owls! WOW!! Nature (creation!!) is so wonderful when we take the time to be still and wait a while; but please ...don't expect our house to be tidy if you call at this time of year!

Guess who else just put in an arrival just in time for this newsletter!!! A gorgeous baby donkey, at the top of High Bank Lane! He has a little white nose, just like his mummy!! So cute.

We would love to hear from you, if you would like to contribute something to the newsletter.

A Huge, Big THANK-YOU to Margot and Saffron for their help with the newsletter and for putting up with us using their computer late at night!! In my previous incumbency, as Editor, we had a computer.... which made life somewhat easier!!!

God bless.

Lisa Chadwick (Ed)



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If you are not a member of Friends of Northcliffe, but are interested in joining, please complete the portion below and send it with a cheque made payable to Friends of Northcliffe to:
Joan Newman at 42 Moorhead Crescent, Shipley, West Yorkshire. BD18 4LQ

Friends of Northcliffe membership form.

Please tick the appropriate boxes

Individuals £3 Family £5 Concessions £2 New Renew

Name(s):

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Cheque enclosed for £

Members Subscriptions

The subscription year for Friends of Northcliffe runs from April to 31 March 2010
You can use the above form to renew your membership.