

**Fairfield Association**  
**Fauna, Flora and Orchard Management Group [FOG]**  
**Minutes of the Meeting held on Thursday 11th September 2014, 7.00 pm**  
**at Whitegates, Sunnyside Close**

**Present:** Dave Brookes, Glenys Ferguson (mins), Tony Finn, Sue Nieduszynska, Ian Procter, Hilary Short, Mick Short (chair), Chris Workman

1. **Apologies:** Andrew Brennand, Graham Brandwood, Ian Fraser, Oliver Fulton, Helen Hicks, Rebecca Procter

2. **Minutes of last meeting:** Approved.

3. **Matters arising from Minutes:**

3.1. **Damage to Aldcliffe Road wall:** The wall is currently being rebuilt and a cheque from the insurance company is expected shortly. **Hilary** will ask Mr Edwards to repair the short section of damaged wall down the old lane. [Now completed, including the coping stones at the corner of Upper Sowerholme adjacent to the end of the Flora Field track.]

3.2. **Non-native planting in the Orchard:** A letter has been circulated to all Orchard neighbours reminding them that Lancaster City Council and Natural England forbid such planting. There has been no action to date by the offenders, so this will be followed up by a specific letter directing them to remove their plants by a certain deadline. If they fail to comply, the plants will be removed by the FA. (**Hilary & Oliver**)

4. **Tool matters:** As requested at the July FOG meeting, Ian has produced a detailed and wide-ranging report (available) on the options for dealing with grass cutting and brash disposal.

*On grass cutting:* The urgency to find an alternative to the current “stand behind” mower has been reduced by the willingness of David Elliott to take undertake extra mowing outside scheduled volunteer sessions. However, the meeting considered that this could not be a long term solution, and investigation of options should continue. It was also agreed that the preference is for something flexible, that can move loads. Amongst the machines investigated by Ian, the most promising were the Stiga-branded sit-upon mower and a mini-tractor (its greater safety and adaptability compensating for its higher price compared with a quad bike). **Ian** was asked to continue his researches, taking advice from independent experts, such as LWT and Myerscough College. Hiring or arranging an on-site trial were suggested. The machine’s ability to move between the fruit trees and around the nature reserve should be considered too. Grant funding may be required to cover the considerable purchase cost.

*On brash disposal:* It was quickly clear that buying a machine to dispose of the waste created by hedging work would not be a worthwhile use of FA funds. Instead, the choice has been narrowed to hiring a chipping machine, to be operated by volunteers, or contracting the job to Andy Lee (although borrowing may also be in the equation if Happy Mount Park acquires a machine). **Ian** will check whether volunteers need specific training to operate a chipper. It was decided, this year at least, to seek approval from the FA to employ Andy Lee at the end of the hedging season. This is more expensive than hiring a chipper, but was considered the safer and more reliable option. (**Ian** to contact Andrew.)

5. **Advice from Helen Rawlinson (Cumbria Wildlife Trust):** Helen has previously provided wildflower seed for the hay meadows. She met Sue, Ian and Mick on 5th August to look

around, and made helpful suggestions about how to develop the meadows (report available). She was impressed with the progress in respect of yellow rattle and red clover but also made the point that creation of a wildflower meadow takes quite a long time, and that previously-sown seed could yet emerge in future years. She also said that we should think more exactly about what sort of meadow we want to create. It was agreed to discuss the development of the wildflower meadows in the light of NE's prescriptions, Helen's suggestions and the results of Graeme Skelcher's latest survey (item 9.3) at a subsequent FOG meeting (**Glenys** to arrange). **Mick** drew Helen's attention to the fact that the seed spread around the arable margins was not local, and in some cases not even native. He will consult with Helen and Richard Storton about alternative supplies.

6. **Visit by Natural England Adviser:** Ben Hibbins has recently taken over responsibility for the FA's Agreement. He visited the nature reserve on 20th August and spent four hours with Mick, Dave and Glenys. It was a positive and productive visit, with many points of clarification and advice arising (full report available). A key point that he raised is that anything written into the NE Agreement is binding, and only some elements are open to variation subject to the permission of NE. Moreover, there is a risk of losing funding if we follow if advice or recommendations received from other sources and that is in conflict with the prescriptions in the NE Agreement. Ben also noted that a campfire site and any opening up of Pony Wood for public access contravenes the woodland management option and so would only be permitted if these areas were taken out of the Agreement (with implications for the FA's payment stream). Ben agreed to:

- draw up the forms for soil testing in Hay and Carr House Meadows and arrange for the analysis of samples taken by us
- consider the restriction on supplementary feeding of the cattle in the meadows in the light of Helen Rawlinson's argument that if they are eating hay cut from the meadows then this will also spread the seed
- confirm in writing that it is at the FA's discretion as to how to interpret the clause that says between 1st December and 31st March the cattle "should preferably graze the LGGs Field" unless "this is not possible", and therefore there is no need to apply for permission to allow the cattle to use parts of the reserve covered by the NE Agreement
- review the stocking figures, particularly in the light of the problems experienced with the grass in West Field.

**Mick** will contact Ben to remind him about these matters and also to report on recent progress. It was agreed to defer any further discussion of the management of West Field until his answer on cattle numbers has been received (**Glenys** to add to a future agenda).

Ben's suggestion of planting extra willow to block more of the view of School Pond from the boardwalk will not be pursued, for the time being at least.

The decision to delay any de-compaction of the soil around the cattle crossing until spring was confirmed. **Glenys** will ask **Graham** to add monitoring this soil to his monthly list.

7. **Rush cutting proposals:** The Natural England Adviser confirmed that the marsh vegetation is too dense. Glenys has therefore been in contact with Richard Storton to ask about cutting. His advice is that the best time is Sept – Nov, if ground conditions allow. Costs will principally be for transporting the Softrac from Kendal and back, hire and diesel is minimal, Richard's time (he is now qualified to drive the machine) is free. Scything would be a good back up in small areas around the edges, scrapes and ponds. Richard also advises weed-wiping of the re-growth in the following months. It was agreed to go ahead with the cutting,

subject to FA approval of the costs (**Glenys** to ask Richard for an estimate). A decision on the weed-wiping (note: approval would have to be ratified by the FA) was deferred for further information about the purpose and value of the exercise and likely costs (**Glenys**). Natural England would also have to be approached for permission to weed-wipe.

## 8. Management:

**8.1. Anna's Pool repairs and Upper Sowerholme Bund:** On 18th July, Richard Storton and three volunteers used sodium bentonite to stem the leak. Extra mud was used to raise the bund. The repairs appear to be holding well, and the whole area is now considerably wetter. The eel-friendly pipe remains to be installed (**Glenys** to remind Richard).

**8.2. Rural Payments Agency remapping and field numbers:** No action.

**8.3. Algae treatment in Alder Pond:** **Graham** has agreed to refresh the treatment in the manner described in the July Minutes, but as yet has not had an opportunity to carry out the work.

**8.4. Improvement of the Long Pads path and creation of the Flora path:** Georgina Peacock is refining her designs in the light of responses received at Fun Day and following a recent meeting on site. Her revisions are expected in time for display at the HLF Public Exhibition on 26/27th September.

**8.5. Flora field: update on arable crop and margins:** After a slow start in the areas where the NE mix was planted, the margins have performed quite well in all three mix areas, although the NE mix is still patchy on the east side of the field. The crop was harvested on 31st July, and the farmer appears pleased with the yield. Mick is awaiting details of the herbicide used this year. Arrangements for next year (including an agreement on herbicide use) will need to be confirmed in due course (**Mick**).

**8.6. Concessionary Path:** **Oliver** is continuing to chase Ann Wood (Lancaster City Council).

**8.7. Tree Survey progress:** Andy Lee has completed the survey of Little Wood, but is still to cover the Orchard and Fauna. No quote has been received to date (**Ian** to pursue).

**8.8. Haymaking and West Field grass:** Hay and Carr House Meadows were mown on September 2<sup>nd</sup> and the crop baled, wrapped and stored in the sheds on 6<sup>th</sup> September. The quantity of fodder created for the cattle is similar to last year. The FA's usual contractor, Lancashire Wildlife Trust (LWT), was having difficulty finding time to do the work. It was eventually done by W&H Contracting. Their work was judged to be excellent: the equipment is able to access the fields, small bales can be produced, the firm was expert and professional, and the charges comparable to LWT. The decision was made that next summer's haymaking should take place much earlier, as soon after the NE threshold of 15<sup>th</sup> July as possible (particularly if the weather has been good). **Ian** was asked to set this up well in advance with W&H Contracting. The cattle will be put in to graze the haymaking aftermath after volunteers have gathered and sown further wildflower seeds on 13th September

W & H Contracting have also cut the West Field grass and are in the process of clearing and baling. They have found a local farmer who can use the crop, thus

containing the costs to the FA of its disposal to a more reasonable level than originally expected.

**8.9. Single Payment Scheme entitlements:** The position is still unclear, and the advice remains to wait for further information (**Hilary**).

**9. Monitoring:**

**9.1. Maintenance inspection:** Graham's full report available. The Sunnyside Lane padlocks are now working, thanks to Ken.

**9.2. HLS habitat inspection:** Full report available. It was decided not to take any specific action in School Pond at the moment, despite the high sward height.

**9.3. Results of wildflower surveys:** Graeme Skelcher's report on the July meadow survey has just been received. Sue has also had some feedback from Martin Sherlock's various surveys. These will be circulated for a more general discussion of the management of the wildflower meadows at another meeting (see item 5) (**Glenys**).

**9.4. Bioblitz:** Chris has submitted a report of the survey on 22nd June which focused on the invertebrates in the beetle banks in Flora Field. It revealed low numbers of specimens, limited species diversity and nothing of special interest. Chris noted that this reflected the fact that the area had been overgrazed and poached in the recent past. He expects improvements on this baseline as soil organic matter and depth of litter layer increase. However, he was concerned about potential drift of herbicide from the surrounding arable. In discussion, it was noted that it appeared to have been a good year for butterflies and dragonflies across the reserve. Next year's bioblitz will look at other areas as well as the beetle banks (**Chris**).

**9.5. Breeding bird survey results:** Dan Haywood's results were submitted to Sue just before the meeting. To be circulated and discussed at a subsequent FOG (**Glenys**). Not yet invoiced. **Sue** was asked to forward the wildflower, bioblitz and breeding bird reports to the FA webmasters.

**10. Volunteer activities:** Ian's written reports for July and August are attached at the end. There was discussion of the ragwort problem in the Big Meadow marsh, where this 'undesirable' appears tenacious, and where spraying is not possible, but digging and pulling are also more difficult in the tangle of vegetation. Ignoring this area is not really an option. Flowerheads could be cut off, but this would need repeating if they regrow (or turn into perennials). The major burden of ragwort treatment has again tended to fall on just a few people (principally Ian and Ken). It was suggested that next year appeals for help are advertised more regularly and a "Bog Blitz" is held - several consecutive, well-advertised sessions, where people are encouraged to turn out with the specific objective of getting on top to the Big Meadow marsh (**Ian**). Whilst the preference for digging out remains, it was recognised that the ragwort is still too endemic (e.g. in the rest of Big Meadow) for spraying in the dry areas to be discontinued entirely. FOG expressed thanks to David Elliott for the sterling work he is doing in keeping on top to the nettles and sward growth in the Orchard. Ian has attended several interesting events recently at which he has made and re-established useful contacts.

## 11. Educational activities:

**11.1. Update from Tony:** The Heritage Lottery funded Flora schools project has now finished. It has proved highly successful, and Tony hopes to build on this into the future. To effect this, educational activities will now be handled through the FA meeting rather than FOG. However, **Tony** will request an item on the FOG agenda when there is need to advise of a visit that requires site preparation. (It was also noted that the organisation of Go Wild will be transferred to the FA meeting.)

**11.2. Ripley School projects:** The nose-pump stand has been finished and should be installed in West Field during the forthcoming volunteer session. It is robust, but more 'rustic' than anticipated. **Ian** will remind the group that a prototype of the next project, finger posts, should be submitted for approval. The quality of the output is more important here. A hand operated, mini-baler (e.g. to provide hay bales suitable for sale to rabbit keepers) has been suggested, if the group requests a further project.

**11.3. Claiming educational visit payments:** Dave has already submitted a claim for the current financial year, in respect of the base payment and 10 school visits.

12. **DBS checks:** No report.

## 13. Recent developments:

**13.1. Heron scarer:** The "wounded bird" noise has also been heard from the storage building. Concerned local residents will be advised to contact Environment Health at Lancaster City Council (**Glenys**).

**13.2. Additions to Fields Access List:** The meeting approved the addition of Helen Rawlinson (CWT) and Ian Nieduszynski (FA member). A Lancaster University student was given temporary permission during August to access Pony Wood to study the sycamores.

## 14. Standing items:

**14.1. Arrangements:** This will be a new standing item. Glenys is preparing a spreadsheet to capture the various matters that FOG needs to arrange on a regular basis during the year. This will be circulated for the next meeting, after consultation on the draft. Actions for this month:

- *Nestbox monitoring:* Ian Nieduszynski has agreed to co-ordinate this. He has already established the locations of all the boxes and has arranged for Richard Storton to participate in the survey, which is due to be carried out shortly (**Sue** to confirm with Ian).
- *Winter Flush counts:* These are due to start in October (**Glenys** to liaise with Graham).
- *Wildflower (NE mix) and bee-friendly margins:* NE prescriptions state that these need to be mown, with dense cuttings removed, after 15th September to leave a sward height of 10 to 20cm. **Ian** will contact W&H Contracting for a quote to carry out the work after the Public Exhibition on 26/27 September. (Note: the bird seed mix margin must not be cut until early spring.)
- *Volunteers' meal:* It was agreed that this was a good tradition to continue. **Ian** will approach someone to take on the organisation. If this fails, it will be added to Andrew's delegated task list. It was queried whether there were other ways of rewarding and recognising the efforts of volunteers – a matter for pondering, with any bright ideas directed to Ian.

**14.2. Financial control:** FOG should have a budget for recurring costs. An administrative mechanism is being set up by the FA meeting. Dave is developing a spreadsheet to monitor this. However, it was recognised that it is still too early in the management of the new reserve to be certain what costs will be recurring and when (e.g, see item 4). So the list will evolve as time goes on. It will also be too complex to present this in the same document as the arrangements spreadsheet (item 14.1), but the two documents will run in tandem (**Glenys** and **Dave**).

*Item 11.3* - £1500 income anticipated from Natural England educational payments (**Dave**)

*Item 8.7* – Tree survey, waiting to be advised of cost (**Ian**)

*Item 8.8* - Invoices expected from W&H Contracting for about £700 for the haymaking and about £500 for the West Field grass. Plus a further invoice if they are employed to mow the wildflower margins (item 14.1)( **Ian**)

*Item 9.3* - Invoice for wildflower survey (£130) already submitted to Treasurer.

*Item 9.5* – Invoice for breeding bird survey (approx. £100) anticipated (**Sue**)

**14.3. Organised events for notification to the FA:** Nothing specific. Jon Carter has expressed his intention to arrange further bird walks this autumn, but no details yet.

**15. AOB:** None

**16. Date/place of next meetings:** **October meeting has been cancelled.** Thursday 6th November, and Thursday 4th December 7pm at Whitegates, Sunnyside Close

## **Ian Procter's Volunteer Items:**

7<sup>th</sup> July 2014

The Ragwort Working Party (RWP) resumed work with two volunteers. We sprayed remaining ragwort in the Paddock and around the Fauna Stones. Moving into the Hay Meadow, ragwort was dug out, continuing the work done by the Cromwell Road sub-group over the last few days. We then moved into Sowerholme and made good progress pulling out the ragwort there. We then resumed spraying, first of all giving the JKW another dose. The specimens on our side are responding well to the repeated spraying although the big patch on the other side of Lucy Brook appears to be reviving. We then did a tour of the Grammar School fields where the ragwort is sparse but concentrated in patches. These were sprayed.

Evening. Two volunteers attended the meeting of Greenspaces Groups held this time at Rylands Park where we were shown round by the Chair of the Friends of the Park, Steve Weardon. Also attending were Helen Ryan (City Council Public Realm Manager) and the local PCSO David Johnson. 11 others attended representing 9 or 10 other local environmental groups. The theme was 'Dealing with anti-social behaviour'. As usual there was a free ranging discussion around this theme and others. Some useful points I noted:

- take account of potential problems at the design stage – we should bear this in mind with the Flora / Pony Wood footpath
- if there is a serious problem, say repeat vandalism, then a multi-agency response can be mobilised through Helen Ryan

- the Council will pick up needles from private land if requested by a Friends or similar charitable group.
- The Keep Britain Tidy campaign still exists and they can provide help with litter issues (see website)
- The Council have a stock of litter picking tools for loan

Next meeting 1<sup>st</sup> September, Greaves Scout Hut, theme – Risk assessment, health and safety, insurance.

#### 8<sup>th</sup> July 2014

The RWP included two volunteers for the morning session clearing ragwort from Carr House Meadow (including some big docks which we should spray earlier as they get huge roots) and then on into the depths of the Upper Sowerholme sub-tropical marsh. Made good progress, certainly from the number of bags filled!

The gate from the Pads path near Lucy Brook into Lower Sowerholme was repaired. The bolt had been detached, perhaps by someone climbing the gate??? The repair was straightforward.

The evening session saw five volunteers at work including the Cromwell Road sub-group who cleared dock from the Hay Meadow. Meanwhile three volunteers completed the digging out of ragwort from Upper Sowerholme and transported most of it to the shed.

#### 9<sup>th</sup> July 2014

Having carted the remaining bags to the Shed three volunteers moved into Big Meadow. In the main pasture, spraying resumed. In the bog, ragwort was pulled out. Some areas prove to be densely infested.

In the evening the Cromwell Roaders worked in the area surrounding School Pond whilst two volunteers continued spraying and pulling in the Big Meadow. The second spraying proves to be more extensive than we hoped and more time will have to be devoted to this as ragwort is flowering and must not seed.

#### 11<sup>th</sup> July 2014

56 bags of ragwort were taken to the tip. The Cromwell Road sub-group completed removal of ragwort from the School Pond area collecting six bags making their running total 28 bags.

In the evening two volunteers completed the second spraying of Big Meadow. This was necessary because the remaining plants were flowering and the herbicide had to be applied well before the flowers seed.

#### 12<sup>th</sup> July 2014

The regular Saturday session attracted twenty volunteers, a pleasing turnout for a sunny summer's day.

- Part of the Orchard was mown including the section we are trying to get back to grass from nettle. This seems to be working well.
- The section of the Orchard strimmed by a contractor during the past week was raked clear of the strimmings and the results carted away to a brush pile. Hopefully our new volunteer mower can get to work on this in the next week or so and see whether this can also be returned to short grass.
- Grass surrounding the fruit tree trunks was cut back with shears.
- Overhanging nettles and other vegetation was strimmed and cut back along the Fauna path.

- A team worked in Pony Wood and the extension clearing grass from the base of new saplings. About half the saplings were done and this needs continuing next time.
- The newly repaired boundary stone (marking the boundary between Lancaster and Aldcliffe parishes), was transported from the shed and reinstated in the extension to Pony Wood.
- The fence near the cattle crossing of Lucy Brook was repaired where the cattle had forced through and into the stream/
- The gates to the Paddock and Lower Sowerholme were opened for firewood collectors but no one came.

#### 14<sup>th</sup> July 2014

The RWP was a disappointingly singular affair this morning but steady progress was made clearing the Big Meadow bog. There is a great deal of ragwort in this area including lots of small plants not yet spiking. The priority has to be to dig out the flowering spikes so they do not seed but the small plants are a problem – we simply don't have the time to dig them out and, even if we had, the technical possibility of digging out plants tightly interwoven with other dense vegetation makes the effort often futile. In addition the dense infestation in this area suggests that the strategy of digging / pulling out ragwort is not working. This is the fourth year this has been done and much of the Big Meadow bog is as bad as ever. So, lots of issues here.



#### 15<sup>th</sup> July 2014

Morning and evening sessions. Two volunteers continued to pull ragwort from the Big Meadow bog.

#### 16<sup>th</sup> July 2014

The Cromwell Road sub-group collected three more bags of ragwort from the hay Meadow. Running total 31 bags.

The RWP (2 volunteers) completed the clearing of ragwort from the Big Meadow bog. This completes Phase 2 of this year's programme – secondary spraying of pasture and removal of ragwort from the marshy areas.

#### 17<sup>th</sup> July 2014

The Volunteer Organiser attended a Study Visit to Working Woodlands organised by the National Association of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty in Silverdale. After introductions the day



included visits to three sites within the Arnside and Silverdale AONB and a concluding feedback session. What I had not realised was that the day was focussed on managing woodland to generate wood for woodburning stoves which is not really relevant to our woodland. However, the work of the Silverdale and District Wood bank was extremely interesting and I was able a) to renew links with colleagues (hedging trainer, parish lengthsman and Claire Harris, our former NE advisor who is a leading figure in the Wood Bank) and b) to tell lots of people about the Fairfield Association with many of the more local people expressing a desire to visit when I showed them where we are on the map. c) So, a stimulating day.

#### 18<sup>th</sup> July 2014

Three volunteers assisted Richard Storton in a further attempt to stem the leak in the Anna's Pool bund. After digging out the pipe we this time used Benotone (sodium bentonite) to fill the gap before rebuilding the bund around it.

#### 19<sup>th</sup> July 2014

Volunteer organiser applied to Woodland Trust for a free tree pack (420 Wildlife). Notification late September for early November delivery.

#### 21<sup>st</sup> July 2014

Our volunteer grass mower started work after an induction session with the Volunteer Organiser. He did an enormous amount of work mowing the area strimmed by our contractor two weeks ago with the mower on a high setting. The plan is to gradually reduce the cutting height to bring the fruit tree area back to grass.

One volunteer cut up and tidied wood in the Paddock.

The broken coping stone on the wall by the Shed has been replaced 15 months after we took possession. Hurrah!

#### 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2014

An inspection of the Reserve by the Volunteer Organiser to assess the ragwort situation. I applied what I hope is a judicious mix of digging out and spraying according to situation. Delinquent ragwort dug out of the Oak Circle in the Orchard and from School Pond. Sprayed examples just under the Aldcliffe Road wall – this and the examples along the Lucy Brook seem to be the only outbreak in Flora and repeats earlier years. A tour round the Paddock, Big Meadow and the Grammar School Fields spraying as I went. Very little in the latter, we are winning with the two former sites.

Took in a look at the repaired bund (above). It seems to be working, the water is right up to the drain lip which may have to be set a little lower as the water is seeping over the top of the bund. Informed Richard Storton and the other volunteers who assisted.

#### 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2014

30 bags of ragwort taken to tip. (Running total excluding Cromwell Road 106)

#### 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> July

One of our volunteers takes a two day course learning how to scythe as part of the *Beyond the Castle* programme. On the second day the course used some of our Hay Meadow which we don't usually mow. After drying the hay was stored in builders' bags in the barn shed.

28<sup>th</sup> July 2014

The Orchard mown again.

30<sup>th</sup> July 2014

In the morning two volunteers assisted Richard Storton in making adjustments to the repaired bund at Anna's Pool. The pool water level was a little too high so that water was flowing over the bund. The outflow lip was slightly lowered and turf was cut and laid to raise the level of the bund.

Two volunteers spent a short time assessing the ragwort situation in Upper Sowerholme and removing two bags of ragwort.

The Cromwell Road sub-group reported further clearance of ragwort in the two hay meadows, 6 bags, running total 37.

The monthly Wednesday volunteer session attracted 9 volunteers on a lovely summer's evening.

- We pinned signs to the apple trees asking people not to pick until ripe. Four additional notices explain when the fruit is ripe and how to tell this were posted around the Orchard.
- Overhanging nettles, brambles and long grass was cut back from the remaining grass paths in the Orchard.
- Overhanging brambles were trimmed from the Pads footpath from the Orchard north entrance round to the treble gates.
- A fallen sycamore branch was cleared from the Pads footpath and a badly overhanging branch cut down by the treble gates.
- More of the grass around the saplings in Pony Wood and its extension was trimmed back.
- 12 posts were brought back from the treble gates area to the Shed for use near Anna's Pool in the near future.

4<sup>th</sup> August 2014

We are now into phase three of ragwort control this summer – basically removing flowering plants before they seed. Three volunteers completed sweeps of Upper Sowerholme, the Grammar School Pond and a good proportion of Big Meadow. In the latter the plants take two forms: a) old roots which have not been killed by the herbicide and are thus sprouting again after being sprayed earlier in the year, b) young plants which have recently germinated from seed – presumably left in the ground from earlier years as very little has seeded over the last three years.

5<sup>th</sup> August 2014

One volunteer did further work clearing ragwort from the Hay Meadow, another bag for the total.

6<sup>th</sup> August 2014

I went over to Aldcliffe Road to remove stubbornly resistant ragwort from underneath the wall but found that most of it had gone – someone else must have been about??? Removed some small plants and some rubbish.

As agreed by FOG on 3<sup>rd</sup> July (Items 4 and 13) I have purchased the following tools:

- 2 pairs of shears        £40
- 3 padlocks                £30
- 1 weed slasher         £7

- 1 felling axe                    £15
- 1 bolt cutter                    £13
- 1 sledge hammer            £25
- 1 stake driver   £43.86

TOTAL                            £173.86 (sorry this is £3.86 over budget)

All but the last item purchased from Lyle Tool Shop with good discounts.

Asked Jane to pay Bowland Tree Service's invoice for the strimming work in the Orchard - £150 (N.B. we did allow £200 for this so some saving here).

Consulted three chemist shops about a tick remover, as requested by FOG. The first two knew nothing about them. The woman in Boots said they had them in the past but not at the moment. She was, however, clear that the human version is just the same as the dog version so purchased a Tick Tool from a pet shop.

#### Early to mid August 2014

The Ragwort Working party has now fragmented and its members, colloquially known as the 'Obsessives', get into the Reserve on a needs must basis. Basically the task is to remove any flowering heads before they seed.

20 bags of ragwort to the tip. Running total 126 bags plus Cromwell Road 37.

Collected the repaired strimmer from Lyle Tool Shop. A modest £20 for the parts.

#### 9<sup>th</sup> August 2014

25 people came along for our Saturday morning volunteer session on a bright and sunny day.

- We constructed a fence in the corner of the Hay Meadow to protect Anna's Pool and its newly repaired bund from cattle incursion.
- We continued thinning the grass around the Pony Wood saplings, inspecting them and marking with ribbon those that have died. Only a small proportion. We will review in the winter whether these should be replaced.
- Slashed, cut back and cleared away vegetation around the pear and medlar trees in the Orchard.
- Slashed, cut back and cleared away vegetation toward the southern sector of the Orchard.
- Trimmed around the soft fruit circle to clear overhanging branches.
- Trimmed back the west side of the track from Sunnyside Lane to the Orchard to the north of the Shed. Cleared the debris.
- Strimmed a section of the Fauna path of overhanging grass.

#### 16<sup>th</sup> August 2014

Cromwell Road sub-group took two more bags of ragwort from the Hay Meadow. Running total 39.

#### 27<sup>th</sup> August 2014

After a couple of weeks off entertaining grandchildren returned to ragwort duty with a session in Big Meadow digging out flowering heads, especially one patch in the bog which we didn't get to last time out. Then used up the last of the herbicide before returning the sprayer to base and triple washing all three for storage.

Whilst in the field popped across to look at the bund at Anna's Pool – everything seems to be working – the water level is high and the water is running over the lip of the pipe.

Evening:

The last of this summer's Wednesday volunteer sessions attracted 6 volunteers on a pleasant evening.

- We completed trimming back the overhanging hedge alongside the track from Sunnyside Lane toward the Orchard.
- We trimmed back nettles and long grass overhanging the Fauna path at the Cromwell Road end.
- Overgrowing vegetation was cleared from under and in amongst the pear trees in the Orchard.
- Signs asking people to be considerate in their apple picking were repaired.
- A concentrated patch of thistles in the West Field was pulled out and carted away.

#### 28<sup>th</sup> August 2013

After consulting with Mick, I met with Paul Bullimore, the newly appointed *Community Forester for North Lancashire* working for the *Red Rose Community Forest Trust*. I had met with Paul at the Silverdale event I reported on the 17<sup>th</sup> July. He is the former County Council Woodlands Officer and an experienced arborist. We took a tour of the Reserve and Paul was most impressed with all our efforts. He might be a useful contact for the future but it may be that he brings potential community groups wanting to start their own orchard to see what can be done. I encouraged this.

Later I met with Reuben Neville to take a look at the West Field. His advice was to graze it down, the best option would be with the adjacent sheep. If we did big bale it, it would generate a huge volume, 60 or 70 of the big black bales. I reported this to Dave Brookes as the Trustee with contact with NE and Mr Ayrtton. More relevant in this context are Reuben's comments on the long term future of West Field. If it does work as wetland well and good but he was surprised it was so designated. Obviously our attempts to 'flood' the central area are not yet successful but even so Reuben thought most of the field would not make good wetland. So, if it does not work as wetland Reuben suggested that a) NE would probably not agree to designate it as meadow because of its very high fertility so b) we might consider taking it out of the HLS agreement and contracting it out for silage cuts for a few years. So long as we keep removing the grass the fertility will reduce. Once we get to the stage where the contracted farmer wants to re-fertilize it we can start to move it back to species rich meadow. I jot these comments down so I don't forget and to give us another option to think about.

#### 31<sup>st</sup> August 2014

Prior to mowing the Hay and Carr House meadows were inspected for ragwort. Half a bag.