

Newsletter of the Manchester Wildlife Trust

The Magpie

Number 15

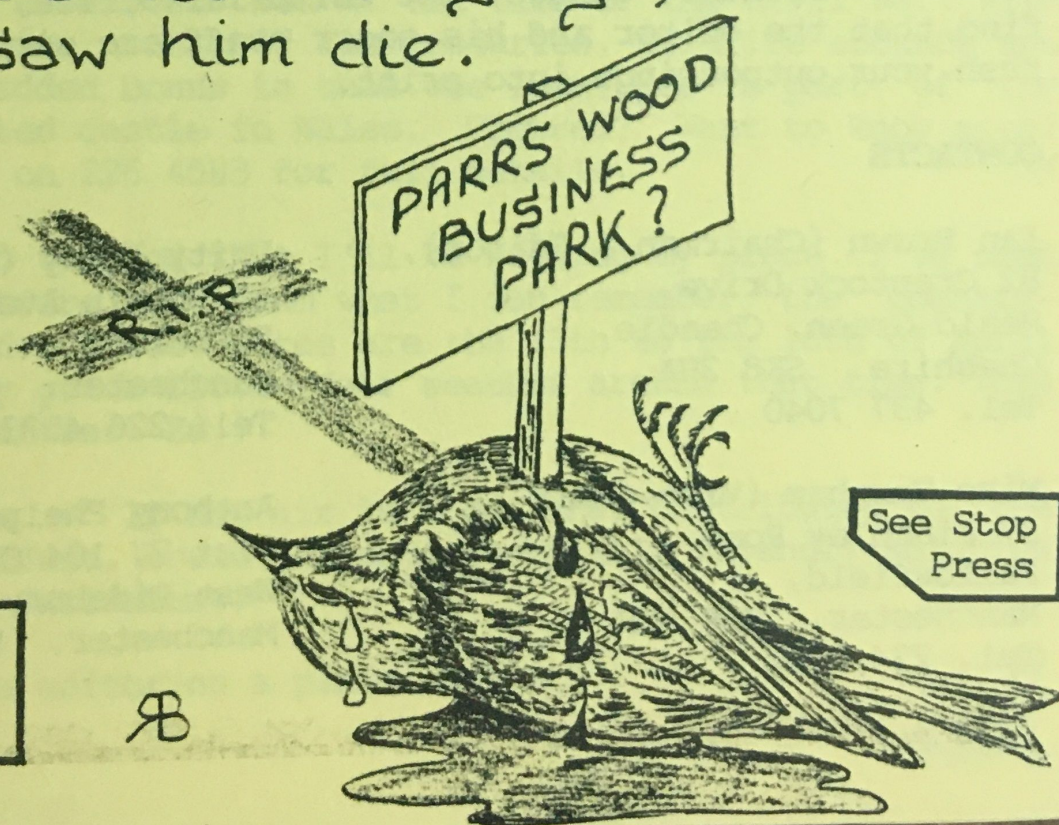
Winter 1990

Who killed Cock Robin?

- I, said the Council,
With my Business Parks,
I killed Cock Robin.

Who saw him die?

I, said Mancunia,
With a tear in my eye,
I saw him die.



And a Happy
New Year
to Everyone

See Stop
Press

Editorial

We first considered the production of a newsletter in late 1985 and the first issue came out in the spring of 1986. Has anyone still got a copy of "Magpie" number one. It must be a rarity by now. Who, in those early days, would have thought to see a 15th issue of "Magpie". Well, by honest sweat and by the skin of our teeth, we have made it and with a little luck the "Magpie" will continue to appear on your doormat with quarterly regularity. I hope our readers consider that all this effort has been worthwhile and that the "Magpie" is a welcome and much appreciated addition to your reading on matters environmental.

We try to keep your newsletter an interesting and varied publication and have made every effort to ensure that this current issue lives up to the standards already set. We inform you of the latest developments at Trafford Ecology Park. In Planning Matters we tell you what is happening to your urban open space. Can Derelict Land Grants be of benefit to voluntary groups? Has your pond sprung a leak? Do not despair; Anthony Phelps informs us that repair is not beyond the scope of a little dirty work. All this and much more in the 15th edition of **Magpie**. Now, are you sitting comfortably? If so, you might as well read on.

We are always open to receive articles from members and others. If you have something of interest to impart, relating to the urban environment, contact the editorial office, where you will find that the editor and his eager staff are simply longing to rush your outpourings into print.

CONTACTS

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Editor, Ian Brown 437 7040

If you need information or advice on any matter connected with urban wildlife, why not write to or telephone any of the above contacts.

EVENTS - This year we hope to have a fuller, more varied events list. Wildlife walks, conservation tasks, meetings and social events will give you plenty of opportunities to become involved in the enjoyment and appreciation of **your** local environment. Walks, led by those with specialist knowledge, will enable you to see things which might well be missed if out on your own. Conservation tasks, which improve the environment, are a most stimulating way to spend a day in the open air. Come and join us; it's healthy, it's rewarding and more fun than you might think. Details are to be found on the events list, which is included in this newsletter. If you wish to attend any event but are in any doubt about location or how to get there, do not hesitate to telephone the contact. We have not arranged much for January, because of difficulty in giving sufficient notice. For the rest of the winter and early spring there is plenty to do, so come along and we will be very pleased to see you. //

A Holiday with a Difference by Unity Kelly

Enjoy **Easter** in unspoilt countryside. Spend a long weekend near Llanvair-Discoed in sheltered woodland above the Severn Estuary and close to Chepstow in Gwent. Join in with the Historic Land Group recreating 30 acres of meadows, woods and farm buildings as they would have been used at the time of the Civil War. With field boundaries unchanged for centuries, wildlife abounds and there is the added bonus in that the local pub is part of the oldest inhabited castle in Wales. Tempted? Want to know more? Then phone me on 226 4583 for full details. //

(Well, I'm so tempted that I'll be booking my place. I've been in the area before and, from what I can remember, the countryside is as advertised. Dates are the 13th to the 16th of April and we usually get a little fair weather around that time. This is not a guarantee! -Ed.)

Green Politics - If hot air is a gas that contributes to the greenhouse effect, would an environmentally friendly solution be to abolish Parliament.

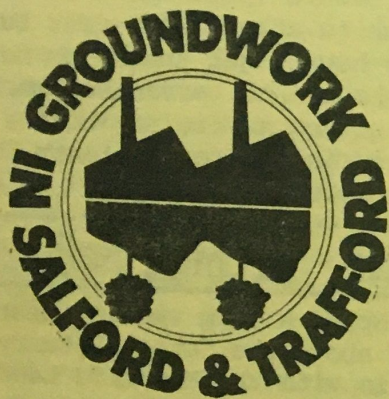
Answers to the editor on a plain postcard. //

Trafford Ecology Park

Countdown to Opening Day

by Colin McLeod, Chief Ranger

A "new look" Trafford Ecology Park will be re-opening in spring 1990, providing a unique environmental education centre that will serve schools and other bodies throughout Greater Manchester and beyond. Almost a decade has elapsed since the Ecology Park was first conceived - it was the first in Britain, outside Greater London, and remains the only one in a wholly industrial area, right in the heart of the vast Trafford Park estate - but it has hitherto been a rather neglected resource.



Now, with the Park under the ownership of Trafford Park Development Corporation, and managed by Salford & Trafford Groundwork Trust, all that should change. Having resembled a building site through most of 1989, the Ecology Park is emerging from the most exciting and extensive period of its development, funded by the Development Corporation. Two new buildings and improvements to the original one, make the Ecology Park a well-equipped study centre, complete with exhibition room, workshop, classroom, laboratory, darkroom, offices and other facilities.

Outdoors, new landscaping provides a range of features including bird and butterfly gardens, dipping ponds, dry stone walls (the only ones in Trafford Park!), activity spaces, limited car parking and an urban forestry area, including coppice planting. An experimental area had space available for researchers undertaking projects such as the reclamation of derelict land (very appropriate for the Ecology Park - a former industrial tip), as well as formal demonstration plots and a small tree nursery.

Despite the disturbance, the nature area around Trafford Park Lake (covering about half of the site) has remained a green sanctuary, supporting at least as much wildlife as ever. Safe behind the fence, many species of birds breed around this old remnant of the de Trafford family's Victorian boating lake.



Hundreds of orchids flower by the lakeside during early summer, and herons visit so regularly that one features on the Ecology Park's newly-designed logo.

Development Corporation funding has also allowed the employment, for the first time, of a permanent full-time staff of three rangers, responsible for making links with schools, industry and the community, and for developing a range of smaller features to enhance the wildlife and educational potential of the Ecology Park. A news letter and a series of leaflets are in the pipeline.

Undoubtedly, school groups will be the most numerous users of the refurbished Ecology Park, but it will have something to offer everyone of all ages, and Groundwork is particularly keen to involve local residents, industrialists and workers. There have already been many visitors to the Park, even in advance of its official opening.

It is hoped that most visitors will leave with some ideas for ecological features which can be copied in their own gardens or school and factory grounds (some demonstration features are designed with just this in mind), and that some decision-makers may leave with "green" ideas which could be more widely implemented in our towns and cities. Just as the Rangers' activities seem set to encompass the whole of Trafford Park and beyond, they hope that the Ecology Park's example will influence the wider greening of the heavily industrialised area - bringing wildlife and a better environment within the reach of everyone.

For further information, or to arrange a visit, please contact the Rangers at Trafford Ecology Park, Mosley Road North, Trafford Park, Manchester, M17 1TU - Tel. 061 873 7182. //

As well as being Chief Ranger at the Ecology Park, Colin McLeod is a member of the Trust, so we can be sure to be well informed on future progress. Hopefully, we will be able to make a visit to the Park in the not too distant future. //

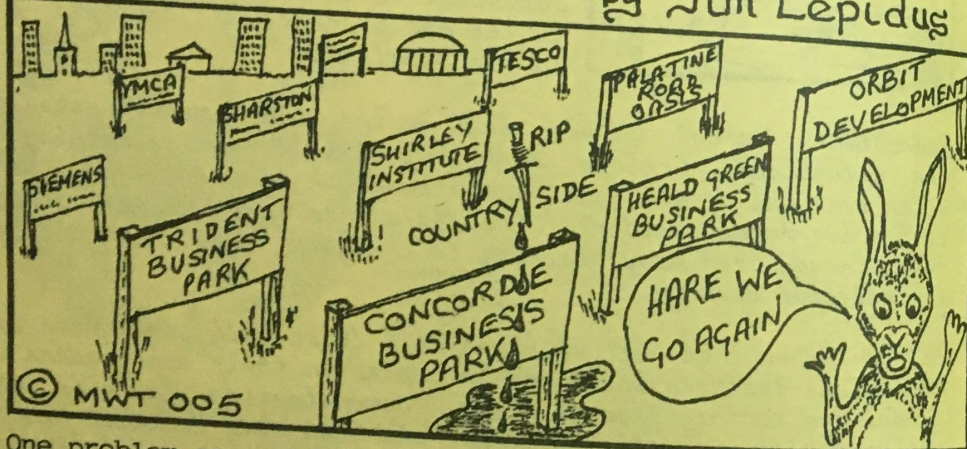
Planning Matters

by Ian Brown

BUSINESS PARKS - We occasionally suffer outbreaks of epidemics, like the flu, just before Christmas, but the epidemic for which I will most remember 1989, is that of a certain planning blight called "Business Parks". There were at least eleven such outbreaks of this disease in South Manchester, all but one on open space and most on public open space. In various stages of development, these "Business Parks", if completed, will swallow up almost all of our urban open spaces, from the Y.M.C.A. Playing Fields to Heald Green Farm, except for public parks and woods.

March Hare

by Jim Lepidus



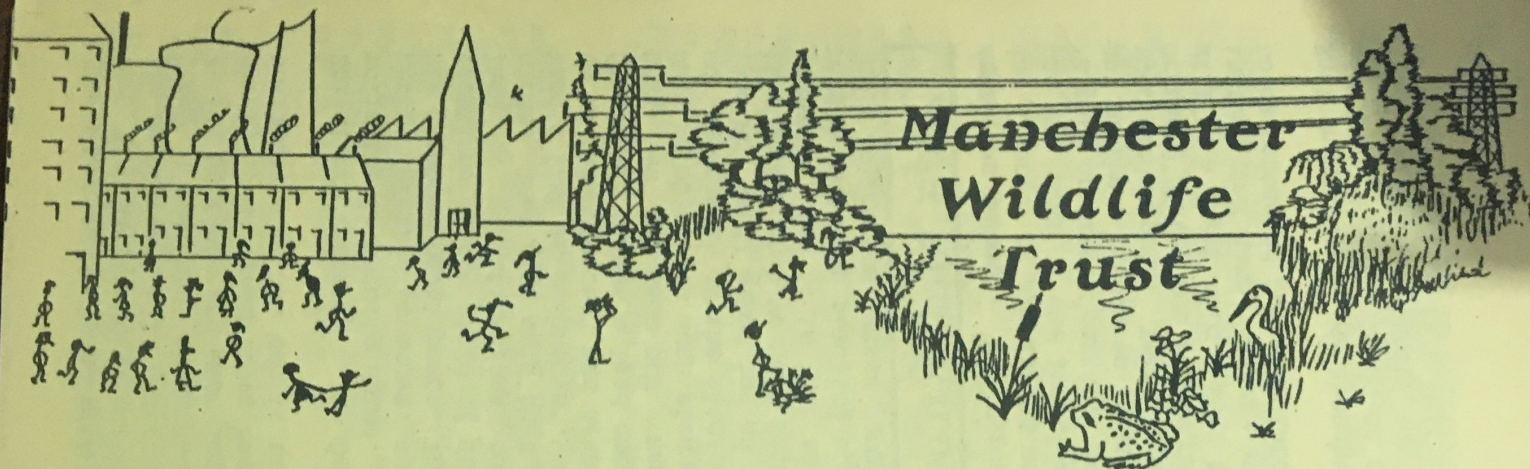
One problem seems to be that many of the sites are owned by the City Council and it would appear that they are selling or leasing these open spaces to help alleviate their chronic shortage of cash. What price Green Socialism now? It seems a little like local privatisation. On a personal note I feel that, "The Earth is a Common Treasury and it is a crime to buy and sell the land for private gain".* We have tried to argue against some of the developments, but unfortunately with little success. We feel our councillors are quite determined that these developments should go ahead. I was particularly upset over the "Business Park" on fields south of Simonsway in Wythenshawe. Phase one started in

* A declaration made during the English Revolution by the True Levellers or Diggers who took over and farmed St. George's Hill. Tony Benn, Guardian 5.1.90.

March, and when Phase two came up (offices for British Telecom) I discovered that a mature hawthorn hedge which connected two woods was to be ripped out. A plan by Robert Camlin allowed for retention of the hedge, but was superseded. I went to the planning meeting and tried to argue that the hedge, which could be hundreds of years old, should be saved, as its presence would not make any difference to the scale of the development. I was told that the hedge must go and that it would be replaced by new planting elsewhere on the site, and that we would have to be patient whilst this new planting matured. (I think that the phrase "Biologically Illiterate" seems appropriate.) I don't mind waiting a few hundred years, but will the wildlife.

New Jobs - Some of the "Business Parks" are purely speculative developments. For example, Sharston Playing Fields, Palatine Road (with palm trees indoors) and the Marples Ridgeway development at Heald Green Farm. This being the case, it cannot be said that they will provide any jobs. It is not even certain that these offices will be sold or let. Even those developments which have prospective occupiers are not bound to create new jobs but merely move them around. This was so with the Trident development at Moss Nook, to where Costains transferred from three premises in Sharston. The Siemens overdevelopment on Nell Lane will be a transfer of headquarters, from Congleton. Let's hope that we don't end up with a situation where we lose all our open space, have a lot of empty offices and no new jobs.

ROMILEY REGRETS - Back in March we made comments, on a proposed housing development in Romiley, to the Stockport Planners. The plan was for houses in a large rear garden, the bottom half of which was wooded and in conjunction with the trees of the surrounding gardens created an area which was obviously good for wildlife. Mr. Ward, a local resident who had observed the local fauna, over many years, provided us with a list which indicated that there was a good variety, particularly of birds. Our assessment of the site, in conjunction with Mr. Ward's wildlife observations, led us to believe that any development which destroyed the heart of this spinney would be detrimental to the urban environment. The local planning committee strongly recommended refusal on access, environmental and other grounds, and the plan came before Stockport's Development Sub-Committee. It was unfortunate that a councillor, who was known to be against the application, had had to leave early and when it came to a vote, it was eight for, eight against. This left the Chairman,



FORTHCOMING WILDLIFE AND CONSERVATION EVENTS IN THE MANCHESTER AREA. THOSE MARKED * NOT RUN BY THE MANCHESTER WILDLIFE TRUST. ORGANIZING BODY, CONTACT AND TELEPHONE NUMBER SHOWN WHERE POSSIBLE OR PHONE IAN BROWN 437 7040. WHY NOT PUT THIS CALENDAR ON YOUR WALL TO REMIND YOU OF WHAT IS GOING ON AND PLEASE TRY AND JOIN US. IT'S GREAT FUN

January

Saturday 27th **Friends of the Earth Networking Seminar** Conference Room, Manchester Town Hall. Time 1 p.m. Contact Neil Lea 789 8880. Anyone concerned about Manchester's environment is welcome to attend.*

February

Sunday 4th **Bird Walk.** Meet at Chorlton Water Park in the car park. Time 11 a.m. Leader Anthony Phelps. Contact Ian Brown 437 7040. We will proceed via. Jacksons Boat (for refreshments) and to Broad Ees Dole Nature Reserve. Wear stout shoes and bring binoculars.

Sunday 11th **Withington Hospital Woodland** - Woodland management and survey. For directions see newsletter. Time 10 a.m. on. Contact Ian Brown.

Tuesday 13th **Word Processor Evening** - Get to know how to work the Trust's Word Processor. Meet at 12 Thornbridge Avenue, Chorlton. Time 7.30 p.m. Contact Ann Buckingham 881 1814.

March

Sunday 4th **Hough End Clough** - Woodland and Grassland Management. Meet Hough End Crescent (South end of Alexandra Road South). Time 10 a.m. onward. Contact Ian Brown 437 7040. **This event may be cancelled to make way for the Plant Transplant.** Please telephone the contact to confirm.

Sunday 11th **Withington Hospital Woodland** - Woodland Management and Survey. For directions see newsletter. Time 10 a.m. on. Contact Ian Brown. **This event may be cancelled to make way for the Plant Transplant.** Please telephone the contact to confirm.

Saturday 24th **Walk on the Wildside** - Bolton Museum & Art Gallery, Le Mans Crescent Bolton. A Natural History Society Open Day. Time 10 - 4. Contact Miss K Berry 0204 22311 Ext. 2197.*

Sunday 25th **North Reddish Mini-wood** - Tree Planting and Management. Time 10 a.m. onwards. For directions contact June Greaves on 432 6475.

Thursday 29th **Wildlife Trust Meeting** - Committee Room No. 7, Town Hall Extension, Manchester. Time 7.30 p.m. Contact Ian Brown 437 7040.

April

Sunday 8th **Withington Hospital Woodland** - Woodland Management and Survey. For directions see newsletter. Time 10 a.m. on. Contact Ian Brown.

Saturday 21st **Woodland Walk** - Boggart Hole Clough. Meet in carpark on Charlestown Road (opposite Booth Hall Hospital). Time 2 p.m. Leader and contact Diana Downing 740 1200. Busses 79 & 81 from Manchester centre.

Saturday 28th **Annual Meeting (AGM)** - Conference Hall, Town Hall, Manchester. Time 2 p.m. Contact Ian Brown 437 7040.



Councillor Brian Leah, with three choices. He could abstain, or use his casting vote, either for or against. He voted for, so the development will unfortunately go ahead. So who's green now Then? I feel that there is not very much environmental concern in big business and even less amongst property developers, but surely local councillors have some concern. Well, in Stockport obviously some do, but it would appear to be one too few.

Solicitors Letter - In September we received a letter from a solicitor in Cheadle Hulme, who's client, the owner of the property referred to above, appeared to object to our comments on his proposed development. They cast doubts on Mr. Ward's qualifications in the field of ecology (he has none), intimating a lack of qualifications could affect his ability to identify birds. They also said that "what is certainly true is that Mr. Ward's list is erroneous". Further, they considered our letter to be "mischievous" and asked for a retraction of our assertion that their client's land contained wildlife of special importance. We had made our comments in good faith (surely it's our duty to object to such planning applications), and felt that our assessment of the site's wildlife value was accurate, so we (and Mr. Ward) asked for an apology, which we both received. It is possible that we were being intimidated into withdrawing our comments, but it is just as well we did not, for how could we make comments on planning applications in future, without fearing a solicitors letter popping through the letter box. //

Odds and Ends

by the Committee

Amphibian Survey - The Nature Conservancy Council are conducting a survey of amphibians and would like information from anyone who knows of the location of **Frogs, Toads and Newts** (Common Palmate or Great Crested). So if you know of the whereabouts of any of these creatures, please let us know. Even if they are in your garden pond. Take a note of the location, giving an exact Ordnance Survey map reference and if you know the numbers, that will be a great help. Sent the information to the Chairman and include your name, address and telephone number should you need to be contacted for more information.

Environment Now - We thought this publication deserved another mention. Firstly, based on the first two issues, it appears to be a lively, colourful and informative magazine with very few advertisements so it's full of good reading. Secondly, after we

sent the editor a copy of our newsletter, they were good enough to include a small piece about us in their December edition. If you wish to try this excellent magazine, and happen to be near the B.T.C.V. office at 24 Seymour Grove, Old Trafford, then pop in and pick up a subscription form. If you subscribe in this way a percentage of your money will go to the B.T.C.V.

Pub Meetings - We have decided to hold monthly meetings at the Parrs Wood Hotel for those of our members who prefer to meet in a more informal setting than that provided by a committee room in the Town Hall. The dates will be the first Tuesday in every month, starting with the 6th of February. The pub is located at the junction of Parrs Wood Road and School Lane, East Didsbury. This venue should be convenient to many of our members and is easily accessible by bus. So come and meet some of your fellow urban wildlifers. See you there! Any time after 7.30.

Tree Plant - Another successful event at Hough End in November. Some members and a large number of school children, guides and cubs planted a good number of trees. It was a little chaotic at times but though the youngsters lacked a little in skill, they certainly made up for this with abundant enthusiasm. It was a little difficult ensure that the school children planted trees in the correct places so we ended up with the odd oak thicket. A little transplanting may be necessary! A good time was had by all and the rain we have had since will give the trees a better chance of survival than they had last year. Thanks to all those who came to help. We hope to be having another tree plant next November, so why not join us; it's a great day out.

Annual General Meeting - This will take place at the Town Hall on Saturday the 28th of April, starting at 2 p.m. Those of you who have never attended one of these events may think that it does not sound very exciting. Those of us who have been to previous AGM's know differently. There is a little formal business but it's generally over in about half an hour and after that, a slide show by some local luminary, an exhibition and chance to get to know other members over coffee and biscuits. Come along; you'll enjoy yourself.

Membership List - We are to publish another membership list in the next edition of **Maggie**. The procedure is the same as last time. If you do not want your telephone number included, let us know by the end of February. Circulation to members only.

Plant Transplant - There may be some of you who are under the impression that this event has become a non-event. Quite the contrary; behind the scenes, work has been going on apace and all will be right on the night (or on the day). The wildflowers have been identified, marked out and plotted so that they will be easily found when the time comes for transplanting. The new site has been landscaped and the topsoil removed in readiness to receive the wildflowers. So all is ready for the big day and this will be announced in the next issue of **Maggie** and will be a pleasant springtime task which we hope many members can find time to attend. It was originally intended that the event would take place last autumn, but the dry weather and hardness of the ground made this impractical. It will all be happening near the airport, out in the country. If you attend no other event this year, come to this one. We would like to thank Manchester City Recreational Services for their help and co-operation on this and other projects and in particular, Elaine Norsworthy who has put in a lot of hard work on the **Plant Transplant**. Without this help the project would not even have got off the ground.

Trafford Countryside Competition - We decided that we should enter this competition so we did a quick survey of an area by Fairywell Brook in Timperley. A landscape and planting plan was drawn up and sent off to be scrutineered by a panel of expert judges. We have just heard that our plan is to go forward for more detailed discussions. Could we be in line for something? More about this in the next newsletter.

Derelict Land Grant - We have just heard that in future, voluntary groups should be able to take advantage of these grants, which up until now have only been available to local authorities etc. This should mean that groups, such as ourselves, will be able to apply for grants to make environmental improvements to derelict land in the Manchester area. This sounds interesting and we will keep you informed when we know more about it.

New Council Members - Would you like to become more involved in the running of the Trust? If so, why not apply (by 28th March) for any job on the council. Phone the Chairman on 437 7040 and discuss the matter. Involvement can be most rewarding.

Tools - We have just purchased some tools. Now we'll be able to do the job. The tools fund is still open for your donations. We've had one but we need more tools so be generous and give!

Pond Re-digging

by Anthony Phelps

Since joining the Trust, and, recently becoming Secretary, I have heard about all the various activities, and members of the Trust, but have only met a relatively small percentage of the members, and, although I have involved myself in all the activities going, there were still some that I had heard about that I had not had the chance to try. One of these was pond digging.

However, at the Town Hall meeting on the 25th May, Mike Gannham asked me if I would like to help him "re-dig" his pond, that weekend.

We started by removing all the stones, and plants from around the outside, and saving these for use later (the idea was basically to save the existing pond, enlarge it and then re-build, using the materials removed). Once the plants were out we saved as much of the water as possible, in a dustbin, and other containers; there was so much life in the pond - a large group of frogs, an enormous quantity of snails, and plenty of insects. I also found the largest leech that I had ever seen, about $3\frac{1}{2}$ " long. The frogs were quite amusing. We tried to dissuade them from staying in the pond while it was being dismantled, but however many we carried to Mike's small pond, the more there seemed to be in the larger pond! We never saw them actually moving between ponds. You got the impression of there being more than ten, although I am sure there were only 5 or 6!

The next task was to save all the mud from the inside of the pond, so that we could lift the old liner out. After that, we dug out the hole to the correct size, giving it a much gentler slope on one side, and taking a little of the steepness from the other. Then a lining of old carpet was laid in, and the new liner laid on top (wellies and trainers left on the lawn). The edge of the liner was pushed under the soil, and the surplus cut away, where necessary. Then, we hosed out the old liner and laid this on top of the new, to give a little more protection.

The next operation was very messy - it involved sifting all the mud saved, into the bin of pond water, to take out any stones, glass, and especially the Canadian pond-weed. When the bin was full, water and mud were taken out, and we gradually re-filled the pond. When most of the pond water from the bin was used, a

hose-pipe was used to wash the mud through a sieve. The mud was laid around the edge, to put the plants in, which was the next job. After that, Mike laid a little cement, to lay some larger stones around the edge and the hose was left on to complete the filling process.

After the frogs' antics at the start of the dismantling, they were conspicuous by their absence when all the plants and water were in place. We found a couple in the smaller pond, and when they were re-introduced to the larger pond they stayed in.

Since then, the plants seem to have survived the transplanting, and there is no sign of the Canadian pond-weed, thank goodness.

Withington Hospital - Why not join in on our next "impossible" venture, as we try to manage and survey a small wood. Details of dates for work days at the hospital will be found on the events list. The site is to be found at the junction, north of Nell Lane and west of Princess Road. Access is by the Maternity Hospital entrance (the first on Nell Lane from Princess Road). Ask at the gate, but our area of operation will be behind the long brick wall on your left. There will be an article, in a later newsletter, about what we are doing in the wood, but why not come along and find out for yourself. If you still have any doubt about how to get there, phone Ian Brown on 437 7040. //

Site of Biological Importance Lost

Tipping has destroyed the S.B.I. at Adswold Brick Works, which is in Stockport. This site had a good diversity of wetland, but now is no more. The owners, New Soils, were unaware of the biological importance of the site and say permission was given to fill in the land in compliance with a 40 year old clay extracting contract. Is this not a case for informing land-owners that there is an S.B.I. on their land? It may not have made any difference, in this case, but if a land owner is not aware of the wildlife importance of their land, it is hardly reasonable to expect them to protect it, whether or not they would wish to.//

GREEN CHRISTMAS FAIR - We attended this event at Cavendish Road School at short notice. It was very good for making contacts. We found out about FoE Networking Seminar (see Events List). Did anyone see publicity for the fair in the local press? //

Membership Application Form

Do you care about City wildlife? Then join us by filling in this form and returning with a cheque/P.O. made out to the Manchester Wildlife Trust Ltd. to Unity Kelly, 13 Ruskin Ave Rusholme, Manchester. M14 4DP

The Trust aims to protect places of natural history interest and provide new wildlife habitats in our gardens and local neighbourhoods. At present we depend mostly on our members' subscriptions to cover our running costs. Members receive the "Magpie" quarterly and can get help and advice about urban wildlife matters. They can take part in any events organised by the Trust and have the chance to become involved in the running of the Trust, which can be very rewarding. Want to know more? Contact Ian Brown on 437 7040 or Unity Kelly on 226 4583. Articles for "Magpie" are always most welcome.

I wish to join the Trust and enclose my annual subscription.

* £4 - Individual. * £6 - Family/Group. * £60 - Life Member
* £2 - Individual.) Unwaged; under 16 years of age,
* £3 - Family/Group.) senior citizens, etc.
(* Please delete those which do not apply.)

Which of our activities interest you most?
Name.....Tel. No.
Address.....
Signed.....Date.....

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82 Crantock Dr. Heald Green, Stockport. SK8 3HA Tel 437 7040

Whilst every effort has been made to ensure that information in the "Magpie" is correct, the Trust cannot be held responsible for any mistakes in the text. Likewise, any person who undertakes any project based on information from this newsletter does so at their own risk.

STOP PRESS

PARRS WOOD RURAL STUDIES CENTRE UNDER THREAT!

Over 350 people attended a Public Meeting, on Wednesday the 24th of January, at the Rural Studies Centre to show their feelings over its possible closure. The original threat was from a property development company who made an offer, to the City Education Department, for the land with the intention of establishing an office development. That offer is now said to have been withdrawn but a similar offer could be made in future. The unanimous feeling of the meeting was that the Rural Studies Centre should be protected from any threat of closure and that this fine Environmental Educational Facility, with its historic buildings and setting of high ecological value, should continue to serve the educational needs of the whole of the City (and beyond), in the future as it has for the last 42 years. A working party has been formed to secure the future of the Centre and Unity Kelly, our Treasurer, has put her name forward. If YOU are concerned or wish to know more, contact Geoff Bridson (445-1090) or Unity (226-4583).

Useful Contacts

British Trust for Conservation Volunteers

Sale & Altrincham - Shelagh Aston - 275 3146 (day) 928 2223

Salford & Trafford - Brian Taylor - 872 7640 (day)

Stockport - Kim Porter 0625 874729 (eve)

Bury Wildlife & Countryside A. G. - Dave Bentley - 724 8602

Cheshire Conservation Trust - Stockport & Tameside -483 6733

Insects Didsbury Insect Group - Jon Delf - 445 9648

Friends of the Earth - Neil Lea - 789 8880

Friends of the Mersey Valley - Ann Buckingham - 881 1814

Mersey Valley Wardens - Sale 905 1100 - Chorlton 881 5639

Stockport Heritage Trust - John Turner - 494 6589