

**"The Excellent Newsletter
of Manchester Wildlife"**

*John Vidal, Environment
Correspondent, The Guardian*

Number 45 - - - - - Spring 1999



Magpie



**Standing up for Wildlife
in Greater Manchester**

50p

Editorial

Send in
YOUR Story
Editor's Office 0161-437 7040

The cover of this **Magpie** is supposed to convey that optimistic feeling of spring, though as I sit here typing this it is still cold, miserable and wet. I can only hope that, by the time this reaches you, warmer weather will be with us. The sketches, which first appeared on **Magpie No. 5**, are by myself. This reminds me that I have been somewhat remiss in not crediting the sketches which have appeared in your newsletter. I will try to redress this omission later in this issue.

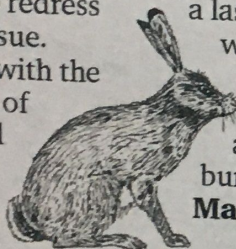
We may not be first with the news but, as on the subject of Genetically Modified Food (in "**Don't Let Them Muck About With Your Genes**"), we are often some way ahead of the mass media.

We first reported on this subject in summer 1998. Recently the subject has hardly been out of the news and it seems that those against, what have been called "Frankenstein foods", are winning the argument. I am told, by Anthony Phelps (alias Jean Bender), the writer of our article, that there will not be an update in these pages. This is working on the theory that, anyone who is

not now fully abreast of the subject must have been living in an isolated cave for the past six months.

I have a problem. This does not occur very often but some of our major contributors seem to have writer's block. This means that there will probably not be as many articles as usual, though we are privileged to have an item from Chris Baines, the well known writer and broadcaster. So, unless there is

a last minute rush, this **Magpie** will be smaller than usual. I will try to make up for this in the summer edition and, don't forget you had a bumper issue with the winter **Magpie**; the biggest yet!



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Please note that all cheques for membership subscriptions etc. should be made payable to "Manchester Wildlife" and sent to the Hon. Treasurer, Ian Brown.

Trees of Time and Place

by Chris Baines

Trees grow bigger and live longer than anything else on earth, but even the greatest oak tree - maybe a 1,000 year old - grew from a little acorn. With the new millennium fast approaching, there is no better legacy to leave for the future than a newly planted tree, and no better way to secure a little immortality than to grow your own **Tree of Time and Place**.

Over 50 national organisations are now working in a unique partnership, to provide support for anyone who is willing to pledge support for the **Trees of Time and Place** campaign. All you need to do is think of your favourite tree it may be an old family favourite or a local landmark, an ancient veteran tree, or a tree you remember from childhood. Gather some seeds from your special tree in the autumn, plant them, care for the seedlings, and plant your **Tree of Time and Place** in the year 2000.



Hundreds of schools and community groups are planning to plant their new trees as millennium copses, and local councils throughout the country are finding pockets of land for the purpose. Ordnance Survey has produced an electronic map to record each tree and planting site. MPs are gathering acorns in their constituencies, and growing ceremonial Constituency Oaks to plant at the turn of the millennium, and all over the country, the partners in **Trees of Time and Place** are organising walks in the woods, seed gathering events, and planting days.

If you would like to pledge your support, receive a free information pack, or offer a suitable site for a community nursery or a millennium copse, call the helpline on (lo-call rate) **0345 078 139**.



Enclosed with this newsletter there is a pledge card headed "I promise to grow at least one tree which I have cared for myself, as a way of marking the Millennium". If you can support this pledge please fill in the card. The more trees planted the better and, from the point of view of Manchester Wildlife, we would prefer that they are trees which will be beneficial to our native wildlife.



by Merton Niven

It all started in 1949 with the National Parks Act. It was shortly after this that the phrase, "Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)" was mentioned. These special sites are now fairly widely known about and represent the very best areas of wildlife (and geological) interest in Britain. With the coming of the 1968 Countryside Act and the 1981 Wildlife & Countryside Act, we could be forgiven for thinking that SSSIs had the full protection of the law. Unfortunately, this is not the case. Protection of SSSIs relies mainly on highly deficient voluntary agreements which don't work (they rarely do). What apparently happens is that English Nature, formerly the Nature Conservation Council, designate an SSSI. They send a map to the owner, with a list of potentially damaging operations (that seems a bit silly - rather like sending the owner a list of instructions on how to damage the site - Ed.). If an owner wished to undertake a damaging operation they must inform English Nature who will negotiate to persuade against, or offer compensation for profits foregone. The owner does not have to comply unless the site is considered to be of national importance. In this case the Secretary of State can issue a stop order. This rarely happens.

What a nonsense! SSSI is a designation of a site which is of national importance for nature conservation (a Site of Biological Importance is of regional, district and local importance), so they should all be considered to be of national importance. There are 6,400 SSSIs in Great Britain and 1,481 have been damaged or threatened. This represents 9% of total landscape and there has been an increase in lost, and damaged, sites since the 1981 Wildlife & Countryside Act.

The main problem is that the legislation concerning SSSIs has no teeth; it does not protect, and because of this many sites have been lost in various ways. Road building is a major cause of loss and prestigious developments, such as the marina at Cardiff Bay (a Ramsar site) don't help. Mineral extraction licences are a big problem.



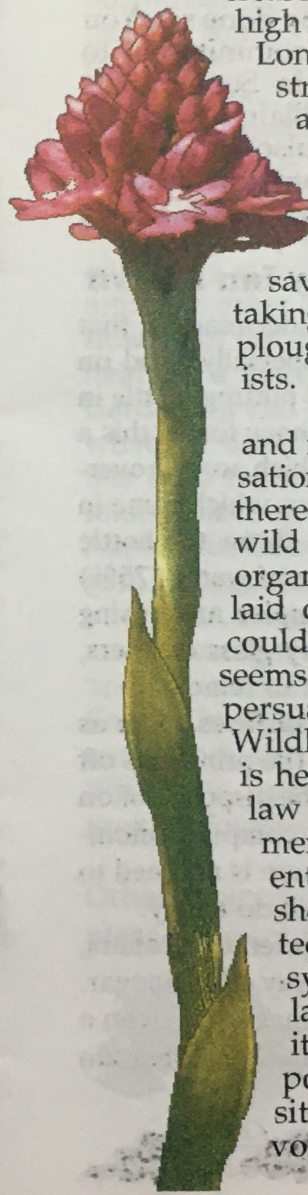
These were supposed to be for small scale extraction but large scale mining is damaging sites. But one of the biggest culprits is probably changes in agricultural practices and the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) payments

must bear a heavy proportion of the blame. Over-grazing of upland areas is a problem, there has been considerable loss of chalk downland and 97% of wildflower rich meadows have been ploughed up since 1939!

There have been some victories for nature conservation - some peat bogs in Northern Ireland have been saved. Thorne and Hatfield Moors were supposed to receive some protection (see

Magpies 41 & 42), though we hear peat cutting has increased. Red Moss (Bolton) was saved from a 20 metre high rubbish tip. The battle for Rainham Marsh (Greater London), notable for its Water Voles, goes on, with strong local support. The developer, aided and abetted by English Partnerships, has already spent ¼ million pounds. There are problems at Moseley Meadows (Wirral), which is threatened by housing development, as the owner has denied access to English Nature. Some sites have been saved by Friends of the Earth, and other groups, taking direct action. A meadowland SSSI, which was ploughed by a farmer, was un-ploughed by local activists.

The present situation cannot be allowed to go on, and it is with this in mind that leading wildlife organisations have joined together to persuade politicians that there must be a Wildlife Bill to properly protect all our wild plants and animals and their habitats. The same organisations promoted the "Wildlife Charter" which laid out a framework around which the Wildlife Bill could be based. We reported on this in **Magpie 41** and it seems that the support the Charter gained was enough to persuade the Government to commit themselves to a Wildlife Bill. It is up to us to ensure that the Government is held to that commitment. It should be enshrined in law that SSSIs should be protected areas and Government bodies should have a duty of care and powers of entry should be given to English Nature. There should be legislation, outside SSSIs, for species protection. Landowners should be encouraged to be sympathetic, but there must be a bottom line and if landowners do damage a site they should pay to put it right. English Nature should offer incentives for positive management. Mineral extraction licences, on sites which have never been mined, should be revoked without compensation. In September 1998, the



6 Government issued a consultation paper on SSSIs, wider conservation and marine conservation. There were some good points; SSSIs should be nationally protected, but there were bad points and marine conservation seems almost like a dream. Legislation could be enacted tomorrow if the Government had the will.

So what can we do to help the process along? The answer is, a lot! There is an Early Day Motion (EDM11), which has been signed by 326 Members of Parliament. You could write to your MP to ask them to sign the EDM, if they have not already done so. You could press for the Government to hold to their commitment to enact the Wildlife Bill by including legislation in September's Queens Speech. Write to John Prescott and Tony Blair, and lobby your own MP, by letter or in person. You can also show your support by signing the enclosed pledge card from the Wildlife

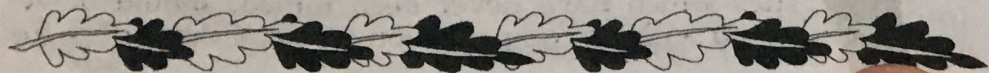
Eco Tip

by Ian Brown

Many of you will know, especially our older readers, that vinegar is an excellent cleaner. It is especially good on glass. I have used it to clean windows by putting a little in water, and applying with a sponge, but have found this a little messy. Recently I had an idea which would overcome this problem. Having used up a proprietary cleaner, which came in a (reusable) plastic spray bottle, and being reluctant to throw the bottle away, I decided I could reuse it by filling with a mixture of water (75%) and vinegar (25%). This makes application a lot simpler and, using newspaper to wipe down, cleans better than proprietary glass cleaners, which I have found leaves a slight film which is difficult to remove.

This home made cleaner can be used on other surfaces, such as work tops but don't use newspaper if cleaning plastic as the print rubs off and leaves a stain; use a paper kitchen towel which can be disposed of on the compost heap. If cleaning electrical items, such as computer monitors, spray a little of the solution onto a sponge first. There is no need to buy vinegar as that which is left over from pickle jars will do nicely.

Thus we make three savings; no need to buy proprietary cleaners, reuse of plastic spray bottles and saving throwing away old vinegar. **Reduce, reuse and recycle.** Anyone who has used vinegar, to clean a window, and wiped off with newspaper, will know where the expression squeaky clean came from.



Inner City Parks

7

Update on the Birchfields Green Action Group

Birchfields Park lies in Inner City Manchester about two miles south of the City Centre, between Longsight, Birch-in-Rusholme and Fallowfield. Like other inner city parks, it has lost many of its amenities over the last few decades, in particular the bandstand, tennis courts, bowling green and clubhouse, and most of the children's playground items. Today, most of the people you see in the Park are casual footballers, dog walkers, joggers, pedestrians and cyclists, passing through, and in the warmer months, picnickers, sunbathers and strollers enjoying the floral areas. Vandalism is a minor problem, with stolen cars and motorcycles occasionally being driven around at night, saplings broken, and the wooden fence set on fire.

A group of locals wants to add to the amenities of the Park to ensure its viability. After consultation with the Parks Department, amongst other activities, the bowling green was planted with wildflowers in the spring of 1998, and in July a public consultation was held (in a marquee!), outlining proposals for a Community Forest Garden on the site of the rose garden, and asking for opinions on what the developments should be. Resulting from this, the Group has held regular meetings to plan the Forest Garden, with visits taking place to Springfields Community Garden, in Bradford, and Apple Tree Court's garden (and new public restaurant) in Salford, to gain information on similar, successful ventures.

In January, this year, we commissioned Naturescape, a local environmental consultancy, to assist the Group to draw up a design and to conduct two of the half-dozen public meetings, related to Forest Gardens, planned for the spring. At the same time, we are contacting local groups and institutions, canvassing their support. With luck, these will result in the start of the planting of our Community Forest Garden in the coming autumn.

Other projects for the Park are in the pipeline. For further details, please contact Gill on 0161-224 8437.

Lesley Bernadis

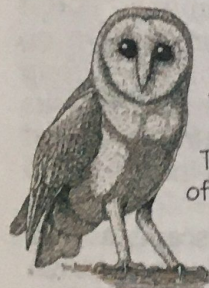


8 Credit Where Credit's Due

The artwork used in Magpie comes from various sources; professional and amateur artists and, though we use no copyright work, without permission, we do include computer clip art to liven up the publication. The original artwork, now held on computer files, should be credited. We have not always done this and it is about time we made amends. Let us introduce you to our main contributors.



Lyn Wells is a professional artist who was a member of Manchester Wildlife until she moved away from the area. She now lives in Clashmore, near Dornoch in Sutherland and, when last heard of was doing bird illustrations for a field guide. Her contributions to Magpie are line drawings but she is skilled in most kinds of artwork. As well as the Hedgehog and Common Spotted Orchid, shown here, Lyn has kindly provided us with illustrations of Coltsfoot, a Kingfisher and a Comma butterfly.



Sue Barnes has provided us with a few illustrations which have appeared on the front cover. In addition to the Barn Owl, Sue has given us a Tawny Owl and a Pole-lathe Turner. Although not a present a professional, her work is of the highest quality.



Ian Brown is not a professional artist and he would not admit to having achieved a high standard. Why did he get the job, you may ask? It happened at one of our meetings when Ian suggested that there should be an illustration on the front cover of Magpie. He expected that there would be at least one artist present but, this proving not to be the case, had to volunteer for the job. The first effort was the Pochard on the cover of Magpie No. 4 (there was also a sketch of ducklings, by Sue Chapman, to illustrate her article). Since then finding that practice, though not bringing perfection, does improve, Ian gained confidence to provide many illustrations for your newsletter. You may recognise his style; the recent cover illustrations of the Frog and the Badger, have appeared previously. Recently, Ian has found his artistic skills have declined because of lack of practice



and has relied more on computer generated art, like the Marbled White butterfly shown here. Expect more of this type of artwork in the future.

Other artists have made contributions. Margaret Brown provided the sketch which accompanied her article in Magpie 44. The cover Magpie is extracted from our tee-shirt logo which was from a professional artist whose name I have forgotten. Apologies to any artist we have not credited and if you would like to have your illustrations appear in these pages, please send samples to the editor.



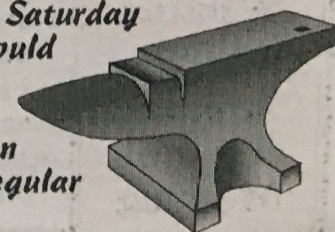
Tim Lepidus

by Art Craft



We have made a slight change to our logo. Can you spot the difference? In contrast we are making big changes at the Bolton Craft Centre. Nothing revolutionary but we've put on a new roof. The original roof was a little weak; holes regularly appeared and, consequently, it leaked. The new roof is a much stronger job; with heavier beams and thick plywood boards, covered with roofing felt. Also, it now overlaps two feet, all round, so we have a larger sheltered area. The funds for this were provided by an Entrust (Landfill Tax) Grant. Using the same grant we are going to box in the forge area. This will make winter working more comfortable and have the added benefit of keeping the smoke away from the other craft workers. The Greenwood craft section will still be open but we're a tough lot so should be able to stand it. In fact, I would not like to work indoors, except in the worse winter weather.

We've now got a regular time table; Saturday and Sunday, once a fortnight. If you would like to know the dates, why not join the group. Membership is free, just send an A5 stamped addressed envelope to: Ian Brown, address on page 2. There is a regular newsletter for members.



10 Re-Peat

Manchester Wildlife member, Kae Nicholson, has written to us concerning the article on peat and composting in the previous **Magpie**. She says, "I do not agree that buying sphagnum moss from other countries is an alternative. Why should we advocate depleting other countries' sphagnum reserves, just because we've drained or dug up our own? I am inclined to agree, and how is it possible to tell sphagnum moss peat from sedge peat when it is in a bag."

Kae also thinks that municipal (large scale) composting is a viable alternative as the larger heaps create more heat, therefore faster decomposition and higher kill rates of potentially harmful toxic bacteria, etc. She also recalls from her academic days, lectures about ex-airfield sites with huge compost piles that even degraded complex organic carbon compounds which are otherwise persistent within the environment. She was disappointed with the



by Petra Moss

green "Darleck" which she used to compost garden and kitchen waste. Although degradation did occur the contents did not turn into compost.

I also have a "Darleck" which I opened up recently. After sifting some of the compost, it looked and felt quite good. I have sown some Ash seeds in this "compost" but it is too early to tell if it will be successful. At least it should be a good potting compost and soil conditioner; certainly a good substitute for moss peat. Why success should be varied, in the production of compost, I'm not sure. Is it luck, ingredients or something else. I do have a special ingredient: urine, a good source of nitrogen to balance the carbon in cardboard and shredded paper. If you have experience of compost making, and get good results, please let us know. If you are not so successful then maybe reading, **The Incredible Heap** by Chris Catton and James Gray (Pelham Books - ISBN 0 7207 1467 2), will help you to make better compost.

Manchester
Wildlife

Annual
General
Meeting

Will take place on Saturday the 24th of April at 12 noon at the One World Centre, Friends Meeting House Basement, Central St., off Mount Street, Manchester. Followed by a walk down the River Irk.

Accounts and necessary papers will be available on the day. We look forward to seeing you.

Yes They Have Gone Completely Mad!

by Des Poiler

11

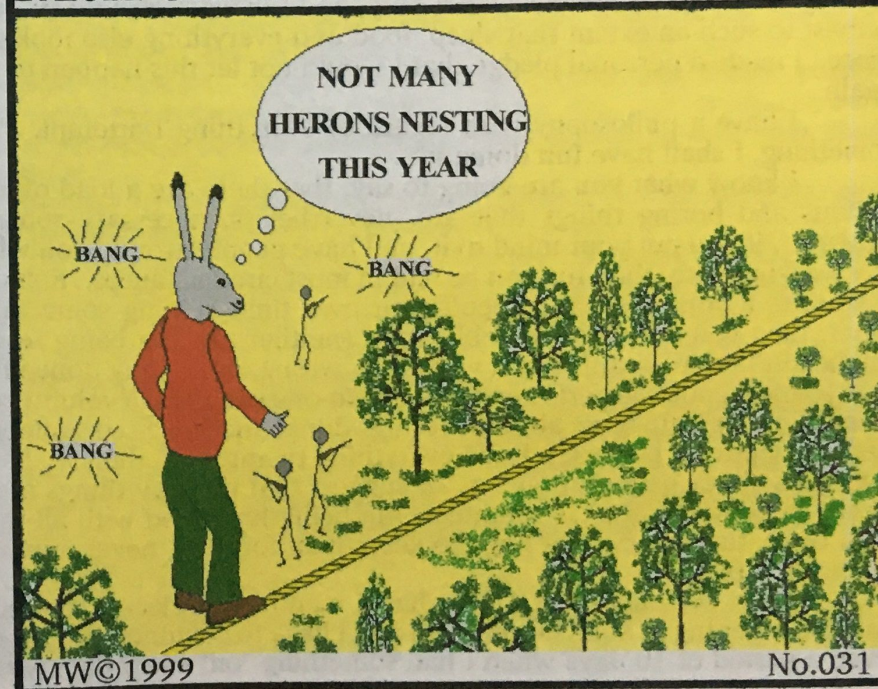
Further to my article in Magpie 44, on the proposed Manchester Racecourse near Worsley, I received a disturbing report that a forestry contractor, from Flintshire, turned up to start felling large trees in the Heronry at Botany Bay Woods. It looks as though Peel Holdings are trying to destroy the wildlife before putting in their planning application. I believe the situation was retrieved, which is just as well as the Heronry is thought to be in the top 10 in the UK. It should be an SSSI!

From the same source came the news of further crazy ideas for the Botany Bay area. There is already paint-balling; there could be shooting, clay pigeons and not Herons (we hope), but the really, really mad idea is an aerial rope-way to view the Heronry. The Herons are going to love this. If there's one bird which requires an undisturbed nesting site, then the Heron is that bird.

Let us hope that wiser counsels prevail and that any forthcoming planning application can be defeated on environmental grounds. The fact that the original Manchester Racecourse closed for financial reasons, and the new version is likely to be a failure, is not grounds in planning law for a refusal. Why not?

March Hare

by Tim Lepidus



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No.031

12 Are You Personally Sustainable? by Anthony Phelps

[The opinions in this article are personal, and not necessarily those of Manchester Wildlife. Some of the events I attended would certainly not be allowed under our constitution, and I attended these as an individual]

Are you any good at saying "No"? I used to be so concerned that I wanted to know everything that was going on, it was hard to say "No", and therefore, I got involved in so many things, taking up so much of my time, that I became, in a phrase I heard recently, "personally unsustainable". In fact, I burnt out, and because of this, didn't become involved in any major campaigning or other voluntary work, outside of Manchester Wildlife, for about a year.

What struck me about this is that this isn't an isolated case. Maybe, as a result of having suffered from it myself, I can more easily see it in others - I don't know, but it worries me for several reasons. Firstly, it's not good for the person involved, and secondly, it's not good for the "green (or any other) movement" in general, as it means there's one less activist available, and believe me, some people don't "bounce back", like I did, and are lost forever.

Some people can get so engrossed and entangled in a cause that they are unable, and even unwilling, to let go, and let somebody else hold the reins, even for a while, whilst they rest and recharge their batteries. I once managed to take one such sufferer aside for a talk. I heard a familiar phrase when I suggested that a rest was needed: "Well, if I don't do it, nobody else will". It had become a duty, and the work had taken over the activist to such an extent that sleep, food and everything else took second place. I made a personal pledge that I would not let this happen to myself again.

I have a philosophy with regard to everything I attempt. "If I do something, I shall have fun doing it".

I know what you are going to say, that there are a load of awfully tedious and boring things that are, nevertheless, necessary sometimes. However, if you put your mind to it, and have people around you who you like working with, then fun can be had in most circumstances. Remember, if you are a volunteer, and spend your own time helping some cause or other, then you are under no obligation (neither are you being rewarded financially) to do anything that you feel is wrong, or is being done in a way that you feel could be performed better. No-one can force a volunteer to do something. It is up to us all to get things done, and if we see someone out of their depth, or being left to do everything themselves, then we have the option to either help that person, or suggest that the way things are done needs to be rethought. If volunteers are being lumbered with all the rubbish tasks, then we cannot hope to keep them for long, never mind trying to develop them!

On a personal front, I have had a mad few weeks - there's been so much happening in Manchester that I feel I have to document it. There was even a period of 10 days when I had something "on" every day, with only

one day "off" during this period! It did take its toll, however, and I became a little "run down" and have been taking things a little easier for a few days. It's so easy to keep filling that diary up!

On the 11th February I went to the EMERGE open meeting. We are constituted to hold three general meetings each year, at which we invite our members, and let them know how things are going on. This was our first since the AGM, when I became a Director, and was quite successful, although, like most meetings, we could have done with more members turning up.

On the 18th February, I got a ticket to an interesting event in the Grants public house in Hulme, which was, in fact, one of the most relaxing events I've been to yet this year. The title was "Spiritual Ecology" and consisted of a talk, with slides, then some meditation and some singing, followed by a wonderful vegan meal. This was a well attended event.

On the 21st February, I was again in Hulme at an event which had originally been discussed before Christmas, and was titled "Community Action Day". Basically there is a lot of land in Hulme which is vacant - some of which is intended for redevelopment. There was a patch beside the new Hulme Arch, just off Stretford Road, which had been fenced off for ages, but was full of trees and a few flowers. The action was to "reclaim" this patch of land as a park for Hulme. It had been planned properly, and we'd even written to the Council asking them to open it up for us. However, if you know our Council, nothing was done - so we did it ourselves. The fencing was old and wooden, and in a dangerous condition - in some places falling onto the public footpaths, and we felt that it was safer to take this down, which we did. We folded it up neatly, and left it on site for the Council to remove. Then we litter-picked the whole site. For most of this day, there was a police presence, but they did nothing except video the action. Surely, if it had been wrong, they'd have arrested us? The parks department had supplied us with "left-over" roses and bulbs which we planted in several beds on the site, and it is now an open space for the people of Hulme.

On the 28th February, Rob and I turned up for my Bird Walk around Chorlton Water Park. It was a lovely sunny day.

The next event I attended was on the 4th March, which was a planning meeting for the "New OKasional Caf", which was to be opened up again. I'd been involved in the previous three cafs, but not actually attended a planning meeting before.

The following evening there was a benefit gig by Attila the Stockbroker (a poet/singer), who I had never seen before. The benefit was for Kosova, and was packed out. It was a brilliant night.

On the 6th, there was an event, strangely not in Hulme! The SchNews team (I gave a plug for this weekly news sheet in the last edition), who are on tour, had come to Manchester for their "SchNews Night". It was vastly entertaining (and I won a valued t-shirt in the raffle!).

The next day, Sunday, Rob, Ian and I met Paddy (the headteacher) at English Martyrs School on a rainy day. We looked around the nature area, and decided that it was looking after itself nicely, and nothing needed

to be done. We discussed the future prospects for this site following the news that the school was to close because of falling rolls. We'll do what we can to preserve this patch of nature we helped to create.

Monday saw the MERCi AGM, in the Friends Meeting House. The main topic on the agenda was looking through, and choosing favourites from amongst the 10 possible buildings that are being considered for purchase. As some of the details had only just been received, it was decided that a final decision would have to be deferred to a later meeting.

Tuesday was the Manchester Friends of the Earth meeting in the Friends Meeting House, with guest speaker Craig Bennet talking about the proposed "Wildlife Bill". We decided that this was far more important to attend that going to the Old Monkey for our Social Meeting.

Wednesday was the start of my decline into sickness - in fact I had my first day sick from work for over 3 years!

On Thursday, feeling a little more human, I attended the EMERGE Board meeting, and gained the title "Director Responsible for Human Resources".

Saturday was the day of the Longsight walk (the first of the trilogy of events entitled "LAND and Birds"). This was very enjoyable, although I have to say that for most of the day I didn't really know where I was, as we wandered around the smaller streets, looking at small patches of open space, and seeing a fair range of species, including Meadow Pipit which I had seen before on Matthews Lane old tip site. We adjourned to Misty's cafe for some refreshments, and then a couple of us continued until dusk. The other events are a day building bird nest boxes, and then putting them up around Longsight over the Easter weekend.

The following day, Sunday, we all met up in Albert Square, and then walked to the new OKasional Caf. Our task was to clean it out completely, and get it ready and kitted out for opening on Monday. In fact, this cafe isn't exactly a new squat (it's a recycled squat!), as it is the same building from the very first cafe back in February 1998. The building has not been used since we last left it, back in March last year! (although we are now using it), and was in need of some repainting. That evening, Steven Cope returned to perform for us (he'd performed at the very last day of the last time we occupied the building). If you've been past the student union, it's the orange and purple building just across the road. At the moment it is a very well used space for people to meet, eat, and just simply be. The first official evening's event was a wonderful three-course meal (Vegan Organic Heaven). I bet you can gather that I was there for that! [For those that are interested, squatting isn't a criminal offence, just a civil matter between the owner and the people squatting. I personally feel that it should be a criminal offence for landlords to keep buildings empty when there are so many homeless people on the streets of Manchester and the rest of Britain!].

Well, that's what's been happening. As the disclaimer at the start says, I couldn't possibly have attended most of these things as a repre-

sentative of Manchester Wildlife, and I didn't. If you are interested in getting involved in anything that's happening in Manchester, do drop me a line, and we can discuss the possibilities. Finally, I'd like to reinforce what I consider very important things to remember:

- ♥ Don't try to do everything yourself
- ♥ Whatever you decide to do, enjoy it - have fun
- ♥ If you feel "put upon", just say "No" - you're too valuable to "burn out"
- ♥ Be "personally sustainable"

Lest We Forget

by Pondlifer

Abbey Pond

Just over five years ago, on the 24th of February 1994, Abbey Pond (Hulme), and all its wildlife, was obliterated in a deliberate act of destruction by a Director and Shareholder of Manchester Science Park. An so, Manchester lost one of its best city centre wildlife sites. There was a plan to transfer the pond, and all its wildlife to a new pond in St. George's Park (also in Hulme). This new "pond" was a complete failure and the only remaining evidence is a muddy hole in a corner of the park.

Manchester Wildlife helped in the campaign to save the pond and even went to the trouble of reporting Manchester City Council to the Ombudsman, for maladministration, as they had not complied with their own planning condition regarding the pond transfer. We were not successful but, at least, we created a few waves. Prior to the destruction, many local people and "green campaigners" formed the



Republic of Newtonia and camped on the Abbey Pond site in an effort to save it. Unfortunately, they were unable to change the minds of the planning authorities or the University.

Abbey Pond was found to be one of the best in Manchester; it was swarming with Smooth Newts and the Broad-bodied Chaser dragonfly, which is quite rare in these parts, was observed on several occasions. Abbey Pond is gone; we should not mourn, but we should not forget. When valuable habitats are lost, in the name of "progress", it should make us all the more determined to ensure that it should not happen, in the future.

by
Ian
Brown

On Wednesday the 17th of March a meeting was called, at Manchester Town Hall, to discuss Local Agenda 21 (LA21). I had heard little on the subject since 1997, when the Draft LA21 Strategy was produced. This Strategy was to have gone out to public consultation. Shortly after, Manchester City Council pulled out of the LA21 process. It is believed that the main reason for this is that did not like what they saw. There was a meeting in June 1997 when it was agreed that a group called Partnership 21 should be formed to continue the work of the LA21 Forum and take over their remaining funds. Nothing happened until a meeting was called, in May 1998, when it was decided that Voluntary Action Manchester should become the facilitators for Partnership 21. Nothing happened until the above mentioned meeting on the 17th of March, which I found out about one week before it was to take place.

The reason for this meeting being called was that John Prescott (Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions) had directed councils, who were lagging behind with their LA21 programmes, to submit a Local Agenda 21 Strategy by the end of this year. At the meeting we were told what steps the City Council intended to take to comply with this government directive. Briefly, a Forum would decide what should be included in the Strategy. This forum would be made up of 12 people from various sectors of the community: two from the voluntary sector, two City Councillors, representatives from transport, power generation and industry, someone from the Environment Agency, etc., to make a balance of community interests. From time to time, this Forum could then consult the wider community (which would include a nature conservation group, such as ourselves).

What would be in Manchester's Local Agenda 21 Strategy is a little difficult to say. I foolishly suggested that the Draft LA21 Strategy should be used as a basis for public consultation. I was told that, while the Council thought that the Strategy was good as a "visionary" document, it was not practical enough. Well, excuse me, but I thought that LA21 was a "visionary" thing and, if we are to confine ourselves solely to practical strategies, we would hardly make progress from the situation in which we find ourselves today. Maybe it depends on your definition of the word "practical".

Through various Action Groups, a many volunteers put in hours of hard work to formulate the Draft LA21 Strategy and I feel that this hard work should not be wasted. But it seems that this is exactly what we are being told. While there was much good stuff in the Strategy, there were some points which could have been improved. The Greening, Land-use and Open space Action Group had suggested that the Nature Conservation

Strategy and the Woodland Strategy should be adopted by the Council. In the Draft Strategy, this was watered down to, "a nature conservation strategy should be adopted by the Council", as though the Nature Conservation Strategy did not already exist. We also suggested an Open Space Requirement. There should be a minimum requirement for "natural greenspace" in urban areas of: a) 2 hectares within 1/2 kilometre of all residents - b) LNRs (Local Nature Reserves) at a minimum level of 1 hectare per 100 of the population. [Manchester has no LNRs]. - c) One 20 hectare site within 2 kilometres of all residents. - d) One 100 hectare site within 10 kilometres of all residents. This standard was taken from UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Project. There was no mention of this in the Draft Strategy. The point of a public consultation was that individuals, and groups such as ourselves, could have made comments so that these errors, and omissions, could be corrected.

What is going to happen next? We can only wait and see. How much say the citizens of Manchester will have, in the LA21 process? Again, we will have to wait and see. One thing we do know is that, if Manchester does not submit a Local Agenda 21 Strategy, which is acceptable to Central Government, by the end of this year, then the Government will impose one on the City of Manchester. I remember, at the time of the meeting, saying (quietly), "maybe that would not be a bad thing!"

At the start I told you that this would be a short newsletter; I had envisaged 16 pages. With three pages left to fill a contributor, who shall be nameless, over came writer's block and sent in a 3 1/4 page article. So, now I have a 20 page newsletter with 3 3/4 pages to go. I'm struggling a little. So here's some credited illustrations to plug a small gap!



Kingfisher by Lyn Wells



Garden Tiger Moth by Ian Brown



Tawny Owl by Sue Barnes

**Eco
Tip**

We have a good idea from Rob Allen. If you have a collection of good books, especially reference books, why not make a special provision, in your will, that they should go to your local library or other suitable organisation. This will ensure that, rather than their fate being uncertain, they will be read many times by many people, giving pleasure for many years to come.

If you look at the events list (opposite) you will see that we have arranged a number of walks throughout the spring and summer. The walk down the River Irk could bring a few surprises. The spring walk on Kenworthy Fields is a good opportunity to see Speckled Woods and possibly Holly Blue. In June we go to Wigan Flashes when we are sure to see Common Blues, weather permitting. Highfield Country Park is still something of an unknown quantity. It has been surveyed (see



page 13 of Magpie no. 42) but we are hoping that recent improvements will increase the numbers, and variety, of butterflies. Abney Hall Park usually puts on a good display of butterflies and there could be the added bonus of orchids in the marsh. The visit to Reddish Vale Butterfly Park is sure to bring satisfactory results.

These walks will provide an excellent opportunity for you to improve your butterfly identification skills or, if you are already an expert, just to enjoy the best of our urban wildlife. The weather is bound to be better than last year; it couldn't be worse, surely. In 1998 we only received two survey reports and the general opinion is that it was a poor year for butterflies.

Our survey continues. To save on paper we are not sending out survey forms, this year, but most of you will still have the one issued last spring. I hope you will take advantage of any fine summer days and search your local open space for butterflies. If you do not have a survey form, don't worry, just write down the species (and numbers) you see, on a piece of paper, and send the results to the editor. Here's hoping to see you on one of our walks; till then, good luck with your butterfly hunting!

More
Good
News

Anyone remember Kingswater Park? It was the name given to a proposed "business park" (offices) in Denton, near Debdale Park. It has been renamed, Waterside Park (don't ask me!) and very nearly had planning permission; until now. John Prescott has called in the proposal for a public inquiry. Hurray! The area, on which are found both Denton and Fairfield golf Courses, has a number of ponds, with a good colony of Great Crested Newts, and makes an excellent open break, between Manchester and Tameside. Why do we need more offices? Many of the office developments, proposed under the various Unitary Development Plans, have not gone ahead, and there are still plenty of empty offices. More on this subject in

April 1999

Tuesday 13th - Social Meeting - Time 7.30pm at the Old Monkey Public House, junction of Portland Street/Princess Street, Manchester. Convenient for Piccadilly Gardens Bus & Metro Station. Contact Ian Brown 0161-437 7040.

Saturday 24th - Annual General Meeting and Walk down the River Irk Valley - Details elsewhere in Magpie.

May 1999

Tuesday 11th - Social Meeting - Details as for 13th April.

Saturday 15th - Open Day at the Bolton Craft Centre - Time 11am to 4pm. Venue Rock Hall, Moses Gate Country Park. Contact Ian Brown 0161-437 7040.

Sunday 16th - Spring Walk on Kenworthy Fields - with Northenden Civic Society. Meet at 11am outside Tesco, Northenden. Leaders Anthony Phelps and Rob Allen. Contact Rob 0161-448 8631.

Sunday 22nd - MERCi/Manchester Wildlife Allotment Open Day - Time 12 noon at allotments on Bethnall Drive (off Wilbraham Road), Fallowfield. South of St. Kentigen's School. Contact Rob Allen 0161-448 8631.

Thursday 27th - General Meeting - Time 7.30pm at the One World Centre (Friends Meeting House basement), Central Street, Mount Street, Manchester. Contact Ian Brown 0161-437 7040.

June 1999

Saturday 5th - Walk on Wigan Flashes - Meet at 1pm outside Wigan Wallgate Station. Regular trains from Manchester Victoria and Salford Crescent. Contact Ian Brown 0161-437 7040

Tuesday 8th - Social Meeting - Details as for 13th April.

July 1999

Sunday 4th - Visit to Highfield Country Park - Meet at 12 noon on the old railway bridge, Nelstrop Road North (south of Barlow Road/Longford Road), Levenshulme. Contact Ian Brown 0161-437 7040.

Tuesday 13th - Social Meeting - Details as for 13th April.

Sunday 18th - Visit to Abney Hall Park, Cheadle - Meet at 12 noon in the lakeside car park. This is down Newlands Road which is to the east of Manchester Road, just south of the railway bridge. Contact Ian Brown 0161-437 7040.

August 1999

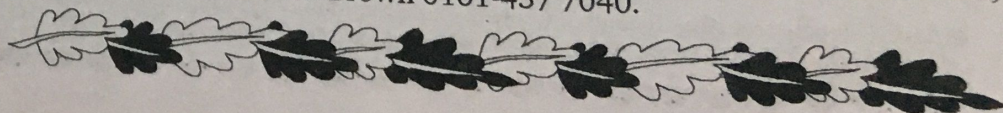
Sunday 1st - Visit to Reddish Vale Butterfly Park - Meet at the Reddish Vale Visitor Centre, at the bottom of Reddish Vale Road. Time 12 noon. Trains from Piccadilly to North Reddish or Brinnington. Contact Ian Brown 0161-437 7040.

Tuesday 10th - Social Meeting - Details as for 13th April.

September 1999

Tuesday 14th - Social Meeting - Details as for 13th April.

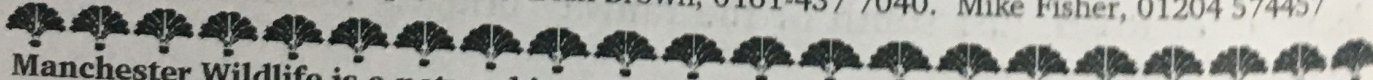
Thursday 30th - General Meeting - Time 7.30pm at the One World Centre (Friends Meeting House basement), Central Street, Mount Street, Manchester. Contact Ian Brown 0161-437 7040.

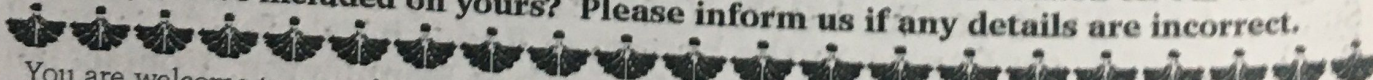


Useful Contacts



- RSNC, Urban Wildlife Partnership** - Chris Gordon, 01522 544400
- English Nature** - - - - - NW Regional Office, Bernard Fleming, 01942 820342
- Cheshire Wildlife Trust** - - - - - North Group, Trafford, Liz Blackman, 0161-962 6748
 Wilmslow Group, Tony Browne, 0161-436 1761
 Stockport & Tameside, Eric Stead, 0161-494 9130
- Lancashire Wildlife Trust** - - - - - Bolton Wildlife Project, Mick Weston, 01204361847
- Medlock & Tamm Valley Conservation Association** - - - - - Mildred Burlinson, 0161-330 2721
- BTCV** - - - - - Salford & Trafford, Val Sutton, 0161-872 7640 (day)
 Sale & Altrincham, Shelagh Aston, 0161-860 6910
 Bolton, Rick Parker, 01942 817302
 Bury, Lawrence Kitchenon, 0161-796 6404
- British Trust for Ornithology** - - - - - Greater Manchester Recorder, Judith Smith, 01942 712615
- Red Rose Forest Team** - - - - - Jane Whitaker, 0161-872 1660
- RSPB** - - - - - Bolton Group, Tony Johnson, 01204 468850
 Manchester Group, Simeon Rydz, 0161-434 2720
 Stockport Group, Tony O'Neil, 0161-223 8987
- Advice on Birds in Distress** - - - - - Irena Zalasiewicz, 0161-763 5146
- Bat Groups** - - - - - South Lancashire, Angela Graham, 0161-7997 4745
 Cheshire, Mike Freeman, 01606 41581
- Butterflies/Moths** - - - - - Barry Shaw, 0161-491 0753
- Mammals/Insects** - - - - - Bolton Museum, Steve Garland, 01204 522311
- Amphibians/Ponds** - - - - - Dave Bentley, 0161-724 8602
- Mersey Valley Wardens** - - - - - Sale, 0161-905 1100. Chorlton, 0161-881 5639
- Croal/Irwell Valley Wardens** - - - - - Nicky Greek, 01204 571561
- Stockport Countryside Service** - - - - - 0161-477 5637
- Trafford Council** - - - - - Ros Park, 0161-912 4174
- Manchester Sustainability Group** - - - - - Adrian Pearce, 0161-234 4594
- Manchester Recycling Officer** - - - - - Pete Stevens, 0161-234 4629
- Stockport Recycling Hotline** - - - - - 0161-474 4747
- Manchester FoE** - - - - - 0161-834 8221
- Networking Newsletter** - - - - - Michael Bane, 01457.871609
- Visions Community Design** - - - - - Judith Mottram, 0161-834 6309

Bolton Greenwood Group - - - - - Ian Brown, 0161-437 7040. Mike Fisher, 01204 574457


Manchester Wildlife is a networking organisation. You are included on our Contacts List, are we included on yours? Please inform us if any details are incorrect.


 You are welcome to reproduce anything contained within "Magpie", with an acknowledgement.

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