

## **Meeting Notes from GCCG Ordinary Quarterly Meeting 15<sup>th</sup> December 2021**

### **1. CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME (Peter Owen)**

Seasons greetings to you all. It was a pleasure to welcome some actual attendees to our first meeting since Covid hit us all and I appreciate the potential risk that involved. It was also good to welcome Lesley into the Group as Acting Secretary until we can seek her formal approval at our AGM next March.

### **2. ATTENDANCE AND APOLOGIES**

**Attendees:** Peter Owen, Bettina Taylor, Margaret Brennan, Josie Harrop, Alan Musgrave, Emma Burrows, David Jefferies, Lesley Larkin, Chris Neild, Keith Holloway, Stuart Priestley.

**Apologies:** Nilima Arora, Angela & Nigel Bent, Russ & Adrienne Booter, Alan Butler, Viv Cunningham, Janet Evans, David Fairlie, Janet Fisher, Tina Hilton, Michelle Inwood, David Khan, Elizabeth Latimer, Keith Marsden, Chris Mullin, John Pollard, Albert Snape

### **3. MINUTES FROM LAST MEETING**

Peter requested as the last meeting was virtual and no amendments had been received that the minutes should be approved. This was agreed.

### **4. MATTERS ARISING**

No matters were raised.

### **5. SECRETARY/MEMBERSHIP REPORT (Lesley Larkin)**

Having only recently become involved, I firstly need to ask for your patience and understanding as I get up to speed with who's who and what's what. Unfortunately the transition of the membership records has not been wholly successful and I need to validate the information that has been transferred. The best information I currently have is that our membership is as per the table below. However, the number of members shown in this table is thought to be higher than reality and I certainly share that concern.

Members	164
Members validated by Treasurer	122
Member Type Single (To be validated)	112
Member Type Family (To be validated)	52

For example, we have a difference of 42 between the number of members and those validated by the Treasurer from the bank account. Of these 42, only 6 have responded to confirm their email addresses, 1 has an invalid email address and for another

1, we have no information other than their name. The remaining 34 have not responded to confirm their email addresses.

Similarly, of the 122 members that have been validated by the Treasurer from the bank account, I'm only totally confident of 52 as they have either confirmed their email addresses or advised they do not have email. Of the others, 46 have not responded to confirm their email addresses, 2 have invalid email addresses and for the other 22 members we have no information other than their names.

I realise this is not a pretty picture but rest assured further validation work is ongoing to improve this view. If you're ever chatting to other members it would be appreciated if you take any chances you get to mention membership records and if you, or they, think that I may not have their confirmed details, I can always be contacted on email [GatleyCarrsCG@gmail.com](mailto:GatleyCarrsCG@gmail.com) or telephone 07900 291639. As I use these records to share the quarterly reports, I'm keen to get as many as possible validated so that no-one misses out on hearing about the wildlife, the nature and the good work that is happening on the Carrs.

On a slightly more positive note, an updated membership subscription form has been added to the Gatley Carrs website. This describes the different options and gives simple instructions on paying your membership subscription. So, for those members that don't already pay by standing order, if a reminder is needed on how to do it, you can find out how on the website.

**Comment;**

Peter commented that Lesley had already done a large amount of work in reconciling our membership list, working with himself and the Treasurer to match names to payments and identify valid contact details but acknowledged that more work is still to be done.

6. **TREASURERS REPORT 2 Sep 2021 - 4 Dec 2021\* (Michelle Inwood)**

- Balance as at **2 Sep 2021**                   **£4837.37**
- Balance as at **4 Dec 2021\***                   **£4447.00\***

\*Note: November bank statement not received at the time this report was produced, so automatic payments such as Nov memberships are not included in this quarterly report.

<b>Incomings</b>	<b>£</b>
• Memberships	100
• Bird food donations	175
<b>Total income</b>	<b>275.00</b>
<b>Outgoings</b>	<b>£</b>
• Bird food (Shentons)	59.20
• Flower bulbs	40
• Wildflower meadow	566.17
<b>Total outgoings</b>	<b>665.37</b>

Summary: Memberships and donations are gratefully received and make a huge difference to the upkeep of The Carrs. Thank you for your support!

As we currently have no other sources of income, we rely on the public for donations and for membership. If you would like to set up an online automatic payment, regular or one-off, the account details are as follows:

- Gatley Carrs Conservation Group
- Sort code: 01-01-75
- Account no: 19082894

**Comment;**

Thanks yet again to Michelle for her very efficient record keeping.

Our Group rely on donations to allow us to do all the extra jobs the site needs to keep it in good condition and that membership fees don't cover. We are very grateful to the many donors who help us out anonymously. This enables us to feed the birds through the winter and the ducks throughout the year.

Elm Road Church donated £250 in the last quarter for which we are very thankful. This is not shown in the Treasurers report yet.

SMBC have also been very generous in providing extra services on the site to cut, weed wipe and clear the wildflower meadow, remove dead trees etc, etc. All are tasks we couldn't finance ourselves.

## **7. BIRD REPORT SEPT/OCT 2021 (Chris Neild)**

The weather in September was changeable as expected, but most days, it was still quite warm. At this time of the year birds are closing down from their breeding season so not as vocal as they were in previous months. Most of our summer migratory birds are now on their way to their wintering areas and it always feels a little sad knowing it will be April before they return to our shores. One species that quite often winters here is the Chiffchaff. A single Chiffchaff juvenile was seen several times during September but was gone by month's end. I have never known them to winter at Gatley Carrs, but they have done so several times at my other Reserve.

On the Pond the maximum number of Mallard was 36. This included several young birds from previous broods. Proof indeed of their success rate at Gatley Carrs. Plenty of Moorhen with regular sightings of 6 Adult and 8 juveniles, yet another success. Still just 5 Domestic ducks.

Around the rest of the Reserve, Goldfinch were abundant, often seen in quite large flocks. Fewer Greenfinch and Chaffinch. Roving flocks of Long-tail Tit, Blue and Great Tit searched together looking for food. Robin, Blackbird and Dunnock seen also.

October was unseasonably warm but often very wet. A very exciting month for me. The trees were beginning to lose more and more of their colour and the strong winds blew more leaves down with quite a few trees devoid of leaves. A lovely carpet of leaves lined the glades and it was so nice to walk through them. On the Pond Mallard numbers had reduced to a max 28 seen. Moorhen total same trend as max total was 8. On several dates I visited, no ducks were visible at all, possibly due to some kind of disturbance. A single Canada Goose appeared on 2 dates and also a Grey Heron. Around the Reserve plenty of Robin, Dunnock, and Blackbird. Up to 4 Ringed neck Parakeets as they noisily flew over.

Although it was pretty quiet around the Reserve it turned out to be a very special day for me. I know we must have a particular bird at Gatley Carrs but I have never seen one here. Well one day I did. I heard a very familiar sound and slowly approached the tree. Not very easy to see as it was hidden amongst the Ivy. A male Tawny Owl staring back at me!!! At last after 7 years of

doing these reports I found this iconic bird. Diligence pays off, I never give up. Of course I have not given the location as I do not want it to be disturbed. Tawny Owls are usually faithful to one tree and hopefully I shall monitor him during the winter.



**Photo courtesy of Paul Brewster of Focal Point**

**Comment;**

Thanks once again to Chris for her ongoing diligence and record keeping.

**8. WILDLIFE AND NATURE REPORT OCTOBER TO DECEMBER 2021 (John Pollard)**

My health problems have continued so my report is once again based on observations of others on Facebook and reports of other officers, as I still haven't been able to get down to the Carrs. But I have been delighted to see the continuing progress of the wildflower meadow and to see that has been cut in preparation for next year.





### Meadow Silage

Chris achieved great results in the meadow and the two-year plan appears to be working. As per Chris's report a wide diversity of species has been achieved and the different techniques used can now be assessed to help guide future planting and maintenance planning.



Alan's band of volunteers also planted bulbs in the area to add to the diversity and further Spring planting to follow.



There have been issues with falling trees and we are grateful to SMBC for clearing these quickly.

Damp conditions in Autumn led to some good shows of fungi around the site.



Giant Puffball





Honey fungus



Stags horn





Honey Fungus



Honey Fungus



Spindle tree

Thanks to Josie Leibrick for these wonderful images.

**Geoff Skitt:** "I would like to pay a personal tribute to Geoff Skitt who died this autumn. Geoff was a much valued and industrious volunteer especially with tree planting and hay making on the wildflower meadow. In the mid 2000s he received the Stockport Greenspace Volunteer Certificate and award for his efforts more than 10 years ago. His support will be greatly missed"

**Comment;** We all echo John's thoughts about Geoff. Our continued best wishes go to John for a return to better health asap.

## **9. SITE MAINTENANCE REPORT (Alan Butler)**

The last couple of months have been relatively quiet on the reserve, annual jobs are up to date, and with help from the volunteers this makes the workload far easier. The footpaths are eventually recovering from the increased pedestrian traffic over the strict Covid isolation, the grass is starting to get back to normal as less people are using the area to exercise. I'm pleased to report there has been very little vandalism and the whole site is looking good.

Planting took place on the 17<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> October of 240 mixed Bulbs adjacent to the Snowdrops, giving this area pride of place



on the Carrs, Spring is a lovely time of the year and hopefully this area will be the one to watch out for.



Volunteers have been busy keeping the many Brambles, and Blackthorns at bay from restricting the many pathways. Cutting these back annually is most important for new growth and to enable Bramble pickers to enjoy the fruits that follow.

I'll be "out of action" for a few weeks as I have had left knee replacement surgery, but Chris and Noreen are stepping in and keeping the Bird dispenser topped up and the Ducks fed during my recuperation.



### **Alan's new look**

I'll be back as soon as possible and many thanks for all the good wishes received. Kind regards and thanks to the volunteers who help me to keep this site so good, not forgetting the daily bird feeders who give up their time to keep our feathered friends healthy thro' the winter months. Thanks also go to our Chairman Peter Owen who does a lot of work behind the scenes and is very passionate about this area.

See you soon, have a lovely Christmas

### **Comment;**

Despite his current incapacity Alan is still pulling the strings behind the scenes and has spies out keeping an eye on things.

## 10. **WILDFLOWER MEADOW REPORT (Chris Mullin)**

On 8th November Arboricultural Services Treework Ltd mowed the meadow. I had not planned to have the entire meadow mown using heavy machinery, however my preference to scythe the meadow was shuffled to one side by a bout of poor health.

However, the highly effective close-cut facilitates the sowing of more yellow rattle in the Spring. Thus, step-by-step, the volume of wild grasses will gradually diminish. And there-in lies the conundrum: do we want a wildflower meadow dominated by colourful wildflowers, or is a mix of pollinators, which includes grasses, a more pleasing and educative goal?

During the summer I warmed myself watching the bees, beetles, butterflies, and moths moving from flower to flower, spreading the love and joyfully maintaining a significant proportion of the meadow's biodiversity. Out of the corner of my eye I could also see the grasses spreading the love but by different methods, e.g. self-pollination and by emitting spontaneous clouds of pollen. Maintaining the grasses in alongside the wildflowers will make the meadow a more natural environment, appealing to a greater number of people and species. In addition to giving space to the grasses, thus, space becomes available for thistles (sow thistle, prickly lettuce etc) nettles (red, white, and common) and brambles.

In November, following a generous donation by the Gatley Flower Rangers, 200 wild daffodil bulbs were planted. In addition, the Stockport Borough Council Neighbourhood Officer has donated a number of crocus bulbs that I plan to plant next week, if the weather is kind.

### **A list of plant species on one day in August**

- 'Native' Sunflower ( )
- Bindweed
- Bird's Foot Trefoil



Birds Foot Trefoil



- Common Knapweed
- Corn Marigold
- Corncockle
- Cornflower
- Dandelion
- Evening primrose
- Goats Beard
- Grass Vetchling
- Hairy Ladies Mantle
- Knotted Crane's Bill
- Lady's-smock/Cuckooflower



Lady's Smock

- Lesser Celandine
- Mallow
- Native Poppy
- Oxeye daisy
- Plantain
- Ragged Robin
- Ragwort
- Red Clover
- Rosebay Willowherb



### Rosebay Willowherb

- Shasta Daisy
- Sow Thistle
- Vetch
- Wild Carrot
- Winter Bittercress



### Winter Bittercress

- Yellow Rattle

### **Comment;**

All present showed their appreciation for all that Chris has achieved with a well-deserved round of applause.

## 11. **GOVERNANCE AND RULES**

Peter explained the rationale behind needing to update the constitution and rules of the group. Having a formally documented constitution will benefit us when applying for grants and we need a documented rule in place to allow children and vulnerable adults to assist in the group's activities. Lesley has drafted a revised constitution and Group rules. These are to be discussed by the committee and then brought to the AGM for discussion and approval.

**Volunteer work;** We now have a **WhatsApp** group set up for contacting volunteers and advising when and what tasks need doing. This is now working very well. If you would like to be added to this group please let me know, message me on **07799 888049** and I will add you into the group. Any time you can spare all helps us enormously.

**Fund raising, Our ongoing need;** We are very grateful to the numerous people who have made donations during the year as they remain vital to our survival. **If anyone is experienced in sourcing funds and support grants we really could do with your help to assist us in any way you can. Support from SMBC has increased recently but their funds are severely stretched at the best of times and even worse now due to Covid, so other sources are needed. Please contact us if you can help.**

## 12. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

### a. Christmas Tree:

- i. Emma updated the meeting on the plans for the Christmas Tree Decorating event. All plans are in place for Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> December with cakes/drinks being provided for a suggested donation of £2 per person. Notices advertising the event have been sent to all GCCG members with email as well as being posted on both the Gatley and Gatley Carrs Facebook pages.
- ii. Special thanks go to David Jefferies for donating a magnificent tree this year and to Stan Clarke, our usual tree sponsor, who has agreed to put his donation towards the more permanent project of repairing some of our noticeboards.

- b. Peter reported on the good news that the Trust Conservation Group had approached the Gatley Carrs Group with an offer to plant more trees on the site and all to be funded by NatWest bank. After discussions with SMBC a list of



- approved trees has been agreed and planting of over 1,000 saplings to commence next February.
- c. Council contractors are currently working on site to cut back dead or overhanging trees from all the main pathways, this is planned to take 10 days.
  - d. To help raise awareness of the Carrs, an article has been submitted to the SK8 magazine for publication in the January edition. Keith Holloway suggested we contact the new local publication, the Cheadle Post and offer them a similar article - this will be taken forward by Peter and Lesley.
  - e. Keith reported that the recent City of Trees initiative to plant trees on Gatley Hill resulted in approximately 3000 trees being planted. This was an amazing achievement given the horrendous weather on the day.

Many thanks for your continued support. We'd appreciate it if you could take any opportunity to spread the word about the Gatley Carrs Conservation Group.

Peter, Chairman  
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### **Next Meeting**

Proposed date of next meeting which will be the Annual General Meeting is **March 16<sup>th</sup> 2022 7.30pm.**