



# **Gatley Carrs Conservation Group Notes from the Ordinary Quarterly Meeting held at The Horse & Farrier, Gatley on 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024**



(Credit: Josie Leibrick)

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

Welcome once again to our quarterly meeting. As ever, the reports from the various committee members are shown below and I propose that we crack on through the formal part of our meeting as required by our constitution and then all have a chat about ideas and any issues.

## **2. ATTENDANCE AND APOLOGIES**

**Attendees:** Jim Arkwright, Angela Bent, Maureen Butler, Fiona Campbell, Betty Davies, Andy, Day, Michelle Inwood, Lesley Larkin, Josie Leibrick, Chris Mullin, Chris Nield, Peter Owen, Liz Wilson

**Apologies:** Margaret Brennan, Janet Evans, Dave Jefferies, Alan Musgrave, Stuart Priestley

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

Minutes from the last meeting, the Annual General Meeting, were approved and physically signed by the chairman, Peter Owen.

## **4. MATTERS ARISING**

No matters were raised.

## 5. TREASURERS REPORT (Michelle Inwood)

The accounts for April 2023 – March 2024 have been audited and approved by Neil Kellett (confirmation via email dated 23/06/24 09:38)

- Previous balance as at **7 March 2024** of **£4413.32**
- Current balance as at **11 June 2024** of **£4477.97** (an increase of **£64.65**)

Income	£	Expenditure	£
Membership subscriptions	110.00	Bird Food	
Membership subscriptions (Paypal)	6.98	Bird Hide	82.33
Donations (Barnard, J Green)	55.00		
<b>Total</b>	<b>171.98</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>107.33</b>

### **FUND RAISING: GCCG relies on donations and membership:** As

we have no other sources of income, we are very grateful to the numerous people who have made donations or subscribed as members during the year as they remain vital to our survival and the work we do on the Carrs. Thank you for your support. If you would like to support the group financially, shown below are different ways that you can:

a) Online automatic payment, regular or one-off, the account details are:

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

b) PayPal, please click on the PayPal button on the GCCG website:

<https://www.gatleycarrs.org.uk/membership/become-a-member> -

NB: Paypal charge for every transaction. 52p for a £7.50 membership, 45p for a £5.00 one.

c) Cash

## 6. SECRETARYS/MEMBERSHIP REPORT (Lesley Larkin)

Since the last meeting in March, membership has increased by 1. The total confirmed memberships now stand at 132, made up of 99 Family and 33 Single subscriptions. If you remember from the last meeting, I'm always keen to say Confirmed Memberships as we are also aware of an additional 44 that we distribute our report to but whose ongoing support has not been established. As always, I'll continue to try to contact these and get better clarity on their membership status. I'll also share this list with the other committee members in case there are any that they can help with.

The less good news is that between March and May of this year, the number of overdue subscriptions has increased by 9 to 34. As these 9 were all Cash or Paypal payments which don't automatically renew, I've

got a bit of work to do over the coming months to contact each of them to check if they're able to continue to support the group.

## **7. BIRD REPORT - (Chris Neild, Chris Mullin, Fiona Campbell)**

Many thanks go to Chris Neild for providing previous bird reports based on what she has both seen and heard during her visits to the Carrs but as she is no longer able to provide these, a discussion was held on how best we could report in the future.

Although there are apps available that allegedly identify birds based on their calls and songs, eg the Merlin-Cornell app, it was unanimously agreed that the validity of what the app identifies is not reliable and that recording what a human sees and hears is still the best method.

As such, going forward, Fiona Campbell has offered to compile a bird report to include the birds that she has seen and heard directly as well as the birds that Chris Mullin records during his site visits. Many thanks Fiona.





## **8. NATURE, WILDLIFE AND WILDFLOWER MEADOW REPORT (Chris Mullin)**

The grasses on the Alan Butler Wildflower Meadow are once again attempting to dominate. The reasons for this are legion. Primarily, I have been busy preparing my house to be sold and have missed the opportunities presented by the brief, ungenerous weather windows. Also, despite Peter's cajoling, the contractor did not fulfil his contract and the meadow was not mown.



However, all is not lost. For example, for the first time in four years, the Bluebells have appeared and the Wood Anemones, planted two years ago, have flowered. In greater numbers than last year, on February 21<sup>st</sup>, the first Wild (Tenby) Daffodils began to flower. The Wild Tulips appeared on March 27<sup>th</sup> in greater numbers (9) than last year (1). Obviously, they have benefitted from the cool dormancy I spoke about last March. All the above seem to have benefitted from the protection offered by the Black Poplars and the damper conditions in the southern end of the meadow. As did the Snakes Head Fritillaries! Fritillary numbers:

- 27/03/24 – 40 purple and 12 cream Fritillaries were counted
- 28/03/24 – 41 purple and 3 cream
- 29/03/24 – 59 purple and 3 cream
- 01/04/24 – 85 purple and 15 cream

The greater number of Fritillaries are due to the long, wet mono season that started in November 2023. In previous years, people have approached me and lamented how few fritillaries there are, and how, in years gone by, there were more, many more. This year, people have approached me and lamented how few fritillaries ....

More positive notes are played by the slow changes in the southern end of Butler's Meadow; glorious quantities of Meadow Cranes Bill interspersed with the white umbellifers of Cow Parsley, St John's-wort and the lurking Common Knapweed plants. I guess an analogy between the domination of the grasses and the Knapweed is that it seeks domination and to help it in that quest produces toxins at its root which stunt the growth of nearby plants.

Knapweed is a member of the Daisy and Dandelion family which also embraces Burdocks and Thistles. We have established that simply cutting thistles off at ground level prevents the plant from photosynthesising and it dies. The same technique can be used with Knapweed. For sure, it will be important to remove as much Knapweed as possible before the plant finished flowering and the seeds are cast.

The saplings continue to flourish. There has been an oak sapling growing against the fence of the meadow for approximately four years. The received wisdom was that once the sapling roots reached the rubble underneath the soil after approximately two hours they would perish. So far, so good.

Going forward, Peter will request that the wildflower meadow be mowed in August in readiness for seed sowing in November.

## **9. SITE MAINTENANCE REPORT (Andy Day, Jim Arkwright)**

Unfortunately, bad weather, full-time jobs and other personal reasons have prevented us from spending lots of time at the Carrs. However, we have progressed as many of the maintenance activities as we could. The bench areas have been strimmed, chippings laid to lots of paths, Garlic Way cleared and a new bird hide has been built and installed.

We are aware that there is a lot of Himalayan Balsam that needs pulling up and bashing to remove as much of this invasive plant as possible. Fiona Campbell, as part of the Social Team, has arranged 2 dates, Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> June and Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> July, to encourage as many members/members of the public to come along and help.





We will review the maintenance schedule and aim to schedule in the outstanding work as best we can. Maureen Butler raised a concern about the condition of the orchard area specifically that the trees are overdue pruning and the grass needs to be mowed better. Josie Leibrick advised that she is involved in another group that is in contact with a pruning expert and she will check with him about giving us advice on how to do ours.

**VOLUNTEERING:** We thank all our volunteers for their help and hope we can carry on the good work for the future of this lovely area. We use a **WhatsApp** group to share information, advising what tasks need doing and when, such that if anyone is available and wants to help, they can respond. If you would like to be added to this group, please let **Peter Owen** know via **07799 888049**.

## **10. SOCIAL MEDIA (AND EVENTS) REPORT**

Many thanks to Emma Burrows for providing these reports in the past. As Emma's such a hard act to follow, a small social subcommittee made up of Fiona Campbell, Liz Wilson, Josie Leibrick and Lesley Larkin has been setup to take this forward. This team will work together to help organise/publicise events at the Carrs with the intention of raising awareness and encouraging members of the wider Gatley community

to get involved. Fiona will also continue as an administrator for the Gatley Carrs Facebook page.

The next Himalayan Balsam Bashing is scheduled for Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> July between 2-4pm, posters have been created for sharing with the local schools etc reminding people they can spend time with their children at the Carrs for no cost and an Open Day to advertise the Carrs is being planned for 28<sup>th</sup> July in the Horse & Farrier, Gatley.

 <p><b>Come and enjoy the Himalayan Balsam Bash</b></p> <p>This is critical to keep the Balsam from taking over our beautiful Carrs (and is good fun too!)</p> <p><b>Sunday 30th June and 7th July 2-4pm</b></p> <p><b>Meet in the car park at 2pm</b></p> <p><b>Please bring gardening gloves and wear long sleeves to avoid the nettles!</b></p> <p><b>Accompanied kids and families are welcome</b></p> <p><a href="http://www.gatleycarrs.org.uk">www.gatleycarrs.org.uk</a></p> 	<p><b>Summer Holidays Spend Free Days!</b></p>  <p>The school holidays will be here soon and keeping the kids entertained can be tricky, not to mention expensive!</p> <p>Don't forget you have Gatley Carrs on your doorstep...fresh air and nature!</p>  <p>There's lots to do...scavenger hunts, nature trails, hide and seek, as well as space for rounders and football on the field. So bring a picnic and have a spend free day, outdoors!</p> <p><b>For more details and where to find us:</b> <a href="http://www.gatleycarrs.org.uk">www.gatleycarrs.org.uk</a></p> <p><b>Become a member:</b> <a href="http://www.gatleycarrs.org.uk/membership/become-a-member">www.gatleycarrs.org.uk/membership/become-a-member</a></p>
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## 11. REVIEW OF THE PAST QUARTER (PO)

There are several highlights to report this quarter.

Firstly, the long-awaited installation of the new noticeboards in the main car park and on the top field. I was so glad that Maureen Butler was able to unveil them in what was a poignant yet happy moment to remember Alan. Joe at Sign and Display Ltd did an excellent job and showed enormous patience to ensure we got exactly what we wanted and made all the changes we requested. The signs are informative and inviting and will hopefully yield results.





Another highlight was the installation of a new steel bird table, very kindly donated by Glen at GS Foam Ltd. Glen worked to scale up our rough design and took it to a whole new level with the powder coating and such attention to detail. Jim Arkwright, Stan Johnson and myself got it installed and it looked great. Subsequently, Glen agreed to donate two more tables and even provided the manpower and materials to get them installed. We're so grateful to him.





Yet another highlight was the creation and installation of the new bird hide/screen. This success was based on our rough idea and Stan Johnson's technical drawing. This was installed and painted at the end of April and is a great improvement on the old willow screen. Special thanks go to Steve Holberry, a local builder, who donated all the timber and paint.



In reviewing this quarter, we should not forget the help we get from the local councils. Stockport Council have been supportive in maintaining grass cutting, fallen tree removals and pathway cutting. Manchester Council have pursued the illegal tree cutting issue with warning signs and hopefully this will work.

It's also good to see the local support we get when we appeal for help. Thank you.

## **12. ANY OTHER REPORTS (All)**

None

## **13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS (All)**

- a. Green Flag Award:** We cannot submit a request for Green Flag status at the moment due to the ongoing/pending continuation of the Network Rail work and the effect it's having on the condition of the Carrs and the Car Park. At this time, we do not believe the application would be successful but we will look to progress this as soon as we can.

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

Peter, Chairman

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**NEXT MEETING:** Proposed date of the next Quarterly Ordinary General Meeting is **Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> September 2024** but this will be confirmed nearer the time.