

# **Meeting Notes from GCCG “Virtual” Quarterly Meeting 24<sup>th</sup> March 2021**

**Chairman’s welcome**

**Spring is in the air**



Yet again we are forced to only meet “virtually” due to ongoing Covid restrictions, but fortunately that doesn’t mean that we haven’t been active.

The various reports below confirm what has been happening and also maintain the formal duties of our constitution. I hope you all continue to find these reports of interest and we welcome feedback and comments.

## **Attendance**

Everyone, at home.

## **Minutes from last meeting**

Sent out to you all.

## **Secretary/Membership Report; Pete Phethean** For virtual quarterly meeting March 2021

Currently we have **126** members.

**25** of them have already renewed their subscription during 2021 (January to mid-March) and therefore their subscription fee will not be due again until next year.

**75** memberships are due to be renewed during mid-March to end December 2021 and are therefore in subscription.

**26** existing members are late with their subscription. Again, this is possibly because of the ongoing restrictions on social contact. Gentle reminders and standing order forms will be emailed out to help things along. Please consider subscribing via standing order if you do not do so already because this method is the most convenient for members and membership records.

**36** of the memberships are single memberships with a £5 subscription fee.

**90** of the memberships are family memberships with a £7.50 subscription fee.

This total of **126** members is nine more than last December's tally. The increase represents both new members and former members who re-subscribed. A warm welcome goes to them. Thanks are due this quarter to our chair Peter Owen whose efforts resulted in a number of former members renewing their subscription.

Membership numbers continue to increase, and this obviously reflects growing appreciation amongst residents of how valuable a community resource we have in The Carrs Nature Reserve. If possible please encourage your friends and neighbours to join GCCG and to visit The Carrs regularly!

## **Comment;**

Thanks again to Pete for keeping the records up to date and for his ongoing prompt response in enrolling the many new members wishing to join our Group in recent months.

## **Treasurer's report; Michelle Inwood.**

### **GCCG Treasurer's report for March 2021 virtual meeting (5 Dec 2020 - 5 Mar 2021)**

<b>4 Dec 2020 balance</b>	<b>£2749.65</b>
<b>5 Mar 2021 balance</b>	<b>£2936.87</b>

<b>Incomings</b>	<b>£</b>
Memberships/donations	467.50*
<u>inc £100 SPRING (Supporters of Parks and Recreation In Gatley);</u>	
<u>£40 S&amp;D decorating Clarke &amp; Sons; £50 card sales Critchley</u>	
<b>Total income</b>	<b>467.50</b>

<b>Outgoings</b>	<b>£</b>
Bird food (Shenton)	59.20
Bird feeder	19.48
<u>Annual site insurance</u>	<u>201.60</u>
<b>Total outgoings</b>	<b>280.28</b>

\*Additional cash income from memberships and donations has been used for Carrs site maintenance which includes the purchase of chicken wire, staples, heavy duty dustbins, duck food and bird food.

**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**

**Thank you for your support.**

Michelle Inwood  
GCCG Treasurer

12 March 2021

### **Comment;**

Thanks again to Michelle for her good record keeping, essential for our ongoing Group management.

### **Latest finance news;**

We have been notified that Elm Road Church Trust Fund will, be donating £250 towards our efforts, and we are very grateful for their help.

### **Bird Reports ; Chris Neil**

#### **GATLEY CARRS BIRD REPORT JANUARY 2021**

Well the New Year has arrived and what dreadful weather we have had in January. Heavy snow and rain, strong gale force winds and below zero temperatures.

The Pond was often frozen and then we had the floods. Damage did occur around the Reserve, the worse was a fallen tree that blocked the stream path close to the steps. The stream burst the banks flooding the stream path quite badly. Access to the Dipping Pond was not good as the Pond had flooded to, covering the viewing platform.

On my first visit I noticed several feeders had been put up to provide extra feeding areas to the existing feeding stations around the Reserve. It was lovely to see a family party of 10 Long-tailed Tits on one of these feeders so vital in this terrible weather. Other birds seen on the Pond were 2 Moorhen, 12 Mallard and 8 Domestic Ducks including the now famous Muskovy Gary! A Grey Heron was here also.

Around the Reserve were Blue and Great Tit, I also saw a pair of Coal Tit close to the steps. Several Magpie pairs were seen tidying last year's nest, these birds like most of the other Corvid family, pair for life, often returning to the same nest every year. One Magpie was seen carrying a twig into a nest. Other birds seen were Goldfinch, a lot fewer than normal which is something of a concern and which I shall monitor throughout the year. Also seen Robin, Dunnock, Greenfinch. House Sparrow



and Blackbird.

One of our regular visitors, Josie Leibrick, captured a lovely shot of a Treecreeper.



Peter Owen also spotted Grey Wagtail on the stream and a busy couple of Wrens.

I noticed the Snowdrops just peeping through. Even in such horrible weather we should all be grateful we have our local Reserve to come and exercise and enjoy.

### **GATLEY CARRS BIRD REPORT FEBRUARY 2021**

February was certainly a month of 2 halves. The start of the month had freezing temperatures and heavy frost. Although it was quite beautiful to see the icy Reserve, but care needed to be taken when walking around the Reserve.

The extreme weather conditions did not trouble the birds and we had 2 excellent bird species visit us. The first of these winter visitors was the Redwing, up to 7 birds were seen and they were still around till the end of the month. They have been seen at GC every year. Michael Anthony Brathwaite was lucky to photograph one of these winter thrushes which I have included at the end of my report. The second of our Winter visitors was 2

Lesser Redpoll spotted by Peter Owen 22/2. They were also seen by Josie Leibrick 26/2 who was able, after a great deal of patience, to get a photo of these busy little, never still, beauties which I have also included. I was pleased as punch when I located them close by the Pond 28/2.

**Lesser Redpoll photo courtesy of Josie Leibrick**



On the Pond 8 Domestic Ducks, reducing to 6 at month end, 12 Mallard, 2 Moorhen, also 2 Canada Geese increasing to 6 at month end.

Around the Reserve plenty of birds were singing including Blue Tit, Great Tit, Robin, Wren also Song Thrush. Breeding activity was seen around the Reserve with Blue and Great Tits seen defending nest box territories. Wood Pigeon and Magpie seen carrying twigs and tidying nests. It is not the changing of temperature or warmer weather that prompt the birds, it is the lengthening hours of daylight. On my last visit 28/2 as soon as I went through the gates I could hear Buzzard calling. There was



a kettle of 4 Buzzard in courtship display over the Top Field and even though they spiralled higher they were in view for quite a few minutes. it really is a wonderful sight to see these majestic birds. Plenty of other people watched in admiration too.

So whatever the weather throws at us we should all be thankful for the access we all have to our lovely little Reserve. A walk here not only keeps us fit but also reminds us that during these difficult times, nature is so therapeutic as we watch the changing colours of the leaves, the Snowdrops peeping through, and hear the sound of the birds singing heralding of good times to come.

**Redwing photo courtesy of Michael Anthony Brathwaite**



Thanks

Chris Neil

## **Comment:**

Thanks go yet again to Chris for her keen observations and reporting.

Our daily winter feeding rota has worked really well in providing the extra nutrition our feathered friends need during the winter months. This will finish at the end of this month and will be replaced by occasional top up feeding. But thanks again to all who have helped us with this task over the winter months and the increasing bird life on site is testament to it's success.

6 new bird boxes have also been added to the site.

## **WILDLIFE REPORT JANUARY - MARCH 2021**

This winter has seen the continued welcome increase of footfall and paw-fall on the Carrs but with the consequent increase in mud and dog faeces. There was a major flood of the ponds, carr and stream in January and a few days of ice and snow.

Much interest in birdlife and fungi we owe to our excellent photographers and naturalists. Our thanks to Josie Leibreck and Michael Antony Brathwaite for photos on our Facebook page of Redwing, Redpoll, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Robin, Parakeet, Treecreeper, Sparrow, Bullfinch, Wren, Goldcrest, Reed Bunting, Long-tailed Tit, Buzzard and Lesser Spotted Woodpecker. David Higginson-Tranter has provided us with photos and facts on Blushing Bracket fungus, Scarlet Elf Cups, and most recently a toad and newts under a log.

Naturally Snowdrops, Crocuses and Daffodils, although there are few blooms on the native wild Daffodils, a Field Maple tree named 'Bert' and yellow *Xanthoria* lichen on twigs in the orchard, have all featured this winter!

New conservation prospects have resulted from removal of the fence from around the 1990 central copse and creation of log pile insect refuges and new paths opened up near the motorway fence.

Overall, a very creditable record of wildlife seen in the winter as we await the arrival of wild spring flowers, especially



Cellendines, Kingcups, Wood Anemones and Butterbur all now featuring on the wildlife information board on the upper field!

John Pollard

**Comment;**

As ever thanks to John for his record keeping, noticeboard maintenance and historical knowledge.

**Site upkeep; Alan Butler**

**Gatley Carrs Site Report 7/3/2021**

Spring is almost here again and to prove it we have a lovely show of purple Crocus, Daffodils and our Snowdrops are as pretty as ever.

**Crocuses emerging**





The Pandemic has benefited us by increasing the volunteer workforce by more than 100% enabling the Group to achieve tasks easier and quicker than ever before in my 25 years of experience of volunteering as Head Warden on the Carrs.

Since the last site report the first task was to cut the encroaching brambles on the lower pathway giving light and freedom to the 2 Bird Cherry trees and the Hornbeam Tree closely situated to the first bench, this was done on the 20<sup>th</sup> December by about 8 stalwarts who braved the chilly weather and vicious thorns, this really was a good task done and this area can now be kept under control far more easily.

On the 5<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> of February the last fenced off copse was opened up giving access to the bug hotel installed over 20 years ago, allowing this new area to be explored, we removed dead trees and bushes, thinned new whips out and generally made this area more exciting to view, and used the old fence posts and cut timber to make 4 new bug hotels.

### **Newly opened up copse area and bug hotel**





On the 27<sup>th</sup> February the volunteers were out in force again (with little persuasion) to extend a pathway adjacent to the M56 slip road, again removing very tall and overgrown Brambles, dead trees and bushes, because of the 20+ workforce this was done in record time.



**Extended pathway work**



And Peter Owen led an enthusiastic few to repair the damaged bird hide by the pond, so a very productive morning indeed.



### **Bird hide repair**

My thanks go to all the volunteers, who like me really appreciate this little gem that's hidden away in Gatley, but what a saviour for the hundreds of visitors who have found peace and tranquillity here during lockdown.

I should like to dedicate this report to my good friend Michael Bann (Mike) who sadly passed away recently, for years he was always on hand whenever I asked him to help, he was responsible for the planting of many Red Campions and Teasels

you find all around the Carrs today.  
Alan, Head Warden, GCCG

**Comment;**

Yet again Alan has worked tirelessly to ensure the Carrs is maintained throughout the winter, his commitment is total. It really is great to see that he is now getting more and more help and the results are visible and very encouraging.

The site was also very badly flooded during this period as you can see from the photos below;

**Dipping pond platform totally submerged;**



**Bird hide submerged at the pond;**





### **Other projects completed**

Repairs to both the stream bank and the pond edge have been completed by contractors appointed by SMBC and both are great improvements.

### **Initial preparation work to the stream bank;**





**Finished result; (extra top surface has been added since)**



**Pond edge prep work;**





**Completed work (suitably inspected by our resident site manager, Gary, the Muscovy duck.)**



**We are extremely grateful to SMBC for their support as our funds could not cover such expenditure.**

**Disabled/buggy access path; Car park to dipping pond.**

This project is still awaiting agreement on the final specifications and quotes to decide if it is feasible and affordable, as soon as we know what is proposed, and how much SMBC will contribute, we can then decide if we can find ways to fund the balance.

## **Wild Flower Meadow March update; A report by Chris Mullins**

### **Wild Flower Meadow March Report**

‘Managing habitat for wildlife is not so much a plan implemented as a prayer offered’

When the November digging was completed, I hoped that what followed would be an old-fashioned winter with frosts and freezing temperatures to break up the heavy clods of soil, and that was what happened. Thus, since November a certain amount of weeding-out has been completed.

A secondary use for the soil loosened during the winter is that it can be sieved through a soil sieve or riddle, and utilised to cover newly broadcast seeds, but this will need to be in conjunction with a physical bird scarer.

My work at Woodbank Nurseries continues. On 12/03/2021, I started sowing seed, with Fran and Jim’s help and advice, in pots and trays. A pleasingly large number of the seeds have germinated.

On a practical level, sowing seeds for plug plants in small numbers will not generate sufficient wild flowers to make a difference this year. Therefore, bringing the wildflower turf idea closer to home; I have decided to sow my own wildflower turf in cardboard trays and transport the turf to the meadow in April. This homegrown approach will complement the purchasing of seeds and turf from commercial growers and reduce costs. If turf is purchased it can immediately be planted in the dug area.



## Meadow prep continues



Regarding the acquisition of seeds and plants, Stockport Borough Council have offered to provide 1200 plug plants! In addition, I have requested annual and perennial wildflower seed mixes.

A budget can then be drawn up to allow us supplement all the above by purchasing seed mixes, costings are in process and, once a budget is agreed, we can plan the work programme timetable to facilitate the sewing and planting.

Appeals for help will be placed on our volunteer WhatsApp group page and on our Facebook page.

Chris Mullins

### **Comment;**

Chris is continuing to do an excellent job in overseeing this restoration project and we are very grateful for the back-breaking work he and numerous volunteers have put in to help this along and which will hopefully yield some visible results in this coming year.

### **Social media**

The FB page continues to build. We now have 832 people who are on the page.

We have people who post regularly, and others who don't tend to post their own posts, but like to engage with commenting, "liking" etc.

The new photographers who have recently joined since the last report are now going to have their own album on the page to store and share their experiences and work with us, obviously any intellectual property will remain theirs and if we do use the material for future advertising or other purposes, it will be with their knowledge and authority.

At over 800 people now viewing and seeing the updates on their own newsfeed, this is a vital and real time way for us to engage and gain support.

The recent support this winter for the feeding programme has been phenomenal and down to people who have seen what we are going, and wanting to do their bit in contributing to the cause. We have had several people donating bird and duck food which has been really helpful.



We have had the opportunity as well to publicly thank people for their efforts and contributions which I think is appreciated.

Going forward, my intention is to build up new membership via the FB page and we will be contacting new people by sending them an email with the membership details and standing order details.

I have already put a questionnaire in place when applying to join the page asking if they would like further information and would like to join.

The majority who have joined in the last month or so have indicated they would like further information so it is a good way to grow the membership and continue to engage with the community.

Lastly, I would like to thank Rebecca Critchely for approaching me with an idea to sell notecards of Gary which she has portrait painted and had printed to sell as fund raisers for our work.

The fb page is working in so many different ways, and is an invaluable tool for our outreach and communication and it is a pleasure to administer it.

Emma Burrows

### **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 enormously.

## **AGM;**

This meeting should have been our AGM but once more Covid restrictions have prevented us getting together to vote in the officers of the Group for this next year. In view of this all the current incumbents have agreed to stay in office until such time as this can be formally ratified by a public meeting.

## **In memoriam**



We are all saddened by the loss of one of our very active team, Derek Brennan who passed away recently. Derek and his wife Margaret gave so much time to the Carrs over a number of years and Derek's films were wonderful records of the various events he supported.

Our thoughts and sympathies go out to Margaret and we look forward to seeing her again on the Carrs soon.



## **Other happenings on The Carrs**

Please find below a selection of some of the interesting posts from our Facebook page over the last few months, as I know some of you don't use Facebook I thought you might enjoy seeing them.



**Frosty morning courtesy of Jo Green**





**Pond view courtesy of Rita Stevenson**



**Spring blossom another one from Rita**

### **Fund raising**

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 our secretary Pete and myself trying to track these down.**

**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.**

### **AOB**

Thanks for your continued support.

Peter  
Chairman

### **Next Meeting**

Proposed next meeting - 16<sup>th</sup> June 2021 at 7.30pm