

Meeting Notes from GCCG “Virtual” Quarterly Meeting 23rd September 2020

Chairman’s welcome

As we still remain under Corona virus restrictions and we still can’t meet together safely our planned quarterly meeting has to be postponed once again and so this “virtual meeting” offers our best opportunity to keep you all up to date with our activities.

Once again myself and the other Group officers have continued to progress what they can in relation to the Carrs.

The various reports below confirm what has been happening and also maintain the formal duties of our constitution.

I hope you all find these reports of interest and we welcome feedback and comments.

Attendance

Everyone, at home.

Minutes from last meeting

Sent out to you all.

Treasurer’s report; Michelle Inwood.

GCCG Treasurer’s report for Sep virtual meeting (8 June - 1 Sep 2020)

A short report this quarter due to continuing lockdown measures as a result of COVID-19.

7 June 2020 balance	£ 2228.55
1 Sep 2020 balance	£ 2434.05 (increase of £205.50)

Incomings

Memberships/donations	£305.50
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Outgoings

Cash float for Carrs’ maintenance	£100
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Michelle Inwood
GCCG Treasurer
17 Sep 2020

If you have kindly made a donation or become a member and paid by cheque, these will not be paid into the bank during lockdown.

If you wish to make a donation or pay for your membership, if possible, please pay by cash, complete a standing order or use online banking.

Thank you

Michelle Inwood

GCCG Treasurer

Comment;

Thanks once again to Michelle for keeping such good records, it's very re-assuring to have this support.

Secretary/Membership Report; Pete Phethean For virtual quarterly meeting September 2020

Currently we have **114** members.

67 of them have already been renewed during 2020 (January to end of August) and therefore their subscription fee will not be due again until next year.

25 memberships are due to be renewed between September and the end of December 2020 and are therefore in subscription.

22 existing members are late with their subscription, possibly because of the ongoing restrictions on social contact. Gentle reminders and standing order forms have been 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.

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

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

This figure of **114** includes several new members who have joined GCCG in last three months, and lapsed members who have re-joined. A warm welcome goes to all. Thanks are due especially to Alan Butler and Emma Burrows for their successful efforts to recruit new members during this difficult period. Their action also prompted quite a number of donations of funds for our ongoing improvement projects at The Carrs, and thanks go to everyone who has donated so far. A record of donors and donations will be set up alongside our membership subscriptions record beginning from October 2020.

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 try to 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 prompt response in enrolling new members in to our Group.

Bird Report ; Chris Neil GATLEY CARRS BIRD REPORT JUNE 1ST- JULY 31ST

Please visit <https://www.gatleycarrs.org.uk/np15.shtml> to read the report.

WILDLIFE REPORT; JULY –SEPTEMBER 2020

Please visit <https://www.gatleycarrs.org.uk/np19.shtml> to read the report.

Site upkeep; Alan Butler Site Report for The Carrs Nature Reserve - August 2020

The main task day of Balsam Bashing was extremely successful with over 20 volunteers offering us great support for this very important job to keep this invasive plant under control, although it's never possible to completely eradicate it we do keep it well under control so our own wild flowers have a greater chance of survival.

It's a welcomed change for so many people to offer their help, I'm sure it's down to the Covid 19 lockdown, so many people wanted to get out in the fresh air and take a chance to chat to other people at a safe distance.



The last and important task day was the Willow Cutting mainly round the pond area and also the repairing of the bird hide, we enjoyed a great turn out of volunteers with again more than 20 people attending.



My next call for help will be to replace the netting on the Dipping Pond boardwalk, unfortunately my knees are not able to work as well as they have in the past.

I would also like to make plans to shore up where the bank is eroding away where we feed the Ducks and make it safer for the youngsters to view. (see updated notes on this at end of the report)

The resident Ducks and Moorhens are fed daily all through the year, my reason for this is in my opinion there is not enough natural food for the quantity of Duck and Wildfowl on the Carrs so a supplement of corn and maize helps them survive.

The new Bird tables and suspended feeders are ready for installation and will be up and running ready for the Winter feed.

Refurbished feeders prepared ready for our autumn/winter feeding rota which starts at the end of October.

Thanks to all who have signed up to carry out this task



To summarize the Carrs is looking as good as it's ever been, and what needed doing has been done, now we look forward to the Wild Flower Meadow coming back to life with help from Chris Mullins and SMBC.

There will be a small work party working on repairing the netting on the dipping pond platform on Saturday 26th of this month at 10.0am.

Keep safe and thanks

Alan

Head Warden GCCG

My further updates to Alan's report. Peter

Myself and Alan met with Conservation Volunteer co-ordinator to talk through ideas to stop the erosion of the pond edge at the main access point.

She has come back with 2 options and costs.

Option one; using stones and wire mesh. (Illustration as below)



Cost of materials and labour £2,900.00 plus vat = £3,480.00

Option two; using Coir mats with plants. (Illustration as below)



Cost to Coir option; £1,740.00 plus vat = £2,088.00.

Alan and myself favour option one for durability.

I have written to SMBC to ask for their help in funding this task and await their response.

Hopefully they will help, but if not then we will need to fund it ourselves and also seek funding help from the local community.

There is also a major problem with the erosion of the stream banking at the bridge which is at the bottom of the path from the Lorna Grove entrance.

See below;



Once again I have reported this to SMBC so they can ask the Environment Agency to deal with this before it gets worse.

They have promised inspection visits to assess all our requests.

Other tasks requiring action; The pond channels are once again getting overgrown with reeds and need clearing and some of the overhanging willow trees need cutting back to let light in and then allow us to use the cuttings to repair the willow hide fence at the dipping pond.

Cost to do this work £1,400.00 plus vat = £1,728.00

This we will have to fund ourselves.

Disabled/child buggy friendly path to the dipping pond;

The first steps to trying to improve the pathway from the car park to the dipping pond have started with an initial path scrape to assess the condition of the path currently. The contractor has submitted his report to SMBC as we await feedback for them and a proposed programme of works/cost.

This will be a major expenditure so again we hope SMBC can find the funds to improve the path, if they can't then we will need to get updated quotes to achieve the desired specification.

The original quote from the approved contractor; dated April, 2016.

Specification for path as I understand it is: 275 lin metres from start of path near car park to finish at path around the dipping pond. Scrape off existing vegetation/soil back to existing compacted stone base (disposal on site in suitable locations).

Create 1.5m wide compacted Hoppath path with 50 x 75mm edging boards with 50 x 50 x 450 stobs.

Footpath to be closed during works (1 week), and reasonable portion of car parking area will also be taken up by Hoppath stocks and compound to store machines/welfare etc.

Our quote is based on being able to run 32t gross weight HGVs into the car park. This is based on the response from Highways Authority that there are no weight limits/40t is ok on Brookside Rd; and we won't therefore accept liability for damage caused by this weight of vehicle - I have measured the width and 2.9m is workable for our HGVs, so as far as I understand the Highways email, our approach is reasonable/acceptable. As discussed, the cost of the works will increase if we need to change delivery vehicles to lower gross weights for some reason.

Cost of works above would be £10,750 +VAT= £12,900

This would be a massive amount of money for us to raise, so I await updates and will advise the group when I know more.

So potentially we have a lot of expenditure to come to maintain our site and this illustrates how vital it is to maintain and increase regular membership income.

If any of you feel you can help in any way that would be much appreciated.

Duck and winter bird feeding;

These are further ongoing expenses and funds are again at full stretch.

Alan put out an appeal on our Facebook page for help with the duck feeding costs and we have had an excellent response and more promised.

Comment

Alan's constant diligence in "keeping an eye" on all things to do with the Carrs' site is amazing. From dealing with injured dog reports to sorting out the mess caused by fly-tippers, to organising task days, I can't thank him enough.

Wild Flower Meadow; A report by Chris Mullins

Northwest Europe is one of the most densely populated parts of the world and as a result the pressures on the countryside are enormous. Urban development, agricultural intensification, pollution, and the spread of invasive introductions have led to the extinction of 20 plant species in England over the last 100 years. Factor in the loss of vertebrate and invertebrate species, then the situation is bleak. In effect the balance of nature has been disturbed, tipped in an unnatural direction. Indeed, as species and habitats are lost so is the means of communicating about them. The Oxford Junior Dictionary culled a number of words that were considered to no longer be relevant to modern-day childhood: *acorn, adder, ash, beech, buttercup, catkin, conker, cowslip, dandelion, fern, hazel, heather, heron, ivy, kingfisher, lark, mistletoe, and nectar.*

Language does not exist in isolation, particularly the English language, which contains more synonyms than you can shake a stick at. With the loss of language there is a loss of understanding. In effect, I believe that visitors to Gatley Carrs, and the Gately Carrs Wild Flower Meadow should be given an opportunity to seek answers to a series of questions: what was that, where did that come from, are there any more of them? In short, Gatley Carrs and the Wild Flower Meadow will help to assuage that loss. 'Species' came to the English language from Latin via Middle English and means, to look, appearance, beauty. And we don't want to lose that?

The Wild Flower Meadow is a particularly suited to its purpose and contains all the essential ingredients for a viable meadow - impoverished soil (the soil has been tested as neutral, and only contains trace elements of nitrogen, phosphorous, potassium), with an open aspect to all four points of the compass.

This season the meadow been mown, and the thistle growth restricted with the successful application of a weed wipe. Unfortunately, the preponderance of grasses which out-compete the wild flowers for space and nutrients remains. However, where yellow rattle - known as the meadow maker - has been growing its presence has checked the growth of those grasses. The increased planting of yellow rattle and another hemiparasite, corncockle, will reduce the competitive pressures for the nascent wild flowers.

In addition, I have removed approximately 50kg of bramble from the centre of the meadow. Without the smothering effect of the bramble a large area has been opened up. There remains a need to remove other invasive species, e.g. stinging nettle, and dock. The 'appeal for help' will alleviate the problem.

Regarding the mowing. Ideally, the meadow should be scythed. This is not possible currently. However, the area where wild flower growth has been most vigorous could be cut with a Scag mowing machine or scythed. The Scag machine does not collect grass so, an 'appeal for help' could be sounded to assist with the removal of the cuttings? One idea is that a scything course (cost; £300) could be arranged, attended by five interested people and the area behind the tape could be cut in the process. Could the money be raised in the form of a donation from the Gately Festival Committee?

I have volunteered to help at Woodbank Nurseries where, in addition to my volunteer work, I/we will be able to cultivate the range of wild flowers on the attached list. Thus, we should be able to synchronise the planting at times when the plant has a greater chance of successful flowering. I have been told that I can make use of the Nursery's compost for planting, but will have to provide my own pots, containers, and trays. Shouldn't be too difficult.

In conclusion, the Wildflower Meadow has the potential to play a colourful, symbiotic role on the Carrs. Speaking personally, now that the building work at my house has been completed, I can spend more time on the Wild Flower Meadow. For example, the production of a monthly diary as per Chris Neild's 'Bird Report', will help keep the Carrs and the Wild Flower Meadow in the mind's eye of the community.

Comment;

I am delighted that Chris has taken on this project as the meadow deserves this attention and care. If we can all lend a hand when an appeal for assistance goes out and help Chris, then we can all then enjoy the longer term benefits of seeing the meadow come back to life. This is part of the 2 year plan outlined in the last meeting notes and we remain on track to date.

I have also attached (separate sheet [sic at end of this document]) a list of the planned planting and sowing ideas and schedule.

Green Flag award update

We submitted our application some time ago but due to the Covid restrictions the processing of the applications and site inspections got postponed.

However, at the end of August I was pleased to meet up with their local inspector, Stuart, and walk him around the site. He seemed as impressed as ever with the condition of the Carrs and to hear my update on our plans for the future re the meadow, the path, bird and duck feeding etc, and I am optimistic we will be successful in our application once more. The results will be announced on 14th October.

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.

[Dave Higginson-Tranter](#)

[2 September at 15:00](#)

Another walk done and we beat the weather - just to share nature, get some carers out and about and to natter away is a privilege - here's to the next one.



Jill Seymour

[25 August at 18:55](#) ·

Blackberries from the lovely Carrs 😊xx



Siobhan O'Brien

22 July ·

A beautiful walk around Gatley Carrs last night . There were so many bees around I just love wild life . Makes me so happy ❤️





+10

[Lesley Witton](#)

[24 July](#) ·

Bees enjoying the wild flowers on Gatley Carrs today.



PIC•COLLAGE

Peter Fulcher

[26 July](#) ·

Some butterflies I saw recently at the Carrs



Fund raising

As you will have seen from the all the above there is a lot that needs doing to maintain and improve the Carrs up to the standards we want to achieve.

This all costs money and we need to focus our efforts on how to raise more funds, find sponsors etc, anyone who can help in this area please let us know.

AOB

That's quite a lot on information to digest but I hope you have found it useful and informative.

Please raise any points you would like ref all the above, we welcome your feedback.

Please send your thoughts by e-mailing them to our secretary;

Pete Phethean <peterphethean1@gmail.com>

And we will try to respond as soon as possible and circulate topics for more discussion/action in the Group.

I repeat, any help you can give financially by sponsoring a project, or any help raising funds or just helping Alan with site maintenance will always be appreciated.

Most importantly keep well through this current pandemic and enjoy the haven we have on the Carrs to raise your spirits and gladden your eyes.

Thanks for your continued support.

Peter

Next Meeting

Proposed next meeting - 16th December 2020 at 7.30pm

Wild Flower Meadow: months of sowing, planting, and flowering

March

Barren Strawberry	ideal for supressing weeds, plant indoors
Butterbur autumn	leaves used for wrapping butter, plant outdoors,
Colts Foot	plant outdoors, autumn
Common Field Speedwell	plant indoors
Daisy	plant indoors
Lesser Celandine	Gilbert White: 21 st Feb; first swallow
Primrose Disraeli)	plant outdoors, autumn (19 th April, Benjamin
Red Dead Nettle	plant outdoors, autumn (Bumble bee flower)
Shepherds Purse	plant outdoors, autumn
Violets	plant outdoors, autumn with violets

April

Bugle bleeding)	plant outdoors, autumn (carpenter's herb: stems
Cowslip	plant outdoors, autumn
Common Cornsalad	plant indoors
Cuckoo Flower (Lady's Smock)	plug plant
Cuckoo Pint (Lord's and Lady's)	plug plant, early spring
Greater Stitchwort: likes shade	plug plant, early spring
Ramsons	plant outdoors, autumn
Ribwort Plantain	plant outdoors, autumn
Wood Sorrel	plant indoors

May

Bird's Foot Trefoil	plant indoors (Granny's toenails)
Bulbous and Meadow Buttercups	plant indoors
Bush Vetch	plant indoors
Common Vetch	Plant outdoors, early spring
Cow Parsley	plant indoors, early spring
Crosswort	plant indoors, early spring
Fox and Cubs	sow outdoors, spring (devil's paintbrush)
Herb Robert: likes shade	sow outdoors, spring
Horseshoe Vetch	?
Lessor Trefoil	sow outdoors, autumn
Perennial Cornflower	sow indoors, autumn, divide spring & plant - out
Red Campion: likes shade	sow outdoors, autumn
Red Clover	sow outdoors, autumn
Sweet Cicely	sow indoors autumn, divide spring & plant - out
White Dead Nettle	sow outdoors, autumn
Yellow Rattle: hemiparasite	sow outdoors autumn, and indoors in autumn, divide and plant in Spring

June

Alsike Clover	sow outdoors, autumn, (Bastard Clover)
Broad-leaved Willowherb	?
Chives	plant bulbs mid-autumn
Common Evening Primrose	seed sown early summer
Common Knapweed	seed, indoors, spring (hardhead)
Common Toadflax	cold frame, early spring, division/softwood spring
Corn Chamomile	cold frame, early spring, division/softwood spring
Corn Marigold	sow outdoors, spring
Corn Poppy	sow outdoors, autumn
Corncockle: hemiparasite	sow outdoors, autumn
Cornflower	sow outdoors, spring
Crown Vetch	?
Enchanter's Nightshade	?
Goat's Beard	sow indoors, autumn, divide spring & plant - out
Hedge Bedstraw	?
Lady's Bedstraw	sow outdoors, Sept, Oct, Nov
Lesser Knapweed	sow outdoors, spring
Meadowsweet	sow indoors early spring, plant outdoors spring
Narrow-leaved Everlasting Pea: fences	sow cold frame early Spring
Pineapple Weed	sow outside, June
Red Valerian	seed sown in Spring
Sainfoin	sow outside, Autumn
Silverweed	sow outside, April
Small nightshade	sow outside, April
Smooth Lady's Mantle	sow inside, March,
Tufted Vetch	sow inside, March
Wood Avens	sow Spring, divide Spring
Wood Bitter Vetch	scarify soil and sow in autumn
Yarrow	sow Spring, divide Spring

July

Fat Hen	Sow outside, May
Feverfew	Sow under glass, February/March
Field Scabious	Sow under glass, February/March
Grass of Parnassus	Sow under glass, autumn
Great Mullein	Sow under glass, spring
Greater Knapweed	Sow under glass, spring
Nipplewort	Sow outside, plants emerge following year
Purple Toadflax	Sow in pots early spring. Future by division
Rosebay Willow Herb	Sow as seed, cold frame, spring
(replace stinging nettles?)	
Tansy	Sow outside as seed, spring
Tree Mallow	Softwood cuttings
Vervain	Seed under glass (18C+, spring
White Mullein	Propagation from root cuttings, late winter
Wild Marjoram	Seed under glass, early spring
Wild Teazel	Seed in-situ, autumn or spring