

Kemerton Clippings

Issue 4

July 2009

Appeals for Help!

The Trust is looking for volunteer help in the following areas:

Work Party Volunteers:

Whilst the work parties have started well, we still require more volunteers. If you know of anyone who can give up a few hours one Saturday a month to help out on our reserves, please contact our Support Coordinator Kate Aubury on 07765 334 776.

Help with our Orchard Day:

We will be holding an Orchard Day on 17th October 2009 in Lillans Orchard and the Village Hall. We are looking for volunteers to help on the day with the event. If you are able to give us an hour or two of your time to help on a stall, please contact our Support Coordinator Kate Aubury on 07765 334 776 or email kctoffice@btinternet.com.

Bat Roost Information:

Our new bats surveys have begun. We are very interested in trying to locate as many bat roosts as possible. If you have any anecdotal evidence of a bat roost in your house or outbuildings, we would love to know. Please contact our Support Coordinator Kate Aubury on 07765 334 776.

The Trust is dependent upon the assistance it receives from its many volunteers to continue its important work in the local area, so please let us know if you can assist in any way.

KCT celebrates purchase of new nature reserve at Upton Ham

Thanks to a very generous grant of £21,045 from Natural England through the Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund (ALSF), we are delighted to announce that the purchase of a brand new nature reserve at Upton upon Severn, consisting of three parcels of land totalling 14 acres of Upton Ham Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), was completed in April this year.

Upton Ham is an example of a riverside meadow still managed under the old "Lammas Meadow" system, dating from the Norman Conquest. Lammas meadows are shut up for hay in early spring, cropped in July, and grazed after Lammas Day on 1st August. Nutrients are supplied by flooding episodes in winter. This unique system results in extremely rich meadow flora in late spring/early summer, dominated by the maroon flowered greater burnet in June and also provides nesting habitat for curlews and skylarks.



A profusion of wildflowers including Greater Burnet, June 2009

Such meadows are singled out in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan as a special type of Lowland Meadow because less than 3,700 acres of flood meadow now exist in the United Kingdom. It is vital that the few remaining examples such as Upton Ham are protected. We are therefore very grateful to Natural England for allowing us to purchase this unique wildlife habitat.

With this new purchase, which complements our existing work at Twynning Ham, KCT now owns over 1% of all the flood meadow surviving in the UK!

To celebrate this newest edition to our portfolio, we held a members-only wildflower walk and picnic at the reserve on Sunday 14th June.



Adrian talks about flood meadow flora and fauna at the members-only walk

The weather was absolutely perfect and the meadow looked wonderful in the sunshine. Our Chairman Adrian led the walk, giving us the benefit of his expertise on the flora of flood meadows, and we had a great time romping through the waist-high grass! After the walk we had a picnic on the riverbank, enjoying strawberries from Kemerton Court's kitchen garden whilst watching ducks and herons on the river.

Orchards' future looks rosy thanks to new grant

KCT is delighted to announce that in February we were awarded a grant of £19,800 for orchard restoration and conservation in Kemerton as part of a nationwide partnership project led by the National Trust.

The National Trust's Conserving and Restoring Traditional Orchards in England project is part of Natural England's Countdown 2010 Biodiversity Action Fund, which supports projects that help to achieve the halt of biodiversity by 2010 as part of the Europe-wide Countdown 2010 initiative.

The grant, which will run until March 2011, will provide funding for KCT to resume the restoration and management of orchards at Kemerton, including orchard mapping and assessment of existing trees, restoration of

older trees, pruning where required and some replanting.

A major survey of orchard wildlife will be carried out using recent and fresh data, and efforts will be made to identify many of the unnamed trees.

Work has already begun on the project in our five orchards, with assistance from local volunteer group Kemerton Orchard Workers (KOW) who manage Daffurns Orchard in Kemerton for KCT.

As part of the project, KCT is planning an Orchard Day, which will incorporate the popular annual KOW Apple Day.

The event, which will be held on Saturday 17th October, will include guided walks in the Walled Garden and Lillans



Orchard, Kemerton, as well as apple pressing, raffle, displays and refreshments at Victoria Hall. KOW will be selling a range of homemade produce from the fruits in our orchards, as well as their annual calendar, and there will be a selection of other stalls.

More details will follow about the Orchard Day closer to the event.

'Welcome to our future' awards grant for new Warden

The ongoing work of the trust has received a big boost from Severn Waste's 'Welcome to our Future' fund.

Earlier this year, the grant body awarded us £4,019 to pay for a part-time warden to manage our reserves and undertake practical habitat management on our sites,

particularly at Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve and our other wetlands complex, Beggarboys.

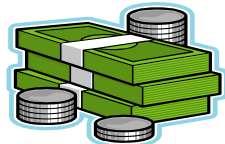
We are very lucky to be able to welcome Alan Marsh as our new warden. Alan had been a very hardworking volunteer with the trust for some time and has a wealth of practical skills to enable him to carry

out the varied tasks that being warden of our reserves entails. For more on Alan, please see the interview piece on page 4.

The grant only supplies funding for this year, so we are seeking new sources to enable us to employ Alan on an ongoing basis.

Funding Update

Our Friends scheme has continued to grow and now stands at more than 130 members. In addition, we recruited a new Corporate Sponsor this year, Cotswold Agricultural Merchants, who are generously funding new



tree and shrub planting in John Moore Reserve.

In addition, we have to date submitted six grant applications this year. We

have been successful with four grants, been rejected by one and are still waiting for news on the other, but this has been a real boost to our work.

Thank you to all who have supported us this year!

Update on Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve



© Kate Aubury

Kemerton Lake at dusk

Thanks to another generous grant from Natural England through the ALSF, we received funding earlier this year to create a large new ride in the Arboretum.

The new ride is still a work in progress, but opened to the public in the summer. When completed, this new ride will replace the existing path from the public footpath to the Eastern hide, which runs parallel, and will become the sole path to the Eastern Hide. In addition, we will now be opening the ride to the Eastern Hide all year round.

KCT are very grateful not only to Natural England for funding our work, but also to our work party volunteers, who spent two very long, hard days assisting with the ride creation in February. We couldn't have done it without their help!

With this new path, yet more of the Arboretum is opened for enjoyment by locals and there are plans afoot to open even more in the near future.

By next year, we hope to open the final section of the woodland path; the ride leading from the Eastern Hide to the public footpath by Kemerton House. This new ride will only be open to 'Friends of KCT', and when complete, will mean Friends can walk a complete loop of the lake reserve.

In addition to the new ride, the ALSF grant also paid for

equipment and training for our new bat surveyor, Kate Aubury, more equipment for the work party, a new noticeboard for the lake reserve, and also paid for the slideshow we held on Friday 13th March.

We continue to work hard to conserve and enhance our beautiful lake and are rewarded by such sights as the hundreds of orchids this year; bee orchids, southern marsh orchids and pyramidal orchids all flowering in profusion around the lake.



© Kate Aubury

Work party volunteers chip wood on the new ride, Feb 2009

News in Brief

We have been hoping for sometime to survey bats on our reserves. Thanks to a generous grant from Natural England, the bat surveys began in June this year.

The surveys are being carried out by our Support Coordinator, Kate Aubury, in conjunction with experts from Worcestershire Bat Group, and will survey five sites; Aldwick Wood, Richards Wood and Beggarboys, Squitters Brook, Kemerton Lake and the Park.

A full report of our findings will be included in the next newsletter, but first surveys results are very encouraging, with a total of eight species found so far including pipi-

strelle, noctule, brown long-eared, lesser horseshoe and Natterer's.



Moonseat at Kemerton Lake

If you have visited the lake recently, you may have spotted some unusual structures dotted around the landscape!

Studio in the Woods is an ongoing educational project where architectural students design

and construct site specific installations alongside practising architects. For the last two years, Studio in the Woods has been held at Kemerton Court Farm, including KCT reserves, where students have used timber and other materials grown and milled on site. Four teams built a total of 11 pieces this year. The largest is Moonseat, next to the public footpath by the lake;

Moonseat: Constructed by a group led by Mitchell Taylor Workshop, and Mole Architects, this is designed to provide a shelter from and express the quality and pattern of the prevailing south-westerly wind and allow a framed view of the sun and moon rise.

Meet the new warden... an interview with Alan Marsh

In February this year, thanks to grant funding from both Welcome to our Future and ALSF, KCT welcomed our part time warden Alan Marsh on board. Alan is responsible for practical habitat management on our many reserves and habitats. You will get used to seeing him whizzing around the estate on his ATV, working very hard! Editor Kate Aubury sat down with Alan to find out a little bit more about the newest edition to KCT's staff:



New warden Alan on his ATV

Could you tell us a bit about yourself?

I am 62 years old, married to Ann; we have 2 boys and 4 grandchildren. I originate from the West Midlands and have been employed in engineering all my working life, initially as a metallurgist and later as a Managing Director in both light and heavy engineering. I retired in 2003 from the post of Group MD of MAN's heavy duty diesel engine companies in the UK. We moved to Kemerton in 2006 as part of our retirement plans. My interests include gardening, photography, computing, DIY, wildlife and following the fortunes, or otherwise, of Aston Villa FC. I am a strong believer in contributing to local activities in the area where you live.

How did you get involved in the Trust's work?

Shortly after moving here I joined the Kemerton Orchard Workers group which made me aware of the Conservation Trust activities and having visited the web site I contacted John Clarke, the Trust's Conservation Advisor. I have done quite a lot of voluntary work since January 2007 and it was a natural progression to get further involved in something that I very much enjoy by becoming the part time warden.

What does being warden entail?

There is no fixed job description apart from attending to Health & Safety matters. One needs to be able to adapt and prioritise as both seasons and weather influence habitat management or as new projects develop. One needs to be practical, very flexible and prepared to tackle a wide variety of tasks.

What's your favourite job/aspect of being the warden so far?

It's difficult to single out one aspect. I enjoy putting my engineering knowledge to good use, the proximity to wildlife and the odd photo shoot, learning new skills and I very much enjoy going out with John Clarke and the educational experience.

What has been the worst job you've had to do so far?

I have not experienced a worst job but the most challenging element has been the weather, be it completing tasks when it's -10°C or in torrential rain. (*I'd rate chipping a thorny hedge-row for 2 days as the worst job so far! —Ed*).



Fallow Deer on the Estate

Have you had any great wildlife moments since you became warden?

Seeing my first Hobby, being literally a few feet away from a mature Buzzard and wishing I had the camera, seeing Roe, Muntjac and Fallow Deer and Fox cubs at play. I have also enjoyed photographing some of the wild orchids and beautiful landscape, when remembering to take the camera and time permits!

Why would you encourage people to get involved with KCT?

If you enjoy being outdoors, the company of like minded people, would like to help conserve the nature reserves and beautiful landscapes in your locality what better way is there than to support the Trust as a 'Friend' by making a donation, helping to sponsor a project and/or joining the once a month Saturday working parties?

KCT secured grant funding for our warden for most of this financial year, thanks to both Welcome to Our Future and ALSF, but it is vital that we secure more funding for next year to retain Alan. His work is extremely important to enhance and maintain our wonderful habitats. We will keep you updated on our progress.

Work party update by Richard Bennett

I've joined the KCT working party six times this year. Between 5-10 of us meet once a month, on a Saturday, to tackle a range of conservation jobs in the Kemerton nature reserves.

In the first couple of sessions, we were improving the path just below Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve, by stripping out redundant wire fences, cutting back scrub and hedgerow, and shredding the resultant wood to go back as path covering.

We spent one session paddling in the boundary of the lake, cutting and killing intrusive willow. If left unchecked, this would eventually take over the marshy areas, and make the habitat much less suitable for Jack Snipe and other birds, which use these scrapes.

On another work party, we dug out the access route to the John Moore Reserve (off Church Lane) and installed a land drain and heaps of hardcore. Although this reserve is open to the public, the marshy and churned up access was pretty uninviting, so we hope the improved access will be welcomed.

In the same session we also pulled up a large area of the invasive Himalayan Balsam before it started seeding; this is an invasive and prolific annual weed, so hopefully we've reduced its spread somewhat.

In the latest session, we were hay raking in two glades in Richards Wood. There's a lot of habitat value in keeping glades open for insects and margin butterflies such as ringlets and



© Kate Aubury

Our work party volunteers hard at work in Richards Wood, June 2009

as a feeding habitat for bats, so the regular mowing and hay clearance helps with this.

I've really enjoyed my once-a-month hard work in the open, with the right tools and guidance, and working in a cheerful and energetic team. It's amazing how much we all get done together, and it's good to know that we have improved our local conservation areas and made them more accessible for everyone who lives nearby.

Focus on a Friend: Sue McLeish

In this article, we would like to focus on our Wildflower Project and the work done by KCT Friend, Sue McLeish.

Sue has been working with John Clarke on KCT's cornfield wildflower project for over a year now and does all the hard graft throughout much of the year; planting seeds and weeding the plots at KCT's plant nursery site in Kemerton.

This year has been a triumph for several species and in particular the poppies (see the picture opposite).

The wildflower project was set up by John Clarke some years ago to grow wildflowers from locally collected seed to preserve species and enable the Trust to reintroduce flowers in-

to sites across the estate where they have become scarce or died out altogether. We believe this project is very important for flora conservation, as many wildflowers have now become extremely scarce through modern farming practices and loss of habitat. In addition, we can educate and pass on our experience to other organisations.

Whilst the project had been started years ago, lack of time and resources meant it had foundered in recent years. So the Trust was delighted when, following a request for assistance, Sue McLeish offered her help last year. The project is now back on track and doing very well.

This is a classic example of how



© John Clarke

Sue with some of the poppies grown this year; Rough Poppy (dark red flowers in foreground), Field Poppy (scarlet flowers on left) and Prickly Poppy (small orange flowers)

dedicated volunteers can make such a difference to the work of KCT and both John Clarke and all the team would like to thank Sue for volunteering her time and enabling this project to continue.

In following editions, we will continue to highlight the many volunteers who provide such invaluable help to our work.

RELIC Project makes headlines across the region

Relic (Replanting Elms in the Countryside) was set up several years ago by John Clarke and Bob Hares of the Pershore Horticultural College following the discovery of a Dutch Elm Disease-resistant Elm Tree near Pershore. Cuttings were taken from the tree and grown at Pershore.

In February this year, those first saplings were planted out in Pershore at a ceremony attended by the Mayor and the project attracted substantial media coverage. The project was featured on BBC Midlands Today in March, and included an appeal for details of any other mature Elm trees which might have escaped disease.



The programme generated a huge amount of interest and John received details from the public of potentially disease-resistant Elms in 15 counties across the country.

Since then, the project has grown exponentially, with the small team working to get cuttings from 8 of the identified Elms to grow more saplings.

Following the huge interest generated by all the press coverage, KCT set up a website

for the project (with grateful thanks to our website designer Jim Verrechia) which will be updated regularly with news: www.kemerton.org/relic

The next step is to secure grant funding to expand the project with the ultimate goal to grow more disease-resistant English Elms to replant in the British countryside.

We are very grateful to all the farmers, naturalists and others who have helped us so far, particularly the Madresfield Estate, Worcester County Council Highways, Bromsgrove District Council and Gloucester Royal Hospital.

KCT at Kemerton Fete

KCT had a stand at this year's highly successful fete. Whilst the stand was primarily an information stand, we did hold a Wildflower Competition,



with wildlife-friendly prizes. Congratulations to our winners; Mary Nelson, Daphne Edwards, Emily Field, Penny Minta and Phil Yerburch, and our grateful thanks to the following local businesses who generously donated prizes;

Countrywide Stores Tredington
Toddington Garden Centre
Haywards Hardware Store
Merlins
Aubury Computer Systems Ltd



Our exhibitions were designed to inform about our work and how to become a member and get involved.

The whole day was great fun and congratulations go to Ann Marsh and all her team for a successful event.



Easter Egg Hunt is Eggsellent Fun!



KCT's Annual Easter Egg Hunt was another fabulous day—and with better weather as a bonus this year!

More than 60 kids took part in the Easter fun at Kemerton Court on April 11th, with an egg hunt and a nature trail and lots of chocolate eggs!

We held another art competition; this time we asked for the biggest, best Easter Egg ever! We had some beautiful entries,



Easter Eggs for the kids!

but particular congratulations go to the winners of each age category; Matthew Batteson (under 4s), Megan Woodward (4-5yrs), Harry Brassington (6-7yrs) and Hannah Simister (8-10yrs).

Many thanks to all the Connolly Clan for all their help on the day.

Kemerton Cuttings

Biological Records Report from John Clarke (October – March 2009)



Common toad *Bufo bufo*

Kemerton Lake

In October up to 14 Little Grebe were recorded. 30 Shoveler on 30th and 35 on 31st – along with 2 female Goosander. On 6th October c.100 Coot were present.

Up to 180 Lapwing were present on occasions. Siskin and Redpoll were also recorded with highest counts of 20 Siskin and 8 redpoll on 31st.

On 4th November 2 Jack Snipe had joined other Snipe – highest counts of 6 Jack Snipe on 25th and 46 Snipe on 14th. A Green sandpiper was seen on 25th.

Regular sightings of Kingfisher throughout October and November

November/December saw high counts of Wigeon peaking at 1080 on 29th November. 10 Little Grebe on 10th December.

December peak counts of 28 Tufted, Pochard, 650 Wigeon, 9 Teal, 10 Gadwall, 21 Mute Swan, 97 Greylag, 3 Shoveler, 45 Snipe, 4 Jack Snipe, 60 Siskin and 20 Redpoll.

An immature female Peregrine was there on 10th December

In January up to 14 Little Grebe were recorded, with numbers of duck dropping sharply.

Raven regular visitor – 4 on 5th Jan. 3 Jack Snipe on 13th, 11 Snipe on 16th.

135 Coot were counted on 29th, with 228 Tufted Duck, 19 Pochard, 40 Mallard, 120 Wigeon, 22 Teal, 16 Gadwall & 4 Lapwing.

On 23rd there were 102 Coot, 269 Wigeon, 20 Siskin, Mistle Thrush, 3 Bullfinch and a Jack snipe.

2 Great Black-backed gull on 22nd February.

First frog spawn reported on 2nd March and a large frog/toad migration reported across the road towards the lake on 3rd.

On 2nd March 2 Great-crested Grebe, 18 Redwing, 5 Shoveler and 7 Lapwing were present.

2 Sand Martins were there on 10th March – also 1 Jack Snipe.

On 17th there were 42 Tufted Duck, 4 Gadwall, 2 prospecting Oystercatcher, 12 Pochard, 2 Great-crested Grebe, 65 Coot, 92 Wigeon, 14 Shoveler. Water Rail calling. An early Comma butterfly. A female Sparrowhawk was seen to take a Green Woodpecker.

On 19th March there were very large numbers of toad. Small Tortoiseshell and Comma butterflies were seen.

Elsewhere on the estate

A polecat was seen in or near Daffurns Orchard on 11th October

25 Mallard on a pool near Westmancote on 23rd October

20th November – a Marsh Tit and 2 Redpoll were reported feeding at a bird table in Kinsham.

A dead Water Shrew at Ivy Cottage on 21st December

2nd February 2 Woodcock flushed from a dry ditch in Kemerton.

On 6th February c100 Fieldfare in Daffurns Orchard

16th February Brimstone Butterfly at Ivy Cottage.

15th March – Comma butterfly plus mating 7-spot ladybirds at Ivy Cottage.

19th March Chiffchaff calling in John Moore Reserve.

On 21st March Orange Tip, Peacock and Brimstone Butterflies on wing.

22nd March saw this year's first Swallow – in Stable Orchard, Kemerton.

Around the area

A pair of Raven was watched displaying in and around a Cedar of Lebanon in Kemerton.

26th December – c.50 Golden Plover in arable field on Bredon Hill.

On 19th March 3 Wheatear and a Red Kite were seen on the summit of Bredon Hill.

Kemerton Conservation Trust is grateful to all contributors – in particular Rob Prudden.

By John Clarke, Conservation Advisor



Comma Butterfly *Polygonia c-album*

**Kemerton Clippings & Cuttings
July 2009**

Edited by Kate Aubury
Contact email: kate@aubury.co.uk

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**For more information on the work
of KCT, please visit our website:
www.kemerton.org**

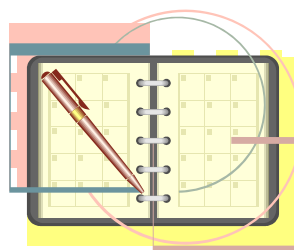


© David Aubury

Bee Orchid in flower, Kemerton Lake

Save the Date!

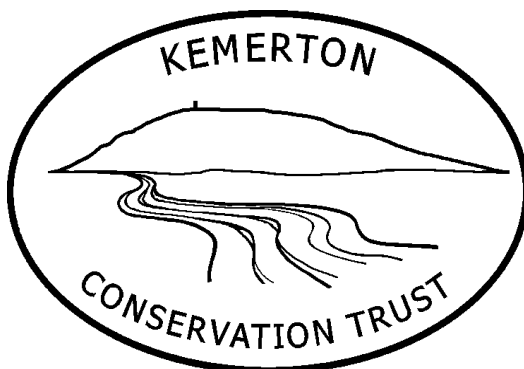
- **Saturday 29th August** - Working Party (10am start, location to be confirmed)
- **Saturday 26th September** - Working party (10am start, location to be confirmed)
- **Saturday 17th October - Orchard Day:** guided walks through Lillans orchard in the morning and stalls and apple pressing at Victoria Hall in the afternoon (more details to follow)
- **Saturday 31st October** - Working party (10am start, location to be confirmed)
- **Saturday 28th November** - Working party (10am start, location to be confirmed)



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