

**Kemerton Conservation Trust**

Kemerton Court  
Kemerton  
Tewkesbury  
Gloucestershire  
GL20 7HY

Tel: 01386 725 254

[www.kemerton.org](http://www.kemerton.org)

Registered Charity No. 702488

**GOVERNORS**

ADRIAN DARBY, OBE  
MATTHEW DARBY (Chairman)  
PETER DOBLE  
PETER MARREN  
ROGER UMPELBY  
ROSEMARY WINNALL, MBE

# Annual Report from Kate Aubury, Support Coordinator

## April 2024-March 2025

### Overview

In the last 12 months I have been busy administering the Friends scheme, writing and issuing the newsletter and dealing with general queries, updating Facebook and the website, organising events, completing grant applications, assisting with Trust H&S administration and supervising the monthly work parties. I helped Chairman Matt Darby with organising the weekly warden work and liaising with contractors carrying out ad-hoc habitat management. I have also continued to assist in habitat management decisions and project management, including managing two major grant funded projects at KLN and May Wood. I also organised and took part in the Daffurn's Orchard Bioblitz, continued Lesser Horseshoe roost counts, carried out several fungi surveys in the autumn, and have been doing ad-hoc monitoring as I carry out regular site visits.

### Friends of KCT Scheme

The overall Friends scheme numbers have continued to increase in the last 12 months. We have 414 individual or joint members and 6 corporate sponsors (the figures were 355 and 6 respectively in 2023/24). The membership mix continues to consist of a higher proportion of donors (346) than volunteers (68).

Over the last year, we gained plenty of new members, but we also lost 32 existing members (as against 31 members lost in 2023/24). Of these 25 were donors and 7 were volunteers (as against 23 donors and 8 volunteers last year).

All members continue to receive the bi-annual newsletter, which is very well received and an important part of our communications with the Friends.

I continue to update the Facebook page, which is a more informal communication channel for members and the public. I post photos of work parties, advertise upcoming events, update on projects, highlight the diversity of the reserves with photos of flora and fauna throughout the year and write short pieces on any big news items. I try to ensure it is updated at least once a week (sometimes more frequently) and posts generally reach 250-500 people. Many visitors and locals have also used Messenger, the Facebook messaging app, to send queries and requests, notify us of problems on sites or make complaints. I try to deal with these promptly.

### Volunteer Work Parties

Work parties were held as normal this year, with one session cancelled in October due to my neck injury.

Turnout has increased significantly from 6.58 per session last year to 10 per session this year. Several new volunteers joined us over the winter/spring, and we also combined with KOW volunteers for two work parties at Daffurn's Orchard.

The work parties have continued to prove essential in supporting the Trust's work. Most of our work is general habitat management on the reserves or in the orchards, but we also helped in the delivery of the FiPL Woodland Grazing and Visitor Improvement Project and the NN Aquatic Habitat Creation and Restoration Project, both at KLNLR. We visited Upham Meadow for the third time to carry out essential Ragwort pulling on our parcels, allowing the Trust to avoid using sprays on these floristically important areas. This has now become an annual visit, helping us to meet our management responsibilities at that site.

I estimate that from April 2024 to March 2025, the volunteer work party donated approximately 333 hours of work worth £2081.25 to the Trust. (This figure excludes John's and my time). This is an increase on the previous year, due to the higher attendance figures.

I continue to keep H&S records for all work parties. There was one incident to report in the year when a volunteer became unwell, and an ambulance was called as a precaution.

In addition to our own work parties, we also hosted a Corporate Volunteer Day with staff from Babcock DSG helping us plant native bulbs in May Wood as part of the FiPL Woodland Grazing and Visitor Improvement Project. Our Warden John supervised the day and the team from Babcock enjoyed it so much they are planning to return this year.

## **Events**

We had a varied programme of events including our Annual Open Day at KLNLR.

We held our Daffurn's Orchard Bioblitz in April, supported by Governors Roger Umpelby and Rosemary Winnall, as well as ecologists from CSA Environmental. The weather on the day was unfortunately rather wet and cold so attendance was lower than expected, and there were few bees or butterflies to be seen, but we still recorded a total of 191 different species of flora, fauna and fungi, with 120 of the records new for the site. The event included moth trapping and a bat survey in the evening, and experienced moth trappers Gavin Peplow and Oliver Wadsworth kindly lent us their expertise again.

On 1<sup>st</sup> May Matt Darby led a member-only Dawn Chorus Walk in May Wood, which was fully booked and went very well.

We held our KLNLR Open Day in June. It was well attended with two walks; the first led by me, which was a general wildlife walk and the second led by Adrian which focussed on the flora. It made a small profit, and we recruited some new members on the day. We trialled a new format with both walks in the afternoon, allowing us to set up in the morning. This made it easier for me and my volunteers and meant we had higher numbers for the second walk.

In late-July we held a member-only Glow Worm Walk on Bredon Hill for the second time. Numbers were kept low to prevent too much disturbance; the walk was led by Pamela Clarke and her volunteers and went very well.

In late July I represented KCT at Tewkesbury Goes Wild, a free month-long nature festive involving different activities every day. With the help of my enthusiastic daughter, I led a children's bug hunt on Tewkesbury Nature Reserve.

We held a member-only Guided Walk of Beggar Boys Wetland in August led by Matt Darby and me, which was fully booked. The reserve was looking beautiful in the sunshine, and there was plenty to see, and we had excellent feedback from the attendees.

I led a member-only Fungus Foray in May Wood in September, which was well attended and received positive feedback, with a wide range of fungi found on the day.

Our second Kemerton Apple Day since KCT took over managing Daffurn's Orchard went really well, with the same fantastic team of volunteers as 2023 – Charlie Taylor, Andrew Millington and Tom Martin - organising the event on our behalf, assisted by me. Turnout was great and the event raised £750 for Daffurn's Orchard, which was a brilliant result.

We had to cancel a planned walk to Aldwick Wood SSSI in November due to gale force winds and rain.

I hosted a visit from Tewkesbury U3A Birding Group in January, taking them on a guided walk around KLNK. The group made a donation for my time, and everyone enjoyed the visit.

Finally, in February this year Governor Roger Umpelby gave an illustrated Butterfly Talk at Victoria Hall. I advertised it on social media locally and we had good numbers attend, including lots of non-members, and as always Roger's photos were superb, and the talk was well received.

### **Grant Applications & Project Management**

Our Daffurn's Orchard Bioblitz Project, funded by Welcome to Our Future, was successfully completed in May 2024.

Our KLNK Woodland Grazing and Visitor Improvement Project joint grant application with Kemerton Estate Partnership was submitted to Farming in the Protected Landscape (FiPL) in February 2024 and was approved for funding. In addition to the grant of £18,826.48 from FiPL, I also applied for and secured an additional £2 500.00 from Highfields Trust CIO. The project began in June 2024 and was completed in March 2025. This was a major project involving several contractors and significant capital works and required a lot of planning and project management.

In July I completed our stage two application to the Natural Networks Programme and successfully secured a grant of £7,904.11 for our KLNK Aquatic Habitat Creation and Restoration Project. Work began in August 2024 and was completed in February 2025. This was a major project involving several contractors and significant capital works and required a lot of planning and project management.

In December I applied to Tewkesbury Rotary Club for a small grant to replace our broken events gazebo and get a new up to date roller banner. I was successful with my application and we received £250.00 towards the cost of these two items.

In addition, we again received a generous unsolicited grant of £200 from the Miss K.M Harbinson's Charitable Trust, which was used to purchase bulb planters and other tools for our volunteers.

Much of the grant application work has been completed in donated work time from Kemerton Estate Partnership, as with so many other tasks on my plate I simply could not complete the extra administration in my own time.

### **Daffurn's Orchard and KOW**

I continued to manage the orchard and administer the Kemerton Orchard Worker volunteer group for the first half of this year, but a new Committee of local residents was formed in December 2024 and officially took over the day to day running of the orchard and group from

1<sup>st</sup> January 2025. I assisted the new committee with the handover, ensured they had the relevant training including first aid certification, and will continue to help with management decisions and manage the finances for the group. The new committee have already arranged new events and activities including a Wassail in the orchard in January. They will also be organising future Apple Days, with my continued assistance.

Before the handover, we held two work parties on site with both KCT and KOW volunteers, completed the Daffurn's Orchard Bioblitz (see Grant Applications), held a very successful Apple Day (see Events), and continued to increase the orchard's profile in the village through regular posts on Facebook and the village WhatsApp. All funds raised by or for the orchard is kept separate in our accounts. As part of the administration, a separate short report and financial statement has been prepared for members of KOW.

### **Bat and Fungi Surveys**

I carried out NBMP bat roost monitoring and the results were submitted to both the national scheme and to Pamela to enter into Recorder.

I carried out several fungi surveys in autumn/winter at KLNK and May Wood, Richards Wood and John Moore NR, as well as collecting additional fungi records when out and about.

I continue to collect ad-hoc records whilst out on site carrying out project management or site surveys etc.

All records are sent to Pamela for adding to Recorder.

### **Website**

David and I continue to maintain the website, updating the 'news and events' section as required and any other changes such as updating governor information. The website is a bit dated, so we hope to carry out some major updates in 2025/26.

### **KCT Portacabin Closure & Recorder Merge**

Over the autumn, Pamela and I worked together to clear out KCT's Portacabin office. Files were sorted and thinned, office furniture and IT equipment was given away or recycled, and I advertised the cabin for sale. The farm assisted in removing and loading the cabin when the new buyer arranged collection. KCT's PC, which was in the now closed office, was old and needed replacing. To save the Trust money, it was decided that we would move the files onto the server in the Estate office, where most of the Trust's electronic data is already stored, and that the Master copy of Recorder on the old PC would be merged with the Satellite copy on the Secretary PC in the Estate office. I liaised with Mike from Littlefield Consultancy to complete the merger. We had some major issues, and Mike kindly spent half a day free of charge in the office with me sorting it all out. Pamela now enters data on Recorder using remote access software.

### **Health & Safety**

I continue to assist with ensuring our H&S documentation is up to date.

### **Vandalism at Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve**

This year has seen only minor vandalism issues, mostly signage damage and littering at KLNK and in the woods. A homophobic message was sprayed onto our life buoy over the summer, which we have scrubbed off, although faint signs remain. Our new leaflet holder in Water's Edge Hide was unfortunately smashed and thrown in the lake so we have not replaced it. We also had one instance of fly tipping in one of the gateways at May Wood, which was dealt with promptly by Wychavon DC after I reported it.

All vandalism and damage was reported to the police.

**Conclusion**

That concludes my roundup for the year – I would just like to thank Adrian, Matt, Pamela and John for all their support this year. I would also like to thank my husband David, who has again helped with maintenance of the website and acts as my IT support, and my daughter Lottie who has enthusiastically assisted me at various events throughout the year.