



Christmas 2011

Happy Christmas to all our members and supporters!

It certainly feels quite wintery out in the local countryside now, although that comes after a very mild November, and it is certainly a lot warmer than this time last year.

If you are looking for a chance to explore the local countryside over the Festive season then do join us on our annual New Year's Day walk. This year we will be walking around Swaddywell and welcoming people to the newly opened visitor building on the reserve. Frieda Gosling and Jean Stowe will be leading the walk, which starts at the pit at 1pm.

It is very appropriate to start the year at Swaddywell as 2012 marks the centenary of the creation of the Society for the Promotion of Nature Reserves, by Charles Rothschild, an organisation that has since become the Wildlife Trusts movement, conserving and promoting nature across the country. Don't forget that Swaddywell Pit was one of its very first nature reserves – highlighted by Rothschild in an early book setting out places of key conservation concern. So it isn't farfetched to say that it all started here!

And the good news is that that work continues today thanks to your support and enthusiasm. We are delighted to announce that as of early December we have acquired our fifth local reserve and have secured a

ten year lease on an extended reserve at Bainton Heath, bringing the total amount of land we are currently managing on behalf of the local community to nearly 150 acres.

High Meadow Etton

The new owners of the eight acre field at High Meadow Etton (just north of the South Drain in the corner made by the road and the Green Wheel) have agreed that the Trust will manage the land until such time as we can purchase it.

We are currently talking to the owners and members of the local community about what we should do on the site, but initial ideas include planting a community orchard and a wild-flower meadow. In addition the site has a large barn that we would like to use as a workshop for local artists and a venue for community events such as (real) barn dances, drama productions and apple days.

Further details to follow. We will be organising an initial open-day in 2012 for members to see the site and give their views on how it could be used.

Bainton Heath

The Trust has leased land at Bainton Heath from National Grid since 2008. This year we have completed detailed scientific surveys of the site to help us develop the proper management plan for the site.

These surveys have confirmed just how important the site is. The invertebrate survey found a large number of nationally scarce species (all with Latin names only, so I won't bore you) and a visit by the British Trust for Ornithology concluded that the site is important on a national scale for its population of breeding nightingales.

We are pleased therefore that National Grid have recently confirmed a new 10 year management agreement on the site, but have also extended the boundaries of the

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area we manage to include the whole of the site – more than doubling our reserve.

Bainton Heath is such a sensitive site that we can't offer public access even to our members. But we will be holding at least three events there next year, so do take the opportunity to come along and visit – not least to hear the wonderful nightingale chorus on 26 April.

Reserves Round-Up

Thanks to a grant from the Big Lottery and lots of volunteer effort we have a new pond at Swaddywell! Hopefully it will soon be colonised by newts, dragonflies and beetles! Come and see it on 1 January!

We are deliberately raising water levels at Etton Maxey Pits to create damper areas for breeding waders and hopefully to encourage reed-bed creation and to suppress willows!

Langdyke events

For 2012 we have produced a full calendar of events across the range of partners working locally, including the Wildlife Trust, John Clare Society, John Clare Cottage and Natural England.

We hope that you will agree this offers even more opportunity to enjoy and learn about the local countryside and its wildlife.

We do of course welcome your feedback on all our events – do let us know if you feel there are other things we should be organising or offering to our members!

The next events are

1 January - New Year's Day walk around Swaddywell Pit, meet at the main Swaddywell car park at 1pm

22 January - work party at Etton-Maxey Pits, meet at the entrance off the Etton Road at 12pm

But if you can't wait that long, do remember that we have a weekly work-party on Thursday afternoons, usually at Swaddywell – all members welcome to come along. Let us know if you are interested!

Contacts

Newsletter and walks

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