

Spring Newsletter 2009

Dear Friends,

Well, this is a very sad day for me as this will be the last time I write to you. My first newsletter was in the Winter of 2002 and ran to all of four pages with no pictures, no poems and was very "matter of fact". I had only been involved with the Arboretum for a year and half at that time and so was most definitely "the new girl on the block". Although it takes up a lot of my time, I really shall miss bringing you the news, both of Friends and the Arboretum, but I am sure that the NMA will keep up the good work and ensure you are all fully informed but I can't let you go without one final poem, now can I? It has been very difficult to find something suitable (especially after all the snow we had last winter) but I hope the following will fit the bill:-

A WALK IN SPRING

by K. C. Lart

What could be nicer than the spring,
When little birds begin to sing?
When for my daily walk I go
Through fields that once were white with snow?
When in the green and open spaces
Lie baby lambs with sweet black faces?
What could be finer than to shout
That all the buds are bursting out —
And oh, at last beneath the hill,
To pick a yellow daffodil?

This newsletter is going to concentrate on our past deeds so I hope you will find it interesting to read and perhaps bring back a few memories but, first of all, I must concentrate on the serious business of the Friends.

Letter from David & Jane Childs sent to the Friends for the EGM held in December 2008

Dear Roger and Carol,

The Friends was an idea of brilliance conceived and created just when the infant Arboretum needed all the friends it could get in its formative years when it was struggling for survival. Many would have felt that it had no future and should be left exposed and unloved on the Alrewas gravel pits, like some unwanted child of Sparta. Your nurturing gave it strength and to you both and all the Friends, but especially the founding members, a lot of thanks are due especially from those who are benefiting now from the Arboretum's growth.

Sadly of course, and by the nature of the project, there are many who were with us at the start and who are no longer with us. Those absent Friends would be proud of what has been achieved and delighted that they were a part of the group that has given so much to create the success we all see today. One of our proudest memories and moments was being told that we had been elected Life Members.

We wish you well and would be grateful if you could pass our love on to all who gather together with you on 2 December. You are our Friends and always will be for you gave us so much of your time, support and devotion, and left us with very special and joyous memories. Our lives were enriched by you all.

David and Jane

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Present and Apologies.

97 Members were present and apologies were received from Judith Thorpe, Jack Plant, Chris and Brian Cadman

Welcome

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and said it was wonderful to see so many Friends present.

Acceptance of Minutes

The Chairman asked if everyone had had the opportunity of reading the Minutes and if they thought it was a true record of the meeting held last year. Laurence Olphin proposed that the Minutes be accepted. This was seconded by Geraldine Crocker and the meeting was in agreement. The Minutes were duly signed and there were no matters arising.

Introduction by the Chairman, Carol Davies Lee

I must first of all thank David & Jane Childs and Jackie & David Fisher for being with us this evening, the effort you have made to attend is very much appreciated. This is going to be an evening of thank yous, firstly to yourselves for supporting the Friends at our last official get-together and for wearing your uniforms. It is a splendid sight. Secondly to thank Friends everywhere, past and present, for all the work put in at the Arboretum, especially in the early years when there was so little to believe in - yet you believed.

In particular I would like to thank the present committee who have stood together throughout these last difficult months and who have supported me personally. Among whom I would like to say a particular thank you to Anne Smith, Secretary to the Friends, right hand person, Editor of the Newsletter (which is going to be a difficult act to follow) and above all, my friend. Also thanks to Ken Pilgrim, our Vice Chairman and Treasurer who puts his heart and soul in to any job he takes on. To Laurie Walford, our only member who is continuing on to the new Friends Committee. His work with publicity is just too good to lose. Dr. Christopher Morris has been invaluable with his OHP presentations and especially his guitar sing-along at the Epiphany party. Laurence Olphin has been our legal guru from the start and has

given essential service, especially at the start and at the end, and Keith Woodward who has been very busy during the last year but has always helped where he could. Also thank you Roger, who said he would do anything to help and ended up doing all sorts of things I didn't ask him to do! I don't think he thought he would be asked to become Membership Secretary, a huge job which he has done with compassion and understanding. He is the only point of contact for many of our Friends and he has spent hours and hours listening to their stories, remembering their special birthdays and anniversaries and sending sympathy cards or letters to the bereaved.

Little did I realise in 1996 when David Childs came to talk to the Parish Council about an idea of having an Arboretum in Alrewas, that so much would happen in the following years.

There are many happy memories looking back: Christmas Walks; Epiphany; parties; training days and outreach meetings; the friendships we have all made; members of the Royal Family whom we have seen and spoken to; the knowledge we have gained - how to wait on table and do the washing up, first aid and CPR, operate a wheelchair or a buggy, or even a train! We have learnt about trees, wildlife, organisations, military campaigns, the plots for military and other groups and, in particular, the many lovely visitors we have met and heard their moving stories.

Most of all I know that without the Friends the NMA would have struggled to get off the ground. Who knows, we may not have been awarded the AFM without the visual impact and service provided by the Friends.

An ever increasing number of staff and volunteers have no idea what the Friends have contributed over the last ten years or so. For those people our demise will not be noticed but I am certain many Friends will remember us with affection and, I hope, respect.

Now we have done our part in the creation of the NMA and our work is finished. We wish the Arboretum continuing success.

Report from Treasurer

Ken Pilgrim presented the accounts as follows:-

Statement of Account for the year ending 31st December 2008

Receipts	2008 (£)	2007 (£)	Payments	2008 (£)	2007 (£)
Bank Balance b/f	91.86	5580.29	Postage/Sty/Printing	3556.84	1950.09
Cash in Hand b/f	6.13	20.31	Trailer Repairs	177.63	0.00
Subscriptions	2987.00	2284.00	Chapel Hearing Loop		3915.88
Donations	1447.51	840.00	Chapel Heating		1000.00
Sale of Clothing	1735.18	2196.18	Purchase of Clothing	1844.86	1345.51
Raffle	160.10	119.00	Web Site Costs	186.25	125.00
Bank Interest	123.55	2.72	Refreshments (Functions)	91.85	158.63
Fauld Talk	510.00		David's Book, incl postage	562.74	

Photo Comp	85.15		Sundries	69.01	0.00
David's Book	537.50		Deposit A/c	2621.85	2500.00
Sundries		50.60	Bank Balance c/f	1052.23	91.86
Deposit A/C b/f	2500.00		Cash in hand c/f	20.72	6.13
	10183.98	11093.10		10183.98	11093.10

Membership and donations showed encouraging trends through the year. Due to the pending closure of the existing organisation no subscriptions were requested for 2009. New members for October to December 2008 were accepted by the New organisation for 2009, which was in line with our policy. The 2008 figure for postage, etc., includes printing of Friends leaflets amounting to £440. The substantial increase in costs of printing is due to the introduction of colour printing for the newsletters, which has been well received by our old and distant Friends who are unable to visit us. Clothing sales are down slightly due to reduced demand pending closure. We have a small selection of stock still available, which will be sold off at significantly reduced prices to anyone who would like it. The small deficit in 2008 has been made up by sales in 2009.

We are continuing as volunteers with the working weekends and will still wear the Green and Yellow for these weekends. Our thanks go to Jane Vaughan for running our clothing store over the last few years, doing a grand job and making a surplus. As last year the accounts have been independently checked and found to be correct by Gordon Dale, a member of the Friends.

Christopher Morris said "just to clarify the situation the final accounts need to be audited and this would be done in due course".

Report from the Membership Secretary, Roger Davies-Lee

Since its inception in 1997 the Friends membership has grown from 15 members to a staggering 706 at the end of the last year. Of those 249 remained members and 85 opted out of membership. I am forbidden to pass on your particulars to another organisation because of infringing the Data Protection Act, the names of those who failed to return the yellow slips also have not been forwarded. If you do not receive any notification from the new organisation within the next month or so, I would suggest that you ring and ask for a membership form, fill it in and return it to the Membership Secretary of the NMA Volunteers.

It is with genuine regret that I retire from Membership as I have met, corresponded with and spoken on the telephone to many Friends over the 12 enjoyable years as Membership Secretary. I have watched us grow from a few enthusiastic Friends to what is now a very formidable group of well-informed, experienced, hardworking and enthusiastic people.

I wish the NMA, and the Friends in particular, an interesting, enjoyable and challenging future.

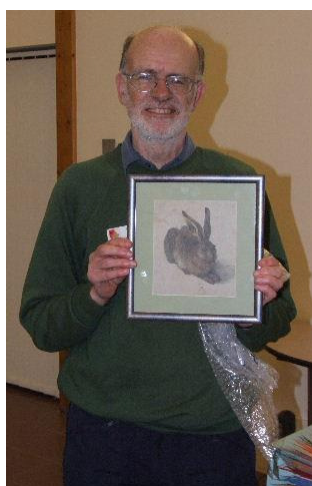
CDL then thanked Roger and Ken. After discussions with Richard Thorpe and the Arboretum it was agreed that it seemed a good idea to actually have a donation from the Friends to some particular project which was meaningful to all of us, past, present and future. Richard had done his walk and contributed £1,500 towards this project and our contribution means it should be finalised.

CDL also told the meeting that all our records would be deposited with the County Archive and we hope the archive of our website will be integrated with the New Friends website, if they agree to this.



Presentation by Richard Thorpe

Richard gave us a PowerPoint presentation regarding his ideas for us contributing our surplus funds to his wildlife proposals for the 'Wind in the Willows' Wildlife Area (WWWA). The aims of the proposals are to increase biodiversity at the NMA and to create an additional educational interest, utilising the WWWA as a site of wildlife interest, particularly for youngsters. This would fit in with the memorial symbolism of this area of the NMA and also give ideas to parents as to what they can do in their own gardens to encourage wildlife.



Examples of work to be done - log piles for insects, bee nests, planting of bulbs and plants to attract wildlife, erecting bird and bat boxes, creating another bird feeding area and hedgehog shelter, creating raised beds, log paths, discovery trails and installing wildlife signs easily understood by children. There could possibly be a small shallow wildlife pond and the adjacent reed bed would form an integral part of the scheme.

Richard gave us some samples of signs depicting wildlife and it was felt by the Friends that this is the sort of project we would like our surplus funds to be used for and the name of the Friends of the National Memorial Arboretum would be mentioned as a sponsor of the WWWA.

It is anticipated that most of the cost would be involved with signage. The source of the funds would be £1,500 from RT's walk sponsorship and £1,500 from the Friends. The Friends/Volunteers who attend the working weekends will carry out the work.

Talk by David Childs

Having just heard about the plans for the WWWA, has reminded me that when I was 11 I played the part of the Chief Weasel in a school production of the Wind in the

Willows, so I will open by greeting you, "Friends and fellow animals", a proper salutation for this evening.



I decided, foolishly, not to speak from a prepared script and I am glad I did because Carol has said it all. Richard talking about Wind in the Willows (the plot's real name is The Co-operative Wholesale Wood!!) reminded me of planting the trees with school children and one of the boys said, "it is very windy and we are planting willows, can we call it Wind in the Willows Wood?". After great thought, the answer came straight back "of course we can". That has always been the strength of the Arboretum in that any person with an idea feels free to suggest it and follow it through and there is no fixed agenda. If the

idea is good and we liked it, we would go with it. It got us out of trouble on many occasions.

When the project started we certainly did not have a business plan which took into account all the strange little things that needed doing and so it went struggling on and Carol has already mentioned cooks, servers and washer uppers. It wasn't just that they were volunteers they also brought their professional skills to something they became very enthusiastic about in a very short time and, looking around, it has kept us very young since. The Parish Council felt that if we were bringing a memorial here "shouldn't we know something about it". I was invited to give a talk and was on my best behaviour and friendships were made and have remained. As the project went along, somebody would come along and so got to be involved in a very positive way.

At the start there were two groups, those who said, "let's give it a go" and those who said, "oh you can't do that" and indeed there was a lot of proposing or ignoring and a few have watched how this project has moved from mud in the Winter, to dry dust in the Summer and solid stone underneath, and so much needed to be done to actually make this project looking like it does today. It's all very well writing a cheque to bring in a machine but what is important, and what made it what it is today, is sweat and muscle. We never had Friends who said, "oh, I can't do that". Mucky things, aren't they, visitors? Talking of visitors I can remember the very first visitor, Day 1 on his own. Day three, it went up to 4. It was very hairy balancing the books and at some stage we were very close to being insolvent. What got us through was Friends turning up and doing jobs that normally you pay people to do.

It would be lovely if I could mention everybody by name but as I cannot it is better that we talk of Friends collectively and those who have gone from us. All I will say is that Sylvia, Frank and Sam were tremendous and gave us much support at the very beginning. One of the joys is that we have had people come along at a low time in their life and have found strength through the Arboretum. It is not to do with trees but people, not only Friends but all those thousands of people who have come for an event, met up with their old friends and feel that the day has meant something to them all. A day based around an excuse to plan a reunion and receive great comfort from

that. Important, especially to all those people, is the welcome they have received here and I think almost without exception people always mentioned to me how nice it was to feel special from the moment when they walked in. I used to hide away when people came to see a tree and I did not know where it was. Jackie would sort it out! That enthusiasm and joy of the project was instilled in all of us by the way Jackie dealt with all visitors.

When I came to write my book and it came to the acknowledgements, I wanted to put a sentence in which said thank you to Jane for putting up with my increasingly erratic behaviour and disappearances from the house and failure to return, often not letting her know where I was, and the support she gave me on what was not a very clever career move.

Just mentioning one other person, because it gives the key to how this project works. Angela Ham was the PA to Peter Sharp at Police Mutual Assurance. Peter supplied the plan for a long avenue of trees and so The Beat was born. Peter used to gather the police groups together and made sure the funding was put together. Angela then left to have a child who is now nine, she came here regularly and is now involved with it.

This place is a tribute to the past and a gift to the future and unless young visitors get involved it will fail. There are super stories, real 'Boys Own' stuff, one of those is Len who is here with us today. These stories will encourage the young, they will see a wonderful collection of trees and much more, but without the involvement of children there is no hope for the future. I hope they will also see the last name to be carved on that memorial. We have been the bridge between the people whose lives are remembered in the Arboretum and on the Armed Forces Memorial and the children of the future. You plant trees for the future not for yourself. The future of the Arboretum lies ahead of it and certainly ahead of us all gathered here. I hope our grandchildren and great grand children will still be coming here in years to come.

Presentations & Awards

See below

Resignation of the Committee

The Committee then resigned, en masse, from the Friends of the National Memorial Arboretum.

Refreshments were served and the meeting closed at 9.00 pm.

AWARD CEROMONIES

Friend of the Year 2008

The Chairman said that the Friends this year had been chosen because they have been with us from the very early on and had been two of the most active, helpful and enthusiastic volunteers throughout that time. A presentation was then made to Maynard and Pauline Scott of an



engraved jug. Maynard, who is not one to keep quiet for long, said what a wonderful surprise it was and he was especially pleased that the award also included Pauline. Over the years all our award winners have worked very hard indeed doing everything that has been asked of them. They have all been involved with the Friends for a very long time, some of them almost from the very beginning, and it has been a pleasure and an honour to know them. We know they will continue to support the Arboretum for many more years to come.

Other Awards

Then several other awards were made both from the Friends and the NMA with many tributes, quite rightly so, being given to all the recipients. I think you will gather from the pictures that it was a very happy and emotional ending to the AGM.

- A reproduction of a picture of a young hare painted by Albrecht Durer in 1502 was given to Richard Thorpe in recognition of his wildlife work
- An engraved bowl was presented to Carol Davies-Lee as Founder and Chairman of the Friends from 1998 — 2008
- Three engraved paperweights were presented to Laurence Olphin, Roger Davies-Lee and Jackie Fisher as Founder Members in 1998 of the Friends Committee
- A personal gift from the Committee was given to Carol Davies-Lee in the form of a decorated vase
- Flowers were given to Carol Davies-Lee and Anne Smith Anne Smith was given a beautiful engraved vase in appreciation of her work as Secretary and Newsletter Editor



- Jane Vaughan was presented with a lovely orchid in appreciation of her 'uniform' work
- Charlie Bagot-Jewitt, on behalf of the NMA, then presented each member of the committee with a bottle of wine and presented Carol & Roger Davies-Lee with Life Membership of the NMA Friends and Carol with a paver which will be laid in a place of her choice in the Arboretum



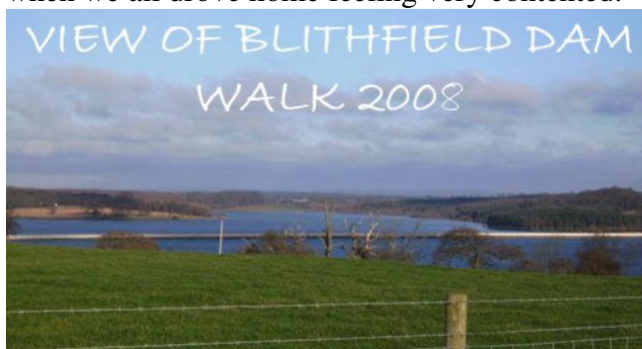
PAST EVENTS

Christmas Walk : 28th December 2008



For those of us who decided to do this walk the weather did us proud. Although it was biting cold we were all wrapped up warmly and after visiting the Church at Blithfield, to see the beautiful Christmas decorations and listen to a rendition on the organ by Charlie, we set off across fields and tracks. We were joined for the first part of our walk by Cosie (Charlie's wife), his two daughters, two dogs, and two horses and they left us at the top of a hill overlooking the reservoir. We then had our half-way halt where, standing in the sunshine with views over the reservoir, hot punch, coffee, Stollen and cake awaited us. We then carried on our walk round the

edge of the reservoir and over the dam at the end into Abbots Bromley where we had a wonderful lunch in the Coach & Horses. The afternoon finished at about 4.00 pm when we all drove home feeling very contented.



Epiphany Service : 10th January 2009

The service really was excellent this year and very well organised by Maynard Scott who also gave us an interesting and informative address on the meaning of Epiphany. The Sutton Coldfield Chamber Choir, led by Gordon Thornett, did us proud once again and the prayers were led by the Congregational Minister, the Revd. Stella Wallace-Tween. Readings were given by Patrick Pilkington and Judith Thorpe and I think all of us left the Millennium Chapel feeling joyful, uplifted and enlightened.

Friends' "Bring Your Own" Party : 10th January 2009

This followed the Epiphany Service as usual and once everyone had refreshed themselves after all the singing at the service, "Dr. Chris" got out his guitar and we had a very good sing song with all the old favourites. (Chris can be booked for parties, weddings, Bar Mitzvahs and Scottish Ceilidhs but don't tell him I told you!!!)



PUBLICITY by Lawrie Walford

During the last twelve months there has been a steady increase in the number of Parish News/Magazine Editors who print the details I send out each month of forthcoming events to be held at the NMA, and news about the Friends. The circulation, which includes Association Magazines which go world wide, is now 40,000 plus.

With the intended re-organisation of the Friends of the NMA, I hope to continue to send out these details. So, if any readers of this news letter would like to have details of forthcoming events printed in their Parish News/Magazine, please ask the editor

concerned to contact me on E mail lawriew@globalnet.co.uk

A REVIEW OF THE FRIENDS WORKING WEEKENDS by Ken Vaughan

The "Friends" working weekends came into being in the very early years of the NMA at a time when the organisation was desperately short of funding. The idea was that one weekend a month those friends who were fit, able and willing would turn up and assist David Childs on any number of physical tasks he had lined up that would assist the development of the site.

I personally became involved with the working weekends in 2002. Although a number of years had passed since the planting of the first trees there was a sense that these were still the pioneering days in the fledgling NMA. Short of cash, resources and equipment, and with just two ground staff for the 150 acre site, there was so much to be done.

As each new plot was constructed and area developed, there was a corresponding increase in the time and effort needed to keep the areas in any semblance of respectability. Although some voluntary groups looked after their own plots the full time ground staff, in the form of Barry and Dave, had their hands full just to keep the overall appearance of the site in anything like good order. The Friends work parties were, therefore, the only additional resource available to carry out the extra tasks required to keep the site moving forward. As one need was completed, it was immediately followed by another. On more than one occasion Graham (Nolan) would advise us that one group or another were visiting a particular plot that was in need of drastic attention. They were not only visiting on that day, on that morning, but within two hours. It was a case of all hands to the pumps and by some minor miracle we managed to get the job done, if only just.

So over the years what jobs and tasks have been carried out by the work parties? Basically you name it and it has been done. Litter has been picked, by the barrow load, following flooding. Grass has been strimmed and mown. Hedges planted, laid and cut. Ditches dug and cleaned out. Fences, direction posts and information boards erected. Nest boxes constructed and put up. Paths cleaned and slabs laid. Trees and shrubs planted. Benches cleaned, rubbed down and treated. Plaques put out and cleaned. Roses pruned and sprayed. Memorials washed and cleaned. Willow woven. (Trefoil/Greek Chapel). Construction projects carried out on a number of plots such as the groyne around the R.N.L.I.

From the ladies point of view the dead heading of the roses was probably the most pleasing task. Another enjoyable task has been the siding (pruning) of trees during the winter months. Made even more pleasurable in that it was a task in which we could participate en-mass, with the hum of idle chat and banter with our companions as we worked at our task.

Probably the least enjoyable task is the endless weeding required on all plots. More than any other task this sorted out men from the boys or, dare I say it, the women from the men. It is an undeniable fact that the women members have been the best at

this arduous task. They displayed more patience and perseverance. They did not moan and they were more thorough. They might say, "that mirrors life in general"!

In carrying out this multitude of tasks the Friends have always used their own tools and equipment and, in many instances, provided the materials for the job. We have worked in baking sunshine, drenching rain, on various occasions retreated in the path of advancing flood water and, for those of you who know the site, in biting cold winds.

Since 2002 I have kept a record of all those who have helped at the Working Weekends. In that time over 80 different friends or volunteers have taken part. Some only came once some, such as Hugh Clarke, have been regular attendees. The most we have had on any one day was 21 the least was 5, with an average attendance of 13. The ages ranged from teenagers to those in the eighties, Don Redman and Ted Collier come to mind. No matter how few or how many times individuals may have taken part it is with the knowledge that in some small way they have all contributed to the growth of the NMA to the wonderful place it is today.

What have we, the participants, got out of it? At times we may have got cold and wet and aggravated aching limbs but along the way we have had fun and friendships have been made. Each and every working weekend has been a labour of love; it is a privilege to work on this very special site which means so much to all of us and our visitors.

TREE NUMBERING & DATABASE by Bob Morris

19 August 2000 - I remember the date clearly because it was our Golden Wedding Day and Jackie Fisher had kindly offered to say a few words whilst Muriel & I, along with Family & Friends, dedicated a tree in The Golden Grove. As we walked towards The Beat Jackie took the opportunity to ask me if I would undertake the task of gridding the NMA site and recording the position of every tree within that grid. I said I would think about it and let her know! Actually I have never let her know and I have not as yet said that I would do the job!

Nevertheless I did think about it a lot because it was, to say the least, more than a little embarrassing when we were unable to give visitors any indication of where to look for a tree which they had dedicated and paid for some time previously. Very soon after I began to take a serious look at the problem. However it became apparent that marking key grid points on the site was fraught with difficulty because many would be located where positioning a permanent marker was not practical - for example a grid point might be in a car parking, roadway or building area.

It seemed sensible, therefore, to find out how other organisations had tackled the tree identification process and with this in mind Muriel and I, along with Richard and Judith Thorpe (who had more IT skills than me), visited The Forestry Commission Arboretum at Westonbirt and Richard and I also visited The National Forest and Leicestershire County Council. Although none of these organisations had quite the same problem that we had they were all most helpful and, as a result, we envisaged purchasing fairly sophisticated database software and commissioning a specialist firm to make a GPS survey of the site. All that, however, had to be abandoned because it

was going to involve expenditure which, at that time, the NMA just could not afford. The only practical way forward was therefore to produce a fairly simple "do it yourself" database related to diagrammatic layouts using software already on my home computer.

I actually started numbering trees and recording information in June 2001 and I remember feeling a certain satisfaction when the first 100 trees (which were in the Naval Revue Area) had their metal tags made and attached. The system worked fairly well, the recorded information gradually built up and eventually we reached that happy day when Jackie Fisher was able to find a wanted tree in the database and give a reliable tree location to someone making a phone enquiry. Doesn't seem much now but at that time it felt like a major breakthrough!

That original database was eventually replaced by the current RBL system which, although not problem free, does make it possible to include much more information about individual trees. That RBL database is, in its turn, likely to be replaced in the not too distant future by a system which will include many of the features which we had originally intended but could not at that time afford - so hopefully we can all look forward to a process of continuing development and improvement in the database and related site layouts.

In the tree numbering work I have been greatly helped by Hugh Clarke who, in addition to his own task of attaching dedication labels to many thousands of trees, has found time to number trees in some of the bigger areas. Between us we have allocated numbers to almost all of the trees on the NMA site and have attached metal numbers tags to about 24,000. In the database we now have details of approximately 9,000 dedications, which will no doubt increase further as the months go by.

MY INVOLVEMENT WITH THE NMA AND STICK MAKING by Hugh Clarke

I first visited the Arboretum in 2001 and found the guided tour of great interest as I have always had a great love of trees and woodlands which I inherited from my grandfather who was a gamekeeper. Whilst on an organised trip to the Westonbirt Arboretum I decided to join the NMA as a Friend. There were many jobs to be carried out so I resolved to accept the work of placing the large backlog of black label dedications onto appropriate trees. This also required some co-ordination with Bob Morris, who many of you know, with his tree numbering system. There is the constant need to revisit labelled trees as wiring of the label requires releasing or the label re-fixing by the use of a screw and backing piece. Furthermore labels become damaged or lost so require replacement, which is an ongoing process. It is also a great opportunity to observe wild life such as Hares, Mice and the variety of bird life which I regularly see.



I had, for a few years, been making sticks as a hobby and had continued following my retirement in 2001. With the NMA being a charitable institution I felt that a 50% contribution from the sale of my stick making could benefit the Arboretum's funds. This proposal was accepted and it gave me an outlet for the hobby to

continue (I had already exhausted the supply to friends and relatives. Hence the display in the shop.

Because of my regular label placing in the woodlands I quickly realised that there was a good supply of Hazel growing in various areas which was maturing gradually into walking stick shanks (the main stem of a stick). If I could harvest this during the dormant season, the material could be used in stick making. Therefore permission for cutting was requested and received from Paul Kennedy and now many of the sticks for sale have a label notifying of the close NMA association.

To those interested in stick making I list a brief resume. Further help and guidance can be had from the Stick Makers Guild, their website is www.thebsg.org.uk.

A handle profile is cut to match the shank available. The handle is then carved, rasped, filed and sanded to shape with a hole cut to receive a metal rod. With a matching hole in the shank the handle is glued to the shank and carefully shaped to the shank diameter. Should the shank be bent it can be straightened with careful application of heat. Linseed oil and varnish to the handle with polish to the shank and a ferrule fitted will complete the process. The above has infinite options by the use of antler, horn, etc., which can make for great variations in this hobby.



Note from the Editor: What Hugh has not told you is that his 'hobby' has raised, for the Arboretum, £1,828.50 since September 2004. That is quite some achievement.

WILDLIFE by Richard Thorpe

The wildlife and its associated activities have changed considerably over the last few years. It was inevitable that with a tidy site and the growth of the trees, we would lose some biodiversity. There is still the Croxall Nature reserve across the river which retains its wildness. Having said that the Arboretum remains a wonderful place to see wildlife and there are still some areas of undisturbed habitat which will be retained.

We have a thriving Wildlife Watch Group for children which would not be possible without the help of Jean Williams and Jane Wadham. We have constructed a bird feeding area and a floating otter holt. We know otters are using this facility. The Friends of the NMA have helped in numerous ways and we have had excellent support on our bird walks, bat walks and mammal events and these will continue into the future. Help with recording species from both visitors and volunteers has helped us build up an accurate picture of wildlife and how it is evolving.

There are future plans to develop wildlife education in a woodland area by illustrating ways of increasing biodiversity that visitors can emulate in their own gardens - watch this space! We will be offering more wildlife walks for visitors in the months and years to come.

I look forward to continuing help from the new Friends organisation and volunteers in the developing Arboretum.

GUIDING, THE BEGINNING by Carol Davies-Lee

Imagine the picture: there is no Visitor Centre yet and only a small square car park to hold about 20 cars (now the staff car park). It is a very cold Spring day and we have decided to hold "A Walk in the Woods". This is an initiative run by the Tree Council to encourage people to get out and about in the countryside. All over the country places with woods are advertising walks with all sorts of exciting extras available, like hot drinks, and spot the largest (oldest) tree, bring your Teddy on a walk etc.

We did have trees, we also had the Normandy and Dunkirk Avenues, the Polar Bear and the Greek Chapel, otherwise we really only had whips and hundreds of willow saplings. However, we took up the challenge to invite people along as we thought there was interest locally in what was happening down the road in this flat muddy field. I bowled along in my normal fashion, just in time, to find the car park nearly full and people pouring out of cars and putting their boots and scarves on. Just on 200 people turned up that day curious to find out about this Arboretum they had heard of. Fortunately Judith Thorpe, the then Secretary of The Friends, did a continuous head count and had also prepared some information sheets of what you could see already.

As the people came our small group of Friends Committee members took each group on a guided tour and people were very enthusiastic about the idea of having The Memorial Arboretum here in the Midlands. We decided that we should have some proper guiding notes and Judith took on this task producing a whole sheaf of information about each area and adding to this whenever a new plot or area was planted or dedicated. Our Training days started by being a guided tour given by Jacky Fisher passing on her information about everything in the Arboretum, including all the new additions with amusing anecdotes and her usual sensitive approach to the whole project. We continued in this way training up, not only all those who were interested in learning to guide but also others who wanted to know more about the Arboretum including plot holders and craft members from the shop and eventually the restaurant.

When Anne and Graham Nolan visited the Arboretum and showed interest in doing some voluntary work, it was Graham who initially showed interest in becoming a Guide, Anne indicated that she didn't really think she would be able to learn all the information and speak to the people, the way Graham did. But we saw the potential! Soon Anne was doing a wonderful job with the guiding and when Graham joined the staff I was delighted that Anne agreed to take over the Guiding Training which by then had grown beyond our wildest dreams.

Now Judith, Graham and Anne are all staff members. From small acorns.....

GUIDING FROM THEN TILL NOW by Anne Nolan

In the earliest days of the NMA a group of people came together to help with practical tasks. From the start they shared in David Child's vision and, as the site took shape, memorials were developed and visitors started to arrive. Some of these same

hardworking people began to share their knowledge and so the guiding team was born. As they walked and talked they inspired others to get involved and, like the young trees on the site, the team began to grow.

I was one of those earliest new recruits. From the beginning the team all made me welcome. They shared their knowledge and stories and generally cheered me on. How lucky I was to be joining when there were far fewer memorials. It was possible to walk through the Lichfield and Kingfisher Woods and still see the visitor centre because the trees were small, so you couldn't lose your way! Even so, it took weeks of walking the site, listening to different guides, memorizing the notes and practising on anyone who I could persuade to listen until I was ready to be "launched" as a guide.

Gradually the visitor numbers grew, we led groups around the site and helped people to find their trees and memorials. We talked to people in the visitor centre and the chapel, we were there when new memorials were dedicated and we met many veterans of the Second World War and heard their stories. Some of the team went out to talk to groups.

The trees grew and new team members joined. The Friends Committee asked me to co-ordinate the training, and a welcome pack was prepared for new guides. "Trainees" were paired up with an experienced guide who helped them while they were learning. We launched the guide training days and shared information about different memorials and dedications. Even bad weather could not put us off and on one extremely windy October training day a group of us were nearly blown away! As the trees grew taller and visitor numbers increased, a working party spent many hours developing "best practice" notes for the team and prepared the first standard walks.

Time moved on and the Armed Forces Memorial arrived and with it we began a new era. Immediately the visitor numbers began to rise steeply and the guides were kept very busy. It became clear that we needed a lot more help and fast! The Arboretum arranged a recruitment campaign and there was a terrific response. These newest team members have faced a big challenge - to learn about more than 150 memorials, and navigate their way through maturing woodland at the same time as helping over 300,000 visitors!

The trees are much taller now and the visitor numbers are many times higher than when the Guide Team began. Between us throughout the years we have spoken with thousands of people and passed on our enthusiasm and passion for the Arboretum. We have changed and adapted the way we work to make sure that we are helping the NMA to flourish and grow for our visitors.

Some things don't change though. The guide team still welcome, support and encourage the new guides and they still do everything they can to help the visitors. They continue to care passionately about the Arboretum and all those who are remembered here. They are still a wonderful group to belong to.

MEMBERSHIP, THE BEGINNING by Roger Davies-Lee

I well remember the time when my wife, Carol, was Chairman of the Local Parish Council. She came home one evening after her Council Meeting and said that she had

met this super chap called David Childs who had been to give the Council a Presentation of his vision....

A National Memorial Arboretum where people could come and commune with nature and, at the same time, remember lost family or relations whether due to acts of war, accident or illness. A place where you could dedicate a tree or a plot to an individual, group or a whole Regiment. The various plots would be sympathetic, bearing a relationship to those being remembered. There would be about 80 acres of old gravel pit "filled in" and gifted to him on a 999 year lease for £1 per year. The original idea came from Group Captain Leonard Cheshire and David was fired with enthusiasm.

It later turned out, as Jackie Fisher used to say, "He had no help, no money, no office and was a workforce of one". Thus with all of these drawbacks Carol felt she should do something to help and so the FRIENDS OF THE NATIONAL MEMORIAL ARBORETUM was born.

Sylvia Kelly, also a member of the Parish Council, volunteered to be Treasurer and proposed, "As it was Carol's idea she should become Chairman". Laurence Olfen, a Qualified Lawyer, offered his help on legal matters. Sam Kent, who helped David survey the proposed site, joined as did a young lady called Julie Beckett. Julie was the first Work party Co-ordinator and Sam helped as her assistant, this left a void called Membership Secretary which Carol suggested I could amply fill. Charles Elliott, who lives in the village, offered secretarial help. This was the Founding Committee of the FRIENDS, all seven of us, with Jackie as Liaison between David and us.

At our first outing we gained four new members at the Alrewas Show and a further two at Kings Bromley Show. Every year we held an outreach meeting in the autumn with venues in Burton, Aldridge, Sutton Coldfield, Abbots Bromley etc. We attended shows and functions to spread the word and gained many more members who were keen to help and work in the Arboretum. After a year we boasted thirty-eight members which, as the Arboretum started to take shape, increased to over 100 at the second AGM and our numbers have steadily grown over the last twelve years so that, prior to our handover to the NMA, we were approaching 800 members world wide.

I would like to say thank you to all the FRIENDS I have spoken to or met, I have enjoyed every minute of it, Good Bye Old Friends.

OUTREACH by Roger Hailwood

The volunteers at the NMA have a passion for the site and what it represents and the outreach team take that passion with them to share it with others. Part of that team are the speakers who are prepared to travel the country and have, since the early days, made presentations to over 500 audiences which range from village WI groups and gardening clubs, to University of the Third Age groups and Royal British Legion AGMs. They might be as small in number as a dozen or as many as 150, but invariably they produce a good cup of tea.

Originally, Jackie Fisher, in her role as Administrator, undertook promotional talks around the locality, speaking wherever she could get an audience; and it was largely due to her energetic enthusiasm that news of the developing Arboretum got around. The demands on her time became unsustainable and so she recruited three of the

members of the Friends of the Arboretum, Tony Critchley, Maynard Scott and myself to undertake some of the speaking engagements.

The style of presentation by the speakers has always been personal, with Tony and Maynard relying upon descriptive oratory while Charlie Bagot Jewitt, Jan Althom and me have supplemented our talks with PowerPoint presentations. Maynard has recently stepped down from the speaking team to concentrate on other aspects of being a volunteer.

The number of requests for speakers, however, does not diminish so we are faced with the need to increase the team. Several of the new volunteers have expressed an interest in helping in this way and some of them have accompanied the speakers to see what they do. A meeting is scheduled for the beginning of April to plan the way forward, making the best use of our resources, and putting this part of the outreach on the same professional footing as other aspects of the NMA.

A vital part of the role is the raising of funds for the NMA, giving the groups an idea of the running costs of the Arboretum and how much we need their support. The groups visited are encouraged in making a donation, and paying the travelling expenses of the speaker. The speakers usually take with them items from the shop, which are related to their presentation, and this brings in extra income to the NMA. However, the main purpose of the presentation is to encourage members of the group to make a visit to the Arboretum and largely we have had great success.

In the early days, The Friends of the Arboretum organised information evenings, in Sutton Coldfield, Burton on Trent and Tamworth to name a few, to which members of the public were invited. The purpose of the events was twofold in that they promoted the Arboretum and were an opportunity to recruit more members to the Friends' organisation. Other opportunities for publicising the Arboretum have presented themselves at the local village shows, where there has been a regular stand at the Alrewas Show, supported by Lafarge, and occasional appearances at the Kings Bromley and Canwell Shows and Open Gardens, all of these manned by members of the Friends.

WORKING WEEKENDS

I am sure these will be continued by the NMA so, for the meantime, pencil the following dates in your diary but they will be confirmed in due course. Sue Elliott, Grounds Manager at the NMA, has been given the task of overseeing the working weekends in the future, so please note that these will now take place on the first weekend of every month, i.e. 2/3 May; 6/7 June; 4/5 July, to tie in with Sue's weekends on duty.

WILDLIFE ACTIVITIES : RICHARD'S NATURE NOTES

There will be an early morning bird walk on Saturday May 16th at 7.30 am, meeting at the NMA but walking around the Croxall Nature Reserve in the company of Lichfield RSPB. Binoculars and walking boots recommended. Breakfast will be back at the NMA as usual and donations to Lichfield RSPB would be appreciated.

Alan Williams has been booked to give a talk on Barn Owls on 7th May at 7.30pm in the NMA Conference Room. Alan, an expert in this field, produces his own DVD's on the life of these beautiful birds and the talk is not to be missed.

There will also be a bat detection evening sometime over the summer - date yet to be fixed.

"WIND IN THE WILLOWS" WILDLIFE AREA PROJECT

If you feel you would like to give a donation, which you can be assured will be used only for this wonderful project, then please don't hesitate to send it to me, Anne Smith, at the address on the front of the newsletter and I will ensure that it reaches its destination safely.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anne". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line underneath the name.

Anne Smith
Editor
15.04.09

AND TO FINISH

I think we should have the words of the Immortal Bard, Robbie Burns

**SHOULD AULD ACQUAINTANCE BE FORGOT,
AND NEVER BROUGHT TO MIN'?**

**SHOULD AULD ACQUAINTANCE BE FORGOT
AND THE DAYS O'AULD LANG SYNE?**

**The Friends of the National Memorial Arboretum would like to wish the
National Memorial Arboretum Friends all the very best for the future.**