

Raising awareness of the historical, natural and amenity value of Markeaton Brook including all brooks from Hulland Ward, Langley, Mackworth, & Quarndon into Derby Centre



## **Markeaton Brook Matters Issue 5 Autumn 2008**

Welcome to this edition of the FoMB newsletter, in what has been a busy year for FoMB so far. We may not have seen much sun over the summer but it hasn't stopped many of you getting out and enjoying the wildlife and spaces along Markeaton Brook.

### **Sturgess Fields Breathing Places Project**

Those of you who read the Spring 2008 Newsletter will know that FoMB applied to BBC Breathing Places for a grant, at the suggestion of Professor Coyne, the Vice Chancellor of the University of Derby. The Grant was for work on the Sturgess Field, developing and enhancing the amenity that already exists in this important area for wildlife. In June we were told that the funding had been granted to us, which is being match funded by the University, and since then we have been working with the University, WildDerby and other partners to bring into being the Sturgess Fields Nature Trail.

In common with most projects there is a lot of preparation to be done before anything much is seen to be happening. We have been meeting with the University, WildDerby and Groundwork to formulate just how to bring reality to the aspirations. No one will be surprised to find that the Friends and the University do not always see eye to eye on matters, but the future of the Wildlife site is bigger than both of us and we are all learning to compromise.

An independent environmentalist has been appointed to produce a Management Plan for the site, for the use of all in the partnership. This will highlight the need for a mowing regime for the grass, replanting of trees, where to place bat and bird boxes, the preservation of habitats for other species such as toads, white clawed crayfish and other significant species. An important aspect of our work is to create an Education Pack for use by teachers working with primary school children to teach them the value of wild life both in the brook, on the banks and in the open space surrounding the area, one field being managed as a Wild Flower Meadow. At a higher level, Conservation students at the University will be creating a Nature Trail Leaflet for the project.

There are also areas that need to be protected from over use and abuse such as the area of Ancient Woodland where the ground is being compacted (detrimental to the roots of the trees) and fires are sometimes lit. The whole is an area which must be managed for the benefit of wildlife while acknowledging the needs of local people and their habits of use, and at the same time acknowledging the rights of the landowners, the University.

Over the next few weeks the visible signs of progress should be notice boards placed near the entrances to the fields, including a new pedestrian entrance made in the gates near the Jonty Farmer, the siting of dog waste and general litter bins which we all hope will cut down littering on the site which is currently to no one's benefit.

Wardens shall also be on the fields at various times to talk with local people regarding the Nature Trail. FoMB Committee members have committed to doing this but we do need more help. If you are interested in being involved with this project, would like more information or wish to make any comments please contact us – details at the end of this newsletter.

## **Sturgess Fields Planning Application**

Staying with Sturgess Fields but on a separate matter, the University of Derby has appealed against the decision to refuse Planning permission for a road across the site between Kedleston Rd. and Markeaton St. A public inquiry will open at 10.00am on Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> October 2008, at Council House, Corporation Street, Derby, DE1 2FS. The Inspector expects it to last 3 days, FoMB will be presenting evidence against the road proposal and we would ask for your support. If you want to have your say at the enquiry or just support us please be there at the opening.

## **Summer Events**

We have enjoyed some lovely events and walks and worked well to improve areas of the Brook over the last few months. Our new information banners, as designed by Bill Grange, have been displayed at most of our events and look very impressive.

Five walks gave us the opportunity to enjoy different areas of the Brook system and learn more about its history and nature. Many thanks to Don Farnsworth, Derek Palmer, Bill Grange, Godfrey Meynell and Barney Parker, for their time and expertise in leading these walks.

The Adventure Day on Sturgess Fields was great fun and it was good to see so many families enjoying their day. The pond dipping resulted in a competition to see which group had the largest Water Scorpion, and though we had no need for 'Rainmakers', those which the children made were fantastic.

Thank you also to our youngest friends, Shari, Sophie and Hannah who have done sterling work Balsam pulling and litter picking over the summer and enjoyed the pond dipping too.

The Practical Task Days are now well established and led by Judith Overton on the last Thursday of every month. A group of our members carry out maintenance along the Brook including litter clearances, balsam removal, species recording and other tasks depending on the season. We would welcome anybody, who can offer a little of their time, to come along and help us. Please contact us if interested, details below. Thank you to all those that have helped over the last few months, your work is very much appreciated.

## **...and as the dark nights approach**

FoMB are still meeting throughout the autumn and winter. As always everyone is welcome.

### **Sunday 28th September 2pm Fungus Foray in Markeaton Park**

Find out more about Markeaton's fascinating fungi. Peter Smith will guide us around the park. Meet at Markeaton Park's main car park (A38/A52). Ref SK334372.

### **Monday 6th October 7.30pm to 9.30pm Mammals of Derbyshire**

A presentation by Debbie Alston from Derbyshire Mammal Group.

Meet at the WI, Derbyshire House, Sherwin Street Derby DE22 1GP.

### **Saturday 18th October 2pm Veteran Trees of Kedleston Hall**

Join Simon Hiley, Chief Warden for a tour of the grounds and a look at these prized trees. Meet in the car park of Kedleston Hall.

Please contact us if you have any comments or suggestions, if you would like to help us with any aspect of our work or if you would like any more information.

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