



## 12<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting of the Nettleham Woodland Trust

### Chairman's Report

This report covers the twelve months since the previous AGM in June 2018. Our focus is totally on the Ashing Lane Nature Reserve where we have now been 'in residence' since January 2009. This decade and a little more was suitably celebrated on 1<sup>st</sup> June on a lovely summer afternoon, a stark contrast to the first muddy engagement in creating a French drain under what is now the Memorial garden

#### 1. Main events in 2018-2019:

The priority in 2018-2019 was again consolidation and management rather than expansion. We did not actively seek new planting activities, but looked both backwards and forwards in its activities. Highlights included:

- the installation and unveiling the roebuck sculpture funded by the Lincolnshire Deer Group and carved by Nigel Sardeson
- 'cleaning' South Wood in at least two respects:
  - removing trees, some planted in 2009, some naturally regenerated willow and birch, to allow the oak more space to develop;
  - removing new growth, notably alder, close to the walks which threaten to create canopies, block sunlight and thus ultimately turn a grassy path into mud;
  - the felled trees have been left in lines to provide habitat and will eventually rot down;
  - one pleasing consequence has been rapid colonization with Southern Marsh orchids;
- additional noticeboards and marker posts in South Wood for the nature trail;
- the replacement of the fence around the Monk Oak with a splendid octagonal bench funded by donations;
- the installation of six dormouse nest boxes, sponsored by Susie Mendel, all of which were found in spring to have been occupied, not by dormice, but by blue tits and one field mouse family;

#### 1.2 Public engagement:

We continue to be involved with a number of local groups most of which are listed in the 'On the road' and/or 'Hosting' sections. The most significant public showcase was the Monk's Wood 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration attended by Joy Monk and her daughter and son, friends from other bodies such as the Lincolnshire Deer Group and the Lincoln Conservation Volunteers, and family members

#### 1.3 On the road:

Talks delivered to external audiences this year included a WLDC 'Community Links' celebration evening at Hemswell Court on 18<sup>th</sup> July 2018 attended by Susie, Julia and Chris at which we both made a presentation and provided a display

We also have had a good presence on the internet through our website, managed by Su Colman. Rod Newborough's "Foresters' Jottings" are now in their second edition, and articles by Rod, Susie Mendel and Chris Williams have appeared in various local publications. Chris and Rod were interviewed for City Radio at the tenth anniversary event on 1<sup>st</sup> June

On the subject of 'roads', Lincolnshire County Council were approached about the state of Ashing Lane, notably sections of the bridal way to Reasby. A forbidding blue sign has been one positive outcome, but shortages of public fund means that there will be no repairs to the road surfaces

Sara Bright and Chris Williams enjoyed the networking at a Forestry Commission course on 'Forests and People' at Hill Holt Wood on 26<sup>th</sup> March 2019, and have UK Rural Skills certificates as proof.

#### 1.4 Hosting:

In 2018-2019 we welcomed groups including:

- 8<sup>th</sup> June 2018: Bishop King Primary School with "Working in woods" (careers) theme

- 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2018 and 19<sup>th</sup> May 2019: Lincoln Conservation Volunteers – hard graft
  - 7<sup>th</sup> May 2019: Scothern Scouts – hard graft with woodchip for Cathedral Copse
  - 12<sup>th</sup> May 2019: Lincolnshire Naturalists Union (LNU) – 18 visitors
  - 16<sup>th</sup> May 2019: Lincoln College Construction students – groundworks for the octagonal bench
  - 18<sup>th</sup> June 2019: Scothern Beavers – hard graft
  - various dates – the Welton litter-pickers have removed tree guards in Monks Wood and on Green Lane;
  - visitors to the Ashing Lane holiday cottages, now able to use the splendid Nature Trail leaflet inspired by Brenda Whittle and then developed with the extensive support of Su Colman, Rod Newborough and Susie Mendel
- Other organized groups e.g. walkers have certainly passed through, but we don't know who and when!

## **2. Past, present and future**

### **2.1. Behind the scenes:**

Managing 45 acres of woodland in a Nature Reserve (Monks Wood -35; Coop Wood - 10) is not in itself a fulltime job, but it is certainly absorbing and focuses the mind, especially in the growing season. Our own team continues to be splendid doing the important jobs which keep the woods, water features, open spaces and walks in excellent condition.

Mowing the walks with Attila, our brush cutter, is a three hour shift, far less than when we were cutting between each row of trees to give them the freedom to grow above the rampant grasses. Dennis remains the first contact with our supplier Charles Hill with Rod the most frequent mower.

Obtaining grants and funding in 2018-2019: Susie has beavered away in providing additional income with mixed success:

- We were Community Champions at Nettleham Co-operative shop between September and November 2018 and received £640.
- In January 2019, a grant application was made to the National Lottery's "Awards for All" for interpretation boards for the new Nature Trail in Monks Wood, which was unsuccessful.
- Another grant application for the same project was made to The D'Oyly Carte Charitable Trust in May and we await the outcome.
- In August 2018, NWT signed up for the new Lincoln Lottery. Tickets cost £1 per week, half of which goes to NWT. Whilst not attracting very many supporters, it has raised £176 to date.

### **2.2 Coming soon**

Rod will be talking about our projects to the Lincoln WI on 4<sup>th</sup> July

Chris is likely to be a guest speaker for the Branston U3A in their 2019-2020 programme

## **3. Mentioned in dispatches:**

### **3.1 Sustaining NWT:**

In addition to the organisations and individuals I will mention in a minute, I would like to highlight our anonymous, un-heralded volunteers who collect litter on a regular basis. There are also those many members of the general public, who tell NWT stalwarts that they have greatly enjoyed visiting the Ashing Lane Nature Reserve, and ask us to pass on thanks. Sometimes they pass on information about a problem which needs action.

More precisely, I must now highlight the following organisations, supporters and friends for their active support since the May 2018 AGM:

Grant aid and sponsorship:

- The Forestry Commission for on-going financial support through the annual Farm Woodlands Payments (FWP) of £1700 per annum for Monks Wood to 2024, and £400 per annum for Coop Wood to 2027;
- Lincolnshire Co-operative Society, for continuing high level support from CEO Ursula Lidbetter, and Ben James, Senior Community and Education Co-ordinator;
- The Lincolnshire Deer Group;

- Funding from Lincolnshire Co-operative through the Community Champions scheme;
- Several anonymous donors;

In kind:

- Charles Pickering and family of Ashlin Farm, really good neighbours in every way;
- John Carcass of Woodpecker Tree Services for woodchip for paths;
- Ben James and many others at the Lincoln Coop for marshalling volunteers and providing lunch and a portaloos at the September 2018 event.
- Jonathan Hill, Jude White and the Lincolnshire Conservation Volunteers etc

In manpower and/or time and/or technical advice and support:

- Micky Watson, Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust voluntary warden for sightings and advice;
- Maurice Nauta, RSPB, for monthly bird surveys since June 2013, with only one gap in the record. These are posted on the website by Su Colman and provide a remarkable record;
- Stephen Howell for his work on butterflies and moths at ALNR;
- Stephen Heathcote for his expertise and advice on bryophytes and newts at ALNR;
- Brian Hedley for confirming the presence of Southern Marsh orchids;
- PCSO 2297 Ange Law for advice;

### 3.2 People

Charitable trusts are totally dependent on a small band of brothers and sisters who give freely of their time. Nettleham Woodland Trust is no exception here. I first wrote about the importance of volunteers at length in my report to the 8<sup>th</sup> AGM in May 2015, and every year since. Nothing has changed. Without the graft and dedication of volunteers, groups like NWT would not exist and the community-enriching projects such as the Ashing Lane Nature Reserve simply would not happen. And we need more people able to put in a few hours fairly infrequently to spread the load and develop their own skills however they can best contribute.

### 3.3 The Committee

Much committee work is done by email, but major decisions are face-to-face. Without this group, we would cease to exist and our management responsibilities and duties would have to be passed back to the landowners i.e. the Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust and the Lincolnshire Co-operative

In 2018-2019 the Committee was:

- Chairman: Chris Williams
- Secretary, Website Manager and Willow Warden: Su Colman
- Treasurer: Julia Ambrose
- Woodland Adviser: Rod Newborough
- Land & Business Adviser: Dennis Tate
- Minutes Secretary and Grants Officer: Susie Mendel, honorary AGM report proof-checker
- General members: Sara Bright and Robyn Bright

### 4. To conclude

Things are generally going well. I hope that everyone will continue to enjoy what has been achieved by NWT in just over a decade.

*Chris Williams*      Chairman

18<sup>th</sup> June 2019