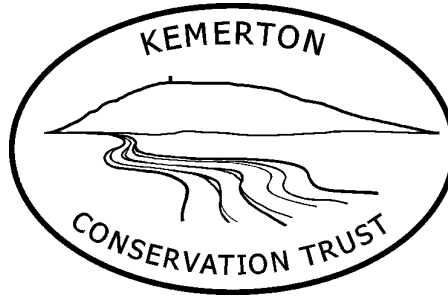


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GOVERNORS:

A. M. G. DARBY, O.B.E. (Chairman)

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P. S. DOBLE

LORD HOWICK OF GLENDALE, V.M.H.

P. MARREN

DR. M. PALMER, M.B.E.

B. WESTWOOD

R. H. WORKMAN

Kemerton Conservation Trust

Report from Kate Aubury Support Coordinator

October 2015-October 2016

Overview

The last 12 months has seen me able to achieve considerably less than in previous years as I was on maternity leave until April and since my official return have had rather less spare time to devote to Trust matters with a baby to look after. However, I continued administering the Friends scheme, writing and issuing the newsletter and dealing with general queries throughout my maternity leave, organised several events including the Annual Open Day, gave a talk, completed grant applications for our Water's Edge Hide project and carried out the administration for the monthly work parties, although our Warden John Threadingham kindly supervised those in my absence. Since coming back from maternity leave I have returned to supervising the work parties, organised events including this year's Open Day, given a talk and also supervised the completion of the Water's Edge Hide Project including organising our grand opening and writing the final report for the funders.

Although I have carried out some of this in the half day assigned to Trust work as part of my administrative role with Kemerton Estate, the vast majority is done in my spare time and it has at times been a real struggle to hit deadlines with the competing demands of a newborn. However, despite motherhood forcing me to cut back, a lot was still achieved in the last year and below is a more in-depth look at all the activities I was involved in.

Friends of KCT Scheme

The overall Friends scheme numbers have increased slightly in the last 12 months. We have 185 individual or joint members and 6 corporate sponsors (the figures were 171 and 6 respectively in 2014/15). The membership mix continues to consist of a higher proportion of donors than volunteers (130) than volunteers (55).

This year, we recruited a reasonable number of new members and only lost a small number of existing members. We lost 10 members in the last 12 months (as against 17 members lost in 2014/15). Of these 6 were donors and 4 were volunteers (as against 14 donors and 3 volunteers last year). 2 of the donors sadly passed away. 2 of the volunteers were younger members who have now gone to university, a trend we see every year as we do encourage teenagers to get involved.

The new donors were mostly recruited either at the Open Day or via our website after visiting KLNK – the membership forms are now available for download and have proved very useful. Most of the new volunteers are locals who have approached us interested in getting involved in the care of the reserves, including several youngsters doing D of E. These only tend to come for a few months but it's a mutually beneficial arrangement.

All members continue to receive the bi-annual newsletter, which is very well received and an important part of our communications with the Friends. Ensuring the newsletter was written, printed and issued on time was one of my biggest challenges this year and the July edition was 2 weeks late going out due to difficulties in finding time to write it.

I continue to update the Facebook page, which is a more informal communication channel for members and the general public. I post photos of work parties, advertise upcoming events, highlight the diversity of the reserves with photos of flora and fauna throughout the year and write short pieces on any big news items. Lack of time has meant I have posted less frequently in recent months but I try to ensure it's updated at least once a month and posts are generally viewed by about 50-100 people.

Volunteer Work Parties

The work parties continue to flourish and are invaluable in getting large scale habitat management jobs completed.

Turnout has however decreased quite markedly over the last year, with an decrease in average attendance from 10.1 per session last year to 6.9 this year. This is of course disappointing as it impacts on how much we can achieve. We lost several volunteers – as happens every year – but we have also seen less regular attendance from some of our existing volunteers as other priorities compete for their time. In addition my husband David cannot attend anymore as he has to look after Charlotte while I supervise and he used to attend every work party. We gained 1 new regular adult volunteer and also 3 young volunteers who came for a few months as part of their D of E award work. I continue to advertise volunteering at all events and will be looking for new avenues to recruit as we really need some fresh faces.

Our warden John Threadingham kindly stepped in to supervise the work parties from July last year to March this year to cover the final month of my pregnancy and the first few months of motherhood. I had intended to return to supervise them again in January but this proved logistically impossible and I am very grateful to John for being flexible and helping me manage this.

The work parties have continued to prove useful in supporting the Trust's work. The majority of our work is habitat management on the reserves but we also assisted with reed cutting and site preparation for the Water's Edge Hide Project which completed in June 2016.

I estimate that from April 2015 to March 2016, the volunteer work party donated approximately 207 hours of work worth £1293.75 to the Trust. (This figure excludes John's and my time).

I continue to keep H&S records for all work parties. We had one minor incident to report in the period covered by this report and an accident book entry was completed for that.

Events

In October 2015 immediately after the last Governors' Meeting we held our Annual Open Day at Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve. We had a reserve tour led by Adrian in the morning and a fungi foray led by our new Governor Peter Marren in the afternoon, and turnout was excellent with approximately 40 at each session.

Also in October 2015, David, Charlotte and I attended the annual Kemerton Orchard Workers' Apple Day with an information stand. I publicised the work the Trust had done in conjunction with the wider Worcestershire Orchards project, as well as all our general work.

In March Friend of KCT Roger Umpelby gave our members an excellent talk about invertebrate predators and parasites. Unfortunately turnout was quite low, which was a shame as the talk was extremely interesting and Roger had kindly donated his time. It also meant the event lost money because of hall hire costs etc.

Also in March I gave a talk to the Tewkesbury U3A Natural History Group on Fungi, which was well received and gained the Trust both more publicity and a small donation.

In May, Adrian and Matt co-led a member-only walk through The Bushes SSSI & Aldwick Wood SSSI designed to showcase the trees and flowers of these two sites. Although the weather was lovely turnout was low – only 6 – but the walk went well and all who came enjoyed it thoroughly.

In June we held our Annual Open Day at Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve. The focus of both our walks was the gorgeous orchids. Both walks were led by Adrian and Matt. The weather was mixed but turnout was good and everyone had a lovely time. Unfortunately the rain really came down at the end of the day making the takedown operation difficult and the volunteers all got absolutely soaked!

Also in June I hosted a visit at Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve from Pershore U3A Natural History Group. The walk went very well and the visitors were impressed by our many orchids.

In July we celebrated the successful completion of our new hide with a Grand Opening Event. This was invitation only and included Governors, Friends and representatives from the funders. The hide was officially declared open after the cutting of a ribbon and attendees got to be the first to see inside. The feedback was fantastic, with everyone very excited at the wonderful new views.

In September we held a slideshow evening where I gave members a talk on fungi. Unfortunately turnout was extremely low, which meant the event lost money because of hall hire costs etc. so when considered alongside the earlier talk's lack of attendance has resulted in a decision to cease such talks for the time being and focus time on walks which are generally better attended and require a lot less time, effort and cost to organise and hold.

All in all this year contained a packed and relatively successful programme of events, despite my maternity leave limiting the amount I could organise. I intend to start planning next year's schedule before the end of the year.

Grant Applications

At the start of this year I completed two grant applications, one of which was successful and the other was not. Both related to the Water's Edge Hide Project (see below).

Lack of time has meant no further applications have been completed but we will review the situation at the start of next year and identify any projects which may require funds.

In addition, we again received two generous unsolicited grants totalling £450 from the Miss K.M Harbinson's Charitable Trust, which we intend to use towards volunteer tool and equipment costs.

Bat and Fungi Surveys

I did not carry out any bat surveys this year due to lack of time. At John Clarke's request I did check the Lesser Horseshoe Roost for bats in July and confirmed their presence but not exact numbers as it was daytime and I needed to minimise disturbance.

I did not carry out any fungi surveys this year due to lack of time.

All records from my bat and fungi surveys are sent to John for adding to Recorder.

Website

David and I continue to maintain the website, updating the 'news and events' section as required. As mentioned above, we continue to have a number of new members download the membership forms directly from the website so that has proven a useful addition. We have not had time yet to amend the Kemerton Lake page to include details of the new hide but it is on my long term list of jobs and will be done over the winter.

On the blog page, I have not had the time to write any pieces this year. I hope to be able to occasionally add to the page in due course but it is not currently a priority given my lack of time.

Water's Edge Hide Project

The Water's Edge Hide Project completed in June this year and our Grand Opening was held in July. The initial budget was £23026.10 and the fundraising target was £20,526.10 with the balance coming from our previous year surplus. I raised a total of £18000 through 5 grants and after a budget overrun of £932.42, the total cost to the Trust was £5958.52. Although this is obviously higher than we had planned the hide is a fantastic new amenity and overall the project has been a big success. I supervised the project from start to finish and am very proud of the result. Although the hide itself was built by contractors, our warden John Threadingham was instrumental in getting the practical preparation completed and also in putting up new fencing etc. and I would like to register my thanks for his hard work on the project. There is a full project report available online for anyone who wishes to find out more.

Conclusion

That concludes my roundup for the year – I would just like to thank Adrian, Matt, John and John for all their support this year. I would also like to thank David, who has continued to assist me at every event, has looked after Charlotte whilst I supervise the work parties and write the newsletter etc, as well as doing maintenance for the website. His support has been particularly invaluable to me this year because of juggling motherhood alongside my volunteer role and subsequent lack of time and I could not achieve half of what I do without his unstinting assistance.