

Forest Town Nature Conservation Group (FTNCG)

Wednesday 29th February 2012, from 7 pm, at the Forest Town Welfare



Present: Lorraine (Acting Chair); Dave (Acting Vice Chair); Shlomo (Acting Secretary); Josh (Acting Treasurer); Alyson (Acting Membership Secretary); Betty; Alan; Frances; Malcolm; Rose; Colin; Megan; Jackie; Margaret; Christine; Helen; Ron; Ian; Susan; and Jo (Mansfield District Council (MDC)) and Andy (Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust (NWT)) [21]

Apologies: Jeff (Rushpool Representative); Pauline; Val; and Barry [4]

Recent sightings

Shlomo received an e-mail from Pauline and Malcolm in which they reported seeing redwings in Forest Town (near Kingsway Hall, and in their own back garden), see photos uploaded to <http://www.foresttown.net/nature/> and Betty reported seeing a sparrow hawk.

Hedgehog hibernation project

Lorraine called members' attention to the Hedgehog hibernation project that Jeff had noticed. A study conducted 40 years ago suggested a link between climate and when hedgehogs come out of hibernation. That study is now being repeated to see if climate change has affected hedgehog hibernation patterns. Your help is needed to collect hedgehog records from now until 31st August 2012. There is a website <http://www.hedgehogstreet.org> where you can register sightings – and don't forget to tell us too! Sighting forms available on request.

Spa Ponds update

Since we last met Dave and Ruth cleared fallen trees from the path; Alan and Barry cleared a mountain bike and suitcase from the frozen ponds, and passed these on to the police. The site and surrounding fields have been put up for sale by auction. Copies of the brochure were circulated. Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust (NWT) is aware of this situation, despite not having been given prior notice. Christine suggested contact is made with Councillor Martin Wright to see if Nottinghamshire County Council might be prepared to buy some or all of the land. It was noted that such land sale processes can move very slowly. For the time being there is no reason not to continue balsam pulling and seed planting as planned, with the next "pull and plant" session taking place from 10 am – 1 pm on Saturday 28th April. In conversation with Shlomo, Ruth confirmed she will order seeds to plant in April's balsam pull.

Action: Shlomo to discuss Spa Ponds with Councillor Martin Wright as suggested.

Mansfield District Council (MDC) Friends Network

Dave and Rose attended the meeting on Tuesday 14th February as representatives of the FTNCG. Dave reported that the meeting went very well. MDC Head of Operational Services Martyn Thurman explained how MDC intended to involve Friends Groups with Section 106 Agreements in the future. Friends Groups and ward councillors are to be informed at an early stage in potential Section 106 projects to allow more input on local needs. Friends Groups were invited to comment on this new system. Shlomo asked Martyn for a copy of his report about the new system to enable the FTNCG to comment, and this draft was supplied by Jo.

Rose said she felt positive about the draft proposal, but that a closer look at the detail would be worthwhile. Jo offered to write a “community-friendly” version of the draft S106 policy. Shlomo noted some shortcomings in the draft, including the lack of commitment to greater transparency through MDC making S106 Agreements more accessible, e.g. via MDC website planning portal. Shlomo intends to pass on some observations to MDC via Ruth Marlow. **Action:** Jo to write and circulate “community-friendly” version of MDC’s draft S106 policy. Shlomo to feedback to MDC re: scope for further improvements to the policy.

At the February Network meeting Jo supplied Dave with six more litter picking tools, and Dave raised the issue of litter on the Rushpool site and the prospect of Asda taking greater responsibility for litter clearance. Martyn and Jo said that they will contact Asda regarding this issue. Alyson has also been in touch with Asda, who are looking to support our work on the Rushpool site. MDC have also organised two litter pick sessions on the site, one took place on Saturday 25th February and one is planned for Saturday 10th March.

The next Mansfield Friends Group Network meeting is scheduled for 10th September, and we hope to once again be represented by Dave and Rose.

Save Sherwood Forest

The Save Sherwood Forest group will be holding a ramble on Sunday 18th March at Sherwood Pines (Visitor Centre postcode: NG21 9JL). The group was formed in response to the Government’s forest sell-off plans, which were subsequently “abandoned”. Forestry Commission (FC) land continues to be sold off, and the FC faces ongoing budget and staff cuts, much of the forestry land in Nottinghamshire is owned by the big estates (e.g. Welbeck and Thorsby).

Plans for Mothering Sunday (18th March) are to gather from 10 – 10:30 am at the notice board adjacent to the main Sherwood Pines car park, midway to the café, followed by a relaxed, buggy-friendly, ramble of about 40 minutes’ duration. All are welcome to attend.

Rushpool Open Space

Plans are progressing for the forthcoming session on Saturday 3rd March. The MDC chipper has been booked. Andy will join us to help supervise. We will have all the tools we require. The hot water flask, cups and tools have been received, stored and insured. Dave was authorised to purchase a suitable garden fork, for which he will be reimbursed in full. Asda has offered to supply some refreshments and a member of staff to help drag gorse and pick litter. Jo also offer to support the ongoing site development planning process by providing maps and through liaising with the FTNCG regarding revisions to the site management plan. At the recent meeting between Jo and Andy (Chambers) and Andy (Lowe), and subsequently, the following was agreed:

- FTNCG to be engaged in a process of reviewing and revising the site management plan, including identifying oldest gorse for pruning, and newer growth to be left undisturbed to protect biodiversity on the site, therefore pruning limited to no more than 10% per year;

- The plan would not include removal of so much gorse and bracken that one could walk through the site from the Sandlands side to The Bridleway side;
- A knee rail (“birds-mouth fencing”) and drop barrier would be added by MDC in July 2012;
- A plastic picnic table would not be a welcome addition to the site, as this would be likely to provide a focus for vandalism and anti-social behaviour;
- The existing paths at the Sandlands entrance will be taken up by July 2012, and the chicane will be removed, closing off the entrance. Soil will be imported to this section of the site and heather brash from Oak Tree Heath will be planted (probably in October); and
- MDC agreed to pay for bushes and trees to form hedgerows to be established on the site. FTNCG has been invited to consider the species mix and numbers of plants required. These will include blackthorn, hawthorn, rowan and possibly rose. Dave, Ian and Andy will work together to formulate initial hedgerow and site management plans, including suggestions for signage, litter bins, etc., and report back to the Group, including Jeff.

Forward programme for 2012

We’ve produced a revised handout with our Spring Programme (below). On Wednesday evening 28th March Stuart Reddish and his wife Lynda will tell us about 'Thynghowe: The Story so Far' and give details on how we can participate in the 'Thynghowe project. From 3rd – 28th March there will be a Friends of Thynghowe display at the Mansfield Museum.

After considering venue preferences for the Annual General Meeting (AGM), tentatively set for Wednesday evening 9th May, we decided we’d prefer to hold the AGM at the Forest Town Welfare if the Sherwood Room is available.

Action: Shlomo to book the Sherwood Room for Wednesday evening 9th May if possible.

We continue to welcome suggestions for meetings, outings and events to be included as part of our Summer Programme (June – August). Dave will advise us regarding the rhythm of balsam pulls, and Andy can advise us about the next guided walk. We are on the lookout for speakers to come to future meetings to talk about bats, bird spotting, insects and woodland.

Following discussion it was agreed that an outing to the Attenborough Nature Reserve would be planned for Saturday 11th August, setting off from Forest Town at 10 am and returning to Forest Town around 4 pm. Colin will help make arrangements for transport (e.g. pricing up and then negotiating the hire of a coach or mini-bus, as required).

Action: Could those who intend to join the August Attenborough outing please let us know as soon as possible. Colin to cost transport options, Shlomo to ask NWT to show us around.

Stinting Lane concerns

Malcolm voiced serious concerns regarding degradation of Stinting Lane being caused by the latest wave of development at the Sandlands site – despite these ancient hedgerows being legally protected. For some background into the history of Stinging Lane, see: http://www.ourmansfieldandarea.org.uk/page_id_544_path_.aspx

Action: Jo to ensure MDC are aware of these concerns (especially MDC’s Tree Officer), and enact enforcement action (under the Hedgerow Regulations) as necessary.

Fly tipping

Fly tipping is occurring along Stinting Lane and in the green space off Clipstone Road near Betty and Alan's home. Betty thanked Lorraine for helping raise awareness of the fly tipping, by taking and uploading a series of photographs. These photos, viewable at <http://www.foresttown.net/index.php/nature/litterbugs/> were presented to MDC by Betty. Further action is required.

Action: Jo to ensure MDC's Grimebusters are aware that Betty's complaint has not yet been resolved.

Membership renewal

Most FTNCG members joined in February or March 2011, so membership renewals are now due (£2 per member).

Nottinghamshire Biodiversity Action Group (Notts BAG)

FTNCG has joined Notts BAG, and our website has been updated accordingly.

Action: Shlomo to ensure Chris adds e-mail addresses to his Notts BAG circulation list.

Website development

The FTNCG website at <http://www.foresttown.net/nature/> has new photographs, including some amazing shots of birds and bugs from Jeff, redwings from the Marples, and a new 'litterbug' gallery.

Time Team King John's Lost Palace episode

According to The Friends of Thynghowe the episode to be aired on Sunday 1st April is to feature discovery of King John's Lost Palace at Clipstone. "We are expecting some significant revelations about the impact of the Plantagenet kings on our part of Sherwood Forest."

Any other business

- Our lottery bid has not yet been progressed.
- The next Mansfield & Ashfield Wildlife Group meetings are planned for Tuesdays 27th March and 29th May. The March meeting will include presentations from Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust's Andy Lowe and Chief Executive John Everitt. The May meeting, requiring pre-booking, will be an evening walk around Budby and the Major Oak with Andy Lowe.
- Dave and Shlomo will represent FTNCG at the next Friends of Greenwood Community Forum meeting on Monday 16th April.

Next FTNCG meetings and events

- Saturday 3rd March from 10 am at the Rushpool Open Space, gorse prune and litter pick.
- Wednesday 28th March from 7 pm at the Forest Town Welfare, with guest speakers Stuart and Lynda Reddish telling us about the Thynghowe project and how we can participate.
- Spa Ponds balsam pulling and seed planting on Saturday 28th April from 10 am.
- FTNCG Annual General Meeting (AGM) on Wednesday 9th May from 7 pm.

See revised Spring Programme, overleaf

Forest Town Nature Conservation Group (FTNCG) Spring Programme for 2012



Forest Town Nature Conservation Group (FTNCG)

- **Wednesday 28th March:** FTNCG meeting from 7 pm at the Forest Town Welfare. Stuart and Lynda Reddish will tell us about the Thynghowe project and how we can participate.
- **Saturday 28th April:** Spa Ponds balsam pulling and seed planting from 10 am.
- **Wednesday 9th May:** FTNCG Annual General Meeting from 7 pm – venue to be confirmed.
- **Saturday 11th August:** Outing to Attenborough Nature Reserve. Free entry, donations to cover cost of transportation.

Other activities of interest to FTNCG members

- **3rd – 28th March:** Friends of Thynghowe display at the Mansfield Museum.
- **Sunday 18th March:** Save Sherwood Forest ramble at Sherwood Pines gathering from 10 am, setting off from the notice board adjacent to the main car park at 10:30 am for a 40-minute relaxed, buggy-friendly ramble.
- **Tuesday 27th March:** Mansfield & Ashfield Wildlife Group meeting from 7 pm at Bridge Street Methodist Church, including presentation by John Everitt, the Chief Executive of Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust. Admission £2, includes refreshments.
- **Monday 16th April:** Friends of Greenwood Community Forum, Tippings Wood [Dave and Shlomo to represent FTNCG].
- **Tuesday 29th May:** Evening walk around Budby and the Major Oak with Andy Lowe as part of the Mansfield & Ashfield Wildlife Group. Need to pre-book your place.
- **Monday 4th June:** Evening Jubilee Celebration at the Welfare between 7 pm and 11 pm will include live music, a free buffet (for ticket-holders only, with tickets available from the Forest Town Community Council). The Jubilee Beacon, to be sited in the grounds of the Welfare, will be lit after 10 pm.
- **10th September:** MDC Friends Network [Dave and Rose to represent FTNCG].
- **October / November:** Various activities, including training in hedge laying.

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Friends of Thynghowe

The Friends of Thynghowe will launch their new Heritage Lottery funded project on Saturday 3rd March from 11.30am at Mansfield Museum. An interesting visual display will be in the Mansfield Museum from 3rd – 28th March featuring photographs, information, maps and documents.

The Friends of Thynghowe are looking for volunteers to become 'history detectives'. "We will be searching the forest for archaeological features from the Iron Age to the Second World War, including the Viking Age when Sherwood Forest was the home to Viking warrior farmers and the cradle of early democracy. We will be searching the records and archives for historical information on our area of Sherwood Forest". Read more at: <http://www.thynghowe.org.uk/>

- **3rd – 28th March:** Friends of Thynghowe display at the Mansfield Museum.
- **Saturday 14th April:** An Introduction Workshop to all aspects of the project, including 'taster' sessions, will be held at Sherwood Pines.
- **Saturday 21st April:** Annual Perambulation (walk approx. 3 miles) along the 1816 boundary through Birklands.