

Fairfield Association
FAUNA and Orchard sub-Group [FOG]
Minutes of the Meeting held on Thursday 6th December 2012, 7.30 pm
at The Robert Gillow

Present: Graham Brandwood, Dave Brookes, Ken Capewell, Glenys Ferguson (mins), Tony Finn, Oliver Fulton, Helen Hicks, Ian Procter, Rebecca Procter, Hilary Short, Mick Short (chair), Chris Workman.

1. **Apologies:** Sheila Beven, Andrew Brennand, Sue Nieduszynska
2. **Minutes of last meeting:** Accepted.
3. **Matters arising from Minutes:**
 - **LEF Award Certificate copy:** It was decided to scan the certificate and photograph the glass pane (**Oliver**).
 - **Payment for haylage:** Hilary and Oliver have agreed a sum with the graziers that covers the cost of LWT's work.
 - **The Martins' hedge:** The Martins are happy to nurture this hedge themselves. FA volunteers will keep the Orchard side clear and tidy (**Ian**).
4. **Current/recent developments:** None
5. **Report from the FA meeting:** Mick reported that the FA had given approval to FOG to proceed with the tool shed (item 18). He noted that the process of incorporating FOTT and the Friends of Dallas Gardens into the FA as sub-groups like FOG may lead to the modification of FOG's terms of reference.
6. **FAUNA:**
 - **Monthly maintenance inspection:** Circulated. Little to report. A copy will be sent each month to Richard Storton (RSPB) (**Graham**).
 - **Website updating:** Oliver's revised FAUNA page is now in place. No action on inconsistencies/outdated links (**Mick**). See also items 9 & 15.
7. **Volunteer activities:** Ian's full reports are attached at the end. An annual Volunteers' meal is now a 'tradition'. **Ian** offered to organise in 2013. Ian has obtained three quotes for skip hire (for the pigsty rubble) – all identical. If the weather is favourable, **Helen** will photograph the ceremonial demolition of the pigsty, as a record and for publicity purposes. Mick suggested using sycamore brush from the pigsty area for wassailing, as this would reduce the distance it needs to be transported to a dry storage area. Graham saw no problem using this sycamore, although suggested that it should be mixed with wood of thicker (1-2 inch) diameter. It was agreed to defer cutting the remaining hazels for at least a year. If possible, path clearing will be added into the session on December 8th.
8. **Breeding birds survey & winter flush counts:** Oliver has returned the original maps to Dan Haywood, who intends to supplement them with a written report and spreadsheet soon. **Graham** will arrange to be accompanied by Dan and/or Richard Storton on his next monthly inspection for training in conducting winter flush counts.

9. **Educational activities:** Tony has been approached by Julia McDowell, the FA webmaster, who is hoping to research the use of mobile devices such as smart phones in outdoor learning. She would like to use the Orchard and FAUNA as a location and involve local schools, focusing initially on Dallas Road. She is also suggesting an interactive page or blog on the FA website for schools. FOG was supportive in principle, and would like Julia to attend either the January or February meeting to explain more fully, before the proposal is passed to the FA for approval (**Tony** to contact Julia).
10. **Volunteering with Lancashire Wildlife Trust:** Mick and Ken have arranged to help LWT at Warton Crag on Sunday 9th December. Mick has had about 10 people respond positively to his email requesting help for LWT with hedge planting at Freeman's Pools early in the New Year. **Mick** will finalise arrangements.
11. **First Aid group:** Has yet to convene (**Mick**). The group of Mick, Helen and Ian will arrange the acquisition of an extra first aid box as well as compare the different courses they attended.
12. **Bird and bat boxes:** An order has been placed for delivery to Richard Storton. Steve Bradley's advice was to buy no more than six bat boxes, three of which should be "American" in design (open at the bottom to permit inspection).
13. **Health and Safety Policy:** Progress on contributions to the appendices to be submitted to the FA:
 - a) Policy for FAUNA fields. **Oliver** has still to finalise.
 - b) Volunteer working parties & external volunteering groups. Documentation forwarded to the FA. Approved at November FA meeting.
 - c) Guidance for external contractors. **Dave** has still to finalise.
14. **Fundraising: MA Language teaching session 1 December:** Attended by over 40 enthusiastic students, paying £10 per head. They were split into groups of five for a 'walk and talk' through FAUNA and the Orchard. The session proved effective in creating realistic language learning situations, as well as being enjoyable for both students and the 'tutors' provided by the FA. Their Lecturer, Diane Potts, is keen to repeat the exercise next year. Ruth Haigh has provided Oliver with some suggestions relating to the organisation of the event.
15. **Community Spaces Conference:** Attended by Oliver. He was particularly inspired by a presentation relating to social media and websites. It was suggested that a blog, to which anyone can contribute, is a good way of keeping a website vibrant. Currently people are encouraged to report wildlife sightings in FAUNA and the Orchard to Tony, principally by email. Oliver considered that this could be switched to a blog: it would provide an easily accessible record, make the information readily available to a wide audience, and be something that generated interest. Spam and abusive postings would need to be considered. The advice from the conference was to set up a system that checked each author's first post, but no more if that post was acceptable. **Oliver** will develop this idea.
16. **Concessionary path agreement and Local Nature Reserve Designation:** No progress.
17. **Edenbreck boundary and allotment holders' fence:** No progress with the Council on the boundary (which does not affect the tool shed). It is believed that the allotment holders now

have the finance to construct their fence. **Mick** will ask when this is likely to happen, and so when our boundary hedge can be laid. January/February is the appropriate timing for laying, although Oliver noted that Natural England's deadline would permit a delay until 2014.

18. **Tool shed: funding and construction:** Sam Edge has agreed to create the detailed plans, ask two local builders to submit tenders and manage the project, reporting to **Hilary**. Given the deadline for spending the Take Pride grant, and the pressing need for equipment storage space, the aim is for building to start by the beginning of February. **Hilary** has still to explore the payment of VAT. The meeting was in favour of installing electricity (a further benefit being that it would allow equipment to be charged) unless costs were prohibitive. It was noted that there must be a formal agreement with the Granell-Watsons if the supply is to be taken from Edenbreck Cottage and that there might be a problem if/when they sell the property. Windows could be deleted from the build in order to afford lighting (battery powered LEDs are an option if there is no electricity). The meeting preferred sedum rather than turf for the green roof (**Hilary** to consult with Sam).
19. **FAUNA leaflet:** The typeset sample was admired. Chris noted that the Towneley Close path access was missing from the map, and suggested that the City Centre be added too (**Hilary/Helen** to arrange for these modifications). As soon as they are printed, the leaflets will be distributed for free – funding is coming from the Community Spaces Sustainability Grant – through the tourist information centre, library, local hotels etc. **Helen** was asked to enquire about the costs of reprinting.
20. **Decision on volunteer tasks for this winter:**
 - **Screening of School Pond:** Dan Haywood advises constructing a 2m screen around part of the pond. Birds wanting to use the pond would not then be disturbed by people on the FAUNA footpath, who would also be less visible to birds in Big Meadow. However, Richard Storton suggests that we can afford to be patient and wait for the hedge to grow. It was decided that a 2m screen would look unnatural and be impractical (existing hazel supplies are insufficient, it would invite vandalism, it would be vulnerable to the frequent windy conditions). It would also block public viewing of the pond. Oliver suggested planting some faster-growing willows as an interim solution, especially if the existing hedge is growing poorly in places. **Graham** will make enquiries about this at a course he is attending in January. Item to be reconsidered in a year's time.
 - **Future of oak tree in copse by oak circle:** The meeting was in favour of felling, subject to no objections from Michael Sheppard (**Oliver**). It was agreed that there was no rush, so this could be left until the next visit by a tree surgeon (e.g. when the ash trees are inspected in about a year's time).
 - **Laying of hedge on west side of the Pads path:** **Ian** will take advice from Joe Craig (Chairman, Lancashire and Westmoreland Hedge Laying Association), a useful contact made through his hedge laying course (see **Ian's** report at end). He will arrange a site meeting with Joe that includes Philip Turner and other interested people. They will also view the other hedges, particularly The Paddock and FLORA hedges, for advice on laying and a minimal maintenance strategy.
21. **Stand-in Chair for FOG:** Although in email contact, **Mick** will not be available to chair meetings etc. from about the start of April until possibly the end of August. He suggested that

the role could be shared by Dave and Oliver. To be discussed further at the next meeting, so that a recommendation can be made to the FA.

22. **FLORA:** The FA has now exchanged contracts to buy 26 acres of land in FLORA, and has six months to raise the additional funds required for the purchase. It was noted that funding and fundraising issues are the remit of FA; FOG's role essentially related to the management of the area once purchased (should the FA decide to combine this task with management of FAUNA and the Orchard). However, Mick urged the meeting to consider fundraising ideas and approach anyone who might be willing to join those who have already pledged money.
23. **AOB:**
- The FAUNA footpath tends to flood by the Stones and by the gate into the Paddock (can also create an ice risk). **Dave** will raise this with the Contractors when they return in January.
 - **Oliver** has read an informative article on ash tree disease which he will forward to **Glenys** for circulation.
24. **Date / place of next meeting:** 7.30pm Wednesday 9th January (upstairs at The Robert Gillow 64 Market Street) and Wednesday 6th February (The Robert Gillow).

Ian Procter's Volunteer Items:

Report on volunteer session 10th November 2012

13 local volunteers were joined by 20 students from Green Lancaster on what turned into a lovely morning after an early downpour.

1. We continued to trim back the FAUNA path, nearly but not quite finishing it.
2. Self seeded saplings were removed from three areas of the Orchard.
3. Overgrowing vegetation was slashed and cut back at the south end of the Orchard.
4. Excess vegetation was cleared from the remainder of the new FAUNA hedge saplings
5. The FAUNA hedge from the ash tree onwards was pruned to encourage it to thicken.
6. The buddleia near the Oak Circle was pruned back
7. The hazel in the copse between the Oak Circle and the Towneley Close path was coppiced. The cut branches were pruned, prepared for future use and stored in the Big Meadow.
8. Consultations took place as to the future of an oak tree in this copse. To be decided at a future FOG.
9. Fly tipped rubbish was cleared from behind the stump circle.
10. The remaining 'Ouch' signs were removed from the apple trees.
11. Some of the apple trees were pruned.

So, a great deal was achieved. Thanks to all

Report on volunteer sessions to protect the bunds of Lucy's and Anna's ponds (23rd and 24th November 2012)

As agreed by the last FOG a group of volunteers trimmed the recently coppiced hazel to form stakes and weavings for fences. These were transported across to Sowerholme and the fences constructed. The one around Anna's Pond was extended to prevent sheep getting into the Hay Meadow from the FLORA fields.

Six volunteers participated in a very muddy job.

Volunteer meal: 20th November 2012

13 volunteers gathered at The Robert Gillow and enjoyed their evening meal. The question was asked whether celebrating with a meal for two consecutive years constitutes a 'tradition' that we should cherish?

Hedge laying course

Three volunteers (Graham Brandwood, Keith Taylor and Ian Procter) attended a hedge laying course over three days at Crook O'Lune organised by Tarja Wilson of Lancashire C.C.'s Environment Directorate. Altogether we attended for 6 days.

The course was a bit of a mixed bag. At times we learnt a great deal about the work of hedge laying, at other time we seemed to be cheap labour to tidy a site. But overall very worthwhile, especially at no financial cost.

Whilst there I took the opportunity to consult with the trainer, Joe Craig (Chairman, Lancashire and Westmoreland Hedge Laying Association) on what we should do with a hedge such as ours alongside the Orchard / Fauna fields. In general he was very clear that if we wanted to encourage birds then a low, thick hedge was needed unless we wanted to particularly encourage magpies! In addition Joe is happy to come along and view our hedge and give us advice. I have his phone number and with the agreement of FOG, hope to arrange a meeting with him, myself and anyone else with an interest in this issue.

NOTE: If we do lay some of this hedge this winter we will need stakes and hazels is apparently ideal. We already have a small stock in Sowerholme but will need some more.

Proposed tasks for volunteer morning on 8th December 2012

There are too many tasks awaiting us than we can reasonably expect to accomplish in one session. I have thus listed the tasks in priority order in consultation with the Chair of FOG. Tasks that we don't accomplish are at least 'on the agenda' for future sessions.

Tasks 1 and 2 really have to be tackled at this session. Task 1 will likely be ongoing through December and January.

1. Start to prepare the pigsty area ready for the building of the tool shed.
NOTE: On site meetings and discussions have occurred involving myself and Sam Edge, Mick, Hilary, Dave and Fraser and a plan of work has been devised. A skip will be hired to be ready for Saturday morning and the main task will be rubbish clearing and the demolition and clearance of the pig sties. Whilst I only want about four people to be working in the restricted site it will be nice if as many volunteers and supporters as possible¹ gather adjacent to the pig sties at 10.15 to witness (and photograph) the ceremonial wielding of the sledge hammer. It may not quite be the Berlin Wall but to all of us who have wanted rid of the ugly sties it may feel just a bit that way!
2. Collect and store firewood for wassailing bonfire. Two builder's bags from the prunings of apple, willow and hazel in the Orchard, Graham to advise on suitability for purpose. Transport the bags to Mrs Ridley's garage.
3. Complete the trimming back of the Fauna path.
4. After Task 2: clear remaining prunings of apple, willow and hazel to the brash pile.
5. There are 6 remaining hazels ready for coppicing. QUESTION: should they all be done this year? Once coppiced the boughs should be trimmed and stored to be used in hedge laying.
6. Strim around fruit trees.

¹ I will ask Ruth to send around a brief email to her list as well as Jonathan's