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Rowhill



The Queen's Award
for Voluntary Service

The MBE for volunteer groups

The Newsletter of the Rowhill Nature Reserve Society

www.rowhillnaturereserve.org

 [Rowhill Nature Reserve Society](#)

Summer 2020

Message for Rowhill's Chairman

We're very sorry to have been required to cancel further events.

For the AGM, our intention is to prepare all the paperwork and file it with a note explaining why the AGM has been postponed. Once we are all backup and running, we intend to have a short AGM before one of our regular talks.

If any of our members find that current circumstances mean that they need some help, please feel free to call me direct on my mobile and I will see if I can help directly or find other sources of support.

Please keep an eye on the notice board, the notices through the copse, email and post. As soon as the government advice gatherings are allowed, we will be looking to continue with events.

Regards

James Byrne 07931144033

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Chairman's Report

Dear Members,

I am sorry not to have seen many of you recently, but our talk events have had to be postponed.

We continue with the Field Centre in shut down and monitor government advice on comparable areas of assembly. Most of our events and talks are not really possible whilst exercising social distancing. Also, the demographic of our membership includes a fair percentage within the more vulnerable age groups.

The talks arranged are cancelled progressively as we approach them but as soon as this is all over we will immediately restart the programme.

Here is some good news! We have received a £10,000 grant from the government via Rushmoor Borough Council. This is a Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Relief Grant due to the COVID - 19 pandemic.

Our friends at Rushmoor were very helpful and instrumental in our receiving this grant and we are grateful to them. £10,000 is a lot of money. But we are missing fundraising activities and still have to pay the utility bills, etc.

We have also procured an electrical safety test, the result of which is a £2,500 expenditure on remedial and upgrading works for the Field Centre.

Would everybody please make sure that they have renewed their membership? I know many of you would have done this at the AGM had it not been postponed. But please renew and convince others to join. It is having a robust membership that assists us when we do apply for funding. [\(A membership form will be attached with this newsletter as a reminder to those who haven't as yet, renewed their membership. Thanks in anticipation, Ray Rasmussen.\)](#)

Also, thank you to Zurich, our insurers. Renewal of our policy was due in May, but Zurich wrote to us stating that due to the COVID pandemic, the policy was being extended by three months, to August, at no extra cost. Thankfully, we have had no reason to call upon our insurance for many years, but at the time of renewal, they are always helpful and responsive. I don't think there is a lot of choice on the market but we do try to be sure we are getting a competitively priced policy when spending the Society's money.

James Byrne

Conservation Report

The Conservation Volunteers managed to work two Sunday tasks in March before the lockdown took hold and scuppered our plans. We finished coppicing the hazel in the cant near to Luke Road and layered the remaining stems to encourage regrowth. Joining us was David, a new volunteer, who was able to use his previous experience of using a billhook to coppice.

Complying with the proposed Rowhill Management Plan, we burnt the majority of holly brash rather than building a dead hedge. For safety reasons, we had blocked public access to the nearest path. I thought someone had breached this measure when I initially glimpsed a red/tan coloured dog coming towards me. I soon realised that it was a fox, unconcerned by our movements or noise.

Some Volunteers are visiting the Reserve as individuals, whether for exercise or to monitor the condition of the Copse. We are working to stop the spread of Variegated Yellow Archangel near Parkland Grove.

On a visit in April, Oli Mousley identified visitors had trampled down the dead hedge blocking an unofficial boardwalk path. Oli then spent some time reinstating the hedge with holly saplings. He then made his way to Chestnut Glade. Also on that day, Ray Rasmussen had seen a tawny owl there, sitting in the nesting box. (Don Wakefield has reported that a member of the public had seen two owlets in the box in early May. - Ray R.)

It had been arranged for Oli and Emma Southon to attend a chainsaw course in April. The course has now been rescheduled for October. This is one of the ways in which we are looking to delegate roles and responsibilities within our group. Discussions have led to several task leaders and first aiders coming forward.

I think we all have an increased appreciation of Rowhill's health and well-being benefits over these past weeks. Even if you can't physically get to the Reserve, you can still enjoy images found on our upgraded website: www.rowhillnaturereserve.org or on Facebook: [Rowhill Nature Reserve Society](https://www.facebook.com/RowhillNatureReserveSociety).

Studies have found just looking at images of nature, encourages a positive mood.

Carol Roberts

Education

It will come as no surprise that we haven't had any schools visiting. However, that is not to say children have not been using Rowhill to learn!

I met one family on my daily walk/litter pick, who had purchased litter pickers for their children to teach them how to care for their environment and the importance of taking litter home.

Another day, I could see a mum and dad and their two children intently studying a piece of paper and then looking really carefully at some bushes and the nearby stream. The two children had Scout neckerchiefs on. It turned out that they were scheduled to go on a scout camp and as it was cancelled, instead, the family were doing all the activities they should have been doing at the camp, locally. The particular activity that afternoon was a scavenger hunt and they next had to find something that would help them see in the dark. This was early afternoon and I would love to know what they came up with.

On another occasion, some children with their mum were learning about weight and balancing on a makeshift saw.

Each sunny day, it has been very rewarding to overhear some fascinating conversations between family members and so heart-warming to watch families re-discover some of the simple pleasures of life.

Fund Raising

Although I suspect it will be some time until we can have functions to entertain and raise money, it does not mean I have been sitting twiddling my thumbs! Just before this 'lockdown', I came into some Tupperware. Quite a lot actually. It reminded me of the time before I was married when I used to baby-sit for a Tupperware rep and instead of payment, she paid me in Tupperware for my 'bottom drawer'. I am still using some of this nearly fifty years later!

In my early married life, I attended some Tupperware parties and I seem to recollect that the party would start with a game. This was followed by a demonstration and then lastly the party host would produce something yummy to eat and drink. So if we do return to a chance to socialise, I intend to have a Tupperware party. Many of the items are brand new so you

may be able to pick up some real bargains. I will bake some cakes and perhaps we could all come in clothes of the '70's?

On the subject of raising funds, I would like to say an enormous thank you to those who supported the plant sale. Although we could not have our usual plant sale in the Field Centre, a neighbour let me have the use of a greenhouse so I was able to bring on many plants and operate a mini-market with plant deliveries. It was quite tricky getting the orders together as some of the plants came from friends at the allotment and they raise money for Phyliss Tuckwell. However with careful record-keeping, I was able to donate £70 for their charity and we raised in excess of £300 for Rowhill. It worked on balance that we were able to raise the same amount as we would have done by having the plant sale at the Field Centre! Once again Thank You.

Jackie De La Haye

Comments from people using the Copse

The Copse is really fulfilling its function as a healthy lung for the local population while we have these COVID-19 regulations.

I'm usually around the Copse and have been passing every 2 to 3 minutes individuals but more commonly couples OR parents with children. Most of those who speak are new to the Copse OR have rarely visited it before, but are enjoying/appreciating it.

Once the meadow was mown, that very lunchtime, there were 4 family groups sitting/playing on the Amenity Area and 2 people walking the mown perimeter AND 2 ladies with toddlers picnicking and playing. There has been similar usage since (including the 2 ladies with toddlers using that same spot several times).

Some 4 or 5 comments have been made to me about how nice it is that it has at last been mown and how neat the whole Field looks as a result.

Litter has been minimal (or people are collecting it) but last night (30th May) a small group shredded the small amount they had brought with them into over 70 small bits (tedious).

The Volunteers past efforts are much appreciated by those I encounter and thanks for the recent scalplings added to the Southern Path mid-section.

I have met many very well behaved cyclists on various paths (frequently teaching their children how to cycle responsibly).

Several people have asked what are the regulations and can't they be more visibly displayed. David & Julie Matthews pointed out that GOOGLE MAPS now show the Blackwater Valley Path through Rowhill Copse as an official cycle route. The Matthews said they had tried to explain to cyclists BUT the retort was that it is shown on their computer maps as a cycle path. The Matthews and others have asked about RNRS/RBC putting up simple prohibition signs.

Don Wakefield

We have recently had a few others comment about the increase in cycling in the Reserve. The Society's official policy is '**NO Cycling in the Reserve**'. Obviously for the safety of our nature as well as the public and their dogs.

It was suggested that we put up our own signs re cycling, but Rushmoor has just conducted a 10 year Management Plan for the Reserve and more and improved Signage is an important factor within it. We will be asking that this is given a priority.

But the Reserve is the start of the Blackwater Valley route, which is a cycle route. So we are a bit 'between a rock and a hard place'. The Reserve is owned by Rushmoor B.C., and the Society works with guidance from them and their agents Blackwater Valley Countryside Partnership.

The last time I remember this issue being discussed at a committee meeting, we were advised that a 'no cycling' sign had to be the 'official internationally recognized version' only, on secure posts. Signage is not under our control, we are still waiting for replacement notice boards at all entrances.

We sent an email to Steve Bailey, BVCP, and Andy Ford, RBC about this.

Ray Rasmussen

Everywhere seems to have gotten a lot busier locally with walkers and cyclists, so no surprise the Reserve has been so as well. Not all of the Blackwater Valley path is a cycle way and we have no plans to extend the section that is to Rowhill.

Renewing the signs is a project we have long wanted and is a priority in the draft plan I have seen. I would think new signs would not be contentious so we could start on that, once the current situation lets us get back to more normal work.

Steve Bailey - BVCP

I believe the message needs to be the same as the Basingstoke Canal; we have seen very high cycling numbers over the last few weeks.

I do not believe it is practical for 'No Cycling' and this would be against a trend towards encouraging more cycling as a means of transport as we emerge from this Coronavirus pandemic.

I think it is worth remembering that in terms of safety to nature, dogs (off lead) would be a much greater threat than cyclists, it is about shared space and each user group respecting the other.

Andy Ford - RBC