

DOVETALES

18th Edition – March 2017

NEWSLETTER of the
NAUNTON DOVECOTE
TRUST



Naunton Dovecote on an early January morning in hoar frost

WILDLIFE AT THE DOVECOTE SITE

Shortage of space has prevented me from reporting in previous issues on a meeting we had with representatives of the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust in 2012. Our intention was to try and maximise conditions to encourage whatever wildlife we could in the small, undisturbed, overgrown area upstream of the sluice gates. We have all seen kingfishers, herons, dippers, wagtails and the delightful egret from time to time, but we were anxious to seek advice on the most wildlife-friendly way of managing this little area. Will Masefield and his colleague, John (who made a special study of water voles), came out and met a couple of trustees and our riparian neighbour to advise and I quote extracts from his report below.

“It’s very important that the aquatic and marginal vegetation is not denuded too much on river-clearing sessions. Sympathetic/rotational control is the order of the day here, with at least 1/3 of the channel (i.e. one bank or the other) left untouched at any one time. This will not impede water flow, and provides essential habitat for macroinvertebrates that prop up the food chain (dippers, for example, rely on such invertebrates, as do the fish that support kingfisher populations etc). Also, why not delay until the pre-winter period as this will have least impact on the habitat; summer flooding is extremely rare (so a low risk strategy) and it will reduce the effort required. You may find that in some years, no work is necessary at all, but in others blockages need to be removed.

It’s easy to imagine that planting trees is a wildlife friendly thing to do, and the odd mature tree along a watercourse is great habitat for a lot of things. But generally speaking, overshadowed banks have far less wildlife interest than sunny ones, which are a haven for herbaceous vegetation, water voles, water shrews, in-stream vegetation and the invertebrates that rely on it (I could go on...!).

Dovecote bank (downstream section) - if the grass is managed by mowing, it would be very beneficial to leave a waterside margin (at least 1m) to develop interesting plants, which would provide floristic interest and beauty (yellow flag iris, etc). It’s worth giving this a go, as you often find that people’s ideals of ‘tidiness’ are overridden when wildflowers are allowed to flourish!

Dovecote bank (upstream section) - management of this parcel of land depends a little on whether it becomes over-shaded by willows on the opposite bank and what you consider to be right for the community. In an amenity area, the small orchard idea is a good idea (and might eventually attract the rare and beautiful ‘noble chafer’ beetle!). It could be a nice educational asset to the village, with reptile/amphibian refugia, mining bees bank, bird feeders etc (we can provide wildlife gardening info to you in this case). If the area is to be left more undisturbed, then perhaps a log-pile otter holt would be a good idea (again, we can provide guidance notes), and the kingfisher bank might be an exciting trial. “

We hope this report is of interest to all villagers, and may explain why we have asked the annual river-clearance team to leave one third of the vegetation in this area. We also hold back from mowing the Dovecote bank grass right up to the edge where possible and there is now quite a good clump of yellow flag irises in two places on that bank. We hope that all riparian owners in the village with a love of wildlife will be interested in the above advice when planning management of their section of the river.

When we met, Will and John saw signs of visits from otters, but no sign at that stage of the water vole (Ratty of *Wind in the Willows*) although we do have a plentiful supply of meadowsweet growing, apparently a favourite food of the water vole.

They also asked river clearers not to disturb more than necessary the stones on the bed of the river, under which the little shrimps and other crustaceans lurk, all of which provide an important link in the wildlife food chain.

As part of our current project (see page 5) we were advised to commission a proper ecological survey to assess, in particular, the presence of bats – I think we already know about the doves and the jackdaws! David and Jane Pickup and Peter and Gill Bell accompanied Colin Menendez (our Environmental Adviser) for the nocturnal shift of the ‘bat count’. They observed the Dovecote site from 7.30 p.m. to 11.30 p.m. and were rewarded in the early evening by the appearance of a lot of common pipistrelles and a few horseshoe bats. However, at about 10.30 the air was dense with hundreds of Daubentons bats feeding over and around the river. Colin Menendez tells us that the latter are not resident at the Dovecote as they do not live in buildings, but they appear to be attracted by the river. The other two types may well be resident in the Dovecote, but he did not consider that our proposed building works would trouble them too much, especially if the work was done at the right time of year and with due consideration for their presence.

The subsequent Report also noted that there were no signs of white claw nor signal crayfish, no conclusive signs of water voles, but potential signs of activity. There are water voles present in nearby waterways and these are likely to pass along our stretch of the river; again, there are no signs of otters, but these are also known to use the river. We are requested to avoid making hazards for these two species in our restoration of the turbine house.

* * *

As many of you will know, one of our Trustees, David Pickup, has a particular interest and knowledge of wildlife and this is the aspect of the Dovecote site for which he takes responsibility within the Trust. I asked him to write down some thoughts for us on the current state of the River Windrush and he has let me have the following observations following a walk during April 2016 down the back path.

“Yesterday evening, before the thunder, I took a walk along the river to see if any of our summer visitors had arrived. I listened but could only hear our own native birds in full flow. The robin, blackbird and great tits were all I could hear, and there was a lot of wren activity along the water’s edge.

The next two or three weeks should see the arrival of the chiffchaffs, willow warblers and blackcaps who all seem to love this stretch of river and their melodious song makes this walk all the better. The river itself was flowing full and fast after the recent rain, making it difficult to see how the native brown trout were doing. I did see a couple, but not as many as I would have hoped. As the river warms up and settles down, it should be easier to spot their activity.

If we get a good mayfly season this year, and we haven’t had a good one for a while, we should get a better idea of trout numbers, as they throw caution to the wind and start a feeding frenzy - and, as they are so easy to see, fly fishermen call mayfly season “duffers’ fortnight”.



Another sight to look forward to is the arrival of a shoal of roach that has taken to visiting our stretch of the Windrush. These pretty little fish are about 3 inches long, shiny silver with orange fins and they shoal in large numbers – up to 60 or 80 at a time. They are particularly partial to the roots of the willow tree about 30 yard upstream from the river bridge by the Black Horse, quite a sight, and very handy for the kingfisher!!”

NEWS UPDATE since August 2015

Sales: The Michaelmas Markets in November 2015 and 2016 organised by Katie Hanks in aid of St. Andrew’s Church were each a brilliant sales pitch for the Trust.

Just to remind you all, I always have a supply of mugs, calico and jute bags, jotters, tea towels, blank cards, postcards and of course, Christmas cards at Spring Barn (01451 850459). Please do not hesitate to let me know if you would like something.

Thank you also to contributors and purchasers of plants at the end of my drive in aid of the Trust. This raises between £150 and £200 each year – pure profit as all are donated.

One of two orchids donated by Jill Wilkie has turned out to be a veritable Triffid for the poor Parker household in Dale Street who had to apply for planning permission for an extension to accommodate it!

UPDATE ON OUR CURRENT PROJECT

(A) RESTORATION OF TURBINE/GENERATOR SHED AND ASSOCIATED FEATURES, TURBINE, LEATS, CHANNELS, ETC.

(B) ESSENTIAL REPAIRS TO DOVECOTE AND LEAN-TO BUILDING

(C) REMOVAL OF ASBESTOS ROOF AND REPLACEMENT WITH WELSH SLATE PITCHED ROOF AS SHOWN IN EARLIEST IMAGES OF DOVECOTE

(D) PROVISION OF MAINS WATER, KITCHEN AREA AND WC

Our thanks to Stuart Corbyn who is project-managing this planned building work for us and we are pleased to report that Planning and Listed Building Consent have now been granted for us to undertake all the works we wish to do. There are various caveats attached relating to possible disturbance to wildlife, but we have commissioned a proper ecological survey to assess the presence of bats in particular – and pinpoint how to cause the least disturbance during our building works. We have also decided to commission an Archaeological Survey of the lean-to to try and glean any further information we can about its structure and functioning. We (and Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings) would be very pleased to hear from any of you who have memories of this as a functioning mill.

Our plan is to start the project as soon as we have secured funds. Unfortunately, recent applications to Gloucestershire Environmental Trust and the Summerfield Trust were both refused, due to heavy oversubscription to their funds. However, we have received a quotation from a suitable builder which is achievable, and we can if necessary defer stage (D) above to a later time if necessary.

The total cost of (A), (B) and (C), including £11,000 already expended in professional fees, is between £85,000 and £92,000. The Trust already has a sum of £40,000 which is allocated to the project. This is accumulated from your regular donations, rental income from the Units, the Donation Box, sales of merchandise and ad hoc donations over the past few years. You will probably already therefore have made a donation in one form or another to this project.

In order to bridge the funding gap of approximately £40,000, we will be approaching some small local charities, heritage charities, local businesses and supporters who have shown a particular interest in this scheme. The four remaining elements complete the original objectives of the Trust to develop/enhance each of the features at the site for the benefit of the community and to try and secure ongoing income for the Dovecote into the future. To date we have succeeded in purchasing (1999) and repairing (2001), developing the stable block for rental and village use (2007), demolishing the tractor shed (2009), re-building walls and rendering stable block (2010), attempting to re-instate the turbine as a working generator (2011 to 2014) and mending and altering the sluice gate (2014/15). We have, for a small village, raised an enormous sum (£142,000 excluding Grants) between 1998 and 2015 in order to save and preserve this unique building within our community – a building which can benefit all of us in many ways, and also those visitors who pass through the village and are able to stop and enjoy its peaceful setting.

On a personal level, I (and many others) have been closely involved in retaining the Dovecote in its present, unspoilt condition since 1997 in various different roles. As Chairman of the Trust I feel it is our duty to make the most of each and every aspect of the site, and to extract the maximum interest and enjoyment from all possible aspects of each of its features, thus keeping up as much engagement as possible with this lovely building. The main risk to it now, as I see it, is complacency – an assumption that everything will continue as it is without our input.

We have the Dovecote itself, an important Listed Building; the ‘lean-to’ former mill, the building of which secured the future of the Dovecote after the price of corn made thousands of others redundant; the old sluice on the river which held back a ‘head’ of water for this mill; the turbine/generator built next to the river in 1925 to make electricity for the Manor; the old pig sheds, then stables and now made into four units to provide an income and village storage; the 1960’s Bradstone tractor shed (now demolished); the quiet, unvisited wildlife haven upstream of the sluice, and the enclosed agricultural ‘farmyard’ with its Cotswold stone walls. The Trustees have slowly worked to enhance and make use of each of these eight features and preserve their history, and this current project would complete that objective and add modern water/kitchen/WC facilities so that more use can be made of the site.

We hope that you will all wish to support us in funding the gap between the funds we have in hand and our target. We will be writing to those of you who have moved to the village since our original large fund-raising efforts in 2000/2001 in the hope that you would also like to help us reach our target, but any pledges or promises to help from any of you will be most gratefully received and for this purpose you should contact either myself, Penny Hanks (Spring Barn) or Donna Renney (Parker’s Barn).

Trustees and Officers/Sub-Committee Members, as at December 2016

Naunton Dovecote Trust: Trustees: Penny Hanks (Chairman), Donna Renney, Corrinne Powell, David Pickup and Stuart Corbyn

Secretary: Diana Woolley

Treasurer: Gerard Hanks

Supported by Sub-Committee Members:

Pat Boulton, Barbara Steiner, (Fund-Raising, Events and Publicity)

Keith Russell and Peter Bell (Site Management)

Ceramic Dovecotes: More recent residents in the village may not be aware that Peter Morton still has a stock of limited edition ceramic Dovecotes which were produced in about 2000. They cost £50, 50% of which goes to NDT., and make very attractive presents for people with a fondness for Naunton. Please contact Peter on 01451 850027 if you would like more detail.

LOST FRIENDS

Raymond Mould

We are very sorry to have to report that since our last issue, Raymond Mould, our biggest-ever financial benefactor, has died. He was a great supporter of the Dovecote Project and his generosity is much appreciated and made a very significant difference to our fund-raising efforts.

Dennis Herbert

We were also very sad to learn of the death of Dennis Herbert early last year. Dennis was brought up in Naunton at Ash Tree Cottage and lived there from 1929 to 1959. He wrote a really interesting Entry for the Dovecote Book describing Naunton in those early days. We are delighted that his widow Pat wishes to remain as a Friend of the Trust in his memory.

Mrs. Elizabeth Young

Mrs. Young was the widow of W.J.C. (John) Young. In fact they both lived in Sutton Coldfield, but came to Naunton quite frequently as John's aunt was Evelyn Day (formerly of The Pound and Humphries Barn) and his mother, Gladys Young, lived next to her sister for many years at Hilltop. Mr. and Mrs. John Young were generous donors to the Trust in memory of Evelyn, Geoffrey (Day) and Gladys; Mrs. Young's son, Dr. Bashford, very kindly

made a donation in her memory following her death in May 2015. The relationship with Elizabeth Young typified the way in which being a 'Friend' of the N.D.T. can keep people's connection with the village of Naunton and our 'goings-on'. Elizabeth always phoned at Christmas to order our cards, and catch up on village events.

Cathy Turton

Everyone in the village will be aware of the recent loss of Cathy as nearly every one of them attended her funeral at St. Andrew's in January. Cathy and David were 'Friends' of the NDT and although the Dovecote Trust was probably one of the very few village organisations with which Cathy was not directly involved, as with everything to do with Naunton, she was 100% enthusiastic and supportive of what we were trying to achieve. We all miss her input and enthusiasm very much.

Derek Tucker

Another very sad, and very sudden loss, was of our former Postmaster and Shop-keeper, Derek Tucker. St. Andrew's Church was full of his Naunton friends for his funeral. He and Margaret were both very keen supporters and we are very pleased to say that Margaret intends to keep up her support of the Dovecote Trust.

'Friends' and original Donors

Our last edition set out a list of the current 'Friends' of the Naunton Dovecote Trust, i.e. those people who donate annually by standing order. However, I am reminded that this is only half the story in the sense that there is a long list of people who donated to the Trust when it needed funds very badly, i.e. when we were trying to pay for the purchase and original repairs to the Dovecote in 1999/2000 and also who contributed to subsequent projects as set out on page 6 of this issue. Unfortunately, many of those people are no longer with us but I would for the record like to mention them and a list is included on the last page of this edition, overleaf.

**List of Nest Hole Sponsors and Donors to Dovecote Projects either by Donation,
by being one of the Original Lenders to the Trust who either converted their Loan
into a gift or waived the interest on that Loan, or by making some
other contribution of a material nature to the Dovecote Project**

Ian Adcock and Vanessa Gatford
Mr and Mrs. D. Acland
(the Notgrove Trust)
Mr. and Mrs. R. Ash
Mrs. Zoscha Andersson
Mr. Claude Arkell
Mr. James Arkell
Miss Jean Bacon
Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Barwood
Miss E. Shirley Beavan and Mr. D. Bennett
Mr. David Bedford
Mrs. David Bedford
Mr. David Boehm
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Mr. J. R. Brand
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Mr. Richard Howard
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Mr. and Mrs. Rob Johnson
Dr. P. Johnson and Ms. P. Stevenson
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Mrs. H. Kennard
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Mr. and Mrs. M. Law

Ms. C. J. McCartan (now Bytheway)
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Sponsorship and Ad Hoc Donors since 2011

Dr. J. Bashford
Beverley Chance
Margaret End
Emma Spiers

Grants: English Heritage, Cotswold District Council
Naunton Parish Council, Friends of the Cotswolds