

Porter Valley News



The newsletter of Friends of the Porter Valley - Registered Charity No. 1069865

Issue 109



January 2023

Working with Wilder Nature and Natural Regeneration

A talk by Ian Rotherham
Wednesday 1st February
7:30 - 9:30pm
Bents Green Methodist Church
Ringinglow Road



Before the talk we will have our Open Meeting.
After the talk, tea and biscuits, and a chance to chat with the committee
and other members.

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Forge Dam

The project is nearing completion but works have stopped for the winter as flows in the brook are high and it will be better to resume outstanding items in the spring. During very high flows the temporary "Irish bridge", allowing machinery to reach all the pathways, was washed away and this will have to be reconstructed in the spring.

Access works are complete except for the final tarmac surface around the pond pathways. When this is done the benches will be anchored down in their final position. The bridleway has been resurfaced but requires some work to deal with water oozing from the field in a few places. A pipe beneath the bridleway will be installed later. Along the route, hedging "whips" are being planted to replace areas cut through by the contract works.

The railings up the ramp from the cafe to the pond have been replaced and a safety fence has been erected to deny access to the spillway.

The pond is now being re-occupied by wildlife and we wait to see the further improvements in this regard when winter has passed. I met a man the other day who was visiting from Harrogate. He just loves the Porter Valley and Forge Dam and was full of praise for the works carried out. That for me says it all!

David Young

Work Morning Update



Digging the pit

On November 22nd, the hardy souls who work outdoors began reclaiming the area used by contractors as a compound for machinery. Higher up the bank a woodland and hedgerow mix of seeds was scattered, once debris had been cleared.



Team 1: the finished product



Building the hibernaculum

Lower down the bank, where the mud was ankle (at least) deep, a hibernaculum was constructed. This looks like, and indeed is, a pile of mud, sticks, brash and leaves, plus a ceramic drain pipe, creating an underground chamber for amphibians and reptiles. Sadly this desirable residence was vandalised within a week, but was reconstructed with an explanatory sign which will hopefully deter future attempts at demolition.

On December 12th, Ranger Matt brought 388 hawthorn 'whips' to replace the fence and hedge which had had to be removed to enable site access. The whips were planted in a line 50cm apart. Professional planters can achieve one planting every three seconds, but volunteers did well to plant 300 in the time available and in such hard ground. 10% of the whips are expected to die, so the remainder have been temporarily planted in a safe spot until we can resume the task.



Planting on frozen ground

Thanks are due to everyone who volunteered during 2022: fences, railings, leaky dams, goys, footpaths, Himalayan Balsam



Team 2: the whip planters

clearance, railings - all these tasks have benefited from your input.

Lyndon Porter



The chain gang at work

Forge Dam Playground

Our October consultation indicated near universal approval of refurbishment, the key points being a larger and access friendly play area with a non-trip surface, retention of the iconic slide, and new equipment that would provide scope for imaginative play for both individuals and groups of children.

Comments about the need for regular cleaning have already led to a welcome initiative when three families from Fulwood WI spruced up the playground one Saturday morning. A great sight, with lots of little ones sponging off algae and mud.

Next steps include renewing communications with supporters, looking at possible designs, estimating potential costs - and fundraising.

Ann le Sage

Funds raised from Christmas Activities

Instead of an all-day fair at Forge Dam this year we took advantage of less Spartan opportunities to fund raise, such as wreath and wreath kit making indoors, selling on the website and pop-up tables at the Forge Dam Café kept to a more manageable 2 hours, rather than a hypothermia inducing day-long stint! We enjoyed one shared afternoon with Christchurch Fulwood at Forge Dam with music and family activities but were grateful to have shelter from the café's extended roof and a temporary marquee.

And it looks as if we have raised about £4000 from cards, calendars, wreaths and kits, the one-off wreath making workshop Hilary has described, knitted goods and the miscellaneous pop-up sales. Next year we will consider requests for community wreath making events indoors.

Thanks to all who have contributed to raising such an impressive sum.

Ann le Sage

Bingham Park

Bingham Park Community Group has enjoyed a very successful 2022.

Project 1: The joint use Basketball and Netball Court was formally opened by the Lord Mayor, Sioned-Mair Richards on July 9th. The Lord Mayor donned her trainers to join young people on the court (with some success) attempting to score into the nets. The court was funded by Crowdfunding, FoPV, local donations, City Trusts and initiatives by local children making bird boxes and jewellery.

Project 2: So popular has the court proved it soon became apparent that a second basketball court would be a huge asset. Ongoing fundraising plus a donation from FoPV meant that in December we reached the target for a second basketball court, which will be opened in 2023.

Project 3: A group of skate boarders currently use the old third tennis court to practise their skills. Following a community survey, a meeting with local councillors and residents was held to see plans and raise any issues. BPCG has now committed to fundraise for a mini skate park within the area of the third court.

Glyn Mansell



Christmas Wreaths and Wreath Kits

All through November the elves were working hard. John Gittins went off to Blackburn Meadow with Dave and Ann Clegg to collect willow and on November 4th the process of hoop making began attracting much interest as we worked by Forge Dam playground. In the following fortnight, Hilary stencilled dippers on 60 bags, John Gittins made wreaths and some 70 wreath kits were completed. We took an order for 18 kits for a small business that was having a team bonding session making wreaths and sold another 8 kits. That left 40 kits for sale at Forge Dam or on the website.

On November 22nd the wreath makers convened at John and Jenny Gittins' home, transforming the hoops into extravagant wreaths for sale. One went on display at the Forge Dam Café, the others awaited sale, sitting in the cool of Ann le Sage's balcony. John organised us all, ensuring there was a plentiful supply of wreaths and kits. Their input was all the more generous as they were due to leave on a three-month trip to family in New Zealand shortly.

Hilary White



Looking Ahead...

The second big grant from DEFRA will enable the final tarmac surface to be laid on the footpath round Forge Dam as soon as the weather eases. The growth of grass and flowers in Spring will improve the area churned up by contractors' vehicles, and the hedge planting undertaken on recent work days will plug the gaps on the bridle path. Extricating a collapsed tree from the main channel will require ingenuity, a winch and a boat, apparently, so look out for dramatic photos of that operation!

Safety measures in light of the now deep water in the dam are also under active discussion. Recent heavy rain having filled not only Forge Dam but also the local reservoirs, after the very dry Summer and Autumn, we are reminded of the need to think about possible flooding, given the increased risk of extreme weather events linked to climate change.

We will hear more in 2023 about plans to mitigate flooding and it looks as if Endcliffe Park will be the subject of consultation, so watch this space.

Ann le Sage

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Annual Membership:

Single: £10
Family: £15
Concession: £5

For membership forms
and online application
visit our website.

Bird Survey Update

Bird watchers are often seen along the valley, wielding binoculars and pointing cameras, usually toward 'our' colourful kingfishers or bobbing dipper. In addition to the excitement of spotting different birds, volunteers (including FoPV members) have been recording exactly what they see at specific points between Endcliffe Park and the top of Clough Lane, to provide a baseline to compare with future records and inform conservation work. The point with the greatest variety of birds was at Wire Mill Dam (38 species) and the least, the top of Porter Clough (20 species).

If you would like to add your bird and other nature sightings from the Porter Valley to Sheffield and Rotherham Wildlife Trust's Nature Counts website, you can do so at <https://record.wildsheffield.com>

Chris Nicholson

The Memory Tree

Loyal readers will recall that this time last year, I wrote about the delight so many walkers and runners take in the cherry tree, decorated each December, just 200 yards west of Carr Bridge. But who was the tree memorializing?

FoPV member Janis Leslie writes that the tree is in memory of Alison (Ali) Douglas who died some 10 years ago. Ali was an artist and teacher and was committed to the WEA for whom she taught many classes; she helped many people and was much loved. Old friends decorate the tree to remember Ali every year. Thanks to Janis for taking the trouble to let us know about the tree, and RIP Ali.

Les Greenwood

Duck Race: In preparation for the 2023 Easter duck race, a group of us will be meeting at my house in January to get the ducks ready (dried & numbered) for the starting gun. If you'd like to help, please contact me (address and contact details above).

Glynis Jones

Activities for February to May

Any changes in the following details will be available on the website

When and Where	What and Who
Wednesday 1 st February 7.30 pm Bents Green Methodist Church Hall	Working with Wilder Nature and Natural Regeneration Open Meeting and talk by Ian Rotherham
Saturday 4 th February 10am Forge Dam	Forge dam Renovation * A walk led by David Young
Thursday 9 th February 9.30 am	Conservation work morning
Tuesday 28 th February 9.30 am	Conservation work morning
Saturday 4 th March 10 am	Walk * details tba
Thursday 9 th March 9.30 am	Conservation work morning
Tuesday 28 th March 9.30 am	Conservation work morning
Saturday 1 st April	Walk * details tba
Monday 10 th April 11am – 3.30pm Endcliffe Park	Easter Monday Duck Race (games, stalls, dog agility etc.) Duck race starts at 2pm (duck sales from 11am)
Thursday 13 th April 9.30 am	Conservation work morning
Tuesday 25 th April 9.30 am	Conservation work morning
Wednesday 3 rd May 7.30 pm Bents Green Methodist Church Hall	Open meeting and talk

Conservation work mornings: prior booking no longer required – for details, please contact Dave Clegg orielclegg@aol.com or Lyndon Porter lyndon@the-porters.me.uk or visit our website FOPV.org.uk

*Walks: These are ticket events – for details and registration, please visit our website walks page.
Registration opens two weeks before the walk.

The Committee:

Ann le Sage
Chair / talks
Lyndon Porter
Treasurer / walks
Glynis Jones
Secretary / newsletter
Dave Clegg
Conservation / planning
Les Greenwood
Newsletter
Mike Halliwell
Website / membership
Glyn Mansell
FD playground project
Rob Peck
Safety officer
David Young
Vice chair