

## Chairman's report 2022

### Management

I am very pleased to say that our work party schedule has been back to normal this winter, and thanks to the generous support of our volunteers, we have managed to considerably curb the advance of scrub into the meadow areas and cut more grassy areas, to make way for lots of flowers over the spring and summer months.

The matter of the insurance for the Friends of Halsey Field work parties has been resolved, as HCC's Countryside Management Services, or Countryside and Rights of Way Service (CROWS) as they are now called, have agreed to provide insurance for the Friends of Halsey Field work parties, provided that there is a trained leader and first aider at every work party. Sherief and I attended a Leadership course arranged by CROWS on Sunday 16th May, I updated my first aid qualification last June, and we are now using CROWS paperwork and risk assessments. When Ciaran Mullan attended our work party last August he was satisfied that we were working in a safe and effective manner, so we had the green light for a full programme of work parties throughout the autumn and winter. Unfortunately Ciaran has been very ill recently, so has not been able to come back to the site to give us advice on management etc.

### Halsey Field Leaflet

Last summer, all the committee worked very hard to produce an information leaflet about Halsey Field and this has now been published and printed and distributed to various organisations around Hemel, including the library, Community Centres, Wildlife Trust, schools etc. Our leaflet has been much admired, and I think all our members have been extremely pleased and proud of the result. Work has not yet begun on the children's leaflet.

### Birds

We had an exciting Early Morning bird walk on 1<sup>st</sup> May, led by Matt Moreton and Steve Lings, when we saw 23 species of bird on Halsey field and 33 species altogether, including birds in the farmer's field and in Warners End wood. Five of the species we saw are on the Red List, including a Black Redstart, and 5 are on the Amber List. We are planning another Bird walk event this year on Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> May starting at 7am.

Last November, Matt Moreton helped us check and clean out the bird boxes which the Scouts had made the previous year and we were pleased to find that all of the boxes showed signs of occupation, mainly by Bluetits and Great tits, but a couple had been used by Glis glis (edible dormouse) and a Glis glis was still sleeping in the final nest box we checked!

Unfortunately, our owl box was destroyed last summer, before we had time to move it to another tree, but Matt has kindly offered to make us another box, which we will hang in a much quieter position than the oak tree.

## Moths and Butterflies

We held a very successful moth survey evening on 30th July and in spite of heavy rain and high winds during the day, we caught 51 different species of moth, including 9 species not yet recorded on the site. A few moths were kept in pots overnight in the fridge (to keep them calm), so that people who attended the Big Butterfly Count the following day could see them. All the moths were then released back on to the field.

In spite of a heavy shower and not very much sun, we counted 11 species of butterfly and 3 species of day flying moth during the 15-minute period of our Big Butterfly count. The butterfly results were entered on Butterfly Conservation's website, and the moth list was sent to Colin Plant, the county recorder.

The results of the butterfly transect walked in the spring and summer of 2021 was sent to Andrew Wood, the county coordinator for butterfly monitoring in October. The total number of butterflies seen on the site last year was somewhat lower than in previous years, possibly due to the cold spring which prevented butterflies which have two broods each year, such as the Common Blue and the Brown Argus, from laying many eggs early in the year. Other recorders in Hertfordshire found a similar drop in numbers last year. The butterflies which did particularly well were the Brimstone, the Peacock, and the Small Skipper, and we were pleased to see that the Small Heath put in another appearance last summer and was seen on several occasions over the course of July. A new visitor to Halsey Field, never been recorded before (but only seen on one occasion) was a Dark Green Fritillary.

## Networking

On Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> November the Friends of the field were invited to hold a stall at the first Dacorum Climate Action Network meeting. The event was very busy with interesting talks, good networking opportunities and a chance to gain more volunteers to help with work on the field, so thank you to Melanie Parr for organising this.

We have continued our relationship with the local scout group, and the Beavers have recently been involved in the construction of an insect hotel on Halsey Field. Mike and I went to join one of the Beaver sessions last October, when I gave a short talk and slide show about Mason and Leaf-cutter bees, which are the species likely to occupy the hotel, then the Beavers helped to drill some holes in logs which the Scout Group supplied, ready to place in the insect hotel during its construction down on Halsey Field. The Osborne Property Group donated some roofing felt, so that we could make the construction watertight, and last November, Steve Lings gave his valuable help and advice when we began to construct the hotel. We plan to complete the construction this March with the help of the Beavers.

This month I agreed to give a talk about Halsey Field to a group of children St. George's Primary School in the Old Town on Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> March. I have made a Power point presentation which will be suitable to use for other groups if necessary.

## Grants

Last month Cllr. Fiona Guest suggested that we should again apply for some of her Locality Grant, so we put in a bid for an additional smaller brush cutter to help with the grass cutting, especially in the autumn months, and a hedge trimmer to help with cutting back the advancing scrub. We have already heard that this bid has been successful, and we now have an extra £1000 in the bank. We also bid for money from Dacorum's Green Community Grant to buy a moth trap and generator to help with our moth monitoring, and this bid has also been successful. We have been given £1500, which is more than we bid for, so we can buy extra monitoring equipment and all our volunteers were congratulated on their work.

We have recently received a donation in the name of Chris Pritchard who has sadly recently passed away.

This winter the Halsey Field sign, which was purchased with a grant from the Box Moor Trust, was becoming almost unreadable because the surface was cracking up. Fortunately, this was still within the ten years' guarantee and the company Nature Signs Direct agreed to replace the artwork. As they asked us for a copy of the artwork which Steve Lings originally designed, we were able to improve this before sending it to the company, so the new sign is even better than the original.

## Development

We are extremely concerned that the proposed development in the Gade valley immediately east of the Halsey Field will affect the biodiversity on the Wildlife Site, and at present we are therefore opposing the proposition. If the council allow the development to go ahead however, we will do our best to work with the developers to ensure the best outcome for Halsey Field.

## Thanks

The Halsey Field project has enjoyed great support from all the Friends of the Field, through generous donations, advice and expertise, and also help with the manual work of looking after the site, and I would like to thank everyone who has been so generous over the year.