

Brent Island Trust

Newsletter, June 2020



Strange Times

These are strange times indeed. With many of us mainly confined to our homes over the past two months, there has been some consolation as we watch Spring turn into early Summer in our gardens. That goes too for The Island, where the trees are in leaf and the Yellow Rattle is in full flower, showing it is establishing nicely and will soon be helping to reduce the rampant grasses and allowing space for more wild flowers to grow. The Island is still open for visitors to enjoy, but please observe the social distancing rules at all times.

It has been rewarding in recent weeks to see families using this precious space for rest and recreation during the wonderful weather. Many have used it as a spot to picnic and enjoy the sunshine while observing the guidelines to protect their health. These rules mean it will be impossible for us to maintain our usual regime of management for the time being, but we will be keeping an eye on the paths and we plan to cut back encroaching vegetation where necessary. We shall miss the yearly visit by the enthusiastic volunteers from EE Telecoms who have been such a help in the past couple of years.

As we don't have quite as much information to impart as usual in this newsletter, with no upcoming events, we thought we would include some photographs of The Island past and present to entertain you. We hope you enjoy them, and we look forward to meeting again in brighter times. Stay safe.



Yellow Rattle



Membership Renewals

Thank you to everyone who has renewed their membership subscription by Standing Order. This is tremendously helpful to us and ensures we have a flow of income we can rely on. If you would like to switch to this form of payment please contact our Membership Secretary, Graham Royle (01364 72803 or grahamroyle@outlook.com). If you prefer to pay by cash and have not been able to do this in person, you can either send Graham a cheque, or wait until conditions have eased before passing on your subscription. There is no pressure to do this until such time as you are comfortable in doing so.

Annual General Meeting

We would usually be preparing for our AGM later this month but circumstances prevent it this year. Fortunately our constitution states "There shall be an annual general meeting of the Charity which shall be held in the month of June in each year or as soon as practicable thereafter." Our plan is to see how the situation develops but if a meeting proves to be impossible before the end of 2020 we'll investigate alternative ways to elect committee members and carry out other necessary business – perhaps by post or on-line. We'll let you know as the future becomes clearer. Meanwhile current committee members will continue in their present roles – a list is on our website.

Website

If you haven't taken a look the Island website (<http://www.brentisland.org.uk/>) recently can we suggest you do. We have been adding a wealth of information, including:

- A survey of the larger trees on The Island along the lines of a similar record carried out in the early years of the Trust. Over the years, the aim is to monitor the health or decline of all trees with a girth greater than 1m. Sadly, some, such as the 'Elephant' Beech, will disappear from the record but others will join it as they mature. Take a look at the *Plants & Trees* page of the Wildlife section on the website.
- Seasonal images of The Island – the latest being of apple tree blossom.



- The events part of the website is currently rather sparse for obvious reasons but we will let you know about future activities and record recent points of interest.
- In the last newsletter we described how we've restarted the Photo Monitoring project to chart changes on The Island by taking photographs every few years from defined places and in set directions. Go to the *Photo Monitoring* section of the website to see all eleven views from the last 20 years.

Wildlife on The Island

- Recently, Grey Wagtails and Dippers were spotted on river boulders off the viaduct end of The Island. Dippers used to nest each year on the ledge to the left of the arch until a flood destroyed their site. Does anybody know where they're now raising their young?
- Butterflies are delighting us in the recent hot, sunny weather. These include Orange-tip, Speckled Wood, Red Admiral, Meadow Brown and a rather worn Comma brought out of hibernation by the spring weather.
- Other recent insect activity includes Beautiful Demoiselle, Swollen-thighed Beetle, high numbers of the tiny Cocksfoot Moth resting on buttercup flowers, bees of many species ranging from honey bees and bumble bees to solitary and cuckoo bees and hundreds of hoverflies.
- Wild flowers across the meadow and around the edge of The Island are at their best this month. The Blubells have just about finished but in bloom now are Pignut, Speedwell, Wild Garlic, Red Campion and many others. A list of The Island's plants is on our website's *Plants & Trees* section.
- Despite now being almost horizontal the 'Elephant' Beech is now in full leaf. At a recent committee meeting we did contemplate whether we should leave it in place but as it's straddling and partially blocking the river flow and it has crushed a fence on the far bank it will have to be removed.



Underneath the arches



Comma butterfly



Wildflowers on the edge of The Island



Damage from when the Elephant Beech fell. It is now in full leaf!



A Leak from the Leat

The leat has sprung a leak by the path near the gate which will need attention. We've been in touch with Castleford Engineering who carried out renovations on the sluice gate. They will come to inspect and make recommendations on its repair. Meanwhile we'll keep an eye open to make sure it doesn't get worse.

Damp on the path caused by the leaking leat



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