



BRANCHLINE



ISSUE 40

WINTER 2004

Six months of success for the Community Heritage Initiative

Leicestershire County Council's Community Heritage Initiative has got off to a flying start.



The Initiative started in February this year and in the first six months has provided training for 300 people and has helped over 300 more join in with surveys of ancient trees, ponds, hedgerows and butterflies. The information collected is added to records held at the Environmental Resources Centre and will help people understand our county wildlife.

Ernie White, Leicestershire County Council Cabinet Lead Member for Community Services, said, "The Community Heritage Initiative is providing an excellent service for our communities and has exceeded its targets for the first six months. I look forward to seeing the Initiative develop over the next few years and help more people record and celebrate our natural heritage".



The Initiative can supply survey forms and advice on recording landscape features and wildlife, and setting up a parish wildlife survey project. It also runs a varied programme of free information sessions, and can help people use the information held at

Holly Hayes, the Environmental Resources Centre for Leicestershire and Rutland, to study the natural heritage of their area.

Wild Attitudes

Young people across Leicestershire and Rutland value the countryside for peace and quiet, and relaxation. That's the main message from the recent Wild Attitudes! survey by the Community Heritage Initiative.

Results are now in and reveal that most young people have very positive feelings about wildlife and countryside. They like walking and watching wildlife and few are bored or uninterested.



There are concerns about young people no longer joining local natural history groups or developing taxonomic (species identification and classification) skills, leading to a serious gap in skills and knowledge in the near future. However, it is clear from this survey that young people are interested, and the Community Heritage Initiative hopes help nurture this spark of interest.

The survey was done to help direct future 'wild' projects to be done with youth groups. Youth Groups interested in taking part in a project, such as making a wildlife documentary, should contact CHI for more details.



Supported by the
Heritage Lottery Fund

Community Heritage Initiative
Leicestershire Environmental Resources Centre
Leicestershire County Council
216 Birstall Road, Birstall, Leicestershire, LE4 4DG
(: (0116) 267 1377 Fax: (0116) 267 7112
Email: chi@leics.gov.uk

Rutland
County
Council





Who are you?

The Stepping Stones Project represents a partnership project that aims to improve access for all, enhance the environment, improve people's awareness and encourage community actions in the countryside around Leicester. The Stepping Stones Project was set up in 1992 (as the Leicester Urban Fringe Countryside Management Project), following a County Council response to the Leicestershire Countryside Policy Document 'Countryside 2000-Planning for change in the Leicestershire Countryside, A strategy for Action.'

The project boundary is focused on the countryside around Leicester, where the rural and urban landscapes merge. As this landscape is typically under pressure from various types of development, a large population wanting to use the area for informal recreation, agricultural use, equestrian use and many others, the Countryside Management Project was established to help protect and enhance the pockets of countryside within this landscape.

The Stepping Stones Project is based

at Leicestershire County Council and receives additional funding from the District and Borough Councils of Blaby, Charnwood, Harborough, Hinckley and Bosworth and Oadby and Wigston. The project also receives funding from other sources. The International Tree Foundation contributes towards the Free Tree scheme detailed below.

The project has two Project Officers, Andy Jackson and Samantha Forster.

What are your areas of interest?

The Stepping Stones Project has four main objectives

- Improve Access for All
- Enhance the Countryside
- Improve awareness of the Countryside
- Encourage Community Action

What do you do?

- Both Project Officers are on hand to help with enquiries relating to any of the above objectives.
- The project can also provide **grants** of up to £2,000 (75% of the total project costs) for community projects as well as private grants for farmers and landowners who are undertaking works such as hedge laying, hedge planting, small woodland management, pond works, pollarding and tree and shrub planting. The rates for the private grants vary depending on the works. Further details and an application form can be obtained from the project. See contact details at the end.
- In the original Project Strategy



Supported by the
Heritage Lottery Fund

Community Heritage Initiative
Leicestershire Environmental Resources Centre
Leicestershire County Council
216 Birstall Road, Birstall, Leicestershire, LE4 4DG
(: (0116) 267 1377 Fax: (0116) 267 7112
Email: chi@leics.gov.uk

**Rutland
County
Council**



several Green Wedges within the Project Area were identified. All of these are identified within the relevant District or Borough Local Plans and the County's Structure Plan. The project has been working with consultants, landowners, parish councils, community groups and individuals on long term management strategies for each of the green wedges. For further details please have a look at the project web site.

- The project runs a Free Tree Scheme each year offering up to 100 free trees (60-90cm in height) for planting in community areas or private land, which will have a visual impact that, can be appreciated by the community. The closing date is 17th December 2004.
- TreeFest is the annual celebration of trees in the landscape organised by the Stepping Stones Project. This year's event will take place on Sunday 28th November 2004 at Brocks Hill Country Park.
- The project runs several training courses through out the year on various countryside management topics such as hedge laying, coppicing, tree care and pruning and green wood working, as well more leisurely activities such as winter and spring walks in the woods.

The Project Officers also work with Leigh Clewlow at the County Council

in running the Leicestershire Tree Warden Scheme.



Where and When do you meet?

The project does not have regular meetings for the public. However, the project does meet quarterly with representative Officers from each of the funding partners. The Project Officer also report to elected members from each funding partner during October every year to discuss funding for the project and agree work priorities for the year ahead. In April/May time each year the project invites elected members representatives and Parish Council representatives to a meeting of the project where officers feedback on the progress and achievements of the project.

Do you have a newsletter?

No, although the project does produce an Annual Report and newsletters for the Green Wedge Forum. Copies of these can be requested.

How can I contact you?

Andy Jackson's telephone number is 0116 265 7221. Samantha Forster's telephone number is 0116 265 7264. The project's email address is - stepping_stones@leics.gov.uk

Do you have a web site?

The project web site is www.leics.gov.uk/stepping_stones



Supported by the
Heritage Lottery Fund

Community Heritage Initiative
Leicestershire Environmental Resources Centre
Leicestershire County Council
216 Birstall Road, Birstall, Leicestershire, LE4 4DG
(: (0116) 267 1377 Fax: (0116) 267 7112
Email: chi@leics.gov.uk

**Rutland
County
Council**



Wardening in Leicestershire and Rutland

Local enthusiasts have lots of opportunities to get involved in safeguarding local heritage and the countryside in Leicestershire and Rutland, with a wealth of local societies and chances to play an active role in their communities via county-based Wardening Schemes.

Leicestershire County Council (LCC) supports a number of projects where local people can, via their parish councils or meetings, become appointed volunteers for heritage issues. Three schemes exist, with a variety of training and literature available to volunteers who sign up. There are opportunities to be Archaeology, Heritage or Tree Wardens - and many people act as all three for their community. All are run through the authority's Environment and Heritage Service (EHS) and all except Tree Wardens are supported by LCC in Rutland as well. Rutland County Council are currently exploring re-establishing a Tree Warden network in their authority area.



Wardens for all schemes are unpaid and require approval via Parish Councils. In non-parished areas Tree and Heritage Wardens are supported by colleagues in District Councils. Being a Warden doesn't involve having extra rights or powers, but the position can be a vital link to heritage issues and can help facilitate local projects and events. In recent months Heritage Wardens in three parishes have driven local grant applications for heritage projects and secured awards of between £14,000 and £18,000.

Archaeology Wardens

The Leicestershire and Rutland Archaeological Network was set up in 1996, and in this time 185 Archaeology Wardens have been appointed.

These wardens act as the "eyes and ears" of the Archaeology Section of LCC's EHS. They carry out fieldwork themselves, and provide a link between LCC and the wider public. The backgrounds of recruits include: members of archaeology and local history societies and metal detector clubs, parish councillors and unaffiliated individuals.

The fieldwork that wardens has in the past tended to concentrate on is "fieldwalking", the collection of artefacts from the surface of ploughed fields. Many wardens undertake metal detecting, often in conjunction with fieldwalking and excavation projects as well as building and earthwork surveys, including a project recording medieval field systems.



Finds from wardens' fieldwork are passed on to LCC for study and recording under the Portable Antiquities Scheme and the Object Identification Service. Some wardens have arranged with landowners for these finds to be donated to LCC's EHS Collections, in which they form a publicly accessible resource, supported by the finders' own records of their fieldwork.



For more information contact Richard Pollard on 0116 2645803 or email rpollard@leics.gov.uk



Supported by the
Heritage Lottery Fund

Community Heritage Initiative
Leicestershire Environmental Resources Centre
Leicestershire County Council
216 Birstall Road, Birstall, Leicestershire, LE4 4DG
(: (0116) 267 1377 Fax: (0116) 267 7112
Email: chi@leics.gov.uk

**Rutland
County
Council**



Tree Wardens

The Leicestershire Tree Warden Scheme was started in the early 1980's to create a network of volunteers to monitor existing trees in the county and help co-ordinate new tree planting schemes.

The Leicestershire Tree Warden Scheme comes under the umbrella of the National Grid Tree Warden Scheme, which is co-ordinated by the Tree Council in partnership with the National Grid. The scheme works in partnership locally with many of the District Councils, Severn Trent Water, the Environment Agency, English Nature and the Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust.



Each of the 152 volunteer wardens is registered with their parish council and we presently have wardens in 112 parishes in Leicestershire.

Tree Wardens have three main priorities:

1. Gathering Information - on a tree's location, species, age and condition, as well as historical information
2. Local Liaison – providing information and advice for the local community and keeping local authorities informed of any infringements to protected trees
3. Practical Projects - tree planting schemes and events

Leicestershire County Council provides talks, field and nursery visits and the Tree Council has a number of annual initiatives including National Tree Week. For more information contact Leigh Clewlow on 0116 265 7060 email lclewlow@leics.gov.uk

Heritage Wardens

This scheme was established in 2000, with support from the Heritage Lottery Fund, through the authority's Heritage Watch programme. This scheme covers all aspects of local heritage - although it has a bias towards broad landscape heritage studies (covering archaeological features such as earthworks; folklore and local history, an element of built heritage; geology and industry that has shaped the countryside we see today).

Network volunteers receive a comprehensive pack that focuses on Leicestershire and Rutland, but has received national praise for the wealth of information it provides. Updates are mailed to volunteers - along with regular free publications that are thought to be of benefit to local heritage studies. Volunteers have opportunities to attend over 20 training sessions a year - which are all free, along with an annual gathering of Wardens. The network has nearly 170 members covering over 120 parishes. In some areas, where a number of wardens are registered, specialist areas are shared out, and local groups are now forming for projects and activities.

Various projects are run as part of the network, with regular surveys for wildlife habitats (such as ancient trees, ponds, grassland meadows); parishes' Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation; species such as dog's mercury (an indicator of old woodland sites) or reptiles through the Snakes Alive survey.

For more information contact the Community Heritage Initiative team on 0116 267 1377 or email chi@leics.gov.uk



Supported by the
Heritage Lottery Fund

Community Heritage Initiative
Leicestershire Environmental Resources Centre
Leicestershire County Council
216 Birstall Road, Birstall, Leicestershire, LE4 4DG
(: (0116) 267 1377 Fax: (0116) 267 7112
Email: chi@leics.gov.uk

**Rutland
County
Council**



Collecting Things

A Report by Anthony Fletcher, Keeper of Natural Life

Collecting things used to be a popular hobby. Most introductory conversations would follow some sort of - "what's your hobby?" Or, with increasing familiarity, "how's your!!! collection coming on?" But did anyone ever ask why do you collect? In fact, do people still collect things?

Today I was told that television has killed the hobby of going out and collecting things. It seems that nowadays we passively accept what is offered to us; we don't go out and get it ourselves, but sit in an armchair, gawping at a screen, and getting obese. That's what I hear, but think about this, most of us have huge collections of something. For example, video's and DVDs, not to mention CDs! We even cherish our old LPs, remember 78s? We actively hunt for bargains to add to our collections. Have you tried HMV in Oxford St. for CDs at 1/3 price. Or pay a visit to Fosse Park at the weekend and watch countless other collectors in action - hunting round NEXT for yet another shirt, or Marks & Spencers for the latest ready meal.

Natural History collecting isn't really much different. A story goes that Sir David Attenborough was once asked by a media man, 'when did you start studying insects? He replied, 'when did you stop?' It seems that collecting things is a natural thing to do. It starts at an early age, perhaps with flowers or insects, passes to records and clothes, and goes on to?, well, I don't know, I'm not yet old enough. I guess though, a few of us, stay at that childhood stage, captivated by what is immediately around us, the colour, smells and movement, the plants and animals. Maybe we are still hunter-gatherers, exploring our environment for what is useful or good to eat. Maybe this instinct has evolved so that nowadays we collect memories. Our experience of rock, insect or plant-hunting, in beautiful or awe-inspiring places, can be kept alive by collecting a memento. To this end I used to keep a rock from the top of every mountain I climbed. Eventually this collection

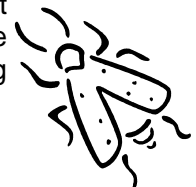


grew too large for the house and became the basis for a rockery in the garden. But, each rock identified a memory, an experience to be clung-to for as long as possible. Even now I look at my desert rock, and feel the 105° heat and the disquiet of knowing I am very tired and many miles from help should things go wrong. Nowadays my large collection of photographs serves much the same purpose - not new-fangled digital 'virtual' images, but old-fashioned 35mm slides which I can project onto the wood-chip wallpaper in the living room, giving that old master effect!



I'm not ignoring the fact that some things, so beautiful or intriguing, just have to be collected and hung on the wall. Even lichens turn up in floral wreaths or as cake decorations. Collected things can stimulate our imaginations, give aesthetic delight, decorate our homes and help us to relax.

So while there may be many personal reasons for collecting things, I suppose a few people do it for an ostensibly useful purpose, like science, or some kind of biological survey. But in museums, we more often encounter collections which had no ostensible scientific purpose at all; they were collected for personal pleasure or gratification. Examples are the bound seaweed volumes, often made by Victorian ladies, presumably on their seaside holidays. These now provide material proof of floras now much depleted or extinguished by pollution. Similarly, the scientific value of many collections was appreciated only much later, often after the originator had passed away. I suspect that Charles Darwin and his lesser known contemporaries started collecting bird skins, shells, beetles, fungi and so on, mainly because they liked doing it! These collections stimulated their imaginations, and the great scientific theories came afterwards, maybe long afterwards.



Why collecting is important?

Nowadays we seem to be expected to justify our passions. There has to be a reason, often financial, for doing everything. This is reasonable when public or grant money and jobs are involved. Fortunately in museums, non-financial reasons are still acceptable. Our emphasis is on education,

Community Heritage Initiative

Leicestershire Environmental Resources Centre
Leicestershire County Council

216 Birstall Road, Birstall, Leicestershire, LE4 4DG
(: (0116) 267 1377 Fax: (0116) 267 7112

Email: chi@leics.gov.uk



Supported by the
Heritage Lottery Fund

Rutland
County
Council



access to collections, and improving the quality of life of the public. The personal is as much valued as the material. So while one curator may specialise in the collector and his times, another may seek the scientific data - the information which the collection holds. So, the life of people like Rev. Andrew Bloxam, vicar of Twycross and contemporary of Charles Darwin, is of great interest. Just think of the life of a vicar in the NW Leicestershire coalfield area in early Victorian times, having to administer to accident victims families, the plagues of the day, and daily burials of infants, he must have needed some kind of relief. For Andrew Bloxam, botany must have been that relief. Alongside harrowing daily events, he was proud to announce the presence of 15 species of bramble within 100 yards of his rectory, named



a dozen new species of fungi, and compiled lists of mosses and lichens everywhere he went. Even Barmouth, at the very end of the railway line, appears on his specimen labels, a place where he must have taken his family for its annual holiday. In fact, his labels are a study in their own right. They are on a variety of papers, some watermarked, so the pieces can be jigsawed together, and obviously were sliced up from ledger sheets. Others are re-used envelopes or correspondence, some with a child's drawings on the back. Paper must have been so precious a commodity to a 19th C vicar, that everything was recycled.

Collectors still do this. I regularly receive specimens in old tobacco tins, yogurt pots, crisp packets, Olivio cartons, etc., with labels on the backs of train tickets, kleenex tissue, or old Christmas cards. So, natural history collections can have great social history value. One specimen of Bloxam's was wrapped in The Times dated 1861, detailing a first hand account of a battle in the US civil war.

The uses to which we can put natural history collections are legion. Initially we may collect, say a fungus, to identify it at home, but it proves to be particularly valuable because its new to the county. Such 'voucher specimens' are essential as they are the proof that that species lived in that place at that time. Museums keep these vouchers and employ a specialist curator to keep them safe and make them accessible to users. They are safer in a museum, with its controlled temperature, humidity and pest

controls, than under the bed in the spare bedroom. In fact, if you have to keep your fungi



in the bedroom, then put them on top of the wardrobe where its warmer and drier, and less accessible to carpet beetle larvae (woolly bears). In time though, the value of a specimen may become appreciated by others, even non-scientists. A doll was brought in once and I was asked to identify what it had been stuffed with. It turned out to be *Sphagnum* moss, now a rarity in Leicestershire, but the doll was from Humberstone around 1900! Does this mean rare bryophytes existed in Leicester City in those days? Or was it stuffed with the natural precursor of lint, as highly absorbent *Sphagnum* moss was a common wound dressing up to and including the First World War.

On the scientific side, its sometimes suggested that traditional uses of collections will become redundant as DNA and RNA studies progress. Instead of visiting a museum to compare your unknown specimen with one precisely named, we shall simply use a 'DNA probe'. But who will calibrate the probes? They will always require people skilled in naming organisms. It also presupposes that all species have been named. But as it has been estimated that only 5% of the world's fungi have yet been discovered, we clearly have a very long way to go. And, will it ever be commercially viable to construct DNA probes for all the 300 million species thought to exist on our planet? As an aside, who before the 1980's, ever considered that museum specimens would be a useful source of DNA? The germs of a Jurassic Park are there in all of our museums.

So, Museum natural history collections are not merely assemblages of personal mementoes or scientific materials. Their future value is, as yet unknown. Anyone could and will find a use for them, whether a scientist, artist, historian, and so on. For, collections are not simply of objects, but of information, in the widest possible sense.



I hope this piece might encourage some of you to start or even continue collecting and maybe leave your collections in your will to a museum somewhere. In the future, your descendants will be grateful for your efforts, and will not begrudge you having had some considerable pleasure on the way.

Community Heritage Initiative

Leicestershire Environmental Resources Centre
Leicestershire County Council

216 Birstall Road, Birstall, Leicestershire, LE4 4DG
(: (0116) 267 1377 Fax: (0116) 267 7112

Email: chi@leics.gov.uk



Supported by the
Heritage Lottery Fund

**Rutland
County
Council**



The CHI greatly appreciates the time and effort people have put into responding to the questionnaire featured in the last edition of Branchline. The results have now been collated and analysed. Our findings will be featured next time and we hope that your suggested improvements will be seen within the next few issues of Branchline. For further information or to submit any comments or articles please contact the Community Heritage Initiative at:

Leicestershire County Council, Holly Hayes, 216 Birstall Road, Birstall, Leicestershire, LE4 4DG.

Phone: 0116 267 1377

Email: chi@leics.gov.uk

Web: www.leics.gov.uk/celebrating_wildlife

THANK YOU

LANDshapes

The project aims to capture 'the spirit of heritage in The National Forest', the LANDshapes team are working with the population of the area to develop a new 'sense of place'. We aim to encourage both locals and visitors to develop their emotional involvement with the landscape - especially important at this time of major participative transformation.

The result of generations of human and natural activity, shaped by the underlying geology. Landscape is a truly two-way and dynamic relationship between people and their surroundings. In The National Forest a new landscape is currently emerging both transforming and encompassing the old.

LANDshapes is an innovative 3-year Heritage Lottery Funded project being undertaken by the National Forest Company, designed to capture the cultural heritage of the National Forest area at this exciting time in its development. In keeping with the truly participative nature of the overall Forest vision, LANDshapes works to help and encourage communities to celebrate and record the landscape in all its diversity and to develop a 'sense of place' within the new working forest.

By the end of its final year the project will have produced a number of 'outputs' including an archive of information accessible via the internet and a highly readable exciting book, as well as having worked in partnership with local communities on events and projects throughout the region.

ABOUT BRANCHLINE

Branchline is produced by Leicestershire County Council's Environmental Resource Centre and is the newsletter for the Community Heritage Initiative, a project developed with support from the Heritage Lottery Fund and Rutland County Council. It aims to be a networking publication and used as an information source for parishes, groups, and individuals interested in protecting and discovering more about the area's countryside and heritage. Mailings are free of charge as a service to the communities of Leicestershire and Rutland. If you have any articles that you would like to see in Branchline, drop us a line at the Environmental Resource Centre (details below), or e-mail them to chi@leics.gov.uk. Articles are welcome and the **deadline for Spring 2005 Edition is February 1st 2005.**

The articles supplied do not necessarily reflect the views of Leicestershire County Council or the CHI partners.



Supported by the
Heritage Lottery Fund

Community Heritage Initiative
Leicestershire Environmental Resources Centre
Leicestershire County Council
216 Birstall Road, Birstall, Leicestershire, LE4 4DG
(: (0116) 267 1377 Fax: (0116) 267 7112
Email: chi@leics.gov.uk

**Rutland
County
Council**

