



# BRANCHLINE



## ISSUE 47

## Autumn 2006

### The Hidden Heritage of Fields

All enclosed fields, like the furlongs of the common fields before them, have names. which range from the intriguing to the mundane, from the romantic to the boringly obvious and all tell us something about those fields whether it be the position, shape, or history of the field concerned. Field names are as much a part of the heritage of the countryside as are the hedges around them or the birds that fly over them.

Many field names have fallen into disuse or been forgotten, especially where hedgerows have been removed to create larger fields more conducive to modern systems of agriculture, but many are worthy of investigation and resurrection. Although the Women's Institute did a survey of field names in the 1960s there were gaps in this survey and no attempt was made to determine the reason for, or the origin of, the names.

Possibly the best place to start researching field names is the aforesaid Women's Institute survey, for the respective parish, which can be found in the County Records Office along with terriers, old sales brochures, indentures and other similar documents. Local farmers are another source of information, but, particularly where the

ownership of land has changed, they may not be conversant with the old names. In my experience, most farmers are not only interested in knowing the names of their fields but are even more interested in knowing their origin.

Names such as "Home Field", "Top Meadow" or, say, "5 Acre" speak for themselves but others hold secrets waiting to be revealed. "Linnet Close" turned out to be nothing to do with a species of bird but was, in fact, named after a farmer who owned it in the mid 19th century - its previous name still remains a secret waiting to be discovered. Some fields carry the name of former furlongs and can be a vital clue to the location of former furlongs in the medieval open fields, whilst "Mill Close" or "The Maltings", for instance, give clues to the location of once important, but long since lost, buildings in the local community. Others such as "Gravel Hill" or "The Clay" simply refer to the soil conditions of the respective field.

Some have names the origin of which is destined to forever remain a mystery. Regardless of their meaning the names are worth resurrecting for, as said above, they are part of the heritage of the countryside. Surely "The Bargles", whatever that may mean, has got to be better than "7 Acre".

*By John Lacey—Heritage Warden Mowsley*



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## Resources to Enhance Your Activities!

Leicestershire's Open Museum can provide a range of resources to supplement your activities and group's work, ranging from individual natural history specimens to sculptures of animals and complete displays based on environmental issues.

There are three ready made portable displays, from the Moving Objects touring display scheme, that can

supplement the work of youth and adult learning groups, as well as providing information - and a colourful focal point - for special events and venues.



'Nature Observed' encourages exploration of the variety of wildlife in the British countryside and on the coast. As with all Moving Objects displays, there is a wealth of activity ideas to accompany the display, and a handling box to introduce different materials and textures found in the natural world.

'What a Waste?' . Organised as a quiz, this display explores how, throughout history, different materials have been recycled into functional items or art objects. With examples from the

Roman period to the present day, this display is fun, challenging and surprising. The accompanying display screens show what happens to modern waste, and how it can be recycled, making this display ideal as a basis for awareness raising projects.

'JunKit' is a display of artwork made from reclaimed materials created by a community group. It shows how plastic drinks bottles, bags, old zips and other discarded items can be transformed, making this display truly inspirational for groups wishing to undertake art activities based on junk.



'Artworks' is the County Council's loan collection of 20<sup>th</sup> Century and contemporary art.

Among its 900 works, there are sculptures, made from re-cycled materials, and Aboriginal works that provide an opportunity to look at art expressed through a society that has been in harmony with nature until modern times when industry and modern life have impacted.

There are a number of sculptures of animals and birds, and a selection of landscapes and cityscapes, that can be used to explore the conflicts between man and the environment, as well as the need for people to express their connection to the environment through art forms. From abstracted interpretations of landscapes and animals, to naturalistic, realistic renditions, building the use of art into projects and environmental activities is an effective tool to engage people and see how we can view and respond to

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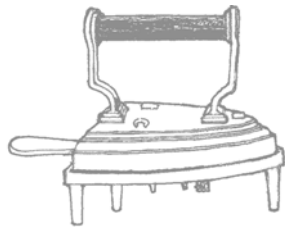
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our environment in different ways.

'Resource Box' is a large collection of museum objects and specimens for loan to community



Resource Box

groups and schools. Covering most subject areas, there is a significant natural history section containing British bird specimens, some mammals and insects. All specimens have died natural deaths and been donated to museums. These specimens are excellent for teaching species recognition, and provide an opportunity to see the size of birds and animals in relation to each other. There are also a number of animal and bird skeletons which help illustrate how creatures have evolved particular strengths and traits to work in their natural habitats. For more details please contact: Resource Box: Alan Joyce, 01455 552834; Artworks: Lisa Webb, lwebb@leics.gov.uk, Moving Objects; Robin Clarke 0116 2670014.

### Harlequin Sighting

An east Asian ladybird known as the harlequin (*harmonia axyridis*) has been recorded for the first time in Rutland. The species was first seen in the UK in September 2004 and sightings have mostly been confined to the south east of England. At the time of writing it had not been recorded in Leicestershire. Volunteer recorder Glenys Panter of Birstall, was in Ketton Churchyard, Rutland, on Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> July when she spotted a ladybird she believed was a harlequin. She returned with a camera and her photograph was verified by experts to be the harlequin ladybird. Glenys reported her finding to the national harlequin survey and also the Community Heritage Initiative, who run a ladybird survey each year. For further details visit the CHI web pages.

## Community Check!

***Are you interested in the environment? Would you like to make a difference in your local community? CommunityCheck is calling for volunteers to join its local programme.***

Using trained volunteers, the CommunityCheck Project helps publicly accessible organisations reduce their environmental impact, and save money, by carrying out free environmental audits. A "check" involves looking at an organisation's waste produced, water used, purchasing, transport and energy efficiency, as well as management issues.

The project provides training to volunteers. After completing a "Check", at a convenient time, volunteers produce a free detailed report containing practical, relevant, recommendations - to help the organisation reduce its environmental impact and save money. Volunteers can get involved in other areas including marketing, fundraising, support and training.



The CommunityCheck Project is funded by the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and the Big Lottery Fund, and has support from both Leicestershire County Council and Leicester City Council. In four years work, the project checked over 120 organisations in Northamptonshire, including libraries, community centres, schools, pubs, hairdressers and churches. If you are interested in becoming a volunteer, or having your organisation checked, please contact Caroline Shannon on 01780 722072.

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## Pondamonium

Field pond records have been sent to Holly Hayes since the early 1990s and Community Heritage Initiative (CHI) has received some records since 2004. Despite the small number of records received, these do provide valuable information on a habitat which is rapidly disappearing in Leicestershire and Rutland. New pond recording volunteers are now being called for.

### Pond loss

Since 1880 over a million ponds in Britain have been lost. This has been due to factors such as land drainage, pollution, and general neglect - with ponds being filled in or left to become overgrown - and changes in agriculture with many field ponds no longer used in farming. Urban housing and road development has also contributed to their decline. In Charnwood for example, ponds have been lost, through lack of management and infilling, with the number left estimated at 300 compared to 1000 in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Nationally, in the late 1990s, there was a reversal in the loss of ponds with a 6% increase due to the creation of new ponds. (*Countryside Survey 2000*. [www.cs2000.org.uk](http://www.cs2000.org.uk)). It is not known if new ponds have the same ecological value as old ponds but, if they are managed effectively as a wildlife habitat, they could potentially have a higher conservation value.

### Why are ponds important?

In the past, ponds have been

undervalued possibly due to a belief that they were a common habitat. Ponds are not protected under wildlife law,

unless they are the site of a protected species such as the great crested newt, although they provide a valuable haven for wildlife. Many plants, invertebrates and amphibians, live in the water, at the water's edge or use it in a stage of their life cycle. Species that depend on ponds, such as the great crested newt, are on Britain's endangered species list.

Ponds are also important for their cultural and historical value.

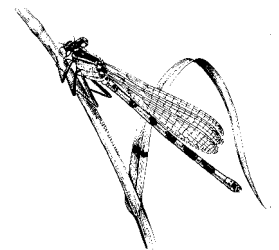
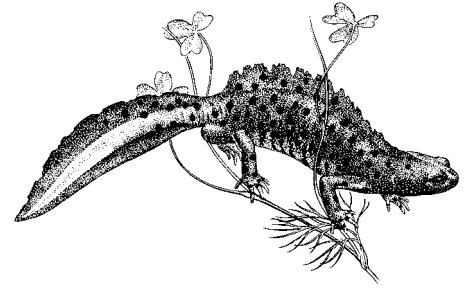
**What is a pond?** - A pond is defined as a body of standing water, 25m<sup>2</sup> to 2 hectares in area, which usually holds water for at least 4 months of the year. The Pondamonium survey asked recorders, primarily, to record details of field ponds but other ponds (excluding garden ponds) could be recorded if they were of obvious potential value to wildlife.

**Features of ponds**—Recorders were asked to note such features as the habitat surrounding the pond, any evidence of management, plants present, type of pond base, and inflows and outflows. All of these can have an effect on the condition of the pond and the wildlife that inhabits it.

### Location of records

Records sent in to the Pondamonium survey have mainly been concentrated in the Charnwood area.

There are few records for Rutland, Melton, Harborough and Hinckley and Bosworth.



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The map indicates those areas for which pond records have been received.



### **Pondamonium results**

Over 50% of the ponds surveyed were surrounded by arable land, hedgerows and/or ditches, 2% were surrounded by woodland, one was near a main road and another was located next to a hay meadow.

Three ponds in the Rothley area were recorded as lost. A new pond was recorded in the Mowsley area which is being created as part of a Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) Stewardship scheme.

The survey results showed that 7% of ponds had marginal tall plants, 1% had either submerged, or floating plants, and 2% had emergent plants. Few reported duckweed or algae but moss on pond banks was common.

Pond vegetation provides food and shelter for wildlife. Emergent plants grow in the shallow margins of the pond near the water's edge, and species, such as yellow iris, have erect stems and leaves which emerge above the water's surface. Dragon fly nymphs use the tall stems of these plants to climb out of the water before they become adults. These plants also provide shelter and cover for wildlife.

Submerged species, such as water-milfoil and hornwort, grow completely

under the water and are rooted to the substrate. These are essential to a pond as they remove excess nutrients and supply the oxygen that pond animals need. There are two types of floating plants; those that float freely on the surface such as the water soldier, and those that are rooted in deep water with their leaves floating on the surface, such as the white water lily and crowfoot. Both types provide shade for pond life and the water below, reducing the build-up of algae, and are also used, by a number of insects, as platforms for mating.

The commonest pond base recorded was one of decomposing leaves and twigs, which may mean that these ponds, if they are not effectively managed, will become silted up and no longer remain a standing water habitat.

Recorders reported some ponds drying out. This is not a problem providing it is due to dry weather and not due to land drainage or water abstraction. Many ponds will dry out during the summer and research has shown this causes little or no damage to wildlife. Temporary ponds regularly dry out but are a valuable habitat for invertebrates.

### **Ponds for the future**

Due to the low number of records received we do not yet have a full picture of the number and condition of field ponds in Leicestershire and Rutland. One of the best ways of preventing the further loss of ponds in Leicestershire and Rutland, and protecting the future of wildlife that benefits from their existence, is to join in with a local survey such as Pondamonium.

*For further information about ponds and their management visit the Pond Conservation Trust at [www.pondtrust.org.uk](http://www.pondtrust.org.uk). Remember we need more records and the Pondamonium survey forms are easy to use so anyone young or old can take part. They can be downloaded at [www.leics.gov.uk/celebrating\\_wildlife](http://www.leics.gov.uk/celebrating_wildlife) or are available from CHI.*



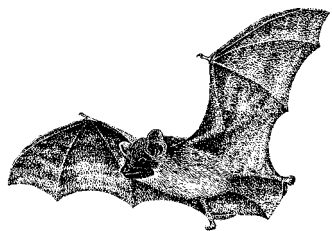
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## Village Bat Project



Leicestershire and Rutland Bat Group (LRBG) has been awarded £4,600 to develop conservation and recording skills among members and the general public. £3,477

has come from the Better Communities Award, which is a partnership between Leicestershire County Council, The Learning and Skills Council and Leicestershire Rural Partnership. A further £500 has been awarded by a small local charity, The Ken Chamberlain Trust. Additional support is being given by the Community Heritage Initiative (CHI), as part of their work to help local natural history groups develop new programmes.

One of the first actions under the project will be the acquisition of equipment, including a laptop computer and AV projector; bat detectors and sound analysis software; and new display boards. As part of their contribution to the project CHI is helping the Group put together a new website, new full colour leaflet, displays for the new boards, and local information leaflets, with LRBG providing text. The Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) has agreed to let LRBG use images of bats, looking cute and friendly, from their photographic library.

All this is aimed at raising the profile of both the bat group and bat issues generally, and bringing a wider range of people into recording and conserving bats through our new Village Bats project. Training workshops are being held in Leicestershire and Rutland to train people in basic bat recording, and to encourage them to take part in the Bat Conservation Trust's National Bat Monitoring Programme. The workshops include some basic information on bat ecology and conservation, habitat preferences, how to

search for bat droppings in churches and how to record bats and roosts.

Anyone interested in attending a bat training workshop in September should contact the CHI.

In addition as part of the project the Group has hosted a BCT bat detector workshop in the summer. This has begun training volunteers who want to know more about bats or go on to get a licence.

LRBG are very grateful to Better Communities Award and Ken Chamberlain Trust and excited about working with all of the new volunteers.

Jenny Harris, Co-ordinator, LRBG

## Group Training

***Ever thought about setting up a new community group but been put off by the number of things to consider?***

A free training session is on offer on Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> September, 7.30pm at The Coplow Centre, Billesdon, which will help you get started.

'Setting up a Community Group' is being organised by the Community Heritage Initiative and run by experts from South Leicestershire Council for Voluntary Service (SLCVS). This session is the first of two which will provide a basic guide to setting up and developing a community group from scratch.

The second session on "Developing our Group" is at North Kilworth Village Hall on 17<sup>th</sup> October. This will provide lots of tips and advice on how to deal with matters such as the complex issues of funding and management.

**To book free places call CHI on the number below.**



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## Flower Power

The Heritage Lottery Fund has awarded a grant of £50,000 to the Leicestershire and Rutland Federation of Women's Institutes to enable them to conduct a Wild Flower survey during 2007. W.I. members, and other interested groups, will be hunting for 12 wild flowers, which are good habitat indicators, recording their distribution across the two counties. The project is not just open to W.I. members, but other community groups, schools, Heritage Wardens and interested individuals who want to join the hunt for the flowers across the seasons, starting next spring.



The rights of way network will be used to look for flowers throughout 2007, and with permission of land owners it is hoped to be able to access other areas normally off limits.

Volunteers will also note the dates when they found the chosen species in flower, which includes species such as primrose, cowslip and bluebell, as well as flowers that bloom later in the year, such as meadowsweet, ragged robin and harebell.

All the flowers chosen, with help from local conservationists, are good habitat indicators and will help produce records on the plants distribution and monitor the state of local biodiversity and the countryside. The project is also supported by other events and activities which will help local people appreciate and celebrate this aspect of their natural heritage.

The Heritage Lottery Grant will fund training courses to raise the skills of participants, and to celebrate our wild flower heritage through traditional and modern crafts. It will also be used to digitise the results,

making the survey available to everyone on the web. The resulting surveys will be part of a major display in 2008, including competitions on a wild flower theme.



Additional support from the Better Communities Awards, which is supported by Leicestershire County Council, the Learning and Skills Council and Leicestershire Rural Partnership has allowed key volunteers and the WIs wider membership to be trained in ICT, giving them the necessary skills to run and develop this large programme of activities across the coming years.

The Ken Chamberlain Trust, which is supported by Severn Trent Water, has also supported the project with an award of £1000 to help the WI launch the survey. This is one of two special awards made each year for outstanding projects. The grant allowed the W.I. to produce an introductory pack, which includes a sixteen-page A5 full-colour printed booklet, illustrating the flowers to be surveyed, together with explanatory material. The booklet will also be available via the internet in coming months from the Community Heritage Initiative projects pages (see below).

This is the fifth Federation survey to be undertaken. Previous surveys have covered: field names (1968), church yards & burial grounds (1981) and two countryside surveys (1978 and 1996). The Holly Hayes Environment and Heritage Resources Centre will be giving ongoing advice on the running of the project, and will take on the responsibility of archiving the work when completed.

*For further information contact Ruth Fenney, at the Leicestershire and Rutland Federation of W.I.s, 135, Loughborough Road, Leicester LE4 5LQ 0116 266 1342 email wihouseleics@aol.com*

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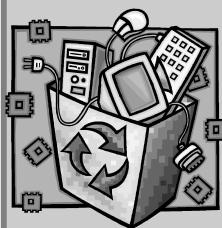
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## Grants and Funding

Funds are available to encourage groups in Leicestershire and Rutland to make their projects greener thanks to continued support from Severn Trent Water. The **Ken Chamberlain Trust (KCT)** is offering grants of up to £500 to enable groups to think green before carrying out refurbishment work or starting a conservation project.

Ken Chamberlain was a well-known Leicester conservationist, known to many as the 'bird box man' because he built more than 20,000 bird boxes and the awards were set up in his memory, in recognition of his work to improve the environment.



KCT provides grants to groups needing extra cash to incorporate environmental best practice to make their projects more sustainable. These could include funding to allow your project to use

more expensive environmentally friendly paints, support to allow your project to purchase energy saving products, financial assistance for secure cycle parking or funds toward the cost of planting a wildlife area with native species.

In particular KCT recognise that sometimes environmentally-friendly materials can be more costly but these

awards can provide the extra cash to make it green. It could be that a residents' group wants to use environmentally-friendly materials to refurbish their meeting room or introduce energy-saving products. The idea is to encourage groups to consider best environmental practice wherever possible. There are also two awards of up to £1,000 each year for larger-scale projects.

To apply for an application form in the first instance to Ken Chamberlain Trust, PO Box 6862, Loughborough LE113WJ or visit the website [www.kenchamberlaintrust.org.uk](http://www.kenchamberlaintrust.org.uk)

**Awards for All:** Grants are now available from £300 to £10,000 from Awards for All. Grants are available to community groups but some procedures have changed:

1. All documents must match (no differences in group names) eg name of group applying, constitution, bank account
2. Three months' worth of bank statements (not just one)
3. A short form signed by the bank to confirm the account details (so we know the account is genuine)
4. A referee from our list (not just a friend of a committee member, for example).

For more information, please call the Big Lottery Fund advice line: 0845 4 10 20 30 For application packs call 0845 600 2040 or visit [www.awardsforall.org.uk](http://www.awardsforall.org.uk) How to Apply.

### ABOUT BRANCHLINE

Branchline is produced by Leicestershire County Council's Holly Hayes Environment & Heritage Resources Centre and is the newsletter for the Community Heritage Initiative (CHI), 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 Holly Hayes (details below), or e-mail them to [chi@leics.gov.uk](mailto:chi@leics.gov.uk). Articles are welcome and **the deadline for the Winter 2006 Edition is November 1st 2006.**

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



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