

This year's cold snap seemed to take everyone by surprise. For many children it was their first experience of a long cold spell and at least one school allowed children out in the snow at playtime - good for them. For



Earthwatcher it brought back memories of 1947 when snow lay thick for weeks not days. Two things were missing though. First was the sight of people out with a shovel clearing snow off their bit of pavement. Second was the sound -

clickety click, of vehicles passing with snow chains on. These days folk complain about the lack of gritting lorries when the best solution is a set of chains kept in readiness for a white out.

The cold spell happened to coincide with **Earthwatcher** going solar. As a result with the installers coming from the other side of the Pennines, it was not surprising the job took twice as long as planned. However by Friday the hi-tech solar collectors were in place on the roof and the new storage tank was in the airing cupboard. Since then the system has generated most of the hot water for daytime needs but is not designed to provide central heating. In the summer it should be possible to switch the gas boiler off most of the time. OK it was expensive to install but if gas bills are halved that's better than 1% interest at the bank - and think of the CO₂ not going into the atmosphere. The installers were first class and the back up so far has been great. For further information and guided tours contact **Earthwatcher** on 01924 210781. By the way spotting solar panels in Wrenthorpe could be a wild goose chase but a German friend tells me that back home whole streets have them.

PS And finally the **WRENS** committee meets at 7.30pm every third Thursday of the month. At the moment we meet in the Bay Horse but hope to return to the Valley Community Centre once it has been refurbished. Why not join us, or contact the secretary, Colin Firth on 01924 781546 with anything you would like us to discuss or via the Wrenthorpe website <http://www.wrenthorpe.org.uk/>

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Wrenthorpe Environmental Society Newsletter 2009

Dear members

This is what you have been waiting for- your Wrens newsletter, which tells you what your committee has been doing on behalf of our local environment. I hope their efforts meet with your approval. After all you elected them and you pay your subs. But first here are the details of the AGM. Do come along and take this opportunity to have your say.

The rest of this newsletter tells you



The annual general meeting of Wrenthorpe Environmental Society will be held on WEDNESDAY 25TH March at 7.15 pm in Wrenthorpe Village Hall. It will be followed by a presentation by the Thurlstone Owl Sanctuary which includes live owls, to which non-members are welcome at a cost of £2 which is equivalent to the annual WRENS subscription. Older children are also invited. There will be time for discussion and free drinks and nibbles will be served.

more about the main work your committee has been busy with this year but there was not space for everything. If you have any thoughts about new projects for the future, do contact us and we will put it on our action plan which we use at the regular committee meetings. Which reminds me we are always keen to introduce new members onto the committee-why not offer your services?

Colin Firth, WRENS secretary

Litter Picking -it's the new cool!

In Wrenthorpe we are very fortunate to have access to open countryside, parkland, meadows and lagoons. Many people exercise themselves and their animals, play football and just enjoy these facilities. Unfortunately some people drop litter in these areas which detracts from the beauty of the surroundings and can be harmful to wild life.

As part of their responsibility to care for our community Wrenthorpe Methodist Church members offered to undertake litter picking sessions in particular areas of the village in partnership with WRENS who already provided litter picking in the village centre through WRENCARE. During the past year members of Wrenthorpe Methodist Church have organised litter picking supported by WRENS members and Wakefield MDC who provided litter picking equipment and black plastic bin bags and the services of their rapid response team to dispose of the bags of collected litter and other rubbish, an excellent example of partnership in action for the environment.



Litter picking has been undertaken on Lindale Lane and Lindale Hill and in Wrenthorpe Park, Alverthorpe Meadows and the Lagoon area where people using the area were also invited to join us by filling a bin bag as they walked. A small group of young lads who were in the meadows asked what we were doing and joined in to work hard alongside us. Three pick-up trucks full of litter and rubbish were collected and disposed of.

We are now in a new year and litter and rubbish is again spoiling our

surroundings. Our next litter picking session is planned for Saturday March 21st starting at 10.00am on Lindale Lane and Lindale Hill. If you would like to join us just turn up or contact Gwyneth on 01924 370 302.

Gwyneth Dixon

Wrenthorpe Park and Alverthorpe Meadows Improvement Project

Wrenthorpe Environmental Society has been working over the last two years on the first part of a project

to improve some parts of the park and meadows.

Work carried out over previous years had defined areas ripe for improvement, and these were carried forward into the present project.

Earthwatcher is pleased to report that all three Wrenthorpe schools (Jerry Clay Lane, Wrenthorpe, and the hospital school) now have gardens in which pupils can learn how to grow their own food and even go on to cook it in the school kitchens. It may be that they would welcome plants or a little bit of support from local gardeners. Why not contact them and offer your help?

Bulb Planting - brightening up forgotten corners

Around the time that this newsletter is published there should be evidence of some hard work done by Wrens during the autumn. We had ordered 5,000 daffodil bulbs that then had to be planted!

Two committee members collected the bulbs from Wyevale Garden Centre at Carr Gate, who had kindly given us a good discount and ordered special bulbs for us.



The first daffodil planting took place at Bragg Lane End, on 26th October, which fortunately was a decent day. Our group of volunteers, which included committee members and dads, mums, grandmas and children planted about 3,500 bulbs into two areas in the grass.

The following Sunday saw another stint of planting. On this occasion we met on Bradford Road near the turn off to Carr Gate. Here we planted on both sides of the road and on the banking near to the "Wrenthorpe" sign where Wrens had planted daffodils some years ago. The last planting of the daffodils took place on November 9th on Wrenthorpe Lane opposite Sunnyhill Stores and about 400 bulbs were placed on the grass at both sides of Sunnyhill Crescent.

We have noticed with horror that one of these areas has just been dug up! We hope that the workmen put everything back and that the bulbs survive. (February 2009)

Monday 27th October, which fell in school half term, saw us planting yet again! This time the venue was in Wrenthorpe Park near to the Lagoon. On this occasion we were planting native British bulbs as this area had been designated a new Local Nature Reserve. Supporters once again joined committee members in planting English bluebells, wild native daffodils, native single snowdrops and cowslips. As you walk your dog around by the lagoon, or whilst just enjoying the peace of the park and meadows keep a look out for these plants amongst the trees above the lagoon towards Silcoates Street.

Very many thanks to all those people who supported us by helping to plant during these events. We hope all residents of Wrenthorpe and beyond will enjoy a splash of colour in our environment this year and for many years to come.

Liz Firth

WRENS actively work to conserve and improve the environment of Wrenthorpe, to collaborate with other organisations with similar interests and to increase the awareness and understanding of environmental issues amongst residents. WRENCARE is one of many successful achievements by WRENS over the years.

John Coles

Treasure Hunt and Country Walk-fun for all the family

The Treasure Hunt and Country Walk were both held on Sunday 21st September 2008. We were very lucky as the sun decided to shine and it was hot! A total of 108 adults and children took part in the events. The Country Walk started from Wrenthorpe Park at two o'clock and covered a distance of approximately 4.5 miles. 14 adults and nine children set off with maps and quiz sheets and all arrived safely back at the Village Hall having completed the walk and the quiz. The winners of the quiz were "Hayes Desserts" who took home a book token.

The Treasure Hunt started and ended at the Village Hall and was well attended with a total of 85 taking part, forming 19 teams of which approximately half were young children. Each team was given a quiz sheet in rhyming verse, which contained clues to be solved following footpaths in the village. The walking distance was approximately two miles. As the teams arrived back, the children were given a sticker to say they had completed the Treasure Hunt and two chocolate gold coins, which was the "Treasure". The quiz sheets were marked and four teams tied at the end with a total of 41 marks out of 42. The winning teams were "HSM2", "The Smiths", "The Badgers" and "HSM1". All these teams received a book token.



Everyone enjoyed the refreshments provided by Wrens after their exertions!

Liz Firth



In December 2007 a grant of up to £25,000 was obtained from Waste Recycling Environmental Ltd towards the project, dependent on match funding being obtained by WRENS. Waste Recycling Environmental Ltd (with its appropriate acronym of WREN) is an organisation that funds environmental projects through the distribution of landfill tax credits under the 1997 Landfill Tax Act.

During 2008 further funding was obtained from Wakefield MDC and the project was thus able to progress, the contract with WREN being finally signed in January 2009. Working in partnership with Wakefield Council Parks Services the details of the work were defined, and tenders were issued in late 2008.

The situation now (mid February 2009) is that work is progressing, with completion expected by the end of March 2009.

So what changes can anyone visiting the park and meadows expect to see?

1. The present informal entrance to the park through the hedge opposite Valley Drive has been made a permanent path with steps down from Wrenthorpe Road.
2. The circular path around the area where the picnic tables are sited is being drained and resurfaced to remove the problem of flooding in wet weather.
3. A new surfaced path is being constructed to run down from the Fox Lane entrance to join the main path through the park and meadows.
4. A new path and boardwalk are being fitted at the lagoon, along with two dipping platforms from which it will be possible to discover the natural life of the lagoon waters. There will be some seating at the end of the boardwalk.

A survey recently conducted by Earthwatcher of nine year olds' feelings about the park and Alverthorpe Meadows reveals that they go there mostly for play, exercise and fresh air and dog walking. They especially like the open spaces and the playground. WRENS have also surveyed older peoples' views and will be carrying out another survey once the improvements in the park are finished. Watch out for the results or better still let us know what you think about what has been done.

5.The existing bridge crossing Balne Beck near the lagoons has been refitted to remove the ramps on each side of the bridge. Additional fencing has also been installed.

6.Fencing alongside the beck at the main entrance from Wrenthorpe Park into the meadows has been erected.

7.Fingerpost signs will be erected at various points within the park/meadows area.

8.Some seats will be fitted in the Local Nature Reserve area of the meadows.

9.Information boards are to be fitted at the Wrenthorpe Park car park, Meadow Lane and Hornbeam Avenue entrances, and near the lagoons.

As well as the information boards WRENS are having placed in the park and meadows, there will also be signs fitted by Wakefield Council Countryside Conservation Services unit, following the Alverthorpe and Wrenthorpe Meadows

Wildlife experience of the year for Earthwatcher was a close view of a merlin in the snow bringing down a small bird. Merlins are our smallest bird of prey and a comparative rarity but you are most likely to see them in winter when they move down from the uplands. Earthwatcher reported the sighting to the RSPB at Fairburn Ings. If you see an unusual bird report it to the Fairburn Ings on 01977 603 796 or our local RSPB rep. On 01484 861 148. By the way the name has nothing to do with the Arthurian magician! It comes from an old French name, esmerillon.

area being designated a Local Nature Reserve in October 2008.

As part of our original plans it was intended that a path and steps should replace the present rough path that goes up from the outflow end of the lagoon to the main path running between Hornbeam Avenue and Meadow Lane. Unfortunately it has not been possible to complete this work, as the Environment Agency (EA) will be carrying out extensive works this year around the outflow as part of flood relief work for Wakefield. If we had fitted the path and steps they would have been destroyed by the EA work.

It has not been possible to include all our original ideas into this tranche of improvements, but it is hoped that the start we have made can be continued in the future, assuming sufficient funding can be obtained.

Colin Firth

WRENCARE celebrates a decade of litter clearance in the centre of Wrenthorpe.

An ambitious partnership initiative was set up in March 1999 between the Wrenthorpe Environmental Society (WRENS) and local businesses. Since then the partnership, along with the dedication of Brian Collinson has made it possible to clear litter from the centre of the village on a twice weekly basis.

The WRENCARE scheme is administered by Wrens but it is the generosity of The New Wheel, The New Pot Oil, Wrenthorpe Community Association, Wrenthorpe Post Office, Sax for Hair and the South West Yorkshire MH NHS Trust which funds around 130 hours a year for clearing litter from the central roads, pavements, car parks and village green areas.

Armed with bin bag, litter picker and weatherproof hi-vis jacket, Brian estimates that he walks around 2½ miles and amasses almost a bin bag of rubbish per week. Over the decade he has walked around 1250 miles (2000km) and collected approximately 500 bags of rubbish - a marathon in anyone's eyes! The various discarded items such as paper, bottles, cans, cigarette ends are only a few of the array of objects which do not escape Brian's eagle eye. He has also been able to report damage, vandalism, drug dealing or other unusual activities during his work. Brian adds that he never gets bored of the job come rain or shine and chats to many passers-by who know him or are curious to know what he's doing. Many express their gratitude for his community work and concern for his whereabouts when he's on holiday and an unfamiliar 'stand-in' is seen.



The WRENCARE scheme received official recognition on the 19th October 2004, when Wakefield District Environmental Action Forum awarded WRENS the WMDC Anti Litter Cup in the 2004 Care for your Town/Village Competition. First awarded in 1978, this honour has been won previously by several Parish Councils, two other environmental groups and a school. This was a sterling tribute to the WRENCARE scheme in its fifth year.