

# riverGuardian

The newsletter of the River Colne Project

This River Guardian has been designed as a summary of what has been achieved during Phase two of the River Project.

Phase two of the Project has accomplished much in the past 18 months since Mick Smith started in February 2004 as the new Project Officer. Our members database has grown to over 300 people, this success and high regard for the Project reflects the varied and high quality work programme delivered during the period and the publicity the project has received.



National Moth Night May 2004



The River Colne in winter

As well as the main projects (see overleaf), many smaller schemes and events have been carried out, encompassing a huge range of topics and interests. These have encouraged community participation and increased the project's profile, and have included tree planting, dry stone walling and various other practical projects, a moth night, dawn chorus walks, dragonfly walks, bird slide shows and wildlife gardening, as well as, a winter wildlife wonderland event and a series of wildlife workshops.

During the year Mick has run three very well attended River Forum public meetings. These continue to increase awareness of the project and act as a key focal point for people who want to keep up to date with what is going on and to suggest future projects. Because there is so much support for the project and a strong commitment to continue the work of the past four years, we have submitted funding applications to continue the project for as long as possible. We are hopeful that the River Project will continue to deliver successful and worthwhile projects in the valley over the next few years.

## Doing all we can to continue

In July we received disappointing news that our core funding applications were rejected. In order to extend the life of the project and to give the Project time to attract further funds, Mick suggested he reduced his hours to give the Project life until Christmas. He will continue to run the projects already set within his work program but also apply for additional funding. In the two days Mick is not working for the River Project he will be setting up a Countryside Skills and Wildlife

Gardening business. The type of work he carries out is varied, but includes creating nature areas for schools; habitat management and general gardening with a wildlife theme.



Mammals of Merrydale June 2005, public event

# Mick's Report - How the

## Sculpture Trail

We have delivered a series of community consultation workshops to develop the initial themes and ideas for a Sculpture Trail in the Colne Valley, mainly inspired and in places physically related to the river. Four local school workshops (Marsden Junior Sch., Linthwaite Clough Junior and Early Years Sch., Wellhouse Junior and Infant Sch. and Crow Lane Junior, Infant and Nursery Sch.) and two community workshops, one of which targeted young people, ran successfully last summer. The aim was to inspire and enthuse attendees about their local area and to create themes and ideas for the Trail. The workshops were a huge success and some fantastic ideas and comments arose from them. The outcomes of the workshops: photos, poems and art pieces, were then worked with and an exhibition produced, which toured the valley. An accompanying free leaflet has also been produced.



**Community Workshop, Slaithwaite  
Working on ideas for the Sculpture Trail**

A proposed route for the Sculpture Trail has been developed using the Huddersfield Narrow Canal towpath as a spine with small circular routes off it, linking the sculptures and wider green spaces.

We have just received core funding from the Arts Council - Yorkshire, to employ a part-time Project Manager to develop and deliver the Colne Valley Sculpture Trail. The Officer will hopefully be in place by November working alongside Mick. Particular thanks to Cate Clarke for this success.

## Improving footpath access

We have improved footpath access to and along the river in a number of locations in the Colne Valley. An improved footpath network has meant that more people have been able to enjoy the river.

In association with Environmental Alliance through their River Corridor Greenways Project a 700m circular route has been created at Titanic Mill, designed to be accessible to less able individuals. This route is the largest length of public footpath along the river and is now a clear, hard surfaced path that gives you the opportunity to see kingfishers, dippers and herons.

A series of other smaller footpath improvements have been carried out with the help of volunteers and community groups.



**Footpath improvements linking Manchester rd to the river, through Slaithwaite Spa.**

## ***Naming the River Project***

**Many centuries ago, the river Colne was the reason settlers decided to live and work in the Colne Valley. Ever since then and up to the present day it has been a source of life. Today it is disappointing to think that there are no signs along the river telling residents or visitors they are crossing this important and significant river. We are about to change that fact. The River Project has secured funding from the Local Heritage Initiative to fabricate four name plaques to be erected by the river on the main road crossings in Marsden, Slaithwaite, Linthwaite and Milnsbridge. The plaques will be fabricated in spray painted, galvanised steel for durability and will include elements of the rivers rich history. There will be some design elements in common for each of the signs, but there will also be details unique to each village.**

# projects have progressed

## Riverside improvement projects



**Dry stonewall being restored by Mick and volunteers**

**A number of riverside sites within the valley have been improved.**

### **Slaithwaite Spa Recreation Ground**

In its heyday at the turn of the 20th Century, people from all over the area would come and walk around the beautifully laid out gardens, play tennis or go swimming in the spa pool, naturally fed from mineral water springs issuing in the river. There is a strong sense of local pride around the site and so the River Project helped form the Friends of Slaithwaite Spa. In conjunction with the FofSS and Kirklees Leisure Services a management programme has been agreed. Funding from BTCV's People's Place's grant scheme, Kirklees Rights of Way Department and the Colne Valley Area Committee allowed work to begin. Projects have included, footpath improvements, repairing the safety fence and restoring sections of the dry stone walls. We have planted 300 wildflower plug plants, 100 native trees and shrubs, cleared areas of rubbish,

installed benches and carried out essential habitat management.

### **Uppermills, Slaithwaite**

Working with Kirklees Council Highways department, mill owner Max Royd and volunteers, a severely flood damaged footbridge crossing the river was restored. Surrounding land was landscaped to create a natural earth bund to stop future flooding of the adjoining factories. The earth bund was sown with a native wildflower mix which has created a haven for butterflies, bees and other insects.

### **Other Riverside improvement projects**

The River Colne Project has carried out a large range of smaller environmental improvement projects with volunteers throughout the valley. These have included, removing invasive weed species such as Japanese Knotweed and Himalayan Balsam from a number of sites along the river, clearing encroaching rhododendron to allow light to get to native heather species, regular litter picks and rubbish removals as well as installing bird boxes, surveying butterflies and dragonflies and creating a community wildlife garden.



**1 of 3 new benches along the river**



**Removing Rhododendron**



**Linthwaite 17th Cubs clearing Himalayan Balsam**

September 2005

# Surveying Historic Iron Field Gates

This has been a hugely popular and very exciting project. Iron Field Gates are a key component of the heritage of the Colne Valley.



We worked with West Yorkshire Archaeological Services (WYAS) to make this project as productive and useful as possible. A training session for volunteer surveyors ran in September 2004. With 25 pre-determined areas, split between 21 volunteers, who then spent the next 6 weeks surveying the turn-of-the-19th century gates in their area. Survey records were collated and analysed by WYAS who have produced a valuable and detailed report of the findings



**As a celebration of the project, a Feature Gate has been restored and hung by the River Colne Project offices in the centre of Slaithwaite.**

From this damaged, neglected, rusty gate.....



.....to this wonderful Feature Gate.

## The Future of the River Colne Project

The River Project is dedicated to working with volunteers and community groups to deliver projects that will enhance the environment of the Colne Valley for everyone. We are in the process of securing funds to develop the Project into the next phase. We want to build on the work carried out in previous phases and to focus on managing the green spaces in the Colne Valley for people and for wildlife.

For further information please feel free to contact

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