



# End of Year Report

## November 2001

Welcome to the second annual review of progress on the Ridge. Due to the unpredictability of our wonderful climate, and other significant events, a few sessions had to be changed at the last minute and some cancelled altogether. Therefore, I feel it is easier to review the various tasks on a month-by-month basis, rather than a general overview of the various habits as in last year's report.

### November 2000

The 'official' monthly session (path resurfacing) fell before the last AGM and was covered in 2000's report. However, soon after the AGM, we received the excellent news that work on the wheelchair path was to commence later in the month. As this was to be a totally new path, rather than upgrading an existing one, some preparation work was required.

Therefore, a small number of members met mid-week to define the line of the proposed path, by strimming back the grass, removing a small number of bushes and lopping off some branches, in readiness for construction work to commence.

### December

This was originally planned as a tree maintenance session, but with the completion of our wheelchair route, the focus of the session had to be changed at short notice. Our attention therefore turned to re-landscaping the edges of the path where the spoil had been dumped during the construction work. This involved the levelling and re-distribution of approximately 35 cubic yards of spoil, to allow existing vegetation chance to grow back.

An excellent turnout (as usual), plus the added bonus of 7 members of the local Duke of Edinburgh (DofE) Group, meant that by the end of the session the majority of the work had been completed. The majority of the soil had been spread thinly over a wide area and reclaimed turf was replaced on bare ground. A small number of members met the following Sunday to complete the small amount of tidying work that remained.

Over the winter months, the expanse of bare ground and newness of the path attracted some negative comments from some site users. The churned-up area at the Sandy Lane access point, cause by numerous attempts to remove the skip from the previous mowing session, further added to the eyesore. However nature, when left to its own devices, will quickly reclaim bare ground and by mid-July 2001, all the disturbed ground had fully grown over, with the path subtly blending into the landscape. In addition, the disturbance enabled many long-dormant seeds, already present in the soil, to germinate - resulting in 8 new species being recorded.

### January 2001

The original plan was to commence widening the feint path crossing the grassland to the rear of Cranston Road, but the cold weather kept many members away and rendered the ground

too hard to dig. The few who attended set about tidying an area below the main summit where a burnt car had been removed previously. The ground was dug over to bury any small debris and several large old branches positioned over the patch to limit disturbance while the vegetation grew back.

With some time to spare, we also managed to remove the accumulation of compressed dead leaves from the steps at the top of the bridleway, as well as give the site a litter-pick.

This was the last stolen car to enter this part of the Ridge, but there have been 2 on the eastern section earlier this year. To combat this threat, Matthew Hart (a local DofE candidate) and I have installed two bollards at the Brookside access and a further one on Thoresby Road. In addition, Broxtowe BC has secured all possible access on the east side. I hope that this work has made the whole Ridge secure from further occurrences (touch wood!) - in the last incident the car was burnt on the roadside.

### February

The work session, rescheduled from January, was once again postponed as the site was now under a layer of snow (as well as being frozen).

### March

Finally, two months later than planned, conditions were perfect to start work on improving the path across the grassland. Experiments undertaken in February 2000 showed that simply digging away the turf layer would leave a stable earth path, without the need to apply a formal surface - although this may be considered appropriate at a later date.

Armed with spades, rakes and wheelbarrows we set about removing turf to widen the path to approximately 3ft. The surface was then dug over, levelled off and re-compacted. All the spoil was used to 'rough landscape' some of the hummocks of overgrown garden rubbish along the boundary fence. At the end of the morning, we had created 65yds of new wide stable path.

### April

Due to the foot and mouth epidemic across the country, it was not possible to organise a visit to another site, and so the 'spare day' was used to finish off the path widening from the previous month. During this session we completed the project, adding another 60yds to the path.

### May

With the vegetation growing once again, this session saw us working in the wooded area adjacent to Thoresby Road. As with previous sessions, the focus was to assist the numerous young trees by reducing competition from fast growing grasses.

Vegetation was removed from around the bases and dead leaves (freely available on site) were then used as a mulch to stop the grasses re-colonising, as well as providing essential nutrients for the young trees. Many seedlings had the lower side branches pruned in order to promote straight strong growth.

### June

This was our third year of bracken control in the glade between the two outcrops and I believe that the fight is slowly being won. The Bracken is not as high as our very first session, and nowhere near as dense. We also have a new ally in the form of the brushcutter.

This work went exceedingly well and the usual area was completed in record time. We were also able to attack numerous other patches throughout the site. The lower section was left to provide cover for our resident family of Foxes, who have now opened up a second den elsewhere.

## July

On a wonderfully sunny day the group, once more, gathered to deal with Rosebay Willowherb and Nettles. Both are excellent at rapidly colonising new areas, but are also of conservation value, so control is always needed.

This was achieved by pulling up the Rosebay after flowering, but before setting seed. Selected areas of Nettle were cut down using the brushcutter, with others being left to limit access and provide cover for wildlife.

Between mid-June and the end of July, there was a spate of fires on in the area between the two outcrops. As Rosebay is partial to colonising burnt ground (hence its other name of 'fireweed'), there may be even more to deal with next year!

## August

Due to very heavy rain on the day, the second Bracken bash was cancelled.

## September

Once again it was time to manage the grassland. In a change from previous years a smaller area was mown with some long grass deliberately left to provide winter cover for wildlife. In addition, a different mower was used resulting in the grass being cut higher than usual, and we were fortunate to have an ample supply of 'big bags' for moving the cuttings.

These factors, coupled to the usual excellent turnout, resulted in all the raking being easily completed by mid afternoon on the Saturday. Which left the Sunday session free to undertake the bracken bashing session that was cancelled in August. Our thanks to Broxtowe Council and the BTCV for their usual support and assistance with this annual mowing project.

Surveys of the grassland conducted over summer, show that those species of herb already present are beginning to become established over wider areas - this indicates that the management is slowly starting to take effect.

Two experiments are currently being undertaken to ascertain future methods of additional Bracken control. One involves a small area being thoroughly dug over to bury the thick mulch layer and expose the rhizomes to frost. Another area has simply had a deep raking to remove the deep layer of accumulated dead vegetation. The results will not be known until summer 2002.

## October

Yet another last minute cancellation, once again due to very heavy rain. However those who braved the pouring rain agreed to reschedule for the following week, providing the weather was more clement.

The following Sunday was warm and sunny enabling the group to restore a 40yd section of 6ft wide path near the top of Brookside Avenue. The work involved removal of a large amount of vegetation and washed down sand - approximately 5 cubic yards. At the end of the session the original surface had been uncovered, leaving a safe path.

A small amount of further removal and landscaping work is still required to finish off, which will take place later this month. The path will be monitored over the next few months to determine if a new top dressing is required - this will be installed in spring 2002, if needed.

To prevent more sand being washed down in the future, two diverters have been installed on the steep path leading down from the main outcrop, and reclaimed turf from the excavations has been used to fill in a deep gully adjacent to this path.

### General

Due to Wollaton Park being closed for the most part of the year, there appears to have been a general increase in visitors to the Ridge, mainly teenagers and dog walkers. Hence, dog faeces and litter have increased accordingly. Although little can be done about anti-social dog owners, individual members have kept on top of the litter as it occurred.

Also during summer, in addition the numerous fires, the outcrop adjacent to the Bridleway attracted the attention of the mindless and several patches of illegible graffiti appeared. The decision was taken to leave it alone, as any attempt to remove it would damage the rock face and/or possibly attract more 'art work'. Thanks to the British climate it is starting to fade nicely.

Considering the amount of cancellations, postponements and last minute changes that have been necessary over the year, we have somehow managed to complete the vast majority of tasks in the annual work plan, with only last December's tree maintenance not undertaken. This remarkable feat is purely down to the commitment, enthusiasm and hard work of the group members. I would personally like to thank everyone for their efforts in the practical management work over the last year and look forward to continuing the good work in the future.

I would also like to thank Matthew Hart for his help over the last year. For part of his Silver DofE award, Matt has assisted me in a numerous important tasks throughout the site, involving general maintenance and preparation work for the Sunday sessions.

### And Finally...

We have now joined the information technology bandwagon! For those of you blessed/cursed (delete as applicable) with access to the Internet, you can now visit our brand new website at [www.bramcote-ridge.org.uk](http://www.bramcote-ridge.org.uk).