



# WINTER NEWSLETTER

## FRIENDS OF BRAMCOTE RIDGE

Welcome to this first issue of our new style newsletter. These will be issued quarterly and keep you informed about what is happening on the ridge. We hope you find this informative and would welcome your opinions on its content.

### **SANDY LANE LOCAL NATURE RESERVE HEDGE LAYING AND GRASSLAND RESTORATION**

A section of very old hawthorn hedge on one side of the main path not far beyond the play area has been layered and the area of bracken and many of the trees behind this hedge have been cleared. This work began about six weeks ago and when it started our chief news reporter Norman went along and this is his report.

“It was a warm sunny day on the 27<sup>th</sup> of November and the sound of a chain saw from beyond the playground area announced the arrival of Chris Dean and his assistant Liam. Christopher is a champion hedge layer from Derbyshire and he was soon at work demonstrating his skill and expertise. He trained at Broomfield Agricultural College and qualified in Countryside Management and Conservation and also in tree surgery. Soon after leaving college he was asked to lay a hedge and agreed to give it a try. The supplier of stakes happened to be a four times champion and was so impressed that he persuaded Chris to enter a competition that he duly won. Since then he has won many matches and his work can be found in many areas of Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire.

Like all experts Christopher makes the job look easy. He looks at the tall growth and selects a branch to fell. He uses a chain saw to slice at an angle through three quarters of the trunk at the base. He then pulls this trunk towards the ground making sure it does not snap. This is laid as the base and further trunks are felled in the same fashion to rest on top of each other. Unnecessary growth is removed with a billhook and axe and finally stakes are hammered in to keep the line. New growth is guaranteed providing we keep the weeds down on a regular basis.

Christopher explained that, rather like stone walling, hedge laying varies in different counties depending on livestock, the type of farming and also on the type of existing hedge. Ours is the Derbyshire style! You may have been fortunate enough to see Chris in action but if not hopefully will appreciate his fine work.”

The hedge laying work was completed in ten days and then the Council Tree Department sent two of their team to clear most of the smaller trees and shape some of the more mature ones. A few people have objected to this work and even though the initial work looks drastic the area will be transformed by the end of summer. The restored hedge and more open grassland will be hugely beneficial to nesting song birds, foraging green woodpeckers and several grassland loving species of butterfly like the Small Copper and Common Blue. Cowslips and primroses will be planted in the verge between the laid hedge and the path.

Just before Christmas a “munching monster” machine cleared all the tree debris from the site by shredding everything and grinding it into the ground. A very impressive machine!



There will be more in the next issue on the developments in this area and giving details on the grassland and heath land restoration. Have a look on our web site for more photographs of the work in progress [www.bramcote-ridge.org.uk](http://www.bramcote-ridge.org.uk)

### **WORKING SESSIONS OCTOBER to DECEMBER 2013**

During the last three months we have twice cleared the bridle path of leaves, debris and soil washed down from the hills. Several overhanging branches have been removed, many saplings dug up in Ivy Wood to prevent this returning to the dark and dense area it was 4 years ago, ivy cleared from the black poplar tree, litter cleared every month, some minor paths widened and areas of bramble cleared.

### **SCOUTS, CUBS AND D of E AWARD**

In 2013 we had two very successful events with the local scouts and intend to repeat these this year. We were also joined at our December working session by a group of cubs who swept the steps leading from Thoresby Rd and also cut back bramble.

Sam, who came to our June working session initially for three months as part of his Duke of Edinburgh bronze award application, has continued to work with us as he enjoys it so much and is now a paid up member of our group!

### **GRASSLAND AND WILDFLOWER AREAS ON ALEXANDRINA PLANTATION RESERVE**

The Council have mown the grassland areas here and also cleared the two wildflower areas. They will rotovate the wildflower areas in early spring so that we can sow fresh seed a few weeks later and cross our fingers for a colourful display by the end of June.

We are extremely grateful to Broxtowe Borough Council for all its help and support.