

## **Mousehold year end report 2012 to 2013 (draft)**

### **Introduction**

Mousehold Heath covers 184 acres including open areas of lowland heathland, mixed woodland and recreational areas. A works programme is prepared annually in line with the Mousehold Heath management plan.

This plan was recently updated by the Conservators for the period 2013 to 2018 to identify and prioritise works that require implementation in line with changes on the heath since the plan was introduced and changing operating environment including budgetary restraints.

Finances to organise and carry out management works on the heath is provided from the Conservators budget precept on Norwich City Council, which is set in January each year at the same time that the annual works programme is agreed.

### **Work programme activity**

#### **Heath and woodland management**

One of the key objectives highlighted in the management plan and identified as a priority is to address the reduction of open heathland and acid grassland across the whole site, which at the moment is less than 10%.

Our objective is to increase this percentage cover by restoring degenerate areas, by removing scrub encroachment (primary succession) which is the main cause of concern.

Norwich City Council on behalf of the Conservators has secured a grant from the Higher Level Stewardship scheme (HLS) of £30,600 to restore and conserve areas of heathland and acid grassland on the site. This grant will be paid for over a ten year period to support the implementation of Management Plan objectives 7.1 and 8.1.

Presently, large areas of heathland are in poor condition. The HLS Restoration of Lowland Heath Option is aimed at restoration of habitats that are not currently in good/favourable condition. The HLS funding 'Indicators of Success' state that by year 5 of the agreement, cover of dwarf shrubs, of at least two species, should be between 30% and 90% in heathland areas.

The first two years of the agreement will see £8,538 allocated to capital works, to fund restoration in areas that have become degraded by scrub, bracken, gorse and secondary woodland.

To increase biodiversity and the enjoyment of the site, a new community wildlife pond was completed to help aquatic flora and fauna establish and to provide a pond dipping resource for local school groups.

Humus has been removed from nutrient enriched heathland areas, improving invertebrate habitat, especially for ground mining wasps and bees, and enabling pioneer heather plants to become established.

### **Volunteering and involvement**

In recent years the Conservators have set out to increase the number and range of partners that it collaborates with to help implement these works and widen the understanding of Mousehold. Over the past year, this has included: the Mousehold Heath Defenders, scouts, beavers, Duke of Edinburgh award students, Easton College Step by Step Group, Assist Trust, Julian Support Trust, local school groups including Open Academy, Skill Force Sprowston School and Mousehold Avenue Infant School as well as voluntary groups including, the Conservation Volunteers, Norwich Community Green Gym and an Easton College work placement student.

Over 100 volunteer days of work were undertaken in practical conservation tasks and ecological survey's including Bat, Moth, Butterfly, Bird, Wild Flower, Invertebrates. This resulted in a massive 3,685 working hours!

### **Public access and enjoyment**

Due to the age and structure of secondary woodland areas and to ensure safe access to the woodland, the Mousehold wardens have undertaken chainsaw and tree safety courses. Tree surveys have been carried out and this has resulted in an increase of tree works resulting in over thirty potentially dangerous trees and branches being made safe.

To enhance visitors enjoyment and understanding of the heath, the Mousehold Heath Wardens organised an annual guided walks and talks programme which included, butterfly walk, geology and landscape walks, biodiversity and landscape for the Norwich ladies walking group, three moth evenings, a fungal foray, Heart Heritage and History walk, five community wildlife watch walks through the year in partnership with Norfolk County Council Adult Education Services and a health walk to celebrate the start of the Olympic Games.

A ceremony of remembrance at the Airmen's Memorial at Gurney Road, a winter solstice gathering and a St Georges day celebration were organised in partnership with the Mousehold Heath Defenders.

Norwich City Council Events team also organised play days during the School summer holidays along with band concerts and cross country runs.

In total over 800 members of the public attended these events over the period of April 2012 to April 2013.

### **Staffing arrangements**

At the start of 2012, some minor line management changes were put in place with the Mousehold warden's moving under the responsibility of the north communities and neighbourhood Manager.

These changes have brought about clearer roles and responsibilities and allows the wardens with their considerable specialist skills and knowledge to prepare and implement the annual works programme once this has been

agreed by the Conservators, together with the monitoring of budget expenditure, and the changes brought about by the work to implement the management plan.

This has resulted in a more planned approach through work priorities being identified and costed and a more flexible approach how these are implemented.

### **Projects and activities**

Several new partnerships were formed during the year, with some securing external funding. This included:

- **Natural England** - Higher Level Stewardship funding for Heathland restoration £8,538.00 for the first two years.
- **The Norwich Society** - for the restoration and replacement of the Mottram Memorial £2,500.00
- **The University of East Anglia** - Big Norwich bat project
- **Greater Norwich Development Partnership including Open Academy School** - heathland creation and restoration including production and installation of an interpretation panel
- **Norfolk Biodiversity Partnership and Norfolk Geodiversity Partnership** - Excavations and Exposures, the installation of an Earth Heritage Trail including way-marked posts the production of an EHT leaflet and a Web page on the Norwich City Council Web site.
- **Norfolk County Council, Historic Environment Officer** - the first stage for improved interpretation of St. Williams Chapel (Schedule Ancient Monument) including, with the help of volunteers, the cutting back and clearance of vegetation to open up public access.
- Infrastructure renewals i.e. bollard replacements and furnishings (on going)
- The installation of a new Community Wildlife Pond, this will be planted with aquatic plants in the new financial year.

### **Looking forward**

As new partnerships and funding have been formed for the implementation of the management plan, it is essential to keep within the funding criteria. Recognition of the national importance of the site's heathland and grassland habitats has been confirmed by a HLS agreement with Natural England. With this in mind, priority will be given to heathland and acid grassland restoration and expansion to achieve the desired objectives.

The first year's capital works funded restoration works will be implemented, along with other grassland and heathland management. Woodland management, scrub clearing and emergency vehicle access tree management along Gilman Road will continue.

The procurement of specialist contractors with experience in heathland/grassland restoration will continue, along with volunteer community groups and organisations supervised by the Mousehold Wardens, who play a large part in making this possible.

Public walks and talks are promoted through an annual programme available on line, local press, what's on, NCC events leaflet and the Tourist Information Centre.

To ensure a good first impression and a safe environment for the visiting members of the community, on going monitoring of the site is carried out including the reporting of anti-social behaviour, site repairs, contract failures, tree surveys and works and improvement of service recommendations, with emphasis on public health and safety.

**Nigel Hales Will Stewart - Mousehold Wardens**

**June 2013**

## **Appendix 2**

### **Education**

The Wardens have organised environmental education activities for Open Academy students, Sprowston Beaver group, along with weekly conservation based activities with Forest School from Mousehold Avenue Infant School. These activities increased understanding and enjoyment of the site to over 100 students.

### **Ecological surveys and species monitoring**

#### **Butterflies:**

An additional Butterfly Monitoring Scheme (BMS) transect survey was completed between April and October. 251 butterflies were recorded on this transect, mainly in the recently managed and restored areas of the Anthills and heathland.

There were 370 butterflies recorded on the transect undertaken on the Weston side of Gurney Road – a good number considering the poor weather conditions. Over 50 members of the community were involved in the surveys.

There were two new species of butterfly recorded bringing the site total to twenty five. The Small Heath (*Coenonympha pamphilus*) - UK Biodiversity Action Plan Priority (UKBAP) species and GB Red List, Near Threatened – were recorded on recently managed heathland areas and on the Anthills acid grassland.

White-letter Hairstreaks (*Satyrrium w-album*) – UKBAP Priority and GB Red list, Endangered – were recorded on Elm trees adjacent to Gurney Road. This record prompted a mini twitch, with many observers attending at midday, at the start of August, being rewarded with good views.

#### **Moths:**

Three public moth evenings, along with ad hoc surveys were completed, with 35 people attending. 70 moth species including 15 new species to the site, made up the 385 moths recorded in total. These ranged from the large and colourful Elephant Hawkmoth (*Sphinx ligustri*), which thrilled the participants on 23.06.13 and the Heath Rustic (*Xestia agathina*), a scarce and threatened moth that is closely associated with heather.

These surveys have resulted in the species list rising to 177.

#### **Birds:**

A Common Bird Census (CBC) survey was carried out by the Mousehold wardens with the help of volunteers. 30 species of bird were recorded as having breeding territories based on the CBC methodology. This number was roughly the same as previous years. This survey is being extended onto the western side of Gurney Road this year.

**Plants:**

The results of a monthly plant survey on St. James' Hill, carried out by members of the Mousehold Heath Defenders and a Mousehold warden are attached. See Appendix 3.

**Bumblebees:**

A monthly survey carried out by a member of the Defenders and a Mousehold warden on St. James Hill recorded a number of bee species, including Buff-tailed bumblebee (*Bombus terrestris*), White-tailed bumblebee (*Bombus lucorum*), Re-tailed bumblebee (*Bombus lapidarius*) and Common carder bee (*Bombus pascuorum*).

### Appendix 3

#### List of plant species recorded on St. James Hill, Mousehold Heath, 2012.

Fat-hen (*Chenopodium album*)  
Rosebay willowherb (*Chamenerion angustifolium*)  
Broad-leaved willowherb (*Epilobium montanum*)  
American willowherb (*Epilobium ciliatum*)  
Grousel (*Senecio vulgaris*)  
Heath grousel (*Senecio sylvaticus*)  
Common ragwort (*Senecio jacobaea*)  
Tansy (*Chrysanthemum vulgare*)  
Wormwood (*Artemisia absinthum*)  
Mugwort (*Artemisia vulgaris*)  
Common poppy (*Papaver rhoeas*)  
Scarlet pimpernel (*Anagallis arvensis*)  
Common field speedwell (*Veronica persica*)  
White campion (*Silene alba*)  
Red campion (*Silene dioica*)  
Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*)  
Ox-eye daisy (*Leucanthemum vulgare*)  
Dandelion (*Taraxacum* agg.)  
Goat's-beard (*Tragopogon pratensis* agg.)  
Greater celandine (*Chelidonium majus*)  
Creeping thistle (*Cirsium arvense*)  
Spear thistle (*Cirsium vulgare*)  
Canadian golden-rod (*Solidago Canadensis*)  
Common chickweed (*Stellaria media*)  
Common mouse-ear (*Cerastium holosteoides*)  
Red dead-nettle (*Lamium purpureum*)  
White dead-nettle (*Lamium album*)  
Common nettle (*Urtica dioica*)  
Sheep's sorrel (*Rumex acetosella*)  
Broad-leaved dock (*Rumex obtusifolius*)  
Pineappleweed (*Marricaria matricarioides*)  
Wild radish (*Raphanus raphanistrum*)  
Wild rose (*Rosa canina* agg.)  
Dove's-foot Crane's-bill (*Geranium molle*)  
Small-flowered crane's-bill (*Geranium pusillum*)  
Herb Robert (*Geranium robertianum*)  
Common stork's-bill (*Erodium cicutarium*)  
Ivy (*Hedera helix*)  
Hogweed (*Heracleum sphondylium*)  
Spanish bluebell (*Hyacinthoides hispanica*)  
Cleavers (*Galium aparine*)  
Perforate St. John's wort (*Hypericum perforatum*)  
Common Cat's-ear (*Hypochaeris radicata*)  
Broom (*Cytisus scoparius* ssp. *Scoparius*)  
White bryony (*Bryonia dioica*)  
Hop (*Humulus lupulus*)  
Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*)  
Ribwort plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*)  
Greater plantain (*Plantago major*)  
Field bindweed (*Convolvulus arvensis*)  
Horse-radish (*Armoracia rusticana*)  
Garlic mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*)  
Hedge mustard (*Sisymbrium officinale*)  
Foxglove (*Digitalis purpurea*)  
Common mallow (*Malva sylvestris*)  
Black horehound (*Ballota nigra*)  
Hedge woundwort (*Stachys sylvatica*)  
Wild strawberry (*Fragaria vesca*)  
Blackberry (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.)  
Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*)  
Hare's-foot clover (*Trifolium arvense*)  
Green alkanet (*Pentaglottis sempervirens*)  
Sheperd's purse (*Capsella bursa-pastoris*)  
Wild cherry (*Prunus avium*)  
Elder (*Sambucus nigra*)  
Black medick (*Medicago lupulina*)  
Wild cabbage (*Brassica oleracea*)  
Black nightshade (*Solanum nigrum*)  
Wall lettuce (*Mycelis muralis*)  
Rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*)  
Oak (*Quercus robur*)  
Elm (*Ulmus minor* agg.)  
Lime (*Tilia x europaeus* agg.)  
London plane (*Platanus x hispanica*)  
Silver birch (*Betula pendula*)  
Apple (*Malus domestica*)