

SUSTAINABILITY MATTERS

Visit to Ashing Lane Nature Reserve

Twenty of us met up in early August for a leisurely walk around the reserve, on what thankfully turned out to be a warm rather than scorching day. Our guide for the afternoon was Su Coleman, a trustee of Nettleham Woodland Trust (NWT).

Ashing Lane reserve, just outside Dunholme, is mostly owned by Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust but managed by NWT. Planting started in 2009 on what was a wheat field and over the years the area has developed into a wonderful haven for flora and fauna, as well as a much needed amenity for recreation and education. Activities include walking, bird watching, horse riding and cycling.

During our walk we learned the stories behind some of the reserve's landmarks including Monk Oak (named after fundraiser Dennis Monk), Beatles Pond (which really does have a connection to the Fab Four – it's not a spelling mistake!) and Cathedral Copse.

The oaks in the copse have a fascinating back story. In 2017, members of the public were able to purchase oak saplings for £12.17, a figure chosen to celebrate the 800th anniversary of the Charter of the Forest and the Battle of Lincoln in 1217. Every oak purchased was recorded in the Book of Oaks, held at Lincoln Cathedral, and the trees have all been designated for eventual use in repairing the Cathedral's high roofs.

The reserve is home to wide variety of wildlife including mammals, birds, reptiles amphibians and invertebrates. Last year, one volunteer counted an impressive 611 butterflies in just one hour. A highlight of our walk was the Wildlife Tower which, within weeks of being erected, became home to kestrels and barn owls not to mention peacock butterflies. The tower also has a wonderful weather vane depicting a man coppicing willow.

Do try to visit the reserve if you can – it's not a particularly strenuous walk and there are accessible areas. Just bear in mind that there are no toilets on site and that the approach road-cum-track is to put it mildly, rather bumpy!

Julie Guest