

Ten Years On

Ever since Christmas I'd had this nagging feeling that something was going on. A bit like having on Babylon 5 and hearing vague reports of activity on the outer rim of the galaxy.

A series of "that little bit odd" incidents over a period of months: Suzanne's invitation to join her in a birthday meal, not unusual in itself but she did remind me of the date on a number of occasions: Delays in the production of the newsletter. Mick reckons the printer broke (a little bit suspicious): Nobody wants to come for a drink after a weekend away - decidedly odd - drinking being second only to saving the planet on a list of things members like doing most. Unknown to me the importance of these events was about to be revealed.

March 23rd arrives. 8:00pm and time for Suzanne's meal. I'm goosed having been lecturing on a pond course all day. Can't beat a good days lecturing for draining the old batteries. Simon and Ross arrive to pick me up. Simon's wearing a suit - that's a bit strange - somewhat formal for a meal at Suzanne's. Simon requests a slight detour so that I can advise a bloke about a pond. Funnily enough I didn't find this odd having spent the last 8 hours talking ponds. Another 5 minutes is neither here nor there. Odd place to meet somebody, Westhoughton Cricket Club. Perhaps the pond is going in on the dance floor? Opening the door to

the cricket club, lights, banners people, noise, after that things get a bit hazy.

Ever experienced an adrenaline surge? Well I have on a number of occasions. The worst one was at Leicester Polytechnic in 1991 when I was giving a controversial talk on the egg search method for surveying Great Crested Newts (what else?) to 200 delegates. The trick with giving talks is to convince the brain that you are addressing one person and not 200, then you can deliver the talk in a relaxed manner. Unfortunately my brain overruled me on this occasion and slipped into panic mode. My knees began to wobble and my mouth dried. Fortunately the slide projector blew up which gave me time for a deep breath, the chance to crack a couple of jokes then on with the talk.

Second biggest adrenaline surge was at Westhoughton Cricket Club. Fortunately, Mick ushered me into the seating mode and I had time to recover, but as he pointed out I was shaking a bit. My initial reaction was one of awe over the amount of work that went into the event. The food, the decorations, the planning. Next comes a feeling of humbleness. Such a mega event, just to celebrate my ten years as organiser. And what a great night it was. Old friends, new friends, the beer, the music, the dancing, superb. The explanation of the strange happenings was now apparent. A group of members had

been meeting at the Howcroft every other Sunday for months planning for this one night. I know a lot of people contributed to the celebrations and I would like to thank them once again for organising a great night.

If ten years ago someone had asked me to describe what Bolton Conservation Volunteers could achieve in the next decade my aspirations would have borne no resemblance to the events that did occur. Project after project that started as small buds but eventually came to fruition: Deane Clough, our first pond: Seddon Fold Farm, four new ponds, a thousand metres of hedgerow laid and planted: thousands of trees planted: Doffcocker, the wildlife islands, new reed beds and hedgerows: Greenmount Bird Hospital: Sefton: Hope: Hart Common: Wearish Lane: Captains Clough: the list is endless, the benefits for wildlife awesome.

What of the next decade? What can we achieve? We're stronger than ever, financially sound with a good mix of members. With our own tools and chain saw there is little that we cannot tackle if we set our minds to it. The Bolton Hospice project is a bud at the moment but it will come to fruition. The last decade was great, the next decade will be greater. Let's go out there and do it again.

Rick Park