

## A very, very busy year

It has been an incredibly busy time for Three Owls since our last edition of Three Owls Newsletter. We have put regular updates onto our website, itself being fully revamped earlier this year, and we have seen a huge increase in the amount of traffic through the site.

This newsletter is being distributed in paper form to those who stated last time that they had no access to the internet, but if things have changed and you now do have access to read it online, then please let us know and we will amend the mailing list and save money on stamps and envelopes. It can be read and downloaded free of charge from our website [www.threeowls.co.uk](http://www.threeowls.co.uk).

Although there is no longer an annual subscription for membership, we are very grateful for any donations you can spare to enable us to continue our much-needed work. Your previous gift aid declarations are still valid, and can add a further 25% onto your gift; meaning for every £20 donated, the government will add a further £5 to make the total gift £25 (well worthwhile!). If you do need a form, please let us know and we can either post/email/fax one out to you.

It is almost 18 months since the previous newsletter, as there has always been so much going on, there would always have been a half-told story if it had come out any earlier, and having waited until the end of the year, we can give a full appraisal as to how the new Three Owls Wood at Tarleton has fared in its first year of existence.

The Advice Helpline has been busier than ever; I did think that with the new Website giving out so much information, that calls may ease off – but in actual fact the opposite has been the case and even more people are contacting us for advice, as to how to help wild birds in their own areas. Three Owls has contacts and supporters in many different countries around the world, and though the vast majority of calls for help do come from the UK, we also receive calls for help from much further afield.

We were very pleased to find in only our first year at Three Owls Wood, that a pair of swallows decided to make their nest and successfully reared four babies. It was lovely to see them growing up, and once fledged, they joined a 20+ flock in the Wood, and swooped all around acrobatically, as I mowed all around the field between the trees.

The first pond has now been dug in the boggiest part of the site, and thanks to our current very wet weather is already nearly full. We have already been approached by some young people on the Duke of Edinburgh scheme who would like to help us with regard to pondwork in the future. It is from help such as these volunteers that we can invest in the youth of today which will help ensure the Reserves' future in years to come.

other wild bird and animal welfare organisations, our nature reserves offer the chance for other rehabilitated birds and animals to be returned safely to the wild in a protected environment. Read on, to hear about just ONE of these important rehabilitations from a city-centre rehabilitator;

**ALFRED: A SUCCESS STORY.**  
*Before a bleak and blustery day before Easter, and the dusk was already here when anxious friends from Wigan arrived with a cardboard box. They had found a pigeon in the bushes at the bottom of their garden, dragging his wing and obviously frightened and hungry. When the box was opened, there was a beautiful big woodpigeon, with a dreadfully deep wound in his left shoulder, probably from a cat, but the bite mark was very deep and nasty, and he was very frightened and very thin.*  
*Food came first to mind, and then, following Nigel's training over the years, I bathed his wing gently with warm water and some salt added, dried it carefully and lightly covered the wound with Dermisol. He went into the big carrying bag which Nigel had given to me, with a dish of conditioning seed, which he promptly tucked into; this became his home for the next few days.*  
*For reassurance, I carried him upstairs to see the other resident birds, who are a permanent part of the family here, and a real look of surprise and relief came into his eyes. He was so much bigger than they were and so we christened him, "Alfred the Great".*

*The following day, Alfred and I were off in the car to see "Uncle Nigel" at Three Owls. Nigel examined him carefully, pronounced upon his broken wing and strapped it up with special medical tape, which was to stay there for the next ten days, and he advised me on how best to treat the flesh wound. Alfred began to get better rapidly, and I soon let him out of his carrying bag. He even had a bath in a big Pyrex dish, but he was a sad little bird: Woodpigeons need other woodpigeons, and it nearly broke my heart to see how, as the daylight faded each evening, and particularly when he heard the woodpigeons in the park outside. Alfred would fly to the window to try to go and find a safe roosting spot in the trees. But each evening he settled when I drew the curtains, and I found, too, that he liked crumbs of Marks and Spencer's "Alf-butter sukians cookies" as a treat at bedtime!*  
*I counted the days and was looking forward to the tenth day when I'd be able to take him back to Nigel to have the strapping taken off his wing. But Alfred was impatient! - On the ninth morning I came down to find that he'd already taken it*

**Wet Weather causes a few problems!**

As in many other parts of the country, we have endured a huge amount of rainfall this year, the most of which hasn't caused us too many problems other than part of the new **Three Owls Wood** at Tarleton becoming too boggy to mow.

However, the ground on the **Home Reserve** at Rochdale is now so soft in places, two of our tallest trees have come down as their roots were unable to support them in the strong winds. Sadly, one was a fir tree used for many years by the herons as a nesting tree (they use the same nest year after year, just adding more and more twigs). There are of course plenty more trees available, but someone is going to have to start from scratch in 2013!!

All will be attended to when our tree specialist is onsite this winter helping with our usual reserve maintenance programme - the only time we can attend to it due to the very long nesting season we have onsite (Herons start nesting in January/February, and the smaller birds don't finish until mid-September).

General maintenance does of course continue throughout the year, and as a consequence the birds are very familiar with me and often 'drop by' to see if there are any worms or tibbits where I am working. They are wise enough however, to keep away if anyone else is around. Of course, to many of them I am 'dad' - having either reared them from tiny chicks, or nursed them back to health in the past.

There are more reserves in the pipeline, and it had been hoped that our 3<sup>rd</sup> such reserve; **Three Owls Field Reserve** would be up and running by the time we went to print. However, all the best things take time to sort out, and as ever the legal wheels turn slowly with Red Tape, as such we will update the website as soon as everything finally drops into place.

1-12-11 to 31-12-11  
337 Calls 1770 minutes = 29 hrs 30 mins

1-1-12 to 31-1-12  
505 Calls 2205 minutes = 36 hrs 45 mins

1-2-12 to 28-2-12  
383 Calls 1639 minutes = 27 hrs 19 mins

1-3-12 to 31-3-12  
480 Calls 1913 minutes = 31 hrs 53 mins

1-4-12 to 30-4-12  
470 calls 1985 mins = 33 hrs 6 mins

1-5-12 to 31-5-12  
588 calls 1945 minutes = 32 hrs 25 mins

1-6-12 to 30-6-12  
667 calls 2508 minutes = 41 hrs 46 minutes

1-7-12 to 31-7-12  
806 calls 3395 minutes = 56 hrs 35 mins

1-8-12 to 31-8-12  
594 Calls 2289 minutes = 38 hrs 9 min

1-9-12 to 30-9-12  
483 calls 2057 minutes = 34 hrs 17 mins

1-10-12 to 31-10-12  
532 calls totalling 2901 minutes = 48 hrs 21 mins

**Annual totals**  
Calls – 6281  
Minutes – 25305  
Hours – 421 hrs 45 minutes.  
Overall average call of 4 minutes 2 seconds

**The 2012 Manchester to Blackpool Bike Ride - Confessions of rider 5370.**  
By John Thorpe.

This year's ride seems to have come round so quickly that I almost lost track of time, and found myself facing the ride, probably in wet weather and with little or no preparation. Now at this point I should say, particularly for the benefit of any younger readers, that cycling for long distances without breaking your body in gradually and building stamina is not a sensible idea, and I neither recommend nor promote it. I'm afraid this is yet another example of an adult practising one thing and preaching another but if it's any consolation you'll probably end up the same thing one day when you're older! Anyway, suffice it to say that while preparing my trusty steed once again, I was aware that she was undoubtedly in better shape than I was. So far this year, I've had several viral infections (along with half the UK population no doubt!), and knew that I was not in top condition - of course that's all relative, and compared to many of the serious competitors in the ride, my top condition is nothing to write home about!

Due to getting used to the relative ease of using my motorcycle for the past couple of years I've grown a bit lazy when it comes to muscle power, and my son, always the supportive, sensitive one asked if we should stop off the life insurance policy, and my wife enquired whether anyone had actually died on the ride so far! Thus filled with confidence I braced myself for the task ahead, and armed with insulin, copious amounts of padded clothing and an evening on Saturday, I drifted off to sleep imagining the worst that could happen. Perhaps are an ever-present danger, and like illness, strike without warning or any regard for the character of the rider or the condition of the bike - however the ultimate failure would be not to finish the course. Apart from the personal disappointment there's the very real risk that potential sponsors will feel cheated and will not honour pledges.

When the alarm went off at 4.00am I sprang out of bed (OK I was still dreaming this bit!) and gingerly opened the curtains, to find that it was fine and quite promising outside. Given the capricious nature of the weather over the past months I didn't get too elated, but was glad that at least the ride into Manchester might be dry.

Working on the principle that while my muscles might not be 100% perfect, I could at least put enough fuel in the tank for them, I waded through a large bowl of porridge, complete with chopped banana, a cake and an energy bar and extra vitamin tablet. I'm not too proud to take help when it's there folks!

Double checking the bike and my supplies said a fond farewell to our adopted rabbit, Kane, and posed for a couple of photos for my wife, who, bleary eyed, dragged herself out of bed to see me off, and to take snaps to remember me by! Five o'clock saw me on my way, taking care not to pull a muscle and easing myself into the routine again, heading towards the Manchester United Football ground the only time you'll

tired. It was on this section that a lad on a rather tired looking bike, pedalling with his heels (very uncomfortable and energy wasting) and awkwardly carrying a bag over his shoulder, came up alongside as we cycled uphill and I panted a bit. "Are you knackered?" he cheerfully enquired. "Not yet, but ask me later!" I grunted.

Some of the bikes, as in previous years, are unusual, and among this year's offerings were recumbent models, where the rider lies back and pedals with the feet or sometimes with the hands on adapted ones, a green model which looked like a large scooter where the rider stood up and tumbled with the push down on foot pedals, rather like an exercise machine; and best of all the uni-cycle - I've seen these before of course, some having a small wheel, some a tall saddle post, and some, like the one I saw on Sunday - a large wheel. The young lady riding it went past me as if I was standing still, and I was filled with admiration for her sheer guts in taking on sixty miles on one wheel. I'd love to know what she did when she had to stop at the lights though, did she dismount or just find a post to lean on? Answers on a postcard please to Three Owls!

We worked our way through Leyland and into Preston by the carriage way which seems to go on forever (especially when your legs are aching), and arrived by the dock area, where I had another break while I watched a cornamont fishing in the water below. They are sufficiently agile birds although not populated with anglers due to the fact that they eat fish-who'd have thought it!! This one dived, stayed submerged for a minute then popped up calling from the entry point. A few Lesser Black-backed Gulls flew overhead, calling plaintively and obviously hoping for some fish scraps or some of my sand-larks, but both the Cornamont and I held on to our minds for dear life!

Still bathed in sunshine, the trusty bike and I sailed forth towards our final destination, crossing the Lancaster canal over a small stone bridge which must have seen some sights since it was built, and which gives some of the dumber riders the chance to die with death by riding on the wrong side of the road into traffic they can't possibly see. I'm always amazed at why these imbeciles travel so far to try to kill themselves when they could surely do it more cheaply and easily at home! This is a beautiful part of the ride, and goes through country lanes and roads winding between fields and through small villages. Only the uphill bits spoiled the idyllic scene-I'm not a great uphill or wind person (if you're making up your own jokes I can't stop you!) and unashamedly prefer the flat or downhill. On one hill I actually managed to clock a little over 30mph-if only I could do that all the way I'd be there in two hours flat!

We progressed through Cottam, Trandles, Kixham and Freckleton, and on to Warton, where the wind freshened and began to blow with a force that told us we were about to start on the final few miles to Blackpool. A Bike Events steward at a roadside called out "You're on the last leg now!" I thought he said "You're on a leg!" and was about to ask him how he knew, but really thought "We certainly are, and they're the hardest few miles of the whole ruddy trip!"

I'd better concede before Nigel thinks I'm taking over the newsletter altogether. Even when the going is tough and you don't think you can make it. If you have a goal to aim for you can win through. My goal was not to let down all the people who have shown they care about our work (in this country and overseas) and our ethos at Three Owls. Times are tough and we know how hard it is to spare money for charitable donations, but any help you can give will be hugely appreciated. We have a proud heritage to live up to, and we all play our parts. Like the other seven thousand riders in the event, I'm very proud of completing it, and with luck will be back for the 24th event in 2013. We've achieved a huge amount over the years, and recession or no recession we must not fail the birds and the wildlife that depend on us.

I'm thrilled to report that the total amount received to date for John Thorpe's Sponsored Bike Ride 2012 from Manchester to Blackpool is an amazing £525; which smashes last year's then record-breaking sum of £500. A HUGE thank you to everyone for their support in helping - raise this sum; as usual all funds raised go directly towards helping wild birds - we are having yet another very busy year as we celebrate our 50th Year of helping wild birds.

## Brood Confusion

The abysmal summer weather this year caused a series of problems, and the Mother Nature as it did for us humans. The early broods fared quite well, for the first lot of blackbirds and thrushes were out of the nests and growing up well with only a brief winter storm causing a minor hiccup – which here on the Home Reserve they weathered very well. However, once into April the wet weather started and the 2<sup>nd</sup> brood really struggled, many succumbing to getting wet and chilled either before or just after leaving the nest. Very few parent birds bothered with a 3<sup>rd</sup> brood this year, and consequently we will all notice a shortage of the smaller birds this winter.

## Helping us to help others

As planned, we have been able to make grants to other established organisations with a proven track record of doing work similar to that of Three Owls, in 2010 we distributed £21,200 in grants, and £96,500 of equipment to help save wild birds lives.

In 2011 a further £15,000 was given out in total in grants, and in 2012 our grant total was a massive £40,000 – all helping to ensure the safety and survival of wild birds far and wide. Within this years sum was a grant of £30,000 in

Recent overseas calls include: France, Spain, Norway, Denmark and the latest South Africa! Of course, whilst we do have a comprehensive list of bird-friendly rescue centres, inevitably there are occasions when we have to do research too; in order to find the most suitable place and 'local' to the caller in need. In this latest case, the C.R.O.W. (Centre for Rehabilitation of Wildlife) was less than 20 minutes from where the bird was found, and so the bird was swiftly taken over to their care. Alas, rarely do we get follow-ups to these international calls, whereas with UK calls, updates as to the outcomes (usually very favourable) are the norm rather than the exception.

## Three Owls Wood

The first trees were planted in November 2011 in memory of a local young boy; Caleb Zubairi whose life was tragically cut short, and were English Oak trees. Following a successful grant application to the Forestry Commission, the remainder of the field was sub-soiled in March 2012; this is when the top 18" is broken up to allow the young trees to become established – the field had previously been used for grazing and had become quite compact. Later that same month, 3000 trees were planted with the able assistance of 40 girl guides, their parents and leaders. The sanctuary trustees have been very pleased with how our partnership with Global Renewables has turned out; as it was they who have sorted out all the grants for us.

Nigel and David did a lot of research with regard to a mowing machine for the Reserve, as the trees need to be mown between on a very regular basis for the first five years to prevent voles nibbling the bark on the young trees which would be disastrous. This culminated in a demonstration day, where the local supplying dealer (Redblade) brought a very heavy-duty machine to be 'tested' on the field. David and Nigel both report that this was time very well spent, as due to the nature of the land, a lesser machine would neither have coped nor lasted. We were initially advised that the field would require mowing about 3 times a year, however due to the extreme fertility of the soil and rapid grass growth, we have found it needs mowing every 3-4 weeks on average! Mowing towards the end of the season was however hampered by the excessive rain we have encountered this year, and we will resume mowing again in Spring 2013. The purchase of the mower was made possible due to a generous legacy left to us by the late Harry Jagger.

David is keeping a running tally of all the birds seen at the Three Owls Wood. So far we have noted: Ravens, Crows, Oystercatcher, Snipe, Fieldfare, Common Buzzard, Kestrel, Marsh Harrier, Duncock, Robin, Swallow, Barn Owl, Whooper Swan, Mallard, Canada Goose, Lapwing, Blackbird, Mistle Thrush, Skylark, Starling, House Sparrow, Blue Tit, Common Pheasant, Shelduck, Grey Partridge.

## Three Owls Reserves help others too

Often people think that our nature reserves are solely there for 'our' birds. In reality, they are there for ALL wildlife, and not just ones we introduce to them. Quite apart from providing habitat to birds we have nursed back to health and released on our sites, we also provide homes to birds and wildlife from other sanctuaries, who need a safe haven to release their own charges back to the wild in a protected environment.

We have worked closely with Rochdale Hedgehog Rescue a number of times now with regard to releasing their rehabilitated hogs on site – lots of slugs and worms on reserves, and plenty of places to hibernate make them ideal sites.

We also liaise with other sanctuaries who may have lost their own release sites through house-building on adjacent land. Three Owls has suffered similarly, but thankfully the housing development adjacent to us, is mainly down at the very bottom of the reserve and thus gives the very minimum of intrusion to the site.

A very important side to the Nature Reserve work we do, is to provide habitat for rehabilitated birds and animals to be returned to the wild. Of course here at Three Owls we have done almost 50 years of hands-on rehabilitation work through our own bird hospitals, now, through close working relationships with

off. I just hoped that he hadn't caused any damage, and anxiously phoned Nigel, who thought not.

In the five weeks in total that he was here, I grew to love Alfred and, though he became plump and sleek and bright-eyed, a city centre rehab home is no place for a beautiful woodpigeon. And so, one fine day in May, we set off in the car again for Three Owls. But it was with trepidation - Could he fly long-distance or couldn't he? I had no way of knowing, having only seen him cross the short distance in a room. However, the ever-wise and practical Nigel had arranged that, if he couldn't fly, he had been promised a home for life by the kind people at Rainbow Valley Bird Rescue centre near Skipton. It was a lovely gentle day and, as we drew up to Three Owls in the sunshine, the wood pigeons in the Reserve were cooing, and Alfred loved it.

Nigel gently took him out of his box, looked him over with approval and then Alfred perched on Nigel's fingers and we walked with him to within thirty yards of the Home Reserve. Alfred took his time to look around very carefully, and then the temptation of the lovely trees with their thick foliage, and the rustle of the wind in the leaves got the better of him. Our hearts lifted with joy as he took to the air, flew hesitantly and a little hop-sidely and landed safely on a branch from where could assess his new surroundings.

Dear, kind Nigel kept a watchful eye open for him over the next few days and reported seeing him safe, flying well and even bathing in the ponds. Since then, he has made firm friends for this summer with two other woodpigeons, and even I have seen him a time or two when I've been at the Three Owls Home Reserve.

My friends, Joan and Laura, are delighted that "their" little bird should be happy and well. As for me, I am very grateful to Nigel for his compassion, care and wisdom, and for all that Three Owls stands for and does.

Jennifer

Brand New Website

Over last winter we spent several weeks having a new website designed. Our original website was designed and run by Alan Maloney in Bury, however after many years, he took the opportunity to retire when we decided to fully revamp the site, to show Three Owls in its new direction forward. We would like to publicly thank Alan for all his hard work in both designing and keeping the website going for all of those years.

The new Website was initially designed by a Rochdale company, however they were unable to bring it online and maintain it as we would have liked so it was taken over, completed to our requirements and is now run and hosted by a Southport company. All the trustees have been very pleased with the layout, and Nigel has ensured that it was designed to be as informative as possible, and not just simply a news site. Hence there is lots of information from feeding, to initial care, to making nest boxes and bird cake, even how to find your local sanctuary or report a lost racing pigeon! It has become a HUGE public resource and of great benefit to all who visit it. Since going live on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2012, it has had over 130,000 visits, and each update put on the site brings forth a further flurry of activity to the site.

Such is the profile now of Three Owls Bird Sanctuary & Reserve on the world wide web, that simply Googling "Bird Sanctuary" on the internet will put Three Owls on the first page of over seven million results worldwide.

## Three Owls Advice Helpline

The Advice Helpline has continued to be a much-used service, with many people very relieved to find that we have not only continued the service, but improved it to provide text and email facilities, as well as the usual voice call help.

I have collated some statistics which show purely the voice calls, and an incredibly busy last 12 months;

1-11-11 to 30-11-11  
436 Calls 1699 minutes = 28 hrs 19 mins

It has been very clear from feedback received that these efforts were saving many birds lives that would otherwise have perished. Our efforts in ensuring that the wealth of Three Owls knowledge is being passed on has been very warmly received from all quarters.

I had expected a drop in calls when the new Website came online, however the opposite has been the effect, and more people are contacting us than ever before – great news for wild bird welfare everywhere!

Another website "Pigeon and Dove Rescue" asked me if it was ok to put our Helpline number on their site, in order to help as many people as possible? This was due to a single person setting up their site and running their phone and email, as due to their low level of pigeons, they wanted to help as many people as possible. However, they had totally underestimated the number of people who would need help, and became totally swamped and needed to back off to just running the website. I agreed to this, and estimate that 'around 20%' of the calls do come from visits to that website.

Where it is not possible to answer the phone – such as driving – I have produced a fully informative voicemail message, giving out a vast amount of information in a very short time and directing people to the Website for further assistance. Where necessary and people leave a message I will return the call; the ability to handle both text and email from the Helpline also means faster response times for public benefit and ultimately more lives can be saved too.

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ever find me near one!), and found that the muscles, although a little stiff were not performing badly. Virtually quiet roads are always a pleasure to ride on, and I was reminded of how relatively quiet the roads used to be when I was a child - apart from the odd Penny Farthing bike, horse-drawn omnibus and Model T Ford!

My bike and I reached the football ground at around 6.00 am, and had our photo taken with my eccentric friend "The Voice of the Ride", who I've greeted every year for twenty three years. Along with a number of early morning riders I set off at 6.30am in lovely weather, on the principle that the earlier you leave, the earlier you arrive - in theory at least. Like last year I had fixed the 'helmet-cam' in place, but since I was trying different batteries, was unsure of whether they would last the required time. In the event they proved not quite up to the job, and while I haven't yet seen the footage, I hope it captured some of the atmosphere of the day. Aiming to just settle into a steady rhythm, I wound my way through Trafford Park and past the edifice to retail therapy that is the Trafford Centre, through Bootstown and on towards Leigh, all the time expecting the rain to hit us. Instead it actually got warmer and sunnier, marvellous normally, but with so much moisture in the air, a recipe for humidity. I have to tell you that humidity and Lycra cycling gear don't mix, and there were times when I thought I was going to be wetter on the inside than out!

Inevitably you pass unfortunate souls whose tyres have literally let them down, and if anyone is looking panic-stricken, I make a point of asking if they need a hand. There's nothing worse than being stranded miles from home, and not having the experience or tools to sort the problem out, and thus it was that I stopped somewhere around Aspull, as I turned a corner and spotted a young African man bent over his overturned bike and looking very frustrated. His chain had stuck fast between the chain wheels and he was having no luck freeing it with a screwdriver. Luckily I had a decent tool kit with me and together we utilised a pair of long nosed pliers and the screwdriver to free it, turning the pliers into short nosed pliers in the process! A grin that any film star would pay good money for made it obvious how relieved he was, and as we shook hands and got back on the road I could at least feel some satisfaction that he could now continue - and probably go faster than me!

This year, unlike last, we were able to go through Halgh Hall Country Park, but as a matter of choice, for a refreshment break, rather than the obligatory route. I opted to do so, partly because it's a beautiful place, partly because I loved to rest and partly to see if the infamous cobble at the entrance still wreaked havoc with tender parts of the anatomy. The answer was yes, and I can now sing "Oh for the wings of a Dove" with no effort at all! After a short stop I rejoined the ride and continued on to Standish, Charnock Richard and Chorley. In case anyone thinks I'm heroic and have an iron will because I took a short break, I have to dislodge them. The real reason is that taking a short break makes it that much harder to get back in the saddle, particularly when one's

A rather portly lady rider to my left cheerfully called out "Not farto go now eh?"

When I pointed out that the wind was so strong on occasion that it told me that I was on your tracks along the coast road, she said dejectedly "Oh, don't think I could stop it!" Too late, I thought, I've done it now!

We turned into the wind, and felt that the leg muscles groan as they took the strain. The famous white windmill at Lytham gleamed in the sun and so did I. .... with perspiration. The mood was lightened by a rider who shouted to his riding mate, " I think I'm getting my second wind". I thought, "So am I mate, the first came from eating my lunch in a hurry, and the second is coming straight off the Irish Sea!"

At long last we turned off the road, with its wind and sand, and were on a more sheltered one running along the promenade. To Blackpool; and I passed what I took to be a father and daughter, riding side by side. He was supporting her back and giving her a push with one hand, as she struggled against the wind, and there was something quite touching about the determination of the child and the support of the adult which summed up the spirit of the ride.

Finally, at 1.38pm, after a long slog, the finish line with its huge white banner and flanking crowds of well-wishers came into view. A couple of bottles of water, an energy bar and my coveted completion certificate were the rewards for sixty miles of pedalling, and it certainly felt good to ease out of the saddle and rest. The sun was easing aching muscles all over the finish area, as riders and their smoozing bikes stretched out on the grass with friends and relatives, and there were so many people in a small space that it was hard to reach the bike hire tents to book my place on the 2-30 coach to Manchester. True to form some rain fell as we headed Botoon and Manchester itself, although briefly. As usual, I helped to unload the bikes from the transport lorry and felt sorry for the owner of the last bike off, which had a flat tyre, which meant him repairing it before he could get home. I eventually got home at 5.38, after what seemed an eternity, and every traffic light seemed to be on red! For those interested in figures, the total distance covered was 89.3 miles (including the outward and return journey) from Manchester to Bury), with an average speed of 10.5 mph, ironically (very ironically!) I donated Blood Donors today and found that my iron count just one point too low to donate, due to, the nurse felt, my exertions on Sunday. This has never happened before, but then again I don't think I've ever had an appointment for medical purposes. Still it was a perfect excuse for a bottle of Guinness-purely for desolating the event. Still you understand! The nurse, I saw was also a riding tandem cyclist, and said "Don't worry, just eat plenty of red meat, broccoli and red wine" Giving that I'm a vegetarian, I took the red wine prescription.

response to an Emergency Appeal by another charity, in order for them to purchase some adjoining land to use as a release site. This land will also be managed for us as deemed as the final Reserve. We will be able to publish full details of this as soon as the field bits of paperwork are through – we all know only too well how long red tape takes to sort out!

## Bluebell Wood

A final picture to round off the year; taken in May this year on the Home Reserve at Rochdale. Although shown in black and white here, it was an amazing sight to behold and can be seen in full colour on our Website. Of course as well as creating a beautiful view for all to see, the flowers also attract insects, which in turn provide food for the multitude of wild birds for which the Home Reserve is their home and sanctuary.

May I wish each and every one of you a very peaceful New Year.

Nigel.

**Three Owls Bird Sanctuary and Reserve**  
Affiliated to the Jean Sainsbury Animal Welfare Trust

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Nigel S Fowler (1978 to present day)  
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