

Burbage Parish Council Newsletter



On the verge of extinction... or salvation?

ROADSIDE verges, we are told, have become the last refuge of almost half of Britain's entire native flora.

Along with remnants of land no-one much wants because they are unsuitable for building houses or no good for intensively growing eatable things, these linear strips are the last hope for many species.

Plantlife, a group which is trying to persuade councils to manage their verges for wildlife as well as for people, has produced chilling statistics to armour its arguments. It reveals that about a third of the 1,346 plant species in Britain are at risk of extinction. More than 700 types of wildflower are hanging on in verges. They used to grow in our meadows, but compared with the rural and urban scene in the 1940s, a pathetic 3 per cent of those survive.

And every county is suffering: Warwickshire is losing two species every year; in Northamptonshire 74 species have vanished since 1970. So will councils listen to the warnings and spare those verges?

You may have noticed, in the past couple of years, that highway verges are not being cut as closely, nor as frequently, as they used to be. There's a cost-reducing consideration, of course, but those local authorities going the extra mile and actually planting wildflower verges surely deserve approval. When highways

factors are involved, parish councils like Burbage have no powers towards verge treatments. It wouldn't argue against putting first the safety of road users, on wheel or foot; at roundabouts and road junctions, the cow parsley just has to get the chop. Nor would it deny the wishes of most residents to keep our urban roadsides neat and tidy. But it would applaud the recognition of the role verges can play in preserving both flora and fauna.

Many wildflowers, you see, just love the long, rank grass and damp undergrowth alongside hedges, roadsides and field boundaries – prime areas for the attentions of grounds maintenance crews, though a top target, too, for people who don't care about making a midden of our country. When the brushcutting gangs have been busy, who hasn't been shocked to see the carpet of car-flung litter exposed on verges and central refuges? Anyone who cares about the environment wishes it wasn't so... but most would surely prefer a view of ox-eye daisies to ketchup-smear pizza boxes.

• Burbage parish council has been trialling bio-diversity strips at two maintained recreation sites in the village, leaving some boundary sections unmown. The main aim here is to give small creatures, particularly hedgehogs, a safe corridor to move from area to area. But when our grounds maintenance operators leave a swathe of uncut undergrowth as they use brushcutter or mower, keeping a sharp lookout for hedgehogs, it may additionally be a bit of wildlife TLC that can help native wildflowers to survive.

So they will watch with interest what comes up from research in a flora survey which includes the central Woodland Avenue allotment site in Burbage. This summer and autumn, Graham Calow will be carrying out the study for the Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland's new atlas of flora, due out in 2020. Working in a 2km square grid in the heart of the village, his findings will contribute to a publication revealing what plant species still survive in Britain, which ones are endangered... and what is lost and gone, maybe forever. He will be looking for examples of arable weeds and wildflowers rather than cultivated crops, recording information and taking pictures.



For kids who want to hit sixes, cricket lovely cricket

CHILDREN aged five to eight who are handy with a bat and ball are being invited to a great first experience of the nation's summer sport.

Burbage Parish Council's playing field at Hinckley Road, home to Burbage Cricket Club, is among hundreds of centres across England Wales accredited as All Stars Cricket centres, running an eight-week programme that will develop cricketing skills among children who enrol.

The sessions, set up by the England Wales Cricket Board and starting this month, will be hosted by the Burbage club in a safe environment where youngsters can enjoy active sport as well as make new friends. Every boy and girl registering will get a pack of cricket goodies including a bat and ball, backpack, water bottle, shirt and cap.

Contact atkinschris@hotmail.co.uk for further details of the Burbage programme. To register your child visit www.ecb.co.uk/play/all-stars.

BURBAGE BEST? It's what we've always said

BELIEVE that Burbage could qualify as Britain's Village of the Year, 2017?

Get in quick and you could see the community included in a shortlist of locations that will be whittled down further before judges decide what each contender has going for it. The reward is a TV filming role and a £10,000 community cash prize, in a challenge being thrown out in a new Channel 4 series being made by Reef Television, an independent production company responsible for the Hidden Villages programmes presented by Penelope Keith. She will host the new show and says: *"We must continue to celebrate our unique and wonderful rural communities. So much of our media is urban-centred. We forget about the rest of the population at our peril. I like the fact that when I walk down my village street we smile and say 'Hello, how are you.'"*

She is urging proud villagers and the close-knit communities of which they are part to come forward and seek a nomination to appear on the programme. Anyone can make the application, supplying basic information (closing date midnight, 14th May) to www.villageoftheyear.co.uk. A panel will look at selected locations with a filming team to arrive at a shortlist. Organisers say it's far from being a simple beauty contest. The show will examine a range of criteria including appearance, history and heritage, village events and activities and visitor experience.

Could you be a friend to a forlorn planter?

UNLESS volunteers can be found to care for them, the future of planters that brighten up the scene in some Burbage streets looks bleak. The parish council maintains colourful displays at major locations in the parish, but community help is needed to keep the show going in barrels, boxes and hanging baskets previously looked after by volunteers. The council can supply the materials and take care of main watering duties. If you could assist in planting up, dead-heading and keeping the displays looking their best please contact the Parish Office. Since nothing looks more forlorn than an empty planter, they may have to be otherwise removed.

Looking for weedy sorts at Woodland Avenue allotments

BY one unofficial definition at least, a weed is just a plant growing in the wrong place. But in any polite conversation with a Woodland Avenue allotment gardener, dockweeds and celandines perhaps aren't the sort of words to mention in the same breath as asparagus and purple sprouting broccoli.

Only joking... there are lots of good plantsmen (and as many women) who care as passionately about what comes up through the soil they till, edible or not, as they do about the conservation of Britain's flora and of the birds, bees, butterflies and animals taken into the same custody of their care through what they do (and sometimes don't do) in flower, fruit and vegetable plot.

COUNCIL and committee meetings at the Millennium Hall in Britannia Road normally start at 7.30pm and follow this rota, subject to change if clashing with Bank Holidays: First Monday of month – Parish Council; second Monday, Planning Committee; third Monday, Finance & General Purposes Committee; fourth Monday, Planning Committee. Meetings in the weeks ahead: Monday, 8th May, Planning (6.30pm); Parish Council AGM (7.30pm). Monday, 15th May, Finance and General Purposes (7.30pm). Monday, 22nd May, Planning, Monday, 5th June, Parish Council. Monday, 12th June, Planning. Monday, 19th June, Finance and General Purposes. Monday, 26th June, Planning.