

www.salisburywatermeadows.org.uk

all things from eternity are of like forms and come round in a circle

Marcus Aurelius

We did not know at the time but the report in the Spring Newsletter was Mike Gallagher's last because he and Sue have decided to move nearer their family, their gain is our loss. At the time of writing (17 July) they are still here but a sold sign has appeared on their house! I am sure everyone will join in thanking Mike for his support of the Friends generally and handling the web site in particular. The quotation above reflects the fact that having launched the site with Dieter Schulz in 2004 (Newsletter 26) here I am again. We relaunched in early 2007, employing Kirsty Looms as Webmaster and I have more recently taken over from Mike Gallagher as – for want of a better term, perhaps Editor.

A written report about a website seems a tautological oddity. The name of a site has to be strongly promoted but then it should speak for itself. So, if you want to know what has been happening lately - log-on to the title above. That of course is unfair to members who cannot or do not wish to join the e-world. So, leaving out routine updates and minor alterations here are the most recent major developments

- navigability has been improved by creating a side menu containing all the pages – the top drop down menus are still there if you want to use them
- Kirsty has been able to negotiate many more links so that the number has increased dramatically to 44 - wildlife agencies 7, academic 4, local tourism and heritage 16 and local accommodation 17
- the first four months of John Vickerman's bird survey can be seen and by the time you read this there may be sightings for the eight months to August
- a number of what can broadly be called 'history or archaeological' pieces from past newsletters are transferred for permanent retention as part of 'published papers'
- and the really big one – the Framework Management Plan, several years in gestation, 18 sections and 17 annexes. This is a really worthwhile and comprehensive document but don't try too much at once. I recommend Annex V, first drafted in, I think, 2005. For those who know about these things the whole document can be downloaded as a 2MB pdf.

It is easy (and therefore cheap) to find out how many 'hits' we receive and how many 'pages' have been viewed. In February 2007 when the redesigned site was launched there were 79 visits and 542 pages viewed. The low number of visits might suggest mainly members alerted to the new facility. A year later the figures were 527 visits and 1378 pages. After extending our links earlier this year the figures for April were 1580 and 2793 and by May 1838 and 4303. In mid July both hits and pages are on course to at least maintain that level. Of these the origin of some 50% is "unresolved/unknown", the remainder from 13 countries. 11% (1628 hits) of this residue was from this country in March 2008 but since then the figure has averaged nearer 5% - month by month 672,1508, 531, and 412 by mid July.

Is this success or a disappointment, and where do we expect it to lead us? The Tourist Information Centre already promotes the Town Path route as a major Salisbury attraction and was quick to push the District Council into action when the litter problem was pointed out to them. There is clearly some room for discussion about how we might capitalize on visitors. But before that it might be useful to get a sense of how much of this activity is already generated by members.

So, finally, can I ask members who read this to respond. The original aim of the website (see no 26, Autumn 2004 - to which I will return in the next issue) was

*to inform members; help spread knowledge
of our purpose; gain more support*

Are you, the members, being informed? Here is a rather rough and ready survey

- do you actually have access to it?
- Do you actively dislike this sort of newfangled nonsense?
- have you EVER looked at the site?
- do you refer to it frequently?
- do you use it occasionally ?
- do you never access it?
- is it useful?
- if it was not there would you miss it?

To avoid disappointment I have no expectation of any replies but if you would like to tell me what you think, email cowan_m@hotmail.co.uk , subject 'web site' and half a dozen words of text in response to the above questions. Of course if you have no computer to access the website you won't be able email me but do write if you have a view – 24 Lower Street, Harnham SALISBURY SP2 8EY. Please do not phone.

*Michael Cowan
17 July 2008*