



ARDEN TRAIL UPDATE

January 2009

Happy New Year and welcome to the **Winter Arden Trail Update!**

Unbelievable as it seems, 2008 is behind us and we've now moved into the final year of this exciting project. Our Year 1 Parishes now each have their heritage interpretation art features in place – do go and take a look if you're in the area, they really are fabulous. We're surging ahead with community meetings and activities in the Year 2 Parishes, and even as I write we are welcoming our final four Parishes to the trail. It seems to have taken an age to come to Nether Whitacre, Shustoke, Maxstoke and Kingsbury, but at last we're here...and it's going to be a great year! Well there's plenty to get through, so let's get started...

First year Parishes. . . .

In mid-August, right on schedule, artist Ant Beetlestone completed and installed the Baddesley and Mancetter heritage interpretation features. Over two sunny days...how very lucky considering our summer...two carved stone benches and a birdbath were eased into place on Baddesley Common, just off Newlands Road. Several walkers passed by during the installation...and all were not only impressed with the work, but also very pleased to see that the area's natural and industrial heritage was being preserved and represented for future generations. Local resident and regular dog-walker Mrs Stout told me "I'm so glad to see that we've got something. It's really lovely...I'm going to use it and sit here every day and enjoy the views". Already local residents are placing bread around the bird bath to encourage our feathered friends to come on down and give it a try! Our Community Design Committee was involved in its design and creation from the very start and should be proud of what they helped to create for their Parish. Do try and get out on the trail and take a look and let me know what you think...you can find my contact details over the page!



Mancetter's Jubilee Quarry also has an exciting new feature for walkers to enjoy, to stop for a bite to eat, a well-earned rest or just to pause and enjoy the carvings and the simple beauty of the six carved pieces that make up the sculpture. The artist carved each piece with images and representations of Mancetter's unique ancient Roman history and Queen Boudicca – themes particularly favoured by residents and design Committee volunteers. Visit the piece and amongst others you'll see carvings of Celtic trumpet blowers announcing the charge into battle, Boudicca herself taking up arms against the oppression of the Romans, and faces representing the spirits of the dead...the ghosts that are said to march up the track, past the benches themselves. It really is a lovely, exciting piece of art. Mike Gale, Quarry Manager for Tarmac, who generously donated the stone for this piece, said "I have thoroughly enjoyed being part of this worthwhile project. What I particularly like about the sculptures is that whenever you look at them, you always seem to find something that you have not seen before".

And finally to Atherstone...after a couple of unfortunate but unavoidable delays in the creation of the Atherstone Heritage Interpretation feature, I am incredibly pleased to tell you that the sculpture is now proudly in place in the Civic Society garden on the canal towpath, near bridge 41, off the Coleshill Road. The beautiful and striking cast iron sculpture has carved plaques depicting images of the town's unique and diverse industrial heritage. From the hats adorning the top of the structure and the adders nestled in amongst the legs, to scenes of amongst others the historic ball game, the mines and the Market Square, Cannock based artists Planet Art have created a piece of such strength and presence that I hope all those that see it can't help but be impressed, and that the Atherstone community can be hugely proud of. Whilst the piece itself was being installed an elderly former employee of the old hatting factory opposite the site happened to walk past, and was incredibly emotional as she told us how pleased she was that there was now something in place to remember an industry that although once so vital to the town, has now all but disappeared.



And so if you have contributed in any way to this project...whether you've volunteered for our committees or events, attended our meetings, suggested themes for art features or joined us on walking the trail...I want to say a massive thank you, because remembering and preserving our natural and industrial heritage really does matter. Please do get in touch if you have any questions or just want to tell me what you think...I'm always pleased to hear from you. Email the project team on ardentrail@northwarks.gov.uk or call us on 01827 719219.

And so to Year Two. . . it's all happening in Ansley, Arley, Astley and Fillongley!

After the successful meetings in January and March of last year Geoff Treadwell, our rights of way and access expert, finalised the route of the trail through these Parishes and developed and confirmed the circular walks taking in each areas' unique points of interest or natural beauty. We asked local residents to join us on walks through Astley, Arley, Ansley and Ansley Common during October and despite the cold and mud we had a great show of keen walkers join us as we hit the trail for a couple of hours in the glorious countryside. We are currently working to get leaflets available for each of the Parish loops – the circular walks that leave the main trail and re-join it a little further along – and these should be ready soon to let you know how far the walks are, how easy or difficult, and what you can expect to find along the way...keep checking the Arden trail web pages at www.northwarks.gov.uk/ardentrail and I'll let you know as soon as we have these leaflets available and how you can get your copies.

Local residents who had volunteered to be involved in developing their parish's Heritage Interpretation Art Feature were invited to form committees and join us at a meeting at Fillongley Village Hall in September. We discussed the themes and ideas put forward by residents at the community meetings and used these to create a design brief inviting artists to apply for the commissions. At the end of the evening four briefs had been written and with a minimum of tweaking were advertised nationwide on popular artists' job websites asking for ideas and applications that would excite and inspire our dedicated committees to award them the contract.

On December 8th, at Wesley Hall Methodist Church in Old Arley, our shortlisted artists came from as far afield as North Yorkshire to pitch their ideas for our features. Stone carvers, metal workers, wooden totem pole creators...we had a truly memorable night watching presentations and listening to creative concepts all brought about from themes and memories that our local residents had put forward several months before. The process worked fabulously and the artists who best interpreted the feel and themes that our communities so wanted for their piece were voted for and chosen by our design committees on the night. It was certainly not an easy task...and our presenters faced some very tough questioning from the local residents present! But I'm incredibly excited by the artists who won the votes...I'm looking forward greatly to working with both our volunteer committees and the winning artists and am sure we are going to see four more brilliant pieces of interpretative art that each of our parishes can be very proud of. If you joined us on that cold and stormiest of nights last December I want to say a very big **thank you**. The weather was appalling and it meant a lot to me and the project team that you came along on the night to make sure you had your say and got the right man (or woman) for the job. Astley's commission went to the established Derbyshire artists White-Wray, Arley's to North Yorkshire's Steve Tomlinson, and Graeme Mitcheson of Castle Donington impressed both Ansley and Fillongley committees to win these two commissions. **Each of the artists will be holding a community event or workshop soon to further develop the themes and ideas already put forward for each feature.** These may involve working with local youth or elderly groups, schools, resident's associations...or any combination of the above! I'll be publicising these activities as the details are finalised, so do keep checking your local press or our Arden Trail website, or contact me with your details now and I'll make sure I invite you along to get your thoughts and have your say. We really can't do these things without you so come along and get involved...the artists and I look forward to meeting you!

Nether Whitacre, Shustoke, Maxstoke and Kingsbury. . .let's blaze your trail!

Now we've entered Year 3 of the project I'm delighted to welcome on board our four last, but by no means least, parishes! It's early days but we've lot to do and we're about to get the ball rolling. On **Tuesday February 3rd at 7.15pm at Piccadilly Community Centre, Perryman Drive, Piccadilly, Kingsbury, B78 2ER** we will be holding our First Community Event for these four parishes. We want as many local residents, community groups, the young and not so young, to come along and tell us **what you want** the North Arden Heritage Trail to do in your area. Where do you think the trail should go? Do you know a great little walk that we could develop as a loop that takes in your favourite local beauty spot, a unique industrial landscape, a little known ancient monument...? Please come along, we need your local knowledge and ideas to really bring the Trail to life in your villages. We'll also be asking you to get your creative juices flowing! Could you suggest themes, designs or memories that could be developed into a fabulous piece of outdoor art for your community? Would you like to be involved in the whole creative process, from writing the artist's brief for your heritage feature to interviewing prospective artists...developing and selecting the final design...even joining us on a studio visit to see the piece in production? Then volunteer to join the Heritage Feature Design Committee for your Parish. It really is an interesting and worthwhile experience. Lavinia, a member of the Mancetter Committee, had this to say about taking part: "The project was both interesting and enlightening and we would recommend it to be a worthwhile experience to be involved in. We enjoyed working with your team and also the other committee members. It felt good to have a voice and know your opinion counted". If you want to take part do come along on February 3rd and make sure you get your say. Alternatively give me a call and let me have your details and I'll keep you informed and invite you along every step of the way. Your voice really does count...so use it!

Thank You. . . . to our amazing volunteers!

The Arden Trail is incredibly fortunate to have some fabulous volunteers carrying out an unbelievable amount of work in the name of the trail. These groups of hard working men and women undertake vital manual tasks to improve access along the route...whether it's replacing old fashioned and impractical stiles with kissing gates, resurfacing difficult to negotiate areas, improving drainage in permanently boggy patches...their aim is to make this trail and all it's loops as enjoyable and accessible as possible for the widest numbers of users of all physical abilities. During 2008 the various teams, co-ordinated by Geoff Treadwell, our Rights of Way expert from Warwick County Council, have completed the following tasks, to name but a few...

The Thursday Volunteers - installed a bridge on the Mancetter loop at Hartshill, cleared heavy undergrowth from the footpath on the Arley loop, carried out vital drainage works and step renovation on a Hartshill footpath and installed kissing gates at Astley.

The Ansley Volunteers - Carried out way-marking and installed kissing gates on Ansley Golf Course and between Ansley Common and Ansley Village, continuing to replace stiles with gates between Church End and Ridge Lane, and install gates in Arley.

Volunteers have also completed major drainage and surfacing works on the main trail at Hartshill, as well as a large ditch crossing at Baddesley Ensor and a new footbridge and gates in Fillongley.

....PHEW!! Many thanks to all these local grafters who give their time so freely in all weathers. We're always looking for extra hands...so if you think you can spare a few hours here and there, if you want to get your boots on and get out in the fresh air doing something rewarding not only for yourself but for others too, please do get in touch. Let me have your details and come and join us in making this trail accessible and fun for all.

And finally. . . .

Do you live in any of the 12 parishes we travel through on the trail? Have you got memories of industries and lifestyles fast disappearing from our local communities? Did you once work down the mines...in the hatting industry...do you remember the sounds, the smells, the struggles of times gone by? I'm looking for your memories...would you talk to us and let me record those memories to use on our website, or in our leaflets? Let others who have no experience or re-collection of these fascinating experiences get a feel for how life used to be. If you, or someone you know, has a story to tell then I'd love to hear it. Email or call me on the contact details below and let's see if we can make your memories really work for the North Arden Heritage Trail...

Acknowledgements

We'd like to acknowledge and thank all the volunteers who have been working on the project and the project partners who have supported the project.

Volunteering opportunities will be registered with *Volunteer Centre North Warwickshire*, who can help with all aspects of volunteering. Tel: 01827 717073, email info@vcnw.org.uk or visit www.vcnw.org.uk.

Contact Details

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