

# History of the Spinney

The spinney is approximately 2¼ acres. It is mainly wet woodland bordered by a stream on one side and a ditch on the other.

It was a millennium gift to the people of the parish of Whilton from Joan and Griff Davies of Roughmoor Grounds. It was decided that the smaller, drier part of the spinney on the right of the footpath from the village should be a picnic/play area and the other part be for conservation.

It had not been managed for many years and the commercial crop of approximately 170 Italian Black Poplars, planted for matchwood, had overgrown and over-matured to the extent that they were dangerous and needed felling. There were about 100 native trees in the spinney which would obviously grow better when the poplars were felled.

Volunteers from the village cleared and burnt undergrowth and made two paths through the spinney. Even at that stage, flowers and plants, mostly water-loving, were being seen, especially in spring and summer. A monthly plant survey was carried out and eight zones marked off for more detailed observation. A pond was dug out at the far end of the spinney, sponsored by Daventry District Council.

Foot and Mouth disease curtailed efforts for a time but arrangements were made in summer 2001 to have the trees felled. This was a major task and made rather a mess of the spinney on top of the neglect due to Foot and Mouth. Volunteers did a great job clearing up in the field where the trees were dragged after felling.

More tidying and clearing has taken place and paths are now being re-formed, plant survey areas were reclaimed and new ones positioned where interesting plants grew.

Since the felling of the trees, the native species are growing better and more flowers have appeared due to the extra light.

More wet areas had appeared and we had a board walk installed by BTCV during the summer of 2002 over the worst parts. Clearing the ditch and pond are ongoing tasks.

In the late autumn of 2002 thirty three young trees (Willow, Hazel, Field Maple and Ash) were purchased from BTCV and planted. Fortunately all the trees were sponsored by residents and connections of Whilton which gave us a small profit to purchase more trees in autumn 2003 and to replace any that may have suffered due to the extremely dry summer 2003. Most seem to have thrived against all odds.

We had our Official Opening in April 2003 which we combined with an Easter Egg Hunt followed by Easter type refreshments. 50 adults and children attended and the event was enjoyed by all.

Three benches have been made from wood lying in the spinney and put together without glue, nails or screws and are placed in the Play Area. We hope to make more for other parts of the spinney later this year.

We are now trying to identify some of the grasses, bromes, reeds and sedges which are abundant in the spinney.

In spring 2004 we planted 33 more young trees ordered from BTCV and all have either been sponsored or were re-allocated for the few failures from 2003. There were also 10 tiny blackthorn planted to increase the undercover.

It has been noted that this year self-sown native trees such as Willows and Ash are growing well and filling in the open spaces where the Italian Black Poplars had previously grown. Three Horse Chestnuts also look a lot healthier with increased light.

*21<sup>st</sup> June 2004*