

Mudlarks Restore Ilam's Dew Pond

By John Boyle, Mudlarks NTV

In the sheep grazed parkland behind Ilam Hall, part of the Peak District Estate's White Peak Area, is a large dew pond. About six years ago a fenced wooden platform was built next to it to enable safe pond dipping by many visiting school children each year.

Ken Sharples, the Community and Learning Officer, leads children as they net specimens from the dew pond, often to compare them with ones caught in the nearby river Manifold. The leeches, water fleas, water boatmen etc. are temporarily taken back to the Learning Centre beneath Ilam Hall. By using the projecting microscope the children can see images of the living creatures a thousand times larger on the screen.

Unfortunately, by 2010, the dew pond was choked with mud and reed-mace. Pond dipping was much less successful or enjoyable and biodiversity in the dew pond was reducing. Mudlarks National Trust Volunteers accepted the challenge to clear the unwanted mud and vegetation.



Before Restoration work began. Photo by John Boyle

Dark Peak Area staff willingly loaned a pump to lower the water level and tools to dig out the dew pond during the dormant autumn and winter seasons of 2010. Mudlarks NTV minimised disturbance around the dew pond and left some

mud and reed-mace in place to preserve habitat and encourage insects and other pond life to re-colonise it.

By the spring of 2011 school groups were back at Ilam and pond dipping in the restored dew pond. Ken Sharples said recent specimen catches showed that insects were flourishing once more in the dew pond and biodiversity was increasing.



After the work was finished. Photo by John Boyle

Future cooperation between the NT staff and volunteers to establish a regular maintenance programme will prevent the dew pond from becoming overgrown again. It will mean that this valuable learning resource is always available for visiting school parties and biodiversity in the dew pond continues to improve.

If you would like to do practical conservation work in the Peak District please contact

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to join us on our regular workdays.