

**NHS [Nice 'n' Handy with a Spade]
Visit to Kadoorie Farm
4 March 2007**

After a slightly delayed bus journey due to diversions for the Standard Chartered Marathon in Central and Wanchai, our group arrived at the Kadoorie Farm and Botanic Gardens just before 10.30am. Luckily, the dark skies and rain which had appeared during the journey cleared shortly after our arrival.

Our first favourable impression of Kadoorie was then experienced as we visited the loos! These were designed such that the top of the cistern was a wash basin. Upon flushing, the tap automatically released water into this basin, and after washing your hands, this "grey [ie used] water drained from the basin to fill up the cistern and was thus reused later.

So we boarded Kadoorie's shuttle bus to take us to the upper farm feeling this was a suitable start to a day of environmental do-gooding. En route, however, our guide Snoopy introduced us to some horrific figures with regard to how to make good our carbon footsteps: for a flight to London, we would need to plant 47 trees! and since trees become less effective at carbon replacement after the age of 80, the process needs to be ongoing. This sobering message made us realise that, whilst our participation in Kadoorie's tree-planting programme was a step in the right direction, it was a small step.

At the aptly named Long Tank, we disembarked from the bus and our tools and seedlings and the all-important fertilizer were waiting for us on the side of the road. We later learnt that they had been transported up from the lower farm by the two mules from the Lantau Ngong Ping Skyrail fame. We packed the seedlings in little blue back packs and, after being taught how to carry a pick without damaging the rear end of the person in front, walked uphill for 15 mins or so. We were able to enjoy fantastic scenery since the weather had cleared and at our highest point had a panoramic view down over Sek Kong and the old runway. Snoopy then demonstrated how to plant the seedlings, making it look easy, and we eagerly donned our gloves and had a go. We planted approximately 6 each so a total of about 120 trees. Everyone found it enjoyable, being quite a novelty for us city dwellers, but quite hard work.

Feeling very self-righteous and happy because the sun was coming out and we could have an outdoor lunch after all, we set off down a return path via some 4 year old growth, the sight of which encouraged us, and many vowed to return to see what ours looked like in a few years.

What is it about having a pick thrown over your shoulder and walking in a line that makes grown people sing "Hi ho, hi ho, it's off to lunch we go....." ?

Our shuttle bus then took us to some washrooms and then up to Kwun Yan Shum summit for a rather rushed lunch. Following that, we had a quick visit to the Kadoorie Brothers memorial and the orchid farm but unfortunately at that time of the year, no orchids were in bloom. This was compensated by many trees all over the farm being in bloom, a beautiful sight, with the daffodil tree being a favourite [really - you should have seen it!]

At 3pm we met Executive Director Andy Brown and Chief Vet Gary Ades on the lower farm. Gary showed us a brand new enclosure where they intend to keep orphaned animals, including two barking deer. At present, a badger ferret, some squirrels and two huge wild boars occupy the enclosure. Apparently the number of boars is increasing considerably in the territory. Feelings were mixed as to whether we would like to meet one on one of our hikes. We were then treated to a visit

to the restricted area not generally made available to the public. This included the animal hospital [WARC] with its current inmates, Polly Parrot with a neck bandage, and a very small orphaned fruit bat.

Finally, we were shown the holding area close by with several rhesus monkeys and one white faced gibbon. The fact that it looked like a cuddly teddy bear probably explains why some foolish people had smuggled it into Hong Kong to keep as a pet, then later abandoned it at Kadoorie's gates when it had grown too big to keep in your average HK flat. Although we were unable to see the gold coin turtles that are held there, we heard their story from Gary. So many of these attractive turtles have been trapped in local streams and are sold for big money, that the species was facing extinction. There is little that can be done to stop the trappers and the trade, but thanks to Kadoorie's rescue and breed plan, they now have good numbers of these turtles at the farm which they are waiting to release back into the wild, probably in ten years time, when there will be none left in the streams. Hopefully the species will be able to reestablish itself.



The day ended with the presentation of our two cheques, one in support of the tree-planting programme and the other in support of the WARC. Andy thanked the Society for its support and invited us back for another visit in the future. Many members expressed their wish to go again, both to plant more trees and to visit other areas of the farm. I shall endeavour to arrange this next year, but meanwhile, if any Members wish to get a group of friends together to go tree planting again, the relevant booking form is attached separately. Alternatively, individuals are welcome to join this activity on the first Sunday of the month which is a Nature Fun Day. Please see the farm's website at <http://www.kfbg.org>. Go to Education and Projects for more details.

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