

CARISBROOKE RESERVATION

The 11.9 acres of Carisbrooke Reservation were purchased by the Town of Wellesley for conservation purposes in 1973. At the same time the Wellesley Conservation Council, Inc., a private land trust purchased an abutting 1.3 acre strip in Weston called the George Lienau Memorial Trail. It also abuts a large parcel of Weston conservation land and connects to the Weston trail system. Together these lands protect the Cold Stream Brook watershed.

The reservation is named Carisbrooke after a castle in England. The name was chosen by a housing developer who bought the land in 1931. In 1938 construction stopped and the remaining land was sold to MIT, from whom the Town acquired it.

The main entrance of the reservation is at Glen Brook Road, off Glen Road, near the Weston line. The reservation's trails were first seen on maps prepared around 1928. At that time the wetland near the entrance was a pond. Sedges and rushes at the water's edge caught soil and debris that formed soil. They were followed by plants that like wet soil. As the plants took over, the entire pond became filled in. Recently the pond was restored as part of drainage improvements, and was named after the Assistant Town Engineer who designed the project.

The stone walls found in the reservation indicate that this land was once cleared for agriculture. The soils in New England are very stony and farmers built walls around their fields from the rocks that had to be removed for farming. The types of trees in the reservation are also an indication that the land was cleared not too long ago. There are a great number of Birch and Aspen in these woods. These trees are typically found in a young forest. When a field is no longer planted or grazed, sun-loving shrubs move in among the grasses. They are followed by Birch, Poplar and Aspen, whose seedlings need sun to survive. They are replaced by shade-loving species such as Red Maple, Hickory, White Pine and Red Oak. Many young Oaks and Maples are growing along the path, a sign that the composition of the woods is changing.

The twigs, dead leaves, decaying branches and pine needles that lie on the forest floor are a very important part of the energy cycle. They are fed upon by bacteria. The bacteria break down the nutrients that are captured in the plant material and return them to the soil. The nutrients are then free to nourish the plants, which in turn feed a wide variety of birds, animals, and insects. The decomposition of this organic matter is also important because it enriches the soil and provides humus which acts as a sponge to soak up rain water and reduce rapid runoff and flooding.

Many of the plants along the trail are not natives, especially near the houses. Plants such as Winged Euonymus (Burning Bush) and Barberries have been planted in gardens and their seeds have been carried to the reservation by birds.

There are two geologic features of interest along the trail. The first is the outcropping of exposed granite bedrock. The other is an exposed sedimentary rock which has a red color caused by iron compounds. Notice the vertical lines in the rock. These are actually layers that were deposited horizontally when the rock was being formed. The rock was pushed upwards at a angle by movement in the earth's crust.

With its pond, wetlands and stands of mixed hardwoods, the reservation provides an excellent habitat for birds and wildlife.