



Oct 2014  
to  
December 2014



Our website:  
[www.friends-of-rcp.co.uk](http://www.friends-of-rcp.co.uk)  
Ranger's Office  
0115 921 5865

Issue 65

# Friends Newsletter



**Well Done Everyone**  
**Winners for the 8th Year!**

# RHS IT'S YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD

The Royal Horticultural Society and East Midlands in Bloom are proud to present

## Friends of Rushcliffe Country Park

with a 2014 It's Your Neighbourhood Award of

**Level 5: OUTSTANDING**

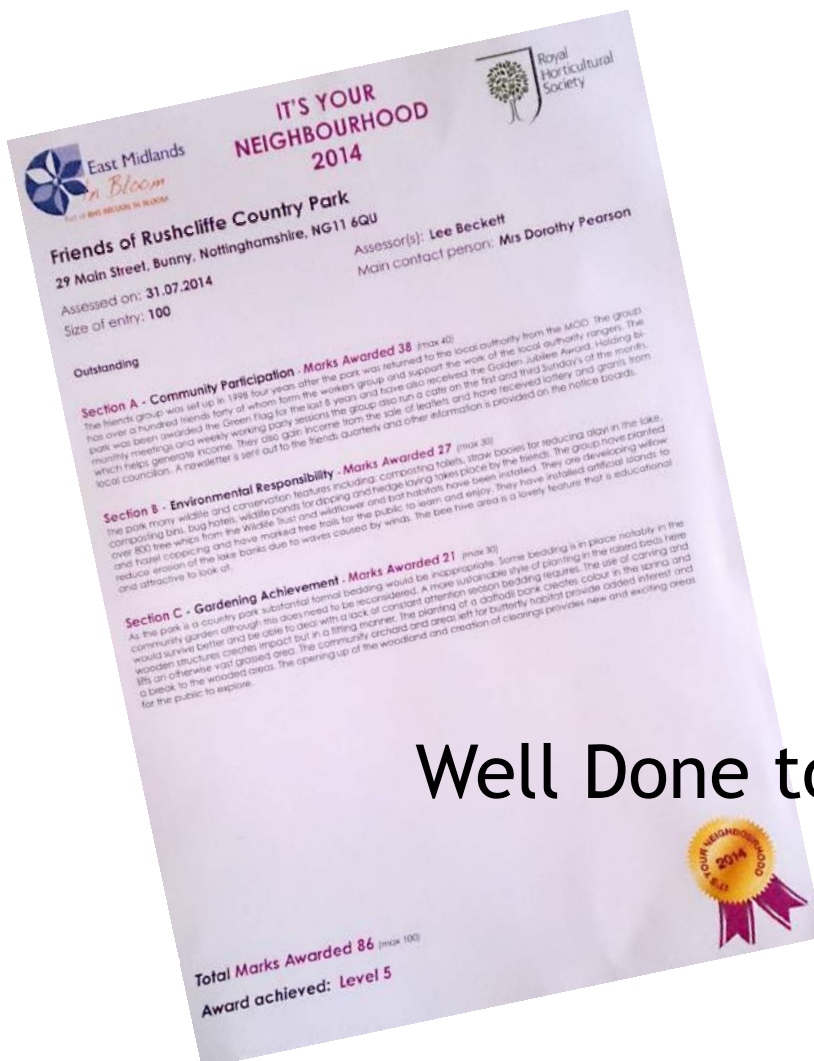
Royal Horticultural Society President



EAST MIDLANDS IN BLOOM CELEBRATES  
**50 YEARS**  
RHS BRITAIN IN BLOOM



Sharing the best in Gardening



Jean and Sue have just collected this award from 'East Midlands in Bloom'

A few weeks ago Dorothy and Jean showed a judge around the park who was suitably impressed.

We attained the highest level 5

Outstanding!!!!

Well Done to Everyone

# Timber!



Another activity has been added to the sensory trail.

I call it 'The Timber Totter'. Inspired by the well established sport of Tottering Dominoes, I thought we could have our own version. There are 28 'trees' on two levels and if you're lucky they will all totter from a single push---as you jump about with glee! Shouting 'TIMBER'

Roger

**New Photo Hunt**

All the blue photos are around the Education Centre

All the red photos are around the Sensory Trail

All the yellow photos are in Gibbies Wood

**The Photos**  
When you

These numbers s  
how many phot  
have been take  
in an area.

**Start**

**Photo Hunt**

An addition to our popular 30p activity sheets is the new Photo Hunt. There are 27 close up photos of sculptures and artwork around the park to identify.

Roger

## Mammal Tails Tales - Helping out with the summer survey

It had been a cold rainy January morning when Zoe asked for volunteers to help with the annual summer mammal survey in the park. I was instantly hooked at having a chance to get so close to these little critters that use the park more than we do but are rarely glimpsed. When I popped my name down to help little did I know what a fantastic time I had waiting for me, and it all started one sunny Sunday afternoon in July.

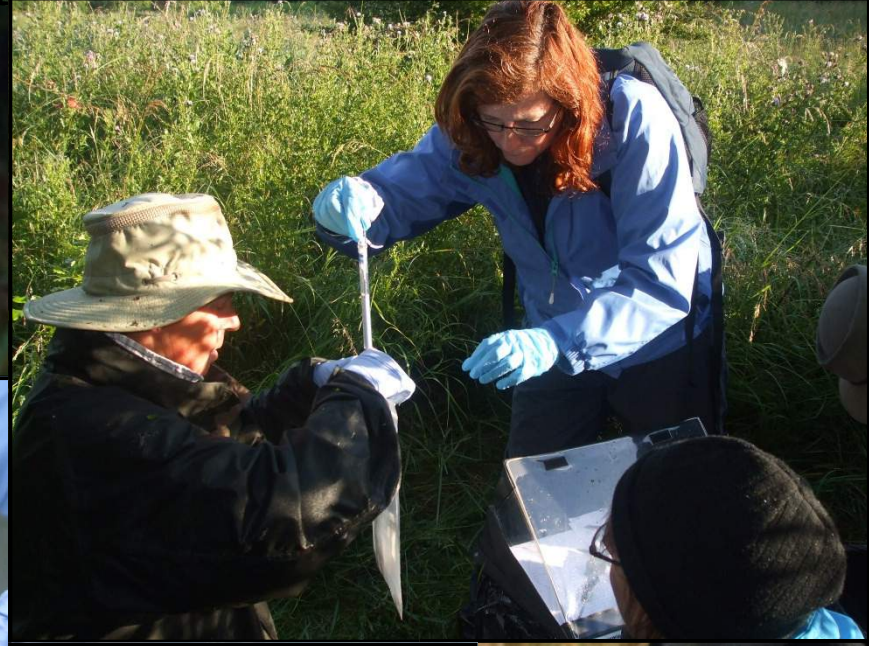
When I arrived at the park it was straight into preparing the 60 mammal traps, all new to me, so I learned a lot. Zoe showed me how they were assembled, which took me a bit of time to get used to, then make a nest with straw and fill with extremely tasty fresh fruit and berries and a handful of casters (juicy fly larvae!) to create the perfect little hotel for the night if they wandered in. Zoe had selected the key areas for this year's survey, the seasonal pond and the Friends' Field, so with the truck loaded it was off to lay them around the park. As we were choosing where to place them my advice was to think like a little 'un and look at what paths they would take. This basically involved crawling under hedges and bushes and in my case being pronged by blackthorn and getting tangled in a bramble bush in a particularly ambitious trap lay! Spiked but very happy it was a thoroughly enjoyable afternoon and topped off by seeing 3 grass snakes basking in the sun in the seasonal pond. Amazing, a first for me and something I certainly won't forget.

We won't dwell on the 5am start at the park next morning, and the 4 volunteers arrived bleary eyed but ready for action. As we set out to the seasonal pond to check the first traps the light was catching the early mist over the lake. It was so silent and peaceful, punctuated only by some beautiful birdsong. It was very special to see the park in such a different way. Then it was to work. One person was in charge of writing all the information, then each trap was checked in number order to see if it had been tripped. If so it was a case of identifying what visitor we had and the recording began. We caught wood mice, common shrews, field voles and, quite a rarity I was told, bank voles. Each one was weighed (in a plastic bag!) and measured for length, gender checked, which can be easier said than done I discovered!, and taking a tiny clipping to identify them if we caught them again so we could account for true numbers. Zoe was brilliant at carefully getting them out of the traps and into the bag for recording after which we gently let them go and they quickly disappeared into the undergrowth. We had to be fast to ensure minimum disturbance to each animal and we worked brilliantly as a team, like a well-oiled machine! The survey was being done over 3 early mornings so each used trap was refilled with new straw and fresh food ready for the next day (Jill, you're an expert!), although all of the traps were kept closed during the day and opened in late evening to ensure any animal was only inside for the shortest possible time. Despite needing a very loud alarm clock by day 3 I absolutely loved being involved in helping out. We laughed a lot every day and in a mini competition between Zoe and I on whose traps had the most catches I'm pleased to announce it was a draw! In fact the whole survey was a tremendous success - on day 1 we recorded 17 captures, the best first day ever I believe, and it only got better, We recorded 29 on day 2 and a whopping 42 on the final day. Overall, excluding recaptures we recorded 72 different animals, with a good mix of types across both sites, a figure which provides strong evidence of a very healthy and well managed park.

The whole thing was a fantastic experience. I know the other new recruits to this years survey, Jan and Steve, really enjoyed it too. We all had the chance to have a go at each task involved in recording and releasing but for me it was the experience of handling these little critters that was the stand-out thing. What a privilege to hold an animal in its own environment, something you so rarely see but is so vital to the health and diversity of the park. And they made me laugh a lot, from the field mice who are startlingly good at jumping and when feeling annoyed stick out their enormous teeth to the extremely agile vole escapees who expertly thwarted numerous humans trying to keep hold of something so little. But I also learned so much about how to identify the different mammals too. Their eyes and ears are a great way to check what they are but I also learned the amazing differences in their tails, and that for me is the long and the short of it.

Am I doing it next year? My name's already down.

Sue Woods



# Wytham September 2014

We met in Oxfordshire ready and able to start work at 9am on the Monday. The first job was to remove an old fence, then cut back and crown lift the wood around the old fence line ready to put in a new one. Roger proved more than adept at driving the Ute and especially enjoyed the radio, though he couldn't then hear Kevin's anguished cries to stop, as Roger got carried away with the old fencing! Later that day we cleared back a hedge line - enough to see the wood for the trees. On Tuesday we set up the new fence once the posts had been forced in by Nick's tractor post putter in.





On Wednesday we drove to a part we hadn't been to before (Marley Wood Entrance by Botley Lodge) to tidy up and re-fence a badly made fence (which doesn't go with Wytham ethics). The area to be fenced is used by a forest school where kids can run around and enjoy den building, coppicing or anything else away from a school environment. It was so far off the little road and down a grass track that we thought the kids would imagine they were lost in the wilderness!

We took the old fencing out then put the posts back by hand in the right places. We had to cut some trees down to make sure that the new fence was straight. We also cleared the path near there to allow access to a field then built a revetment to stop people and tractors falling down into a drainage ditch. The cut down branches etc. would be useful for the forest school.

On Thursday we went back and put the fencing up with new wire. This all took longer than we thought it would as on two parts of the fencing the strainer posts came out under tension and had to be replaced. A very smart gate was put in to make a proper entrance to the forest school. We all thought we'd done a good job as everything looked clear and open and neat.

We had lovely weather, the best ever we thought. We ate out twice and Roger cooked his famous pancakes on the evening campfire which were delicious. He really has improved with practice! All 9 of us enjoyed our time at Wytham and I think the home team were pleased with what we'd done. We know that there's a gate to be done next year, so roll on May 2015!

Janine



## Seasonal Ranger says.....

Working at a country park through the summer - what could be better? Hmm, perhaps working at a country park through the summer, while everyone else is still at work? It's not that it isn't lovely to see all the good people of the borough enjoying themselves in the sunshine, but they can be a bit messy and noisy and bleed quite a lot.

There was a fair amount of carnage on the 4X track and skate ramp and various scuffed knees to patch up in the first week or so of the school holidays. Things seemed to calm down fairly quickly though giving me time to concentrate on entertaining peoples children for them with pond dips and mini beast safaris once again. Steve Brown was good enough to take charge of the den building sessions for us, leaving Mick and I free to offer a wealth of fascinating information on our invertebrate selection available in the educational woodland.

These sessions went well and put a few quid back in the piggy bank so we are now looking forward to a couple of slightly spooky half term den building/halloweenish mornings at the end of October.

As for my personal development - my practical skills have continued to improve and I have 'worn out' (that's what's been happening and I'm sticking to that) a number of pieces of equipment. I'm all trained and ready to use Zoe's - our new tractor, so looking forward to that. And, as I'm sure you've all noticed, my interpersonal and leadership skills have really reached new heights!?

So into the autumn with you for a bit - making hay while the sun shines (and it really has hasn't it?). I'll be around during the winter now and then to do a bit of woodland work and hopefully see you all again next year. Keep up the good work.

Chris.



## Bee Update

Following the demise of our bees in 2013 due to an invasion of wasps, the new hive produced a good quantity and quality of honey.

We filled and sold 56 jars and hope next year to start another hive.  
Helen



## Millfield Community Orchard



Less than two years after my last report I have been asked to write another; some of our friends are rather impatient for the growing of apples!



In early 2013 we planted the remaining forty seven trees to join the five already planted in 2012. These new trees were bought as maidens since very young trees tend to establish better than two year old trees. All the orchard trees are on a semi dwarfing rootstock so that it should be easy to pick the crop. Two growing seasons on, most of our trees are thriving well and all are still alive.

This year we suffered some aphid damage but ladybirds followed by their larvae arrived naturally and dealt with the problem. So far we have avoided the use of pesticides. I think that we are still on schedule for a small number of apples in 2016.

We have also planted a hedge along the North edge of the orchard. This is mainly hawthorn but we have included a natural looking selection of other hedging shrubs. We are especially grateful to Zoe for her work on the hedge.

Also in the hedge at eleven yard intervals we have planted standard trees. These are mostly the sort of trees that one would expect to see in a Nottinghamshire hedge, however nine of them are apple interlopers from the West Country and Normandy. These nine are not desert or culinary apples but a selection of bitter sweet and pure sharp apples. They are growing on a vigorous rootstock to produce hedgerow standards so I don't expect to make much cider from them until 2018 .

J Youngs





## **Our New edition!**

**A BIG thank you to the friends for sharing the cost so that we can purchase a compact tractor, mower and tipping carriage box. Above was her first outing cutting the buggy tracks in the Friends Field. A positive joy only taking an hour compared to several hours with a hand propelled mower!**

**Myself, Keith, Chris and Mike Rust have all passed a day's competency training, so we are now all a go.**

**The Tractor will not only be used to mow the buggy tracks, but also the Orchard and regularly top areas where we have removed encroaching blackthorn. This will help to prevent it from re-establishing and allow grasses and wildflowers to return.**

**We have almost completed our annual hay cut, with just the lakeside willow, Gibbies Coppice areas and the end of G4 to cut and rake off. Once done we will then use the tractor to rotovate the areas where annual seeding of wildflower mixes will take place.**

**Zoe**



### Rushcliffe Nature Conservation Forum

On Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> September Margaret, Janet, John Young, John Elwell and myself attended a Nature Conservation Forum at the National Water Sports Centre at Holme Pierrepont. This was a day long Forum attended by about 50 people and included a lunch break and delicious buffet. The day was very interesting with several people from different groups giving talks on Conservation and creating new wild life habitats.

The first speaker was Stephanie Hilborne, Chief Executive of the Wildlife Trusts. She gave a stimulating and passionate speech on the work of Wildlife Trusts. One item in particular was an obvious and important point in getting children involved in conservation. This made me wonder if we could do more at the Country Park other than the one day a month devoted to the younger generation.

The other speakers were equally interesting in their field , a talk on Identifying Rushcliffe's Living Landscape Project which was an update on Rushcliffe's Biodiversity Opportunity Mapping exercise was very enlightening. Talks on Bunny Wood, Swifts in Kinnoulton, The Hook at Lady Bay, Friends of West Bridgford Country Park, and Bingham's Linear Park followed.

The final talk, was about the Skylarks Nature reserve in and around the old Adbolton Lane Gravel Works, which culminated in a visit to the site. A large digger was working away, moving soil around to create various habitats to attract different species of birds. All in all a very interesting day which was the first of hopefully a yearly event.

Well done Rushcliffe.

Dorothy

## Work Days

The Friends' work days will be held every Wednesday and Saturday. Meet at the Rangers' Office at 9.30 am.  
New volunteers always welcome

Registered Charity No 1079665

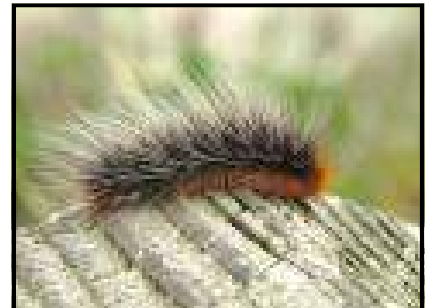
## Wildlife Update

Since June 14 more species have been identified on the park, mostly as a result of Holiday pond dips and bug hunts, although there are a few which were found at other times. For instance Chris found a species of fungus with a sinister life cycle. This infects flies which the chemical messenger in the fungus forces to climb to the top of grasses or bushes, then to spread out their wings and rear pair of legs and then die. The fungal fruiting bodies then sprout from between the segments of the fly and shed their spores on to other flies in the area.

During the last 30 years the population of a (formerly) common moth called Garden Tiger has dropped by at least 80% so it was a surprise to find a larva galloping across a path. The larvae are called 'woolly bears' and were previously found everywhere. As this was the first record for this species on the park, adults must be here even though we have not seen them.

Lastly, the donation of a Contorted Willow brought the number of tree species to 71. This tree was planted out in the shelter-belt and is doing well.

Mick.



## Dates for your Diary

Wednesday 5th November FoRCP Meeting 1.30pm RCP

Wednesday 7th January 2015 FoRCP Committee Meeting 1.30pm RCP

Wednesday 14th January 2015 FoRCP Meeting 1.30pm RCP