



January 2015
to
March 2015



Our website:
www.friends-of-rcp.co.uk
Ranger's Office
0115 921 5865

Issue 66

Friends Newsletter

The Friends received an invite from the Lord Lieutenant to attend his Carol Service in Southwell Minster on the 5th December.

Mike Rust, his wife, Pete and myself attended what turned out to be a lovely evening in a packed Minster. The service was serious, humorous and entertaining and like no other Carol Service I had ever attended.

The service was in support of Reach Learning Disability and they performed All I Want for Christmas is You which was very emotional and received a lot of applause from the invited congregation.

The service had professional singers, actors, The Southwell Minster Girls' Choir and Nottingham Trent University Chamber Choir to name a few of the people taking part.

If we receive an invite next year I think this event is well worth supporting.

Dorothy



Wishing you all a Happy 2015



Our new tractor has proved it's worth mowing the new wildflower areas



Many Thanks to Gordon and John Randall for their skill and talent in making seats and headboards for the trailer.

Friends can now be transported safely. Once on site, seats can be removed making a more comfortable place to sit for tea & lunchtime breaks and allows the trailer to be used for transporting such things as hay, brash, stakes & binders.



Next – G4, the area behind the bike sculpture, either side of the Memorial avenue, the Michael Lord plantation, and the Millfield orchard strip were rotovated ready for reseeding with the annual cornfield mix





It was also decided to experiment by rotovating a strip, where wide enough, from the side of G4 up to Millfield to see if that would regenerate by itself without the need for seeding.

Three other areas were also rotovated in preparation for planting new hedgerows. We have applied for free hedgerow plants from the Woodland Trust and if successful they will be planted out before spring.





Jean sowing the annual wildflower mix for hopefully an even better show this summer



Dave Mitchell (Executive Manager for Communities) saying thank you and goodbye to Michael after 12 years working at the park. During his time, he has been an invaluable source of information for the flora and fauna of the park. Mikes identification of rare species has helped us achieve SINC Site and Local Nature Reserve Status. We wish him good health and happiness.



Fear of the Park?

Almost as soon as summer was over the autumn half term seemed to be sneaking up on us. As it coincided with Halloween we thought there should be a little seasonal silliness in our holiday activities. So, along with the ever popular den building there were some other entertainments for visitors that went down a Halloween treat.

Mick and I decorated the woods with 'terrifying' ghosts, pumpkins and witches hanging from the trees to add to the atmosphere. These were made by Teresa and myself (the better ones by Teresa) out of bin bags, carrier bags, cardboard and assorted rubbish in the spirit of reusing, recycling and keeping costs down.

Steve Brown was on hand in rather stylish cloak and a far too frightening mask - we both had to show our lovely faces before some of the little ones would follow us to the woods!

The children were encouraged to come in fancy dress too if they liked and a fair few did just that. Little vampires, witches, aliens and other monsters worked hard at their stick structures before sharing a few treats with us all.

Next on the agenda was the opportunity to have a good old fashioned whack at a conker. An array of these were hung from a rope between two trees with others threaded to hit them with. Although many of those taking part had excellent aim the tough little nuts seemed impossible to crack.

A spooky trail led down the path lined with close up pictures of vampires, ogres, bogey men and more. Flipping the picture up revealed it was only a bat, fox or toad etc. and some clever children guessed correctly each time.

At the end of the trail - on the mini beast hunt benches - were arrayed the sensory 'feely' buckets appropriately relabelled for the event. Cards attached to them warned of contents like 'Shrunken Heads', 'Biting Spiders', 'Goblin Teeth' and 'Dragon Scales' when really they held things like coconuts, burdock burrs, sunflower seeds and pieces of bark. The children seemed to have no fear, plunging their hands straight in and encouraging adults to do the same. A particular favourite was the 'Nest of Rats' - a bucket full of fluffy reed mace heads with a few fresh ones for the furry rats. This caused more than one squeal.

66 children joined us over the two days bringing parents, grand parents and younger siblings and we all had a frighteningly good time.

Chris





Reeding Matter

A very popular feature of the park (as I'm sure you will have noticed) is our beautiful lake. Veritable throngs of visitors perambulate it, sit and admire it or feed its residents throughout the year. Over the years though, as the lake's surroundings have matured, many views across its placid waters have become obscured by burgeoning tree, shrub and especially reed growth.

Reed beds of course create wonderful habitats above and below the water. Offering hiding places for young fish and birds alike, emergent plants for invertebrate imagos to climb and dry their wings. Nesting and feeding opportunity for our ducks, swans, coots, moorhens - not to mention supporting the cleverly woven nests of the Reed Warbler. But.....

The common reed does grow rather well and spread by means of shallow rhizomes at quite a rate. Also, as reed beds increase they allow areas to silt up and dry out. With the West side of the lake being almost completely concealed from view and reeds growing up to the fence in many places it was time to take action.

Nothing could take place until the summer was well over to ensure no occupied nests were disturbed. So - as the park breathed a September sigh of relief and before the water level rose again - work began.

I coppiced, crown lifted and cleared alder, willow and dogwood with (I hope) an eye to the aesthetics of the area and received grateful encouragement from many visitors. This generated the usual, unbelievable, amount of brash etc. that Paul and Steve doggedly cleared away. On to the reeds....

The new landscape blade proved to be the ideal tool for the job - being a sort of dangerous looking brush cutter and capable of operating with the cutting head underwater. The engine however should not be submerged but can be quickly dried out and restarted before anyone really notices - I'm led to believe!?! Quite how I didn't decapitate any inquisitive moorhens during the cutting is still beyond me - blooming stupid birds!

The amount of reed cut over a brief few weeks was staggering and without the vast team of volunteers raking and carting it away would still be there. Roger, Martin, Steve and Janet even donned waders and joined me in the water (lovely at that time of year) dragging floating mats of material to the bank. It was great to have the whole team working together in such a busy part of the park. Lots of our visitors got to see the energy, enthusiasm and effort put in by the FORCP doing a job that improved the visitor experience noticeably and instantly. Well done everybody!

If you missed the fun - don't worry - I plan to do the other side in 2015 and formulate some plan for managing/refreshing the large reed bed at the back.

Chris





One happy resident

The final dipping pond was relined & turfed and additional slabs placed around all the ponds to make the edges safer when children are pond dipping.



Remembrance Sunday at the Tower



After seeing pictures of the growing sea of Poppies on the TV, we felt we had to go and see it for ourselves.

Nothing prepares you for the impact, the vibrant red, the crowds and the atmosphere.

We were fortunate to be in the Tower Courtyard at the 11th Hour—the singing of the hymns from the chapel, the last post, the chimes of Big Ben and the 2 minutes silence, was very atmospheric and emotional.

Courtesy of Tony—a chauffeur driven white Jag, and the handsome driver Nicos made a wonderful and memorable weekend.

Next Year we are going to go to the Greek islands to check out the wildlife!!!

Margaret, Jean & Kate

Many thanks to Margaret, Janine and Paddy for knitting poppies to make this remembrance display for the classroom.



Tales from the Temporary Ranger

Hello everyone - allow me to introduce myself - My name is Chris and I'll be your Temporary Ranger this winter. With Mick hanging up his Rangering hat to enjoy life at a more leisurely pace I'll be stepping in to cover until more permanent arrangements are made.

Those of you hoping to have an easy few months under Zoe's tender mercies had better have eased off on the mince pies. I shall be reinstating my punishing regime again in January!

Although I've only been gone a month or so, I've already missed working at the park and with you also, really this is like an early Christmas present for me. What a good boy I must have been this year.

Chris



John Randall has replaced the original plaque on the 10yr bench by carving a new one out of recycled plastic—very smart.



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

“John's Jottings”

Morning coffee breaks are a rewarding aspect of Friend's work. On a recent Wednesday, while taking a break from hedge-laying, a weasel came into view, scampering round the area where we had just been working. It dropped the mouse it was carrying, disappeared briefly, and then emerged again to reclaim the mouse.

The beautiful picture of a Water Rail on the lake was taken by Howard during the recent icy weather. Although only occasionally observed on site, they are normally very secretive birds and we may not always be aware of their presence (except from their give-away squeal). Winter is often the best time to see them, perhaps dashing between clumps of reed. Also on the lake, the ever-popular family of swans departed as usual this autumn but have now returned.

I was very surprised to hear the croak of a Raven while working in the orchard at the end of September. Looking up there were two of them, flying in a north-easterly direction. Associated mainly with the north and west of the country, it seems they occasionally come further east. You never know what might turn up!

John Elwell



Total species on the park recorded to date = 1532

Dates for your Diary

Wednesday 7th January 2015 FoRCP Committee Meeting 1.30pm RCP

Wednesday 14th January 2015 FoRCP Meeting 1.30pm RCP

Wednesday 4th March 2015 FoRCP AGM 1.30pm RCP