



April 2015
to
June 2015



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

Issue 67

Friends Newsletter



Chairperson's Report

Welcome to our 16th A.G.M. and from little acorns what a majestic tree is still growing! Minutes from the 1999 AGM records: there were 16 members and now we have 60 subscribing to the Friends of Rushcliffe Country Park, some working on a Wednesday and some on the Sundays when we have our café open. We have an additional 10 non-subscribing friends who provide cakes or help with the cafe.

It is 8 years since I agreed to be the Chairperson of the Friends of Rushcliffe Country Park and I was very dubious of the hard act which I had to follow. I wanted to maintain the standards that had been set in previous years and think that, as a Group, we have achieved above and beyond anything that I could have wished for.

It is thanks to this enterprising team, working in harmony with the Rangers, that the Country Park looks as it does today and continues to gain popularity with the public. Through these efforts the country park has upheld the Green Flag status for the last 8 years and let us not forget the Royal recognition we received three years ago.

Team FoRCP is certainly up with the gold medal winners and comprises of people with many skills, great knowledge, fortitude and the all-embracing enthusiasm to work within the team. The mundane is just as important as the skillful.

This last year we have been involved with many diverse tasks from reed removal to Newsletter publishing, repairing and sharpening tools, to making seats for our new trailer. To serving teas, to garden maintenance. Path maintenance to hedge laying to name a few.

There is one item which does not get mentioned too often and that is the printing and editorship of our Newsletter. Many thanks to all who contribute to this sterling paper which is read and enjoyed by so many people.

On a weekly basis, month in month out, winter and summer we average around 28 people at each Wednesday's session. The total hours worked by all the Friends of Rushcliffe Country Park in this last 12 months has been 6396 hours. It never ceases to amaze me how much enthusiasm is shown by so many people.

We must be doing something right as when a person comes to the park for the first time to volunteer, they invariably join as a Friend, not only working on a Wednesday but quite a few also make cakes or help with the Sunday teas.

I found it very rewarding, as I am sure Keith did, to see 50 Friends all together enjoying canapés in this classroom. They were kindly provided by Keith in recognition of our work at the park.

Of course there is a lot of back-room work going on which probably many of you are not aware of. Many friends come in extra days to help complete tasks or help the Rangers with any jobs that need an additional pair of hands.

Some of us do a substantial amount of work at home. There is Jean who balances and scrutinises the books and what a good job she does keeping her finger on the pulse. Then there is Sue, who you know is retiring today after four years as secretary, who does many secretarial tasks to keep the smooth running of this superb team. She also oversees the Teas on a Sunday which is a big task in itself.

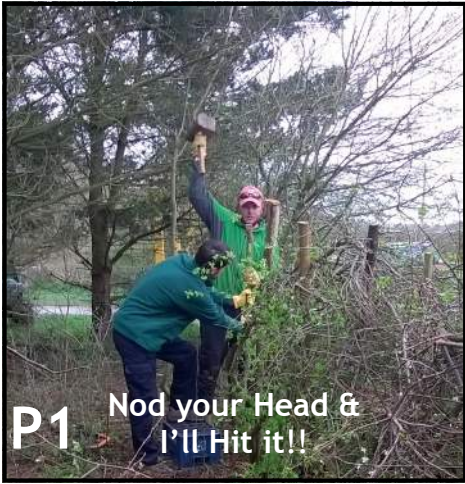
I try to do my share trying to keep the big engine well-oiled and motivated!!

A big thank you to all for your support over the years and the contribution you have made to the park. I am sure our work will continue to be as successful over the next 12 months.

Last but not least, the Rangers have provided the Friends of Rushcliffe Country Park with unfailing encouragement, support and wise advice throughout the year. We were sorry to lose Mick and his 'expertise' when he retired at Christmas but delighted to welcome Chris and his quirky sense of humour as a full time Ranger. Also a special thanks to Zoe for arranging our enjoyable trips to Wytham.. Dorothy

This Season's Hedgelaying







Well Done everyone
for this season's
hedgelaying - as ever
a skilled and talented
crew.

Particular thanks go to: John Randall, John Youngs,
John Elwell & Gordon Smith for their invaluable
instruction to newer members of the team.



Millfield

Fruit Tree Pruning Training

A rather chilly but fine February 11th morning saw a small group of us heading off to the Orchard for a training session on pruning Apple trees, given by expert fruit grower and breeder Bill Harrison, of Barton-in-Fabis.

The orchard was mainly planted in early 2013 by The Friends and incorporates many varieties of dessert and culinary apple, of local and historical interest. In addition, 10 cider varieties are being grown as standards in the orchard hedgerow.

Pruning at this stage is still part of the formative training of the bush trees, to create a well branched, open-centred crown, on a short sturdy trunk.

Bill started demonstrating on the first tree by pruning back the previous years growth, which was a shiny brownish colour, to an outward facing bud 3 or 4 buds from the base. He then cut out any badly placed shoots, those facing into and crowding the centre, or those crossing other shoots. An open goblet shape was encouraged by cutting back strong branches that didn't conform, harder, to an outward facing bud. Weak shoots were cut back hard to encourage stronger growth where required.



The cuts were made with sharp secateurs or loppers, according to thickness, and were made just above the bud at a gentle angle, sloping down away from it, but not extending below the level of the bud.

Each tree had to be treated as an individual and the pruning required judged accordingly, standing back to view the tree before, and during pruning. This led to some pensive expressions when we were all let loose on our own trees, under Bill's guidance where needed.



Bill recommended that we hand pull all the grass away from the base of the trees as it will compete with the apple roots for nourishment and moisture. Once cleared then some well rotted compost/manure can be used as a mulch/feed around the trees, keeping it off the trunk. This can then be topped off with straw.

I, and I am sure others, are looking forward to seeing the orchard in blossom, not to mention enjoying the apples in the future.

With thanks to Bill for the informative training session.

Janet



The kind donations from the Kerry & Carnell Families has enabled us to create a holly hedge to smarten up an area by the lakeside. Thanks to a hard working team of Ladies, species Bacciflava, Madame Briot, Amber, JC Van Tol, & Handsworth Silver Queen were all planted in one day. Chosen to give variety in leaf and berry colour we hope they will give a good show in the future. Butcher's Broom were also planted at the far end. With the wind howling we realised the hedge needed a wind break so thanks to the team that set too and built a wattle fence bound with willow.



New Hedgerows

Two sets of hedgerow plants were requested from the Woodland Trust: One set by the Friends, for two new interior hedgerows; and one set by Sue Wildling on behalf of the new Dog Activity Project. We were pleased to be successful on both counts.

The new project now named: **Copper's Dog Activity Trail** is under way: The area was first crown lifted and the brash used to make a dead hedge along the far side. Then the boundary hedgerow planted. Thanks to everyone who helped clear the brash and plant 443 hawthorn & mixed plants with me. The project is to be funded mainly by donations from dog walkers who use the park. Sue Wildling has organised gathering donations and applying for gift aid for those donations.



The next stage will be to install a fence and entrance gates to enclose the area. The survey (thanks to Janine & Jill for carrying that out) and subsequent conversations with our dog walkers have shown a very keen interest in this project and once donation levels are reached, as hoped, we can then start building the features for the trail. The type of features are shown on posters at the site which is at the top left corner of the memorial field.

Zoe





H108

A big thank you to Crossdale Drive Primary, Keyworth who after offering us their left over Woodland Trust hedgerow plants, I invited to come along and help plant them with us. They planted 162 of the 278 required to create this new hedgerow outside P18 woodland. Well done.

The remaining Woodland Trust plants that we were given will be used to create another new hedge outside the corner of P16 woodland.

These two hedgerows are designed not only for habitat but to eventually take over as the barrier for the woodland.



Ranger Ramblings.....

We have been living in interesting times staff wise here at the Park. Following my reinstatement as a 'Temporary Ranger' after Mick's retirement, I've now been awarded a nigh mythical Full Time Ranger post.—That's it now - you're stuck with me for good.

To fill the gaping void my departure from the Seasonal Ranger post left, Alastair Glenn has been

appointed. This young man has been volunteering as a Shadow Ranger (how cool does that sound) with the Forestry Commission and has all but completed an Environmental Conservation & Countryside Management course. He's lean, he's keen, he doesn't appear to be mean and he'll certainly be seen - winning the hearts and minds of our visitors this summer.



Welcome aboard Alastair and good luck.

The Easter Holidays are upon us already and not a moment too soon. A large volume of chocolate eggs have been secreted away in the visitor centre for the past couple of weeks and I'm not sure how much longer we can keep our hands off them. Due to the success of an advertising campaign helped by Nicky Mee and Tom Theakstone from RBC and a cart-load of awful puns, over 100 children will be visiting us this break to build dens and hunt eggs in the woods. I have something surreptitiously educational in store for them but also, most importantly, chocolate. So things should go well.

As I'm sure Alastair is already champing at the bit to get stuck in - we've accepted lots of school bookings already for the summer. Ponds will need to be dipped, mini-beasts hunted and dens built over and over until the sticks run out. Thanks to those of you who've already offered assistance with the educational activities - I'm not sure you fully appreciate what you're in for but it's too late to back out now!

The weather so far (as I'm sure you've noticed) has been blumming awful but well done and our ever eternal thanks to everyone who's carried on working through it. Footpath repairs in the wind and rain, hedgelaying in the wind and rain, unending coppicing in the wind and rain, hedge planting - wasn't it sunny at least one day when we did that? Summer's on the way folks and everyone and their uncle will be coming to enjoy all your hard work.

Give yourselves a pat on the back and put your feet up (this is not to be done on a Wednesday though).

See you all at the front.

Chris



“John’s Jottings”

Much of the Park’s fauna has been absent or in hibernation during the winter months, so most sightings have been birds. Nevertheless, Chris saw a Field Vole recently. Also the appearance of small hills of earth provided evidence of Mole, which surprisingly was not already on the Park’s list.



I am told that a survey of the bat hibernaculum produced just a single Brown Long-eared Bat, but further work by the South Notts Bat Group is planned to improve the suitability of this area and hopefully attract a few more.

We have also had another 60 or so large Carp removed from the lake. Some real whoppers turned up, around 20lb in weight. The fishermen also reported healthy stocks of Perch and Roach hiding in the reed bed.

I am told that a recent sighting of a Gadwall on the lake in February was a first for the Park.

However, I know that to be incorrect, because my own records show that I saw one here way back in January 2009. Similar in build to Mallards, Gadwalls can easily be overlooked, although the male’s predominantly grey plumage is quite striking given a good view through binoculars. On the subject of ducks, Shoveler have been on the lake at times this winter. Large flocks of Starling have been seen swarming across the Park early mornings in January.



Everyone likes to know about the Park’s Mute Swans, and sadly the cob was found dead recently, possibly as a result of a collision. The pen appeared several more times, apparently with a new mate, but it seems a new pair has taken up residence recently and hopefully will produce cygnets this spring.

Being fully occupied with hedge-laying and associated tasks during my visits to the Park this winter, my own bird sightings have been rather limited. However, bird song has been on the increase since the start of the year, with residents such as Robin, Dunnock and Great Tit providing musical entertainment. There has also been the occasional party of Long-tailed Tits passing by, their noisy calls giving them away. The “yaffle” call of Green Woodpeckers has also been prominent at times.

On 1st April I heard a Chiffchaff singing, and we can expect more summer migrants to arrive during the next few weeks. John



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

'Message in a bottle'

The 'Message in a bottle' activity has been refurbished with 15 new bottle signs. This activity continues to be well used. Roger



Dates for your Diary

Linger by the Lake 10am - 12 Noon 1st, 15th April

Linger by the Lake 10am - 12 Noon 6th, 20th May

Linger by the Lake 10am - 12 Noon 3rd, 17th June

FoRCP Meeting Wednesday 3rd June 1.30-3.30pm RCP

FoRCP Committee Meeting Wednesday 26th August 1.30-3.30pm RCP

Subscriptions - £5 per friend are now due

Name/s.....

Address.....

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Email:.....

I would like to renew my membership for 2015.

I prefer my newsletter

by post by email. Please post to Rushcliffe Country Park, Mere Way, Ruddington, Nottingham. NG11 6JS