



July 2015
to
September 2015



Our website:
www.friends-of-rcp.co.uk
Ranger's Office
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Issue 68

Friends Newsletter

A new welcome sign



A new sign appears

The month of April saw the installation of a new sign to take the place of the old one at the entrance to our park.



The design is based on the brown tourist signs for country parks, a stylised depiction of parents and child, arms held aloft in celebration of going to the park.



Rangers and friends work hard to erect the sign.

The old sign was very weary and few even gave it a glance.



We have received a great many compliments about the sign, we hope you agree!

Dawn Chorus Walk

With wildlife and outdoor activities already very popular with the younger visitors to the park, I decided to try running a dawn chorus walk this year. International Dawn Chorus Day fell on Sunday 3rd May. This day is now celebrated around the world but began in Birmingham in the 1980's when broadcaster and environmentalist Chris Baines asked everyone to attend his birthday party at 4am so they could enjoy the dawn chorus with him.

Early May is a good time to enjoy birdsong with many birds well underway with nesting, territory holding and general 'twitterpating'. Rising with dawn gives you opportunity to hear birds joining the chorus as they become active and before they get distracted with feeding etc. So how hard could it be? I have learned to identify a few bird songs over the years and nobody needs a 5am lecture anyway. The date was set, posters put up, details sent to advertisers, facebook and, of course - Twitter.

I didn't imagine there would be many takers- especially as I couldn't offer breakfast - but some folks expressed an interest and it was possible that more would show if it was a nice morning.

It wasn't.

I think the rain began around 4am and held as promised. Amazingly a few people still turned up so we took our walk in raincoats anyway. The diversity of birds I was hoping for may have been lessened by the weather, but many hardy songsters still performed for us. Blackbirds and robins initially soon followed by wrens, wood pigeons, willow warblers, chiff chaffs, blue and great tits. The insane rantings of the reed warblers and disturbed rooks reminded us that all birdsong isn't beautiful and a couple of whitethroats and pheasants added some variety.

The highlight of the morning? After wandering along hedges, through and around woodlands picking out little voices - a chaffinch performed a solo for us in full view. Sitting atop the gate post of Weggie Walk meters from us.

See you all 5am May 1st 2016!

Chris



Wytham May 2015

This year I vowed to be more diligent in my preparation for Wytham. Having earned the names 'Roger no poles' and 'Roger no pegs' I was determined to be prepared. On entering the hallowed grounds on the Monday May 4th, I was as always looking forward to our few days away. After pitching my home and preparing a meal we spent some of the evening around the fire, before rain sent us early to bed. A very noisy night, with lashing rain and wind.

The Tuesday morning found us travelling to Marley gate, I believe the only gate needing our attention, we have replaced all the others. We worked out that the Friends have now been to Wytham 15 times over 8 years. We set to with our now famous gusto, taking out old deer fencing, whilst others demolished the old gate ready for its replacement.

Kevin and Neil now providing a fascinating spectacle of felling some enormous trees and Nick also impressed us in his new tractor, effortlessly removing giant logs. The power of hydraulics is quite mesmerizing. John Young impressed me with his stamina in hole digging and in no time we had installed giant gate posts and hung the metal deer gate.

After further work Helen and myself stayed with Nick and drove in the posts ready for the morning.

That evening we were to have a barbeque. As we waiting the wind got very strong and with some tall trees whipping dangerously close to the tents, Zoe and me mobilised the friends to move our tents fully erected to a more sheltered site. I did not want my record to be 'Roger tree on his head' We had a great venison feast in the barn, the rain and wind now serious and another early night to bed. Wednesday began with a return to Marley gate and Fencing took up much of the day. Eventually the project was completed and we posed for our proud photo.

That evening we all retired to the Talbot for our well earned meal. A noisy bunch, the Friends all get on so well and enjoy one another's company.

On Thursday morning, back at the yard I went up to the site of an interesting project.

A well known potter called Jim from Wychwood, who had for many years travelled to Japan in connection with his trade had gained funding from the Japanese Government to build a traditional wood fired kiln. His contact with our artist in residence Robin had led him to Wytham. A very suitable location due to ample space and the available timber. The shelter that will cover this kiln had been started, it looked very strange to see a frame building that sloped 15 degrees down hill until it was explained that this was a vital part of the design, to create a natural upward draft. We look forward to seeing the finished kiln in September. I understand that this project carries a great deal of international prestige and the pots fired to christen the kiln will be sold in Japan as highly collectable pieces.

On Thursday May 7th which turned out to be the best day of the week (weather wise)!!! Myself and Roger volunteered to help a young artist to install her wooden sculptures around Wytham Woods for the Arts Festival which was due to run for 2 weeks through May. Emily Russell is normally an abstract painter but she decided to try a new medium in wood for this project. The wood was sourced from her brother's small woodland in Wales where he is a carpenter. Roger and I helped her slot her designs together and fix them to solid oak plinths with brackets. When finished they looked very at home in the woods with the dappled sunlight playing on them. I will definitely be keeping an eye on Emily's future projects and hope she makes a career out of them.

That evening some of our group left us and those who remained had a great evening round the campfire where plenty of pancakes were consumed .

Roger and Sara

Woollen Woods in the Sensory Area

This project was thought up by the organisers of Volunteer Arts England together with the Campaign for Wool to feature in the Volunteer Arts Week.

Six Parks in the country were each to decorate an area with woollen objects.

The Parks were here in Nottinghamshire, Isle of Arran (North Ayrshire), Cumbria, Lancashire, Devon and Country Antrim (Northern Ireland).

Each wood had a specific theme to work round. Rushcliffe Country Park's featured flower was to be the cherry blossom and the tree the oak, perhaps with reference to the Major Oak of Sherwood Forest. We even have some clones of the Major Oak in the Park.

People working at or associated with the Park together with groups such as knitting circles and Girlguiding as well as individuals made a large amount of cherry blossom, oak leaves and acorns as well as birds, spiders, ladybirds, flowers, bees, mushrooms, hedgehogs and rabbits and other woodland items. People knitted, crocheted, wove and felted things all made from wool.

The Friends made supports with willow and wool to go up in the trees in the Sensory Trail to display the contributions.

On 11th May these were all assembled in the Sensory trail and left there until June 2nd when the display was taken down. Everything was set high up to discourage people taking items but as the trees came into full leaf it became a game to spot the natural things hiding in the woods.





Some days when the Woollen Wood was on display the Ruddington Framework Knitting Museum ran wool workshops at the Park and people were given the chance to try out the stocking knitter. A very long, thin swan was made with such a realistic head that people thought it a real swan's head. The Sensory Trail is a popular area of the Park so many people saw the displays. Friends working in the area heard many pleased comments on the idea and how it all looked. The whole display was interesting to set up and much appreciated and enjoyed by visitors and Friends. Janine

Norman the Newt bench

I have built a new bench outside the classroom which is designed to make a feature of the tree. It is designed to look like a newt and beside it I have added an information sign about newts.



I started with the design below and submitted this to the Friends for approval. The next step was to build a full size cardboard model. I was then able to cut this up and use each card piece as a template to cut out of 8" by 3" timber. The timber cost £250



After shaping each piece with the planer to create the flowing lines, I started joining everything together with help from Steve. The completed bench in five sections for ease of handling, was taken by Zoe and myself to be tantalised at the wood yard.



On its return I set about colouring the eyes and with the help of Rosemary we assembled the sections. York stone was then used to create a surface on the ground, and finally I bought 12 square metres of turf to finish it off. I have been delighted by the responses of passing visitors and look forward to seeing people using it, especially on hot days. Roger

Hedgehogs to Beetles

Visitors to Gibbies Wood may have noticed the absence of the wooden lizard and hedgehog usually found there. Unfortunately, they had reached the end of their useful lives and succumbed to rather a lot of rot and invertebrate infestation. They have been removed for everyone's safety.

It turns out the hedgehog was an ideal habitat for the Lesser Stag Beetle (pictured) and loads of adults and larvae were discovered living in it.

Resisting the urge to take part in a bushtucker trial type event with the admittedly juicy looking beetle grubs.....

A hard day's grafting with some fine volunteers resulted in a large amount of the wood being relocated to the mini-beast area (and some sore backs).

A large pile was placed near the edge of the activity woodland- suitable for its inhabitants to continue their insect lives. A smaller habitat for the beetles and their larvae has also been created near to the hedgehog's old location and everyone moved in - hopefully without too much disturbance.

Plans are afoot to install replacement constructions to Gibbies later - watch this space (or the space where things ought to be in Gibbies?!).



Hours of careful selection and patient training was required to get these tiny pollen beetles into position - I think you'll agree it was worth it.



A new home for our super buggy



Friends might be interested to see some photos I took showing the arrival of our new container. Roger

Sunday Teas [on July 5th.]

'Sunday Teas' on the first and third Sunday of each month remain the main fund-raising event for the Friends of Rushcliffe County Park. There are a dedicated group of supporters - some Wednesday workers but mostly other RCP enthusiasts - who bake or serve teas, coffees, water, juices, cakes, teacakes, savouries -all according to the supply- and some who bake AND serve!

The cakes are gathered on Saturday afternoons and Sunday morning early, after the room has been set out; then they are cut and priced before the rush.

The Junior Run at 9.00am results in an enthusiastic rush at 9.15! Most week's they are met by Teresa who has a simple craft for the children to do[while the parents enjoy a cuppa and cake- of course!

The remainder of the day the 'café' remains open for all and depends often on the weather!

On an average Sunday there are 30 voluntary hours completed in the Education room- cake baking is outside that quota!

Sue and Dorothy are always looking for more bakers and servers so if you would like to help for a couple of hours once a month or bi-monthly please add your name and contact details to the list or contact one of them. Also if you would like to set out the room in readiness at a time to suit yourself either on Saturday afternoon or Sunday morning early.

Recently the funds have paid the rent of the room, for tools for hedgelaying, a small tractor and trailer [now with padded seats thanks to John and Gordon], a tractor driving course for 2 FoRCP and the wood for the fantastic new newt seat designed and made by Roger just outside the Education Room.



Easter Egg Hunts

Following the cries of outrage last year that no Easter egg hunts were taking place in the park I thought we could make a bob or two this year. Combining it with an (always popular) den building session meant I could specify the time, limit the area and know how many eggs to buy.

This turned out to be more popular than I anticipated. I was originally going to run two sessions - both Wednesdays of the Easter break. These booked up so quickly (despite the avalanche of awful Easter puns on my posters) that I had to put on an 'eggstra' (sorry last one) day the second Friday. I had already taken a booking for a private session the first Friday but could have filled that too.

Severely testing StJohn's and Steve's patience by filling their cupboard with Easter eggs was the only obstacle to success.

The egg hunt itself was a slightly educational affair (see - I could have gone for eggducational there, but didn't). The youngsters traversed the bug hunt woodland seeking the egg signs on the trees. Each egg featured a picture of animal eggs and a clue as to whose it was. 'Opening' the egg gave them the answer and a little information about how that creature lays and cares for its eggs and young. Using this to fill in all the blanks on the activity sheet gave you the right to claim your prize - a full-size Smarties egg. Much to the delight of all involved who, I was frequently informed, were only eggspecting (that one just slipped out) a crème egg. There was also a game matching birds with their nests - tricky but some found it interesting.

The dens were of their usual high standards of construction and creativity. One had internal walls, another adorned with bunting! Rosemary joined us for the first of many activities for her this year and - I believe - enjoyed the eggsperience (can't stop now). Steve Brown - aka Lord of the Dens - was on hand as usual and made a wonderful egg guard too.

Look out for activities over the Summer and Autumn for those little relatives. But book early to avoid disappointment!

Chris



New Boy Left holding the handbags!



A big thank you to all of the friends for making me feel so welcome here at the park, I've even managed to remember some of your names by now! Extra thanks to Chris, Zoe and Keith for accepting me into the team!

I've loved working here (so far!) and have clearly arrived in time for all the good weather! Ill be thinking of you all when I'm in sunny New Zealand in winter and you're all here in the cold and wet!

I've already learnt a lot from all the staff and volunteers and learnt there's a big difference from what they teach you at university to real life!

A delightful
trio



John's Jottings

“Spring is always my favourite season, with butterflies increasingly on the wing and resident bird species boosted by summer visitors, all of them in a frenzy of breeding activity. This year has been no exception, with a constant background of song from species such as Blackcap, Whitethroat, Willow Warbler, Chiffchaff, Chaffinch, Wren, Robin, Song Thrush, Blackbird and others while working at the Park. Barn Swallows and House Martins appeared over the lake on 16th April, and Swifts appeared in May. The less common bird species seem to have passed me by this season, but there have been sightings of Oystercatcher (2 over the lake) and Barn Owl. Blue Tits, ever resourceful, have raised young in the door at the side of the garage and in an old life ring box in the pond dipping area. Our new pair of resident Mute Swans have raised 8 cygnets, all doing well at the time of writing.

I was intrigued to hear that two nests of Tree Bumblebee have been found by Chris and Janet respectively. At home I have them nesting under the tile cladding on the side of my house. These bees have spread northwards from continental Europe in recent years, and now cover much of England. Apparently they don't cause any harm to our native species and they are good pollinators.

The early school pond dip sessions turned up plenty of mayfly nymphs and an emerging adult as well plenty of caddis larvae of various types and diving beetle larvae. Two new species were also discovered on mini-beast hunts (attended by Mick Thompson). *Tetragnatha Montana* -the long jawed orb web spider and a lovely cranefly (pictured). Lesser Stag Beetles, relocated from the rotted remains of the hedgehog in Gibbies, have also been found spreading through the mini-beast area.

Butterflies have been around in good numbers, including Orange Tip and Speckled Wood early on, and Peacock, Comma and Red Admiral later. The newly refreshed wildflower meadow seems to be attracting a number of blues.

Finally, there have been a number of reports of Grass Snake recently, including one at Millfield and another by the lakeside. Mick spotted the latter while counting the Southern March Orchids - 396 this year!”

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

Thanks to the efforts of all our fundraising friends, we have now been able to purchase, for the Park, a wet stone grinder. This is a special type of sharpener, with a grinding wheel which turns very slowly, and runs in a bath of water. Unfortunately our existing grinder, which runs at a high speed, overheats small tools and takes away the tempering.

This new machine is especially designed to sharpen delicate tools, and with its attachments, when I can get them sorted out, should cope with scissors, knives, chisels, wood carving tools, secateurs and garden shears among others.

It has been suggested that, if any friends of the park want to have equipment sharpened, they bring them to me, Bill, and I will do my best with them. Their owners will then make a donation to the park.



So - **bring them in and let me get at them!!**

Dates for your Diary

Linger Teas - 1st, 15th July. 5th, 19th Aug. 2nd & 16th Sept.

Sunday Teas. - 5th, 19th July 2nd, 16th Aug. 6th, 20th Sept. 4th 18th Oct.

FoRCP Summer Social Wednesday 12th August 1.30pm

FoRCP Committee Meeting Wednesday 19th August 1.30 - 3.30pm RCP

FoRCP Meeting Wednesday 16th September 1.30 - 3.30pm RCP