



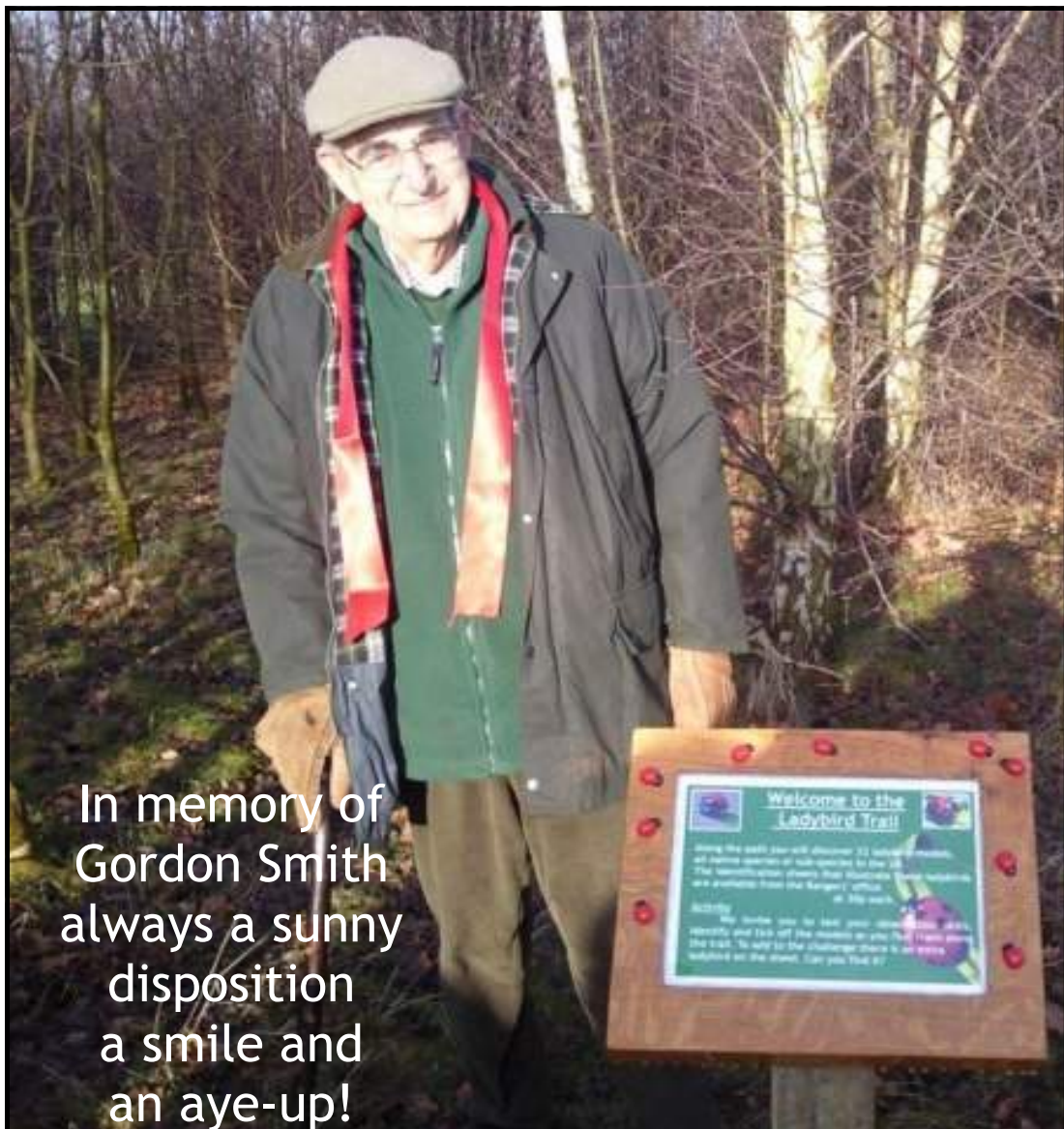
Jan 2016
to
March 2016



Our website:
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Issue 70

Friends Newsletter



In memory of
Gordon Smith
always a sunny
disposition
a smile and
an eye-up!

In Memory of John Antippa our 'Singing Greek'

Dorothy and I attended the funeral of John Antippa in the pretty Greek Orthodox Church of The Virgin Mary Eleousa on Derby Road where John was a stalwart member. Speaking to Myrtle, his wife, after the service she said that it wouldn't be too long before she was back to see us with trowel in hand. Jean.



The Autumn saw the last working month of the year for Alastair Glenn, the new seasonal Ranger. Al will be spending his 'off' months travelling with his partner in New Zealand and the Far East before returning to the job (temptations of the outdoor life in New Zealand permitting...) in the Spring.

Alastair and Steve Brown, a long standing volunteer who specialises in the heavy stuff at the park, have both qualified in Chain Saw Operation after formal training—congratulations to both of them and may all your splinters be small ones!

Steve's dog, Snoop, whom several of us had started to believe was actually imaginary, finally put in an appearance at the park in December. He is still deciding whether to become a regular dog volunteer or whether just to turn up when there's cake on offer.



The Dog Activity Project Team (now all members of the Friends) held another successful fundraising teas in the Autumn to upkeep Copper's Dog Area. Gareth, from Chalfield Dog Training club, provided some welcome free advice sessions to dog owners using the area. A survey indicated interest in dog training sessions being run at the park. The pilot classes begin in January and we are hoping that this will be the start of a regular feature for the park's dog walkers. Anne.



Douglas, Dog Volunteer.

Hello, Friends, Dogs, Countrypersons,

I am Douglas, a not very White West Highland Terrier, and I have been a dog volunteer, under the supervision of current Dog Ranger Tim, at the Country Park, for over a year. I am a regular Wednesday attender along with Scooby, another longstanding volunteer, and I do my best to come to every single opportunity to eat cake on Sundays.

As a Dog Volunteer my duties are variable. On sunny days I like to be helpful chasing things in the park - squirrels, rats, moorhens, that sort of thing. The rats and I have an arrangement - I run up and down frantically barking at them and they sit behind the fence looking unperturbed.

I also help out by picking up edible rubbish, especially pizzas and the tasty debris from picnics. I always offer to eat any leftovers whilst the picnic is still happening just to make sure that nothing goes astray. On damp days I test the depth of puddles, and flag up muddy areas of the park by rolling in them. I indicate to the other volunteers how wet it is by leaving test paw prints in prominent places, on their trousers or belongings. I also dig small holes, and occasionally find dead mice.



I was introduced to the dog delights of the park a few years ago before I became a volunteer, when I was no' but a pup. I used to meet Copper, the late Dog Ranger, and he used to greet me with a cheery growl.

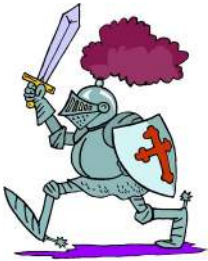
Since Tim took over the job he has kept up the tradition of gruff supervision though he ignores me so long as I don't go anywhere near him. Since the Dog Activity Trail opened, there are now a number of other dog volunteers, who mostly help by supervising DIY activities and events. Close supervision of volunteer work parties is sometimes needed as some public dogs - not me, I hasten to add - have been known to wee on the piles of backpacks that the other volunteers leave carelessly close to prime dog sites, and this can cause quiet swearing.

Future tasks I would like to take on at the park include sampling the cakes before the Sunday cafes - I would be prepared to do home visits if this would be helpful; organising the tea box for the dog volunteers - particularly choosing the biscuits; clearing the dog activity trail of carelessly abandoned dog treats, and testing out the newt bench for comfort for dog dozing sessions.

Douglas



Autumn Antics - Right On Target



The summer holidays were barely over before the autumn half term break loomed on the horizon. There had already been enquiries as to whether we do 'doing Halloween' again but I had different plans this year.

At risk of being sued by Sherwood Forest I decided to put a medieval outlaw type spin on the autumn den building sessions. Posters written in offensively inaccurate 'Olde English' went up asking visitors 'Could ye live like Rudding Hoode?' Well, over fifty children thought they probably could, so with parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, child-minders etc. in tow they entered the woodland. Dens went up with the usual vigour but there were also other activities on offer.

A few pieces of willow, some string and pencil tip rubbers made a surprisingly effect arsenal and the arrows were soon flying at targets strung between the trees in a temporary 'archery area'. For everyone's safety this was carefully supervised by Steve 'Hawkeye' Brown (a master bowman it turns out) and then Alastair-a-Glenn (a man who can make even a low quality cardboard hat look good).



The children loved shooting at targets, dragons and knights and some of the adults had a crack too - with varying levels of success. A virtual forage through the woodland was available too. The 'Great British Forage Off' foragers were supplied with an activity sheet to create an 'OutlawChef' menu from the cards they found in the trees and then supply the comments of the judges - Maid Maryberry, Friar Wallace and co.



Nettle soup seemed a popular dish but there were some interesting ideas - disappointing not to see a hedgehog curry but I guess they were just too cute?

Anyway - you're not here to enjoy yourselves—lots of winter work to do now.

Next year's Easter egg hunt is waiting in the wings.....Chris



Harriet the hedgehog comes to town!

The old hedgehog which was built from sycamore logs had become a very well used and loved structure but after some six years the wood had succumbed to rot and many families of ground beetle inhabited the mound.

Children who had enjoyed the old hedgehog were shocked when it was removed and the beetles rehoused in the bug hunting area.

A new one was needed which would hopefully last considerably longer. Building the body from tyres would address this requirement.

I started with a small resin model and made a plaster cast of the head. This was then drawn with contour lines, photographed and blown up on our projector. The profiles were then drawn and cut out to create a pattern.



The old hedgehog

This pattern was then used as a template for all the layers of timber which were screwed and glued together.



The finished head was taken by van to the timber yard and tanalised. Tyres were collected from several garages and made ready for installation (thanks to Jill and Jan for this), Roger.



Harriet takes shape due to a great turnout of Friends and a digger and a dumper.



Harriet invites you to play out



Gordon Smith - A Quiet Man with a wicked sense of fun.



**A lovely and talented
true gentleman
We have all lost
a very dear friend**



Sundays wouldn't be Sundays without tea and cake at the Country Park...

A not so typical Friends Café on Dec 6th when the Rainbows Children's Hospice has it's annual Santa charity run in the Park. On duty in the morning were Penny, Simon, Sarah, Eileen, Jenny, Wendy, Dorothy, Bill and Janine.



A new Wildflower Meadow sign



A new sign has been designed to replace a very tired old sign, but the text, still appropriate, has been retained. The sign is to be installed near the seasonal pond on the perimeter path. It will have a new aluminium frame. Roger

New Signs to encourage bird feeding habits

Following a discussion at the Friends meeting Sue and I set about designing a sign to discourage the habit of people feeding bread to birds on the lake.

They are now in place, we hope you approve. Roger.



John's Jottings -

Wildlife at the park update from John Elwell

As I write this it is only 7 days till Christmas, yet elsewhere in Nottinghamshire today I have seen a number of wild flowers still in bloom, including Ragwort, Yarrow and a solitary Mallow. The unseasonably warm weather has brought other surprises, for example I heard at least 3 singing Song Thrushes in Rutland in late November. Normally I don't recall hearing this species singing until late December.



My visits to the park this quarter have mostly involved work on the hedge near Bradmore gate. As usual for this time of year, the main wildlife in that area has been a handful of bird species calling, particularly Robin, Dunnock and Long-tailed Tit. The last of these is one of my favourite birds, and there seem to have been plenty around this season. Winter thrushes, Redwing and Fieldfare, have been appearing, but this year my cotoneaster tree berries at home have been seriously depleted already, presumably by Blackbird (but I suspect finches too). So whether I will get the normal visit from winter thrushes in the next few weeks is doubtful.



Birds have been the main wildlife interest in the park this quarter, and the lake has been host to plenty of Cormorant activity, a solitary Teal, frequent sightings of Shoveler and returning Water Rails. Two new species have been added to the park's list: a Pochard on the lake and a Little Egret flying over and in the fields near Weggie Walk.



Finally an update on the Mute Swans. Apparently the family went away for a weekend in October and only seven cygnets returned. Since, then, one of the cygnets has been a little reluctant to leave with the others on their daily outing, and it finally passed away this week. So six healthy cygnets survive out of the original eight.



...ergo, we have a new duck

You may have noticed this little chap pottering around on the lake recently. He is an Orpington - a domestic duck, like our large Appleyard duck.

Early in December we began receiving regular phone calls from Ergo employees (a computery company on the business park) expressing concern about a duck that had appeared on the ponds at their car park entrance. Apparently two ducks had arrived together - one looked quite ill and soon died. The remaining one was milling about, making everyone feel sad and almost getting hit by cars several times a day. When I got chance, I went to visit and several staff came out to see me. The duck was quite obviously domestic, unable to fly and not very worldly wise so I agreed to try and catch it.



About 20 minutes later he had wandered off to sit glumly by the woodland - easy pickings for any passing dog or fox! The day was spent with duck retrieval duties being added to the list of tasks and I fully expected a pile of feathers to be all that was remaining the next morning.

What a difference a day makes - the following morning Ergo (that's his name now) was happily quacking, swimming and feeding with the rest. He seems to have become firm friends with our Appleyard duck, who also lost his partner, so a happy ending for all. Quack.



A moorhen regularly gets involved in supervising work on the lake and specialises in checking the operation of the Linger birdfeeding station.



Cyril the Snake makes his entrance

In the same way that the hedgehog was replaced, it was necessary to remove the old snake, it had become unsafe.

I was asked to design and cost a new snake. A large group of friends were introduced to the texturing of the body using skills of routing and wood carving with hand tools. They produced a scale pattern which looks brilliant! The snake was then taken to the timber yard and tanned.



The old snake



Well done to all the friends who installed the snake, another great team effort. Check out the sentence which has been carved along Cyril's sssslender body.

Roger

And there are plenty of hedges to lay...



Coffee time is a key morale boosting moment during hedge laying sessions and it's always helpful when Dorothy or Liz have birthdays and turn up with cake.



A newly laid hedge is a truly lovely thing, and shows the skills of the volunteers to good effect.

Work Days

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

Registered Charity No 1079665

Hello Friends,

I wanted to introduce myself as I have taken over the editing of the Newsletter from Roger, all round super volunteer and good chap, who has been doing this, and many other volunteering tasks, for some time now.

I hope I will be able to keep the newsletter up to his high standards, but in order to do this I wanted to ask you to get in touch with articles and photos that may be of interest to the Friends and supporters of the Country Park. You will find me at the Park most Wednesdays at the work group, Sundays whenever there is cake to tempt me, or through the usual Country Park email address:
countrypark@rushcliffe.gov.uk

My dog, Douglas, and I, are relatively new volunteers, having only been working at the park for a year or so, but we are in awe of the contribution the Friends have made to the life of the park, and how much this is admired by the general public who use the park.

Looking forward to hearing from you,

Anne Dealtry (and Douglas the Westie).



Well, Harriet did invite me to play...



Friends pop up everywhere...

Dates for your Diary 2016

Linger Teas Wed 6th, 20th Jan
Café Sun 3rd, 17th Jan

Linger Teas Wed 3rd, 17th Feb
Café Sun 7th, 21st Feb

Linger Teas Wed 2nd, 16th March
Café Sun 6th (10k Run), 20th March

FoRCP AGM Meeting - Wednesday 9th March 1pm RCP

With every good wish for the New Year 2016