



April 2016  
to  
June 2016



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

Issue 71

# Friends Newsletter

Welcome to the Spring newsletter.

The wet Winter turned into a chilly Spring and the park has had moments of great beauty as you will see from the photos taken by Friends in this newsletter.

The Sunday Teas and Wednesday Linger by the Lake sessions have been very successful and continue to make the revenue that the Friends use to make the park even more successful as a place for both the community and nature to enjoy.

Our resources can now go further due to the introduction of Gift Aid for membership subs and donations—thanks go to Sue Wilding and Jean for the hard work involved in making this work. If you pay income tax please consider completing Gift Aid forms for the park's benefit.

There are increasing numbers of people volunteering and joining the Friends, who provide thousands of hours of creative work for the benefit of the park and it's users.

Anne Dealtry, Editor.





## A BIG THANK-YOU

To all our many friends, I would like to say a personal thank-you for your help and support over the past weeks following Gordon's sudden death on Christmas Day.

A special thank-you to Zoe and my dog walking tea and cake lady friends, who were so marvellous.

Gordon's legacy at the Park will live on. Zoe has a trophy for the Best New Friends Hedge-layer each year. Hedge-layering was always Gordon's love, in fact it was this that brought him to the Park and I am sure many of you or reflection remember his hints and advice.

As a tribute money from the funeral will go to create "SMIFFS CORNER"

Zoe already has the trees and we hope to start planting soon, with help from the Friends.

A sum of money was also donated to Kidney Research U.K.

Working the Park with Amber gets easier as the weeks go by, and gives me much pleasure, and sharing Amber's bench, so see you around soon.

Love Celia

---



## Profitable Photos— the calendar makes money for the park

You may have seen an attractive 2016 calendar with photos by members of Rushcliffe Photographic Society, which was available to purchase at the Education Centre.

Many people did buy one and the proceeds were donated to the Friends raising a very useful £1040. Thanks go to Alan Douglas, Pauline Barrett and their colleagues for this very worthwhile fundraising venture.



## AND OTHER NEWS...

Alastair, the Seasonal Ranger, has returned intact from his travels and has started work at the Park again, which coincides with the Park opening hours changing to 8am until 6pm for the lightest time of the year.

The ladybirds in the wood have had a coat of paint restoring their brightness.



The Rushcliffe 10k run took place in March with it's usual large number of runners and supporters – with Friends, and volunteers, opening the Sunday Café in the Education Centre with great success. The café continues to make excellent profits. New cake makers, 'setting up' volunteers and serving staff are always needed. 'Linger' continues to attract park regulars who appreciate a hot drink and a chat.

The Friends have paid for Beekeeping training for several volunteers who will join Sara and Helen in caring for the park's hives.

## Douglas, Dog Volunteer.

Hello, Friends, Dogs, Countrypersons,

I have had a very exciting first 3 months of 2016 at the park. As well as some Friends' opportunities to eat delicious cake, I joined the first ever dog training course to run at the park. I LOVED the snow!

6 of us took our owners along to Copper's Dog Activity area to let them feed us copious amounts of treats whilst they thought that they were teaching us something we didn't already know. Gareth, the trainer was very nice—anyone who believes in reward based training is high in my estimation, and he even gave us a little certificate to show how marvellous we were. It is hoped that further dog training events will run in future.

Copper's area has been closed for a while over the Winter as the amount of rain meant it was too muddy to use, even for me. As it's still a work in progress, the Dog enthusiasts amongst the Friends are looking, with Zoe, at ways to make the area more of an all year round site. In the meantime it's undergoing maintenance and cleaning to reopen soon.



I have been involved in supervising a number of friends' tasks so far this year. Anne seems strangely fascinated by litter picking so we seem to do that rather a lot. We also had our first go at path laying and using the 'wacker' plate to tamp down the stone - I thought that was quite fun and marched up and down after it for what seemed like miles, watching all the passing dogs churning up Keith's beautifully raked gravel.

On our walks at the park, we often meet Amber, the springer spaniel, with Celia, her owner, near Amber's Bench and have a moment remembering Gordon, Amber's dad.

I have yet to catch the rat that lives near the Lake despite my best efforts. Following him round the boundary fence of the Lake is now one of my most pressing interests when I visit the park, and in 2016 I shall have him!



Douglas



## FROM 1 TO 31— Jean hits the big 80!

For the last couple of years I've thought of planting a tree on the park before I die so that I can watch it mature. I have been a member of the Friends since it was formed 18 years ago and it is a very special place to me.

As the park was first being landscaped I came with my class of children from James Peacock School to plant trees and also when the hibernaculum was opened by Blue Peter.

As my 80<sup>th</sup> birthday drew nearer I thought now is the time to put my idea into practice. After speaking to Zoe we set off in the buggy to Millfield, which is where I wanted to plant the tree, close to the orchard. On the way Zoe suggested I could have a group of trees. [A good idea, I thought. ]

It was proving difficult to find a suitable place. Then came the suggestion for an **Avenue** of trees, alongside the orchard - 31 trees in all!! Thinking on my feet I thought maybe my family would like to donate to the cost of the trees instead of buying me presents. They were very happy to go along with the idea and wanted to be involved in the planting. So in a matter of 30 minutes it had gone from 1 to 31 trees!!

Despite the very cold, wet and windy weather I planted the first 3 trees on my birthday. Zoe, myself and Margaret, who had her 80<sup>th</sup> the day before me, celebrated with a glass, or two, of champagne. 27 trees, [15 different species] have been planted and the remaining 4 will be planted in July when my family will be visiting from Hungary. More celebrations!! Jean





Some of the natural beauty of the park over the past months shown in photos from friends and Rangers - coloured winter dogwood displays, snowdrops in flower in the woodland, Ear fungus on a dead elder, alder catkins and flowers, wild cherry bark, and a pretty toadstool!



A Four part celebration—the Friends' Annual party 2016 celebrated three auspicious birthdays:

**Paddy**—who will be 90 at Easter

**Jean and Margaret**, who both turned 80 in February.





## Weekly Working Party News.

“Would you like to learn how to lay hedges?” asked John Randall within seconds of my being introduced to him on my first week as a Friends of Rushcliffe Country Park volunteer back in December 2015. Looking at the ‘jungle’ to one side, John’s neatly laid hedge to the other, and the array of dangerous tools (in the wrong hands, i.e. mine) close at hand, I hesitated in my reply. However, I agreed to give it a go and am pleased I did.

John was the perfect teacher, describing through words and action the technique, then patiently watching on while I had a go and pointing out gently if I had gone awry. After two consecutive Wednesdays I felt a great sense of achievement at having learned something new and of an old tradition. It was extremely satisfying to look back along several metres of newly laid hedge and to know I had a part in it.



On week 3, I worked with Kate on binding the hedges. Kate adapted quickly to working with her new ‘apprentice’. Week 4 and it was time to do another important job connected with the hedge laying - clearing the brash. I joined the small group of volunteers who clear the hedge layers’ work area of brash and branches. The old branches are removed, dragged from the hedge row for disposal, or formed into a ‘hedge; another job which I learned, required a certain skill.

Returning after the Christmas break I was pleased to find there was still hedge laying to complete and even more pleased when John appeared happy to have me working with him again. The hedge row to the west of the park was quite different to Bradmore Gate where we had been working previously; it had a lot more thorn and tall, intertwining field maples. Here, I was able to gain some confidence in deciding which growth should stay and which should go. John left at lunchtime and said I should continue on my own as I knew what I was doing. This came as a surprise to me but I gave it my best shot and welcomed visits and words of advice and encouragement from the two other Johns and Rosemary during the afternoon.



By week 6 my awkwardness with tools of all sorts had improved slightly since week one, but there was still some way to go. I was still leaving the task of hammering in stakes to John on the grounds that he had the height, technique and could use a mallet effectively! However, there was no getting away from it on week 7 when he said I was ready to work on my own; he would work further down the line and be on hand when needed.

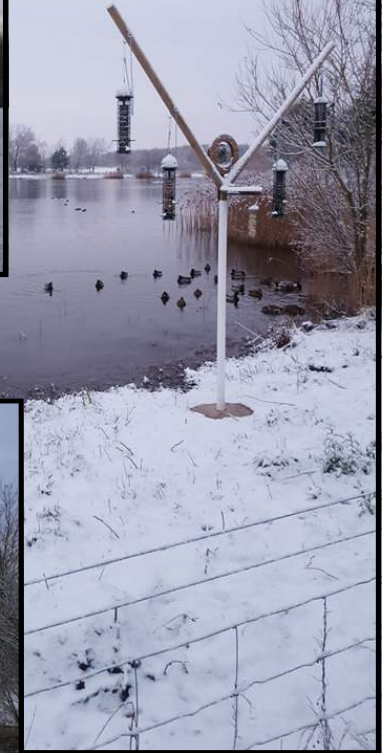
Panic set in on week 8 when I discovered John was unable to attend. Now Ranger Chris was pushing me out of my comfort zone 'encouraging' me to carry on hedge laying in John's absence. Over the next two weeks the stretch of hedge was completed and I got to do the final part of the hedge laying process - tapping and topping. I was glad my skills with the mallet and saw had improved over the weeks as working along the line of stakes, sawing each one to the same height and at a 45 degree angle, proved quite a challenge to Rosemary and me - neither of us being above 5' 3".

The weather forecast for Wednesday on week 11 suggested heavy rain. I thought hedge laying might be out of the question and decided to attend the Monday work party instead. There were only two other volunteers there that day and we worked with Rangers Keith, Zoe and Chris on path resurfacing. More new skills learned that day. I was given quick instructions to drive the buggy, use the 'wacker' and most essentially - lean on a shovel whilst watching another person working. To be honest, I wasn't actually given instructions on how to do

the latter as, whilst Keith was operating the rake, the skill came to me quite naturally! Weeks 12 and 13 saw us move to another stretch of hedge, this time off Asher Lane and once again, of a very different nature with not too much old hedge to work with - different type of hedge - different skills. It was early March and the end of the hedge laying season would be over very soon, leaving the foliage undisturbed in time for the bird nesting season.

Reflecting back on my first few months as a 'Friend' I can say I have really enjoyed every moment. I am grateful to everyone at the Park who has made me feel so welcome. And to those who have shared their expertise, particularly John, I offer a huge thank you. I wonder what the next three months will bring?  
Lib





Let it snow!



# John's Jottings -

Wildlife at the park update from John Elwell

At last spring is on the way and we are past the equinox. Frogs have been spotted in Gibbies pond, but otherwise news seems to be mainly to do with birds. Singing has been under way, with all the resident species in full voice. Some began back in December, but others, such as Chaffinch and Blackbird, more recently.



A few less common bird species have also been seen. Flocks of Siskin, a winter visiting finch, have been reported over the last couple of months, and there have been single sightings of Merlin, our smallest falcon, and Goosander, a saw-bill duck, previously unrecorded in the Park.

For the last few weeks my work at the Park has been along Weggie Walk, where Dunnock and Robin have been particularly prominent and I have caught sight of Bullfinch a couple of times. The real delight has been the constant singing of Skylark in the nearby fields. As the Park has changed over the years this ground-nesting species has been pushed out, but it is good to see they are not too far away.

The adult Mute Swans have driven off their last cygnet and will be preparing to breed again. Apparently two cygnets that the male drove off earlier were removed to Holme Pierrepont, where a group of 'bachelor' swans live.

A lot of the flora is awakening early. Hawthorn is coming into leaf early and Blackthorn, along with other blossom trees, are already flowering. Patches of Speedwell and Cowslip are appearing. There is so much more to look forward to over the coming weeks, including more spring flowers, summer visiting birds, early butterflies and other insects.



## Some additions to our sensory trail

I have added some more equipment, first a xylophone, the slats are made of oak recycled from an old bench and the frame from used fence posts. The next is a Glockenspiel, I have used metal tubes cut from the gate (damaged by the container thieves). They make quite a good sound.



Featured above is the 'Wobbly Tower' and the first of two Mirror activities.



Also we have a puzzle called the 'Bridges of Konigsberg' and the 'Snake path'.



The popular 'Hit Pipes' have been repainted and the bat refurbished.



A refurbished noticeboard

The noticeboard that I made last year near Asher Lane gate unfortunately was damaged. So I changed the design to two opening doors made from recycled bench slats. These doors were then glazed with toughened glass. Two locks make each door secure.

Roger

# 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

Name that dog!



He is Luca and belongs to St John, one of the park's key caretaking staff.



Chris, the Ranger, up to something, as usual!



## Dates for your Diary 2016

Linger Teas Wed 6th and 20th Apr  
Café Sun 3rd and 17th Apr

Linger Teas Wed 4th and 18th May  
Café Sun 1st and 15th May

Linger Teas Wed 1st and 15th June  
Café Sun 5th and 19th June

FoRCP Meeting 1st June 1pm - RCP