



January to
March 2017



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

Issue 74

Friends Newsletter

Dear Friends,

In 2012 the Friends were awarded the prestigious Queen's Award for Voluntary Service. It is the highest award given to local volunteer groups across the UK to recognise outstanding work done in their own communities.

In the past four years we have maintained this incredibly high standard expected of us and yearly the Country Park receives the Green Flag Award.

This is down to the hard and dedicated work of the full time Rangers and importantly the many, many hours of voluntary work undertaken by the Friends.

All the hedge laying, maintenance, creative work, weeding, cake making, tea serving and fund raising have a positive impact on this popular and beautiful Park. You should all be proud of your contribution.

I would like to say a big thank you to you all, wish you and your families seasonal greetings, and I look forward to your continued endeavours and support during 2017.

Dorothy Pearson, Chairperson.



Dogs who walk and train...

For several weeks now the Country Park has had regular Dog Walk & Talk Training Sessions on Sunday mornings. Gareth, a qualified dog trainer who has had connections with the park for some time, meets up with 10 dogs and their owners at Copper's Dog Activity Trail and leads a walk with training and guidance built in. The aim is to help people refresh their dog's training in an everyday setting so they can feel more confident in their dog's behaviour and how to deal with any issues. We went along to observe one of the sessions.

If you or anyone you know is interested, further sessions are booking for:

- Sunday 29th January
- Sunday 5th February
- Sunday 26th February
- Monday 13th March
- Sunday 19th March

Time: 10.30am (for 2 hours)

Meeting Place: Coppers Dog Activity Trail

Cost: £5 per dog

To reserve a place contact the Rangers office.





DOG PROFILE— Monty Corcoran, who belongs to regular Wednesday volunteer, Anne.

How old are you, are you a particular dog breed, what's your background/ family history?

I am a miniature Schnauzer, and went to live with Anne and Clive when I was a small puppy in Autumn 2015. Anne was already a volunteer at the park, and I was her first dog.

When did you start visiting the park?

As soon as I started walking out, after my jabs. I am a bit nervous of larger boisterous dogs, especially if they come hurtling towards me, so I tend to stay in the company of the smaller dog, but there are always plenty of those around.

What do you most enjoy when you come to the park?

I like the smells and scents to investigate. I sometimes find things to eat that I'm not supposed to have which are tasty but dodgy. If I eat the wrong thing I do end up at the vets, rather more than I'd like.



What's your favourite toy?

I'm very partial to a squeaky ball or a football. In the absence of those, any toy will do. Or a piece of cardboard. Or anything really.

What's your favourite natural thing at the park?

I like the magpies though I don't think they are too keen on me chasing them.

Assuming that you are not allowed to eat cake, what's your favourite treat?

This is a tricky one. I have a digestive issue and can't have all the delicious things that I really want. I am allowed carrot and that's a nice change from boring 'special' dog biscuits, and my mum managed to get me some home made treats that go down nicely.

Douglas, Dog Volunteer.

Hello Friends, Dogs, Countrypersons,

I have found Autumn to be very colourful at the park. Pretty shades of orange, red and chestnut brown amongst the leaves, and on my fur when I roll in something. Now it's a bit chillier we have seen some very pretty mists, but I'm pleased to say, still plenty of mud for those of us who like that sort of thing.



I have done a fair bit of litter picking this year but it has to be said that the country park does not have a major litter problem most of the time. Dog poo collection is also usually reasonable but there is room for improvement, and we certainly mention it to them if we see any dogs whose owners aren't paying enough attention.

Dog owners have had a new opportunity to learn a bit more about their dogs' behaviour at the park recently, when our 'tame' (ha, ha) dog trainer, Gareth, started running monthly dog training walks. I went along to watch (as anyone who knows me is aware, I am perfectly behaved at all times.) It was quite interesting and very popular. I particularly liked the fact that Gareth accidentally dropped his treat container so I was very helpful and cleared all the treats up so they weren't a distraction to the other dogs.



Hopefully the walks will continue to 'run' for a while yet and other dogs and their owners will gain the benefit.

Wishing you many treats in the New Year,

Douglas



People Profile -

This time: **Ann Towle**, 'Linger by the Lake Wednesday teas' organiser

What other jobs or roles have you had?

- My last paid job before I retired was as Examinations Officer for Castle College.

What else do you enjoy doing?

- I have been a scout leader for over 30 years working with cubs; just about to go into semi retirement with that. Very much enjoyed the camping with cubs but I also like walking and doing cross stitch.



What do you most enjoy about being at the Park?

- I like meeting people here. 'Linger' has now become an activity that people come to regularly, to meet up with others they have started to get to know. I'm very pleased about that. I enjoy coming with my family to park events to.

What was your first involvement with the Park?

- When we had dogs, I would walk them at the park. My husband still walks dogs here for the Cinnamon Trust. Two years ago I came to the Sunday teas and signed up as a volunteer.



What would you most like to see at the Park?

- There's not much missing but I'd be pleased to see a bike rack near the Centre for those who use a bike to 'commute' to the park.

What's your favourite natural thing at the park?

- I like Gibbies Wood as it's a quiet spot for a solitary ramble.

As the Friends specialise in tea and cake, what's your favourite cake?

- Anything with a cream filling!

And from the Friends, what do we respect Ann for?

- A reliable efficient organiser.
- The creator of the successful Linger teas.
- Always cheery and friendly!

John's Jottings — Wildlife at the park update from John Elwell

As usual for this time of year, the main fauna of interest are the birds. The lake continues as home for something like 300 Black-headed Gulls, which will stay until March, but anyone looking carefully may have noticed a couple of Common Gulls amongst them. These are slightly larger gulls with marginally darker grey on the back, different bills and yellow-green legs. In flight they have black near the wing tips. Common Gulls are strictly winter visitors and are not to be found this far south in summer. Nearly all the Black-headed Gulls are in winter plumage, but I spotted one early in December that had more or less developed the black head of its spring plumage.



The Mallards and Tufted Ducks have not been supplemented by many “winter ducks” so far, but the female Teal I mentioned in the previous newsletter was soon joined by a male, and the two stayed around for several weeks. They often skulk around the margins and can easily go unnoticed. However, Chris saw the male again a few days ago, so they might both be around still.



The Mute Swans have been away a lot of the time. There is a cob in residence at the moment, most likely the one that bred in the summer. He drove off some cygnets that arrived on 18th November, but one weak cygnet remained and had to be transported to a safe haven by Chris.

We have had the usual selection of small birds this season, although I have so far failed to find any Siskins on our many Alders. There have been plenty of Robins (this species seems to be particularly abundant everywhere at the moment) and Long-tailed Tits, and it has been nice to see Coal Tits on the feeders. Small birds attract Sparrowhawks, of which there have been sightings this quarter, including one on the newt bench. Other predators include Kestrel (several sightings) and Red Fox (on Millfield).

As we approach and pass the winter solstice, it is always good to detect early signs of spring. My first singing Song Thrushes were in the first half of November (in two different places in Notts), and I heard a singing Mistle Thrush in West Bridgford early in December. But in the meantime we can probably look forward to some real winter weather, and you never know what wildlife might turn up.

Wintery Views



Not just another bench...

Smiff's Corner has now had a handmade bench installed, so this tranquil spot, with trees, hedges and wildflowers can be enjoyed in a leisurely way from this vantage point. Constructed by John Randall, the bench commemorates Gordon Smith with a beautifully carved hedge-laying design.



There's more to Pond Life than meets the eye...

Rosemary Dove provides more information on some of the insects to be found in the Country Park ponds.

Water Stick insect Order Hemiptera; Family Nepidae; species *Ranata linearis*; 30 - 35mm long - found while 'dipping' the lake margin in an area of amphibious bistort, *Polygonum amphibianum*.

The water stick insect lives in the water on the lake margin; they are well hidden, clinging to vegetation waiting for prey to come in reach of its long grasping front legs, usually small prey such as mosquito larvae, tadpoles and water fleas. They pierce the prey with their sharp beak, inject saliva which sedates the prey and starts to digest the prey.

Mating occurs in the spring and the females insert eggs into floating plant stems. In 2 to 4 weeks these hatch into nymphs, which as they grow go through a series of moults until they reach adulthood in about 8 weeks. At the end of their body they have a breathing tube, siphon, which is poked out of the water to breathe, they can stay under water for up to 30 minutes. They can swim quite well and if necessary crawl out of the water, open their wings with the aid of their hind legs and fly to another site.

Back swimmer Order Hemiptera; family Notonectidae; species *Notonecta glauca*, 15mm

Often numerous in the lake it is one of the commonest British species of water bug. It swims upside down legs at the top 'back' at the bottom, air is stored in two channels fringed with hairs on what would normally be the underside of the abdomen. It is a predator hanging motionless just below the surface of the water, with the first two pairs of legs and the tip of the abdomen touching the surface film sensitive to any vibration. Sensing any disturbance it rapidly peruses its prey using its powerful hind legs to propel it, attacking insects, small fish and tadpoles. Once the prey is caught it pierces its prey with its beak like mouth parts (rostrum) and injects digestive enzymes through the rostrum and sucks out the juices. If handled it can give a painful stab!

The back swimmer can fly well and move from lake to pond, when not flying the wing are folded under pinkish wing covers, its fore wings are modified into hard protective covers for the thin, delicate hind wings.

Mating takes place in the spring, and oval eggs are embedded into the plant stem, hatching into nymphs (incomplete metamorphosis) which undergo 5 instars and moults before becoming adult bugs in about 8 weeks.. They are similar in appearance to the adult but are greenish with large red eyes and wingless.

The back swimmers have large compound eyes for day and night vision and can produce a sharp image in both air and water.



Friends were saddened to hear recently of the death of Margaret Bingley, a stalwart supporter of the park, who reached the great age of 101 years.



PARK UPDATES

- There has been a suggestion that a **bike rack** be installed near the Centre for those commuting by bike to the park. This is being looked into.
- The Friends have been disappointed to hear of a request to the council from residents of the Barleylands housing estate near the park to have a number of **mature birch trees felled** at the edge of the park next to their gardens. The residents have complained of reduced light in their gardens caused by the trees. As the trees have been present for 25 years and are healthy, Friends are keen to present the argument to retain them. Please contact the Rangers office if you are interested in knowing more.
- A **Facebook** page is to be created for the Friends group to publicise activities at the park.
- A compulsory **car park charge** is to be introduced for the country park car park in 2017, and work will also be undertaken on improving the car park. There will still be an annual pass available and it is hoped there will be some parking available for volunteers working at the park.

The Friends have a **urgent vacancy** for someone to work with Sue Jackson on organising the twice monthly **Sunday tea and cake** sessions. Please contact Sue or Dorothy directly or leave your contact details with the Rangers office if you are interested. More helpers are always needed to bake cakes, prepare the room or serve teas.

Knitting Wool wanted—Any spare balls of knitting wool would be gratefully received by the Friends. Our knitters can produce items for sale, with the proceeds going to the Country Park.



Artex Planting

Standards:

- 21 Oaks
- 7 Silver Birch
- 5 Sweet Chestnut
- 3 Crab Apple
- 5 Beech
- 5 Limes
- 5 Walnut
- 5 Copper Beech
- 2 Cherry
- 3 Wayfarers
- 1 Scots Pine
- 1 Wild Service Tree
- 1 Hawthorn

Understorey: 162 Hazel for Coppice / 5 Spindle / 3 Dog Rose / 3 Dogwood
Bluebell and snowdrop bulbs

Volunteers: 14 Artex employees came along in 4 sessions to help plants the hazels and some of the standards.



Artex Activities

The fenced off 'Artex area' in the Kite Field has been planted up with a range of native trees and hundreds of bluebell and snowdrop bulbs.

Artex staff joined the Rangers and the Friends' volunteers to do the planting. The fencing will remain for the present to protect the area from damage until the trees and flowers are established into a further area of attractive woodland to enhance the park.





'Tis the season.... for hedgelaying

Our own hedge laying enthusiasts have been active for a while now as the dormant season has provided hedges a-plenty for their endeavours. Part of the recent hedge near the play area has already been laid and there are long stretches of boundary hedge providing plenty of scope. The Friends mostly use traditional hand tools for hedgelaying, though the chain saw does speed up the removal of larger trunks.



Where the hedgelaying gets serious...

Some Friends geared themselves up for the beginning of the hedge laying season by visiting the Quorn Hunt Hedge Laying Competition at Long Whatton on 3 November 2016.

John R, John Y, John E, Rosemary, Janet, Marijka and Lib enjoyed the day watching professional and hobbyist hedge layers at work.

The Classes were differentiated by whether or not competitors had won prizes at previous competitions. Each competitor had to cut, lay, stake and bind 11 yards of laid hedge within 5 hours. All of the competitors used chain saws for the majority of their work, unlike the Friends who work on RCP with bill hooks and manual saws, with very occasional use of a chain saw for more hefty trunks and branches.



Sensory Trail



Another two additions to our sensory trail have been installed. Families are often commenting about the interest they find in new features. The first is an activity to find 18 creatures which use camouflage in their lives, try it out!



The second centres around fingerprints and asks the children to identify those guilty of 4 crimes by comparing prints left at the crime scene with the Police records.

Roger

Park Model



The park model has been completely refurbished. First cracks and gaps have been repaired with fibreglass. The model was then undercoated and then repainted in gloss finish. I had the number discs engraved by Fraser and these were glued on the model. The two signs which direct visitors to the features on the park have all been updated with new photos. Again Fraser printed these on laminate. The last detail was to install fishing line to discourage the coots and pigeons that seem to leave their calling card on the model. Thanks to Duncan for help in painting.



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

John, horrified at being caught having his lunch and not working! (And keeping his sandwich well away from Douglas!)

Tim likes to sign off the newly laid hedges.



Dates for your Diary 2017

Linger Teas Wed 4 Jan; 18 Jan
Café Sun 15 Jan

Linger Teas Wed 1 Feb; 15 Feb
Café Sun 5 Feb; 19 Feb

Linger Teas Wed 15 March
(No Linger tea on first Wed)
Café Sun 5 March; 19 March

FoRCP AGM Meeting 8 March 2017 1.30pm
10k Run 5 March 2017