



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

~~April to~~
~~June 2017~~
Should be July to
September 2017

Issue 76

Friends Newsletter



This will be my last issue as Editor of the newsletter so I have indulged myself with photos of the nature of the park over the last 3 months which I hope you will enjoy.

Anne Dealtry, Editor.

Co-op Local Community Fund.

If you are a member of the Co-op you can choose to support a local charity. 1% of what you spend on Co-op branded goods will be put into a Community Fund and as we are now one of the chosen Charities for this area you can go on-line and select Friends of Rushcliffe Country Park as your chosen Charity. If you live within a 5 mile radius of the park you can choose our Charity. This is for 6 months and finishes at the end of October.

The Friendship Garden is our project and could benefit from around £2,500. Please support our cause by going to:
www.coop.co.uk/membership

Bee keeping at Rushcliffe Country Park

Once again Rushcliffe Country Park is in possession of two working beehives. Four Friends of the Park volunteers having attended a beekeeping introductory course are at last having the opportunity to use their newly acquired knowledge in a practical way.

As an excited, novice beekeeping group we are like 'new parents, ' constantly learning, seeking advice and amazed by these fascinating and incredible creatures as they multiply and carry out their varying tasks within the hives. It is highly unlikely that we will have any honey to sell this year as our priority has to be to ensure the bees are healthy and thrive throughout the year.

Janet Raffit, Dorothy Pearson, David Higgins and Danuta Szeliga.



Well Spotted Sara!

Sara did well to spot this moth larva on an oak tree in Wytham Woods. Identified as Merveille du Jour (*Griposia aprilina*), it grows into a beautiful moth which flies in September and October. The larvae feed on oak - first on the buds and flowers, then on the leaves.



Common to England, Wales and Ireland, less frequent in Scotland. This is one of our most beautiful moths with very distinctive markings. Light green in colour with black markings, some of which are edged in white.

The adults feed at ivy flowers and overripe berries. They overwinter as eggs on branches or in bark crevices of the food plant. The young caterpillars will first feed inside an opening bud and then when they are larger they will feed only at night, spending the day hiding in a bark crevice on the tree trunk.

Family - Sharks, shoulder-knots, chestnuts, sallows and allies (Noctuidae)

Medium sized—Wingspan Range - 36-46mm

Conservation status—UK BAP: Not listed

Caterpillar Food Plants—Feed on the leaves and immature flowers of Pedunculate Oak (*Quercus robur*) and Sessile Oak (*Quercus petraea*). Possibly also Turkey Oak (*Quercus cerris*).



Habitat—Broadleaved woodland, parks and hedgerows.

Thanks to Lib, and
Butterfly Conservation.

Bike stands are go... (so bikes stay put!)

There are now 5 substantial bike stands installed near to the Rangers Office door for the use of anyone cycling to the park (or cycling around the park and calling in on the facilities). Bikes can be locked to the stands for security. Just remember to take your bike home again afterwards (surprisingly the Rangers have had bikes in their Lost Property!) Thanks to Linger by the Lake teas for funding this improvement.



**Q. What's Black,
White and Red All
Over?**

**A. A palette used for
painting ladybirds.**

Danuta, Edwina, Jan and Lib helped Roger apply a new coat of paint on the ladybirds situated, not surprisingly, along the ladybird trail. Each ladybird on the trail has the markings of different species. Children (and adults) visiting the park can enjoy identifying them with the aid of a ladybird trail leaflet.



**‘Linger by the Lake’ was 3
years old on April 5th!**

A small group of the Friends started ‘Linger by the Lake’ 3 years ago, partially in response to Rushcliffe’s request for activities for the lonely people in the area living on their own. This alone did not have much success, even with a bus from Keyworth, but the Walking Group supported the café’s openings twice a month and have increased their number and so encouraged others to use it.

Ann [Towle] has cheerfully hosted it throughout the time and introduced tea-cakes as an option recently, at the request of customers. The profits have bought items for the park - the most obvious being the bird feeder outside the school room’s window, which is now well used by many birds that can easily be seen from there. We decided that a cake was needed to celebrate the three years!

Sue



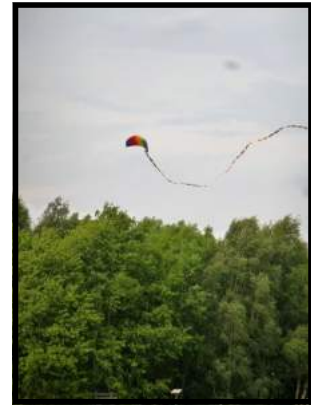
Treasurer vacancy

Jean Gray has been Treasurer since the beginning of our Friends Group 20 years ago and she is now retiring from this post. Therefore we need someone to take over this role from the A.G.M. in March 2018.

It would be useful for anyone who may be interested to contact us soon so they can work with Jean and familiarize themselves with the current procedures that she has employed successfully throughout her tenure.

Please email the Country Park if you would like to discuss this or require further information:

countrypark@rushcliffe.org.uk



It's always rather lovely to see kites being flown in the Fields. One of the few benefits of a windy day which can drive a litter picker to distraction!

Old Soakaways!

Keith didn't just lean on his mattock—he worked very hard digging the soak away hole at the entrance to the ladybird trail. Assisted by Marijka, John, and Martin. PS. Temperature 28 degrees.

Lib.

(Anne and Douglas can testify to this as Doug tried to help dig the hole but got too hot. Most of us who visited the Park that day went home rather soggy!)



Douglas, Dog Volunteer.

Hello, Friends, Dogs, Countrypersons,

I am very sorry this will be our last newsletter as Editors; I have had a marvellous time posing for photos in various parts of the park and checking the Rangers' Office when we're putting together the newsletter for any spare snacks Tim may have left lying about (so far I've only found fish food, but it's quite tasty.)

I am assured that we will still be Friends and volunteers as well as park users and do our usual jobs involving birdseed, abandoned food wrappers and most importantly, cake!

We are at the park even more than ever at the moment as our new job is as Dogsitters so we bring most of the dogs we host to enjoy the park during some of their walks.

There are a number of delightful dog events at the park during the course of the Summer. A few weeks ago in May was the Bark for Life Walk—a very worthwhile 5 or 10km park walk for dogs and their humans to raise money for cancer research. My small friend JJ is



Me and Monty
Corcoran
enjoying the sun.



seen on the right modelling his bandana together with his friend Malcolm.

The Chalfield Dog Training Club have their charity fun dog show and event on 30 July.

Our own dog Friends fundraiser for Copper's Dog Activity Trail took place on Sunday 25 June—too late for photos for this edition unfortunately. However Anne and I made some dog treats for this which of course I have to thoroughly road test before they can be sold.

Gareth is still doing his popular dog training 2 hour Walk and Talk training sessions which are assisting dog visitors to the Park with their behaviour.

Well, see you in the Park, if not in print!

Douglas



So it's Goodbye from me,

and it's Goodbye from Him...



Well, I have now been Editor of the Friends' Newsletter for 6
sues (not a lot, but that's 18 months!) Unfortunately due to
other commitments I now have to hand over the role to
someone else. I hope someone (or more than one to share
the job!) is able to volunteer to take over—the requirements
are:



is-

- The ability to use Microsoft Publisher to compile the newsletter, and access to a computer to do it on;
- Around 20 hours of free time towards the end of December, March, June and September to put together the newsletter;
- The ability to keep in touch with the Friends and Rangers who work at the park to keep on top of what is going on and worth including in the newsletter;
- The ability to coax people into giving you articles and photos about things that are happening with the Friends and the Country Park;
- The ability to harass people into providing something if you are short of copy, and cope with the complaints when you don't provide what people want;
- A free day at the end of each of the above months to copy, fold and prepare the paper version of the finished item, and prepare the email list for the emailed copies (Sometimes help is available with this.)

Douglas and I have very much enjoyed producing the newsletter and it has inspired us to visit the park in a different way, taking photos and taking in different things whenever we are there. Our editing role coincided with the creation of Copper's Dog Activity area which has created a huge amount of interest from the dog owners who visit the park, and those from elsewhere—new visitors from all over Nottinghamshire and other counties keen to see such an unusual park feature.

We were quite keen to highlight the dog stories from the park in the newsletter. Although not all of the Friends have an interest in dogs, I am aware that the newsletter is read by a whole range of people via the Friends' website. Increasing numbers of people are becoming dog owners and want to learn about how best to look after their pets. There are a number of dog events at the park and they are integral to the Park's success. As Douglas and I (and these days, our visiting dogs) walk round the park, we chat to lots of people. A few are nervous of dogs so it's good to be able to pass on information about the Park's policies—where dogs are on and off lead and where best to have a picnic! We also pass on information to dog owners about the Park's policies and activities, and most are keen to get it right.

We shall continue to contribute to the newsletter when we have something interesting to report,

Meanwhile, fare well,

Anne and Douglas.





Grass snake (Natrix natrix)

This is the largest snake in the UK, growing to about 150 cm but more commonly up to around 75 cm (2.5 ft).

It is normally a shade of green with short black vertical bars and/or spots running along its sides and sometimes along the back. There is a yellow or white coloured collar behind the head bordered to the rear with black markings.

Often found near water such as rivers, canals, ponds, as well as open grassland, open woodland and quite often gardens that adjoin these habitats. Compost heaps in gardens may be used as egg-laying sites, if so the young will appear in late August and September.

Grass snakes may visit ponds because they mainly feed on amphibians and fish but they are harmless to humans.

(Thanks to Wildstock)



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

As I write this, we are beginning the transition from spring to high summer. Bird song has already peaked, although some species, such as Wren and Black-cap, still seem very vocal at the Park. As the avian interest wanes slightly, other fauna step in to fill the gap. In particular, this will be the season of dragonflies and damselflies. Common Blue Damselflies have been abundant recently, and Southern Hawkers have been emerging from the old pond in the dipping area. This week there were plenty of Black-tailed Skimmers around the lake, including some pairs in copula. Butterflies of spring, including Orange Tip and Brimstone, will give way to a variety of summer-flying species, including Meadow Brown, Gatekeeper and Ringlet.



This has been a very good quarter for species not previously recorded at the Park. Rosemary's pond surveys have turned up several caddis fly larvae: Mottled Sedge *Glyptotendipes pallidus* and Cinnamon Sedges *Limnephilus lunatus* and *L. rhombicus*. Rosemary also discovered the Great Silver Water Beetle (or Diving Beetle) *Hydrophilus piceus*, a single cell organism of the *Paramecium* genus and a species of Seed Shrimp. Mick found caterpillars of the Parsnip Moth *Depressaria radiella* on hogweed and one caterpillar of the moth *Argyresthia albigaria* on Blackthorn. Surprisingly the long-legged St. Mark's Fly *Bibio marci* (readily observed in late April / early May) had not previously been recorded. The name comes from the fact that the adults emerge round about St. Mark's day (25th April).



Returning to the lake, the two Mute Swans do not appear to have bred this year, despite signs of nest building earlier. The two Great Crested Grebes that arrived in February remained for a while, but in recent weeks only one has been seen and no signs of breeding. However, Little Grebes are around, and their delightful striped chicks, still too young to dive, can be seen waiting on the surface for the adult to emerge with food. Marsh Orchids have been quite numerous around the lake, with about 650 Marsh Orchids and over 100 Bee Orchids. Alexanders *Smyrniolobos olusatrum* is growing near the 3D map. Grass Snake sightings continue, the latest being just outside the visitor centre, being pursued into the reeds by a Moorhen.



Swansong

The country park has had a pair of swans on the Lake for many years now and many cygnets have been born to the delight of visitors. Attempts have been made to ring the cygnets born but this is not always simple and has not always been possible. The male and the female birds, the cob and pen, usually attempt to mate for life but it is possible for an adult bird to find an alternative mate.

The female lays usually up to seven eggs between late April and early May. Both sexes incubate the eggs, which hatch after 35-41 days. The young birds, or cygnets, sometimes ride on their parents' backs and remain with the adult birds for four or five months. The young of some pairs are driven off the breeding territory as soon as their plumage is predominantly white (during late autumn or winter). Other broods often accompany their parents to the wintering area, and usually join a large flock in which they remain when the parents return to their breeding territory. In this area there is a significant group at Holme Pierrepont Country Park. Young birds will not generally breed for the first two years of adult life.

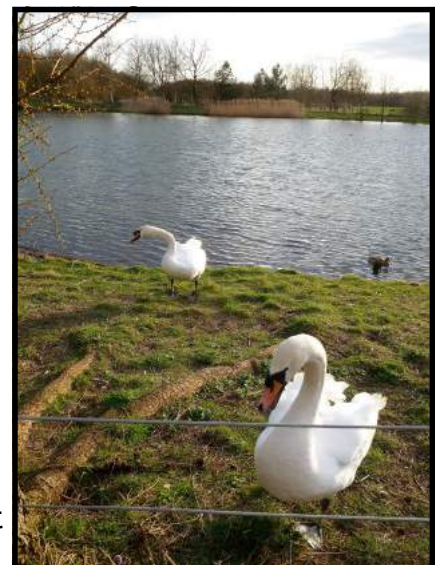
The story of the swans at the park between 1993 and 2009 was told by previous seasonal Ranger Heather and gives an idea of the lives of these huge and appealing birds.

'In 2006 the swans who had been resident at the park since 1993 failed to breed. They had produced a total of 68 young in their 13 year reign. Later that year a new, younger pair arrived and battled with the older pair who were eventually defeated. The older pair were 'retired' to Holme Pierrepont. The new female was identified as an offspring of the original pair. Born in 2003 she was named Wilhelmina.

In May 2007 the pair left the nest with 7 healthy cygnets, Shortly after this the male swan was seen to be ill. Despite treatment who died and a post mortem revealed that he had been shot in the neck and died from infection in the wound. 2 days later one cygnet disappeared, cause unknown. In December Wilhelmina and the 6 cygnets flew off the lake. Soon after a new pair of swans took up residence. The male was not ringed but the female was and was Wilhelmina's sister—named Angelina by rangers. Wilhelmina returned shortly after but was attacked and taken for safety to Holme Pierrepont. She returned 2 days later with a male swan and one unknown cygnet. The new resident pair eventually drove all the other swans away. They also defended their space against several others and in May 2008 produced 7 cygnets. They left the lake that December ... to be replaced by a returning Wilhelmina with a new partner. Before they bred other swans unsuccessfully attempted to take over the territory—including Angelina! However Wilhelmina and her partner presented 5 cygnets to the world in 2009.'

The current pair of swans are relatively new to the park and have not mated this year, possibly because the female is too young. Both birds are unringed which means their origins cannot be traced- the male/cob, a particularly territorial and aggressive young man (remember the poor white duck which had to be rehomed?) is thought to have been around for a year or two but his mate is thought to be a new female/pen, acquired after his previous mate who had 7 cygnets last year, did not return.

Anne.



Thanks to Heather and the RSPB.

Wytham May 2017 Report by Lib

Fencing and assisting with bee research were the main activities for Friends attending Wytham Woods in May 2017, whilst the Japanese pottery kilns provided some pleasant airing during one of the wettest weeks experienced since working party trips to Wytham began in 2008.



There were two lengths of fence to remove and replace - one near the village cricket ground and the other at the boundary between the wood and its car park. A kissing gate at the entrance to the small village cemetery needed replacing and there were numerous wooden signs and benches in need of new weather protection.



Torrential rain meant outdoor work was temporarily put on hold so 75 'bee houses' were constructed in the barn. These were made from drain pipes filled with bamboo and attached to specially drilled poles. After construction, the bee houses were taken out deep into the wood, to locations marked out with a few centimetres of yellow and blue tape attached to no more than a tent peg! The Friends found locating the markers challenging and the 'instructions' for locating the markers soon became referred to as 'clues'.

As the week progressed and the weather fluctuated between wet, dry and more wet, the jobs were finished. Some Friends arrived mid-week; others left early and the wonderful Wytham staff team were on hand at all times. The evenings were spent in the pub or around the campfire and it was nice to have the Wytham team join us one evening and take part in the quiz organised by Sara (the winning team being Nigel, his partner Sue, Nick and Pete).



The Japanese Pottery Kilns situated next to the campsite and barn provided additional interest. People were stoking one kiln in shifts, 24 hours around the clock and all week, in readiness for the pots being removed at the outset of Oxfordshire's Art Week, which commenced after the Friends had left.

This was my first experience of Wytham and I found it energising. There is the friendship - amongst the RCP Friends who I got to know even better - and the Wytham staff who were all so welcoming and helpful. The outdoor work and fresh air resulted in deep, restful sleep - as did a late evening stroll through the wood with sightings of deer, bats, rabbits and a badger coming out of its set. I feel privileged and grateful for having had the opportunity to visit and work in Wonderful Wytham Woods!



The May 2017 Group comprised:
(top right photo - left to right) : Neil, Zoe, Kevin, David, Pete, Dorothy, Helen, Jill, Roger, Sara
(mid left photo—left to right): Richard, Jean, Kate, Mary
(mid right photo— left to right): Nigel, Nick, Pete and Sue
(front)
(bottom left photo) Lib, Nigel

What other jobs or roles have you had?

- Many years before taking on the role of 'Teas' Organiser' at RCP, I trained as a primary teacher and always had a full 'nature table' even/especially when teaching in inner city Byker, Newcastle on Tyne, my home town, and later in St Anne's, Nottingham, so I have tried to share my love of the natural world with the children, my own children and now my grandchildren. My latest working life was in the Nottingham Traveller Team working with Gypsies and Travellers, which proved to be a very interesting 10 years!

What else do you enjoy doing?

- I have also been a Brown Owl for many years and am still involved in guiding, encouraging the local units to use the park as often as they can and also for their fund-raising. I like reading, gardening and walking

What was your first involvement with the Park?

- I first remember the RCP when it was new and the trees very small. Jill [Spafford] and I would walk through with our younger children and we talked about the trees growing to their full size, which we could show to our grandchildren - and now we do!! Jill later encouraged me to join the Friends and so it began!



PEOPLE PROFILE

This time it's Sue Jackson,
Friends' café supremo.



What would you most like to see at the Park?

- I like the park as it is but would like all the visitors to look after the park like we/us Friends do!

What's your favourite natural thing at the park?

- I love to watch the water birds and also the wild flower meadows.

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

- Chocolate cake is my family's favourite but I prefer lemon or coffee. For the twice monthly Teas I try to have a good variety of cakes for the customers [though one memorable Sunday afternoon 3 ladies came together to serve and had brought a cake each-on arrival they found they had all made a chocolate cake!] The first job for 'Teas' is to set out [on Saturday] the room to make it an inviting place to come, then to have enough servers and cakes, too, so it does involve a lot of people each time: more volunteers are always needed in all roles so please help where you can.

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

- Many things but principally being the organiser of the Friends' Teas—a project which has raised many thousands of pounds of funds for the Park.

Dawn(ish) Chorus Walk 2017

Well, I've been practicing so I didn't get caught out during this year's Dawn Chorus Walk and thanks to all the birds for being the ones I'd learned!

It was an overcast morning but not too cold or dull and most importantly not raining. I must admit to being pleasantly surprised by the amount of people who turned up - most of them not Volunteers. I appreciate the support of the Volunteers who were there though, even Dot.

There was around 25 people by my rough count which was ideal for the morning stroll. Our office Dunnock actually performed this year and there were plenty of Blackbirds, Song Thrushes and blooming Wood Pigeons keeping us company.

We didn't manage to pick out the Reed Bunting or Bullfinch songs but these are rather subdued so may have passed us by amongst the chatter. A Goldcrest was also 'almost' heard in the conifers by the railway bridge - this is a good spot to pick out their high-pitched song and we have heard them singing there several times since.



Blue and Great-tits regaled us with their simple songs and we were serenaded by several Robins and Greenfinches as we went on our way.

The reed beds held the usual crop of rowdy Reed Warblers and a tree top just past the ancient hedgerow hosted a soloing Willow Warbler for everyone's enjoyment. Chiff-Chaffs, Chaffinches, White-throats adorned the hedges and woodland edges while Blackcaps seemed to be everywhere, no bad thing as their fast paced warble is a pleasure.

Nothing too exotic this year but everyone got plenty of opportunity to listen to the individual songs of a variety of the Park's birds; perhaps I'll do a test at the end next year to make sure all were paying attention? Speaking of the end, a good quantity of tea cakes were enjoyed by some of the walkers as a well-earned breakfast - thank you to my trusty volunteers for toasting and serving (I think they thought I wouldn't wash my hands!)

Thinking of next year, I think we'll try a 5.30 start to catch a few more songsters - are you with me?

Chris

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

Rosemary and a small team of Friends have begun detailed and scientific studies into a range of natural park subjects . The most recent is:

Freshwater Habitats survey 'PondNet' of Gibbies Hide Seasonal Pond habitat and invertebrate families on 02/06/2017

This is a brief report of the surveys which were undertaken as part of a national programme to document pond habitats and monitor them over the coming years.

Pond Habitat.

Gibbies Hide Seasonal Pond was dug, lined, puddled and pebbled in spring 2004. Aquatic compost put around the perimeter before the pond gradually filled with rain water. When there was sufficient water, common reed, hard and soft rush and yellow flag iris were planted.

The pond area is surrounded by trees and some fencing to protect the area. The margin was grassed and has now been colonised by a variety of wild flowers

When full, the surface area of the pond is 325 sq.m. In the centre, it is 72cm deep. At present it is half full and 80% covered with reeds and rushes with a few small patches of open water. Only 10% of the pond margin is overhung by trees. There is no evidence of water fowl use.

The water pH is 6.44 (neutral) and very low in nitrates and phosphates.

This information and data was entered onto the PondNet Habitat site.

Pond Invertebrates

This was a most enjoyable survey done by Libby, Marjke and Rosemary following the PondNet protocol. We went armed with plenty of trays, sample pots, magnifying glasses, microscope and results forms. The microscope is able to take pictures of finds.

The pond was to be 'dipped' for a total time of three minutes covering different areas and the samples kept in trays to be examined



An unidentified Water Beetle - 10mm. long



A Springtail - 1mm long



A Hawker Nymph - 2mm long

carefully later. The pond was divided into three zones, two with deeper water areas and one with the shallow margin, each zone was sampled for a total of one minute.

We found 10 different invertebrate families on the PondNet list as well as a newt, *Daphnia* sp., *Cyclops* sp., mosquito sp. and a colourful, tiny springtail 1mm long. The springtail is interesting as it escapes from danger by rapidly flicking their tail which is tucked under their body and 'springing' free. We caught three water beetles which proved difficult to identify beyond family level but we have photos and are aiming to get to species level. Caddis fly larvae, three different species of the Limnephidae family were identified *L. flavicornus*, *L. binotatus* *L. rhombicus* all of these have different cases. We did not find any Damsel nymphs found one very small 2mm long Hawker nymph.

The results were entered onto 'PondNet' and are only what was found on that day. A further visit to the pond is planned later in the summer.

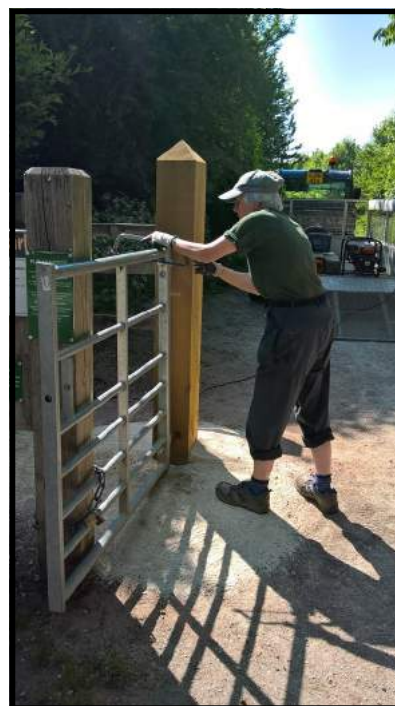
If anybody would like further information, or is an expert on water invertebrate/beetle ID and can help with their identification please get in touch via the Rushcliffe Country Park website

Rosemary

Gateway to the Park



Dytiscid Beetle - 10mm long



A considerable amount of hard work was involved in renewing the gates from the car park into the main park area, thanks to Rangers and volunteers.



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



This is Laura Hamilton, new Seasonal Ranger. She started in June and has been warmly welcomed to the job by the Park Fraternity. She has considerable relevant knowledge and experience.



Some days are just like that!

Dates for your Diary 2017

Linger Teas—Wed 5 and 19 July
Café—Sun 2 and 16 July

Linger Teas—Wed 2 and 16 Aug
Café—Sun 6 and 20 Aug

Linger Teas—Wed 6 and 20 Sept
Café—Sun 3 and 17 Sept

Wytham Trip—September 4