



The Queen's Award  
for Voluntary Service  
*The MBE for volunteer groups*

April 2026  
to  
June 2026



Rangers Office  
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Our website  
[www.friendsofrcp.org.uk](http://www.friendsofrcp.org.uk)

Issue 111

# Friends Newsletter



Rosemary makes the last cut of the 25-26 hedge laying season while Ranger Steve waits by the buggy and I take the pictures. The day was reminiscent of an authentic performance of Haydn's Symphony No. 45 (The Farewell). In case anyone is not familiar, that's the piece where the performers leave the stage as they finish their parts until only only a couple of violinists are left to play the last notes.

John Y.

## Message from Rosemary, Chair of The Friends of Rushcliffe Country Park



Jean Gray celebrated her 90th birthday in February and at a special birthday party, we wished her a Happy Birthday and many happy returns. Jean is a founder member of the Friends of Rushcliffe Country Park and currently is our treasurer.

In the early days, while teaching at a local primary school, she recalls bringing in her pupils to help with tree planting and other tasks around the newly created park. Jean was involved in the publication of the Bombs to Butterflies book telling the history of RCP, as well as many other projects including the Friendship Garden, hedge laying and willow weaving.

Rosemary.

Photo by Rosemary.

## Winter Social



On the 25th of February we had our Winter social with a buffet lunch followed by a quiz, the latter provided by Dorothy.

John Y.

Photos by John Y.

## Hedge laying 2026

As usual in January our main task for many members is hedge laying. It's not the only thing that volunteers do in Winter but it is a major part of our efforts and we have an enthusiastic team. We started on a length of hedge on the SW side of Weggie Walk adjacent to overgrown scrub alongside the railway in December and continued until the last Wednesday in March.



Photo by  
Rosemary



Photos  
by Sarah G



The hedge had many gaps, a shortage of good thorn and wanders around as a result of planting, in previous seasons, in front of the original line.

At least we didn't have the usual problem of field maple that plagues much of the park's boundary hedges. Because of these problems we have laid the hedge rather flat to cover the gaps, used material that we would normally cut out and have not been able to maintain a straight line or smooth curve.



This season we have not been able to harvest much willow for binding and we have not bound this Weggie Walk hedge.

Willow for binding you might ask? Yes we normally use willow; its easier to work with than traditional hazel and we never have enough suitable hazel. Our hedges are largely decorative and we don't need to contain a ton of bull trying to reach his hareem. Willow, when available is appropriate for the RCP hedges.



Photos by Steve



Photos by John Y except where stated

John Youngs.

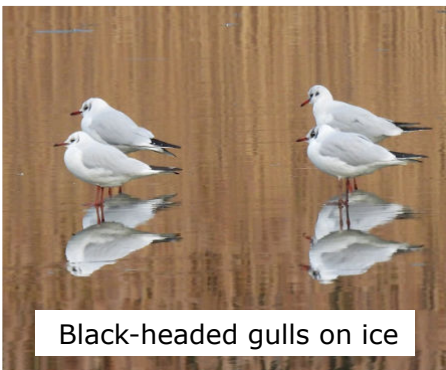
# Janet's Nature Diary

**January 2026** came in with the first light snow of the season on the 2nd and sustained cold temperatures for a while that saw the lake freezing over,

producing some beautiful mirror images and some crisp frosty mornings.



Frosty Teasels



Black-headed gulls on ice

Later in the month the weather was much more unsettled due to the effects of Storm Chandra, with a total of 86mm rain recorded (83mm in 2025), wetter than the long term average for the area.



Redwing



Dunnock

The hedge-laying team saw a small flock of Redwing feeding on Hawthorn berries at Weggie Walk, (the included photo was taken at RSPB Langford Lowfields). Redwing are small thrushes with distinctive orange/red underwings, visiting through winter from northern and eastern Europe and Iceland. Our resident Blackbirds are also partial to Hawthorn berries.



Blackbird



Wren

A Wren was spotted flitting around and feeding in the undergrowth near the the entrance to the memorial woodland. A tiny brown bird with a big voice, the Wren is an all-year-round resident and is apparently the most common breeding bird in the UK.



Snowdrops (Single L & Double R)



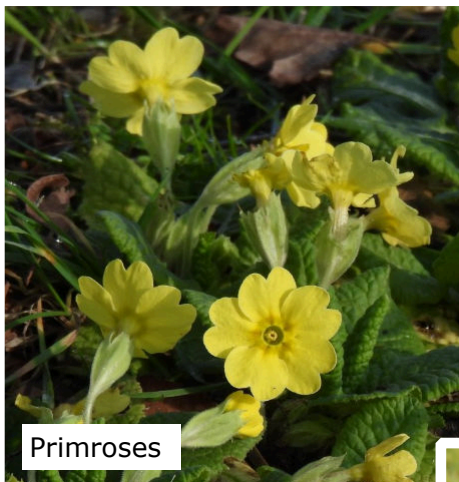
John E. visited the Park (other than for hedge-laying) on the morning of the 29th and had no trouble finding a mixed flock of Goldfinch, Redpoll and Siskin, opposite the seasonal pond. He heard them again later by Bradmore gate, but couldn't see them – probably the same flock. Also Goldcrest, Redwing and Song Thrush by the pond in Gibbies, before the rangers turned up in their buggy!

Snowdrops started to flower towards the end of the month, a welcome sign of the Spring to come. They are flowering significantly earlier than they used to on account of the milder winters we have been having.

**February 2026** Wet, wet, wet was the best way of describing February, with rain falling to some degree on most days of the month, replenishing lake levels. 121.5mm rain was recorded nearby (33mm in 2025).



Wild Daffodils



Primroses

Temperatures were relatively mild.

Wild Daffodils, Primroses, Crocuses, Cowslips, Sweet Violets and some tree blossom came into flower, providing lovely splashes of colour on what were mainly dull days.



Cowslips

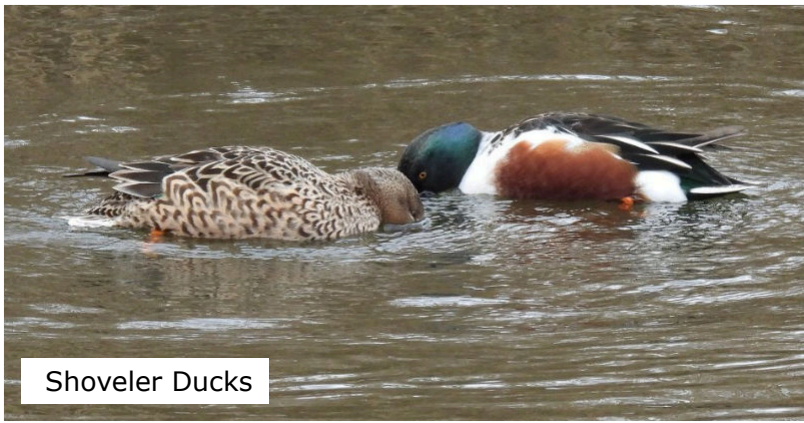


Sweet Violets



Green Woodpecker

A Green Woodpecker was heard, with its distinctive loud laughing call in the memorial woodland (the attached photo was taken in my own garden). Beautifully colourful, with long dagger-like bills, they probe for ants and grubs in the grass and soil.



Birds were busy singing, attracting and displaying to their mates and defending their territories. This pair of Shoveler ducks were performing the courting synchronised circling ritual, their bills submerged to stir up food and strengthen their bond.

Shoveler Ducks



Hazel with catkins and red flowers



Willow catkins

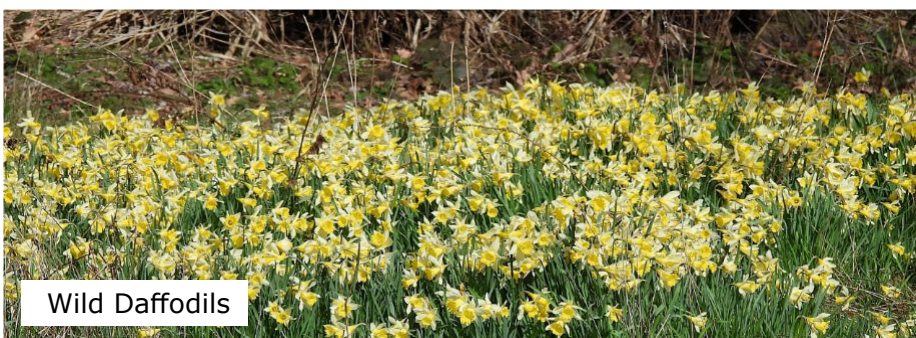


Alder catkins

Catkins, which are long slim clusters of tiny inconspicuous flowers were in evidence, mostly male wind pollinating structures. The tiny red female flowers on the Hazel can just about be seen in this photo.

Bumble bees and honey bees were seen making the most of the flowers and blossom on offer when we got glimpses of sunshine towards the end of the month.

**March 2026** has thrown a variety of weathers at us, sometimes literally, with a mixture of rain, wind, hail and some sun. Nearby rain monitoring showed 25mm as compared to the very low 8.5mm in March 2025.



Wild Daffodils



Wood Anemones

The Wild Daffodils and Cowslips have continued to provide a beautiful display of colour throughout the month and Wood Anemones started to flower. Wood Anemones, which thrive in the dappled shade of woodlands, show phototropic behaviour, only opening their star-shaped flowers in the sunshine and remaining closed or drooping when it's dull and wet.



Little Grebe

A Little Grebe appeared on the lake around the middle of the month, regularly diving (usually just when I had got my camera in focus!) and then re-appearing some distance away. Nest building started to occur, with this pair of Coots both actively involved, one fetching and the other placing material to raise the partially hidden nest above the water level. The Mute Swan pair seemed to be more interested in challenging their reflections in the



Coots nesting

visitor centre window than nest building, so much so that the rangers fitted banners along the fence to act as a screen. To date however, they can still be seen poking the heads above and round the end of the banners looking out for their 'adversaries'. Let's hope they start nest building soon.



Peacock Butterfly



Rosemary reported seeing Frogspawn in Gibbies pond, which will develop into tadpoles within three weeks. She also noted Peacock and Brimstone Butterflies on one of the warm sunny days mid-month, I took the accompanying photo of a Peacock Butterfly warming itself in the late morning sunshine at RSPB Langford Lowfields.

Looking forward to whatever the next quarter brings,

Janet C.

## **'What is in a pile of soil' Three years on**

It is now three years since soil was dumped behind the Park entrance Boulder, the area continues to surprise us, as it has developed into a small, species rich area. The only management is the annual late autumn cut and removal of arisings. See Newsletter issue 101.



As you will see from the pictures, different plants have been dominant each year. In the first year 2023 there was a mixture including plants emerging after soil disturbance. 2024 was teasel dominant and in 2025 it was the turn of the evening primrose, docks and mugwort, all of these are

biannual or perennial so we look forward to seeing what flowers this year. At the time of writing this (March 2026) white dead nettle, dog violets and red dead nettle and flowering for the first time are two Grape Hyacinth. Looking at the many leaves appearing it is difficult to say what will dominate this year.

The abundance of wild flowers has encouraged insects, so in 2025 we decided to record everything found in the area and its border, resulting in 175 species.

83 wild flowers, 8 grasses, 14 trees and shrubs, 3 mosses, 2 lichens, 18 butterflies and moths, 44 insects including 5 causing galls, 2 fungi, 1 mammal and 1 bird (Pied Wagtail). 9 insects were new additions to the Park species list.

A copy of the report is available on request.

Photos by Rosemary

Rosemary and Sarah.

## Other Work Around the Park

Apart from our hedge laying enthusiasts other Friends have been working elsewhere doing typical Winter woodland work, maintenance of the sensory trail and other tasks. I have been sent very few photographs of these activities. These tasks may seem very ordinary to us but I like to show them in the newsletter to show people what we do to support the work of the rangers.

**Alongside Asher Lane near the level crossing** The hedge had grown through the fence and was obstructing visitors walking along the verge. With care to avoid damage to cars which are always parked there from early morning, our volunteers cleared the offending overgrowth. This is the sort of location in which a tractor and flail cannot access without a risk of damaging parked cars.





Photo by Janet C



Photo by Janet C

**Laurel** needs to be controlled and Friends are seen here clearing debris. Many of the laurel bushes had been previously reduced and had often regrown with straight(ish) branches which we used for hedging stakes. Traditionally hazel is used but we use anything that is available from the park. **Reeds** need to be controlled or they would take over the lake. The

park wanted to dig out reeds between the lake shore and the bunds (big reed clumps) which are used as cover for birds. This was a bit beyond us, or our rangers. The Friends funded the work to be done by contractors.



Photo by Anne



Our source of money for such funding is now mainly from the shop.

John Youngs editor.

Photos by John Y except where stated.

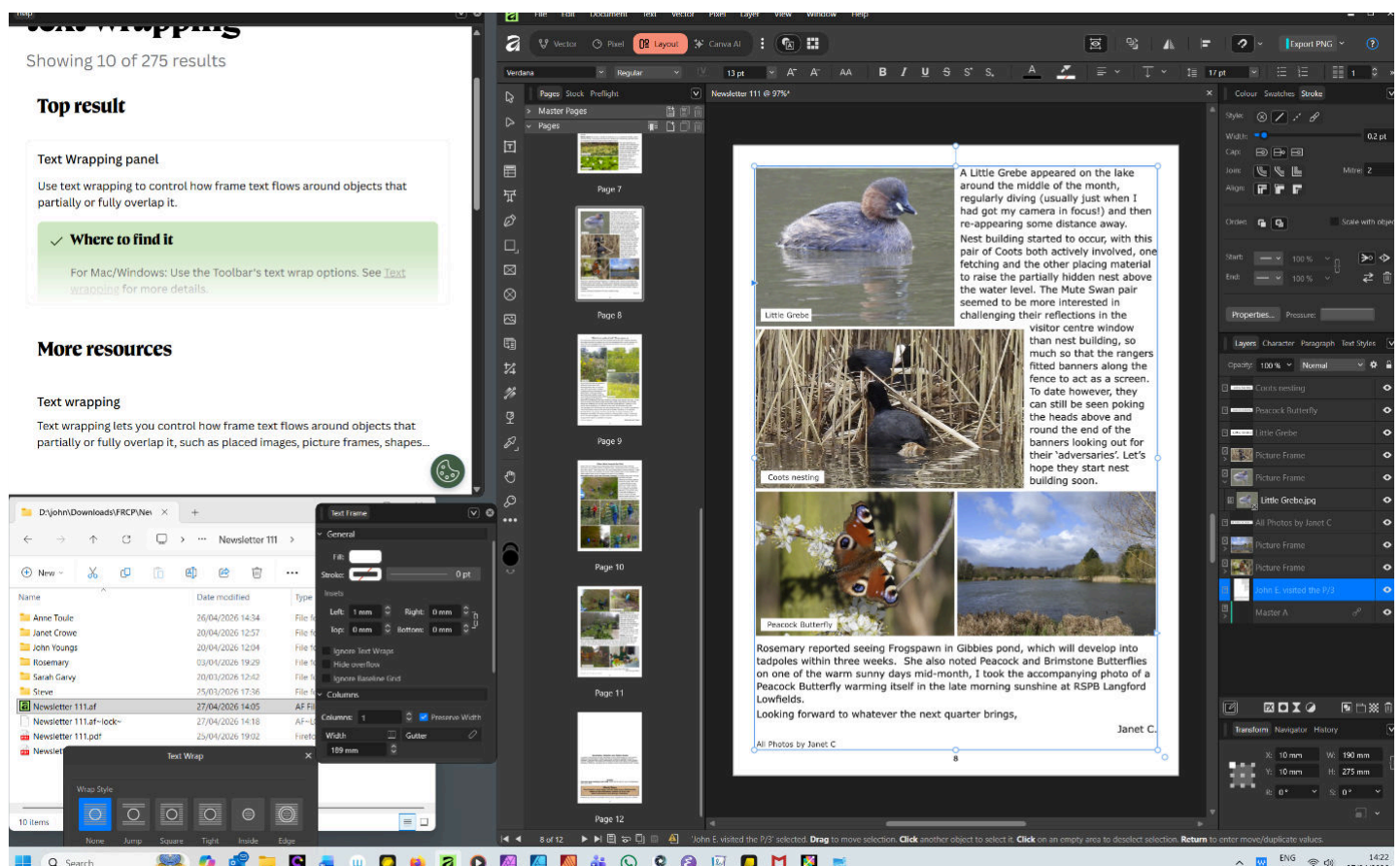
# Newsletter, Website and Digital Assets

I have been trying to strengthen our digital resilience. Presently I am creating the newsletter, maintaining the website and looking after an archive of old photographs. More than one person should be familiar with these tasks

Thank you to two Friends who have volunteered to help with the archive. It would be nice to have an extra person helping them.

It would also be useful to have a second person to help, and ultimately take over, the web site. No special software is needed.

For the newsletter we only need to produce a pdf file and how we do so is up to the person doing it. I have just moved from Affinity Publisher to their new Affinity application. This is a powerful and easy to use application for drawing, processing photographs and desktop publishing. It runs on Windows 11 and modern versions of macOS. This is free to individuals. I do not have, or need, the paid for AI additions. To whet your appetite I include a screen shot.



Microsoft Publisher has been used by previous newsletter editors but Publisher support ends in October 2026. MS 365 users will lose access, but standalone copies should continue to work.

John Youngs editor.

**Work Days**  
**The Friend's work days will be held every Wednesday.**  
**Meet at the Education Centre at 9.30 am.**  
**New volunteers are always welcome.**

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