



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

Jan 2021
to
Mar 2021



Rangers Office
0115 921 5865

Our website
www.friends-of-rcp.co.uk

Issue 90

Friends Newsletter



Orchard Hedge Nov 4th
Photo John Y

During the last quarter volunteering has had to be intermittent and has been carried out by small groups or individuals. Nevertheless two hedges have been laid, and Roger has completed and prepared projects. Other tasks have been carried out such as clearing fence lines but I have not received, or had the opportunity to take, the usual photographs. We also welcomed Tim, who has contributed to the newsletter as well as helping the hedge layers.

I hope that 2021 turns out to be a happier year for us all and that we soon are able to meet socially and to work again.

John Y Editor.

Message from Dorothy

Well, thank goodness 2020 is over – a year we all want to forget!

2021 will be a better year- we have to be positive! The new vaccine will be a great boost and mean that the situation across the county will begin to improve and we will get back to the park and continue where we left off.

I trust you are all well and you are still finding interesting things to do to help the mind and body keep active? If not, perhaps you can give consideration to the fact that we have no income from our café.

It would be good if you can think of items to make and to sell. We will have a pop-up shop occasionally and as we have no calendars or honey left to sell it only leaves the delicious jam bringing some money into our funds. I am limited in ideas but bird boxes spring to mind along with the hazel pens, which were a good seller. Please have a good think of anything which can be made by our members using materials from the park and which will generate an income.

Quite a few of us have been going to the park on a regular basis finding jobs to do to keep the park looking as good as it can. The park has seen many new visitors who have been using it for recreational purposes. They think what a wonderful place it is. I am certain that when Covid has left us many more visitors will stay and enjoy it.

I don't know if you are aware of the TV personality we have in our midst? Yes, Jean Gray no less appeared on the television programme Walking Britain's lost Railways. This was on Channel 5 and presented by Rob Bell. It was a very interesting programme about the Great Central Railway. The programme, ably helped by Jean, outlined the very important role the railway played in getting the workers to the Country Park when it was a bomb filling factory. It showed an excellent aerial photo of the Country Park. Well done Jean.

Finally I would like to wish you a happy, peaceful and above all a healthy 2021. Take care and stay safe.

Dorothy

Membership

It's that time of year for renewing membership!

Because of COVID and all the restrictions in place at this time a decision has been made to defer renewal of membership until probably March, when hopefully things will have improved.

It would be difficult to give out membership forms and it would not be a good idea to have people coming to the office to request forms or to drop off payment. Keep safe

Jean (Treasurer)

Message from Alastair

The old wooden skatepark is due to be removed mid-January, with work on a brand new park to start immediately after, with a completion date of April. This new skatepark has been designed based on consultations with local skaters and is expected to be a huge draw to the park.



We are also in the early stages of some exciting new developments, including modernising the visitor centre and refurbishing the log cabin toilets. More news on this will be released as it progresses.

We have just entered a partnership with Notts Outdoors, the county council's education department, who will provide outdoor education to school groups on the park. Some trial sessions will start in March and hopefully by summer they will be completely up and running, allowing more children to experience the park than park staff alone could offer.

Update on 7th Jan 2021 Unfortunately the decision has been made to stop volunteering taking place on the park for a while. Although the government has said that volunteering is allowed, it seems aimed more at volunteering in hospitals, food banks and care homes etc. rather than what we do here, and isn't in the spirit of 'Stay at home'. We will review this at the end of January and as cases start to drop and vaccinations increase we will hopefully be able to welcome you back soon.

Alastair

Fungi in Rushcliffe Country Park

It is the season for fungi in the Park, and you will see them in the meadows and the woods.

Fungi have no chlorophyll so are unable to convert the sun's energy into food. They have to rely on plant and animal material and use enzymes to dissolve their food. They include mushrooms, moulds and yeasts. In the world there are over 1.5 million fungi.

Mushrooms and toadstools (there is no distinction between these two terms) may rot away after a few days, but they are just the fruiting bodies connected to long-lived underground fungal threads, called hyphae. The hyphae combine to form a mycelium, sometimes in the form of an expanding disc. Some types of mycelia can live for hundreds of years and can grow to an enormous size underground. The largest living organism is a honey fungus in Oregon which occupies 2,385 acres.



Fly Agaric *Amanita muscaria*
Photos Rosemay D



Yellow fieldcap *Bolbitius titubans*
Photo Fungi UK

A fairy ring consists of fungus fruiting bodies emerging around the edge of a mycelia disc that expands from its point of origin. The diameter of the fairy ring gives a rough guide to the age of the fungal organism. Fairy rings can be seen in the Park meadows.

Fungi reproduce by shedding numerous spores from their fruiting body, which can be large like the plate fungi, or tiny like the bonnets.

At the Park we have recorded 138 species since the Park opened 30 years ago. There are many more waiting to be identified. There are thought to be about 15,000 species of fungi in the UK.

Tyntesfield, a 350-year-old, National Trust property in North Somerset, has recorded over 1,000 fungi, so we have a long way to go.



Silverleaf Fungus *Chondrostereum purpureum*

Photo Rosemary D



Hairy curtain crust *Stereum hirsutum*

Photo Gary H

Last year 14 species were added to our list by the local fungus group and Jenny Smedley, seasonal ranger. A total of 37 were recorded by them.

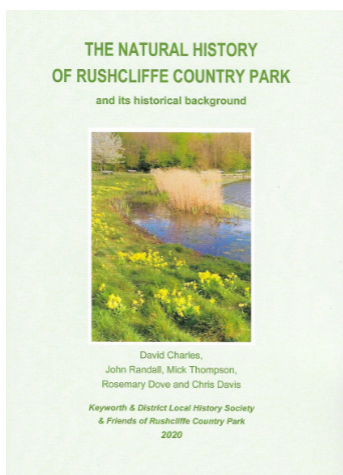
Two new species were recorded this Autumn. Fly Agaric *Amanita muscaria* in the hedgerow on

Weggie walk was seen by Mick Thompson and Yellow Fieldcap *Bolbitius titubans* in the field verge near Memorial Walk was seen by Stephen Brown, Ranger.

Many others have been seen. Two you may like to look out for are often seen in the woods on rotting stumps and logs: Silverleaf fungus *Chondrostereum purpureum* and Hairy Curtain Crust *Stereum hirsutum*. Keep looking, as different fungi are to be found throughout the year.

Many fungi are very difficult to identify and we hope that the local Fungi Group will be able to visit in 2021 once the pandemic restrictions are over and add more species to our list.

Rosemary



Natural history studies in the park

A booklet has been prepared jointly with Keyworth and District Local History Society (KDLHS) entitled

The natural history of Rushcliffe Country Park and its historical background.

Copies may be purchased from FoRCP or from KDLHS.

David Charles, John Randall, Mick Thompson, Rosemary Dove and Chris Davis

Volunteering, Hedge laying, and the Pandemic

I moved from Northumberland in 2019. I was used to open moorland, vast vistas and the Roman Wall. Although Northumberland had all this it did not have Country Parks like Rushcliffe. Pam, my wife, and I loved that we could within half a mile of our home walk around a lake and watch Swans nest and have cygnets. After my wife died, I needed to rebuild my life but COVID blocked so much. I applied to join Friends of Rushcliffe Park volunteers. Fortunately, in early October I was asked if I was willing to join the hedge laying volunteer team of 6 laying the Orchard hedge.

I had never laid a hedge but knew about it from my farming relatives. It was clear that, because of social distancing, I could not be taught to lay a hedge, but I could sharpen stakes and carry the brash for those doing the hedge laying. I was even given the important task of shouting "coffee time!" At eleven o'clock!



Photo John E

I soon learnt how to sharpen stakes safely and exactly where to put the brash in the nearby wooded area and so help wildlife thrive. I enjoyed 3 weeks volunteering feeling part of a team and made to feel very welcome.

When it came to binding, because of the latest COVID restrictions, it was decided that only 3 should take part. I walk around Rushcliffe Country Park most days as my daily exercise and never miss going past the orchard to admire the finished bound hedge. It looks so impressive.

The following week we started laying the hedge next to Smiff's Corner. Again, the same team of 6 made me feel welcome and used my labouring in sharpening and cutting the stakes to the correct length and then moving the

brash a short distance to be shredded later. This time we had 2 Rangers to help. Once the hedge was laid, 4 of us did the binding. I took an active part and learnt this new skill, as well as finishing the stakes to the correct height and angle.

I look forward once this present lockdown is over to joining the team again and hope that, once I am vaccinated, I may be able to learn the actual hedge laying itself.

Most importantly the volunteer team and the rangers taught me that I was welcome, part of the team and gave me their friendship. Roll on the end of this pandemic and an even greater role in keeping this amenity available for all to enjoy.

Tim C

John's Jottings



Wigeon F
Photo John E



Wigeon M
Photo John E



Gadwell
Photo John E

As we have said goodbye to all the summer wildlife, birds on the lake have been the main source of interest. As usual, we have had a number of winter dabbling ducks present in recent weeks, including about 15 Wigeon, plus smaller numbers of Shoveler and Gadwall. At times there has been a male Teal, and on one occasion two males. For anyone who observes wildfowl at the numerous wetland sites along the Trent valley, these species will be quite well known. However, it is interesting to note that this has not always been the case, and Gadwall and Wigeon in particular were not nearly so numerous in the county before the creation of so much good habitat from gravel workings in the latter half of the 20th century. One wonders whether, had the Park been here in the 1950s, it would still have attracted these winter visitors.

Another bird whose fortunes have improved over the last couple of decades is Common Buzzard, now seen and heard over the Park more or less on a daily basis and probably breeding in the area. It was quite scarce in the county until about 25 years ago. Perhaps a reduction in persecution has helped its spread from the north and west of the country.

A dead Goshawk was found on the Park recently and it has been sent away to see if the cause of death



Teal
Photo John E

can be determined. It was found after some very windy conditions, so one theory is that it got blown into a tree. Considerably larger than a Sparrowhawk (they can even take a Sparrowhawk as prey), this is a species more likely to be found in the Dukeries or Derbyshire.

A couple of new species have been added to the Park's list: Greater Thorn-tipped Longhorn beetle (*Pogonocherus hispidulus*), which landed on a rangers' flask, and the gall of a Ram's-horn Gall Wasp (*Andricus aries*) found by Rosemary.



Tufted Duck
Photo John E



Gall of a Ram's-horn Gall Wasp
Andricus aries
Photo Rosemary D



Common Buzard
Photo John E

Signs of spring are already here – in the last couple of weeks I have heard Song Thrush, Mistle Thrush and Great Tit singing. So that is something to look forward to in the weeks ahead as days get longer. I wish you all a happy 2021.

John E

Hedge Laying October to December

The restrictions due to the pandemic has prevented the usual activity, which involves just about all the working members of the Friends. By October Friends were allowed to work in small groups provided social distancing was observed. Rangers were not actively encouraging volunteering but were supportive of those volunteers who wanted to work. I was keen to get part of the orchard hedge laid so that the hedge standards (planted eleven yards apart) were not overwhelmed. I suggested this to Ranger Chris and to my surprise he told me to organise it. Hedge laying is a task suited to social distancing. The hedge did not include heavy material needing two people to lower the pleachers. No chainsaw work or use of a pole saw would be needed so there would be no need to share equipment.

I initially invited Rosemary, Heather, Lib, John R and John E, who all have previously laid hedges unaided and in most cases had their own tools. Later Jan T joined us. Jan had previously done a course with BTCV (as it was then, now TCV).



John E binding the Orchard hedge
Photo John Y

John E invited a new Member Tim to join us. Tim has also written an article elsewhere in the Newsletter for which I am grateful. Edwina also joined us since she also is capable of working by herself. Each of us, apart from Tim, laid a section of 22 or 11 yards. Only a bit of self discipline at tea breaks was needed to maintain safe social distancing.

Most of the group have also laid a section of hedge near Smiff's corner. That is pictured within Tim's article.

John Y

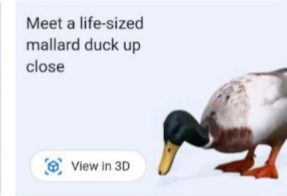
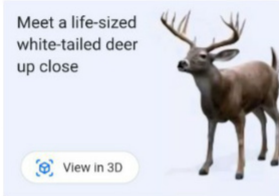
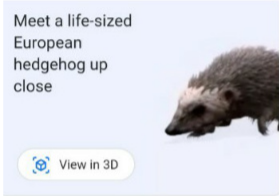
Roger's Activities



Roger has been busy with four projects during lockdown. All the photographs and following text are by Roger.

JY

Friends will have noticed new finger signs appearing around the park. Alastair decided that the old signage needed an update and asked me to make some replacements. I have included some photos of these, I hope you approve.



A new trail has been set up around the lake. It comprises 11 signs that contain a QR code. Visitors are invited to pick up a free crossword puzzle from the visitors centre. Scanning each code on your phone will yield a moving 3D animal which can be seen in augmented reality. It's name is then filled in the crossword. Why not give it a go? You will need to download a QR reader, they are all free, have fun.

Rushcliffe Country Park

With your Crossword sheet walk around the lake and scan all 11 QR code signs giving you 3D moving animals and the words of your crossword.

QR Code Animal 3D Adventure Crossword

Many thanks to Gary, Nathan (Gary's son) John H and Dave for their help in building this trail.

Tree Trails

Friends of the Park may like to know about two new trails.

Welcome to the Tree and Insect Trails

Can you match the leaves you see on the trees with their I.D photos and spot their species?



Follow the Alphabet Insect Trail

Can you name some of the Insects along the Trail?

You may choose to do the two trails separately



First we have upgraded the tree trail, with new signage and also using QR codes for additional information. The same trail also includes an insect trail. 26 insect signs in alphabetical order ask visitors to name the species. The addition of a dragonfly bench has completed this project.



Coming Soon

Soon to be installed are two new activities in the sensory area.



Each is based on the memory game known as Kim's game. (Rudyard Kipling) Children are tasked on remembering 14 objects on a tray and then when the sign is flipped over they try to remember as many as possible.

Roger

All Volunteer Work Is Suspended

Hopefully some limited volunteer work will be possible soon but the regular Wednesday sessions seem to be still a long time away.

The next newsletter is likely to be thin. I welcome any Friend's relevant material for publication. This may relate to work done at home such as preparing articles on the park's natural history, photographs of the park taken while doing your permitted exercise and of course work done in the park when it is again permitted.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to this issue. John Youngs (Editor)