



October 2017
to
December 2017

Our website
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Rangers Office
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Issue 77

Friends Newsletter



Photo Jean

Welcome, and Thank you to John our new Editor, for providing a blaze of colour with the tagetes he planted outside the Rangers Office.

A last blast of summer.

Jean and Margaret

Thanks Jean and Margaret for the welcome and introduction as editor. I was wondering how to introduce myself.

John Y.

A Change of Watch



Contre jour Photo by Zoe

Thanks Anne for all your previous work as editor of the newsletter. The task seems pretty easy until one tries to do it oneself, then it becomes problematic. I hope to carry on in the same tradition, maybe in my own style which will take time to develop. The photograph shows Anne with her assistant and proof reader Douglas. Douglas seems oblivious to criticism of his omissions provided he receives things to eat which he shouldn't.

John

Bill Young

We are all saddened to hear of the sudden passing of Bill on Sunday 10th September 2017. We will publish a full obituary of Bill in the next issue of the newsletter.



Bill you will be missed by all your friends. We offer our condolences to Jill and family.

On October 25th we will be celebrating Bill's life. It will be at the Country Park with Jill, family and friends.

Green Flag Award Number 11

On Wednesday July 19th, Roger and I attended an award ceremony at Pride Park, Derby. Rushcliffe Country Park had won the Green Flag for the 11th consecutive year and we were delighted to represent the park to receive this prestigious award. There were many parks represented from the East Midlands and we had the opportunity to chat to many of their Friends' groups. The venue was extremely nice being in an Executive Suite overlooking Derby City Football ground and the afternoon ceremony was very interesting.



Following this, on Wednesday August 9th, we were delighted to have the flag raising ceremony at the park. The Flag was raised by the Mayor of Rushcliffe, Councillor Leslie Cooper, to a crowd of 45 volunteers. The Green Flag recognises the quality of the park and the highest possible environmental standards. It is thanks to the Rangers and Friends of the Country Park who work tirelessly to maintain the high standards demanded by this Award.

Dorothy

Editor's comment

It is easy to become blasé about receiving this award for so many consecutive years. We should not be complacent. I have been reading 'The Green Flag Award guidance manual' on the greenflag.org.uk website and it is quite clear that this award is about far more than having a 'nice park'. As well as the publically visible work that goes on, there is much that goes on behind the scenes. It looks like a management nightmare to comply with all that is required. We know that assessors do visit and talk to the staff and can demand to see the paperwork. A 'speedread' of the manual suggests how much work is done by Keith and rangers to keep this award. Even as volunteers here, we are usually unaware of how much office and organisational work is needed.

John

Wytham September 2017

As a relative newcomer to volunteering being invited to attend Wytham Woods along with other volunteers appealed to me since I'd be outdoors somewhere previously unvisited by me, and it afforded me a perfect opportunity to hone my rookie hedge laying skills, more about that later.



I arrived at the camping area in the Sawmill Yard on Sunday. Sara, Helen and Zoe had already arrived and were pitched up. Having pitched my tent it was time for a cuppa. I was struck by the beauty of the part of the woods that I could see, the sounds and smells all playing their part. Wytham has the ability, like so many woodlands, to generate a feeling of belonging. Lib arrived later that afternoon, a perfect opportunity for another brew.


The Friends of Rushcliffe Country Park and the staff at Wytham Woods meet twice a year and this has been the case for many years. I was introduced to Neil and Kevin, who are lucky enough to work there, and to Nigel, the Wytham conservator (the boss) and Tristan, who also have the enviable privilege of actually living there, in Tristan's case when he is not at University in Nottingham. On Monday the aforementioned, plus John who arrived on Monday morning, tackled some 60 yards of hedge near Marley wood, a wood within a wood so to speak.

Upon arrival at the hedge I was slightly daunted by the task at hand. The hedge was about 8 feet tall and 4 to 5 feet thick in places. However the combined teams made short work of siding it up and I was quickly fully immersed in the intricacies of hedge laying. If you haven't tried it I can fully recommend it. It is physical work but there is an inherent satisfaction to the whole process. Initially the hedge bottom was



cleared where it had become festooned with brambles and some dead wood. This had the added difficulty of being interwoven with an adjacent deer fence, constructed from wire and standing some six feet tall, that needed to remain in place undamaged. Having made short work of this the teams then got down to the work of cutting the remaining hedge stems (plashes or pleachers *ed's note*). At times this can appear quite brutal but hedgerows are very resilient and will accommodate being cut to such a degree that only an inch or less thickness of the pleacher is left from the original, thus allowing the whole to bend without breaking. This involves the use of a bow saw then a bill hook or felling axe depending upon the thickness of the stem. Chainsaws replaced the felling axes on this occasion.

A Top tip for right handers using a bill hook when hedge laying from right to left; do not cross your arms over (especially when using a double edged hook and wearing light clothing *ed*). Ask anyone who hedge lays and they'll explain why. Neil and Tristan enthusiastically got to work with chainsaws where the pleachers were several inches in diameter. Once the pleacher is cut it is then laid over at an angle and secured with stakes at approximately 18 inch intervals. The pleachers must not be laid too low and deadwood can be used to support gaps. The stakes are then bound with hazel or willow along the tops, (a process known as withering *ed*). The tops were cut at an angle a fist width above the binding, so the cut surface faces the same way as the cut surface of the pleachers, creating a very pleasing effect.

On day two Friends Rosemary and Liz arrived to supply some much appreciated help. By day three the hedge was really starting to take shape and was unrecognisable from its original un-laid but trimmed form. The stems were all cut and laid and some of the binding had taken place. Day four saw the completion of the binding and final trimming 



of stakes and brushing of the hedge with a billhook. I particularly enjoyed the binding process as I had not done this before. It completes the process by tying the whole job together and is aesthetically pleasing.

Unlike a barbed wired fence a laid hedge offers shelter to cattle and sheep and provides a haven for all sorts of wildlife. It is a method that promotes growth from the ground up thus ensuring the life and health of the hedge row. If looked after with regular trimming, a hedge can last for up to 50 years before it needs relaying.



Wytham Woods is an ancient woodland originally owned by the Earl of Abingdon. It was purchased in 1920 by Raymond and Hope Schumacher who had moved to England in 1915 having made a fortune in gold mining in South Africa. The family adopted the surname Ffennell by royal licence in 1917. Sadly their only daughter, Hazel, passed away in 1939 aged just 33. The family donated the woods to

Oxford University in 1942 in her memory.



Wytham is probably the most thoroughly researched woodland in the world. It is unique and we are very privileged to work there.

Thank you for inviting us Nigel.

Gary.



Copper's Fun Dog Show



This was a 'fun' event and the competition really was just for fun wasn't it?

A person hiding behind dark 'shades', under a Tilley hat and with a megaphone was clearly in charge.

Thank you Lib for the photo of Marijke competing.

The Hungry Caterpillar rises Phoenix like.



On returning from holiday I was greeted by the sight of our dear hungry caterpillar, in broken pieces, in the turbine compound. Apparently it had been savaged by reckless monsters. I felt it was time to refresh this popular sculpture. With the delivery of new plywood I was able to replace 5 major components and add strengthening from inside. Then with a grey undercoat, I set about repainting the caterpillar in fresh green and reds. The footplates have been covered in astro turf. The entire sculpture was then fixed to two plastic beams using metal brackets. On the day of installation, we were surrounded with kids keen to leap on it, as the new covering of woodchip was finally laid, they finally had their caterpillar back. Laura put a photo and article on the Friends Facebook page. Within 48 hours it had gained very complimentary comments and over a hundred likes and since then it was viewed by 7,665 people. Thanks to the Friends for their efforts during installation.



Roger

Mosaic Workshop

Over the past few weeks a group of Friends have been encouraged to “have a go” at creating mosaics for the pathways in the Garden of Friendship, our new project.



As leader of the project, with the help of Kate, 21 mosaics have been completed. New skills have been learned. Ideas and problems have been shared and being part of a new group activity has been very enjoyable. As you can see from the photographs, mosaics of a very high standard have been produced and everyone should feel proud.



Kate and I thoroughly enjoyed the whole process, from choosing a vast array of coloured mosaics to give everyone a good choice for their own design, to seeing the reaction when the grouting process had been done and the end product revealed.

New skills have been passed on to the next generation and I hope will be a lasting legacy for the park.

Comments

Janet: most enjoyable and therapeutic.

Sara: Thoroughly enjoyed it. Brought out my artistic talents.

Kate: Just itching to do more.

Zoe: It's a creative thing to do. Very enjoyable, meditative, learning a new skill, A lovely group activity.



Janet



Bill



Jean



Rosemary



Jan

Danuta

Liz

Paul



Sue



Ann C



Dorothy

Lib

Helen



Edwina



Sara



Ann T



Zoe and Marijke

Kate

Myrtle





Helen: At the beginning felt frustrated, it was messy and fiddly, but at the end I felt a lot of job satisfaction.



Myrtle: Enjoyable and helped me brush up on my manual dexterity.



Ann T: I loved doing it. I would love to do another one.

Lib: I thoroughly enjoyed doing my very first mosaic; I found it totally absorbing and relaxing. My frog took me so long to complete, I joke that it started out as a tadpole!

Thank you everyone for your commitment to the project.

Jean.

One More Mosaic

Roger has also created a mosaic using a different pallet of tiles to those used in the tented workshop.



Bike Racks

The bike racks have been popular and are well used. Thanks to the Linger by the Lake group of Friends who have funded their purchase.



Cake SOS! Please can anybody help Sue serve tea.

'Teas' Update in September 2017



We have an excellent supply of homemade cakes for our twice monthly 'Teas', many thanks to our regular bakers, although more are always welcome!

The summer season has seen a low availability of servers as our regulars go on holiday and/or entertain family and friends and therefore are not available, so I have had to send out two urgent calls for help - thankfully answered, although some teams have been low in

numbers. If you, or anyone you know is able to join the rota, please let me know or I will have to close the 'Teas' for a day or part of the day, which is worrying as we have the cakes to sell! and customers to buy!!

Sue Jackson

The Big Butterfly Count 2017

The big butterfly count has been and gone in a flurry of flutterbies; this annual event started in 2010 by the Butterfly Conservation Trust has been growing in popularity each summer, and this year there were over 57,000 records - 282 of those are from Rushcliffe Country Park (impressive, no?!). It has been supported by David Attenborough, and has had a huge social media presence.

Over the time span of the survey I went out at different times of the day in different weather conditions (but mostly sunny as butterflies favour the sun as it keeps their flight muscles warm and functioning), and went to different locations around the park. I cheated a bit and moved around to count butterflies, rather than standing still and watching, but it paid off. I saw my first ever painted lady butterfly - right outside the ranger's office!

The park is proving to be really, really good for butterflies. Earlier in the year, Chris and I spotted some small tortoiseshell caterpillars on the nettles near the activity woodland, and I have seen both six-spot Burnet moth and cinnabar moth caterpillars around the lake, and elsewhere. I have seen 18 different species of butterfly and moth, and this is testament to the range of habitats provided through all the hard work of the Friends and staff. You should all be really proud!

The comma butterfly has had lots of attention this year as it is coming back from the brink of extinction - it is widespread in southern Britain and slowly spreading north - the caterpillars of this butterfly use nettles as a food plant, and there are plenty of those at the park.

Meadows are also great for butterflies, and supporting an array of species. At the southern boundary of the park, meadows G3 and G7 have been top for getting results, with lots of red admiral, peacock, large white, meadow brown and ringlet butterflies sighted. Memorial Avenue has also been great - lots of six-spot Burnet moths on the field scabious, and a common blue flitting around the shorter grass at the top of the Ave. Outside the Rangers Office has been really good too. The combination of a large buddleia (butterfly bush - aptly named) in the sunshine, and the nearby bee garden have given sightings of peacock, red admiral, a holly blue, comma, painted lady, gatekeeper and brimstone butterflies.



Comma on buddleia

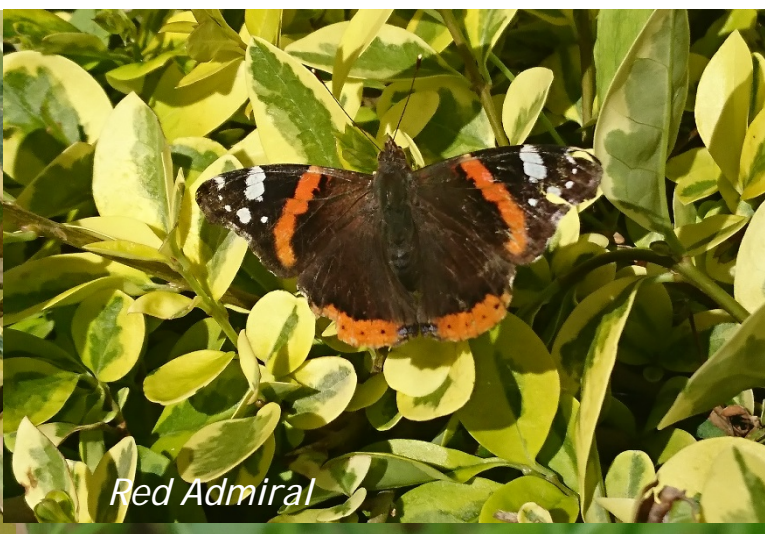
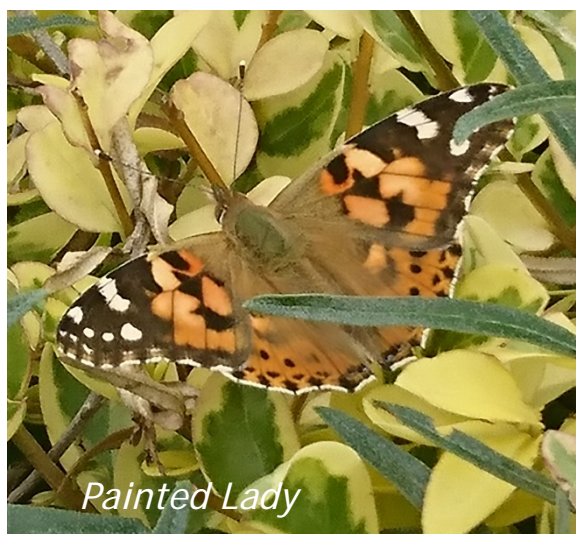
The buddleia has also been really good for supporting other pollinating insects including bumblebees, honeybees and hoverflies.

All of the data collated during this year's survey is available to read through. I typed everything up into a document, and this is available in the new park Wildlife Record Book, provided by Rosemary (which, incidentally, has butterflies on the cover).



As the weather starts to cool, adult butterflies will begin to find somewhere warm and cosy to overwinter. Some will find a way into eaves, roof spaces, or under tiles, to get some shelter in a stable environment (no harsh fluctuations in temperature). Others overwinter in their larval state, as caterpillars or as pupa. Some spend it in the soil (cinnabar moths) ready to emerge next spring, whereas others just find a sheltered spot - I have seen chrysalis of moths between the slats on some bins around the park. Hopefully next year we will count even more butterflies and moths around the Park.

Laura



All photos in this article are by Laura at Rushcliffe Country Park

John's Jottings

Summer has almost passed by, yet it doesn't seem long since we were watching the newly hatched Little Grebe chicks on the lake and watching the Reed Warblers flitting around in the reeds. I happened to see one carrying a damselfly for feeding its young. I was also privileged to see a Reed Warbler in hand at a ringing station in Spain recently, allowing me a direct comparison with a Great Reed Warbler (a continental species, and as its name suggests, rather longer and bulkier than ours) and also with a Willow Warbler (somehow more delicate as well as more colourful).

Moorhens have been trying to extend the summer by producing a late brood in September, but for most species the breeding season is over. Now most of our summer birds are moving south, and even resident small birds are keeping out of the way during their moult. Small birds at present are generally fairly quiet, although Robins are singing as they establish their winter territories. Black-headed Gulls have returned, and also Lesser Black-backed Gull is often to be seen on the lake. I seem to have come across a lot of this species in recent weeks - almost anywhere where there is a decent body of water.



Small Copper
Photo John E.



Puss Moth caterpillar
Photo John E.

Many of the regular butterflies have been around (including Small Copper, which I hadn't noticed in the Park previously), and some will be here for another week or two yet. A member of the public found an Elephant Hawk Moth caterpillar, and I found a Puss Moth caterpillar. Both are enormous beasts, far larger it seems than the eventual adults. The Puss Moth is apparently named after the adult's white hair, which looks like cat fur.

There have been plenty of Bush Crickets and Grasshoppers in the meadows, as well as the usual amphibians encountered during the hay cut. There has also been an abundance of 22-spot Ladybirds. New invertebrate species for the Park are Bronze Ground Beetle *Carabus nemoralis* and Knot-Grass Leaf Beetle *Chrysolina polita*. Two new plant species for the Park have also been recorded: Reed Canary Grass *Phalaris arundinacea* (in the seasonal pond) and Bottle Sedge *Carex rostrate*. Other sightings of note include shrews (lurking at the base of the litter bins), a dead Grass Snake about 4ft long, a young Red Fox by the bee hives and Brown Hare (around the

perimeter and the car park in the evening). A number of plant galls have also been seen.

So with autumn now here, we can enjoy the final flowers and invertebrates of summer and doubtless plenty of fungi. As usual I will be watching out for winter



Grass Snake

Photo Chris



*Elephant Hawk
Moth Caterpillar*

Photo Chris



Pincushion Gall

Photo Chris



*Bush
Cricket*

Photo Laura



Marble Galls

Photo Laura

visitors on the lake (gull and duck species) and listening for flocks of foraging finches. Later in the autumn I will be listening for the first signs of spring singing; this can be surprisingly early for some of our residents such as Song thrush.

John E.

Work Days

The Friends' work days will be held every Wednesday.

Meet at the Rangers' Office at 9.30 am.

New volunteers always welcome

Registered Charity No 1079665

Wanted

New Treasurer

Jean is now retiring as our treasurer after 20 years. We are looking for someone to replace her from March 2018. Please contact Jean, at the Country Park, who can discuss the job with you. We are very grateful to Jean, who has performed this function so well and for so long, and she is now ready for a break. I am sure that she will give help to the new treasurer when asked.

Dates for your Diary

The next full Friends' meeting will be on Wednesday 13th December at 1.30pm in the Education Room.

Sunday Teas will be Oct 1st, Oct 15th, Nov 5th, Nov 19th, Dec 6th, and Dec 20th.

Linger by the Lake on Wednesdays Oct 4th, Oct 18th, Nov 1st, Nov 15th, Dec 6th, and Dec 20th.

Celebration Of Bill's Life October 25th at 1pm in the Education Room.

Wytham 2018

After another enjoyable trip to Wytham this year, next year's dates are as follows:

May 7th–11th 2018, the Monday being a bank holiday and also coincides with badger watch week. It would be helpful to know the approximate numbers to pass on to Neil so that he can decide what jobs can be planned.

Sept 10th -14th 2018. Main work will be laying another section of the hedge started this year.