



April 2018  
to  
June 2018

Our website  
[www.friends-of-rcp.co.uk](http://www.friends-of-rcp.co.uk)

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Issue 79

# Friends Newsletter



Dorothy thanking Jean for her work as sole treasurer in the history of The Friends, and presenting a book of pictures from the archive, all of which include Jean doing some park activity. Jean, thankyou.

## Our thanks to Jean

After 20 years as Treasurer Jean had decided to retire, and Dick Wilson has accepted the position at the AGM after being proposed and seconded by Dorothy and Jean respectively.

Over that time, Jean has devoted many hours behind the scenes keeping our finances and spending under control in addition to applying for the necessary grants to enable us to carry out the many projects on the Park that have been successfully completed.

Jean is experienced in many fields of our work, hedge laying, binding, willow weaving, mosaics and wood carving to name but a few, and is always willing to help and give advice where needed.





During the period of her tenure, we have seen many changes to the Park from the barren waste land when Jean first began working here as one of the five founder friends members. Today, the park flourishes, with many volunteers demonstrating a whole variety of skills.

On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of March at the AGM, the volunteers presented Jean with an album of photographs as a record of her achievements and to show our appreciation of all her commitment, dedication and hours devoted to the park.

Thank you Kate and Janet for your help with the text and for finding a huge choice of photographs for this article. JY.

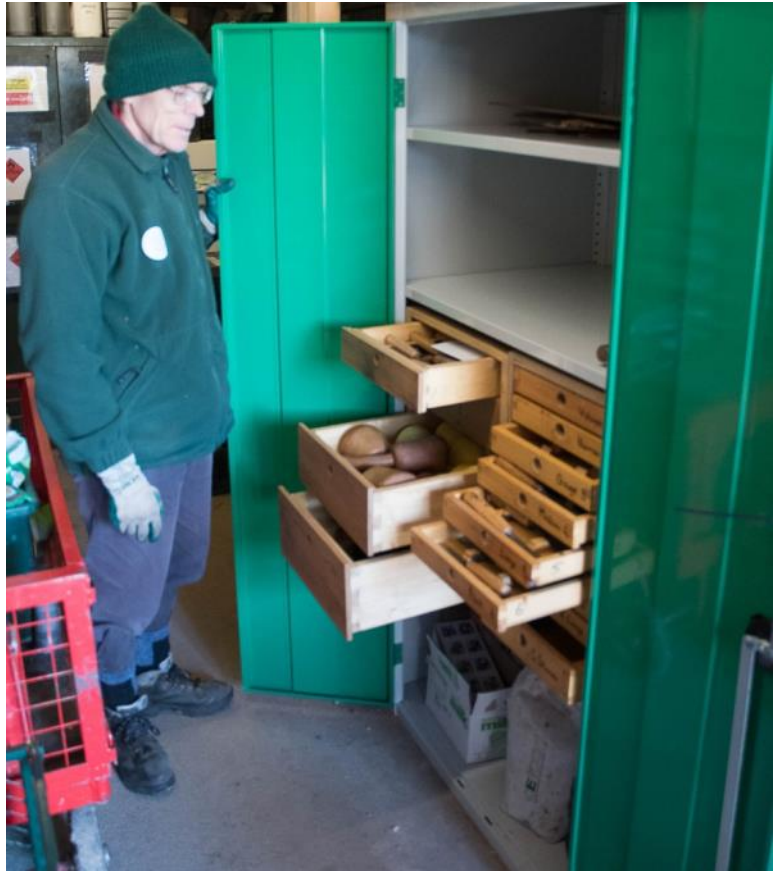
## Storage and Maintenance Of Carving Tools

Mice, or really big mice that may have been rats, had managed to get into the well crafted wooden cabinets made by our late friend Gordon. The mice were eating the handles of the chisels. We needed metal cabinets. Of course we wanted to keep the original cabinets and drawers complete with their perfect dovetails.

John Randle came up with ideas, but we could not get metal cabinets to contain the old wooden ones. This is what he came up with. John has modified the original cabinets with great sympathetic design and skill to fit into a standard deep industrial metal cabinet.

Job done one might think, but no.

Tool maintenance was needed to finish the job. This is a big job for one person but most of us don't have the skills. So John carries on getting these tools into order and is willing to teach how this should be done. Some users have tried to sharpen tools without knowing how - (An echo of Bill's last article about bill hooks and woodworking chisels?).



## Garden of Friendship

Friends may like to know that the garden of friendship is developing well. We are midway through creating the second of the three shelters. This Wednesday ( 4th April) should see the frame constructed on site.

The legs will then be concreted in and the roof panel installed. We are all looking forward to seeing the green living roofs fitted. The mosaic stepping stones have been sitting in the garage for some time now and everyone is keen to see their installation, but this must wait until the last shelter is in. Roger.



## Footpath Repairs before the 10 km Race



## Hedge Laying

We have had a good long season starting all the way back in September 2017.

You have seen some pictures from Wytham in the last issue but here is one more, of a dangerous looking Helen.

We have a new chipper which was bought for the park by The Friends. Our rangers seem to be very pleased with it.



As usual we have had a mixture of types of hedge ranging from overgrown previously laid with lots of horrible maple to a length of almost mainly thorn only spoilt by being very widely spaced and often of large diameter. Its all good experience. A number of visitors to the park have commented that our work looks good, which I sometimes find embarrassing because it isn't up to the standard we see at local competitions. It is still a satisfying craft and enjoyable.

Over the last few years, under Zoe's supervision we have planted several new hedges, mainly thorn, double staggered row, and correctly spaced. I hope that I am still hedge laying when they are ready to be laid. They will give the volunteers chances to produce really good work; but no room for excuses if they don't.

It has been good to see new members start cutting and by the end of the season we had up to about five people working their own length of hedge.



## Lake Survey

On a cold late March morning we did the first of our regular surveys of the lakeside invertebrate and amphibian life. We noted many clumps of frog spawn and in one area observed many frogs laying their eggs and emitting a low barely audible rumbling sound; these areas were not dipped. In other areas as well as the usual hog

louse and fresh water shrimp, we found small mayfly larvae, lesser water boatmen, a few leeches, red non-biting midge larvae and various species of 'worm'. As the weather warms up we will find more species to write about. Rosemary.



Bee orchids were also found growing on yet another location in the park.

## Orchard

We have done the winter pruning. Many of the trees are shaping up nicely and we hope that we get a small crop off them this year. In previous years, when we were pruning to establish shape, we often removed large numbers of potentially fruiting buds.

We are continuing to put the label posts in while the ground is still soft.



## Fencing

We like to keep up our fencing skills. There is usually a small job to do somewhere.



## Goose Rescue

After a very exciting Friday evening in which the male swan nearly killed the goose, a swift rescue by the Friends and Rangers has ensured that the goose is safe. Today it has been collected and taken to a sanctuary to be with its goose brethren!



## Hurdle

We have made a hazel hurdle to create a protective screen at the entrance to the bee keeping area. Hurdle making is a craft that has been used for thousands of years to protect livestock and farmland. Small hurdles were made to move around with sheep and lambs, creating mobile screens to protect them from predators.



## A Bit of a Flap



The invaders were repelled.

See John's Jottings



## John's Jottings

Once again this has been an exciting quarter for birds. For many the highlight was perhaps the Mandarin drake that arrived on 16th January and stayed for over a week. This exotic-looking perching duck has its origins in east Asia, although populations there are now quite small. Escapes from collections have led to the establishment of feral populations in



Britain, Ireland and the near continent. They nest in tree cavities, and the female coaxes the young to jump from their nest before she leads them to water.

Also in January I had the fortune to see a Woodcock, a wading bird from the snipe family. Several of us were cutting back blackthorn in front of a hedge that was to be laid, and suddenly Edwina, working a few yards to my left, called me to say she had seen a wading bird between the hedge and the fence. I dashed round and only had a brief glimpse before it moved out of sight behind the hedge. My initial impression was something about the size of a partridge, although I did notice snipe-like markings on its back. I alerted Rosemary, who was working to my right, and a little while later she called me to say she had spotted the bird. When I finally got a decent view I saw the distinctive transverse markings on its head, confirming the bird as a Woodcock. Edwina's description of the bird and estimate of bill length were spot on! This crepuscular species inhabits wet woodland and is generally very hard to see, except on its breeding grounds in spring when it performs its characteristic courtship display



Shoveler

flight known as "roding". The bird at the Park was very likely a winter migrant from the continent.

On 21st March there was an incident involving our swans. Several other swans landed on the lake. Our cob, egged on by our pen, was very aggressive and after much ado managed to drive away the interlopers.

By the time you read this our gulls will have left for their breeding grounds. The usual Black-headed Gulls have frequently been accompanied by one or two Common



Gulls, and there has been a Lesser Black-backed Gull on the lake for much of the winter. Other avian sightings have included Little Owl, Mistle Thrush, Brambling (on the feeders) and two Oystercatchers (by the lake).

The onset of spring is noticeable in flora around the Park. Blackthorn, Gorse and Lesser Celandine are starting to flower, and Bee Orchids are shooting up by the lakeside. Also frog spawn and frogs have been seen in various places.



Reed Bunting

Finally, be careful when driving in the car park - both Brown Hare and Red Fox have been seen there, as well as elsewhere on site.



Orange Ladybird

# 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

## Suggestions for 20th Anniversary

Dorothy would like suggestions for a 20th anniversary celebration to be held later this year. This will be decided at the next meeting of the friends. Please think about this and discuss informally with friends before the meeting.

## Dates for your Diary

The next full Friends' meeting will be on Wednesday June 6th at 1.30pm in the Education Room.

The Summer Social is still to be arranged but is likely to be in July.

Sunday Teas will be April 15th, May 6th, May 20th, June 3rd, June 17th, July 1st and July 14th.

Linger by the Lake on Wednesdays April 18th, May 2nd, May 16th, June 6th, June 20th, July 4th, and July 18th.

## Wytham 2018

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 last year.