

Friends News

Friends of Rushcliffe Country Park (FORCP)

Issue 8

Spring 2000

PROJECT COMPLETE?



There is rarely any doubt about when a project begins. The first time the group meets and actually starts work is a defining moment. Exactly when a project ends is often not so easy to pinpoint. Deadlines have to be met, accounts have to be settled, Opening Ceremonies sometimes take place, but usually there are loose ends which have to be tied up later and adjustments often need to be made. Finishing off, tweaking and tinkering can take some time. Some projects, like the Community Garden, have no final termination point but slide into an on-going maintenance programme.

The New Horizons Trust Project, to create a History Trail, and the Help the Aged Millennium Award Project, to create a circular walk and shelter belt, are both on the brink of completion (except for minor jobs). The History Trail and Circular walk were way marked months ago. The History Trail booklet was published in January and is selling well. When the first edition has been sold a second, updated, edition will be issued.

The shelter belt, near the community garden, was planted by children from St Peter's Junior School just before the February half-term. It will shortly be mulched to suppress the weeds and nourish the soil.

The only frustration in either of these projects has been the delay in manufacture and delivery of the interpretation boards, map and location labels. The last of these will shortly be erected. The text on the information boards is of standard size but this is a disappointment as larger, bolder print was planned for easy reading.

E M Lawson

FAR FROM THE MADDING CROWD

To escape the hustle and bustle of a busy weekend at the park what better way than strolling out through the park and into the quiet of the countryside beyond.

The 'Friends' and the Rangers of RCP took a stroll out together on a crisp sunny winter morning in January. The walk wound it's way up to the hilltop village of Bradmore and then down again through grassland

pastures to Bunny. The pastures still showing the undulations of the ridge and furrow method of farming from times past. A pleasant tippie at the Rancliffe Arms made for an enjoyable refreshment stop, before strolling back through Bunny and on to the ancient flood plain that stretches out past Gotham towards Radcliffe-on-Soar.

The route through the plains and into the park again gave a completely new perspective on a very familiar landscape and of course the peace and quiet achieved by being far from the madding crowd.

A walk similar to the one described is available as one of the routes in the Circular Walks in Rushcliffe book, available from the Rangers Office at the cost of £3.00.

GUIDED WALKS

The Nottingham Transport Heritage Centre are again doing a series of Guided Walks around the borough during the summer of 2000. The dates are as follows.

Sunday 14th May	East Leake - Bunny Moor
Sunday 23rd July	Thrumpton - Gotham
Sunday 17th Sept	Wysall - Bunny - Bradmore.

For more information about these or any other Heritage Centre events ring 0115 940 5705.

MEMORIES OF THE MoD SITE

During the research for the History Trail booklet, various people in the village were interviewed for their memories of the MoD site.

These are the memories of one of those people.

Mrs Slack, who worked at the site in the last year of the war was in the AID - Aeronautical Inspection Department. Two or three weeks were spent in the classroom learning about explosives and then on site to cover every aspect of bomb filling, with three days in each department until she knew every aspect of the work.

Everything was very secretive, the walls were solid 6-7 ft thick. The workers clocked in and there were three shifts, 0700 - 1500; 1500 - 2200; and 2200 - 0700.

The uniform overalls had no buttons and the AID coats had pockets. Head protection and special shoes were worn, but no items of jewellery or hair grips were allowed. Any rings that would not come off were covered with a bandage. Cigarettes and matches were banned in fact anything that could cause a spark was ruled out. Even a thunderstorm would halt work.

The changing room was divided into two sections, a **clean** side and the **other** side. Face cream and powder was supplied in the toilet blocks but it was not compulsory. Showers were available but rationed and the laundry was done by the MoD.

For reasons of secrecy the buildings could not be seen. They were surrounded by grass banks and there was also a railway running into the complex with its own station.

TNT was yellow and a lot of the girls on the cluster bombs had yellow streaks in their hair.

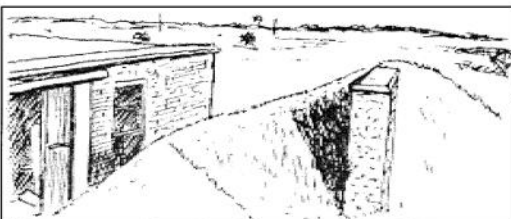
Around each building was a path called a clean way, this

was painted green and kept free of any materials that could cause a spark, especially metal.

Inspections, were carried out at every stage from the empty shell of the bomb coming through the gates, to the filled bomb leaving at the end. This was done by women. The men filled the bombs.

Each AID inspector had a small stencil with an individual number and at each stage of the inspection it was stencilled in yellow paint on the side of the bomb. When the bombs got to the transit site they would have a series of AID numbers on them. Every Monday morning these were checked and

recorded on a chart and, if satisfactory, the numbers would be painted out. Each bomb had a lug on it and when checking stencils, if this lug prevented the numbers being seen, it was normal practice to give the bomb a kick to move it!



An overhead crane and gantry weighed the empty shell cases which had to be thoroughly cleaned out by women. Anything which might cause an explosion had to be removed.

The explosive was mixed in a big copper, this was timed to the exact minute, and there were blackboards to record the times of each procedure. Then everything had to be weighed when it was full to see that the right amount was put in, if not it would be rejected. This would be done at the weekends when the contents would be steamed out and reused.

If the wire did not connect with the fuse in the bomb the building was evacuated and closed down. It would be dealt with on a Sunday morning when there were no personnel on duty. The bomb would be removed through the skylight.

Falling Foul of the Drains

Spring is well and truly under way and its arrival is marked by, among other things, thousands of toads and newts descending upon Rushcliffe Country Park lake to spawn.

It is a perilous journey with many falling foul of predators, busy roads and countless other obstacles. Some of the lucky ones, however, do get a helping hand.

This was the case, one morning in March when the Rangers got a call from the site manager of the latest construction unit next to the Country Park. He was concerned about a large number of toads and newts which were trapped in some new drains. One of the Rangers with help from a ground worker and some nets and buckets spent an hour in the afternoon rescuing the amphibians and putting them in the lake.

It is good to know that even on a busy building site, people have got time to help wildlife.



STATS NOT ALL FOLKS!

The RCP Rangers need statistics and they need your help. Throughout the year they do compile approximate figures for visitor numbers, but they would like to get some official stats. To do this, they need to do a formal visitor count and for it to be successful they need the help of about 12 volunteers. The process is quite straight forward and tea and coffee would be provided. The date isn't fixed yet but it will be some time in May. If you can spare a couple of hours to help the Rangers gather important data please contact them on 921 5865.

HEDGELAYING



This was advertised as a great event which should not be missed by anyone and so it turned out to be. The biggest problem was the fact that there was no warning that a degree in higher maths needed to be obtained before one could start:

First of all you should cut two-thirds of the way through the trunk of the tree with a bow saw. Then using a bill hook, chop about six inches up from the cut, if the tree trunk is not very big, but more if the trunk is bigger. Then shape it so that the trunk is gradually tapered towards the original, always remembering not to be too harsh on the whole thing will collapse. So having done that you then have to lay the hedge at an angle of 30 degrees to the ground. This is when the tree trunk is nowhere near straight to begin with, so which bit should be 30 degrees?



I was always a hopeless maths student at school and over the intervening years things have not improved. So unless one comes armed with a protractor, compass, ruler, pen, pencil and a set of log tables, the whole proceedings can be rather traumatic. One of the volunteers, when told about the 30 degrees, said that he was not moving the hedge, if anything was wrong, it would be easier to move the ground! A sentiment with which I heartily concurred.

These problems apart, it was a very satisfying experience especially when members of the public asked what we were doing and showed great admiration of the finished results. Their comments were better than the two horses who were in the field and decided to eat the hedge as soon as it had been laid. If only they had eaten bits off first, it would have saved us a lot of work, thinning the excess branches.

NATURAL PIONEER

Hemendra Headworth has recently won a grant of £3,200 from the BTCV Natural Pioneers Millennium Award. This grant aims to give volunteers the necessary training to enable them to set up and run their own projects. Hem's project is to create a community tree nursery, with heeling-in beds, seed stratification areas and raised beds. Work has already started and the tree nursery now has one raised bed, two compost bins and areas for stratifying the seeds.

So far Hem has been busy attending both theoretical and practical courses all over the country.

One course about fund raising skills has proved very useful in looking for potential sponsors for the hoped for classroom extension to the Ranger's Office. The courses have also been great places for networking with like-minded people and people who would like to set up a "Friends" group in their own area.

As a result of one of the courses Hem was approached by the BTCV Derbyshire office, who were interested in conservation work opportunities at RCP during the winter months.

The Friends have also been awarded £500 to spend on tools for the tree nursery programme through the Rushcliffe Agenda 21 and PowerGen grant.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

The Friends of Rushcliffe Country Park have recently been awarded charity status. One of the regulations of being a charity is that they must have a subscription. The Friends have kept the subscription to a minimum of £1 per person per year.

To carry on receiving your quarterly newsletter by post you will need to subscribe by filling in the enclosed form.

We hope you will feel able to continue your support so that we can continue to keep you in touch.



THE NEW MILLENNIUM DAWN

An expectant hush filled the air as the last few minutes of 1999 slipped away. Then BANG!!! - rockets shot upward and exploded in all directions; the sky pulsed with a myriad flashes of light and colour; wave upon wave followed, as a cacophony of sound echoed around in a continuous barrage. As the amazing spectacle went on and on, it prompted long-forgotten childhood memories of a war-time air-raid. Thankfully this was not the blitz, an inferno of death and destruction, but a great celebration full of joy and hope. It was only later when drifting off to sleep that a disturbing thought occurred. What effect has all this had on wild-life? Next morning it was the profound silence which first impinged. Drawing back the curtains revealed a still, wintry scene under a cloudless sky. Outside in the chill air, as the luminous light increased minute by minute, there was not a sound to be heard. Slowly, silently and majestically the sun rose and shone pure radiance everywhere. In that brilliant dawn the whole world seemed to have been made anew. "Morning has broken like the first morning", the words of the old hymn came to mind.

Within the hour visitors had spread all over the Country Park, smiling and exchanging greetings. The sun shone brightly from a clear blue sky and the sparkling, ultramarine lake reflected the festive atmosphere. Never had the Country Park looked more radiant or felt more friendly: a good beginning for a new era.

Amazingly the wild fowl on the lake seemed unscathed and the crows, rooks and starlings as indifferent as ever.

E M Lawson


Any articles for the next edition of the Friends News can be sent to 6 Peacock Close, Ruddington, NG11 6JF, left at the Rangers Office or email JMuy@aol.com

Rushcliffe Country Park


VOLUNTEER DATES

Unless otherwise stated, all volunteer events are free and open to members of FORCP and non-members.




APRIL

Thurs 6th	Monthly Meeting	St Peter's Rooms, Ruddington.	7.30 pm
Sat 8th	Willow Workshop	A weekend of willow weaving, to create living willow sculptures.	
Sun 9th	Willow Workshop	This event is full.	
Wed 12th	Community Garden	Come along and help us put some finishing touches to the willow sculptures.	
Sat 22nd	History Trail	Opening celebration - a chance for those who helped compile the booklet and install the trail to celebrate their achievements	5.00 pm
Wed 26th	 Tree Nursery	Finishing off the raised bed and seeing how the seeds are coming along.	

MAY

Thurs 4th	Monthly Meeting	St Peter's Rooms, Ruddington.	7.30 pm
Sat 6th	Brierley Forest Visit	Meet at the Rangers' Office at 10.00 am for a trip to Brierley Forest to look at their new visitor's centre. To network with their volunteer group and for a guided tour around the park. (FORCP members only).	
Wed 10th	 Batty Boxes	Come and construct summer roosts for the creatures of the night.	
Sun 14th	Oxfam Walk		
Sat 20th	Community Garden	Smartening up the mosaics.	

JUNE

Thurs 1st	Monthly Meeting	St Peter's Rooms, Ruddington.	7.30 pm
Sat 3rd	 Wildflower Surveys	Help the Rangers collect valuable data whilst surrounded by idyllic scenes.	
Wed 7th	 Wildflower Surveys		
Sun 18th	Rushcliffe Environment Fayre	Environmental activities and family fun.	10.00 am - 4.00 pm
Wed 21st	 Tree Nursery	Improving access and nurturing seeds.	



This symbol denotes the activity is working towards the Notts Biodiversity Action Plan.

Meet at the Rangers Office at 10.15 am.
 Unless stated all events run from 10.30 am - 3.30 pm.
Don't forget some lunch, sturdy boots and waterproofs.
 For more information contact the Ranger's Office
921 5865.



British Trust for Conservation Volunteers
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