

Friends News

Friends of Rushcliffe Country Park (FORCP)

Issue 14

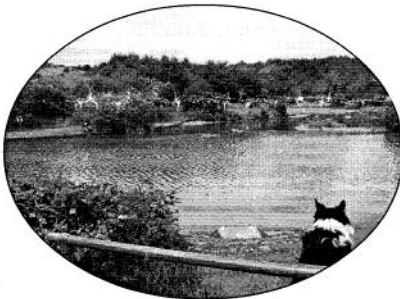
Autumn 2001

VICAR WATER REVISITED

On Saturday 23 June 2001, a group of 'FRIENDS' revisited Vicar Water Country Park. We were met by Steve, a volunteer Ranger.

As it was just over 2 years since our last visit, we were able to see the changes that had been made.

A purpose built Visitors Centre with offices for the Ranger, disabled toilets, restaurant (I can personally recommend the Raspberry Flan) with seating areas both inside and out.



The Tunnel approach had been removed and we were able to drive down to the 'Vicar Pond' parking area in open countryside. A bank had been formed and planted out with numerous saplings. This was, in fact, part of a countryside Guinness World Record and was supervised by Pippa Greenwood of Gardener's World fame.

The Park was opened in 1982, much of it being created from the reclaimed soil heaps of Clipstone Colliery. At the centre of the park lies Vicar Pond, a Victorian fishing lake which during the early 1900's was used for bathing and boating by local people and soldiers from a nearby army camp. In the early 20th century the Duke of Portland had a thatched boathouse built in this area.

The pond was formed in the early 1870's by the damming of Vicar Water, a stream which runs parallel to the road and was originally fed by natural springs which have since dried up. This has been overcome by sinking a borehole.

The 5th Duke of Portland had the work carried out on the pond to create a trout fishery that was used to stock his lakes at Welbeck Abbey. The Lake is now used for coarse fishing and contains carp, bream, roach, perch, tench and rudd.



The oak woodland that was planted in the 1930's is now being managed to create a more interesting and varied habitat. The oaks have been thinned out to allow more light, and bluebells and wood anemones have been planted.

Clipstone Colliery was opened in 1922 and at nearly 65m high its winding towers were amongst the highest in Europe.

The area goes steadily uphill and there are several trails you can follow to view open areas of grassland that support rare plants such as marsh arrow grass. At the top there are glorious views in all directions. It is possible to see across to the Derbyshire hills to the north west and as far as West Burton to the north east. You are at a height of 130m. The view also takes in the spoil heaps of no fewer than 8 former and existing collieries.

We all had a very enjoyable day out, I particularly enjoyed the picnic by the Lake and the enforced break for coffee (and Flan) at the Visitors Centre. Incidentally the staff at the centre 'Bumbles' do a very good job at a reasonable price.



Norman Ecob

FROM GLOOM TO GLORY

August 2nd 2001 was a very humid day. Gloomy black clouds hung overhead and heavy thundery showers were forecast 'later in the day'. It seemed as if, for the second year running, Friends of Rushcliffe Country Park's Annual Social Event would be preceded by a tea-time downpour, even a thunder-storm. It remained looking ominous but surprisingly dry until we began to arrive bearing our gifts of food and drink. A light rain began to fall as we collected in the small marquee, hoping that it was just a passing shower. We tucked into a magnificent buffet and held a brief meeting, before Paul the Ranger, announced he was willing to lead the planned walk if anyone wanted to go.

We set out into the gathering dusk in gentle, but continuous rain. It was very still and a solitary bird cheeped forlornly as Paul explained the new management plan for the meadows. We stood, getting rather damp, on the dipping platform as he described the sequence of hedgerow management to be followed in the next ten years. The rain gradually increased as we passed the Mill Field and turned into The Avenue. Very hurriedly Paul told us of the plans to restore the elm hedge alongside Loughborough Road, before the long-awaited deluge arrived and we scurried though Avenue Gate.

When we reached Mere Way it was dark and there was no traffic. The light from the bright sodium lamps shone down onto millions of wet leaves and reflected back from all the shrubs. The way back to the car park was transformed into a glittering golden galaxy. Glory had replaced the gloom.

It was another memorable moment on the Country Park.

Margaret Lawson.

See the Wood and the Trees

A one day course entitled Woodland Management a Practical Approach is to be held at Rushcliffe Country Park on Sat 8th Dec. It is a must for anyone who wishes to gain hands on experience of Woodland Management, Coppicing and tree felling. The course is free but places are limited, so avoid disappointment by booking now on:

0115 921 5865.



WAY PAST BED TIME!

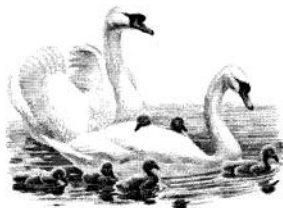
By the time you read this, work should be well under way in the reedbed and a large chunk of reeds will be missing from the centre. Although it is a very good quality habitat in terms of shear numbers of birds and other animals, it is constantly under threat from drying out.

Digging out the reed opens up the watercourse and removes the layers of thatch (decaying stems) which builds up over time. It also removes nutrients from the lake which can cause excess algal growth (and is good fun for volunteers, young and old, who wish to get muddy).

Most of the reeds will be removed from the area but some will be transplanted to other parts of the lake edge.

SWAN RINGING

Every year about this time Mick Thompson and his team prepare to ring the cygnets. This is an interesting experience for the spectators and possibly also for the swans.



It takes place in the early evening and many people gather to entice the cygnets out of the water. At a given moment the helpers grab a cygnet and they are carefully restrained while the rings are put on their legs. The best way to restrain the cygnets is to 'sit' on them - but very carefully. They are not harmed at all by this exercise and quite happily go back into the lake afterwards.

The ringing is done so that in future years whenever swans are found, they can be traced back to their origins, and give valuable data on their habits.

If you would like to sponsor a cygnet, the charge is £3 per cygnet. You will be able to give the cygnet a name and also receive a certificate giving the name and the ring number. Ring the Ranger's Office, on 921 5865 to check availability.

WELCOME

A long overdue appointment has at last been made at the Country Park and a seasonal Ranger has been appointed. His name is Rob Carrier and many people already know him as he came to the park some time ago as part of his college syllabus.

Rob was at Brackenhurst College for 2 years, and there is a rumour going around that he was Student of the Year at college, but that's probably just a little bird tweeting out of turn!

From what we have seen of Rob so far it seems sure he will be a valuable asset to the work force. He also has a great sense of humour which is very necessary when working with volunteers - and Rangers.



NAMES NEEDED

Can you help? Names are needed for two maturing areas of the Country Park to give them their own distinctive identity, just as Weggie Walk and Mill Field have developed a 'personality' of their own.

The meadow between the lake and the pond is to be mown only once every two years as part of the new management plan. Two names have already been suggested for it. They are Middle Acre and Middlemarsh, and both indicate its position in the centre of the Country Park. Middle Acre was the original name of Moor End Farm, which is across the lane near the South Gate. The pond created in 1998 was named Middlemarsh Pond, but is generally referred to simply as the pond, leaving Middlemarsh available for use as a name for the meadow. As this area was very boggy before it was drained it would be a very appropriate designation.

The area of meadowland which runs alongside the Perimeter Path from the pond to Mill Field also needs a name. The only name suggested for this strip so far is Long Meadow, but there must be a better one.

If you have any ideas please pass them on to the Editor or one of the Rangers.



STOP AND PONDER

This year's excess rainfall has caused many problems around Britain, but at RCP the rain has been a definite benefit. Middlemarsh pond for instance, has been full for more or less the whole summer and is now becoming established.

There is a fine array of aquatic plant life, some introduced and some naturally colonised. The list includes, Yellow flag Iris, Reedmace, Flowering rush, Lesser spearwort and Water plantain.

Dragonflies have been observed, hunting over and around the area the most commonly recorded have been, Common Darter (small red dragonfly with spots on its wings) Emperor (large blue or green dragonfly) and Black Tailed Skimmer (blue with a black tipped tail).

With continued management, this area will become an excellent site to observe and learn about water life.

The success of this project can be accredited to a great number of individuals (Too many to mention in this article).

So a big thank you to all who have been involved.



Weggie Walk, early
morning in September





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.





October

- Sat 6th  **Tree Nursery** Help us collect and prepare seeds to produce the next generation of trees.
- Wed 10th  **Woodland Management** Continuing preparation for the new community wood. We will be cutting back willow to make way for trees such as oak and rowan which are being suppressed at the moment.
- Sat 20th  **Woodland Management**
- Wed 24th  **Tree Nursery** Autumn tidy up, but there might be a few surprise jobs to do. Come along to find out about the future plans for the site.

November

- Sat 3rd  **Collect Saplings** Time to add more locally grown trees to the nursery. ✓
- Wed 7th **Community Garden** Winter tidy up and tree maintenance. ✓
- Thurs 8th **FORCP Meeting** St Peter's Rooms, Ruddington. **New members welcome.** 7.30 pm
- Sat 10th **Wildlife Boards** Finale - **1 pm** siting final board for those who wish to get dirty. **3.00 pm** - Celebration - all welcome.
- Sat 17th  **Tree Nursery** Come and see how the nursery is developing and help prepare trees for planting out.
- Wed 21st  **Hedging** Coppicing field maple to give hawthorn a chance to flourish. ✓
- Wed 28th  **Tree Planting** Help us celebrate National Tree Week, with two days of planting. The trees have been growing in the nursery for 2 years and are now ready to be planted in their final destination where they will enrich the landscape for 100's of years.

December

- Sat 1st  **Tree Planting**
- Wed 5th  **Woodland Management** After all that planting, a chance to cut something down - all in the name of conservation.
- Sat 15th  **Hedging** More preparation for next year's hedgelaying in a far flung corner of the Country Park.
- Wed 19th  **Hedging** Final work party of the year - a chance to celebrate all the year's successes with a glass of mulled wine and a mince pie. (Well, we can't afford a full turkey dinner!)



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 **0115 921 5865.**

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