

SUMMER 2016

NEWSLETTER

No. 4

FRIENDS OF
BARNWELL
COUNTRY PARK



This is going to be a relatively short one because we are all busily engaged in preparing for.....



Yes, indeed, it has come round to that time of the year where we stage a musical bash at the Park. Is it a tradition yet? No, but it's heading in that direction.

As you would naturally expect, the main theme of this coming event is bigger than last year. We now have four local brass bands to entertain us! In keeping with last year, those stalwarts who stay to the end will enjoy another, bigger and better Massed Band Performance.

So, fingers crossed that the weather is fine for Sunday, July 17th. The music will start between 11:30 a.m. and 12:00 noon, and carry through the afternoon.

Please put it in your diaries and pass the word on – or put it in your Facebook account for maximum coverage. It should be a lot of fun for anyone who enjoys live performance. You'll start to

see posters up shortly – probably before you have a chance to read this Newsletter.

UPDATES

We need to report to you on our work with:

- The Prize Draw
- North Lake Path,
- a further chat with Matt Harrel on some exciting developments for the Park
- parking issues (see Editorial),
- the land acquisition
- membership count – always v. important

In keeping with our previous issues, we will finish this section by repeating a most important part of your role as a Friend:

Please Tell Us What You'd Like to See Happen with the Park.

The FoBCP Committee is made up of those of us who are dedicated to ensuring BCP's long-term future as well as increasing the opportunities it offers. We come up with lots of ideas many of which will be shared with you in these Newsletters. However, no matter how committed we are, we cannot think of everything. There will be lots of ideas out there. Please let us know what you think.

Again, please talk to your friends. Chat to those who share the Park with you. By working together, we will make this Park a beacon for others to follow. Pride in our Park will lead to our aims succeeding!

We are keen to see if anyone would be interested in taking on the role of Publicity Officer... This task will be as time-consuming as you choose it to be.



Committee Members

Mary James – Chair
Mark Felton – Secretary
Edward James – Treasurer
Philippa Crook – Fundraising Officer
Becca Lowndes – Design Officer
Nick Bould – Barnwell Parish Council Rep
Colin Cartwright & Tim Hunt – Committee Members

Frequency and Length of FoBCP Newsletters:

It is intended to have 4 main publications in line with the Park's seasons: Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter. There will be no fixed length for each Newsletter.

We may occasionally issue Newsletter Bulletins if there is an important issue to cover. We do not have an article this quarter from an outside contributor but we are preparing for what

should be some thought provoking articles in our upcoming issues.

Contributions:

Will Always Be Welcome: If you feel like contributing to this Newsletter, please send a note to our Secretary via: secretary@barnwellcountryparkfriends.org.uk or talk to the Rangers. Tel.: 01832 273435

EDITORIAL

Parking Revisited

In keeping with provoking thoughts, at our last Committee meeting we discussed Parking Charges. No doubt this will come up as a topic when we interview Chris Haines for the next issue.

We have received a number of comments that there are quite a few would-be users who would like to use the Kingfisher Café to “grab a coffee” and, or, to meet friends for a quick chinwag but they are put off by the prospect of paying £3 for the parking charge and then further money for an (albeit excellent) cuppa as well.

We have raised the idea of a lower charge for those just visiting the Kingfisher Café of say £1. One of the areas that Chris is engrossed with at the moment is charging systems for all of the five local Parks under his management. Needless to say, this is a huge investment.

It is generally recognised that the existing system is difficult to regulate and open to abuse, which, consequently, means that the Park’s revenues don’t fully reflect the level of use by those visiting by car. Clearly, this re-opens the whole debate about those who walk to the Park and, by so doing, do not actively contribute to the Park. It is worth saying here that some of those who have contributed to the North Lake Park readily realise this and have stated that the contributions they made reflect the fact that they get free use of a wonderful asset just because they have the ability to walk to the Park from Oundle.

Our Chair, Mary, has suggested that the Park management team consider dividing the parking between café-only users and park users making it possible to identify easily those who are visiting for a short time only. We have discussed the idea of having a “short term” car Park for those visiting the Kingfisher Café only to the right of the Visitor Centre as you look at it from the Park’s entrance in what is currently designated as “Overflow Parking”.

The management team is now looking into this suggestion as a short-term measure prior to a more lasting (although more expensive) solution.

Do you have any views on this or any other topic relating to the Park? Do you consider the parking fees charged are fair? Do you think we should consider some broader system which encompasses visitors by foot from Oundle? Your thoughts and views will be valued and appreciated.

If you have a view that you would like to share with the editor or indeed with the Friends, please write to:

secretary@barnwellcountryparkfriends.org.uk

WHAT’S UP AT BCP?

“IMPROVING ACCESS FOR ALL”

We are pleased to report that the North Lake Path project has now closed. There are still signs up about it at the Park because we wouldn’t wish to deny anyone the chance to participate. They will disappear nearer the Music in the Park event.

We are now confident that we have raised the funds necessary to meet the cost of the new all-weather path. Practically, the work will need to be re-tendered due to the time it has taken to raise the funds. Also, the aim will be to undertake this work in October – in other words, following the Summer season.

When work starts, it is planned that, in keeping with “Improving Access for All”, we will also fund work on the existing paved paths: scraping back

Wildlife and Nature Notes

What a Spring and early Summer!

Matt’s comments can be read below. It has seemed as though the flowers have lasted longer due to the cooler weather. One positive! We also have a thoughtful review of fishing at BCP by our very own Committee Member, Tim Hunt.

There is only one coming to report and no goings. Thank goodness. In point of fact, perhaps the “Comings” part of this should reflect the fact that, so far this year, we have increased our Friends membership by a further 30 bringing us up to 173 friends.

Matt Harrel, our new Senior Ranger, replaced Philippa earlier this year. He has very kindly agreed to give us an interview. We felt that perhaps the best and most entertaining way to go about

Prize Draw

We have two winners! We decided to open the competition to all Friends. This will continue to be our policy. Indeed, the purpose is to bring in new Friends but, hopefully, we can also reward some of the established Friends as well.

the verges where grass has overgrown.

We have explained that all those who have contributed, both funding organisations, corporate and individual will be recorded on a board at the start of the Path nearest to Barnwell Road. There it will be sheltered somewhat from direct UV light by the surrounding trees and we should get 5 to 10 years’ service from the sign. It will be designed by our master designer Becca and produced by our signage sponsors, Ken Signs. We are very grateful to Ken Signs, who have engaged directly with us as a Sponsor of our banners and this important sponsors’ board. From a practical standpoint, the board will probably be erected in Spring 2017 and coincide with an official opening.

this would be to take a walk with Matt so we can also get a feel for how he sees our Park.

Land Acquisition Project “The Island”

We will know how Gloucester Estates wishes (or doesn’t) to proceed in the latter part of June or early July. We’ve done all we could to present our case energetically and logically. We gained a broad section of support from the local area Community: church, business, parishes and councils, politicians, welfare and regional organisations.

We will therefore be able to report fully in the next edition of the Newsletter. There may be more interesting news at that time but we will press on with the current for now!

We are very grateful to Chris Haines and Matt Harrel for making this prize draw possible. This is a gift from NCC Parks to us and it certainly helps to drive up members.

The winners will be announced as before at Music in the Park.

Membership Numbers

We set a target of reaching 250 members by September of this year. Delightfully, we have already achieved this goal. We'll have to try to work out what our next numbers target is. Our ultimate aim should be to achieve a membership of 1000 plus. The reason for this ambition is twofold:

- first, the greater the membership the more seriously our community organisation is taken, and
- second, the more members we have, the more likely we find some who are prepared to help with the organisational and practical aspects of running the Friends. We've made a great start in this respect. We have some wonderful and committed Committee Members but it is all too evident at times that we need more help.

Events

Sunday, July 17th at 11:30 a.m. onwards will be our key event this year: Music in the Park 2016.

We would be grateful for more volunteers to help on this day. We will be down at the Park from 9:30 a.m. and, in this case, many hands make light work.

We aim to build on the number of key events that the Park hosts. In 2017, we are discussing three events: Music in the Park, which will hopefully grow to a five band day (only four this year – brilliant!); we will aim to have a Cider and Sausage event and lastly of those in active planning, a “Made in Northants” event.

All these fit nicely into what can be well accommodated at the Park. We have one other feature we are currently developing but it's too premature to raise it as yet.

Comings and Goings:

Since our last issue, Matt has become well established in his job. Sadly, Nicola Austin has left to work closer to her home in Rugby (what commitment to travel to Barnwell CP for your work!). Nicola will be missed! She has helped build up a great team of volunteers for the Wednesday Morning Volunteer group.

We know that Chris Haines and Matt have been busy with interviews so, by the next issue, we'll have news for you on who has been given the job. We do know that they had an excellent set of possible Rangers to choose from which is wonderful for us.

Wednesday Volunteer Group (WVG)

The WVG continues to do excellent work in the Park and continues to grow in popularity. Tim reported that there were 10 volunteers not so long ago reporting for duty to help on Wednesday morning. This is great both for the work that constantly needs to be done at the Park, and for creating a solid team of people.

We would like to acknowledge the work of the local Schools as well working within the context of Community Action at the Park. Oundle School Community Action meet on Wednesday afternoons and carry on from the WVG.

People who are looking to have some light exercise in a friendly environment will always be welcomed to join. WVG meet Wednesday mornings. For more details contact the Ranger's Office or check out our website.

WVG have completed work on the Lowlands Refuge which looks wonderful now. A seating area has been created overlooking this area.

New ideas and thoughts

Please let us know if you can think of anything you would like to see either improved included for debate or initiatives and ideas.

Waitrose Community Matters

The green token was a great success and we're really grateful for all of those of you who participated. We raised nearly £650 which was a fantastic outcome. This money is being put towards the North Lake Path project. We are grateful to Waitrose for making this excellent appeal available to community organisations like the Friends.



REPORT on ACTIVITIES in the LAST QUARTER

First of all, some of you will be aware of the fact that the management side of the Park has been rebranded. We shall be having an interview with Chris Haines in the next issue which will cover this change. Chris has been responsible for managing the changeover to “First For Wellbeing” for our group of five local Parks. We will leave the details of this for the next issue but we can report that the changeover has been a success. Ownership of the Park remains with Northamptonshire County Council. The personnel remain the same. So, to all intents and purposes, it’s business as usual.

Around the Park with our Senior Ranger: Matt Harrel

We enjoyed our wander around the Park with Matt so much last time that we decided to pin him down to a little more exercise for this issue.

Matt and the team at First For Wellbeing have been very busy going further than just planning plans.

In the last issue we alluded to the fact that Matt wanted to introduce a new play area for children close to the Visitor Centre. This has now progressed and tenders for this work have been put out. Matt says that there have been some really interesting proposals put forward for this area. As part of the tender process, he plans to put up displays of the various



proposals from the tendering contractors in the Visitor Centre. It will then be up to our community of Park users to decide which they like best.

Similarly, we referred to the raised Cherry Tree mound (opp. the existing enclosed play area), and he is in the process of obtaining proposals and quotations for this work. The intention will be to create a play area for older children, possibly with some form of wooden castle and tunnels. This sounds really exciting and Matt says that he has the funding for this.

Together with the improvement work to paths, the North Lake Path and these areas, the Park can look forward to a transformational 2016/2017.

Indoors. Well, Matt also wishes to give the Visitor Centre a face lift and tidy up. He is suggesting an updated toddlers’ area with educational mats and some leather chairs. Those of you coming to the Park regularly should make sure to pop in to the Visitor Centre as these initiatives progress. We’re not saying when – you just need to keep popping in.

Similarly, in keeping with the transition

to First For Wellbeing, which ties in beautifully with our catch-all phrase, “Improving Access for All”, the outside of the Visitor Centre will also have a much needed facelift. There will be a new logo. Also, the Angling Trust has agreed to give a grant to make the anglers’ board more prominent and attractive.

Matt intends to do a whole variety of smaller but excellent improvements. The poor old Friends’ wooden signpost will be reworked (and paid for by the Friends). He intends to provide more (attractive) labelling of areas of the Park. For example, the Lakes will all be labelled. He will continue with his much appreciated temporary information notices. Sadly, some seem to be torn down but we can’t please everyone.

The cameras at some of the bird boxes haven’t been working for a while. Why? Sadly, mice! Work will be done to rewire over the coming months.

In the Kingfisher Hide, new pegs will be installed to ensure the windows stay open and close properly after use.

Matt is also supervising the gradual improvement and repair of fishing pegs.

THE USUAL GENTLE REMINDER

Dog Owners: please can you to keep your dogs under control during nesting season. We’re not asking you to put them on the lead, but just to make sure they’re not disturbing nesting birds or chasing ducklings across the pond!

On the North Lake, some of these need to be rebuilt up.

In the next issue, we will discuss with Matt how the Rangers “Plan the Year” for the Park in terms of maintenance. This should be interesting as Matt’s job is inherently a forward looking one. Going into the autumn will be a good time to learn how he reviews what work needs to be done.

During our walk around the Park, we revisited the pond area which has been isolated for amphibia (between the Picnic Meadow and the Lowlands Refuge). Sadly, the bund which was created between the North Lake Pond and the little pond to encourage amphibian populations was flooded. In other words, the bund which was created by Frog Life isn’t high enough to cope with the higher water levels we’re experiencing at the moment.

Work will need to be done to raise this bund because currently fish have easy access to this amphibian “isolation” unit.

Frog Life: in the middle ground of photo a bank has been constructed to block off main pond thereby creating a refuge for Amphibia seen in the foreground but having been submerged fish will have had access to this refuge during the wet period we have recently experienced.

Educational Front: Matt told us that Amber and Helen are organising an educational course for River Studies. This will be aimed at Schools but we’re sure that there will be fact sheets available for those who wish to do some studying on this fascinating area. They will be undertaking a broad range of exercises from identification to flow rates.

That’s it for this issue. We will certainly

continue to catch up with what Matt is up to in every issue from hereon.

Moth Traps anyone?

Matt is going to install a moth trap. Are there any lepidopterists out there without trapping equipment who would enjoy working the trap? Suitable for any age group.

A Spot of Gardening?

Our active Senior Ranger is looking to ease some of his work load! The raised beds outside the Visitor Centre need some love and attention. Would anyone be prepared to look after them or share the task within a group? We’re looking for one or more people who understand a little bit about plants and gardening and can introduce new plants, and weed and care for what remains.

Wildlife & Nature Notes from the Rangers

Birds & Friends

Kingfishers are back. I hadn’t seen them for a long time until 15/6 and then spotted one on the Refuge Lake. I have also seen Tree Creepers and Wrens, and Blue Tits are nesting in the bird box on the end of the Kingfisher Café. I have seen 10 Cygnets and quite a few Ducklings on various lakes; the Mandarin Ducks have been spotted on Mill Lake with Ducklings.

A Muntjac deer was also spotted in the reed bed.

Plants

With this warm and wet weather we have been having lately, everything is growing very quickly. It’s been quite a challenge trying to keep on top of it all. We have done plenty of mowing and strimming with help from the Volunteers.

It’s Orchid season so keep an eye out for Bee and Common Spotted Orchids.

Fish

We are delighted to introduce another “Fishing” on page 6.

Fishing in the Park is good at the moment. Tim (Committee Member) caught a 9.0 lb Tench on Mill Lake on Friday 10th June - caught on three red maggots.

New fishing ticket box and interpretation sign will be installed in the coming weeks.

Fungi

There are not a lot about at the moment: I found a large Agaricus mushroom in the Watch Spinney the other day, and I have seen a few little brown fellers in the grass I’m not sure of.



Agaricus mushrooms by Matt Harrel



FISHING: OBSERVATIONS FROM TIM HUNT

I am a Tench fisherman during the early season. To my mind it's the most majestic of fish and gives really good sport for its size. I start early normally at first light, which is my favourite time of day anyway. I've also seen many birds not normally seen later in the day: a Reed Warbler; always the Kingfisher; and this week the female Mandarin Duck and two young.

My first outing was on 6th May on Mill Lake: the weed had not started growing then but I still had two nice Tench, both female one of 5lb and one 7.5 lb. Unfortunately, both were on the point of spawning and I felt guilty that I had caught them in that condition, so I did not fish there until 6th June.

This is why generally there used to be a Closed Season from 15th March until 16th June but the Environment Agency in the '70s gave way to commercial pressure and said still waters did not have to observe a Closed Season. It used to give lakes a rest from the pressure of anglers and give the fish time to spawn. There is still a Closed Season on rivers.



9lb male Tench caught on 7th June

There is no evidence as far as I know that the open all year idea on lakes affects the fishing at BCP: it is not fished anywhere near as much as some commercial fisheries. However, I caught those females about to spawn, something which has never happened to me before and I shall think twice about fishing so early again. The reason I did fish that early in May was the fact that Tench spawn when the water has been higher than 10°C for two weeks which it had been this year. I checked the water temperature over a month, but for some reason they were spawning later. I believe that the old Closed Season should be re-instated at BCP but that's just my opinion.

3rd June North Lake: the Tench have finished spawning and the weed has started to grow. I caught many roach but not the normal Rudd, because the water was chilled by recent rain and the Rudd did not show. I had one Tench of 2lb.

10th June: On Mill Lake the weed is much longer, and I had to drag a hole

out and was rewarded with a 9lb Tench which is regarded as a specimen and the biggest I have ever caught. Chris says that as far as he knows it's the biggest ever caught at BCP. I feel sure there must be a 10lb Tench in Mill Lake, and this has been a lifetime ambition of mine!

In the last two seasons, I've caught Tench of 6 lb, 7.5 lb, 8 lb and 9 lb. In all my years fishing I've never caught so many big Tench. In North Lake the biggest I've caught is 5.5 lb., so there is something very special about Mill Lake. It could be because it is a bit shallower, with more weed /food and possibly other foods which are not available in North Lake. It must be natural food because it's not fished as much as North Lake. Perhaps one factor is that there are not many Carp in Mill Lake, so there less competition for food [Source of this information: "The Anglers Trust"].

The reason fish are getting bigger these days is thought to be the result of global warming. There is food available for a



longer season, several months sometimes, and with the water being warmer, the Tench feed over a longer period [Source of this information: "The Anglers Trust"].

There are several things that make Barnwell Country Park very special.

1. All the fish are wild: the lakes have never been stocked with Tench and Carp. I don't know of another lake in the Country like this and I've been fishing for 65 years.
2. In both lakes there is a head of very good Golden Rudd that have not crossed with the Roach. I've caught

Rudd up to 2lb which are almost specimen weight.

3. It's not advertised as some of the commercial fisheries are so we don't get the rough litter-leaving type of fisherman coming.

4. The fishing is hard: you have to know the lakes very well to know how to fish them.

I never fish anywhere else these days, except when my brother invites me down to the River Wye for some Barbel fishing.

I have never been a great river fisherman but when the level drops I am going to target the river and the big Chub.

I must finish by saying well done to the Rangers for being so fishing friendly in the ways they keep the pegs tidy and trimmed and allowing all the new safer pegs we have created on North Lake this year.

[ed. we will be raising Tim's thoughts concerning Closed and Open Season fishing. Our objective will always be to try to encourage best practice to ensure the least practical disturbance to the Park's habitat. There will always have to be a limit to ensure access and pleasure to be derived from our Park.]



WHAT'S COMING UP? Future Events

Further plug: **MUSIC IN THE PARK** on Sunday, July 17th. Please come and support this fun event. There will be music performed by four local brass bands, BBQ, Digfield Ales and a harnessed bungee jumping. Kindly also do a rain dance for keeping it away that day.

We must have had the last of the rain!

Other Park Based Events:

Nature Tots

Date: 13/07/16 Time: 10:00-11:30 a.m.

Notes: Parents and tots group with a difference. Go on a nature walk with a Ranger followed by a craft activity for pre-school children. Barnwell Nature Tots meet at 10am on the second Wednesday each month during term time.

Age Suitability: 0 – 5 years

Price: £3.50

Dragonfly Trail

Date: 21/07/16 Time: All Week

Notes: As part of Dragonfly Week answer fun quiz trail about these creatures that date back 3 million years, Collect quiz sheets from the kingfisher cafe.

Age Suitability: All ages

Price: £2.00 Quiz Sheet incl. Prize

All sessions run 10am - midday

Active Outdoorsy – Wild Art

Date: 29/07/16 Time: 10am-12:00

Notes: Keep your kids happy and active this summer at an Active Outdoorsy Summer Club. Challenging, fun, active games and creative fun for all.

Mixed age groups encourage communication, team building, and cooperation.

Age Suitability: 4 to 11 years

Price:

Oundle Companion Dog Show

Date: 31/07/16 Time: TBA

Notes: At Meadows

Age Suitability: All

Price:

Active Outdoorsy - Compass Fun

Date: 05/08/16 Time: 10am-12:00

Notes: Keep your kids happy and active this summer at an Active Outdoorsy Summer Club. Challenging, fun, active games and creative fun for all.

Mixed age groups encourage communication, team building, and cooperation.

Age Suitability: 4 to 11 years

Price:

Active Outdoorsy - Scavenger Hunt

Date: 12/08/16 Time: 10am-12:00

Notes: Keep your kids happy and active this summer at an Active Outdoorsy Summer Club. Challenging, fun, active games and creative fun for all.

Mixed age groups encourage communication, team building, and cooperation.

Age Suitability: 4 to 11 years

Price:

Active Outdoorsy - Wild Art

Date: 19/08/16 Time: 10am-12:00

Notes: Keep your kids happy and active this summer at an Active Outdoorsy Summer Club. Challenging, fun, active games and creative fun for all.

Mixed age groups encourage communication, team building, and cooperation.

Age Suitability: 4 to 11 years

Price:

Insect Trail

Date: 19/08/16 Time: All Week

Notes: Fun quiz trail about insects and creepy crawlies. Quiz sheets from Kingfisher Café

Age Suitability: All

Price: £2 per quiz sheet incl. prize

Active Outdoorsy - Trail making

Date: 26/08/16 Time: All Week

Notes: Keep your kids happy and active this summer at an Active Outdoorsy Summer Club. Challenging, fun, active games and creative fun for all.

Mixed age groups encourage communication, team building, and cooperation.

Age Suitability: 4 to 11 years

Price:

Public Volunteering Day

Date: 03/09/16 Time: 10-3:00 p.m.

Notes: Come along to our monthly public volunteering day and help the Ranger with park improvement projects

Meet at Visitor Centre

Attendance: Please let us know if you plan to attend

Age Suitability: 10 Years Old and above

Price: Free

Nature Tots

Date: 14/09/16 Time: 10-11:30 a.m.

Notes: Parents and tots group with a difference. Go on a nature walk with a Ranger followed by a craft activity for pre-school children. Barnwell Nature Tots meet at 10a.m. on the second Wednesday each month during term time.

Age Suitability: 0 – 5 years

Price: £3.50

20 Million Steps

Date: 23 & 24/09/16 Time: 11-3:00 p.m.

Notes: Come to the step pod and collect your Free pedometer and record your steps and let's get Northamptonshire walking. Boasting the counties health and promoting the benefits of walking in our beautiful countryside, we are taking part in this year's challenge to beat the target of 20 million steps.

Meeting at Meadow

Age Suitability: All

Price: Free

Activity: River Quiz Trail

Date: 24/09/16 Time: 12:00-3:00 p.m.

Notes: Celebrate all what the River Nene has to offer at our River Nene discovery day walk the Riverside walk answering clues to facts about the River Nene.

Meeting at Visitor Centre

Age Suitability: All

Price: Free

River Dipping Station

Date: 24/09/16 Time: 12:00-3:00 p.m.

Notes: Part of the River Nene Festival: Celebrate all what the River Nene has to offer, River Nene discovery day join the Ranger and find out what calls the Nene home at our River dipping station.

Meeting at Kingfisher Hide

Age Suitability: All

Price: Free

Teddy Bear's Picnic

Date: 24/09/16 Time: 12:00-1:30 p.m.

Notes: Bring your favourite Teddy bear down to the park and have lunch with them and also den building

Meeting at Meadow

Age Suitability: All

Price: N/A