

# Newsletter

January 2017



Many of you will know Chris Jordan, a faithful and active Friend since the very beginning, in the 1990s. He has worked both as a volunteer and committee member, serving as Membership Secretary and editor of this Newsletter until full time caring for his mother necessitated him standing down in 2014. His mother died recently, and on behalf of all of the Friends we would like to extend to him our deepest sympathy at this sad time.

As we start the new year there is nothing yet to report on the car parking issues. The review of all HDC car parks by the Council Car Parking Manager, reported in the October 2016 Newsletter has been completed but no recommendations or other information has been released.

The new tern raft, funded by the Friends, is currently under construction and we hope it will be towed out to its permanent position on the Wildlife Lake sometime in early spring, in good time for the start of the breeding season. Rangers from Paxton Pits, where recently installed tern rafts have proved very successful, are providing expertise and have offered to help with the installation. Terns are now on the amber list as a species declining in numbers, and although terns do come to the Park, there are no suitable nesting sites at present. Regular visitors will have noticed that the old raft has now been removed.

## COMMITTEE

### Chairman

David Thorogood  
01480 456380

### Membership/Treasurer

Malcolm Robinson  
01733 810708

### Secretary

Jenny Bowers

### Other Members

Margaret King  
John Holland  
Ray Bowers  
Graham Taylor

### Ranger Representative

Jim Milligan (HDC)

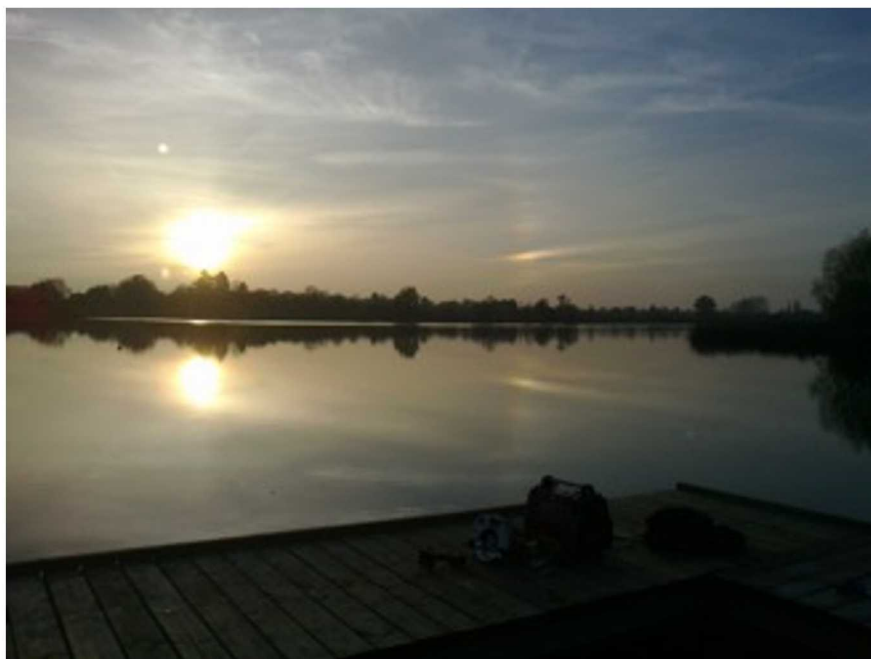
## Contact us

### e-mail

[friendshcp@yahoo.com](mailto:friendshcp@yahoo.com)

### or write

c/o the Visitor Centre,  
Hinchingsbrooke Country Park  
Brampton Road,  
Huntingdon,  
PE29 6DB



Winter sunset over the Main Lake from the new jetty. Peter Browning

We have applied to the Woodland Trust for a package of 420 'Wild Harvest' tree saplings for planting in March. The packs are funded by Sainsbury's, IKEA, the Peoples Postcode Lottery and Yorkshire Tea. The trees are all grown in the UK and include rowan, hazel, blackthorn, crab apple, dog rose and elder, and would provide food for wildlife as well as blossom and berries for us to enjoy. If our application is successful, the new saplings will provide some replacements for trees the rangers working with the volunteers have had to remove, and some trees to border the opened up woodland rides.

*David*

Chairman

## More 'Behind the Scenery' - this time from Volunteer Peter Browning

Peter writes 'The volunteers have continued to be very busy working up to the Christmas break. Tasks have included clearing and burning overgrowth in the area of the Spit, cutting willow on the bund, rebuilding the jetty on the main lake, refitting refurbished bench tops, cutting back vegetation and creating hibernation areas in the Snake Pit to name but several. A number of us even completed a brush-cutter course which is like strimming, only with attitude!



Sam, Peter and Ross  
working on the jetty

Let me introduce myself. My name is Peter Browning and I have been working, mostly on a Wednesday, as a Countryside Services Volunteer since May 2014. My background is military as I joined the RAF in, as I like to put it, the patriotic afterglow of an England World Cup victory in 1966. I served 37 years as an Aircraft Technician and left to join the MOD where my final job was an Environment related one. I became interested in the Environment when I took a course on the subject as part of my OU degree.

How did I get involved with working in HCP? Well, I had been working in the OXFAM Bookshop in Huntingdon and for a number of reasons became bored and frustrated with it. I regularly saw one of my neighbours leaving or arriving home on a Thursday wearing a green polo shirt. I questioned him about it, came to see Peter Hobbs, the Head Ranger before Jim, was offered a volunteer position and quite frankly have not looked back.

One of the first tasks I was involved in was the erection of the Friends' funded wooden fence around the children's play area. It was a task that required team work and no small amount of physical effort. It probably was an ideal task to start on, as it put me into contact with all the Wednesday crew from the start.

What tasks do I prefer to do when I am in the Park? I get a huge sense of achievement from tasks such as erecting or refurbishing "dead hedges" as for, hopefully, many months I can see that they are still doing the job they were put up for. Also I was involved in fixing a memorial bench in place where the donor family had asked if it could be finished for Christmas. The target date was met and I visited the bench during the Christmas period and found that flowers had been placed nearby. I now find that whenever I pass that bench I stop for a few moments to check that it is ok.

What jobs don't I enjoy? Anything that is the result of vandalism! I have been involved in several; including repairs to fencing and repairing the wooden bridge over the Brook. I still put the same effort into the task. It just leaves me angry and frustrated that the valuable time of the volunteers is used up in repairing the damage caused by mindless individuals. I cannot understand why they do it and never will.

Talking about repairing fences: several weeks ago, first job of the day - more repairs to the fence on the North side of the play area that Alex Burke (one of our teenage volunteers) and I repaired the previous week! Grrrr! Just finished when a little tyke comes tearing round the corner and starts climbing the fence! "Oy" says I, using my best Sgt Major's voice. He drops off the fence and his mother catches up with him. "How dare you run away from me!" I can confirm that she was a lot fiercer than me!

No doubt our return after the Christmas break will be met with a new series of challenges. Bring them on, I say!



## and 'Behind the Scenes at our Sconery' ( Café)... from Ian Jackson

2016 saw many changes in the HCP café. Jamie Gillies left after Christmas, and Ian Jackson was brought in as Hospitality Supervisor to oversee some commercial changes. Sadly for us Ian has been offered a new position and moved on just after Christmas. We will miss him and wish him every success in his new job. He very kindly wrote this piece for our Newsletter about his work last year with our super hardworking café team, just before he left.

'The main goal was to smarten up the appearance of the café and to create more space for customers to move in and out. The café had previously become very crowded at peak times, such as the summer holidays and during activities such as the parkrun. Three lots of the tables and chairs were removed to create more space. To further add to the ambience the posters displayed on the windows were removed as they had been blocking natural daylight. They are now displayed on a board immediately outside the café.

In addition, the dishevelled looking tramper shelter that was creating a bit of an eyesore in front of the café was dismantled. Plans are already in place to erect it in a more discreet location under the trees at the side of the café. Also, the rangers and volunteers have done a great job of clearing and tidying the small garden next to the café. This is still work in progress, but with its new shelter in place, I'm sure it will become a very popular area over the coming year.

Many other small changes were implemented as well. The design of the café menu has been improved and the menu simplified. There are however, a greater variety of soft drinks available, and we have moved to plastic bottles from cans. The café purchased a chip scuttle and a contactless card payment system, both of which helped to improve the speed at which we can serve customers.

Most importantly, we have increased the number of casual staff to cover the very busy weekend shifts. Erin, Taylor, Nicole, Rodell, Jake and Finlay all joined this year, and have integrated very well into an already highly efficient team.

All these changes have contributed to a successful year financially for the café. Takings are expected to be up by over £17,000 in the first 3 quarters of the financial year.'

Following Ian's departure, Jeff has been upgraded to acting Manager.

*Good luck Jeff and congratulations to you and all the café team, regular staff and volunteers, for your magnificent contribution to the success of the Park in 2016.*

*Father Christmas and elves at the 2016 Christmas event*



## Update on the butterfly count (see Oct 2016 Newsletter)

One day in late November  
It came as a surprise.  
A Red Admiral flew right by me,  
I hardly believed my eyes.  
But that was not the last time  
I saw a butterfly.  
On December 6, in the park,  
A Peacock flew right by!

Sue Wilkins

## Bon Voyage, Sam! (Bottom right above)

Ranger Sam, another familiar face in the Park, will be away travelling in the Far East for the next few months.

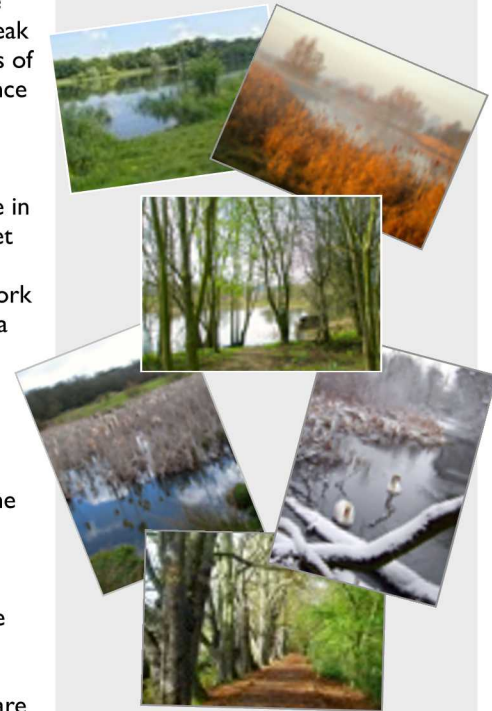
We wish him all the very best for his adventures and are delighted that his initial 2 year contract has now been renewed. We look forward to seeing him again when he returns, as no doubt will our remaining (even harder pressed) Rangers Jim and David!

## MONEY MATTERS

*One of the aims of the Friends is to raise funds to help maintain the Park*

### Park Cards £1.50

*blank inside for your messages, available from the Committee or the Cafe*



## THANK YOU

**Margaret King**  
who with John Holland and other helpers organised the very successful

### Tombola

at the Christmas Event  
raising over £100 for our funds  
and to

Hotel Chocolat and all the other kind friends of the Park who donated prizes and/or bought tickets

## Help the Friends Committee

If you love the park and would like to help, in a general or more specific way, (and/or add to your cv) and could offer a little of your time, talents, energy and ideas to help us help the park, **contact us at** [friendshcp@yahoo.com](mailto:friendshcp@yahoo.com)



I probably say it every year, but the park looked stunning during the autumn months. The staff and volunteers particularly enjoy this time of year, with temperatures ideal for practical outdoor work, and the colour changes in the foliage providing a wonderful backdrop.

It is during this time we try to complete as much of the work as we can around our waterways, with low water levels allowing us to access much of the vegetation near the edges, and this has included

- Clearing one side of the bund (the path between the two big lakes)
- Cutting back willow to open up viewpoints around our lake
- Completing repairs to the jetty
- Refurbishing many of the lakeside benches in our workshop (a good wet weather job!)
- Removing encroaching willow from the wet flower meadow near the wildlife lake.

One other job was to renovate our log otter holt, which we had installed the previous year. I haven't seen an otter at the park in my seven years here, but a Brampton resident (thanks Steve) proudly showed us the photos he took of an otter in our wildlife lake – I'd like to think I'm not the jealous type..

Staff and volunteers of Countryside Services continue to help each other across the district with rangers from Paxton Pits helping with some of our woodland management work this winter, and a team from the park joining others to sort and replant thousands of small trees at the community nursery in Godmanchester (as part of the parish planting scheme).

In recognition of all the hard work that volunteers put into all our sites around the district, the park hosted a thank you lunch in early December (and provided some silly games to boot). It was great to see so many volunteers from around the district attend, and gave them all a chance to meet other volunteers (either from other sites, or the same site but different roles/days). Wildlife surveys, practical tasks, fundraising, events and activities, promotional campaigns, grant applications – the list of jobs performed is endless, and our district would be so much the poorer without their efforts.

We hosted an extra two parkrun races over the festive period (as well as a successful Frostbite League race in December). Parkrun have also obtained permission to make free use of one of the hospital car parks on Saturday mornings, which should help alleviate some (though we recognise not all) of the parking issues we have in and around the park during race time.

Many of those involved with parkrun are also a part of Team Bex, and in the last newsletter I mentioned how they were trying to fund a defibrillator for the park. That fundraising campaign was successful, and the kit has been installed on the side of the café. A big thank you goes out to all those involved – we hope it never needs to be used, but it could save someone's life one day. It also means we can loan out our portable defib. to provide cover at other locations/events.

Finally, I have to mention our Festive day (including Santa's Grotto), which proved a huge success - Leonberger dogs as reindeer, volunteers as elves, crafts and activities on the day, and huge thanks to Graham, one of your very own Friends' committee members, for agreeing to step into the breach, or at least a certain red and white costume, a few days beforehand.

Happy New Year to you all!

*Jim*



### 16-18th February

#### Great Fen LEGO Build

Various LEGO activities,  
also a

#### Map Reading Challenge

for families 11am-4pm,

small charge per child, for some  
events, some bookable



call 01480 388111  
for details of events  
or to book for any of the  
following

### 28th February

#### Willow Basket Making Workshop

£65pp inc materials and  
refreshments, minimum age 14

### 17th March

#### Glitter Stitched Flowers Workshop

with Alex Waylett, £45pp  
bring your sewing machine

### 26th March

#### Photography Workshop

with Ryan Jarvis - learn how to  
improve your pictures with your  
digital SLR or bridge camera. £50pp

### July 31-August 1st

#### Applique Linen Panel Workshop

also with Alex - 2 days.  
£95 + £8 materials

see websites and fliers  
for further information on  
events in the park

[www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/  
countrysideevents](http://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/countrysideevents)

