

Welcome

Welcome to our latest newsletter. We were, of course, very sad to lose our Countryside Ranger Elliott Friars in July this year. I would like to put on record our thanks for his commitment to Oakley Park over the last 4 plus years and the good works his team has undertaken in this period. I am reliably informed that a replacement has been found so the Countryside service should soon be back to full strength.

On the plus side I am very pleased to announce that Elliott has agreed to join the committee as our environmental adviser.

Water

The lack of rainfall in Fleet has taken its toll on Oakley Park most noticeably in the fall in the ponds water level. We are giving consideration to what can be done to alleviate the situation in the longer term, but hopefully a damp Autumn/Winter will restore the water to its previous levels. We will be undertaking some replanting of the memorial garden when conditions are more suitable. Please watch the notice boards for updates.

Dog Bins in Oakley Park

It is worth remembering that all bins, including the original dog bins in the park are now suitable for all rubbish and not just dog mess, so feel free to use them all, and that includes dog owners.

You may also have noticed that the park had a great deal of rubbish lying around it at the beginning of the summer. This was because we were seeing fewer collections by the council and the bins were over filling. This has since improved, thanks to those of you who have constantly badgered the council to come and sort it out. If you feel the bins are overflowing and the council is neglecting the collection of rubbish in Oakley Park, we

would be grateful if you could phone Public Spaces/Waste & Recycling on 01252 844915 or email waste-management@hart.gov.uk. The more people they hear from, the quicker they take action!

After nearly 9 months the vandalized bin at the entrance from Burnside has been replaced. Once again thanks goes to Elliott Frairs, Countryside Ranger, who following the subject being raised at a *Friends of Oakley Park* committee meeting, discovered that several replacement bins were available in the Council's storage depot. He accordingly arranged its installation. It would appear that nobody at the Council had taken the initiative despite the problem being reported on earlier occasions.

Grants

We are still pursuing improvements in facilities for the older children; this includes looking at funding by way of grants for the equipment needed. Unfortunately, our efforts have been somewhat thwarted by changes in and retirements of members of the council who had responsibility for Oakley Park. However, Phil Whiting, Head of Public Spaces, informs me that external consultants have undertaken a 'play strategy' for Hart. The results of the review are expected to be available in January, which should allow access to lottery funding.

Annual Social event

Friends of Oakley Park is having our yearly get together on Saturday 18 Nov. As usual it will be held at the Red Cross hall in Clarence Road. This is a good opportunity for you to meet fellow *Friends* and discuss your concerns and wishes for the *Park*. The event is very informal and there is plenty of food and drink. We will have a guest speaker,

from the Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust and this year's topic is 'Grazing for Biodiversity in NE Hampshire'. If you did not buy your tickets when you paid your annual subscription it is not too late, just contact any of the committee members detailed on the back page.

Ron Ayton (chairman)



Pastures New

Hello,

Well it has now been two months since I left my post with Hart District Councils Countryside Service to move to pastures new at the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust. I enjoyed my time with Hart very much and was given many opportunities to work on different projects with different people as well as manage nature reserves such as Oakley Park, Basingbourn Heath and The Royal Oak Valley, which will always have a place in my heart.

I would like to thank all of you who supported my efforts in conserving the wildlife of Oakley Park over the last 4 ½ years. Through walks, talks, volunteer days and bird and bat box events I feel as though the park has made huge strides forward and it is now an important area for wildlife conservation and for the local community to enjoy.

However, time came for a change and I have headed back to charity work with the Wildlife Trust. My new position is working on the Itchen Navigation Heritage Trail Project, which is looking to improve the wildlife value of the 300-year-old waterway, which connects Winchester and

Southampton as well as encouraging more public involvement through walks, talks and events on the Navigation. So far I have hosted nine bat evenings for the public, held a BBQ for 40 volunteers and carried out umpteen wildlife surveys, so along with all the other work I have to do I have been kept very busy.

With the permission of the other committee members I have decided to stay on with the Friends of Oakley Park and continue to support the good work that they do. I hope to see some of you around at some of the events and the AGM soon.

All the best and thanks for all of your support in the past

Elliott



Oakley Park Pond Dip

On Saturday, 29th July, Elliott and Laura very kindly organised a pond dip at Oakley Park. A mucky, smelly and fun day was had by all with midge and mosquito larvae, damselfly larvae, both lesser and greater water boatman and whirligig beetles all being netted as well. There were plenty of children and parents joining in the fun and we even had one family who came all the way from London! Elliott supplied us with nets and buckets to collect our pond wildlife. He particularly pointed out how low the pond was due to the lack of rainfall, but despite this we all managed to find plenty of wild life. The most notable insects we found were the Water Boatman. We learnt that they swim upside-down, propelled by two long legs, which paddle like oars, making it look like a rowing boat. They like to eat tadpoles and other aquatic insects. Water Boatman apparently rests on the surface,

diving down to investigate whenever they sense any form for vibrations.

The catch of the day was four great diving beetles. This beetle spends both its adult and larval stage in water. It uses its powerful paddle-like hindlegs to swim and is one of the largest aquatic insects.

If you look closely around the pond during the summer you will also see the Blue Tailed Damselfly flying around. The adult damselfly bears no resemblance to its dull brown water-dwelling nymph which can also be found in our pond.

So if you missed our Pond Dip but often pass the pond, why not make time to have a look for some of these insects. You'll be surprised at what's lurking in our pond.

Next year we plan to hold another event but will do so in spring when the pond should be full of tadpoles and newts. Keep an eye on the notice board for dates.

Zena Stewart/ Elliott Fairs



A Word From The Treasurer

We thought this would be a good opportunity to thank you all for your continued support and in particular for the generous donations we have recently received from people who are enjoying the park.

We have recently with the kind help of Kate Philpott and Sarah Horton been looking at applying

for a grant to assist with improvements to the park. This would be used to help fund the next phase of the building of play equipment for older children. Kate, who has just given birth to baby Eve, (congratulations!) will now be passing on her work on the grant to another kind volunteer. At present we are putting applications together, this will be a lengthy process, so we will keep you informed of progress.

In connection with the grant applications, we are also in the process of changing our banking from the Nationwide to Barclays Bank. You may recall Barclay's was kind enough to donate both the time of its staff and money for the renovation of the memorial garden some time back. This change will meet the strict criteria set by granting bodies for control of allocated money (if we are lucky enough to be successful with an application).

Again, thanks for your support and we will let you know how things progress with the grant applications.

Lawrence Christer
Treasurer