

Welcome

Hello again. Firstly some very good news, we are delighted to extend a welcome to Joanne Lawrence as our new Countryside Ranger who introduces herself later in this Newsletter. It is understood that this is a permanent position, which will I am sure, be helpful to all concerned.

On a sadder note Margaret Duggan, who has acted as our secretary for some time, has decided to step-down after some ten years of invaluable service on the committee. I believe that Margaret and her husband Pete have been involved with *Friends of Oakley Park* since its inauguration. May we put on record our thanks for her commitment to Oakley Park especially her involvement in the activities organised over that time.

Website

Apologies to all of those of you that tried to access our web address as shown in the last flyer. The correct one is oakleypark.org.uk, we are taking steps to ensure that it is kept up to date; hopefully a copy of this Newsletter will appear there shortly.

Committee

With Margaret stepping down we are in need of new committee members. Meetings only take place some nine times a year, usually over

a glass of wine, and the tasks are not very onerous. Is there someone who could lend a hand? If you are interested please do contact one of the committee members detailed on the last page. We can assure you will receive a warm welcome.

Annual Social Event

In a departure from our usual timing our annual get together has been deferred until next year. *Friends of Oakley Park* wine & cheese evening will now be on Saturday 19 January. 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 Your Countryside Ranger

Hello, my name is Joanna Lawrence and I'm the new Ranger for Oakley Park and Fleet Pond. I joined Hart's Countryside Service from Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust where I volunteered for a year after finishing university with a degree in Zoology.

My responsibilities will be for the woodland and pond area

of the park and we hope over this winter to improve the quality of this area for local wildlife by some minor works on the pond and some control on invasive species in the woodland. I also look forward to working with the friends of Oakley Park to carry on the excellent work that they have carried out on the park to improve the site for local people and wildlife alike.

I can be contacted on 01252 623443 or at countryside@hart.gov.uk. Or you can write to me at: Countryside Service, Hart District Council, Civic Offices, Harlington Way, Fleet, Hampshire, GU51 4AE

Grants

Following the much-needed revamp a couple of years ago of the young children's play area, attention has turned towards the needs of older children and teenagers. Hart District council has recently put in a bid to the Big Lottery Fund for funding to improve facilities for teenagers at several sites across the district. Within Fleet, it was proposed that Oakley Park should benefit if the bid is won. The bid is specifically for innovative play facilities for teenagers and as such the Friends of Oakley Park committee have been looking at interesting climbing apparatus such as a large Pyramid net. We hope to hear if the bid was successful later this autumn.

Sarah Horton

Park Improvements

You will read elsewhere in this newsletter the exciting developments concerning our grant application. This will allow the purchase of one large piece of equipment, towards which the Friends of Oakley Park will also need to make a contribution.

Depending on our finances (obviously with this larger item of play equipment taking priority), it would be nice to reinstall the kick board.

This you may recall has been referred to in previous newsletters. To recap this was a long-term feature of the park, which was removed by the council due to its condition but never replaced. We would aim to replace it like for like. Below is a picture of a kick board from a quote received 2 years ago to give you an idea how it would look. The size would be 3 metres wide by 1.8 metres high.

I am currently obtaining an up to date quote for this item and will update you via the newsletter on developments.

Lawrence Christer
Treasurer

Oakley Park Bat Walk

Over 30 people attended the bat walk, which was run at the end of August. Everyone had a thoroughly enjoyable event learning about bats, seeing them fly and hearing them on the bat detectors. Of the 16 species of bat, which live within the UK, we expect that maybe 5 may use Oakley Park's woodland, pond and stream at some part of the year and we were not disappointed when everyone heard Soprano Pipistrelle bats feeding in the trees. Towards the end of the evening even more bats, of the same species, were heard and seen flying over the pond, round and round in circles, eating midges and mosquitoes as they went. The walk ended with yet more bat activity in between the youth shelter and the children's playground.

Top Bat Facts

- Bats can live for up to 30 years
- In winter, when insects (bat food) are scarce, bats hibernate in cool parts of buildings, caves and hollow trees
- Bats rarely live in belfries. They prefer somewhere quiet, not draughty, and free from cobwebs
- They have good steering - they won't get caught in your hair!

- Bats often choose modern houses as roost sites - about half of all known pipistrelle bat roosts known in the 1980s were in houses less than 25 years old
- In Britain it is illegal to disturb bats or the places where they roost
- Bats are not blind. Their sight is almost as good as ours but they can also 'see' in the dark by listening to the echoes of their high frequency calls/shouts
- Britain's commonest bat, the Pipistrelle, is only 4cm long and weighs about 5 grams - less than a 2p coin!
- Bat populations are threatened not only by loss of habitat, affecting roosting sites and feeding grounds, but also by deliberate killing and over-exploitation for food
- Of about 4,500 different species of mammal in the world, nearly 1,000 are bats
- Of the 16 species left in Britain, 6 are endangered or rare and 6 others are vulnerable

If you would like to find out more about bats and perhaps help survey for bats or attend a bat walk yourself, visit www.bats.org.uk for further information.

Elliott