

News from Harrold Odell Country Park
November 2010

Now that we're into November, we have re-started the winter tasks identified within the Nature Reserve from the Management Plan. Visitors will begin to notice us coppicing, and stacking the resulting wood into neat piles to season for next year. Any dead wood is being stacked into habitat piles for over-wintering insects, reptiles and amphibians.

Elsewhere, hedge-laying and clearing out areas around the lakes and along the river will be undertaken. This is the time when the leaves are dropping, tree sap is receding back into the roots, the wildlife is no longer breeding and nettles are dying back allowing easier access into the wilder areas of the park.

On Sunday October 24th, we held a very successful event looking at the importance of the landscape in providing the raw materials for every day life. This was a collaboration with Bedford Museum who provided an insight into historic connections and traditional skills with displays of artefacts and a marquee providing family crafts and activities.

Attractions included a bee keeper and skep maker (traditional straw bee hive) a blacksmith, wood turner, dyer and pole lathe demonstrator.

Paul Nicholls set up an area looking at survival skills e.g making fire by friction, the preparation of animal skins and making cord and wooden utensils from natural materials found in the hedgerows. There was also a display of rocks used to produce cement, bricks and building stones. A big thank you to Bedfordshire Geology Group who provided the specimens

We had the Hemlock Morris dancers entertaining us between 1pm – 3pm and we reckon we welcomed 1000 extra visitors on the day as the weather smiled on us. The positive feedback received since may make us hold a similar event next year if resources allow.

On December 11th Richard and I have been invited to a ceremony being put together by the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE). We have been nominated for an award for landscape improvement for the Odell Community Orchard at the rear of the houses in Horsefair Lane. We don't yet know whether we are winners but watch this space.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all our volunteers and the Friends group for all the help and support we receive on a weekly basis. Recently they have used some of the car park donations so generously given to buy and kit out a trailer for ferrying goods and equipment round the park. They have also bought me a new chainsaw and will be paying for replacement wildlife signs for the bird hide shortly, once we have finalised what we want. We are also busy getting quotes for the installation of a proper fence round the playground at the Odell end.

After dealing with a series of recent incidents involving dogs, Richard & I have attended a course run by the Environmental Enforcement Team at Borough Hall in

order to become Enforcement Officers. When all the formalities have been attended to, we will have the power to issue £50.00 Fixed Penalty Notices for fouling and other littering offences. There will be publicity about when this will be happening to give people fair warning when we are ready to implement this. We would like to thank all dog owners who are already behaving responsibly. We appreciate everything you do.

The Walking 4 Health programme is continuing on apace. We run a walk in the park or somewhere close by every two weeks. We meet at the café at 10.30am and walk for about an hour with the opportunity for refreshments at the end. In December we meet on the 9th & 23rd and in January the 6th & 20th. These may be subject to cancellation if the weather is very bad. All dates and events are listed on the website www.hocp.co.uk

Finally, we welcome enquiries and feedback from visitors on any aspect of the park so please get in touch. You can access information via the Friends website or call us on 01234 720016. Tea-zels café can be contacted on 01234 721525 to find out about Christmas and New Year opening times.

Janet Munro
Assistant Ranger