

Skylarks

As the year draws to a close we bring you the last of our quarterly newsletters for 2005. From all on the Friends' committee we wish you a very merry Christmas and a happy New Year and hope to see you soon.

Annual General Meeting

Where does the membership money go?
What is a work party?
Why were the bulrushes being pulled up?
When will the grass be cut?
Who is that woman with the black sack?!



For the answer to these and any of your other questions about the park come to:

A Yuletide Ramble round the park followed by the AGM of the Friends of the Wick Country Park on Sunday 4th December 2005 starting at the Pavilion at 2pm.

Meet the Ranger and the present committee over a glass of mulled wine and a mince pie. Hear about future plans for the development of the park. Be the first to know about up and coming events. Come and talk to us and have your say. For the future of the 'Friends' it is important that as many members as possible are present at the AGM.

We look forward to meeting you.

The agenda will be as follows:

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of last AGM – 5th Dec. 2004 (please see attached)
3. Matters arising
4. Chairperson's report
5. Treasurer's/membership report
6. Ranger's report
7. Election of Officers
8. Election of Committee Members
9. Any other business

Come and join the party!

The first of our autumn/winter work parties took place in October when we joined Mark in the alder pond to clear out the bulrushes. Actually there was a distinct lack of water but at least that meant we didn't have to wear the waders! It was a lovely sunny day that brought out many visitors to the park, some of whom stopped to admire our hard work as they passed over the boardwalk.



Work parties are taking place every third Sunday of the month until further notice. If you would like to join us we will be working from 10am to 12noon and 1pm to 3pm. Bring your wellies if it's wet and meet us at the Pavilion at the start of either session or bring a packed lunch and stay all day. Tea and coffee will be provided. Parental supervision is required for children.

Deborah Belverstone
Chairperson

The Wick Country Park Wildlife Records for 2005

During the course of my work throughout the sites I look after I endeavour to record snap shots of the wildlife found immediately around me and to undertake one brief wildlife survey each month. Though this represents just a small proportion of what's out there, as the records accumulate over the coming years, a reasonably comprehensive list of species should eventually transpire.

Here are some of the species recorded in the park this year:

Emperor moth	Cuckoo	Purple toadflax
Drinker moth	Goldfinch	Hairy tare
Maggie moth	House sparrow	Grass vetchling
Ruby tiger moth	Kestrel	Robin's pincushion
White plume moth	Little Grebe	Nursery web spider
Orange tip butterfly	Pheasant	
Ruddy darter	Whitethroat	
Meadow plant bug		
Thick legged flower beetle		
Dark bush cricket		
Long-winged cone head		
Hoverfly (<i>Volucella zonaria</i>)		
Parasitic wasps (<i>Torymus nitens</i> , <i>Carpales maculata</i>)		
Springtail		

Mark Williams
Wick Country Park Ranger



Tales from a dog walker

Forgive me for reminiscing yet again. I am going back 18 years or so when only the lower end of the Wick had been developed. The whole area was covered in scrub and shoulder high weeds from Cranfield Park Road (at the Salcotts Road roundabout) to the railway line. It was almost impossible to get through but, of course, our retriever Becky managed just fine. Unfortunately she was never able to find her way back to us so there was much calling and frantic searching. Luckily we never failed to 'retrieve' her.



Now and then we came across an old dwelling, not sure whether inhabited or not, except one interesting house which displayed a notice board in the garden with 'any dog allowed to stray onto this property will be shot'. This was a worry for us as Becky was quite a wanderer.

This area was then developed and we moved our dog walking to the area that is now the approach to the Wick Country Park. Our second retriever Pippa was a dog with a different temperament. She was always alert to the sound of pheasant squawking; then the chase began and there was no stopping her. However, for all the times she chased pheasants she was only successful in her quest once. She chased the bird, caught it and carried it home in her mouth much to the astonishment of the passing motorists who did a double take at the sight of this very self-satisfied dog, on the lead, carrying the massive bird, with wings extended, along Cranfield Park Road. We were tagging along behind looking more than a bit embarrassed. The neighbours too were amazed. It seemed a very long walk home that day.

Younger members of the family were horrified when they learnt that, when the dog eventually dropped the bird, I had lobbed it over the hedge as I didn't fancy eating it after it had been in the dog's mouth. Response - 'Dad, how do you think pheasants are usually retrieved'.

Even as an old lady Pippa always made a token chase at the sound of the pheasants but the birds were never in any danger!

Hope to see you at the Annual General Meeting.

Maurice Sweetland



A story from Phil the Pill Box



Hi! My name is Phil the Pill Box and I live in what you call The Wick Country Park in Wickford, Essex. I was built in the last century around 1940 as part of the GHQ LINE to protect London as it was felt at that time there was a real threat that the Germans may invade Britain. My official name was Pill Box Fortress Type 24, but I never really liked being a number! I was big enough for 8 men with Bren Guns to be in! Thankfully they never needed to use them!

After the 2nd World War I was abandoned with only the wildlife to keep me company. I lived happily in a farmer's field sunning myself in summer and glistening in the cold winters' snow - that is until a few years ago when the farmer sold the field and what you know as The Wick Country Park was born.

Well, that's all I've got time for now but keep your eye out in the next issue of Skylarks and I'll tell you about my friends and what I've been doing since the park ranger arrived.

By Tricia Marshall

Take a healthy walk in the park

Join an organised walk in the park, meet new people and keep yourself fit and healthy. Basildon District Health Walks are gentle and suitable for everyone, regardless of age or fitness. The walks are particularly suitable for older people and people who are new to exercise. Everyone is welcome!

Led by a qualified walk leader a walk takes place in the park every Tuesday morning starting at 10:15 for 30 to 40 minutes. Meet in the car park. For more information call 01268 568528.

Events

The Friends' committee has arranged the following events with the Wick Country Park ranger. For all events please meet at the Wick Pavilion.

Yuletide Ramble

Sunday 4th December, 2pm start
A winter wander in the park followed by warming mulled wine and mince pies and the Friends AGM.

Work Party

Sunday 18th December
Sunday 15th January 2006
10am - 12noon and/or 1pm - 3pm
Come and have fun and help the ranger with improvements to the park. Join us for a couple of hours or the whole day.

There will be more events arranged in the New Year.



Membership

If you are not a member but would like to join the Friends of the Wick Country Park please contact Nikki on 01268 734293 or email mikenikki@supanet.com

The Friends of the Wick Country Park Committee:

Deborah Belverstone - Chairperson
Maureen Bradford - Vice Chairperson
Nikki Gibson - Treasurer
Tricia Marshall - Secretary
Alison Sweetland
Maurice Sweetland
Dave Mullender

Contact Deborah on 01268 572732 or email dbelverstone@yahoo.co.uk

Basildon District Council Countryside Services:

Steve Prewer
Countryside Services Manager
Telephone: 01268 550088

Mark Williams
Countryside Ranger
Telephone: 01268 562921