



Friends of Harrold-Odell Country Park

Newsletter No.14
Spring 2012

Harrold-Odell Country Park
Carlton Road
Harrold
Bedfordshire
MK43 7DS

Website: <http://www.hocp.co.uk>

Email: secretary@hocp.co.uk

Telephone: (01234) 720016

'Friends' are people who care about the countryside, especially Harrold-Odell Country Park and who work with the Bedford Borough Council Park Staff in all sorts of ways to make the Park a welcoming place for visitors and wildlife.

The changing landscape of the Park

Over the winter months the landscape of the Park has been changed by two distinctive but related activities, coppicing and spiling.

Coppicing is a traditional method of woodland management. It relies on the fact that some trees, such as, willow make new growth from the stump or roots if they are cut down. This means that trees can be cut repeatedly and left to regenerate, creating a cycle that can be repeated.

Newly coppiced woodland can and does generate questions and even negative comments from visitors. Some see it as the destruction of the natural environment. This is to fail to understand the cycle that is being established and the benefits that accrue from it. Coppicing clears away old vegetation and stimulates new growth. It opens up the soil to light and encourages plants that may have lain dormant for years to spring into life. The revival of orchids in the Nature Reserve is an example of this process. Also, the coppiced wood can be harvested and put to good use.

Coppicing provides the Park with both raw materials and revenue. Felled timber is sold locally and the revenue ploughed back into the Park. It also provides the timber for

fencing and for spiling which requires large quantities of willow branches to protect the banks of the lakes. Above all it creates a cycle that benefits the natural environment and facilitates sustainability.



A newly pollarded willow near the Visitors' Centre. The sight of a seemingly 'mutilated' tree can produce a negative reaction but it's all for the good!



In the foreground is a product of coppicing. The fencing has been made from cut willow, while the tree in the centre shows regenerated growth.



Scene from the Bird Hide window: A coppiced willow sprouts new growth while behind it is a willow that has not been coppiced.



The products of coppicing ready for use. These will be used to create spiling around the lake edges.

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Willow spiling is the most common and best known method for tackling the erosion of banks along the lake sides. Erosion is not something you might expect to find along the banks of a quiet lake but visit the park on any day when there is a strong wind blowing and you will see waves lapping along the shoreline. They may look pretty and gentle but they exert a power on banks which undermines them and causes them to fall into the lake.

The use of coppiced willow branches that are interwoven to create a fence can provide a living structure that has the strength to disperse the power of the waves, thereby protecting the bank. Whether the willow starts to sprout depends on when it is coppiced and how quickly it is used.



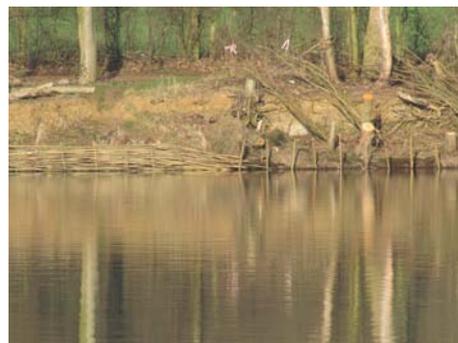
- Coppiced willow cut and laid out ready for use for spiling.



- Willow stakes driven into the lake bed where the bank is threatened by erosion from wave action.



- Willow branches woven to create a natural fence that will deflect waves and remove their energy.



- Spiling that is part finished (right) and finished (left)



- Coppiced willow in the foreground with recently completed spiling in the background.



- Mature spiling where the willow has sprouted and grown into a natural barrier.

Flora & fauna to look out for in the Park this Spring

BIRDS

tufted duck
little egret
great crested grebe
oyster catcher
yellow wagtail
chiffchaff

willow warbler
cuckoo
swallow
black cap
reed warbler
tree creeper

AMPHIBIANS

common newt
frog
toad

REPTILES

grass snake

FLOWERS

bluebell
forget-me-not
ground elder
cow parsley
hedge garlic

cowslip
violet
hawthorn
apple

INSECTS

buff-tailed bumblebee
brimstone butterfly

red admiral butterfly
small tortoiseshell butterfly

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Forthcoming Activities in the Park

Conservation Days

Why not come and join like-minded Friends of the Park in practical work that aims to enhance the park for wildlife and visitors. All tasks start at 10am and finish mid afternoon, but you need only stay as long as you wish. Tasks vary to cater for a range of experience. Please bring a packed lunch. Tea, coffee & biscuits supplied.

Next Conservation Days: April 30th; May 28th & June 25th

For additional information please contact Park rangers Janet Munro or Richard Dowsett on (01234) 720016 or email hocp@bedford.gov.uk

Health Walks

Health walks are run fortnightly on Thursdays throughout the year. Meet at 10.30am at the Visitor Centre. Each walk lasts about an hour and is guided by a trained leader. The aim is to improve physical health and mental wellbeing. Walking regularly can reduce the risk of heart disease, high blood pressure, strokes and depression. Next Health Walks: April 26th; May 10th & 24th; June 7th & 21st

Requesting your opinion!

The Friends' Committee are currently discussing the idea of a Friends Shop. This would operate from the café and during special events. What do you think of the idea? If you like it, what type of items would you suggest we offered for sale? Send your ideas and suggestions to the Secretary at da.taylor@btinternet.com or write to The Secretary, Friends of HOCP, Harrold Odell Country Park, Carlton Road, Harrold.

Wanted ...

Contributions to this Newsletter either in the form of articles or ideas for articles. Our aim is to provide information about what's going on in the Park and to interpret the landscape and the activities of the wildlife. If you can help, please contact the Secretary on 01234 714000 or da.taylor@btinternet.com.

Donations

The Friends receive donations from the car park collection boxes and from donations made by individuals. The money is used to make the Park a better place for visitors.

In these times of cut-backs in public expenditure we want to continue to improve the Park and to this end public donations are becoming increasingly important. If you would like to make a donation it would be greatly appreciated, however small. Cash or cheques made payable to '**Friends of Harrold-Odell Country Park**' please.

If you would like any further information, please contact any of the following:

Nina Bransgrove-Knight (Chair)	01234 721149
Rachel Halton (Treasurer)	01234 720572
David Taylor (Secretary)	01234 714000

Friends' Annual General Meeting

This will be held on Thursday 19th July at 10am. This will be an open meeting, held in the Visitor Centre at the Park.