



The Park

Edition 29 - Winter 2015/16

**The Quarterly Magazine of
The Friends of Harrold-Odell Country Park**

Cover Photograph

(from the archive)

This shows the site of the Dragonfly Pond shortly after it was excavated as one of the earliest projects undertaken by the Friends of HOCP in the 1980s. It is now the site of the latest project undertaken by the Friends, namely the new boardwalk and viewing platform. (see pages 2 & 3)

Why not take a look on your next walk? Take the main path through the Park. Pass the bird hide on your left and the entrance is on your right, just round the corner.

Lost already? Help yourself to our free brochure and map from the rack in the Visitors' Centre.

Friends of HOCP - Committee Meeting

Wed 10th Feb at 10.00 am

Open to all registered Friends

Why not join us and help plan for the future?

Children and Parents

Test your powers of observation ...

... with the **I SPY in the PARK** sheets that are available free from the wall-dispenser at the back of the Discovery Room in the Visitors' Centre, or print them from our website. I Spy sheets are available on Birds, Structures and Signs.

Use the sheets as you walk around the large lake to see how many items you can spot.



Friends of Harrold-Odell Country Park

Carlton Road, Harrold, MK43 7DS
Tel 01234 720016

Newsletter No.29 Winter 2015/16

A Happy New Year to all the Friends of the Park who work so hard to improve it by volunteering for a myriad of tasks throughout the year. And a very Happy New Year to visitors who have braved the winter chill to enjoy the Park.

The emphasis in this edition of the Newsletter is on how to find out more about the Park by using our website and interpretive materials. Although the Park is man-made, it still presents us with a rich range of flora and fauna. There are over a dozen different habitats to explore and these change with the seasons. The new boardwalk opens an opportunity to enjoy the Dragonfly Pond and to enter the Nature Reserve more easily.

David Taylor, Editor (da.taylor@btinternet.com)

Boardwalk Project Completed

This is another success story for the Friends in collaboration with Bedford Borough Council. In June, we approved the plans for a boardwalk and viewing platform to be located off the main bridleway. Once approval had been received from the local authority and the Environment Agency, the project went out to tender. Peter Hall started work at the end of September and the job now nears completion (mid-December).

The idea behind the boardwalk is to provide year-round, dry access to Dragonfly Pond and its reed beds. Previous access has been severely affected by flooding during the winter.



Dragonfly Pond was created by volunteers shortly after the site was designated a Country Park. The vegetation we see today has evolved from nothing to its present state over a period of 30 years. Although it has always been linked to the bridleway by a narrow path, this has been rarely used by visitors. Hopefully the new boardwalk will correct this situation and will allow all our visitors to observe the flora and fauna of the Dragonfly Pond in safety.



What's the point of the boardwalk?

The new facility will provide

- Access for disabled visitors to an interesting habitat;
- Improved access to the Dragonfly Pond for everyone;
- A new access to the Nature Reserve;
- Schools will have a safe pond dipping and viewing point;
- An all weather, all year round facility;
- An information point for both the Dragonfly Pond and the Nature Reserve.

A BIG THANK YOU TO:

- The HOCP volunteers who raised the bulk of the cash for the project through their efforts;
- Cllr Alison Foster for contributing to the cost from the local Ward Fund;
- Stuart O'Odell and colleagues at Borough Hall for authorising a grant from the Disabled Access Fund;
- Ed Burnett, Senior Green Space Officer for his enthusiastic support and guidance throughout the project;
- Peter Hall who cleared the site and built the Boardwalk to such a high standard.

Discover more about the Park by visiting www.hocp.co.uk

All the basic information about the Park is here: opening hours, parking, etc etc etc. But then, you already know all that stuff because you are reading this Newsletter which, presumably, you picked up in the Park!

If you want to see future copies of the Newsletter without coming to the park, you can find them on the website.
Just follow the steps below.



Step 1 Click on www.hocp.co.uk to open the website.

Step 2 Click on News & Gallery on the Main Menu bar.

Step 3 This will produce a drop-down menu. Click on **Archive** and then **Newsletters**.

If you do this and find the archive of past Newsletters, you have mastered how to explore our website and to discover more information .

So, to explore further (1) Look at the **Main Menu**; (2) click on a heading to produce (3) a **drop-down menu**; (4) click on a topic in the drop-down menu to explore the **topics**. You can also type the topic you want to find into the Search box bottom right of every screen.

Did You know ?

Fact Sheets

about aspects of the Park are available on our website for viewing, printing & downloading, including:

[Archaeology in the Park](#) - An outline of the Park's archaeological history.

[Coppicing](#) - Coppicing is a traditional method of woodland management.

[Cormorants](#) - The main lake in the Country Park is home to approximately 30 resident breeding pairs of cormorant that stay all year round.

[Crayfish](#) - lurking below the surface of the River Great Ouse as it runs through the Park is a deadly enemy, the American crayfish that has all but destroyed our native crayfish.

[Dragonflies](#) - "Dragons of HOCP" an article by Jaimie Barnes (in preparation). [New Oct 2014]

[Drowned Settlement](#) - Below the quiet waters of Grebe Lake lies evidence of ancient settlements.

[Hérons](#) - We have six or seven resident herons in the park but others pop in from time to time from other sites along the Ouse valley.

[Landscape & Geology](#) - An explanation of how geology has shaped the park over time.

[Otters](#) - We have otters who seem to visit the park each year.

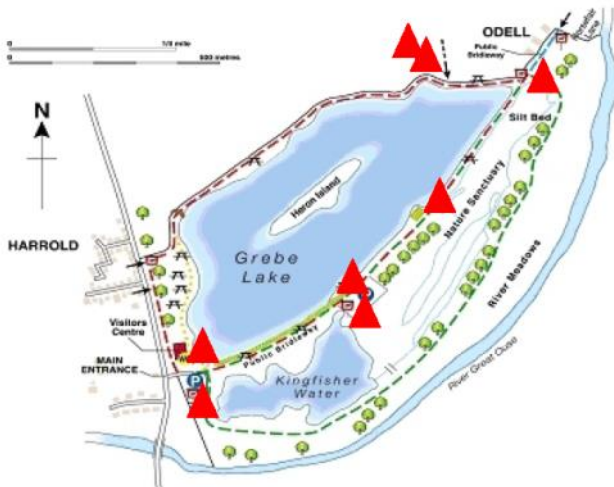
[Spiling](#) - Willow spiling is the most common and best known method for tackling the erosion of banks along the lake sides.

[Time Line](#) - A look back at the development of the site as a quarry and as a Country Park.

[Wassailing in the Park](#) - An account of the first 'Wassail' in the Country Park in January 2015 and the tradition behind it.

As you walk around the Park ...

... you will come across a series of information boards describing aspects of the environment, its past history, features, flora and fauna. Finding these provides an interesting and informative trail around the Park. Use the map below as your guide:



The boards have been erected by the Friends of HOCP and the Borough Council as part of a policy to provide a range of interpretive information to our visitors.

You will also find free illustrated brochures in the rack in the Visitors' Centre. These include:

[An Introduction to the Park](#)
[Guide to the Welcome Trail around the Park](#)

Did you know?

There's a Drowned Settlement under the quiet waters of Grebe Lake

There is evidence of settlement dating back to 3,000BC in this area of the Ouse valley. It includes Neolithic and Bronze Age burial and ritual monuments, Roman settlements and industrial sites. Archaeological investigations in the Park revealed settlements dating from the late Iron Age and Roman periods. The artefacts found were taken to Bedford museum and the site of the settlement now lies below Grebe Lake.



Shortly before the Roman Conquest in the 1st Century AD, a farm existed in the area of the Park marked with the red spot on the map. It consisted of a pair of roundhouses within a sub-rectangular enclosure about 40m wide. The enclosure was originally made up of a timber palisade fence but this was later replaced with ditches. The farm supported a family of about 15-20 people. Two Iron Age cremation cemeteries associated with this settlement were also found on the site.

Visit our website at www.hocp.co.uk to find out more.

Future Events in the Park

Health Walks



These take place on a Thursday every two weeks and are led by Janet Munro who is a trained leader and Park Ranger.

The walks are open to everyone looking for a healthy and sociable pastime. There is no need to book, just meet outside the Visitors' Centre at 10.30am.

"The person who invented Walking for Health deserves a medal. Joining my local group has given me the confidence to enjoy the wonderful green spaces that I didn't even know existed. I feel liberated!" Walker for Health participant

The next Health Walks will take place on 14th & 28th Jan, 11th & 25th Feb and 10th & 24th March 2016.

Friends' Task Days — These are held once a month and provide an excellent opportunity to sample what it is like to be a volunteer. They are also ideal for people who have limited time available in which to volunteer.

Task Days are led and supervised by Park Rangers who will provide the necessary kit and training. If you enjoy the experience, you may feel inclined to join a weekday group of volunteers on a regular basis. Alternatively you may wish to continue on a monthly basis.

Next Task Days: 25th Jan, 29th Feb and 21st March 2016.

In An Emergency

Emergencies can arise anywhere, whether as a result of a health problem or an accident. If you witness, or are involved in, any emergency in the Park:

Contact the emergency services without delay

Ring 999 from your mobile

If this is not possible you should:

Return to the café in the Visitors' Centre;

Tell the staff you need to ring 999;

Ask to use the café telephone.



**TripAdvisor
Certificate of Excellence
awarded to the Park for
2015**

**This is awarded to locations that consistently achieve
outstanding traveller reviews**

Contacting the Park Rangers

The Park Rangers have an office in the Visitors' Centre where they can be reached. However, as they can be deployed either in the Park or elsewhere in the Borough, the office may be closed.

Contact Richard Dowsett, Janet Munro and Nicky Monsey by
Telephone: 01234 720016 **Email:** hocp@bedford.gov.uk

The Bell at Odell



Walking in the Country Park?

A warm welcome awaits you at The Bell in Odell

Just walk through the park along the main bridleway on to Horsefair Lane and 150 yards along the road you will find us serving a fine selection of ales, wines and excellent food.

£1 VOUCHER

Redeemable against any food,
soft drink, tea and coffee.

Valid until 29th Feb 2016