



Rectory Farm Pocket Park Annual Report February 2018

We were very grateful to Joanna & Malcolm who hosted the PP AGM again on 4th February 2017. At this meeting, we decided to apply for an 'NCC Wellbeing Fund' grant to install a new section of path at the top end suitable for mobile buggies and pushchairs, to improve the drainage of the steeper sections of the paths and to install some steps up to the bus stop on the Wellingborough Rd. To support this bid, Keith launched a survey on the 12th, to gauge resident's opinions, on the PP Blog. On the 13th, Anne spotted the kingfisher fishing at the back of the pond and noticed the snowdrops coming up by the Notice Board which had been planted in the Autumn. On the 19th we had possibly the second sighting of a Little Egret by the stream.

After the sad loss of our new Neighbourhood Warden, Lesley Ingram, Nuala stepped in to help us at our Great British Spring Clean in March. 15 attended including 4 children. Lots of rubbish was cleared, a rampant rose bush was chopped down near the bottom of Cransley Walk and mud and leaves were cleared from the path. A muntjac deer had been spotted near the marsh in the morning.

At the April Work Party, the group split in two with Neil, Judith & Joanna continuing to clear the path down Cransley Walk while Anne planted 5 primroses at the Bridleways end, litter picked by the bridge & either side of the path, & Keith did some pruning & weeding. We submitted our application for the Wellbeing Fund on the 5th. On the 22nd the first Holly Blue butterfly was spotted.



In May, we had 2 groups working again with Neil, Vince & Denise trimming the bushes alongside the path at the bottom of Allard Close while Keith cleared a blockage of branches in the stream behind the pond & Judith &



Anne weeded around the seats, Notice Board & PP sign. Joanna took photos & passed messages between the groups. On the 8th we heard that our grant application had been successful and we were awarded £4,138.39 for the path renovation project. On the 19th Katherine Miskin from 'The Conservation Volunteers' in Bedford, came to finalize plans for the path project. After 5 days of rain, the problems were fairly evident! She said they had been working in little Billing Pocket Park doing a similar job.

On the 5th June, The Conservation Volunteers started work on the new section of path at the Bridleways end. 7 attended the Marsh Work Party on a warm day on the 10th, starting with litter picking down Cransley Walk, clearing a bit more of the path and then joining Dave to carry on trimming the bushes where we left off last month. Getting the waste collected afterwards proved to be quite a challenge.



Seven attended the Top Work Party in July. The first task was to clear sawn off branches from beside the old steep path. Rachel cleared the rubbish & nettles from the edge of the path and Brian trimmed the overhanging branches & helped Anne to clear the rubbish from near the fence. Neil trimmed the brambles which were encroaching onto the main path & Joanna took photos. In the middle of the month NBC surprised everyone by replacing the bridge to the right of the pond. Both sides are now enclosed & the base has been evened up with the path level on both sides.



For our family event in August, James Mcadie from Froglife led a Pond Dipping Workshop. There was some trepidation at 1pm when we had a hailstorm, but afterwards the sun came out and we had a glorious afternoon with 11 children & 16 adults attending. Remembering the success we had last time by the bridge, we started dipping there & found many dragonfly nymphs as well as pond skaters and hog lice. The Co-op kindly donated refreshments at their stall, manned by Michelle & Zoe. James had a plan to find funding to dredge the marsh,

hopefully in the Autumn or Winter. Later in the month, Anne spotted an Elephant Hawk Moth caterpillar crossing the path towards the marsh and a little egret by the pond dipping platform. At the end of the month the kingfisher appeared again by the pond and we requested a replacement dog bin to go by the pond.

At the Pond Work Party in September, a very cheerful group of 8 adults and 4 children trimmed overhanging branches around the pond, tidied up around the seats and topped up the wood chips underneath. Jackie also swept the steps leading to Hilberry Rise. Later the kingfisher was spotted being chased by a sparrow hawk out of the willow tree by the pond.



A group of 8 attended the Work Party in October including 2 children. Keith & Richard finished clearing a log jam in the stream at the back of the pond and then joined John to uncover the rest of the paving by the seats. There were several suggestions about how to use the area including having a picnic table - something to think about for future projects perhaps. Judith & Anne cleared the primrose bank of tree suckers & swept the steps & path leading to Hilberry Rise & Berrydale.

On 10th December we had the first significant snowfall for several years, which didn't last very long. The following day Anne spotted a Tree Creeper and a pair of Goldcrests on the oak tree avenue and on the 8th January Neil saw another little egret by the oak trees.

Most of the work on the paths has been completed although the path near the marsh still needs to have some weeds cleared from the edges. A lot has been achieved during 2017, with several new volunteers coming forward to help, but in spite of James Mcadie's enthusiasm to dredge part of the marsh, we have not had any positive response yet from NBC to set up a planning meeting to allow this project to go forward. We will continue this quest in 2018.

