

FRIENDS OF ASPIN POND WINTER NEWSLETTER



Another year over and a new one just begun. 2017 was a very busy and productive one for FOAP and I'm sure 2018 will prove very similar.

The new interpretation board was finally installed in March, a very colourful and informative addition to the pond site. It cost £3,000 and much of the money was raised through the Friends.



A magpost was installed in late Summer. This enables people, and particularly children, to look more closely at natural objects.

Events

The Big Lunch was another great success in early June. We were particularly pleased to welcome the new Mayor of Knaresborough, Coun David Goode and his wife. Teresa Marshall and her prickly friends were very popular, as usual.



The group's fundraising has proved very successful, with two Quiz Nights, becoming ever more popular and the Car Boot Sale on August Bank Holiday Monday raising more than £900. A huge thank you to all those who helped in any way with the events and to the local community for continuing to support us.

Our group's entry for the Christmas Tree Festival at St John's Church was entitled "Helping our Wildlife". I hope many of you managed to visit the festival. Our tree had some very inventive handmade decorations.



The Pond Site

Working parties have been held at least once a month. The group has managed the different areas of the site, including digging out grass from the bottom of the pond, otherwise it just takes over. We've also maintained the hedges, carried out weed control to reduce the number of thistles, nettles, buttercups and willow herb. It was an unexpected bonus to

discover the black plastic sheeting used on the south side for greater weed control proved to be a popular habitat for the Great Crested Newts and toads.

We are grateful to Sonia Starbuck for carrying out a survey of the flora at the site. Amazingly more than 88 different species were recorded. The group has continued to plant wildflowers and bluebells in 2017.



Some unexpected and unusual wildlife visitors have included a female broad bodied chaser dragonfly, a striking larva of an elephant hawk moth, at least five inches long and mullein larvae, munching on the mullein plants. The pond site is fortunate in attracting speckled wood, brimstone and holly blue butterflies, as well as plenty of red admirals.



The water levels last winter 2016/17 were much lower than they were the previous year, so the lower path was not under water. Hopefully there will be enough water this Winter and Spring to maintain a higher water level in 2018, as this will help with the development of the young newts.

History of the pond

Part of our fundraising activities has been to enable us to carry out further archaeological investigations, in order to discover if there was an ancient drainage system from the pond to Crag Top.

In April the group employed Kevin Cale, archaeologist and a team of volunteers, plus a small digger and driver to carry out six test pits. Unfortunately nothing was discovered. Further investigations in October, using geophysical surveying methods and a drone, have not proved anything conclusively as yet, so the true history of the pond and its uses still remain a mystery.

To conclude, many thanks again to all our supporters and a special thank you to our wonderful management team and Harrogate Borough Council for advice and practical help.

Hopefully the snowdrops will soon be appearing at Aspin Pond!

Best wishes for 2018.

Sue Kitching (Chair)

