



Skylarks

As we near the end of another year make sure you join us for the last of our events for 2006 (details below). From all on the Friends' committee we wish you a very merry Christmas and a happy New Year.

Winter Walk with the Canine Ramblers

The Canine Ramblers are a group of dog owners who go out approximately once a month on an organised walk together, visiting different country parks and other suitable venues.

The walks are usually no longer than four miles and are chosen with the dogs in mind, as well as the fitness of some handlers! We have dogs of all shapes and sizes and the only thing we insist on is that all dogs remain on a lead and under control for the duration of the walk and that owners clean up after their dogs. However the walks may be too long for young puppies unless they can be carried part way.

The aim of the group is to provide a variety of walks to interest dogs and their owners and provide socialisation for both dogs and owners! Also to promote good and responsible dog ownership and enjoy the countryside.

Several of us, are or have been through training at the Billericay Dog Training School and, earlier this year, supported the Dog Awareness Day held at the Wick Country Park. I decided then that the park would make a good venue for a walk for our group and of course any other dog owners or friends who would like to join us.

In conjunction with the Friends of the Wick Country Park we have organised a **Dog Walk on Saturday 2nd December, starting at 10.30am from the Pavilion**. We hope to have refreshments at the pavilion after the walk and I will donate some mince pies, as it is our last walk before Christmas. I normally ask for 50p per person for anyone walking with us, but on this occasion I only ask people to make a donation to the Wick Country Park towards the cost of the refreshments, etc.

PLEASE REMEMBER, KEEP DOGS ON A LEAD ON THE WALK AND CLEAN UP AFTER THEM

Gill Beck

For more information about the Canine Ramblers only please contact Gill Beck on 01268 459675.



Yuletide Ramble and AGM

Take a break from the Christmas shopping and enjoy a Yuletide ramble around the park on Sunday 10 December starting at the Pavilion at 2.30pm.

Then meet the Ranger and the present committee over a glass of mulled wine and a mince pie at the Annual General Meeting. All members are welcome to attend this short meeting.

Officers and committee members will be elected for the coming year and we would like to have more committee members. So if you would like to join the committee or nominate another member (with their permission) please forward names in advance to the Secretary, 14 Toppesfield Avenue, Wickford. You can also put forward nominations at the meeting.

The agenda for the AGM will be as follows:

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of last AGM – 4th Dec. 2005 (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

We look forward to meeting you.



Help needed

Can you spare an hour or two? Need some fresh air? Then come and join the last work party of the year on Sunday 17 December between 10am and 12noon and/or 1pm and 3pm. Possible jobs include tending and mulching the garden, planting in the lake and litter picking.

The Dragonfly Walk in August



The weather nearly washed us out, but not quite – a few turned up, and guess what the clouds parted, the sun came out and stayed out until we got back to the pavilion – when it started raining again. Good planning or just luck?

Our ranger is very knowledgeable and knew where to look – these creatures tend to be near water, and there was plenty of that. We were fortunate that the ranger was with us as he could spot the dragonflies and point them out to us.

There are two main types of dragonfly; the darters and the hawkers. Darters are fatter and shorter, and do what their name suggests, i.e. they ambush their prey. Hawkings are longer and thinner and tend to patrol up and down. Both are fierce hunters, prey on insects and can fly very fast.

Related to the dragonflies are the damselflies. These have thin bodies and are not so strong in flight.

The females (both species) lay their eggs in water; these hatch into beetle-like creatures called nymphs. These are also fierce hunters in the water, and will even attack tadpoles.

The nymphs have hard shells that they have to moult as they grow and eventually emerge as these beautiful flying creatures.

What a pleasant way to spend an hour or so on a Sunday afternoon and there were enough specimens of all varieties to make it interesting.

Maurice Sweetland

Web designer wanted

Could you design a website for The Friends of the Wick Country Park or do you know someone who might be interested? If so please contact Deborah on 01268 572732 or email dbelverstone@yahoo.co.uk

A message from Phil the Pill Box.

Hi! I'd like to introduce you to a friend of mine. His name is Ernest. I was actually built to guard his flank. I think I would have done a pretty good job (but really I'm glad I never had to!)

Like me he was built in the last century around 1940 as part of the 'GHQ Line' to protect London. His official name was Pill Box Fortress Type 28A, but he didn't like being a number anymore than I did so he chose the name Ernest. He said it made him feel grand!

He would have housed a 2-pounder gun and approximately 10 men with Bren Guns [heavy machine guns]. You can see two slots under and to either side of the main embrasure, which held the field gun legs.

Well a few weeks ago some men came to the park and looked us all over and guess what? It turns out that Ernest is pretty unique! I heard someone saying he may even be of national interest! So that would mean I would know someone who is famous! I'm really excited about that!

Well that's all from me for now but I'll let you if Ernest is going to be famous. Next time you are in the park why don't you pop in to see him. He's right beside the pavilion. Then you will be able to say you knew him *before* he was famous too!

Phil the pill box



Ernest the pill box – what a handsome chap!

Events

Basildon District Health Walks

Tuesdays 10.15am for 30 to 40 minutes. Meet in the car park. For info. call **01268 568528**

Canine Ramblers Dog Walk

Saturday 2 December
10.30am Meet at the Pavilion
Refreshments provided



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

Work Parties

*Third Sunday of each month
10am – 12noon and/or 1pm – 3pm*
Come and have fun and help the ranger with improvements to the park.

Yuletide Ramble & AGM

*Sunday 10 December
2.30pm – 4.30pm*
Take a wintry walk around the park and then warm up with mulled wine and mince pies in the Pavilion.

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 Belperstone - Chairperson
Nikki Gibson – Treasurer
Tricia Marshall - Secretary
Alison Sweetland
Maurice Sweetland
Allison Tanner

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