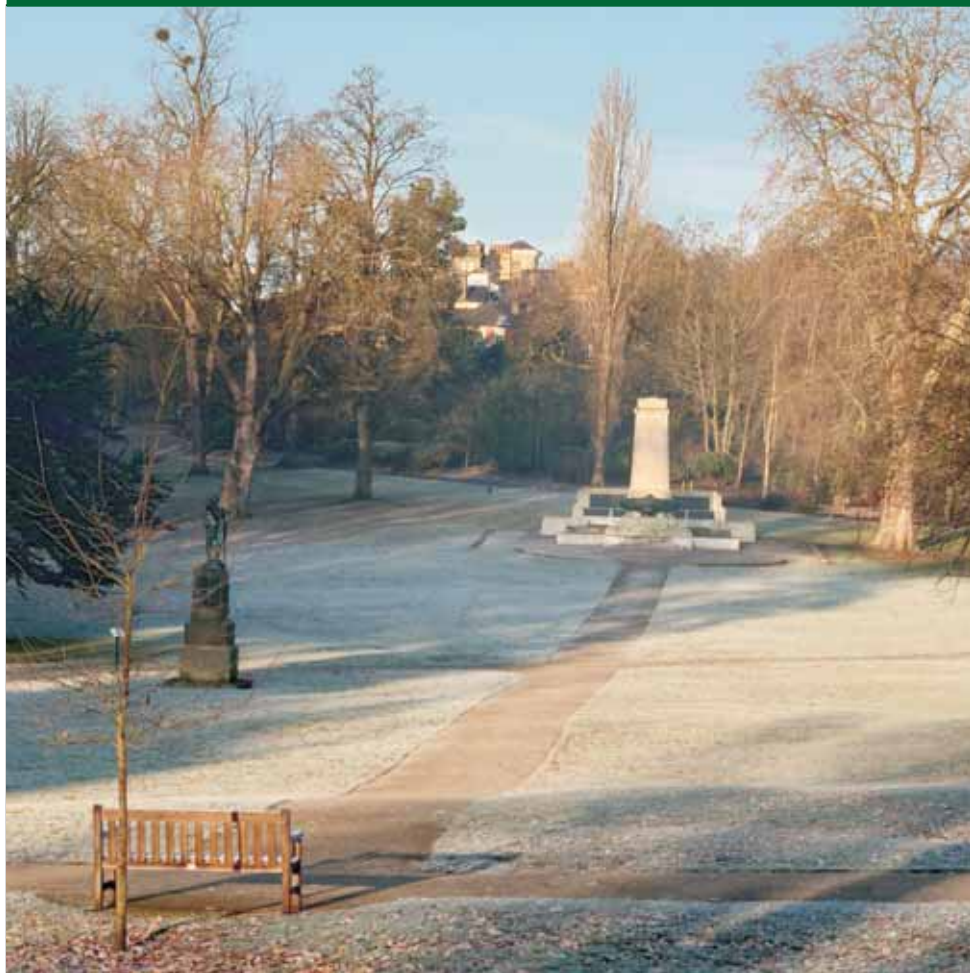




Winter Newsletter 2025



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Welcome

"The trumpet of a prophecy ! O wind, if Winter comes can Spring be far behind?" The poet Shelley's encouraging reminder is timely following, as it does, a period of sharp east winds and nights of frosty air when Nature seemed to hold her breath to allow ice to form.

As if anticipating the soon arrival of Spring the tone of this Winter newsletter is a looking forward to what lies ahead this year for the Park, and what we the Friends of Christchurch Park might be able to achieve in playing our part working with the IBC Parks Team towards the promotion and improvement of this unique preserve of wildlife and vegetation.



Our thanks to all those who have contributed to this issue.

Editor: John Woodcock

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Seale Print

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Within these pages there is a varied range of articles touching on the surprising variety of bird life to be seen, a highlighting of those individuals who have and are contributing to the onward direction of the life of the Park; there is information about forthcoming plans and scheduled events in which the Friends are involved, such as the full programme of Brass On The Grass concerts in the summer.

It is with sadness that I have to report the passing away of one of our most loyal and long standing supporters, David Routh; Rowell Bell has included a synopsis of the life of this colourful character in this newsletter.

I am also particularly pleased to report that an individual has come forward willing to take on the role of Chair of the Friends, a position (and identity!) that will be confirmed at the forthcoming AGM on 26th March to which event I would encourage all who can to come along and learn more of the progress and plans of the FoCP, relax and enjoy an absorbing talk



from our chosen speaker for this event, and share the refreshments provided.

As always, on behalf of the group, may I thank the Parks team at the Reg Driver Centre for their enthusiastic and dependable help and support.

John Woodcock

Vice Chairman – Friends of Christchurch Park



PROJECTS AND PLANS

By John Woodcock

As The Friends Of Christchurch Park it is at the heart of our commitment, and indeed set in our Constitution, to secure the preservation, protection, and improvement of Christchurch Park as a place of historic and ecological interest, beauty, tranquillity, rest and recreation. Consequently anything we can do to further these aims is our joy and fulfilment. I can report as follows.

The Butterfly Garden. Having been responsible for the cost of the re-planting of “butterfly friendly” shrubs, we also

raised funds and contributions for the siting of a replacement bench, and this is now in situ as illustrated here. A new Information Board is in preparation and will be installed imminently, also paid for by the Friends.

Memorial Bench in the Upper Arboretum.

A bench in honour of our loyal and late Member of the Friends David Routh is about to be installed in the Upper Arboretum, funded partly by Friends and partly from some of David's long standing friends. The bench is being made for us as always by Genesis Orwell Mencap.

Bird Walks. Philip Murphy has again agreed to lead a series of Bird Walks this

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year; please note details in the announcement in this newsletter. Philip's engaging and informative repartee during these walks make them a "must do" – even at 4.30 a.m. on the Dawn Chorus Walk!

Bat Walks. The Suffolk Bat Group are once again eager to stage two of these ever popular Bat Walks this September, dates to be announced in due course.

Looking ahead. We are in talks with the Parks Team about possible support of improvement in an area around the Wilderness Pond; also providing a bench facility near to the RDVC. Further news in due course.

Suggestions welcomed. The Friends would welcome for consideration constructive suggestions for further projects that would be of benefit to the Park.

John Woodcock

Vice Chairman
Friends of Christchurch Park





BRASS ON THE GRASS 2025

The Upper Arboretum just would not be the same in July and August without the stirring tones of a brass band and a delighted audience seated on chairs or blankets engaging with the distinctive live music being played.

Following the successful staging of six brass band events in the summer of 2024 by our dedicated and efficient organiser Roger Herbert the Friends are delighted to report that Roger has been able to arrange for seven bands to perform through July to early September this year. The dates and bands scheduled to perform are as set out below. We are as always deeply grateful to companies and individuals who have pledged their sponsorship, without which the performances would not be possible.

In addition, the Cambridge Citadel Band of the Salvation Army are performing a "one off" event on the 29th June, 2.30 pm, commencing at the Park Road entrance, playing and marching down to the Upper Arboretum

"bandstand" where play will continue.

All these band performances are free to attend. Do come along. 2.30 – 4.30 p.m Sunday afternoons as follows:-

20th July Martlesham Brass – sponsored by Woodcock & Son, Estate Agents.

27th July Colchester Band..... – sponsored by The Greyhound Inn, Henley Road.

3rd August Ipswich Hospital Band – sponsored by Scrutton Bland, Chartered Accountants.

10th August Castleton Brass – their own sponsorship.

17th August Suffolk Phoenix Band – sponsored by Coes of Norwich Road, Ipswich.

31st August Saints Community Band – likely sponsorship by The Ipswich Society.

7th September Woodbridge Excelsior Band – sponsored by Woodbridge Antiques.

by John Woodcock, Vice Chairman FoCP

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ON GAZING UPWARDS DURING THE PARK RUN...

By Reg Snook

The park run started on time but some runners were still making their way to the starting line. Some were still jogging along Westerfield Road. By the time the race (well it's not really a race except for those keen ones that had spent 10 minutes or so warming up) and the runners had reached the Cabmen's shelter, the park run was a quarter of a mile long. At this point the late-comers joined the race just behind the leading three (all three being towed over the tarmac by their canine companions – two labradors and a spritely springer spaniel). Most of the park runners were happy, some treating this major event as an opportunity to update each other on the past week's news. No one looked upwards except me, but then I wasn't running.

There were three birds overhead, two birds of prey and a large black bird. A common buzzard was circling above – a rather light phase buzzard, black carpal feathers showing distinctively on its white underwings. Also circling with the buzzard was a red kite easily distinguished by its forked tail. However, it was the third bird, also circling above the runners, that I was mostly interested in. It was a raven! Now ravens and I go back a long way, a very long way, well back to 1962. That's a long way isn't it? Over 60 long years ago but that's where it all started – the Tower of

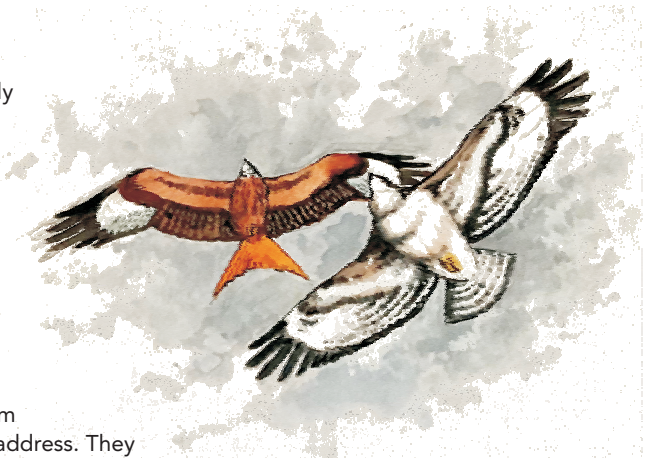


London. Of course, the finest regiment in the British army was on duty with one Guard at Buck Palace, another at Jimmy's Palace and my lot at the Tower. A smart lot we were with highly polished boots, scarlet tunic and well groomed bearskins (headdress). We were, of course, the Grenadier Guards, Queen's Company First Battalion, oh yes, very smart. Well, actually I didn't really want to be part of this very select band of men but I was called up for National Service – I had no choice!

Whenever we were on guard duty at the Tower, I took the opportunity to look after and study the Tower's ravens. I fed them, groomed them, sketched them and cleaned

their cages. The cages in my opinion were far too small. I really treated those black crows with care and compassion but you could never do enough to please ravens. They are intelligent birds but totally ungrateful. They did not like me! Having had their primary feathers clipped so that they did not wander off, made them more aggressive. Perhaps it was my scarlet tunic which made them disagreeable, or my bearskin headdress. They certainly chose to dislike my highly polished boots. Those large bills did extreme damage to my precious footwear.

Ever since those days I've had this love/hate relationship with ravens so, whilst the park runners were either being towed around our park by doggies or chatting amongst themselves as they ambled along by the Wilderness pond, I was gazing up at the lone raven which was trying to grab the tail feathers of the red kite. The kite wasn't happy, neither was the buzzard and the raven appeared to be extremely grumpy but then ravens are always grumpy. I don't think I've ever seen a raven that wasn't grumpy. Mind you, they are not a pretty bird are they? I have a friend who has ravens as pets and he swears that they are extremely good looking but then he is Welsh, he was brought up with ravens. When I was young I had a pet rabbit – he had a pet raven!



Slowly the two birds of prey gained height. Their circles became wider and wider and gradually the raven lost interest. As the other two birds got higher and higher so the raven glided lower. I lost sight of the large black bird when it disappeared over the arboretum. I don't suppose any other park runners bothered to look upwards and, if some of them did, would they have recognised these three large birds – but I did and what memories that large black one brought back. Oh, and by the way, the three runners being towed around the park by their pet dogs were the first three to come across the finishing line. The spaniel won by a short black and white head!



A Walk in the Park Part II

by Rowell Bell



When David Routh asked me if he must be dead before he got his bench, I assured David that it would be installed in time for this summer's Brass on the Grass Concerts. David died at 8pm on Saturday 8 February in the knowledge that his bench had been ordered and paid for, thanks to the generosity of good friends including the museum staff across the Street from David's home where he had lived since May 1964. The staff kept in touch with David; even when the museum was closed and the staff moved up to the Ipswich Art School Gallery adjacent but out of David's line of sight.

A correction on 'A Walk', published in the Autumn Newsletter. There was only one Tuppenny (1975-1987), who loved to travel in a carrier bag. Then along came Jacob the second Yorkie, who loved travelling in David's and Anne's car. After the Friends of Christchurch Park (FOCP) was founded in 1998 along came the third Yorkie called Toby who had his own Column in the early newsletters called "Toby Walks". I only go back to 2008, nothing before that. Sadly, after David's breakdown in 2012 saw him hospitalised, Toby had to be rehoused, and died in 2015. No more dogs, just their portraits. A friend wrote "David and Ken" (Lightfoot) "were two of the first people I met when I moved to Ipswich in 2001. They both

walked their dogs in the Park. They had many stories to tell."

Back to the founding of FOCP in 1998, David cheerfully recounted the time when, Mollie, a former Bond Girl, called "Pat", a nurse at Shrublands Park who looked after 007, Sean Connery, sat next to David on the FOCP Committee. (Incidentally, how many members saw Thunderball on TV last month?) No such luck for me at Committee, I sat between Ken and David, out-smarting one another on some unrelated topic over my head, until the meeting proper got underway. I recounted that out loud after Ken's funeral service July 2021 two veterans' voices behind me said as one: "David Routh". Ken and David could both be relied upon to be at FOCP events, ceremonies, and Green Flag awards.

Back to David's Bench and the Sound of Music. David was Compère at the Brass on the Grass summer concerts every year since they started in 2002, except for 2012 when he was in hospital, right up to Covid. I quote from yet another mutual friend: "I will remember David's characterful introductions Year In – Year Out at Brass on the Grass with Great Fondness".

David knew his music as he belonged to the Ted Heath Music Appreciation Society. And the Glenn Miller Appreciation Society, attending the annual August Bank Holiday Concerts at RAF Twinwood, Bedford where Glenn Miller took off and disappeared. The concerts were hosted by his nephew John Miller. So, no surprise that David's favourite Brass Band Music was 'The Great American Songbook'.

David had a way with the microphone, for example the weather forecast 29 July 2018 was so bad the ice cream van did not turn up and one young member of the band asked "What are we doing here", but with David's encouragement with "Those magnificent men and their flying machines" up, up, and away



we went; people attending the first time said that they would be back.

David, apart from his National Service, has lived in Ipswich all his life. He tried to get into the Royal Navy, having been in the Sea Cadets, but in 1947 they were getting rid of hands, so it was to be the Army until November 1949 then back to Bayley's Printers. David pretty much worked for and eventually became owner until it was dissolved during his illness in 2012, losing his job as well as his dog. However, David came back as Compère and Active Committee Member for FOCP. In my last article I named two other not-for-profit bodies of which David was a volunteer – make that at least Twenty and counting. Anne arranged a 65th birthday party for David 120 Guests, hopefully we will do him proud too. Mavis Lillian (Anne) Routh died 16 August 2020 aged 92, after a long and busy life.





What's On in Christchurch Park

www.friendsofchristchurchpark.co.uk

Bird Walks 2025

Sat 29th March at 8.30am

Meet at Reg Driver Centre in Christchurch Park

Sat 10th May at 4.30am Dawn Chorus

Meet at the top end of the bridleway

Sat 19th July at 8.30am

Meet at Reg Driver Centre in Christchurch Park

Sat 25th October at 8.30am

Meet at Reg Driver Centre in Christchurch Park

All events are free to join but booking is essential at Reg Driver Centre
Telephone 01473 433516



This poster was produced with support from The Friends of Christchurch Park



Bird Report

OCTOBER 2024 TO JANUARY 2025

By Philip Murphy

October

This month is renowned for observing visible bird migration. Notable sightings of birds moving between south and west over the park this month included eight Grey Herons in one group (2nd), c.100 Redwings (15th), c.50 Jackdaws (18th), c.450 Wood Pigeons (26th) and c.30 Fieldfares (30th).



Mandarin Duck totals varied between 15 and 29, and a pair was observed copulating on 26th. At first light on 7th, there were 47 Mallards on Round Pond, where they had presumably been throughout the night, before flying over to Wilderness Pond as the light increased. Four Little Grebes remained on Wilderness Pond throughout the month although a fifth bird was present on 30th. A flock of 27 Canada Geese flew in from the direction of Ipswich Docks and alighted on Wilderness Pond at 08.15 on 8th

A Raven which flew southwards over the Soane Street entrance on 12th joined a second Raven on the spire of St.Mary-le-Tower (now Ipswich Minster) where they were harassed very noisily by Carrion Crows before flying off northwards still pursued by their raucous, and much smaller, cousins.

After no reports of Kestrel over the park in 2023, it is encouraging that one of these small raptors was seen over the park on 17th. Two Sparrowhawks, also on 17th, included a food-begging juvenile which suggests that successful breeding occurred somewhere within the general vicinity of the park.

The above-average temperatures this month were presumably responsible for there being one of the site's Red-necked Terrapins out of the water on the fallen tree trunk at Wilderness Pond on 27th.



November

Prior to this month, the highest-recorded total of Mandarin Ducks on Wilderness Pond had been 36 on September 20th 2020; however, on November 8th at least 43 were counted at this site which is possibly the highest total ever recorded in Suffolk. At least 35 were still present on 12th after which, totals did not exceed 28 for the remainder of the month.

Up to four Cormorants had been roosting in the top of an oak tree on the main Wilderness Pond island in late October. However, following the fireworks display in the park on November 2nd, none was present at the roost site for the remainder of November and no more than two Cormorants were noted during daylight hours on either of the two main ponds.

Late in this month, six Little Grebes were on Wilderness Pond where other sightings included 45 Mallards (24th) and two Grey Herons (28th).

A particularly interesting sight on 3rd involved a Sparrowhawk pursuing a Woodcock low over the Lower Arboretum - the Woodcock successfully avoided its pursuer. What might have been the same Woodcock was flushed from the Wilderness Pond wood on 4th.

Three juvenile Moorhens on Round Pond had been first noted at this site when they were newly-hatched chicks on July 14th.



December

Totals of Mandarin Ducks on Wilderness Pond did not exceed 18 until late in the month when there were 28 on 29th increasing to 35 on 31st. On the latter date, two pairs were observed copulating and there was much chasing, posturing and shoving amongst the males.

Additional reports from Wilderness Pond included one, and sometimes two, Grey Herons and up to six Little Grebes. On some occasions, there were no Canada Geese on the Pond but 15 flew in from the south at 08.45 on 29th. Cormorants had been conspicuous solely by their absence since the fireworks display on November 2nd but one was back on Wilderness on 31st.

A Woodcock was flushed from the Bridleway on 10th and a Common Buzzard flew low westwards on 31st being mobbed by up to 15 Magpies. A Tawny Owl was heard calling in the Wilderness Pond woodland early on 10th with a second bird responding from the direction of the Upper Arboretum.

Resumption of Mistle Thrush song was noted on 6th at the north end of the park. Another Mistle Thrush vigorously defended the clumps of mistletoe growing on the trees immediately west of the Mansion throughout November and December.



January

The fallen tree trunk on Wilderness Pond has been a feature of this site for several years and much-used by ducks, geese, gulls and Cormorants. However, it has been noted recently that, perhaps as the wood has rotted still further, it is now much lower in the water.

As in January 2024, freezing conditions this month resulted in an influx of Mandarin Ducks to the unfrozen northern end of Wilderness Pond with as many as 40 being present on 12th. Three days later, with only about 20% of the pond being frozen as a thaw set in, only 23 of these distinctive ducks could be located.

Early in the month, there were several days when no Canada Geese were present on Wilderness Pond. However, by 19th an obvious male/female pair was present and on 30th four pairs were noted. Also on Wilderness Pond, up to three pairs of Little Grebes were present throughout the month and Mallard totals peaked at 50 on 19th.



The most notable passerine * report involved a Firecrest in the Holm Oaks adjacent to the tennis courts, 18th. The year's first report of a Grey Wagtail was on 14th, and it is encouraging to report three sightings of single Treecreepers. A Great Spotted Woodpecker was drumming at the north end of the park on 29th. By the month's end, there were two singing Song Thrushes in the vicinity of Wilderness Pond and the Mistle Thrush remained defending its territory amongst the clumps of mistletoe in the trees immediately west of the Mansion.

With many thanks to Brian Macdonald and Mark Dowling for their contributions to this article.

Editor's Note – "Passerine" - 'Denoting birds of a large order distinguished by having feet that are suited to perching including all songbirds'

MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

Corporate Members include

Christchurch Dental
Christchurch Solicitors LLP
Gilmour Piper and Associates
Hightop Window Cleaners
Ipswich and Suffolk Club
Ipswich Jaffa
Ipswich School

Kerseys Solicitors
Scrutton Bland
The Cobbold Family History Trust
The Greyhound Inn
W.D. Coe Ltd
Woodbridge Antiques
Woodcock and Son Estate Agent

Individual and family members

We are pleased to report that numbers of new members have joined through the year, and membership of the Friends including Lifetime Members stands at over 300 currently.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Annual Subscriptions from Members are now due, £10 for each Member or household, £25 for Corporates. Please note the Membership Form towards the end of this newsletter.

Please note: Members who have only paid £5 subscription will not in future receive a posted copy of the Newsletter.

If you would like to become a Life Member of the Friends this involves a single payment of £100, payment details are on the form mentioned.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 26th MARCH

The AGM of the Friends of Christchurch Park will be held in the Reg Driver Centre at 7 pm. Please join us to hear updates and summaries of the work of the Friends. We are delighted to be able to welcome this year Erica Burrows, an engaging and accomplished speaker, of the Ipswich Institute and former Chair of Ipswich Museum; Erica is also a guide at Christchurch Mansion.



10 Questions for Billy Cole, Parks Manager



The Friends of Christchurch Park work closely with the IBC's Parks Team and I was keen to meet and discover more about Billy Cole, recently appointed Parks Manager who took the position left vacant by Nigel Campbell who returned to Scotland. I found Billy engagingly outgoing and delighted to share his love of the Park and sense of privilege in his involvement.

1. What is your job position?

My official title is Parks Manager (West).

2. What does the job involve?

The job is multi-faceted; my work involves other IBC parks and areas for which they are responsible, but as to Christchurch Park essentially I promote the development of the Park, help oversee the maintenance, and aim to improve the visitor experience.

3. How long have you worked for the IBC Parks team?

I actually started working for the IBC in 2002 doing casual labouring for them here and at other IBC locations including Whitton, Whitehouse, and Gainsborough. After an interlude during which I trained and practised as a teacher in order to use my Honours Degree in Fine Art, I then had an opportunity to re-join the IBC with their garden re-development team including working at Chantry Park and in school grounds. I started my position here at the RDVC in July 2024.

4. How do you see your role developing as you move ahead?

I am very committed to restoration works and planting schemes; I want to champion the protection of veteran trees in the Park where root protection is vital for the well being of the trees. Also to improve and enhance the visual aesthetics of the Park.

5. What are the principal challenges ahead where you want to be most effective?

Adapting within the Park to the changing climate and associated weather extremes is the big challenge. Balancing the priorities of the "broad church" of Park users is important; for example we have dog walkers, those who focus on music events, park runners etc. I want to ensure that we get all to fit in and share the space responsibly.

6. What is your favourite area of the Park?

I love the approach from the Soane Street entrance; the views of the Mansion and the Round Pond that come into focus as I walk up the path there give a vivid sense of the sheer vastness of space offered by the Park.

7. What are your hobbies?

I am an amateur cook and find this very relaxing, also reading cookbooks and trying out recipes. I like to keep up with fine art exhibitions. A real favourite is the weekly Sunday Times supplement with its abundance of interesting information!

8. What is your favourite book or film?

Arthur C. Clarke's books and associated "Space Odyssey" films.

9. If you could meet one person from the past or present who would they be?

Andy Goldsworthy; he is a famous sculptor, photographer, and author known for his passion for sculptures in parks, land, and gardens using materials that are natural and consistent with the environment.

10. How would you describe yourself?

Someone who is dedicated, trustworthy, a man of my word; fair, and approachable; committed to achieving what is realistically possible.

by John Woodcock, Vice Chairman FoCP

