



Spring Newsletter

April 2012



Dear Friends

Welcome to our Spring Newsletter where we have summarised some of the recent activities of our Friends Group, some future plans which we think are pretty exciting, and an information page on the Phytophthora disease in the Park.

Firstly, you may have noticed that much of the industrial looking **overhead power cabling** above



the car park has disappeared. This is thanks to Western Power and the Council who agreed with the Friends

Group proposal to lay these underground, thereby significantly improving this area of the Park.

Our four **Sunday Workdays** so far this year have included coppicing, clearing out the stream alongside the old gardeners shed and halting erosion of the banks, clearing the overgrown footpath and rockery opposite the summer house, and adding drainage and top-coat to the



footpath heading left as you enter the Park. This builds on the excellent winter work of the volunteers and Council in re-opening the loop path at the top of the Park which now has the first new bridge in the Park for over 20 years! We will be continuing our work during the summer months, so if you can spare only a couple of hours on the odd Sunday afternoon to add something lasting to our local Park then please come and join us.

Future Workdays, 2-4pm, Sundays:
13th May, 17th June, 15th July, 26th August

Annual General Meeting
Wednesday 27th June 2012
7pm, Lisvane Old School, Lisvane

We hope you will be able to attend our AGM this year. Top of the bill will be the Council Principal Landscape Officer who has very kindly agreed to tell our members the fascinating history of the Park. A crowd of 30 or so enjoyed the historic walk she did last summer (after which even the children present were asking her to repeat it for their class mates) so this time it is indoors – with historic photos!

Formal notice of amendment to the Constitution
At the AGM we would also like you to approve a minor formality amendment to our legal Constitution so that members and our treasurer have more time to re-arrange membership fees around the anniversary date. Details are on our website for members unable to attend the meeting.

New Treasurer: We recently welcomed Rob Blacklidge to the Committee who has immediately taken over as Treasurer from the founding Treasurer Bill Vaughn. On behalf of all members we would like to thank Bill for his great contribution in helping getting us started. Members will like Rob, as he has already recommended no change to the £5 household membership fee for 2012/13!

On the topic of **membership**, you will be interested to know that in less than 2 years since our inception we now have nearly 100 household memberships. This means we have a very strong voice when working with neighbouring landowners, the Council, and grant funding bodies. Many many thanks to all of you who have supported the Friends in this way. Please spread the word to friends and neighbours! Our thanks also go to both Lisvane Community Council and Community Association who also continue to support our efforts.



Volunteers wanted: Since the Park is so popular at all times of the year with photographers, we would like to start a Photographic competition for Members. Our Ranger, Alec, runs the Council photography workshops and has agreed to assist and provide judges. However, we would need a member to volunteer to run the competition for us. Is there anyone with an interest in photography who can assist ?

The Committee are also asking if any members might help deliver membership advertising leaflets in their local street/area.

If you would like to volunteer for either of these roles please email: friendsofcefnonn@talktalk.net

Appended to this Newsletter you will find a summary of the latest update from the Council Parks Dept and DEFRA on the control and eradication of **the plant disease** present in the Park, ie *Phytophthora ramorum*, commonly known as *Sudden Oak Death*. The Better Woodlands for Wales' team is currently working in the upper park removing affected trees/shrubs and continuing to generally open up the area allowing greater air/wind movement depriving the disease of the cosy damp environment it enjoys.

We would also like to bring to your attention the **free Botanical Walk** our member Peter Kent is leading on Saturday 28th April (10:00 – 1:00) in the Park. Peter is an immense source of arboro knowledge and has planned it very thoughtfully. You will be surprised at how rare some of the trees and plants are in Cefn Onn!



The 'exciting' news is that following the successful completion of the new spine path through the Park last year we have been provisionally awarded an additional grant to improve the appearance of the Park entrance over the next 12 months. Taking into account many views received from our membership we have developed plans for the gateway, entrance field, car park, and underpass. The Committee is in the final stages of agreeing the costings with the grantees and are seeking the required permissions from the Council, Network Rail and Ministry of Transport. Hopefully work will be underway by the summer. We will provide you with more detail as we get it on the regularly updated News section of our website – please take a look whenever you have the time to see what we are planning.

Springtime and rhododendrons are what Parc Cefn Onn is famous for so, despite battling the disease, we are looking forward to the next couple of months in bloom 2012. With the help of you, the Friends Group members, long may it continue . . .



We hope to see you on 27th June for the AGM, Sue Williams and Gareth Thomas
Hon. Secretary & Chairman

Website: www.friendsofcefnonn.org.uk
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***Phytophthora ramorum* in Parc Cefn Onn – Spring 2012**

Many of our membership and Park visitors have been asking what the situation is in relation to the control and eradication of the plant disease present in the park.



Phytophthora ramorum, commonly known as *Sudden Oak Death*, is an officially notifiable disease which affects a wide range of plants, in particular *Rhododendron*, *Camellias*, *Viburnums*, *Pieris* and *Larch*, all of which grow in Cefn Onn. The record of infected plants shows: 2 in 2004, 9 in 2005, 1 in 2006, 22 in 2007 and 9 in 2008. The biggest concern was whether the infection would spread from the *Rhododendron* and other shrubs to ornamental trees. Unfortunately, this became a reality in 2008 when a *Sequoia sempervirens* tree became infected and had to be felled.

The Council removed all infected plants immediately they were discovered but the infections persisted, despite their quick actions.

Phytophthora ramorum causes leaf lesions and branch dieback in several rhododendron species. Stems with stem blight develop a brown to black discoloration. Usually the discoloration starts at the tip of the twig and moves towards the base. However, the disease can also start at any other part of the stem and move upwards, downwards, or into the leaves. Dieback may extend into the main stems and result in plant death. Leaf infection can occur with and without prior twig infection. In leaves infected from a twig infection via the petiole, necrosis is often concentrated along the prominent midvein. Leaves infected without prior twig infection can show distinct leaf spots on any part of the leaf surface. Roots do not seem to become infected, but *P. ramorum* may still be present in the soil.



In 2008/9 and 2009/10 Cardiff Council implemented the Better Woodland for Wales' programme, principally in the lower park, by removing Rhododendrons (mainly of ponticum parentage). Other species have been crown lifted – raised off the woodland floor. This pro-active work has been very successful as the Park had been infection free for just over three years.

We in the Friends Group had hoped that this infection free window of three years would give the Council the confidence to start reinvesting in new plants. Unfortunately the disease was found in some re-growth of previously infected plants during routine inspections by DEFRA in autumn 2011. Immediate action was taken by the Council to remove it. This infection is very limited and DEFRA are apparently of the opinion that the management plan is working and without it, the plant life in the park would, by now, be decimated!

The Council's disease management plan for the Park continues and a number of plants in the upper historic part of the park are currently being removed. Therefore, it will be a few years before the all-clear. Officially the Park is the subject of a DEFRA plant disease containment order and so warning signs must be displayed and a shoe washing facility is available in the car park area. The reason for this is that people and animals can transfer the disease through contact with infected plants and spread this to other plants both within the Park and in their gardens. You may have noticed that the Council regularly remove and occasionally prop up low hanging parts of many plants in the Park to help reduce the chances of contact with the ground and wild or domestic animals.

Further information on the disease management programme and *Phytophthora* can be found on the Cardiff Council website at:

http://www.cardiff.gov.uk/content.asp?nav=2868%2C4407%2C4413&parent_directory_id=2865&id=8900