



Spring/Summer 2017 Newsletter

Hello all members of the Friends of Parc Cefn Onn. Spring has arrived in this tranquil little corner of Cardiff and the early rhododendrons are brightening up the Park and 'life' is re-awakening after the winter. As a result of the coppicing and plant disease control measures that we and the Council have undertaken over the last couple of years, we are also seeing the best display of bluebells in the Park (possibly ever!). Hopefully they will continue to spread so that we can enjoy them even more each year. There has been a lot going on over the last six months and will certainly be more during the year ahead; you will be able to read the highlights in this Newsletter. We really do appreciate the continued support of all members and we hope you think the Friends are making Park improvements that will benefit both our and future generations.



National Heritage Lottery Grant!!!

Parc Cefn Onn wins Heritage Lottery Fund Support (15 July 2016)

The Grade 2 listed historic Country Park in north Cardiff has been awarded a £459,000 grant by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

The most significant event in the past five decades for Cefn Onn was the announcement in July 2016 that the Council's application to the Heritage Lottery Fund to refurbish significant parts of the upper Park and improve accessibility for all had been successful. Plans and designs have been completed.

Now it's time to get going!

So what happens next?

Cardiff Council will put up signs and plans of the works as things progress so keep an eye on our website and noticeboard.

In general it will involve:

Phase 1: The first activity will be to upgrade the existing office and toilet block situated in the car park entrance and include an education room and garage space for disability transportation. Note that the toilets will be out of use for a wee while.



Phase 2: De-silting the top pond and higher silt-trap of several tonnes of silt that have accumulated over the years since this was last carried out. The collapsing pond banks will also be fixed.

Phase 3: Planting in the rockery area and upgrading of footpaths in top section.

Phase 4: New walkway to be built into top field from top pond area.

Phase 5: Continue path refurbishment and restoration of historic summer house.



Design for refurbished front office

Cardiff Cabinet Member, Cllr Bob Derbyshire, said:
“I’m delighted that the Heritage Lottery Fund has chosen to support this fantastic project. I must pay tribute to all the partners who have worked so closely with us to bring the project to this point, including the Friends of Parc Cefn Onn”

Expressing his delight with the news in the Echo, Gareth Thomas, Chairman of **the Friends of Parc Cefn Onn**, said: *“The innovative and all-inclusive nature of the proposed work will really emphasise the historical and peaceful aspects of the Park. We are really looking forward to continuing to work with the Council to put these exciting plans into practice to help restore and improve this much loved Welsh Country Park. Diolch yn fawr Cardiff Council and Heritage Lottery!”*

Lower pond project

The Friends are involved in the upgrade of the heavily silted Lower Pond and surrounding area. We plan to turn it into an inviting area of ecological and educational interest. We have completed a detailed environmental survey and have plans for cleaning out and re-shaping the pond, stabilising the banks and streams into it, and providing a viewing platform. We are trying to find funds for the total lower pond project as this is not part of the Heritage Lottery grant award.

Flowers & Seasons in the Park

It is always great to see the seasons changing in Cefn Onn. We are now seeing Spring colour in the Park with



Rhododendrons and Camellias in flower, several of the Cherry trees in bloom, and daffodils and crocus are dotted all around the Park.

Fornosan Cherry



Membership fees this year are unchanged yet again for 2017 at only £5 per household. Please invite friends and family to become members. We cannot do the work we do without a strong membership and support. For all membership and joining details (including PayPal subscriptions and donations) please see our website.

Website news

Due to hacking (not of the bramble-clearing variety), we were unable to update our website in any way during most of 2016. A new Friends member with skills in this area has recently joined us and we are very grateful and pleased to say that all is up and running again. Please see our website for Park information, past newsletters, and regular Park [News](#) updates.

Dog mess

Many will have noticed the recent Westminster debate led by MP Anne Main on this issue. BBC Link <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-39254072>



Friends of Parc Cefn Onn have long tried to balance the needs of dog walkers and other users of the Park when it comes to dog mess. Members may have seen the recent Forestry Commission-backed campaign for dog walkers to use a "stick and flick" the mess off the pathway and into the undergrowth, or cover it with leaves. However this is not a solution for Cefn Onn as it is not countryside, illegal, and, due to its compact nature, all 'undergrowth' areas are used by children who love to explore and hide in the hedges, bushes,

trees, and streams. We continue to promote considerate use of the Park by everyone - including picking up and binning dog mess. We will be working with Cardiff City Council on use of the Park as part of the Heritage Lottery project (article above). Please 'bag & and bin'.

Phytophthora plant disease

The sad news is that the fungus-like plant disease, Phytophthora Ramorum, was found in the Park again during 2016. The disease had been in remission for a few years but is now a common feature of western parts of the UK, and South Wales is particularly badly affected. It causes extensive damage and, without significant plant management, can kill a wide range of trees and other plants.



Spores can be spread by wind, wind borne mists and water courses, and the movement of infected plants and contaminated soil. Phytophthora Ramorum can also be spread on footwear, dogs' paws, vehicle and bicycle wheels, tools, equipment etc.



Since it was first discovered a number of years ago in Cefn Onn, the Council has recommended simple precautions such as cleaning footwear, tools, vehicles and clothing to prevent further spread out of the Park to our own gardens and other areas. By following these simple precautions, you will be helping to prevent the avoidable spread of this disease. Don't take any vegetation (sticks, plants, flowers, soil, etc) as infected material will spread the disease.

Sometimes referred to in Britain as 'Larch tree disease' and 'Japanese larch disease', *Phytophthora Ramorum* infects the leaves and shoots of ornamental shrubs such as *Rhododendron*, *Viburnum*, *Pieris* and *Camellia*. Although it does not usually kill these plants, infected leaves can generate many spores. Typical symptoms on *Rhododendron* include leaf-blackening, wilted shoots and die-back. The progress of the disease can be so rapid that shoots wilt and the leaves hang down. Infected plant material is cut back and destroyed on site. A government official responsible for monitoring the disease in the UK has commented to the Friends that without the Council's plant management programme over the last 6 or 7 years Cefn Onn 'would be a desert by now'.

Lower Pond Beastie Bench – the mystery unravels a little more

Love it or hate it, this bench is often a talking point. As part of our lower pond regeneration work, members and Park visitors have been helping us find out a bit more about it and its history. Sadly a fire in 2002 at a Cardiff Council storage office destroyed many of the records relating to the Park. We believe the bench is related to the nine carved brick Beastie Benches found in Cardiff Bay, created by South Wales 'Queen of Brick sculpture' Gwen Heeney. The Beasties were inspired by Dylan Thomas' poem '*The Ballad of the Long-Legged Bait*'.... We are informed that our bench was created by a student of Gwen's in the 1990s who now lives and works in Germany. Using the internet we hope to be able to get in touch with her to see if we can find out and record the inspiration for its particular design. We also have some leads that the bricks may have been made by a north Walian or Bristolian company and so it may be possible to restore some of the damage on the arms. If you have any further insights we'd love to hear about them.



Tree labelling

We are fortunate at Parc Cefn Onn that due to the foresight of Ernest Prosser (the first owner of Parc Cefn Onn), his Head Gardener Tom Jenkins, and previous Park Officers of the Council, the Park contains wonderful variety of trees that are both British natives and specimens from around the World. A number of them are very rare too. During 2016 the Friends undertook the task of labelling 34 of trees within the lower park. The labels detail the country of origin, Latin name and common name. Some of the trees identified are also "Champion Trees"; which indicates that they are the oldest,

tallest or rarest trees within Wales or the UK. We have been able to undertake this work as a result of the extensive knowledge of Friends member Peter Kent and generous contributions from Lisvane Community Association and CJS Electrical in Lisvane. The trees labelled range from the *Fitzroya cupressoides*, the Patagonian Cypress (named after Robert Fitzroy the captain of the *Beagle*), to *Acer capilipes* (the snake-bark Maple which has decorative bark in Winter and autumn colours of yellow, orange and red).



The Friends will be producing a booklet containing a map and detailing the labelled trees. It is hoped that this will help visitors to learn more about the variety of trees growing within the Park and encourage visitors to explore and see if they can find them.

We hope to continue with the identification and labelling of trees growing in the upper park during 2017/18. This work will be undertaken in conjunction with the improvement works being carried out as part of the Heritage Lottery Grant.

GB Champion tree *Acer laxiflorum* can be seen here on the Cardiff Parks website:

<http://www.cardiffparks.org.uk/trees/cefnonn/acer-laxiflorum.php>

Explore: Did you know that the tallest tree in Cardiff is in Cefn Onn? Can you find it?

Grants and donations

During 2016 we were very grateful to be selected by Waitrose to have a box in store which customers could put a green counter to indicate their charity preference for a share of £1000. As a result a cheque of over £350 was presented to the Friends at our recent workday. Thanks Waitrose!



Council cuts

We reported in 2015 that we were concerned over Cardiff Council proposals for a significant budget cut and ‘remodelling’ of the Park Ranger Service. Our Committee and other Friends Groups in Cardiff lobbied the Council on the basis that we were not saying that Cardiff’s green spaces are necessarily more important than other Council services, just that they and their benefits to the environment, health, education, heritage, tourism, community, etc, must receive a fair hearing. Our representations were fairly well received and levels of proposed cuts reduced. However UK central government austerity means further cuts are ahead and we continue to monitor Council proposals for coping with these.

Green Flag award: We were very pleased to be able to assist the Council in the retention of the Green Flag award for Cefn Onn for the 4th year running. Green Flag awards are equivalent to Blue Flag awards for beaches and recognise and reward the best green spaces in the country.



The Friends would like to thank the following for their tremendous support last year:

Lisvane Community Association – which was 50 years old in 2016. Believe it or not, Friend’s committee and founding member and Lisvane Community Councillor, Alan Prosper, was also a founding member of the LCA all those years ago!

All members who provide feedback by speaking to Committee Members, emails, website and Facebook on the direction your Committee is taking. Please keep them coming. Eg. Ideas for the top field.

Welcome all **new members** who joined us over the last year.

All volunteers and 6th Form Welsh Baccalaureate volunteers who have joined our Workdays.

Morrisons store in Llanishen for hosting our stall in August.

Derek Jones has validated our accounts for the past 6 years, but very sadly died in late 2016,

Alec Stewart, our Park Ranger, for his enthusiasm, support, hard work and laughs.

Wildlife

This year we will be carrying out surveys of usage of the bat boxes we installed in 2015.



Workday highlights Volunteers and our Park Rangers continue to meet one Sunday per month in the Park and it is wonderful to see the progress and enjoyment from a group of people working together. Over the autumn/ winter we have:

- Cleaned mural depicting the history of Cefn Onn in the underpass.
- Clearing debris from the three streams and cut back invasive plant growth.
- Cut back brambles to allow the bluebells to grow and spread.
- Rebuilding paths and enlarging the parking area.
- At the October 2016 workday an energetic afternoon was spent raking up the scythed long grass in the front field. Our Park Ranger, Alec, explained that the Council let the grass grow to reduce the thatch and encourage wild flowers and insects. When the grass is scythed grass, seeds germinate increasing the flowers and providing food for birds.

Sunday WORKDAYS 2017

14th May
18th June
16th July
20th August
17th September
22nd October
12th November
3rd December

Further workday details at
www.friendsofcefnonn.org.uk



Some 2017 events for your diary (always see the noticeboard and our website for latest)

Cefn Onn Spring Walk – Saturday 6th May (10:00 – 13:00) 3km guided walk to the top of the Ridgeway. Meet in the car park.

Friends Annual general meeting and presentation: Thursday 6th July, Old School, Lisvane, (19:00 – 20:00).

Cefn Onn Bat Walk – Saturday 9th September (20:00 – 21:30) – 2km guided walk around the Park to discover feeding bats. Bring a torch. Meet in the car park.

North Cardiff Ridgeway Walk (From Cefn Onn to Taff's Well) - Saturday 14th. Bring train fare for return journey to Lisvane Station. October (10:00 – 16:00) – 11km guided walk. Meet in the car park.

Friends of Parc Cefn Onn: *“Working with the Council to protect, conserve, restore, and improve the Park for future generations”*.