

Friends of the Avon New Cut Newsletter 28 – Summer 2017



FrANC

Friends of the Avon New Cut

Welcome to our Summer 2017 Newsletter, which contains a round-up of our activities so far this year and those planned for the months ahead.

Forthcoming Events

Botanical Walk around the New Cut on Sunday 25th June

This walk will start from Gaol Ferry Bridge (Coronation Road side) at 10:00am and will last around 1½ hours. The walk will be led by Richard Bland from the Bristol Naturalists' Society and will focus on the various trees and plants that can be found along Coronation Road between Gaol Ferry Bridge and Vauxhall Bridge. If time permits, the plant life along the Harbour Railway rail track will also be studied during the return to Gaol Ferry Bridge via the Chocolate Path. A small fee of £2 per person will be charged as a contribution to FrANC funds.

Tour of Thomas Ware & Sons Tannery on Tuesday 4th July

The Clift House Tannery on Coronation Road was purchased by Thomas Ware & Sons Ltd. in 1876 and remains the biggest of the traditional leather tanneries. This tour, starting at 6:00pm and lasting around 2 hours, will include a history of the tannery and an explanation of the tanning process. A fee of £2 per person will again be charged as a donation to a charity supported by the tannery. The number of places available on the tour will be limited, so you can book yours by contacting [Derek Hughes](mailto:derekwhughes@btinternet.com) on 01179 544 888 or by emailing him at derekwhughes@btinternet.com. The closing date for bookings is **Saturday 1st July**. In the event of the tour being oversubscribed you will be notified by email whether or not you have a place, so please ensure that we have your correct contact details.

Big Butterfly Count 2017

Butterfly Conservation will again be running this annual nationwide event from



Friday 14th July to Sunday 6th August.

As a contribution to this, FrANC will be organising another survey of Butterfly Junction, as has been done during the past three years.

There has been a nationwide decline in the butterfly and moth population over the past few years, which to some extent has been reflected in the results of the surveys conducted at Butterfly Junction. However, with the construction of the MetroBus route adjacent to Butterfly Junction now nearing completion, the significant reduction in butterfly-friendly habitat that this has produced around the old A-Bond tobacco warehouse is now also evident. It will therefore be interesting to see whether the trends observed over the past few years are repeated this year.

Further details on how to participate in the 2017 survey will be distributed in early July.

Other Walking Events

We are also planning to organise two additional walks later in the year, probably to be held some time during October:

- a **Bedminster/Southville Colliery Site Walk** that will trace the area's coal mining heritage. This will be a daytime walk and members U3A (University of the Third Age) and CLASS (Continued Learning at South Street) will also be invited to take part.
- a **Tributaries of the New Cut Walk**, to be led by Stephen Mason, which will primarily follow the course of the Malago river.

Further information concerning each of the above walks will be made available at a later date.

Previous Walks and Talks

FrANC's contribution to this year's *Bristol Walk Fest*, held during May, was a walk entitled "*Exploring the Cumberland Basin*". We are indebted to our very own Ed Hall, who not only conceived this walk but also led it four times between 4th – 25th May. The walk attracted a total of 43 people (plus one baby) and was well-received by those who took part. Starting at *The Cottage Inn*, the walk progressed through the Underfall Yard, along the Cumberland Basin and around the western tip of Spike Island, before terminating at Vauxhall Bridge via The Create Centre, Butterfly Junction and the Chocolate Path. Along the way, Ed explained how the creation of the Floating Harbour over 200 years ago was necessary to ensure Bristol's future as a major trading port, how the Cumberland Basin lock system operates and the role of the New Cut. Ed also provided some interesting nuggets of historical information, such as what is now *The Pump House* pub/restaurant having once been used as an abattoir !

The photographs below were taken on the walks held on 4th and 25th May:



Clean-up News

As is usual during the start of the year, we organised four 2-hour riverbank clean-ups along the New Cut between January and April. Our thanks go to the 53 FrANC volunteers who took part. Between them, they managed to clock up 186 volunteer hours of litter-picking! Special mention must be given to Cynthia Palmer, Rachel Sellers, Dave Ward and the FrANC Chair, Sara Worth, who managed to attend all four clean-up sessions.

We also owe a big "thank-you" to Bristol City Council for their timely collection of all the rubbish bags that we left stacked on the pavement – which often happened on the same day that the clean-up took place.

It's not often that members of Avon and Somerset Police Armed Response Unit attend one of our clean-ups, but this happened on 22nd April when one of our volunteers discovered what appeared to be a discarded gun on the York Road riverbank (see below) !



The police were called and within minutes two police cars appeared, complete with sirens and flashing blue lights. After being examined by the firearms officers, the weapon fortunately turned out to be a replica and was then taken away by the attending officers for disposal.



Ashton Avenue Bridge re-opens

Those of you who have used Ashton Avenue Bridge in the past will have noted that it has now re-opened after a lengthy refurbishment by VolkerLaser. The bridge will form part of the MetroBus route from Ashton Vale to Temple Meads/Bristol City Centre and now features a separate single guided bus lane and a widened cycleway/footpath.



Photo: Sara Worth

Local Councillors and community leaders became the first to walk across the bridge when it was officially opened on 31st May. FrANC were pleased to be invited to take part in this event and were represented by three Committee Members – Sara Worth, Tess Green and Margaret Fay.

Before work began on the bridge it was in a very bad condition with signs of structural instability, so it is gratifying that this iconic landmark has now been saved. VolkerLaser are to be congratulated on a job well done.

Other News

The FrANC Chair and Secretary helped to run the Bristol Parks Forum's stand at this year's Festival of Nature, which was held at the Bristol Harbourside during the weekend of 10th – 11th June. Leaflets were distributed publicising FrANC's activities and walks.

We loaned the Dame Emily Park Project our litter-pickers, protective gloves and refuse bags for a clean-up of the park in May.

We will be updating the FrANC Membership List within the next couple of months, and will be asking all FrANC members to confirm that they want to remain on our email contact list.

You can find up to date information on all our activities by visiting www.franc.org.uk.

“Protect our Parks” Petition

Bristol's parks and green spaces are important to its citizens and to their health and wellbeing. The Avon New Cut is one of these green spaces, having been officially recognised as a Local Nature Reserve in 2015.

FrANC is a member of the Bristol Parks Forum (BPF), currently the only “community voice” that is dedicated to all of Bristol's green spaces. BPF works with Bristol City Council to ensure that our parks and green spaces are well looked after and helps local “Friends of...” groups enhance the green spaces they represent.

Faced with the need to make significant budget cuts, the City Council are proposing that their Parks Service should operate on a “cost neutral” basis from April 2019 onwards. This means that they will stop funding parks – a budget cut of £4.5 million annually.

BPF believes that, while a significant increase in income can be achieved, having well-maintained parks operating on a cost neutral basis within the next two years is simply not possible. BPF have therefore drawn up a “Protect our Parks” Petition, which calls upon the City Council to withdraw their proposed budget plan and work with BPF and others to develop a realistic alternative.

If you would like to sign this online petition, you can do so via a link on the BPF website - www.bristolparksforum.org.uk.

And finally.....

Huge congratulations to one of the founder members of FrANC, **Ben Barker**, who was awarded an MBE in the recent Queen's Birthday Honours List for “services to the community in Greater Bedminster, Bristol”.

Well done, Ben – your MBE is richly deserved!

