Park Dates for your Diary

A selection of the forth-coming events planned. More details of these and others can be found on the Park’s website and “What’s On” leaflet from the office. Ring the office on 02380 899108 if booking required. Parking charges apply to all events.

**May Café Special**
Two from specials board for £11

**Half Term Trail**
Sat 28 May to Sun 5 Jun
10am to 3pm daily £2 per child

**Pond Dipping**
Tues 31 May 10am to 3pm
Free event run by Friends of Lepe

**June Café Special**
Strawberries & Cream

**Lepe into Action**
Wed 1 Jun 10am to 4pm
Free event. Donations welcome

**Remembering D-Day Guided Walk**
Fri 3 Jun 1:30pm to 3:30pm
£6 pp (add £3.95 for Cream Tea)

**Home Front Heritage Weekend**
Sat 25 & Sun 26 June from 10am
See page 4 for pricing and further information

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**New Build at Lepe** from Stuart

The next evening event in the classroom will be a talk, given by Laura Hurdley, Senior Project Manager and Martin Hallum, Design Manager who will outline the programme and development of the new office and café complex due to be built later this year. See page 4. This is free to Friends of Lepe and will give you an opportunity to see how the park will progress. Please come and join us for the evening where refreshments will be available.

Our 10th Annual General Meeting will be held prior to the talk. Only members and invited guests can attend. Doors open at 6.30 pm and the short AGM starts at 7.00 pm. Anyone wishing to raise an item for the agenda, or who wishes to stand for the committee, must notify their intention in writing to the Secretary (Dave Laurence at Lepe Country Park or email laurence2@tinyworld.co.uk) by Wed 8th June 2016.

**New Forest Ponies** from Stuart

The last of our autumn/winter events was held on Wednesday 16th March where around 20 Friends were entertained and educated about the lives of the New Forest Ponies with an illustrated talk given by Suzanne Kemp, a pony owner herself. Their history goes back 2000 years and all are owned by commoners though, as you know, they are wild and roam freely and number some 3,000 across the Forest. Round ups occur twice a year where the ponies are given a health check and at this time are branded and their tails cut to identify which of the 5 regions of the Forest they belong. It also signifies proof of payment to the Agisters of the marking fees. They are highly sought after and sold both to UK and European owners and exported in the latter case. The talk was well received and we thank Suzanne for her time.
Park Dates for your Diary
(cont’d)

Remembering D-Day Guided Walk
Sat 25 & Sun 26 June 2pm
£6 per person

July Café Special
Take Away Bucket & Spade meals

Sandy Toes Story Walk
Mon 25 Jul 2pm to 3pm
£3.50 per child. Booking essential

Summer Holiday Nature Detectives
Tues 26 Jul 1pm to 3pm also see Aug
£4 per child. Booking essential

Butterfly Walk
Wed 27 Jul 11am to 1pm
£8 per person. Booking essential

Seashore Discovery Trail
Thurs 28 Jul 10am to Noon
£4 per child. Booking essential

August Café Special
Beach Bus ticket Free Ice Cream

Summer Holiday Nature Detectives
Tues 2, 16, 23 & 30 Aug 1pm to 3pm
£4 per child. Booking essential

Covert Operations
Wed 3 Aug 10am to Noon
£4 per child. Booking essential

Dragons & Damsels
Thurs 4 Aug 10am to Noon
£4 per child. Booking essential

Marine Wonders
Tues 9 & Wed 10 Aug 10am to 4pm
Free event. Donations welcome

Orienteering
Thurs 18 Aug 10am to 11am
£4 per child. Booking essential

Bat Walks for Families
Tues 23 & Thurs 25 Aug 7:30pm to 9pm
£6 Adults, £5 Children. Booking essential

September Café Special
Two stamps on Loyalty Card per visit

Bat Walks for Adults
Thurs 1 Sept 7:30pm to 9pm
£6 Adults. Booking essential

Pond Update from Heather

Now spring is progressing the Lepe Nature Reserve Pond is just emerging from its winter rest. Certain non-native plants still need to be removed before they start to grow too much. Sadly, no sightings of frog spawn again this year, we can only assume that the pond’s newts are predating any spawn, or the Lepe frogs have found better accommodation. The daffodils have put on a fine display around the perimeter this year. There will be a pond dipping session for children on Tuesday, 31st May.

Sensory Garden Project from Chris & Heather

Many of you may have seen, during the past few months that an area beyond the classroom has been cleared to make way for a Sensory Garden. Lepe rangers and the Volunteer working party of the Friends of Lepe have done all of this work. Dave Laurence has designed and drawn up the master plan although several changes have been made due to fresh ideas or natural features emerging following the clearance. You can ask to see plans in the office.

Mixed hedges have been planted, consisting of Hazel, Hawthorn, Dog Rose and Viburnums and a Beech hedge surrounding the inner core of the garden to match the original hedging that has matured into trees over the years. Hurdle fences are now waiting to be fitted after the digging of many postholes! A seating area has been levelled and gravelled and sound and water pipes have been installed along with trunking for electrical cabling for future water features. Work is also progressing on a shelter where the old greenhouse used to be. This exciting project is being funded mainly by the Friends. We are also looking for an old shed that still remains useable, around the 6’ x 4’ size would be ideal, also old worn out garden implements.

As you can guess this is a very exciting project and hopefully will be another point of interest for visitors to Lepe Country Park to enjoy.
**Chris’s Corner** from Senior Ranger Swatty

We’ve had a very slow start to Spring, April was cold and wet and we were having problems with our top car park in particular regarding the ground conditions. However, it seemed to change overnight that someone flicked a switch and spring swung into action! The clearance work that was being done over the winter is starting to ‘green up’ in spectacular fashion! Please take the time to have a wander around the conservation area on your next visit, the daffodils may have abated but the bluebells are looking amazing! The wildflower meadows are slowly coming back too - we should have a full colour display in the next few weeks which is well worth seeing. We’re also now starting to see the Lepe staff team taking shape with three new additions in the last month. Tom Major (Assistant Ranger), Laura Cox (Visitor Services Assistant) and Beth Joyce (Heritage Project Officer) have now joined the team. Please say hello to them if you see them working around the park.

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**Introductions & Goodbye**

**Tom’s Introduction** - I have just returned from six months in Thailand researching venomous snake habitat use and movement patterns, focusing on green pit vipers. In Thailand I led educational activities for groups of Thai schoolchildren and found a real zeal for education. The teaching element of my job at Lepe really excites me as I have very fond memories of pond dipping and looking for creatures in the woods as a child, and I remember the influence they had on me. At university I studied BSc Geography at Plymouth before completing a masters in Applied Ecology at Exeter University. I am eager to put my knowledge to good use at Lepe, and gain practical experience in habitat management and surveying in these beautiful surrounds. I am excited to work alongside my colleagues and the volunteers at the park, and look forward to learning a great deal.

**Laura’s Introduction** - I have just started as Visitor Services Assistant. I have joined the team from Manor Farm Country Park, although some of you may be aware that I have worked at Lepe previously and I am really excited to be working in this great place again. I will be based in the park office, which will now be open 9-5 Thursday-Monday, and I hope some of you will get the chance to pop in say hi if your passing!

**Beth’s Introduction** - I have joined the Lepe team taking over from Nia as the Project Officer for the ROC Monitoring Post. I am working part time with the project at Lepe as well as working for Southampton Arts & Heritage and the museum services there. I have quite a varied work/study background from banking to archaeology and history, managing museums and teaching and outreach. I look forward to meeting the friends team hopefully in the near future.

**Goodbye** - Adam Owen, the Park manager left at the end of March to move to Cornwall. Lucky man! Whilst it’s sad to loose him he’s left a lasting legacy with the work he’s initiated at Lepe. Anna Bedford has been appointed as Interim Park Manager.

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**Friends of Lepe Clothing** from Sue

After recent good sales we’ve again replenished our stock and now have all sizes for sale. If you’d like to support the Friends by wearing our smart logo’d clothing please contact Lepe staff or preferably

Sue Laurence at slaurence@talktalk.net or 01425 839354.

We’ve managed to retain prices at our 2013 level: Reversible Jacket £28;
Home Front Heritage weekend from Anna

Lepe Country Park are supporting the local Fawley community Home Front Heritage Weekend on 25 & 26th June 2016. Join us at Lepe classroom for an exhibition displaying the various roles Lepe played in the run up to D-Day. You will also be able to explore the wider role across the New Forest National Park. Joining us over the weekend will be the Solent Overlord Military Club providing a static display of vehicles in the back fields of the park. Guided walks will be on offer as well as a children’s D-Day heritage trail around the park. See prices below.

The Friends of Lepe will be supporting the event with their tea tent, outside the classroom making it the main venue for the weekend & will provide visitors with an opportunity to relax and soak up Lepe’s heritage. The café team are putting on a special wartime menu & we hope to be joined by some live, local music groups to provide entertainment to visitors.

If anybody would like to get involved & help set up or support the exhibition/weekend it will be great to hear from you - we’ll need all hands on deck, so please get in touch with Anna on 02380 899108 or email anna.bedford@hants.gov.uk - a huge thank you already to Heather Lowe, Alison Steele & Howard Moore for their work researching for our exhibition.

The exhibition is free, guided D-Day walk (2pm - 4pm) £6 per person booking on the Lepe website https://www.hants.gov.uk/shop/home.php?cat=335

Children’s trail £2 per child - no booking required.

Nature Watch by Jane

Throughout the year especially after heavy weather we frequently find articles on the beach such as this. It’s a boat mooring float almost entirely covered with Goose barnacles. These fairly fragile looking white shelled creatures live on fleshy stalks attached to their anchorage, which can be ropes, bottles, drifting timber or as here a boat float. The animal feeds by sending out a curved fan which ‘nets’ its food, but don’t survive long out of water.

AGM & Lepe’s Transformation Project from Laura

I’m the Project Manager for the transformation project at Lepe. The project not only includes the fabulous new build we’re planning, but also managing how we transform the rest of the park including the car parks, play, trails and interpretation. I’m based in Winchester most of the time, but you can usually find me at Lepe on Wednesdays and more often as the project progresses. I’m in constant contact with Anna and the team around how things are progressing too. I’ll be attending your AGM in July to provide you with a more detailed update but here are the key milestones we’re working with at the moment.

May 2016 - Submit planning application
June - September 2016 - Interpretation and Signage experts working with the team
July 2016 - Planning decision due
October 2016 - Construction to start on site
May-September 2017 - Play and Trails developed
August 2017 - Interpretation plan implemented
October 2017 - Construction to be completed on site
December 2017 - New build ready to open to the public

As with all projects these dates are subject to change, but they’re what we’re aiming for at the moment. I look forward to meeting more of you as the project progresses, in the meantime if you have any questions or suggestions about the project please let Dave know at Lepe Country Park or laurence2@tinyworld.co.uk so he can collate them and pass to me.
Clean for the Queen from Marshy

Back in March, to coincide with the National Campaign, Lepe held a 3 day Clean for the Queen Event. The idea behind the event was to get community areas, schools and local business cleaned up throughout the country in aid of the Queen’s 90th birthday. Across England thousands of volunteers took to the streets, beaches and countryside armed with litter pickers, bin bags and dog poo bags!

In my joint role for HCC and New Forest National Park Authority (NPA) I joined forces with NFDC and organised a 3 day clean up event at Lepe. As with all community events I felt it was really important that people should understand the reasons why we were doing this, and what legacy could be derived from it. Issues such as - Where does all the litter come from (visitors or marine litter being washed up)? How does litter impact on our marine life? Why should we protect our Oceans? all needed to be explored and explained. So rather than the event being just a 3 day litter pick there was a need to provide an educational aspect to it as well and record and categorize all that we found. This was inevitably quite labour intensive. However with the invaluable support of the Friends, Staff from both HCC and NPA and input from visitors to the park we were able to make the event a real success in both cleaning up the Park and getting our “Caring for Our Environment” message across to children and adults. Working from the Western Car Park on the Friday, covering the Central Section of the Park on Saturday, and culminating in the far D-Day End on Sunday a total of 71 collectors bagged and weighed a staggering 193 Kgs of rubbish as well as collecting large pieces of driftwood, concrete blocks, pallets and large plastic containers too big to be bagged up.

The bulk of the rubbish was various types of plastics from bottles to straws and toys , with glass then rope which included fishing lines, twine and netting being high on the list and dog mess (a lot already picked up, put into bags then thrown into the bushes!), coming in 4th. This was consistent with finds across other clean ups on coastal sites.

A huge thank you to all those who took part and participated in any way to support the event here at Lepe (especially those who kept us constantly supplied with cake and refreshments!) and hopefully we can keep working to minimise the litter found around our special Country Park.

Litter by weight
47% General (other plastics, wrappers, etc.)
21% Glass
12% Rope
11% Dog faeces
7% Plastic bottles
1% Cans
1% Paper & Card

Upcoming Friends Events (see front page for details)

Posh BBQ & Boules - a fun time with a lovely BBQ and drinks to ease the evening away. We’ve increased the price a bit as we were putting on a special spread supplied by Debbie from the Lepe Cafe to celebrate the 10th year of the Friends of Lepe Country Park. Plan to come to meet other Friends, enjoy time chatting and, if you wish, play Boules.

Membership renewal from Dave
If you know of anyone that claims not to have received our Newsletter or any communication please remind them this is because their annual subscription was due on 1st January 2016
Dog Fun Day from Marshy

In April, again with joint partnership working with the NPA, Lepe held a Dog Fun Day which attracted a large number of visitors to the Park, both human and canine. Throughout the National Park dog walkers often feel targeted when Organisations run Ground Nesting Bird Workshops, highlight dog attacks on deer and ponies or talk about Dog Mess in our Countryside and this often has a negative impact when trying to engage with them. We need to find a way to work positively with these visitors and so the aim of the event was to promote responsible dog ownership and encourage visitors to enjoy their dogs whilst still protecting our special habitats. This event consisted of a Dog Show, agility and dance demonstrations, distraction alley, have a go activities, microchipping by a local vet, a couple of stands from local businesses, the NPA Mobile Information Unit plus of course our Friends refreshment tent. Dog walkers bring in valuable income to our Park and the fact that their dogs are allowed access to our seashore in certain places is a reason many keep coming back. By actively encouraging dogs to the site we can get these important conversations going. In response to the event we had over 90 dogs take part in the dog shows, had approximately 400 visitors to the site and raised nearly £100 in donations for the Friends. This event was certainly very positive and one which would be good to repeat next year. Again thanks to the Volunteers who helped make it such a successful day.

Friends Calendar (from Jane & Dave) Anyone that believes they have an easily recognised iconic photo of Lepe and its environs would they please send a copy to Dave Laurence at Lepe Country Park or laurence2@tinyworld.co.uk if as an attachment to email for collation to pass to the selection panel towards the end of July.

Posh BBQ & Boules Registration Form - Wed 29th June 2016

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Send to Dave Laurence, Lepe Country Park, Lepe, Exbury, Southampton, SO45 1AD