

A festive welcome at Dams to Darnley



The Barrhead Dams are a great location for a winter walk.

Welcome to our sixth edition of Wagtail, the newsletter and events calendar for Dams to Darnley Country Park.

Inside you will find:

- Autumn events lookback
- History feature on Darnley Mill
- Information on the Living Water project
- Routes to the country park
- Spotlight on the willow tree
- Winter events calendar

Our next edition will be out in spring 2010.

Autumn antics



FOOD FOR FREE WAS THE theme for our first guided walk of the autumn as we discovered some of the edible nuts, berries, leaves and fungi you can find in the country park.

A rather wet and windy International Peace Day saw eight brave souls attend our peace in the park event; a guided walk followed by a Tai Chi taster session around the shore of Balgray Reservoir. The poor weather continued for our photo walking event on 3 October, but some great images were taken.

Autumn is a good time

for creating artwork and those who attended our Big Draw event created some spectacular images using leaves, twigs and other natural items found in the country park woodlands.

The first of our volunteer days in the park was a great success – see our story on ‘getting our grasslands in ‘strim’ condition’.

Balgray Reservoir was the location for our third fishing event, this time John and Martin from the Scottish Federation for Course Angling demonstrated a variety of course fishing techniques and tips.

Getting grasslands in ‘strim’ condition

OVER THE LAST FEW MONTHS VISITORS TO THE country park might have noticed teams of people cutting and raking the grasslands around Darnley. It might seem like a strange thing to do in the name of biodiversity, but removing vegetation is needed to allow wild flowers to grow up again next year.

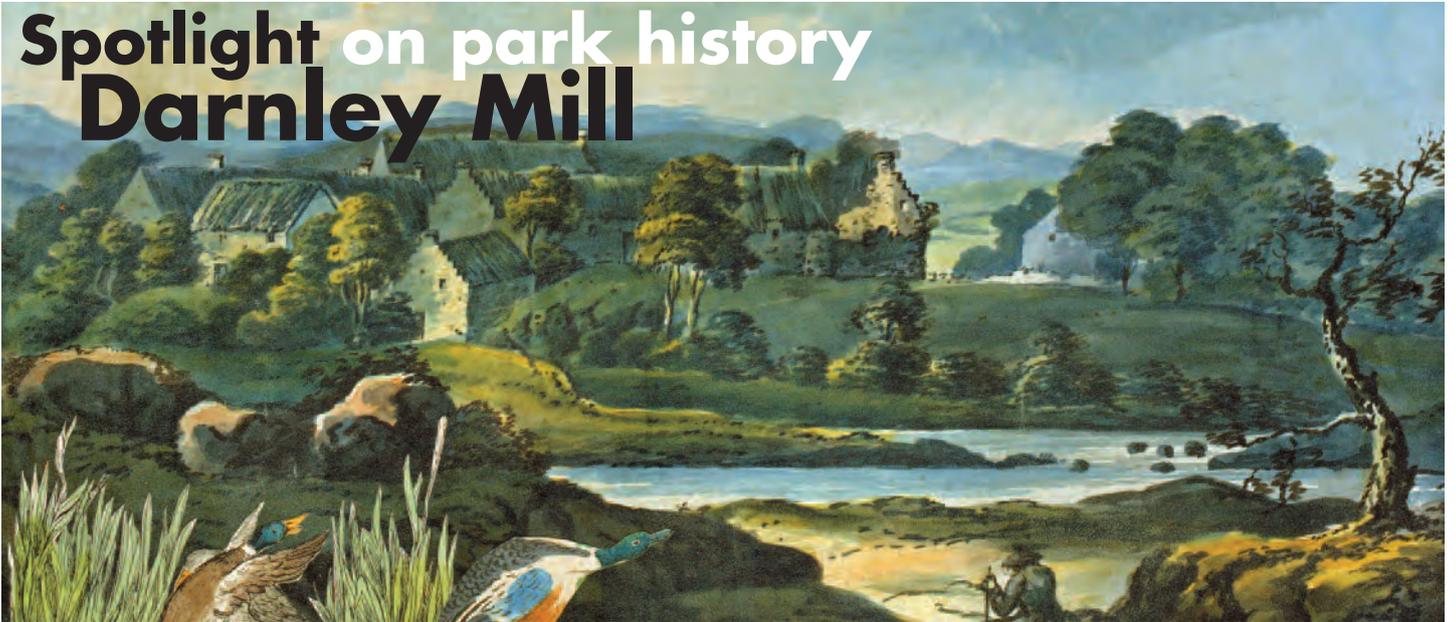
The meadows are strimmed at the end of the growing season, the cuttings are then raked off to stop the nutrients going back into the soil. Grasses thrive in high nutrient soils, outcompeting many wild flowers like primrose, greater birds foot trefoil, yellow rattle and butterfly orchid. Maintaining the grasslands in this way allows a greater diversity of wild flowers and habitat structure, which in turn supports a greater range of insects and other wildlife.

Thanks to everyone who took part in the day in the country park, as well as the squads from Scottish Wildlife Trust and BTCV (British Trust for Conservation Volunteers) who have also been strimming and raking the area.

Everyone’s help is greatly appreciated and all the effort will be rewarded next spring and summer with a glorious display of wild flowers.

Spotlight on park history

Darnley Mill



Painting commissioned by the Maxwell family c.1830. (c) Courtesy of RCAHMS Licensor www.rcahms.gov.uk

THE WATERCOLOUR OF DARNLEY MILL FARM above (c.1830s) shows a group of buildings on the banks of the Brock Burn. Two of them, a cottage and the mill, now form the Ashoka restaurant, off Nitshill Road. The painting, by an unknown artist, is one of a series commissioned by the Maxwells of Pollock showing views across their estate.

There have been buildings on the site of the cottage since the fifteenth century. There is a theory it was also the location of a tower house (Darnley Castle) but no evidence has been found to support this.

The name Darnley appears in the earliest records of the area, but the first reference to the mill is not from a map, but from a document entitled 'Gift under the Privy Seal to Robert Lord Semple, of the nonentry mails of Cruikston, etc.' dating from December 10 1553.

It begins: Ane Lettre maid to Robert Lord Symple, his airis and assignais ane or ma of the gift of the nonentres, males, fermes, proffittis, and dewities, of all and hale the hundredth pund land of auld extent of Cruikistoun, Crukisfew, Neilstoun, Neilstounside...the myln of Dernly ...the Manis of Darnly. (Gardner 1890 in Speller and Taylor 1996, 7)

John Ainslie's Map of the County of Renfrew (1800) is the first map that shows the location of Darnley (or Darnlie) Mill. The lade which was used to power the water wheel can still be seen today as a trench running parallel to Corselet Road.

Over the next two centuries layouts were altered within the complex, extensions added replacing earlier features and several elements were demolished. Today the remaining mill and cottage are Category B listed by Historic Scotland.

Living water project at Darnley Mill

AN EXCITING NEW project has arrived in Glasgow to help promote and protect some very important habitats for biodiversity. Darnley Mill is one of fourteen locations chosen by Glasgow City Council where the Living Water project will work to create and improve ponds. The project is being run by Amphibian and Reptile Conservation and aims to preserve the aquatic habitats that are crucial for frogs, toads and many other creatures.

Project officer Eilidh Spence said: "The project will improve pond networks and encourage local communities to become involved."

Volunteers will be required in the future to assist with a variety of work at Darnley Mill ranging from digging ponds to recording the species present. The countryside rangers will work alongside the project to help achieve the best possible results at Darnley Mill, which is a wonderful habitat for the charming common frog.

Support for the Living Water project has been provided by the Heritage Lottery Fund and Biffaward. The work is in partnership with Glasgow City Council.

For more information or to volunteer contact **Eilidh.Spence@arc-trust.org** or visit **www.arc-trust.org**



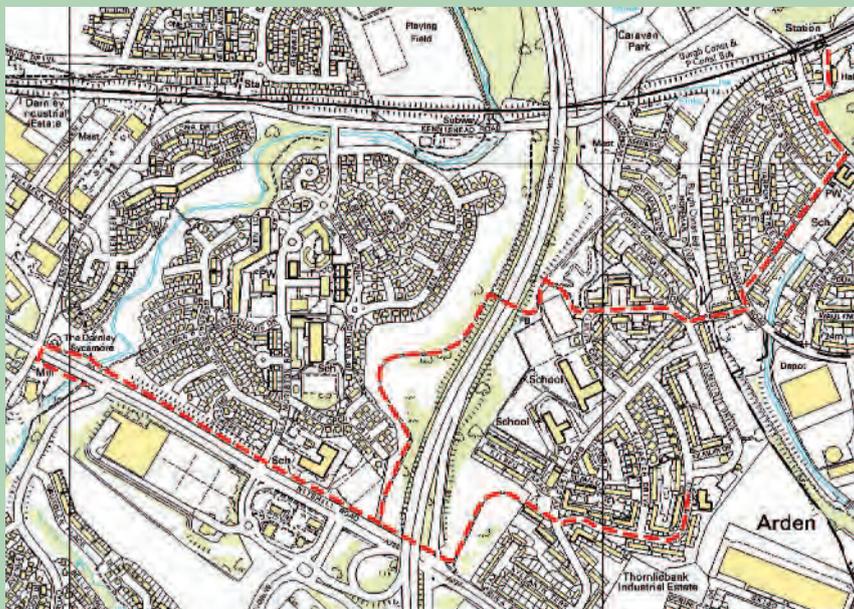
The common frog found across the country park, courtesy of ARC.

Report any problems

Report any fly-tipping, graffiti or antisocial behaviour to the countryside rangers Richard 0141 577 4053 or Eilidh 0141 577 4054. Or outwith office hours to Clean Glasgow 0800 027 7027 or East Renfrewshire Ring and Report 0800 013 0076.

Getting to Darnley to Arden is a walk in the park

THE COUNTRY PARK, WHICH COVERS most of the greenspace between Barrhead, Newton Mearns and Darnley, is only a short walk away. In this edition of *Wagtail* we look at routes to the country park from Kennishead Train Station and Arden Community Hall.



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From Kennishead Train Station

(1½ miles to the country park) 40-45mins.

From the train station turn left onto Boydstone Road and walk for approximately 125m before turning right onto Hopeman Street.

At the end cross over the road, turning left and then immediately right onto Hopeman Road. Continue along Hopeman Road for about 120m, then take a right onto Kilmuir Crescent and continue until you reach the play area. Follow the path around the play park and walk over the M77 bridge. Turn left and follow the path until you reach Nitshill Road where you turn right and continue until the Darnley Sycamore. Cross over Nitshill Road at the crossing and turn left, the

country park entrance at Darnley Mill is approximately 100m away.

From Arden Community Hall

(1 mile to the country park) 20-25mins.

From the community centre head south along Kilmuir Road for approximately 300m then cross over Kyleakin Road. Follow the path which runs behind the houses until you reach Nitshill Road. Turn right and continue for about 800m until the Darnley Sycamore. Cross over Nitshill Road at the crossing and turn left, the country park entrance at Darnley Mill is approximately 100m away.

Spotlight on the willow



WILLOW IS A TREE

that can be seen across the country park from Darnley Mill to Balgray Reservoir. There are many different species of willow and many hybrids which makes identification difficult.

Most willow species are shrubs but some can grow into large trees. Crack willow (*Salix fragilis*) tends to be associated with water and can be seen lining the banks of the burns and reservoirs. Goat

willow (*Salix caprea*), also known as pussy willow, can be found in woods and hedgerows.

Willows produce simple densely clustered flowers called catkins, which contain nectar to attract insect pollinators. Delicate willow seeds need fresh, damp earth or mud to germinate. Such habitats are becoming less common as rivers and their banks are increasingly managed. Most willows can regenerate from cuttings and spread as twigs are carried downstream and washed up on banks.

WILLOW TREE FACTS

- There are around 350-500 species of willow.
- They are an extremely hardy tree, their range extends further north than any other woody plant.
- Willows are extremely palatable to insects and in the UK they support 450 invertebrate species.
- Willow is used to make cricket bats and woven baskets.

Dams to Darnley Country Park Events calendar

- All events are FREE.
- Booking is required for some events.
- All children must be accompanied by a parent or guardian.

Event: Christmas willow weaving

Date and time: Sunday 20 December, 1.30–3.30pm

Description: Get crafty and make some natural Christmas decorations; willow wreaths to adorn your door and willow stars to spread some seasonal magic. All materials will be provided.

Location: The ARC, 64 Aurs Drive, Barrhead.



Event: Walk off your Christmas spirit

Date and time: Saturday 16 January, 10.30am–2pm

Description: Join the countryside rangers on this 6½ mile walk around the country park to walk off the excesses of the festive season.

Location: Meet at St Luke's High School, Springfield Road, Barrhead.



Event: RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch

Date and time: Sunday 31 January, 10am–12noon

Description: The Big Garden Birdwatch is the world's biggest bird survey, providing us with a vital snapshot of the UK's birds each winter. This is your chance to take part and discover the birdlife of Darnley Mill.

Location: Meet at the Ashoka restaurant car park, Corselet Road, off Nitshill Road.



Event: Volunteer day

Date and time: Saturday 6 February, 11am–3pm

Description: Get your hands dirty and get involved with some of the practical work needed to maintain and enhance Dams to Darnley Country Park. All equipment and tools will be provided on the day. For more details of specific tasks involved please contact the countryside rangers (details below).

Location: Meet at the Ashoka restaurant car park, Corselet Road, off Nitshill Road, Darnley.



Event: Tracks and trails

Date and time: Sunday 28 February, 10am–12noon

Description: Learn to be a nature detective and discover the creatures of the country park.

Location: Meet at the Ashoka restaurant car park, Corselet Road, off Nitshill.



Event: Spring clean

Date and Time: Saturday 13 March, 10am–1pm

Description: Help get rid of the grime and clean up the Barrhead dams with your community and the countryside ranger service. Litter picking equipment will be provided, suitable clothing must be worn and children must be accompanied by an adult.

Location: Meet at St Luke's High School, Springfield Road, Barrhead.



KEY CHART



No booking required



Booking required



Bring a packed lunch



Wear appropriate clothing



Bring binoculars

Join our mailing list or contact the countryside rangers

The Dams to Darnley countryside rangers are planning a series of events throughout the year. If you would like to be sent information on upcoming events and all the latest news join our mailing list.

Name _____

Email Address _____

Address _____

Telephone No _____

To join our mailing list post or email your details to the address below.

This information will be treated as confidential and used only for the purpose stated. If you do not wish your details to be held on computer tick this box

Contact details

Email: d2d@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk
Telephone: 0141 577 4054 (Eilidh Milne)
0141 577 4053 (Richard Bolton)
Website: www.damstodarnley.org

Post: Dams to Darnley Country Park, East Renfrewshire Council, Environment Department, 2 Spiersbridge Way, Spiersbridge Business Park, Thornliebank, East Renfrewshire G46 8NG