

Hop along to Dams to Darnley Country Park



This Summer Dams to Darnley Country Park is hosting a range of events for the whole family.

This is the fourth edition of Wagtail, the newsletter and events calendar for Dams to Darnley Country Park.

Inside you will find:

- Spring events lookback
- Countryside ranger service's first year
- History feature on Pollok Castle
- Country park clean ups
- Short woodland walks
- Spotlight on dragonflies and damselflies
- Summer events calendar

Next edition out in autumn 2009.

Spectacular Spring

THE FREEZING FEBRUARY temperatures were ideal for the birds for beginners walk. Though many smaller ponds and reservoirs were frozen, Balgray Reservoir still held some open water, so a good variety of wildfowl were spotted.

Two very successful spring cleans were also held within the country park – see page two for more details.

The range of guided walks in spring proved very

popular, these included a seven mile trek from Newton Mearns into the dams and a walk up Duncarnock Hill, known locally as the Craigie, which gives stunning views over the country park, Glasgow and beyond. Unfortunately the blooming bluebells walk proved a rather wet affair.

A pond life event to discover the underwater world of Darnley Mill took place in April and keeping up the fishy theme fishing for tips attracted over 40 fisher folk for free tuition and advice from local angling experts. Sadly, the only catch of the day was a 4cm minnow!



Fishing for tips was one of the Spring events at D2D.

Countryside ranger service—the first year

AFTER THE SUCCESS of its first year, the country park countryside ranger service will continue for a further three years.

During year one the countryside rangers have worked hard to establish the service and develop the country park. Some highlights include:

- Creating the quarterly Wagtail newsletter
- Running an extensive programme of 22 events
- Working with over 500 school children
- Addressing issues such as air rifles, fly tipping and litter with some notable successes
- Carrying out survey work in line with biodiversity priorities
- Working with community groups and attending events
- Seeing the country park gain in popularity as an area for relaxation and recreation.

Councillor Glass, Chair of the joint committee, said: "The countryside rangers have breathed new life into the park and been a key development in getting more people enjoying the country park."



Countryside rangers hold talks and walks all year round

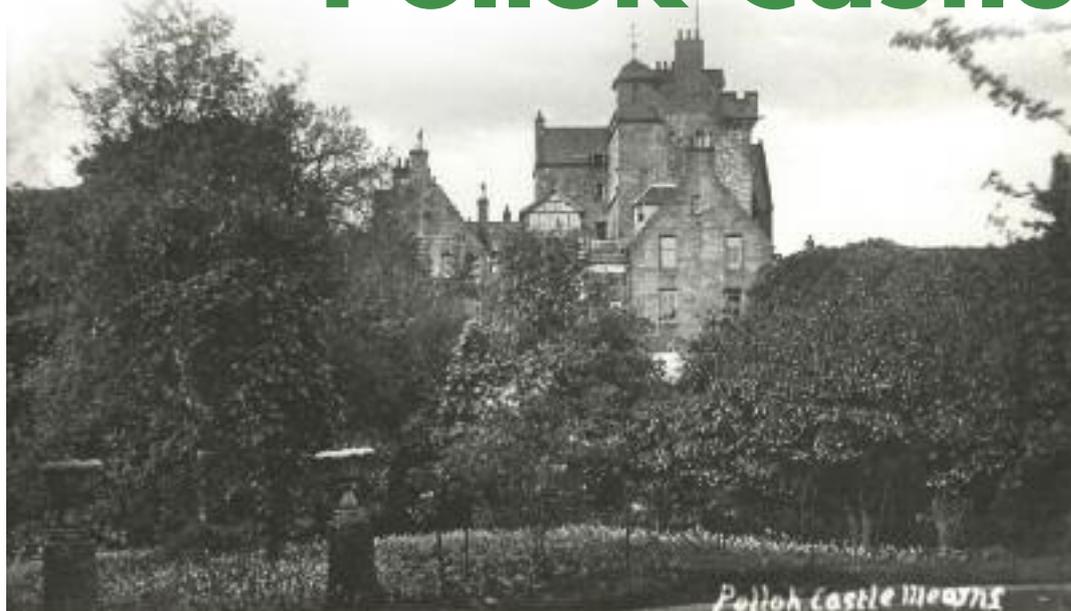
Spotlight on park history

Pollok Castle

POLLOK CASTLE SAT

just to the south west of the present day M77 junction 4. The castle was originally a simple tower house, thought to be from medieval times. It first seems to appear on Pont's map (1583-96) as a castle named 'Pook'. The castle was rebuilt in the Renaissance style between 1686 and 1694 by Sir Robert Pollock. It was erected on the grounds of Over Pollock, the ancestral home of the family. Roy's map (1747-55) shows the castle in detail and its associated gardens at their most extensive, extending across the Brock Burn to the west. The first edition OS map (1858-64) shows a formal walled garden with corner pavilions and possible vegetable gardens to the east.

The castle was destroyed by fire in 1880, but photographs of the building both before and after the fire survive. It was rebuilt in 1886 in the Scottish Baronial style. The castle was requisitioned by the British Army in 1939, but one wing of the house was occupied by the Pollock family throughout most of the war. The estate was apparently used as an



Pollok Castle 1886 - East Renfrewshire Council Library and Information Services.

ammunition dump throughout this time. The house continued to be inhabited until 1944, when Miss Ferguson Pollock moved out and it was finally abandoned. The poor condition of the building led to its demolition in 1952. The majority of the stone was sold and used for an airfield runway. It is thought that several prefabricated houses were constructed on the site to form one large structure, but this was removed by the late 1970s. Today there is no visible trace of Pollok Castle, and the grounds are home to private residences.

How clean is your park?

WELL, IT'S GETTING better. This is down to the help of almost 100 local volunteers who got involved in clean up events during the spring. In the Darnley Mill area alone over 150 bags of litter and bulk items were removed, comprising of everything from DVDs to mattresses. Four new bins are also going in to help keep the area tidy.

On a drizzly Saturday local volunteers, including Go Greener Chairman Councillor Eddie Phillips, tackled the other end of the country park, starting from St Luke's High School, Barrhead and working around Balgray Reservoir. Over 40 bags of litter were

collected making a very visible improvement.

Litter does not only look unattractive but can be very damaging to wildlife. Small mammals like voles and shrews can become trapped in glass bottles, cattle can choke on crisp packets and birds can become tangled in fishing line. Be responsible with your litter, use bins where provided, otherwise take your rubbish home.

Dams to Darnley Country Park would like to thank everyone who contributed to the spring clean ups – it's amazing what a difference people power can make!

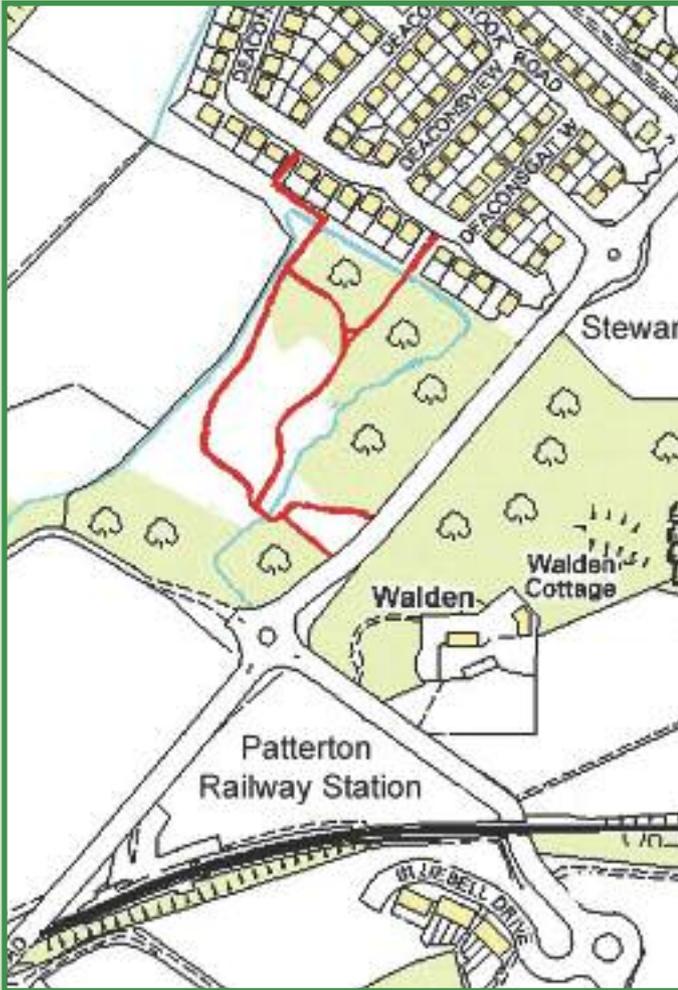
Families and individuals joined rangers for a spring clean.



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.

Stewarton Road woodland walks



IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR A SMALL NETWORK OF paths to try out, then the short walks nestled in the woods next to the Mearns Grove estate, off Stewarton Road, will be ideal. The paths weave through the trees of this old wood and as the total network is less than half a mile it's an ideal wee walk to take children or grandchildren on. The woodland is a bit hilly in places and there are a couple of flights of steps, but there are also alternative routes with gentler slopes.

The woodland itself appears on the earliest ordnance survey maps dating from the mid nineteenth century. New trees have been planted and management plans are being progressed, so it is hoped that the woods can flourish for many years to come.

You may notice several boxes attached to the trees, these are a mixture of bird and bat boxes. All bats in the UK are legally protected due to a decline in numbers over recent decades. Bats account for about a quarter of mammal species in the UK and are therefore a vital part of our native wildlife. If bats still don't appeal this fact may change your mind; a single pipistrelle bat can eat up to 3,000 midges in one night! On a previous country park event several pipistrelle bats were seen and heard around the woods. Another bat hunt is planned for this summer - check out the events calendar for details.

Spotlight on dragonflies and damselflies

THROUGHOUT THE country park water is an important feature, from the large open water of the reservoirs and the Brock and Aurs burns to the small ponds and wetlands peppered throughout the park.

These habitats provide a home for several species of dragonflies and damselflies.

Within the country park common blue, blue-tailed, large red, azure and emerald damselflies and common darter dragonfly have been recorded.

The four spotted chaser and common hawker dragonflies are also likely to be present.

The pond at Darnley Mill is one of the best spots for

dragonflies and damselflies.

A visit here on a warm summer day and you should see these magnificent creatures flying over the water or soaking up the sun on the reeds and sedges.

One of the biggest threats to dragonflies is pollution.

In the country park the countryside rangers are working with the local community to reduce the amount of the litter that gets thrown into the reservoirs, burns and ponds.

The destruction of rivers and ponds also continues to threaten habitats.

A new pond has been created next to the path around Balgray Reservoir, it's hoped this will eventually become a popular spot for these exciting creatures.



Large red damselfly.

DRAGONFLY FACTS

Fossil records of dragonflies date back 300 million years.

A dragonfly can live for up to six or seven years, but only a couple of months of this time will be spent as a flying adult.

Their large compound eyes have up to 30,000 facets or lenses.

They travel at almost 30mph which makes them the fastest insects in the UK.

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: Evening elope

Date and time: Thursday 2 July, 7–9pm

Description: Leaving from Barrhead, join the countryside rangers on a summer evening stroll and take in some of the beautiful surrounding countryside. This walk will not always cover flat ground, so a moderate level of fitness is required.

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



Event: Dragonfly art

Date and time: Thursday 9 July, 2–4pm

Description: An afternoon of art and sculpture themed around the spectacular dragonflies that can be found around the country park ponds. This event is particularly suitable for children aged between five and ten.

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



Event: A peek into the past

Date and time: Saturday 1 August, 10am–noon

Description: Take a glimpse into the industrial heritage of the Darnley area on this guided walk, led by a local heritage specialist. The walk will mainly cover flat level paths, but will occasionally venture off the beaten track.

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



Event: Bat and moth night

Date and time: Tuesday 11 August, 8.30pm start

Description: Discover the bats and moths within the country park on this evening event.

Location: Meet at Patterton train station car park.



Event: Five dams walk

Date and time: Sunday 30 August, 1.30pm start

Description: Join the countryside rangers as we discover the five reservoirs that make up a large part of the country park.

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



Event: Batty bats

Date and time: Tuesday 1 September

Description: Discover the bats and moths within the country park on this evening event which is part of Mearns Community Week. Please contact the countryside rangers for more details.

Location: Meet at Patterton train station car park.



KEY CHART



No booking required



Booking required



Bring a packed lunch



Wear appropriate clothing

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