



## Friends of Hilly Fields Annual Report 2016/17

## **FRIENDS OF HILLY FIELDS CHAIR'S REPORT**

June 2017

The Friends strive to promote amenity and wildlife in Hilly Fields, to encourage a wider use of the park by working with the local authority and Glendale. We also have representation with the wider Lewisham Friends' Forum and the London Friends' Green Network to preserve and enhance London's public green spaces.

### **REVIEW OF PAST YEARS ACTIVITIES**

Hilly Fields Orchard:

The seventh Wassail was held 22nd January 2017, with musical contributions led by Charlie Hart and Phil Hall. Wassail was provided by Sally Adams. Trained master orchardist Caroline helped with pruning, Maintenance sessions with weeding and remulching trees continue.

### **BIODIVERSITY IMPROVEMENTS**

Tom continues to attend the Lewisham Biodiversity Partnership meetings, which monitor nature/biodiversity conservation across the borough.

### **WORK GROUPS**

We are meeting monthly with a reliable small group of volunteers to carry out ongoing nature conservation and maintenance issues, such as hedge planting, weeding orchard, fruiting hedge and meadow, sowing the meadow, pruning orchard and planting and weeding in shade garden.

**BOUNDARY HEDGING:** We were again successful with the Woodland Trust Grant for mixed native hedge and planted with volunteers on the tennis court and playground boundaries in March 2016. Glendale have now strimmed both hedges, but have promised to replant along with the still unplanted 100 hedge plants in lieu of their error the previous year.

We are continuing to build ecological improvements into the updated management plan and look to take these forward in the coming years.

**MEADOWS:** South Meadow has been sown with Yellow Rattle which acts as a parasite on grass and helps to restrict its growth. The 2016 memorial meadow was less successful which may have been due to no cold period over winter and poor germination of the poppies. We hand weeded the thistles in autumn and re-seeded with new commemorative mix from Landlife.

**NATURE'S GYM:** carried out their regular work days in the park weeding the south meadow and cutting back brambles.

**BIRD CHAMPION:** The scheme is now in its tenth year. Monthly surveys are carried out by Tom Moulton and Sue Gore and are reported on the Hilly Fields Birdwatch Blog and the national BirdTrak survey. The tally of bird species is now at 48.

We organised a 'make a bird feeder' session on a Saturday morning before Christmas.

**Big Bird Watch:** Held on 29th January, this years 9th Big Bird Watch recorded 25 different species.

**The Dawn Chorus Walk:** A successful walk with around 16 people starting at 6am on 30th March, 2017 and also covering Brockley and Ladywell cemeteries.

**TREE STRATEGY:** Rachel and Tom met Greenscene's head John Thompson and the tree officer Pete Moss to discuss and agree that they would help instigate the strategy. Council agreed with the principles. Key was preventing damage from sit on mowers, which has recently improved.



LEWISHAM PARKS FORUM and LONDON FRIENDS GREEN NETWORK: Symon Knightswood has been representing the friends at both groups.

**Midsummer Fayre:** Our stall on the main thorough fare had a steady flow of visitors throughout the fayre. We displayed the overall management strategy and information on the bird surveying. Over 50 people tried our quiz with prizes kindly donated by Pistachios café. We have ordered a new postcard of the stone circle in autumn which sold well along with our WWI memorial meadow post card. Andrew Harper arranged a visit from Jenny Clark of the Sussex Bat Hospital.

**Prendergast's Development:** The second tranche of the section 108 money has now been spent on a new basket swing, pull up bars and the granite sett crossover are installed.

#### The Farmers' Market

We still put up the signs for the market, but visitors are sometimes very low, so we take reduced or no rents. Even so, over the years it has been a useful contribution, enabling the new chestnut pale fence around the mud kitchen, replacement top and oven for the mud kitchen, cowslips for the playground, bird seed for the big bird watch and the winter bird feeder session. It will also fund the additional spend to replace chainlink at the top of Vicars Hill with estate railing and toward new park entrance signs.

**Ongoing Park Management Plan:** the original development plan has been revised, as many of the goals were achieved and we have further developed some of the thoughts for use of the shade garden and to improve biodiversity.

A decision was made on the style of park bench. A simple reproduction bench as seen in the original park with oak slats was agreed to be simplest, least controversial and attainable option.

A piece from the AJ on the design of the Bowls Pavilion by Leonard Manasseh came to our attention. The Friends requested a copy of the structural report for the pavilion, and were advised to get a conservation engineer to look at the building. S. Knightswood set up a meeting with Tim Caitlin Brittain (author of book on Manasseh) and interested parties with regards to conserving and extending the use of the building for the future. The meeting took place on 5th September, 2016. Greenscene confirmed that the report was a surveyor's assessment, not a structural report. It was agreed to re-open the pavilion for use by the bowls club. It would be monitored for movement.

The higher profile of the building, means that grants would be available under the HLF and Parks for People Funding stream. The vision is for a restored pavilion to modern thermal standards with a new services core and a community room for shared use. facility with a restored p met with the Bowls Club to discuss proposals and ideas for a combined/ shared addition to the Bowls Pavilioin.

A new facility would open up more opportunities for educational and health groups to use the shade garden. The space is already being used for an after school forest school and there are also proposals for a pre school group later in the year.

**The Bandstand:** This has always been a popular item with visitors to our stall, with requests for its replacement. Marcus took on investigating this element. His quest lead him to a chance meeting with Will Alsop, who has been working on a modern interpretation of a bandstand. It is still waiting for a consultative meeting to be arranged with the 'wider community' of park users.



The Borough's Bye Laws were up for review and the Friends were contacted for comments. Initial concerns were sent through and the council said they would come back for full comments later. Our concerns included not allowing tree climbing, no BBQs and the age limit on children in the playground. The council noted, disagreed, didn't come back to us and ignored.

The park continues to be used by a wide range of health and fitness groups, with a Sunday morning junior Parkrun and a Saturday morning adult Parkrun.

Green Flag: Green flag visited in May and Tom and Rachel showed the Royal Park Judges some of the initiatives the Friends had undertaken, the long term development plan and our plans for new signage.

Website: We continue posting events on the website, we had a recent spate of spam emails, but Chris Wheal has updated our guards.

The email list is becoming increasingly redundant, as people change addresses and we don't update. We have 1300 friends on facebook and growing.

Park Keeper: We have seen further cuts to the Park Keeper's rota. We now have no morning cover or any cover on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. The problems with the increased park users and reduced litter bins emptying has been ongoing over the last few years. Volunteer bin emptying by Chris Wheal & Co prevents much of the previous problems with early morning litter strewn everywhere. There are also regular park visitors who litter pick. A campaign with petition by Chris Wheal did reinstate the recycling in the park. However, the situation with unemptied bins still remains.

THANKS to everyone who has been involved throughout the year, especially our loyal volunteers.

