



**FRIENDS' OF HILLY FIELDS
CHAIR'S ANNUAL REPORT
DECEMBER 2012**

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REVIEW OF PAST YEARS ACTIVITIES

Wild About Play: the playground continues to be very popular, even in cold and wet weather. The friends have used the tools, from the sustainability grant, on several occasions. There was very positive feedback from the story telling sessions, also funded by the sustainability grant.

The blocked drinking fountain was finally replaced. It was the style that had been queried last year, as it was known to be difficult to use and block. No-one had responded to the queries and the fountain was installed. The former was found to be the case, but fortunately blockages had not been a problem.

Hilly Fields Orchard: The orchard has continued to be a success. The second Wassail was held in a snowy park on 5th February 2012, and the opportunity to introduce all those interested in the orchard to see the additional trees planted under the London woodland and tree grant scheme. There have been some changes to volunteers looking after the trees and some welcome additional volunteers. Due to a wet summer, the watering in their second summer was less onerous.

Tom Moulton arranged a successful orchard maintenance for 18th November where volunteers weeded and re mulched the trees. Glendale provided the wood chip.

The LOP returned on a cold and wet 26th November to advise and train volunteers on formative pruning. A successful session with Amber and Merrin of LOP was held with Six of the seven trees being pruned, one had in sufficient growth and did not require pruning. They also advised on future pruning for the pears and the need increase the area of mulch to reduce competition for nutrients and water from vigorous grass. This could be achieved by leaf mulch or wood chip.

The second part of the orchard planting was funded by a grant from the London woodland and tree grant scheme has been less successful. The friends have been trying to get Glendale to rectify poor staking, the lack of 1m clear mulched area, insufficient mulch depth and omission of the cages. The lack of cages has meant that Glendale have now strimmed around the base of the three mulberries and killed them. As so much time is wasted following up this work, we have requested the mulberries are replaced and planted as our specification, the walnut is properly staked, so that it doesn't further damage the bark on the trunk and our money to be returned for incomplete work. We will then be able to rectify problems ourselves.



Bird Champion: This was initiated in 2007 as part of the Natural England funding for Hilly Fields. Keith Ward, the initial bird champion registered the park with bird track, so that sightings can be input direct to the national data base. After over 4 years, he handed over his key role to Tom Moulton and Sue Gore, who manage to make weekly bird surveys in the park. The ownership of the bird champion blog is also now shared.

Tom with Glendale support, also organised the annual Big Bird Watch, which this year took place in the park on 29th January and a Dawn Chorus walk on 19th May. This was led by the brilliantly, knowledgeable Chris McGaw, from the Rivers and People Project.

Bats: The Bat Conservation Trust's Green City Bats project came to an end in January 2012. Andrew and Rachel had been on their bat monitoring course and thanks to Andrew as part of the BCT's National Bat Monitoring Programme Hilly Fields was part of their Field Survey. The intended bat tour of the park had not taken place as a suitable time could not be found by the volunteers. Nick Pond from Greenscene has offered to help with one in 2013.

Prendergast's Development: a portion of the park was taken out of use in November 2010, originally for two years, whilst the building works at Prendergasts school are undertaken. The developers then requested an extension of their planning to December 2013. The friends and some local residents objected to this extension. Although originally told there was no requirement for compensation, the friends further objected and finally were awarded a pro rata sum for the extended use of the park. This comes with the caveat that it is spent for the benefit of the schools' students.

Café Development: the council did not inform the friends about the submission of the café, but fortunately the owners proposals were a sustainable conversion and an aesthetic improvement, which we would only have supported.

The later appearance of telegraph poles in the park was not shown on the planning drawings and was not expected by café or the friends. Having not been informed that this work was to be carried out they raised the matter with planning enforcement. They never contacted the friends to say whether the work had been agreed by council. It later appeared that Greenscene had agreed to the work; including telegraph poles and an exchange box, set into the grass towards the bowling green, and just not told us, claiming they did not think we would mind.

John Thompson from greenscene agreed that the telegraph poles would be taken out and the line buried as it had been when similar work had been carried out in the Bothy. We are still awaiting this to happen. The café has been a very welcome addition to the park and are supportive of the friends. The friends are very grateful for this and their kind offer as a venue for our meetings.



Octavia Hill Memorial Garden: Inline with our initial ideas to create a shade garden as a memorial to Octavia Hill and the Kyrle Society. Rachel submitted a pre-application for a large grant through Parks for People, from the HLF. This would have enabled a refurbishment of the whole park, including tennis courts, repair of the stone circle, new footpaths, park furniture etc. They were in principal supportive of the scheme progress and said that it does cover the criteria required. However, as the work they would require just for a stage 1 application was so vast and would require both time and real commitment from Greenscene, the production of a conservation plan and ultimately £40,000 match funding for an £800,000 grant, it was decided not to pursue further.

Frustrated by our lack of progress, we started to clear the large shrub bed area to the front of the garden. We held two work sessions and cleared a substantial area on one day. This was followed up by a planting session, with donated plants. The third planting session was cancelled as we could not get the plants to site on time and did not want to plant once the hose-pipe ban was in force. Sawn logs were used to demarcate paths and we have been interested to see how the space has evolved probably because of our slow progress. The TDLP have used it for their children's performance events

An additional small number of plants were planted in July. These were donated from the Hampton Court Flower Show via Lewisham Gardens. Rachel collected these one weekend and planted them with some volunteers.

The Heritage Lottery Funds small grants scheme increased in fund size, so we put a pre application in for this. Again, we received positive feedback and support, but it was suggested that we would need to focus more on education, rather than capital build. We then submitted a pre application to the Veolia Trust, but have not heard back yet. This would fund capital work such as a new accessible footpath, seating and pergola.

MGPA Bulb Planting: Friends were successful with their application to the MGPA. However, only the requested snowdrops arrived, along with dwarf irises. They need planting imminently. We also have donated bulbs from Andrew Harper. When we tried to plant in the Shade garden the ground was too hard.



Cricket Project:

Recent background: Whilst the chair was away during the summer, Glendale requested (19th August 2011) if they could put the bid for the changing rooms in through the friends' group, "because it is better that it comes from the friends group". On return from holiday we requested information be sent to us on the bothy/changing rooms proposals, as we had been discussing the possibility (long term and depending on funding) on having a small exhibition in the Bothy about the park and the work of Octavia Hill and the Kyrle Society.

Greenscene responded "the plan for the Bothy area is for changing rooms for the cricket project. The bothy will also accommodate the park keeper.

Should we be successful with funding bids the facilities could have multi functional uses".

The bid was submitted over the school holidays as a form with no drawings. It was for £60,000 from the grant with £5,000 match funding from Lewisham.

On 12th September, 2011 we received a copy of the bid, with no plans, but this description "it is going to be the old portacabins opposite the park keepers bothy for changing rooms. We could put toilets next to the portacabins or possibly have them built inside. The idea is to regenerate the existing portacabins and convert them into the changing rooms".

We did not hear anything about the grant again. Millfields Cricket Team were awarded the grounds on 12th December 2011 and kindly informed us. We requested information on the development of the changing rooms from Greenscene in December, 2011. In February (13th) we were told that the plan had been shown to one of the friends in the park. Rachel requested that Greenscene send this through. On request of the plans, we were sent this information on 27th February 2012; "We (the Council and Glendale) have plans which are being finalised with the company to ensure they meet our requirements. As you know Millfields CC will be one of the cricket clubs which will use the Hilly Fields grounds and they will be playing at the official opening. In general terms we are removing the old toilet unit and container used as an office and replacing these with three units that will be placed side by side. Size wise they will take up the same space but will look much better. They will contain two changing room blocks and the third will have disabled and umpires facilities in addition to a mess room for the keeper. We then hope to work with Millfields to revamp to bothy as a cricket club room and space for the friends to meet. We will also clear the compound area of the building materials and other debris and if funds allow replace the gates and boundary fencing. As I said in the previous email as soon as I have the final details I will forward it to you and ensure it is placed in the notice board".

We requested the plans again, so that we could comment, prior to them being put up on a notice board. We finally received it on 1st March 2012. There was no site plan showing it in situ. We made comments on the ugly nature of it and queried its lack of green/brown roof. We were told that there was no money for this and the budget was tight. Greenscene said subject to funding something could be retrofitted as on portakabins at Weirside.

The very ugly and large portakabins arrived on 16th May, 2012. They have a much larger footprint than the original combination of cabins, and the choice of 'heritage' green does not help it blend in. It also appeared that no-one had considered the levels for access. Some ugly non DDA compliant steps have now been built, hopefully as a temporary measure to the changing rooms. Gossip says that they are intending to build a ramp at the other end.

On a positive note, Millfields Cricket Team are now the home team. The launch was set for 13th May, but was cancelled. There were some dry summer days and it was lovely to see cricket being played. The launch was rescheduled for 16th September when the Mayor's 11 played Millfields.

Ongoing Park Management Plan: as we haven't progressed grant applications, the development of a suite of park furniture has been difficult to progress. We have continued to promote the idea of bespoke furniture for the park and to restrict ad hoc additions to both park furniture, signs and trees.

The tree section have supported and consulted with us on the issue of memorial trees.

The council's shifting sands on policy with memorial benches has meant that we have had no success with our management plan. Having been told we could set the quota at one bench, more have been sited. When we are informed about these benches, their proposed location is never clear and we have continued to express that this is making our long term proposals more difficult. The benches include a new style introduced by Glendale with no consultation about five years ago. Greenscene have had a meeting, not involving the friends, where they have decided on the bench style for Hilly Fields and the options for locations. We have objected and they now say they want to reach a compromise. It appears to us that their idea of compromise is to accept their unsustainable tropical hardwood benches with very personal memorials in a shared public park.

Midsummer Fayre: for the second year running we had a stall at the fayre. A local resident kindly lent us her marquee, which was much needed. We had over 40 people try our quiz with prizes donated by Pistachios café. This year we had postcards made of the park, showing the cricket in action. These sold well. Despite being short handed and the rather strong winds, we had a very busy fair.

Midwinter Fair: following on from the Brockley Design Project's Ice rink event, we decided to try a midwinter fair. So as to not replicate neighbouring fairs, we focussed on a children's fair, with local residents, Belinda and Jackie volunteering their time for story telling and singing sessions. Local author, Clare Stanhope did a book reading and we had a stall run by children too. With perfect winter weather and spiced apple juice and mince pies from Pistachios, it was a successful event.

Park Keeper: With cuts to the park budget, we lost two days cover for the park keeper. Sadly, Keith our longstanding park keeper resigned due to ill health. Fred kindly delivered a get well card to him in August. Lee is our new, and also very helpful park keeper.



New events - update from Stephen at Park run

Hilly Fields parkrun began on 8 September as the first parkrun in the borough of Lewisham, there being around 150 parkruns which take place within the UK each week. Parkrun provide free weekly timed 5K runs for runners of all standards. The only requirements are that you register online at www.parkrun.com beforehand and arrive at the run with a printout of the barcode which you will be sent upon registration.

Hilly Fields parkrun was set up with the backing of Lewisham Council and Run England. Since it began it has settled down to a regular turnout of 50 to 60 runners with around six volunteers helping with timing, registration and marshalling each week. The run consists of three laps of the Park. Unsurprisingly it is one of the more challenging parkruns but that doesn't seem to put people off. It has developed a core of 20 to 30 runners who turnout most weeks with other more occasional runners and newcomers appearing at every run. The events are very sociable with the runners spending time together in the cafe after the finish. Thanks to the Wi-Fi in the cafe the results are also processed then and there.

In accordance with normal parkrun practice we haven't publicised the event extensively. We prefer it to grow organically through word of mouth. We would hope that over the next year it will grow to have a regular turnout of around 100 - the course could probably not cope with a significantly larger field – but there is no requirement for growth.

Everyone is welcome to join the runs. They take place every Saturday at 9am come rain or shine. We will also be holding extra runs on Christmas and New Year's Days at 9am and 10am respectively.

For more information see www.parkrun.org.uk/hillyfields as well as our facebook page – www.facebook.com/hillyfieldsparkrun “

Along with longstanding activities such as the Saturday morning football, there are many more sporting activities are using the park,, including pilates and boot camp. These are arranged by Glendale and we are non the wiser what is happening than any other park user.

Nature's Gym: Have carried out their regular work days in the park. They are mainly tasked with cutting back brambles, so that they can be kept at bay.

Meadows: generally had trouble with cutting early enough and collecting the arisings. This has been ongoing problem. A late cut this year, followed by broken machines left he meadow looking very scrubby. By early December looked as though problem has been resolved and the arisings for once have been removed. Nick Pond from Greenscene is monitoring.

Green Flag: as the park was awarded a high score in 2011, the green flag award was given for 2012, without the judges visiting.

Website: We continue posting events on the website and have requested feedback on its use from Chris.

We have 150 on our email contact list and have 96 friends on facebook.

Thanks to everyone who has been involved throughou the year.