



Friends' of Hilly Fields
Chair's Annual Report
June 2018/19

FRIENDS OF HILLY FIELDS CHAIR'S REPORT

June 2019

This year the Friends, a constituted voluntary community group, have met formally four times. We strive to promote amenity and wildlife in Hilly Fields, to encourage a wider use of the park by working with Glendale and Greenscene, Lewisham. We also have representation for the Lewisham biodiversity meetings, the Lewisham Friends' Green Space Forum and the London Friends' Green Networks (preserving and enhancing London's public green spaces).

REVIEW OF PAST YEARS ACTIVITIES

WALK on the WILDSIDE PROJECT: A successful application from the Lottery's Community Fund has enabled a series of workshops and events. Delivered so far, mono printing from nature, screen printing at Marsha Phoenix House and a series of scavenger hunts and display box available from café, rustic bench and improved mud kitchen, the walk and talk with Chelwood Nursery will be on 24th June and awaiting a date for 'story teller' event.

MPGA grant: Has enabled us to purchase shrubs, hedge plants and bulbs for the renovated upper Vicars Hill entrance. Volunteers prepared the ground and planted the bulbs in December and the following spring a group from the Woodcraft Folk came one Saturday morning to help plant the hedging and shrubs.

We contributed additional funds to enable an estate railing to replace the previous chain link fencing and with had several sessions clearing the brambles and preparing for planting.

BIRD CHAMPION: Now in its 11th year, regular bird surveys are undertaken by Tom and Sue with Judith from Glendale. Our regular BIG BIRD WATCH, which this year took place in the park on 27th January, 2019. It was cold and windy, with fewer birds on the survey but plenty of keen birders on the walk. The DAWN CHORUS WALK on 4th April 2019. All reports are posted on the Hilly Fields Bird champion blog. This spring was the 50th species recorded in the park.

BIODIVERSITY IMPROVEMENTS

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

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 and clearing invasive thistles from the meadow.



Replanting hawthorn hedge 2019

Nature study and mono printing

Bulb planting Vicars Hill

TREE STRATEGY: We have had a little more success with a change to grass maintenance and the problems with mowing machinery damaging the base of mature and young trees alike. However, for unknown reasons, trees have again been damaged on Hilly Fields Crescent and random trees have short mown grass at base.

The tree surgeons are now leaving timber and wood chippings on site, although partly as a precaution against spreading tree diseases. However, **sadly logs are as quickly pinched** before we have collected enough to build the stag beetle loggeries or include in the proposed dead hedging.

Rachel gave a talk “Deptford to Hilly Fields” at the **Greenways and Mews Event on 11th May**. This traced the route which led to the saving of Hilly Fields, its links to Deptford and the desire of its early supporters ensure a ‘distinctively English Landscape’ was available locally and to all.

‘NEW FOREST’: The 450 tree saplings/hedge plants from the Woodland Trust have established well over the first year. Weekly watering sessions took place over the dry summer and regular weeding and topping up of mulch. This March we spent a Saturday with volunteers extending our new tree planting and mulching. Additional tree saplings are ordered from the Woodland Trust and we have agreed the extension of this band of planting for November, 2019.

HILLY FIELDS ORCHARD: Orchard pruning has continued under guidance of orchard expert Caroline Cubbett. Another successful wassail was held on 3rd February with thanks to Sarah Harrison, Nico Springman, Phil Hall and Charlie Hart for organising and leading the music. We planted four new fruit trees and weeded and mulched all the new and old trees. Blue bells have been planted in the orchard and we hope to add to this over the coming years. Parkrun have agreed to help with establishment watering.

BLACK POPLARS: Following the removal of the suspected Henry Williamson guerilla planting of black poplars opposite his former home. Six setts taken from the original tree were replanted in the park. Four have taken and are being watered weekly. Thanks to Breakspare’s Mews Community Garden for looking after them during the intervening years.



Meadow sowing 2019



New quince tree planting



Left logs for wildlife!!

Ongoing Park Management Plan: with ongoing progress the plan will be updated. Two new entrance signs are now in place (funded by the farmers' market and bag and postcard sales). Since agreeing the park bench style as a reproduction Cartmel Bench with oak slats (as seen in the original new park) we have had a steady stream of enquiries and now have three benches in place. New estate railing is planned for the lower Vicars Hill entrance.

Midsummer Fayre: We had continuous interest at the Fayre with some 50 people taking part in the quiz, prizes were provided by Hilly Fields Cafe. We sold the regular tote bags with the new signage design and also children's T-shirts and had positive feedback all round. Our re designed Hilly Fields mug sold well as did the postcards.

Shade/Octavia Hill Memorial Garden: The gardens are regularly used by a forest school toddler group and some holiday sessions. We held a summer weeding volunteering session in June.

CAFE: continues to support the work of the friends. Friends have worked with Ruth from cafe organising the Walk on the Wildside Project. The cafe have designed the first scavenger hunt sheets and accommodated new display box. They will host the exhibition for the mono printing and ongoing events.

The friends are very grateful for this and their kind offer as a venue for our meetings and the free drinks offered during our volunteer sessions!

FARMERS MARKET: sadly, due to taking on a weekly market at Telegraph Hill Park, Whitegates Farm could no longer fit in our park. Unfortunately this means we have lost our small but regular funding.



New sign at Vicars Hill



Newly installed estate railing



Stall at midsummer fayre

Other organisations in the Park: There is an ongoing increase of sporting activities in the park, exercise classes, boot camps and notably the very organised national organisation Parkrun which holds a well attended 5K run every Saturday morning and a children's run on Sunday morning. The football camp on Saturday morning is also a regular fixture and we have other evening formal football groups, rugby and cricket on the north field.

We have started discussions with Lewisham and Basketball players about options for improving the courts.

Cricket Project: Lewisham and Glendale installed an artificial cricket wicket and have a cricket programme to involve primary schools.

There are many more sporting activities using the park, including boot camp and Nordic walking. Trainers and Clubs have to go through Glendale for a permit and we are none the wiser what is happening than any other park user.

The cars using the park as a car park is an ongoing problem, with over 30 seen inside the park on some summer evenings in 2018. This was followed up by enforcement and organised groups were informed to tell all of their attendees not to enter park in vehicles.

Green Flag: there were some issues with the park being blitzed and the loss of some areas of wild flowers from the longer grass and damage to hedging prior to the Green Flag judging. Judges generally seemed quite impressed with the work of the Friends. Yet to hear the outcome.

VOLUNTEERS: Many thanks to all the volunteers, organised and others who have turned out to help with planting, pruning, weeding, mulching, watering, litter picking, bringing their old pans for the mud kitchen, replacing our logs to the mud kitchen, leading the wassail, providing the music, helping with workshops, donating spare tools.

Hilly Fields is a better place for your energy, time, expertise and good humour.



Monoprint workshop



Sun setting on the Wassail



Fritillary in 'new forest'