

Haringey Friends of Parks Newsletter

A STORY OF COMMITMENT

The **Haringey Friends of Parks Forum** is the independent network for all the borough's local Friends groups for parks, nature sites, recreation grounds, community gardens and other green open spaces... There are around 30 such groups, some of which are all-too-briefly showcased in this newsletter. They are all active in taking ownership of our parks and open spaces, working to protect and improve them. We are proud to celebrate their unselfish and sometimes unrecognised efforts!

The Forum brings the local groups together every 2 months, and aids ongoing communication and co-ordination through our email list. We liaise closely with the Council's Parks Service, which is publicly committed to active partnership-working with Friends groups and the Forum. Local groups have helped bring in millions of pounds in external funding to improve Haringey's green spaces, including Green Flag status for 14 parks and community gardens.

Of course its not all plain sailing - the parks department lacks adequate resources, is often poor at communications or unnecessarily bureaucratic, and groups often have to lobby and campaign to get their views over. A few years back, after a march and high-profile campaign, we prevented a school annexing part of a park and as a result got the borough's planning policies changed to prevent this in future. But disputes around urban development continue...

We want more and better open spaces, greater levels of on-site staffing and maintenance, regeneration of run down facilities, and the integration of Friends groups into the management of all sites.

The Forum has good links with the Haringey Allotments Forum and the Haringey Federation of Residents Associations. We also have begun to make contact with parks forums and networks throughout London and the UK.

<http://haringeyfriendsofparks.org.uk>



The community comes out in force to plant birch whips to screen the fence between the school and the park in Downhills Park

Queen's Wood is an area of ancient woodland in the West of Haringey (off the Muswell Hill Road). The Friends will be celebrating their tenth anniversary as a formal organisation in 2010, but we have been in existence as an informal group for much longer. We have nearly 200 families in membership, who pay an annual subscription of £5 a head.

On the last Sunday of each month, we hold Working Parties in the Wood, where we clear litter and do maintenance tasks such as cutting back overhanging branches from paths, clearing drains, and pruning holly and other plants in danger of taking over the woods. We also create dead hedging to protect areas in the Wood in danger of erosion from overuse. We have also planted native British daffodils and bluebells in the Wood. We work with BTCV and, this year, Highgate Wood School on these management tasks.

We work to a Management Plan agreed with Haringey Council and we have just received funding from the Mayor of London's "London Tree and Woodland Grant Scheme" to update the plan to meet the UK Woodland Assurance Standard. The Friends work closely with council officers in the Queen's Wood Management Committee. We also do work to fulfil the Haringey Biodiversity Action Plan.



Children enjoying a Queen's Wood Funday

We also organise educational and recreational activities. This year we have held wildflower walks and bird walks and we have also held historical and bat walks. At our Spring AGM and at an Autumn meeting, we organise talks on matters related to the woods; this April, David Bevan talked about the effect of coppicing on plant life; on 24 September, Rebecca Turpin of the Froglife Trust will be talking about "Wildlife Ponds and Amphibian Life."

From time to time we hold Family Woodland Fun days. The most recent was on 28 June and families brought picnics and were able to participate in activities like Giant Jenga and Snakes and Ladders, mini bug hunts, making bird boxes, looking for faces in trees and storytelling. These events are funded from a mix of members' subscriptions and Haringey "Make the Difference" grants.

We have also sponsored improvements to the Woods, including placing benches and litter bins around the wood and raising funds for coppicing to renew the trees and encourage greater diversity of wildlife. We are currently seeking funds to convert the old and unused Paddling Pool to ponds which will encourage frogs and other amphibians.

Our activities are publicised in notices in the Woods, in a newsletter circulated three or four times a year to members and in our website: www.fqw.org.uk.

Palace Gates Embankment Nature Reserve

As our group is still in its infancy there's not much to report! Local residents are currently working on a management plan with the conservation officer at Haringey Council. We'll then be able to start our work days on the site. In the first instance there is some basic maintenance - litter picking and so on - to do. After that we hope to create a varied nature reserve, based largely on what's already there - but also with some ideas about bat boxes and even bee hives for the future. We're hoping that the site will be a useful educational resource for a local school which backs onto it.

Living Under One Sun

“ *I am secretary of a community allotment project at millmead road which is one stop up from Tottenham Hale station. We are there every sunday and thursday and sometimes more days. Everyone is welcome to join us, from under fives to oap's, and we rely on volunteers to help with the gardening and keep the project going.*

We were awarded the green pennant this year and will organise a celebration to which all will be invited!.

In september, with sponsorship from a local builders, we held a successful harvest festival at Northumberland Park, Tottenham.

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Woodside Park

Woodside Park is situated to the North East of Haringey and was laid out as Wood Green's former Town Hall Gardens in the 1890s. Though the bandstand has long gone and the hundred year old Bowling Club has recently closed down, the park remains an ever popular open space for local residents. The Friends of Woodside Park were established in 1999, counting film director Mike Leigh among its founding members.

In the ten years since its inception, the Friends of Woodside have lobbied for better maintenance and more borders, both of which have been achieved. With our support, the Council sold off the disused toilet block and used the proceeds to create a new playground based on a design by technology students from neighbouring St Thomas More School. The toilet block has since been redeveloped as a café cum pizzeria and is ready to open for business, surely providing a much needed asset for the park.

At the time of the Queen's Golden Jubilee, we were successful in applying for a lottery grant for five new benches and bins which have been in constant use ever since!

Now in its 9th year, we organize an annual Jazz Picnic & Folk Dance in the park which has proved very popular with local residents. The music is live and the event is free, courtesy of a small grant from the Parks Department. Friends and neighbours can bring a picnic and listen to the music and the folk dance is quite a spectacle as MC Chris Turner swaps his mike for an accordion and calls out easy-to-follow dance routines! There is a Caribbean food stall and a cake stall and face painting for children. The evening finishes about 7pm either with more jazz or a local blues band.

For details of this year's picnic, see our Facebook link:www.facebook.com/home.php#/event.php?eid=91099468735&ref=mf

Our website, with links to other local community organisations is to be found at: www.woodside-park.org

Downhills Park

The Friends of **Downhills Park** was started in 1999 to fight plans to turn the open grass recreation area into privately run 5 a-side football hard pitches. Once this fight was won the friends took on a more positive approach to the park and began the work of revitalising the existing tennis courts, planting bulbs and new trees and restoring historic avenues, and coming up with plans generally to enhance enjoyment of the park like the screening of ugly metal fencing with rows of birch trees.

In 2003 we created a huge festival to celebrate the park's centenary and have held a hugely popular art in the park event every year for the past 9 years. The friends meet regularly in a local public building and keep the council in touch with maintenance issues and any problems in the park. We do walkabouts with the local parks manager and together we make the plans people want in the park.

We have brought thousands of pounds into the park for projects like new steps linking different parts of the park and the creation of a beautiful wildflower meadow with benches and interpretation boards and are hoping that another of our plans, a wildlife pond, will materialise soon.

Our ongoing campaign is for a cafe and toilets in the park and this is looking ever more likely as plans for a cafe, run as a training project for adults with learning difficulties, takes shape.

Together we have made Downhills Park a much better and more pleasant place to be!

www.downhills.org.uk



Adults exercise their creativity at Art in the Park

Chestnuts Park

Friends of **Chestnuts Park** was formed by south Tottenham residents in 1999. We meet in the cafe in the park, which we had to campaign to save when the Council wanted to put up the rent 400%! To celebrate we helped create a little garden there.

Following further campaigning, the tennis courts were refurbished and drainage put in the main field. In fact £700,000 of improvements were recently finalised after 2 years of discussion and co-operation with other user groups and organisations with an interest in the park. Together we have been able to develop a whole new Strategic Plan for Chestnuts Park, including a Five Year Maintenance and Management Plan. We convene the Chestnuts Park Strategy Group to discuss, co-ordinate, fundraise, and carry forward these plans.

Phase I is now done, including a new playground, multi-use games area, wildflower meadow, café terracing & benches, & new paths. We also now have some of the on-site staffing we've campaigned for. Phase 2 is likely to include a new entrance, a safer road crossing, and the opening up of the park by removing and relocating a semi-derelict playcentre building.

For several years we held large Spring or Autumn festivals in conjunction with local residents associations. In May 2008 we co-ordinated the Launch Party/mini-festival for the recent improvements. Looking back its incredible what a small but highly focused group of people can achieve!

Coldfall Wood

It has been a great year for The Friends of **Coldfall Wood** and July brought two bits of good news to confirm it. As well as certification from the Woodland Assurance Scheme, the wood was awarded Green Flag status – a real boost for all involved. The awards will give the Friends more leverage in applying for grants for further improvements to the wood. Already this year we've converted an old lamppost into a signpost for visitors, and commissioned an insect survey with a grant from Haringey's Make a Difference fund. The insect traps have already thrown up some interesting discoveries – pseudoscorpions among them – and we hope will reveal more about the mammals living in the wood.

We established a website with a grant from BT, enabling us to publish a list of meetings and events, as well as a comprehensive history of the wood and recent work done on it, with some wonderful wildlife photos taken by one of our members. This has attracted a few new members who were a great addition to our Spring clear up of the woods.

We've also strengthened links with the local primary school. Having provided them with a set of litter pickers, the classes now take turns to go on regular woods clean-ups. Soon the children will hear all about Coldfall's bug life from our invertebrate expert.

Our next plans are to improve the paths through the woods and erect noticeboards, both of which will help new visitors navigate their way through, and also to hold more events such as expert talks on flora, and night-time bat walks.

www.coldfallwoods.co.uk

Lordship Rec

The Friends of **Lordship Rec** formed in 2001 to rescue and regenerate Tottenham's largest but most neglected green space. As regular users we realised there was a crying need for the basics of any decent large park - public toilets, better play equipment, proper maintenance of paths and benches, good management and daily on-site staffing, good quality and staffed buildings, refreshments and so on.

Over the last few years we have made real progress. Together with the Council, local residents associations and other key concerned organisations, we formed the Lordship Rec Users Forum to get everyone working together to work out what the park needs and how to get the funding for it.

Successes have included the new active play areas, a new pathway, some on-site staffing (at last!), the active involvement of the neighbouring Broadwater Community Centre (including the Back To Earth charity and its food-related projects based there) - and other improvements. We ourselves in the Friends have taken charge of restoring the lake area and more recently the woodlands (where we have created a new path and display boards). And we now manage the park's noticeboards.

The Friends have also published history pamphlets, organised a range of walks, clean-up days and events, and co-ordinated annual community festivals of up to 4,000 people. Not bad for a bunch of volunteers!

We now have around 300 members. It's great there's also a range of other user groups organising activities and speaking up for various interest groups (eg Dog Club, walking group, a group that manage some memorial trees, and recently a new bike users group).

Following years of continuous effort, public consultation, campaigning, and partnership-working between the Friends of Lordship Rec, the Council and others - backed by massive support from local people - the park has now been allocated £4m from the Lottery. We'll get this next year as long as the Council can raise an additional £2.5m, and we all continue to work together to come up with detailed and practical plans for the agreed improvements. These will include a new environmental centre, community space and cafe, a city farm, restoration of a culverted river, an historic model traffic area and an outdoor theatre building, improved maintenance and management... and much more..

As you can see these are exciting, if often exhausting, times and there's lots to do! www.lordshiprec.org.uk



The community comes together to fight for improvements in Lordship Rec at the first Restore the Rec community festival