

JANUARY 2005



November saw the first event organised by the newly-formed Birmingham Open Space Forum. Representatives from park Friends and wildlife conservation groups were brought together with an array of Council officers to discuss a way forward for the rejuvenation of our green spaces.

Management Consultant Alison Millward spoke on: What are the problems & what could the future be?

Workshops followed to discuss planning and funding issues, the Parks Strategy and ways in which the community can be involved in pushing forward the renaissance of open space in Birmingham.

BOSF chair, Emma Woolf of Cotteridge Park Friends, has since published a draft manifesto for comment. It is hoped that BOSF will become a strong ally of the Parks Service in pushing the issue of green space up the new District Committee agenda. **We need to lobby our district officers to ensure that open space issues are recognised in District Community Development Plans.**

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

LITTER PICK AND TIDY-UP DAY

Saturday 12th February 10am

SPRING EVENT

Saturday 2nd April 11am

NATURE WALK

Saturday 11th June

USEFUL NUMBERS:

DISTRICT PARKS MANAGER

SIMON COOPER - TEL: 464 8728

RANGER PATROL - TEL: 454 78 10

POLICE NUMBER NON-EMERGENCY CALLS

0845 113 5000

FLORA AND FAUNA SIGHTINGS IN THE PARK

e.m.p@btinternet.com

BIRMINGHAM AND DIST. BEEKEEPERS

ASSOC. TRAINING APIARY

JOHN MADGWICK TEL: 558 8623

Subscriptions for 2004-5

£5 per household (waged)

and £3 (unwaged). Our

subscription year starts on

1 September. If you have not paid

since then or you have not received a membership card it may mean your subs are owing.

If you would like to become a member of the Friends please contact:

Bob Blackaby, 266 Moor Green Lane, B13 8QL (449 3498 evenings and weekends) with your cheque/cash and a note of your name, address and email if you have one.

Cheques payable to **Friends of Highbury Park.**

HIGHBURY PARK FEASIBILITY STUDY:

Hopefully, many of you will have had the opportunity to fill in a public consultation form in response to the proposals for restoration and enhancement of Highbury Park. Since September, plans and photographs have been on show at Highbury Hall, Kings Heath Library and Kings Heath Community Centre. The last stop will be **Stirchley Community Centre** during the rest of January.

We have received over 100 responses up to now and will **continue gathering responses up until early February.** If you have not had the chance to give us **your** view, contact:

Val Edwards on 303 4763 to ask for a consultation form. Also on Birmingham web site – search for Highbury Park Consultation.

There will be further phases of consultation when we have some idea of the amount of money we might have available. We also need to make sure we engage **young people** in the process. Most of the the responses so far have been from adults.

A provisional costing for a scheme is currently being carried out by a City Council Quantity Surveyor. The idea is to get a 'feel' for the amount of money that we would need to carry out extensive restoration of the Chamberlain Gardens and to introduce modern sport and recreational facilities into the wider park.

The Park has been put forward for the 'long list' of schemes for which the City might make a Heritage Lottery Fund bid. This list is being considered and prioritised by City officers. The Friends Group and the Parks Service are hoping that Highbury will be seen as an important contender.



FRIENDS EVENTS
POND DIP – OCT 2004
LED BY ELLEN PISOLKAR
PAT CALLAWAY REPORTS



This was an excellent event. The weather was kind - no rain and some sunshine - for the sixteen or so adults and half a dozen children who took part, exploring the water in the big pond, the stream and the lily pond in the park.

We had borrowed nets and everyone who wanted had a go. In the big pond we found some small three-spined sticklebacks, some water boatmen and a bloodworm. This, said Ellen was not good, and showed how polluted the water is there - partly by the bread thrown to the ducks which falls to the bottom.

I have often wondered why water running across the path at the east end of this pond is foaming, Perhaps it is not a spring, but comes from one of the buildings on Yew Tree or Queensbridge Road, via a broken pipe. Perhaps detergent is leaking into the pond.

Next we investigated the stream, where Ellen showed us how to gently disturb the water to find creatures. Here there were quite a few leeches - the sort which cannot bite, but Hoover up very small invertebrates -there were also a couple of bloodworms, but otherwise nothing. This was even worse than the pond, said Ellen- we should have found stone flies, shrimps and snails. Water which is not maintaining living creatures is badly polluted, however clear it looks.

Should we be worrying about the spraying of glyphosphate in the park? What else might be causing the problem? Even more worrying, Ellen said that the water was worse then when she last tested it five or six years ago.

The lily pond, in spite of its collection of plastic bottles and other rubbish, was in fact, the least polluted water we looked in. Although at first it just seemed to produce a rich supply of smelly mud, we found a good variety of creatures there- water snails, including ramshorn and greater pond snails, water beetles, water boatmen and sticklebacks. Just as there should be!

Thanks to Ellen, for a fascinating and different look at the park, enjoyed by adults and children alike.

More food for thought on how fragile the



ecosystem of the park is. We need to explore how the polluted water of the pond and stream can be improved.

MEMORIES AND MINCE PIES
DECEMBER 2004

In early December, we enjoyed Spring-like weather as we explored the hidden area of Highbury Park behind Chamberlain House.

We rediscovered, almost intact, the Chamberlain viewing platform. This once rode high in the historic garden but is now hidden by the laurels and rhododendrons rapidly marching across the area.

We walked along the footpath which allowed the Chamberlain family to follow a circular route around their estate. Protected by fencing on both sides, they could look inwards to the meadow within their garden and outwards to fields beyond to see grazing cattle from their hobby farm.

New 'Friends' were amazed to see the 6 metre high wall, constructed between Highbury and Uffculme and made from worn out crucibles from the steel industry.



We 'finished off' with mince pies and mulled wine at Lorna-on-the-corner where we continued browsing historic plans and photographs of the park.

For those wishing to obtain a copy of Phillada Ballard's booklet on 'Joseph Chamberlain's Gardens at Highbury' - we are hoping to republish it. Watch this space