



August 2009

Park News

Hay Meadow

The magnificent and ever-changing Hay meadow opposite the car park has been delighting visitors to the park. It has also been used for educational activities by Fox Hollies school pupils who supplied the artwork for the notice-board by the car park.

The Hay Meadow would normally be cut in August, and the cuttings removed. This is to keep the soil nutrient levels low enough for next year's grasses to prosper. This year, the meadow was cut in July for use as overflow parking. The contractors did not take the cuttings away, and we alerted Quadron and the Parks Department about it. Things should be back to normal next year.



Noticed the Board?

A previous newsletter mentioned the new notice board by the car park but apologies to those who looked for it! Its introduction was delayed for various reasons but it is now there with 'Highbury Park' carved in wood. We want to thank the King's Heath Centre Partnership Clean & Green Committee for their support in funding and arranging manufacture of the board! The Clean & Green Committee also organise the Kings Heath Floral Trail, and had a major role in the King's Heath Big Party on July 4. Their efforts will

be recognised in a *Heart of England* award to be announced 7 September.

Drainage Works & Henbury Wall

The City Council Landscape Practice Group are carrying out a preliminary study of the drainage issue. We expect to hear from them shortly about a firm plan for dealing with seepage and springwater runnels at several points along the length of the Long Pond footpath.

A contractor has been asked to repair a small section of the Henbury Garden Wall as a test. The Landscape Practice Group will make a further determination of how to proceed once that's been looked at.

These repairs are being paid for with Section 106 money. We do not have an approximate costing for the combined works, but will report as it becomes known.

Park Keeper Update

Rob Smith has been busy clearing up litter (20 bags after the hot end of May weekend), cleaning the steps near the Henbury pond and diverting some of the water from springs into drains by the pond. He has been keeping an eye on a few spots where people have gathered for evening parties, lighting campfires and leaving rubbish behind.

Recent Events



Art Walk led by Cathy Clarke, May 2009

On this sunny Sunday we met at the Alcester Road entrance to the park, where botanical artist Cathy Clarke gave us copies of the wonderful map shown above. Trace your way around the map to see the route we took and the associations the park holds for Cathy. Some of those associations are historical: the line of Horse Chestnuts marks the drive of the old Henbury Estate; the walled rose garden evokes the intimate domestic space of that estate.

Further into the walk the Burnt Mound and the signs of Ridge and Furrow signalled the park's earlier

history (see *Ridge and Furrow Walk*, May 2009 Newsletter). Before we entered the Hazel Grove, the bleached remains of a fallen tree reminded Cathy of the work of the artist Paul Nash, and we were given details of other artists and of forthcoming exhibitions of landscape painting.



Elsewhere a fallen oak shaped like the bow of a ship evoked the travels of 19th Century plant hunters. Their efforts to stock the nation's parks, gardens and estates with exotic plants included the world-famous orchid collection at Highbury.

The map labels and descriptive text convey Cathy's detailed knowledge of Highbury Park, share her insights, and give a poetry to the place. The walk was a delight from start to finish. You may contact her through us if you would like to know more. We hope to continue this as an ongoing series combining walks and creative activities. If you are interested, please get in touch.

You may have seen some of Cathy's Highbury-inspired work at the Kitchen Garden Cafe, York Road, Kings Heath. The *Exhibition of New Art Works* by Catharine Clarke and Jeni Neale is on display until 6 September 2009.

Wildflowers in the Park

Highbury Park is home to a vast array of wild plants, although grass cutting means that some flowers are not always visible. The shady areas support native bluebells and the delicate Wood Melick (*Melica uniflora*). Wet patches are home to rushes, reed mace (*Typha latifolia*) and pink-flowered Hemp Agrimony (*Eupatorium cannabinum*).

Some plants are very aggressive, such as Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*) and Himalayan Balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*), each introduced as garden plants then escaping into the wild where they have few obstacles to their rampant spread! Interestingly, some people harvest young knotweed for food with rhubarb-like qualities, so there's some benefit to be had.

Speaking of edibles, we would like to do foraging

excursions and a wildflower survey next year so, look for notices here and on the bulletin boards.

Forthcoming Events

Highbury Park Friends AGM

7.00 p.m. Tuesday 15 September 2009 at the Moseley CDT, Red Room. We are having a scaled down version of the AGM this year, and are moving it to Moseley after two years of meeting in King's Heath. We have booked a room for 30 people, and would like to know how many to plan for. If you are thinking of attending please let us know.

The Moseley Society

The Moseley Society are hosting a talk by Phillada Ballard, author of the *Historic Landscape Appraisal* of Highbury Park. The event will be held from 7.30 p.m., Tuesday 27 October, at the Moseley CDT Building, next door to the Post Office. You may have attended Phillada's earlier talk in June and seen some of the marvellous slides of Highbury gardens in architectural details. This is a chance to absorb more of that fascinating detail!

Annual Subscriptions

Our membership year runs from 1st September to 31 August. Membership is £5 or £3 per household. The money is used to help cover costs of the newsletter, website and public liability insurance for events that we organise.

Cheques may be left at York Supplies, Waterloo Road, in Kings Heath, or posted to Highbury Park Friends c/o Flat D, 65 Oxford Road, Moseley, Birmingham B13 9ES.

Useful Contacts

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Rob Smith

HPF Committee

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<http://www.highburyparkfriends.org.uk>

District Parks Manager

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Ranger Patrol

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Birmingham & District Beekeepers Association

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