



JANUARY 2010

Park News

Rob Smith, the Gardener Park Keeper, as well as clearing litter has also been cutting back branches and tidying areas of the park. He has been wading into the long pond to cut and remove some of the trees that have fallen in. He also tells us that contractors have treated with herbicide an area of Japanese knotweed by the Italian garden.

There are loads of photos of Highbury Park through the seasons on our website. The Park Keeper has been inspired by them – so why not take a look, decide where in the park they have been taken, and find your own inspirations? Here's a photo from the website of the Henburys pond, on December 1.



Henburys Pond is part of the Henburys estate which was established by the 18th century. It is marked on the Map of the Henburys Estate in 1840 based on the King's Norton Tithe Map. The water level has dropped in the last few years and the source of the water has not been found. In the past, this pond was a focus for breeding frogs but these have declined in numbers recently. Another worrying development has been the steady growth of some rather invasive pond plants – for example New Zealand stonecrop.

There have been rumours of a terrapin, the size of a dinner plate. Early morning visitors will often see a heron, and in the past, kingfishers would feed here too. As of January, the pond has frozen over more solidly than at any time in recent memory.

The Henburys rose garden wall, after a storm that knocked off a row of bricks and several years ivy growth, also revealed the tip of the obelisk from the Henburys estate dating back more than 150 years. We moved it against the wall, as shown above. That stone has recently disappeared. We can only hope someone with a desire to preserve a historic feature of the park is taking care of it and will eventually return it in good condition.

Graffiti

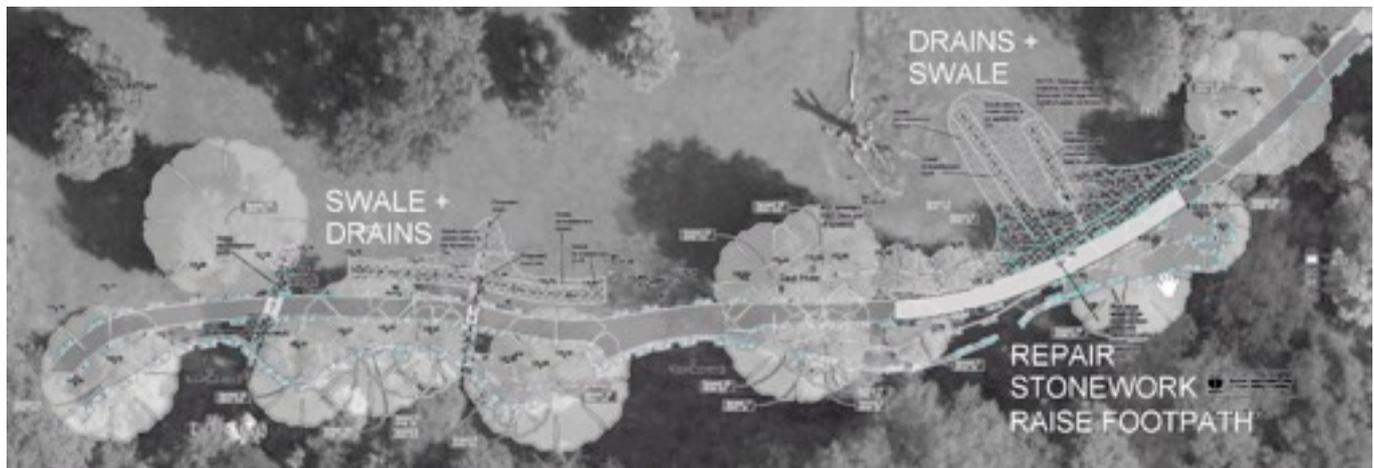
After years of asking local councillors and park management to deal with the graffiti, most of it has been washed off. Rob mentioned it mid-December, and this photo from December 21 shows it's true.



Drainage

North of the Henburys an area of springs whose water pours down the field, over the path and into the long pond, have been investigated as part of the drainage problem we've had for several years. We now know that funding was formally agreed on 17 December, and that work will be carried out in the near future.

Water running over the long pond footpath has been a matter of concern since 2005, when we raised the topic with the Parks Department. Since then we have had occasional meetings about it with Sue Amey and officers from the Landscape Practice Group (LPG). In January 2009 we met to discuss priorities for the Reddings Road Section 106 money - which would normally pay for play or sports resources. However, we raised



The initial footpath improvement plan raises part of the of the footpath, scoops out bits of the slope above, adds two land drains, a manhole, and treatment of the pond edge – including repair of the existing stonework. There may be further revisions after site meetings and discussion of alternatives.

safety issues relating to the Henbury wall, loose paving stones in the Italian Garden, and the drainage. Everyone agreed that resolving the safety issues were a higher priority, with drainage being most important. From that point, LPG staff

The focus has shifted to the area around Manhole D, below the eucalyptus grove, and a major intervention to keep water from crossing the path there. The plan raises the footpath up to 10 inches, scoops out a bit of the slope above, adds two land drains, a second manhole, and treatment of the pond edge - including repair of the existing stonework. A similar intervention is planned for the area further west, involving two sections of land drain alongside the path, a new manhole, pipework under the footpath and a stone sett channel leading to the pond. A third intervention consists of pipework and stone setts from Manhole F. All of this is shown in an improvement plan, which can be downloaded from (<http://is.gd/5Xrat->). At this point, one of the beekeepers got confirmation that both plans are to be carried out. We are a bit uncertain as to whether to applaud the solution for dealing with the two main areas of spring water seepage, or to ask about other apparently unresolved issues. We're expecting to have another site visit to consider those other issues. Part of our concern is that there is another seep part way between Manhole D and E which iced up well before any of the snow arrived. It's outside the areas of regrading shown in the plan, and we don't know if if the improved drainage nearby will clear it up.



made visits to tour affected areas, survey the footpath and make some test channels. Those channels have been maintained and extended by Rob the park keeper, and by bee keepers.

During the summer LPG produced a location plan showing details of existing manholes and other aspects of the affected area. This location plan was superimposed on an obsolete OS map, as the area hasn't been surveyed for some decades. We have a PDF of that plan that can be downloaded from (<http://is.gd/5XrxD->). At that time the idea was to put land drains along the footpath all the way across the silt dump and alongside the footpath by the pond. There was also mention of dredging the upper waterway and raising a section of footpath. That was the last we heard until December.

The silt dump and waterlogging around the apiary are also matters of concern, and we had hoped there'd be a comprehensive watershed survey to look at the causes and set out some environmentally friendly solutions. Again, we hope to meet with officers and work through the various issues.

Council Budget Cuts

The first draft of potential changes to parks and leisure services involves reorganising the Ranger services, which is likely to mean staff cuts as

well. We don't know how this will affect activities and quality of provision, but the Birmingham Open Spaces Forum (BOSF) are gathering information and will prepare a response in due course. Our position will always be that parks and open spaces provide incalculable contributions to quality of life, and deserve proper levels of support.

Recent Events

Highbury Hall Trust Public Meeting

A public meeting held at the Council House on the 28 October 2009 attracted more than a hundred people. The concerns of the meeting were to discuss membership of the Board of Trustees of the Highbury Estate and also to consider the future upkeep and good usage of the hall and grounds. The meeting took place at the instigation of The Charity Commission following expressions of concern from members of the community on the current composition of the Highbury Trust. Birmingham City Council (BCC) are the sole trustee leading to possible conflict of interest in BCCs use of the estate.

Councillor John Alden chaired the meeting, stressing throughout that he was present at the meeting not in his role as a councillor but as head of the BCC Trusts and Charities Sub-committee. Council Officer, Steve Vickers presented the results of a recent non-invasive survey of Highbury Hall and estimated that £3.85 million as the cost of restoring the hall to good order. Councillor Martin Mullaney summarised a BCC proposal on the future of the hall, a proposal that considered revised financial arrangements between the Highbury Trust and BCC and which sought financial viability through extending current banqueting and wedding facilities.

Local individuals and groups gave short presentations on the main concerns. Mary de Vere Taylor spoke of Joseph, Austin and Neville Chamberlain as the greatest social reformers of the 20th century. David Papadopoulos (HPF) spoke of the historical, cultural and environmental spaces of the hall, grounds and park, and of drawing people in through participatory and educational activities. A good example of such activity was given by Chris Sangwin of the Bee Keepers Association. Apiery has been taught in local parks since 1934, first of all in Kings Heath Park and now in Highbury Park. Representing the Moseley Society, Barry Henley proposed a new constitution, and a new management committee composed of community representatives as well as BCC. He made a wealth of proposals on future use of the hall and grounds many of which can be found on the HPF website. Select

A Vibrant Future for a Historic Resource, to see the draft of a concept plan developed by a consortium of local groups. Dr Alison Millward, Readings Road Residents Association, Moseley Regeneration Committee, and also an adviser for Heritage Lottery Fund gave examples of managing charitable heritage properties.

The shared concern of all contributions from the floor was to broaden membership of the Board of Trustees. The Charity Commission was represented by Kate Waring, Senior Case Officer, who offered to facilitate a Review of Governance.

Head of the BCC Trusts and Charities Sub-Committee, John Alden, closed the meeting by suggesting a further public meeting in January/February 2010 when BCC would put forward their proposals. In the meantime views on the issues raised could be sent to him.

NB We have just received the date of the further public meeting. See below in *Future Events*

Highbury in the News

The Birmingham Post has covered the Highbury Estate story in at least 14 items over the past year, including a two-page feature, comment and several letters. Find these through the Birmingham Post website.

Christmas Plant Folklore and Decorations



The HPF stall at the Kings Heath Christmas Fair on Saturday 5 December was decked with holly, ivy, ferns, and laurel, alongside ribbons, tape and scissors. Pamela Smith and Catharine Clarke gave advice on making wreaths, boughs and other decorations with material from gardens and parks. Passers by made decorations to take away, and could also find out about Highbury

Park and HPF from leaflets on the stall. Pamela produced a handout, illustrated by Cathy, on the folklore surrounding some of the plants associated with the Christmas period: holly, ivy, mistletoe, laurel, poinsettia, frankincense, myrrh.

Future Events

Further Highbury Trust Public Meeting to be Held

Birmingham City Council issued this public notice on 22.01.10.

The Council, as Sole Trustee of the Highbury Trust is looking to identify how charitable activity can be maximised at Highbury to satisfy the objects of the trust together with the commercial opportunities that can be developed in order to finance and sustain the charity into the future. The Council is currently using part of Highbury Hall as a successful conference and events centre. Initial proposals and expressions of interest from individuals and /or organisations are requested to be submitted by 15th February and proposers will be invited to make a short initial presentation to a public meeting at the Banqueting Suite, Council House, on 24th February at 7pm.

Please reply by 15th February to: David Tatlow, Director of Legal Services, Birmingham City Council, Ingleby House, 11-14 Cannon Street, Birmingham, B2 5EN.

HPF and the consortium of local groups who have worked consistently to raise the issue of the Highbury Trust will respond, and will attend the meeting. Their response will note that no mention is made of revised governance. Do send in your comments and attend the meeting if you can.

Apiary Work Party

The beekeepers have done a fair bit of work diverting runoff and cutting back branches. We aim to tackle these with a large group of people, and so are organising a pre-season work party for early March (e.g. 6th or 13th). We hope to have volunteers from the Horticultural College, plus stalwarts from the community orchard and Four Seasons projects, and logistical support from the Parks Department and Quadron. If we can get 20 people together, with hand tools and vehicles, we can sort several problems at one go. We will, of course, provide refreshments and other sorts of support. Look for notices on park notice boards in February.

Community Orchard

Discussions about planting a community fruit orchard started about a year ago, partly based on things happening elsewhere in the neighbourhood, like the Gro-Fun project, the Fox

Hollies apple grafting workshop, and the historic landscape report mention of orchards at Highbury. There are no specific proposals yet, but we hope to keep developing the idea, and welcome any interest from people who might like to join in. Look for info on park notice boards about a fruit tree grafting session in late March.

HPF Committee Membership

Work and family commitments among HPF committee members has meant our activities have been delayed more than we'd like, so we are putting out the call for additional members. We are looking for people who can attend committee meetings every month or so, and take on a particular task, such as helping gather information, or write pieces for the website and newsletter. We also need to develop and maintain contacts with other groups, and to stay in touch with local events, issues and decisions. Locating resources so that we can put on more events would be valuable. If you can set time to help please let us know via email or phone.

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 the costs of the newsletter, the website and the 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, Birmingham B13 9ES.

Useful Contacts

HPF Committee

David: 242 1845 or Ellen 444 0819
HPF c/o Flat D, 65 Oxford Road, B13 9ES

E-mail:

contact@highburyparkfriends.org.uk

HPF web site

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

District Parks Manager

Sue Amey: 464 8728

Ranger patrol

454 7810 (use this to report urgent matters)

Birmingham & District Beekeepers

Association John Madgwick: 558 8623

Local Councillors

Emily.Cox@birmingham.gov.uk

Ernie.Hendricks@birmingham.gov.uk

Martin.Mullaney@birmingham.gov.uk