

Champions, whose aims include improving 'the biodiversity interest of a site with management plans incorporating biodiversity features that can be protected, enhanced or created'. We have set about developing the first two projects and hope to address the pond at a future date.

The aim of the wildflower project is to promote floral biodiversity mainly through the inclusion of native wildflowers. This may also be good for the bees as nectar rich plants will be included. Other creatures will benefit from the stable habitat provided. A secondary diversity benefit is the challenge to the dominance of invasive Himalayan Balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*), which has overrun the shady areas around the apiary. Balsam is not especially competitive, and can be managed through simple weeding. We have chosen a spot that's mostly balsam, partly shaded, and somewhat damp, and we are preparing it for seeding and planting with a small variety of native wildflowers, such as foxglove, ragged robin and bog primula. With two volunteers, we have cleared most of the balsam, and are now pulling bramble and raking over the soil. See the before and after images at the head of this article. Special thanks to Steve Draper (in photo above) who has done much of this work.

If you'd like to help with this, please contact us. We've been working in the weekday early evenings, but will arrange a weekend session if enough people request it. We expect to purchase seed and start within a few weeks, and intend to organise a planting event. If you would like to join in, look for notices here, online, and on the park notice-boards. Once the patch is planted volunteers will be needed to keep an eye on things such as weeding the balsam again next year and increasing the area and number of plants. Do get in touch if you would like to take part at any stage (see Useful Contacts at the end of this newsletter).

Park Keeper

Park Keeper Gardener, Rob Smith has worked in Highbury Park for 14 months now, and what a difference he's made! We'd like to celebrate and, say how much his work and presence in the park are appreciated. Many of you have said how much tidier the park is and that you feel safer knowing Rob is a daily presence in the park. To that, we want to add that his enthusiasm and conscientious work are widely admired, and to note that we are lucky to have such a friendly, approachable Park Keeper. We know that Rob is making a big difference in the park, so if you have more that you would like this newsletter to say about the work of Rob and his co-workers, please let us know.

Highbury Update

The questions around management of the Highbury estate as a trust asset are still being addressed, with some success, in a series of meetings between campaigners and council officers. Those who attended February's public meeting may recall that the Chief Legal Officer, David Tatlow, agreed to liaise with both campaigners and officers, and to take on the task of resolving the legal status and financial matters of all of Birmingham's trusts and charities. He (and/or subordinates) has met with lead campaigners several times since then, and has asked for input regarding Terms of Reference for future trust working. The campaign group has become, in effect, an advisory group. This group will continue working on the issues as set out previously, but will now adopt a broader remit, including a high profile public role. The group will draw on the expertise and concerns of Highbury's wider communities, so at this point we need your input as much as ever. To take part in the decision-making process, please get in touch with Tony Thapar via the Moseley CDT.

Recent Events

Forage and Folklore in Highbury Park

On Sunday 2nd May a group of 50 people met at the entrance of Highbury Park to begin a forage and folklore walk led by Alys Fowler and Pam Smith.



As we walked Alys introduced us to foraging, beginning with key rules: **don't eat what you can't identify**, leave some for birds and insects to eat, wild food has a different make up to the food we usually eat so eat a little bit at first, don't eat wild food during pregnancy, beware of dog pee - wash food first. Foraging peaks are spring and autumn when plants are young and tender.

En route Alys pointed out a wealth of plants, indicated their uses and the best time to pick them. We found nettles, rich in Vitamin C and also used as a salt substitute. Try nettles in a soup, or made into a tea. Fast growing lemon balm calms upset stomachs when made into a tea. We learned with surprise that geum (the weed that takes over my garden!) can be eaten cooked, and even 'sticky willy' that dreadful invader, can be steamed and eaten! Hedge garlic, lightly fried was recommended. We found plenty of dandelion leaves, lime leaves and wild sorrel, all great for salads. Beech leaves, early in the season add a nutty flavour to salads. Generously Alys pointed out places where wild strawberries and wild raspberries grow. Drink as well as food was on the foraging menu, including elder flower cordial and elder flower champagne.

Pam began by pointing out that the Latin names of plants often derive from folklore names, and as we walked Pam related the folk lore associated with the plants in the park. First stop was an oak tree: touching an oak was believed to ward off illness while carrying an acorn was believed to deter lightning. Yew trees were a pagan sacred tree and are often found in church yards. Elder leaves give off a stink and perhaps that is why they are associated with witches. It was believed that witches could turn into elder trees. More favourably a twig of elder in a pocket was meant to ward off soreness from riding. Intriguingly folk lore has it that ferns could make you become invisible. We did not work out how, but we learned a more accessible use for their bracken as a mulch for blueberries and other ericaceous plants.



Here is Pam in the black hat. Still visible although standing on bracken, but with her back to the camera. This is a brief summary of a fabulous walk, informative and fun throughout. If you would like more information on folk lore and foraging

see, Roger Phillips, *Wild Food*, Richard Mabey *Food for Free* the Internet site of The Wild Food School, Cornwall.

Photography Walk

On Sunday 13 of June 12 people met for a photography walk around Highbury Park led by Su Richardson and Doug Taylor. The group ranged from complete beginners, through photography student, to professional photographers. Conversation never stopped as ideas, expertise and experience were exchanged.



Su's theme for the day was "less is more" and this revealed the advantages of choosing a specific subject, for example clouds, shadows, framing (for example shooting trees through a frame of branches), colours, or shapes - such as circles in the bridge example below. This approach helped us to see a familiar landscape anew. That's Su in black in the third photo above.

We walked in the direction of sites previously photographed by Doug. Some documented the park at earlier periods. Others showed wonderful effects of light, shadow and texture. As we looked at those photographs Doug gave us insights into shutter speeds, panning, how to retain texture even in photographs with a long shot, and taking photographs towards the light source.



Both Su and Doug talked about their sources of inspiration and certainly left me inspired, and with a set of ideas and techniques that I will draw on for a long time.

Did you take photographs on the walk?

If so we would like to see them, and to have your permission to put them on the HPF website. I meant to mail you about this but unfortunately I mislaid the list of names and email addresses. If you would like to select some of your photos, send them to christine.hardy@blueyonder.co.uk

Future Events

**Tree Recognition Event
a practical event for all ages,
recognising, drawing and collecting
material for pressing. Led by local
botanist, Martin Collins.**

Sunday, 25 July 2010, 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.

**Meet at the Alcester Road entrance to
Highbury Park at 2.p.m. Bring a notebook
and a pencil.**

Volunteers, Committee Members & Trustees wanted

Highbury Park Friends is a volunteer-based organisation, individuals work within it because Highbury Park matters to them. We organise events in the park - History Walk, Art Walk, Folk Lore and Foraging, Photography, and Tree Recognition to name the most recent ones. We carry out voluntary work - litter picks, clearing land, planning the forthcoming orchard and wild flower garden. We have contributed to the successful campaign to set up an advisory group to the Highbury Trust.

We publish a quarterly newsletter, and guides to aspects of the park, we run a website, and carry out research, for example the Tree Survey. Behind the scenes a great deal of liaison goes on with regard to maintenance of the park and neighbourhood activities, and also fund raising.

Highbury Park Friends is a strong and active group and makes a difference. To keep up the momentum and to spread the demanding load we would like more volunteers to join us, with a view to becoming Committee Members and sharing some of the tasks mentioned. The HPF Committee meets once a month, for about 2 hours, in the CDT building in Moseley village. Get in touch if you would like to come along. There are also opportunities for additional Trustees to take on responsibilities.

If you have ideas for events you would like to see in the park - perhaps relating to a neighbourhood group that you are involved in - contact us as we may be able to help organise, promote and support activities. PARKS NEED FRIENDS and HPF needs active members. We look forward to hearing from you.

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.

When you join or renew, please let us know if you prefer paper or email newsletters. We will send out enquiries/reminders if your subscription lapses.

Useful Contacts

HPF Committee

David: 242 1845
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.uk
Martin.Mullaney@birmingham.gov.uk

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