



July 2012

Park News

Long Appreciation

In response to Ellen Pisolkar's article on the Hay Meadow in our August newsletter last year, HPF member, Elizabeth Horton, wrote to us and sent this photo.



(Elizabeth and John Horton, photo taken by their mother, 1937)

I am particularly interested in the wonderful array in the meadow, and enclose proof that it has been a lifelong love of Highbury - see photo of me in 1937 admiring my first encounter with the hayfield. At that time, we understand, a section of the grounds was put to grass for the cart horse which was kept to

pull the mower around the park. I shall be down there again shortly. (Elizabeth Horton.)

More memories of the park came in response to the delightful article by new member, Anne Gilbert, in the HPF March 2012 newsletter. David Blick has enjoyed Highbury Park for a very long time, and here he wonderfully brings it to life.

I was born in a house opposite Highbury Park and now live in the house next door to my place of birth in 1940. I was absent from the area for 9 years when I lived in Stirchley.

I have never found the park and its open spaces lacking in interest, here pirates fought the king's sailors, cowboys fought indians, knights fought for King Arthur, Vikings climbed aboard fallen trees which became longboats. Tree protection metal work became the conning towers of submarines, trees provided seats of the Spitfires that we flew in our minds. Here too the first jet plane frightened the assembled children.

I remember the park in all its original glories, round thatched summer house in which the park keeper, Uncle Tom sat, the playing fields, thatched crescent shaped changing rooms, the bowling greens, putting greens and tennis courts, water fountains for the thirsty, public toilets used for their intended design.

The war had left its mark: barrage balloons with mobile engines and large round metal rings through which the cables stretched skywards, bomb holes - later called ponds - in which dogs recovered sticks thrown by their owners, allotments where the people dug for victory on the former playing fields.

There were Tea Rooms and monuments, snow slopes in winter, rose gardens, rock gardens, Italian gardens, bridges over the pond to the central island, trees of all types and creatures to amaze young minds, frogs, toads, newts, hedgehogs, foxes and birds of many varieties. Hedges contained hawthorn, elder, brambles, crab apples, pig nuts and stinging nettles. Notice boards carried the messages of the bye laws, litter bins were used, and the park was enjoyed in Sunday best clothes after morning service at St Hughes.

A quiet place? Long may it continue to provide a haven for those who wish to enjoy its calm without leaving the City. (David E. Blick.)

'Discover Highbury Park'

For yet more appreciation of this much loved park look out for the new discovery guide for Highbury Park, created as part of the Kings Heath Floral Trail for *Britain in Bloom*.



Artist Catharine Clarke and ecologist Ellen Pisolkar collaborated together on an illustrated walking and exploring journey through the park. The guide celebrates the park's rich history formed by the tapestry of the three estates; Highbury, Uffculme and the Henburys. It also highlights some of the magnificent flora and fauna to be found within the park during the year. A PDF version of 'Discover Highbury Park' will be available on HPF website, or pick up a guide locally. (Catharine Clarke.)

For a chance to enjoy the new guide at two events, an exhibition and a walk, see the Future Events section on page four of this newsletter.

Park Nature Notes

Muntjac deer have been seen early morning.

Ring-necked parakeets have nested in the park this year but in a new location to the nest of 2009. Rooks have nested in the park for the first time as far as we know. At least two

young were raised. The crows were probably not happy.



Rook: pointy beak with bare patch at base.

Crow: blunter beak, at least 60 in park



An in-depth survey of Henbury Pond has been carried out. The first for a pond in south Birmingham. 38 invertebrate species have been found including caddisfly larvae, sticklebacks, water boatmen and water beetles. (Ellen Pisolkar.)

Dog Log

Recently two long standing members of HPF wrote to say that after years of walking pleasurably through Highbury Park they now found their pleasure dashed by the number of dogs in the park.

Running round the park over the last 30 years I ran into a few dog problems myself until a friend gave me good advice: look away from a dog, rather than towards it and the dog will pay you no attention. What a difference that made, since then I have not been run at, knocked over, or pinned against a tree by any dog in the park.

I thought it might be helpful to find out the times of day when there are large numbers and fewer numbers of dogs in the park. I started a dog log, only to discover no set pattern. A few months ago I was startled to come across a host of dog walkers, with a great many dogs, all together on the main path. However, walking at different times of day over the past three weeks I have not seen any such large group again. I hoped to ask Park Keeper, Rob, for information on large groups of dog walkers, but at the moment he is away on mowing duty elsewhere in the city.

Here is my log for 7 days, not all in the same week.

Dogs + indicates dogs on leads
Dogs -- indicates dogs with owners but not on leads

Wednesday	6.40 a.m. to 7 a.m.	4 dogs --
	7.30 a.m. to 7.47 a.m.	no dogs
Tuesday	8.20 a.m. to 8.45 a.m.	2 dogs + 5 dogs --
Sunday	9.00 a.m. to 9.20 a.m.	4 dogs --
	10.20 a.m. to 10.35 a.m.	2 dogs + 9 dogs --
Tuesday	2.50 p.m. to 3.35 p.m.	4 dogs + 7 dogs --
Monday	4.50 p.m. to 5.05 p.m.	4 dogs + 5 dogs --
Friday	6.37 p.m. to 7.30 p.m.	14 dogs --

You will see that dogs were being exercised in the park at all times of day (except on one Wednesday between 7.30 a.m. and 7.47 a.m.) and that most frequently dogs were not on lead. The Birmingham City Council (BCC) 'Dogs in Park Policy' states, "where dogs are allowed to roam freely without a lead in areas identified above then fixed penalty notices will be issued to the owners". This seems to suggest that dogs should be kept on leads in public parks, but the statement is not clear, we will seek clarification. It seemed to me that on the 7 days of my short sample, dog owners, dogs, dog shy walkers and cyclists were all sharing the park in a friendly and considerate way. Dog walkers were scattered around the park and not all in one group.

The BCC policy also states, "Please clear up immediately if your dog fouls. This is a legal requirement under the dogs Act 1996". Plastic bag dispensers and bins support this law in the park, but I noticed that the bag dispensers were empty and only three of the five bins were lined. Conscientious dog owners carry their own plastic bags. To see the full policy notice go to www.birmingham.gov.uk.

It is important that the park is well used. My walks around and cycle rides through the park were mainly on rainy days. I could see how important the park is to all the users I saw, those with, and those without dogs, out enjoying the park in all weathers. While day light hours are long there is the chance to see the park at different times of day, and to choose the time to best suit you. Let us know what you find and what you think.
(Christine Hardy.)

Highbury Estate

Highbury Trust Options Appraisal

This appraisal was carried out by Elizabeth Perkins, of Birmingham Conservation Trust, at the request of Birmingham City Council and was released to Mary de Vere Taylor, as the representative of stake holder groups, in April this year. It gave details of two options.

The first envisaged that Birmingham City Council as Sole Corporate Trustee for the estate would retain responsibility for the majority of the Trust assets. Wedding and conference catering would continue. Periods not booked for these activities might be allocated to "school visits, theatrical productions, guided tours, history lectures and would also involve activities and events in the grounds"(8.4.1.).

The second option "would see the Trust Assets leased for a minimum of twenty five years at a peppercorn rent to an independent trust with a trading arm." A residential college offering leisure courses, with Chamberlain House converted into residential accommodation, is the proposal at the centre of this option. (8.51). Wedding and conference catering would continue.

To access the full document go to highburyparkfriends.org.uk/text/reports/trust/Public_Consultation_Report_2012-04-12.doc where David Papadopoulos has helpfully put the whole document on line.

In the short time available to provide an initial response the HPF committee consulted widely, sought expert advice, and submitted comments on the appraisal and its proposals, together with a wealth of vibrant ideas on the future development of the estate. Our responses were concerned to recognise the Grade II listed building, the public park and its biodiversity, and the important part played in Birmingham's heritage by the Chamberlain Family. We hoped to see strong links with the local communities and to recognise the city wide and national significance of the estate.

As we looked forward to public discussion of options and ideas in this process of consultation, circumstances changed. See the articles following on page 4.
(Christine Hardy.)

Chamberlain House

The BCC Strategic Director for Children, Young People and Families sought approval to purchase Chamberlain House and Associated Land from the Highbury Trust with the intention of then refurbishing and extending the building to allow Uffculme School to transfer into this new accommodation by September 2012. (BCC Public Report, 10 May 2012.)

Highbury Trust, New Councillors on the Sub-committee.

With the changes following local elections in May, new councillors were appointed to sit on the Trusts and Charities sub-committee with a new Chair – Narinder Kooner. HPF contacted the new chair and on the 20th June the Sub-committee met at Highbury Hall with members of Highbury Park Friends, the Community Orchard Group and the Highbury Beekeepers. Elizabeth Perkins from the Birmingham Conservation Trust (who produced the Options Appraisal) led a tour of the estate which includes Highbury Park to the north of the long pond but did not include the inside of the hall. The tour was informal and the councillors were plied with information on the way round.

Following the tour, members of the public were asked to leave while the trustees considered the Options Appraisal. It is to be hoped that the decisions they make will be for the long term good of the Highbury Estate and the people of Birmingham, and that problems of neglect and conflict of interest will be resolved. The next meeting of the sub-committee will be in September. (Ellen Pisolkar.)

Future Events

Wild Life Walks with Paul Anthony Thursday 16th August 2012

**Meet at Highbury Park car park at 7 p.m.
This date is provisional. Please see park
notice boards near to this date.**

'Discover Highbury Park' Art Exhibition - Catharine Clarke

10 July - 17th September 2012

**All Saints Centre, Kings Heath Village
Square. Original drawings and paintings
created for the guide will be on display.**

Highbury Park Walk and Exhibition Visit

Saturday 28 July 2012

Meet at Alcester Road Entrance at 11 a.m.

**Join Catharine Clarke and Ellen Pisolkar on
a guided walk around Highbury Park to
launch the new discovery guide. The walk
will be followed by a visit to the associated
exhibition at All Saints Centre and Cafe in
Kings Heath**

Subscription Renewals

Our subscription year runs from September-August. Rates remain £5 or £3, and cheques, made payable to Highbury Park Friends, can be left at York Supply in Kings Heath, or posted to Highbury Park Friends c/o York Supply, 57 Waterloo Road, B14 7SD.

Like to Get Involved?

Would you like to get involved in suggesting and organising events, carrying out research, writing and delivering newsletters, contributing to the website, liaising with other groups or other HPF committee activities? If you can contribute an hour or two per month do contact us at contact@highburyparkfriends.org.uk

We'll be delighted to hear from you.

Useful Contacts

General HPF Enquiries

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HPF web site

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

**Birmingham & District Beekeepers
Association,** John Madgwick: 558 8623

Ranger Patrol: 454 7810 - for urgent matters.

Birmingham City Council: 464 8728