Autumn Bulletin October 2022

Welcome to our Autumn bulletin. After a long, hot Summer, it's surprising how quickly the parched grass begins to green again. We find ourselves once more in the Autumn months of long shadows and hedgerows full of blackberries, dodging the many showers of acorns that have fallen this year in their thousands! In September, we met many visitors during the annual Heritage Open Day held in Highbury Hall, where we had a stall and signed up some new members. It is always interesting to hear about different people's connection with and affection for Highbury; it really is a special place at the heart of our big, bustling city.

EVENTS 2022

We have just one event left for this year.

Join us if you can for a **Tree Walk** led by Alf Dimmock on **Tuesday 1st November.**

We are hoping for some wonderful Autumn colour in the park this year!

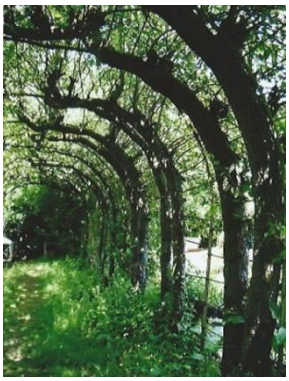
Blossoming Together Project

Celebrating New Trees for Highbury

The National Trust writes: “Birmingham, described historically as a ‘town ringed by blossom’, was once surrounded by gardens and orchards but since the 1900s the number of orchards has dropped by 85%. We are working to redress the blossom balance by offering 600 trees to residents, community groups and business around the city, to bring more blossom to Birmingham.”

We are delighted to be the recipients of 9 blossom trees from this lovely project: cherry, apple and pear trees. By chance, we were the first community organisation to receive trees from the National Trust. Our volunteers braved wind and rain to plant them in the Henbury’s Garden, with the help of Tori and Katy from the National Trust and senior Park Ranger, Alf Dimmock. We hope the new blossom will provide pleasure to us all when we walk in the park during the Spring, in addition to providing new habitats and food for our local wildlife. A big thank you to the National Trust and our volunteers.

Pergola Project



10 apple and 5 pear trees cloned from the Chamberlain Highbury fruit collection (held at Four Seasons) were planted in the rose beds near Shutlock Lane earlier in the Summer. These are all from the original estate and many are from the Chamberlain pergola in particular. The plan is to recreate the fruit pergola, modelled upon the one that was once a part of the Highbury kitchen garden. The fruit trees were grafted in 2019 by volunteers with guidance from Rob Tilling (Lets Grow Together/Fruit & Nut Village) and are nearly all at least 120-year-old varieties. In time the fruit trees will form a mini-orchard.

Volunteers from the Chamberlain Highbury Trust, Lets Grow Together, Fruit & Nut Village and Highbury Park Friends planted the trees. To help settle the trees in during their first year in their new location, they needed a regular bucket of water or two once a week, more often when the weather was hot. Volunteers from Highbury Park Friends took part in early morning watering over the summer to help establish the trees.

Nature Notes by E.M.P

Ivy flowers are a really important food source for insects, including honeybees, at a time when few other nectar sources are available. Look out for bees, flies and other insects on sunny days. The ivy then fruits, just in time for the birds that overwinter in the park.

Healthy soil teems with fungal hyphae but Autumn is the best time to look for their strange and ephemeral fruiting bodies. 50 species were recorded in the park in 2019 and there are probably hundreds more to be spotted. Different habitats support different species – grassland, dead wood, and leaf litter all have their specialist fungi. Some fungi have a symbiotic association with trees. Fly Agaric passes nutrients to Silver Birch trees in exchange for sugars.

Tree of the month: September 2022

Sweet Chestnut *(Castanea sativa)*

Family: *Fagaceae*

Take a stroll this time of year from the car park, heading towards the Children's Play Area and you will pass by several trees, either side of your path. Displayed prominently above their long, dark green serrated leaves are a mass of spiky spheres. It is as though the trees themselves are bedecked with hundreds of bright green sea urchins! On closer inspection, what you can see are the spiny fruit husks of the Sweet Chestnut; a protective case surrounding the ripening edible nuts enclosed within. Not to be confused with Horse Chestnuts, whose nuts/conkers are inedible, Sweet (or Spanish) Chestnut trees are believed to have been first introduced from the Mediterranean to Britain by the Romans. Botanically, they are referred to as an *archaeophyte*; a plant species that was introduced then naturalised in a region/country prior to the late 15th Century. As a valuable source of carbohydrate, it is thought that traditionally the nuts were ground and made into a porridge for Roman soldiers. However, their culinary uses are many and various particularly in Italy and France. They may be puréed to make sauces and soups, used as a stuffing, roasted, or used in sweet dishes such as the dessert *Monte Bianco* and *Marron Glacé*, sweet chestnuts that have been candied and glazed. Later in the season, they may be ground to make a flour and used in a variety of foodstuffs such as pasta, polenta, cakes and pancakes.

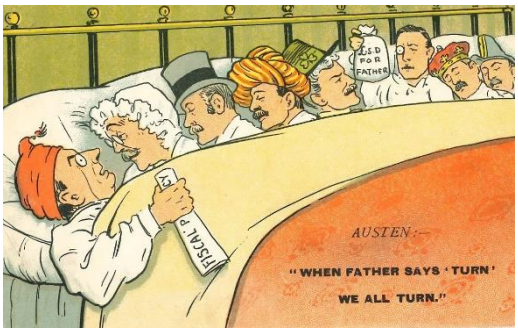
Sweet Chestnuts are in the same family as Oaks and Beeches. They do especially well in the relatively warmer climate of Southern England. For several centuries areas of Kent and Sussex were synonymous with the coppicing of Sweet Chestnuts, used in the production of hop poles and fencing. They can be extremely long-lived and develop a huge girth. One of the most famous examples in England is the glorious *Totworth Chestnut of Gloucestershire*, believed to be over 1,000 years old. From its hollow trunk, several fallen branches have naturally regenerated, giving the appearance of a cluster of trees surrounding the original specimen. Though our Highbury trees are somewhat slimmer in stature, they are a beautiful addition to the park nonetheless! As Autumn sets in, the foliage turns to shades of rosy brown and ochre and their fruit begin to fall. Don't forget to head back in the Spring to catch sight of the delicate cascading flowers, which fall from the stems; their starry yellow male flowers at the tip and the smaller, green female flowers near the leaf axil.

Find out more about trees in Highbury Park by visiting our website and download our illustrated ***Discover Trees in Highbury Park*** leaflet

https://highburyparkfriends.org.uk/wp/habitat-wildlife/shrubs-trees/tree-surveys/

Highbury's History - Joseph Chamberlain (1836 - 1914)

Business man, Politician, Education Reformer



Postcard from the private collection
Of HPF Member Gail Pittaway

In the early 1900's Joseph Chamberlain sought to introduce his policy of Tarif Reforms and Imperial Protectionism thereby challenging the long held British principles of Free Trade. This policy was extremely contentious as it not only divided the government but also split the political parties of the day. He called for the introduction of tariffs on cheap foreign imports from abroad, which had brought British producers to the verge of ruin, and no or lower tariffs on goods imported from Britain's colonies and dominions, which he also sought to protect.

Chamberlain's policy was heavily lampooned as illustrated in this postcard. It shows a caricature of Joseph and his famous supporters, including Austen Chamberlain and Arthur Balfour Prime Minister, as bedfellows. The satire would have been appreciated by the public of the day, who would have been conversant with the politics and politicians, sharing the humour with friends and family by exchanging this and similar postcards.

The regular monthly Open Days at Highbury Hall, run by Chamberlain Highbury Trust have proved very popular with visitors during 2022 and are set to continue in to 2023. It is the perfect opportunity to experience the strikingly grand gothic interior of the former home of Joseph Chamberlain. The building is open on the first Monday of the month, 11am - 4pm. There are guided tours though-out the day; choose from a general tour, behind-the-scenes or (weather permitting) gardens tour. (Or all three!) Refreshments are available, along with local history books and Highbury inspired postcards, cards and prints for sale.

Train Stations update - Camp Hill Line

Now that the first phase of preparatory work is complete, construction work of the three new stations by the company *Volker Fitzpatrick* has begun. The names of the three new stations have been confirmed as Pineapple Road, Kings Heath and Moseley Village, terminating at New Street. **All three stations are currently planned to open at the same time** (subject to change during the construction phase) in **December 2023**. Management of the stations will then be managed by *West Midlands Trains*, running a half-hourly service.

Construction of Kings Heath Station – Work has already begun on site, with the current phase involving the setting up two work compounds; one in the top corner of Highbury Park (Alcester Road) and a smaller compound on the site of the retail park, behind the gym. The main entrance to Highbury Allotments will still be accessible. An alternative pedestrian access point from Alcester Road into the park will be established. There will be tree cutting works scheduled to take place between 22nd October – 27 November, to clear the area for the main part of construction. Both compounds will be fenced off, and will not be open to the public. The compound in Highbury Park will also have hoardings around it for the duration of the build. It is hoped that there will be a variety of public engagement activities happening during the construction process organised by *West Midlands Rail Executive* (WMRE) in conjunction with local community groups.

Keep up to date with progress by signing up to email updates from WMRE.
Go to www.wmre.org.uk/wmrpnewsletter to find out more.

Or why not join the local community group, *Friends of Kings Heath Station.*
www.facebook.com/KingsHeathStation/
Email: friendsofKHstation@gmail.com

Don't forget to follow Highbury Park Friends on Social Media!

TWITTER: @HighburyPark FACEBOOK: Highbury Park Friends
INSTAGRAM: @Highburyparkfriendsbrum

Contributors to our Summer Bulletin - Anne Gilbert, Catharine Clarke, Ellen Pisolkar and Gail Pittaway
Ivy and Fly Agaric Photographs by Brian Ecott
Our next bulletin will be out in December 2022.