HPF Bulletin April 2022

Welcome to our Spring bulletin

There is a profusion of pink and white blossom hanging from the trees. The park resonates with birdsong. Migrating blackcaps and chiffchaffs have returned from Africa. Young green leaves are emerging, and the winter mud is finally starting to dry out. Welcome to our Spring 2022 bulletin. We've already held a couple of great events this year and there are details of more to follow in this bulletin. Hoping to see you in the park soon.

Archaeology Walk with Mike Hodder. 27.3.2022

26 people participated in this fascinating event. Mike Hodder, ex Birmingham City Council Archaeologist walked us round the park to view mediaeval ridge and furrow (an ancient system of ploughing), a lynchet where soil is moved onto a slope from ancient ploughing, and Bronze Age burnt mounds used as saunas, situated by the stream. It seems incredible that so much history is still visible in our local park!

Looking after the trees at Highbury. 1.4.2022.

We were blessed with a sunny, but cold morning when Alf Dimmock, Senior Park Ranger and Steve Flood, Birmingham City Council Tree Officer led a group of 34 people and 2 dogs around the park to explain how we look after our trees, how to spot a diseased tree and why we leave fallen timber in situ. Many thanks to them both for a really interesting morning.

Lost or stolen?

It's only a few months since Izzy Knowles and Moseley Litterbusters gifted us this lovely banner asking people to keep the park clean and tidy. It was attached quite firmly to the railings by the entrance but has disappeared. Does anyone know anything about what happened to it, please?

Nature Notes

Buff-tailed Bumblebees

Bombus terrestris is one of the larger British species and one of the first to appear in the Spring. The large queens fly low over the ground looking for suitable small holes e.g. rodent holes, to nest in. Here they lay eggs which turn into smaller worker bees and a colony is started which, unlike Honey bee colonies, does not last over the winter. EMP

HPF member Ann Flynn shares a poem she wrote

Visit to Highbury Hall

One the birth of December
I stood with the so-called
living.
An historic room embraced
the curious.
A tall window invited eyes to
witness
An alignment of trees:
Their form rooted in truth
Sang with the wind.
Time backtracked, boarders
journeyed
Through the throat of a gong.
In the tones of a flower seller,
The guide recalled forgotten
names,
Their embodiment brief as
stardust.
Voices from different strands
re-echoed
Down wide-shouldered stairs,
Words imprinted in the
ambience
Like carvings displayed upon
the doors.
Rumours of apparitions
fuelled figures.
The building had the
hallmarks of a temple,
Mellowed in the mouth of
winters

Tree of the month. March 2022
Cat Clarke, Botanical Artist.

If ever there was a genus of trees that are susceptible to the vagaries of our British weather, then it must be that of the Magnolia. Each March, is a precarious time for the flowers as they begin to emerge from their hairy buds. Frost, wind, rain or snow can blight their brief flowering period, causing damage to their delicate, fleshy petals (known as *tepals).* However, if the weather conditions are favourable, then a display of magnolia flowers is a glorious sight, set against the clear blue sky of an early Spring day.

Magnolias are ancient plants with a once far-reaching global distribution. Fossilised specimens have been discovered dating back to the Cretaceous Period. Magnolias now grow indigenously in South East Asia and eastern North America, Central America, South America and West Indies. Historically they were cultivated extensively in parts of China and Japan. Its botanical name was first used in 1703, derived from the French botanist and Director of the Montpellier Botanical Garden, *Pierre Magnol* (1638 – 1715).

Here in Highbury Park, we have two Magnolia trees, located on the wide path to the right of the Beech Copse. The trees formed part of The Highbury Park Arboretum, that was planted in celebration of the Queen's Ruby Jubilee in 1992. The white magnolia, *Magnolia x lobeneri,* is a hybrid between *M.kobus* and *M.stellata.* The new flowers are initially blushed with pink, growing in an upright cup shape, before the tepals slowly open outwards and then curve downwards, creating the appearance of a white star. (Hence *'stellata'*, from the Latin *stellatus*, meaning 'covered with stars'.) In Autumn, hard, cone-like fruits appear. appear. For most of the year, the trees largely fade into the landscape.

Events

Sunday, May 1st, 10.30am-12.00pm, The City Nature Challenge comes to Highbury; event leader Jake Williams, Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust.

The City Nature Challenge is a four day competition (29th April - May 2nd this year) where different cities around the world compete to see how much wildlife they can spot and record. At Highbury we have taken part the last few years and the West Midlands has done really well. To help you record your sightings and upload them to the inaturalist website we have organised an event in the park. Meet in the car park - bring a phone or camera to take pictures, and off we go! Please wear suitable footwear for uneven ground.

Sunday, July 10th. 10.30am. A walk around the Henburys area of Highbury with Andy Bishop of Kings Heath Local History Group. " The Henburys - a lost house of the Highbury Estate". Meet in the car park. Everyone welcome.

September 6th. Bat Night. Details to be confirmed

Membership Matters

We currently have 131 paid up members of Highbury Park Friends; thank you all for your on-going support. If you are able to take out a standing order next time you renew it really helps us as it cuts down on admin.

We need help with all sorts of things so if you would like to become more involved with HPF please email anne@highburyparkfriends.org.uk and we can discuss possibilities

Don't forget you can follow us on social media

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