# HPF Bulletin July 2015

## Himalayan Balsam

A tall plant with pretty purple flowers, Himalayan Balsam has been spreading through Highbury like wildfire in the last few years, particularly in the wetter areas. Each plant can produce up to 800 seeds. These are dispersed widely as the ripe seedpods shoot their seeds up to 7m (22ft) away Several volunteers concerned about the invasive nature of the plant held a work party in July and managed to pull out over 2,000 plants.. They concentrated on the Moor Green Lane side of the park. Thanks to Martin and Nicky for all their hard work

**photo courtesy of Martin Richards**

## Nature Notes

### Yorkshire Fog

The purple-tinged swathes of Yorkshire Fog grass are at their best at this time of the year in the Henbury Meadow. The name is thought to come from the Old Norse 'Fogg' meaning long, damp grass. It is a valuable food plant for a number of butterfly species including Small Skippers. See if you can spot it amongst all the other grasses! EMP.

## The Mystery Man with a Machete

Some of you have been asking about the mystery man with a machete who, we reported in the last bulletin, had been wreaking havoc in the park. We are pleased to feedback that illegal hacking appears to have stopped at present. However if you see anything suspicious please phone the park rangers on 0121 675 9613

**Wildlife Walk with Paul Anthony 27.6.15**

Paul took us on a around the top meadow between the car park and Shuttuck Stream, with a focus on butterflies. He told us to expect an explosion of Painted Lady butterflies the following week as temperatures were set to rise. Other butterflies to look out for, about now, include:

*Brimstones, Cloudy Yellows, Ringlets, Meadow Browns, Gate Keepers, Marbled Whites, Skippers, Commas, Peacocks, Red Admirals, Common Blues, Small Coppers and Hairstreaks.*

As we toured the meadow area we saw Meadow Browns, Ringlets, Skippers and Gatekeepers fluttering through the grasses, buttercups and Birds Foot Trefoil. We learnt how:

- the brambles in the park provide an important food source for small rodents
- ivy provides an important roosting site for birds
- moths, with their furry antennae, help to pollinate plants
- historically the elderberry has symbiotic relationship with badgers
- Ribwort Plantain was used for medicinal purposes in times gone by

As well as butterflies, we saw hoverflies and bees busily pollinating plants in the Italian Garden, heard Greenfinches, Blackcaps and a Woodpecker roosting amongst some of the ancient trees in the park, some of which date back over 200 – 300 years.

Paul told us to look out for Emerald Damsel Flies and the local resident Kingfisher over Henburys Pond and Alf told us how meadow grass is left to grow within designated areas of the park and felled trees are left to provide habitats for insects, fungi and small animals.

The walk was led by Paul Anthony and was attended by Senior Park Ranger Alf and 10 Highbury Park Friends.

Gail Pittaway

*Ringlet butterfly*

**Archaeology Walk with Mike Hodder. 6th June 2015**

What exactly is an archaeology walk? Mike Hodder, our guide explained that archaeology is the physical remains of the past that endure. Some of our changing landscape remains on the surface and may be visible with no need to dig. With this in mind our group of 15 left the car park and walked a few metres into the meadow to witness the first area of ridge and furrow in the park. The ridges have been used at some point in the past for planting crops. Ridges tend to face downhill to help with drainage. In Highbury there is little from which to

accurately date, but the ridges are likely to originate from mediaeval times or later. Narrow ridges tend to be more recent and wider ones are older. The old-field boundaries are still delineated by the ancient trees, such as oak. These would have been previously inter-planted with lower bushes to mark field edges. Later in our walk we examined ridge and furrow on the meadow ascending from the long pond. No evidence of human habitation endures in the park

Our second feature in Highbury is burned mounds, of which we have two definite ones and one possible by the stream. The first site in Highbury was identified by the Shuttock stream from a survey in 1980.These heat shattered mounds and charcoal date from around 1500BC, and were used to create a sort of Bronze age sauna. The dating was obtained from radioactive carbon dating. Such structures exist in Scotland, Wales and Ireland as well as all over England. Originally it was thought the mounds were used for cooking, but few food remains were found, and it was later decided the structures were more akin to North American Sweat Lodges. Sites are always on boggy areas, and may relate to family groups. People at the time were farmers. It is thought the sites might have been abandoned due to wetter conditions

Birmingham's parks provide great areas of archaeological survival, as formerly they were mostly agricultural land. It was revelatory to discover exactly how much remains on our doorstep from the past, ancient echoes of which we were previously ignorant. AMG.

**Local History Walk 11.7.15 Led by Andy Bishop**

Andy led our group of 12 around some of the historical features in the park. We learned:

- Kings Heath formed part of the parish of Kings Norton until 1911 when it became part of Greater Birmingham. Kings Norton was part of the Royal Manor of Bromsgrove and part of the King's land.
- The heathland, or common grazing land, separating Kings Norton from Moseley came to be known as Kings Heath.
- In 1767 the turnpike road through Kings Heath, known as the Alcester Road, was established.
- The earliest map of Kings Heath, produced in 1840, shows Highbury Park and the railway line that was built in 1838.
- The Henbury's house built in the 1700s was located in the area which is now the rose garden, behind the remains of the red brick boundary wall towards the Alcester Road entrance to the park
- In 1921 the Henburys became a public park, known as Uffculme Park. The remains of the house became a tea room
- Joseph Chamberlain continued to farm the adjacent land, which belonged or was leased to Highbury, and which formed the greater part of what we now know as Highbury Park.

Gail Pittaway

## Committee Changes

Following our successful AGM in May, there have been some changes to the HPF Committee which now comprises Paul Gaynor (Treasurer) Gail Pittaway, Paul Anthony, John Madgewick (Beekeepers) and Anne Gilbert (Membership Secretary)

We'd like to say a very big thank you to David Papadopoulos, past chair, for the huge contribution he's made over the years. We are still looking for help, especially to help with IT and to organize events; so please let us know if you would like to become involved.

## Events diary

**August 20th 2015.** Bat walk led by Brumbats**. 8.15 pm.**

**September 5th 2015**
Wildlife Walk with Paul Anthony
10.30am – 12.30pm

**September 11th 2015**
Between the Oaks Heritage Walk through Kings Heath Park, Highbury Park and along the River Rea
Meet 11.00am at Kings Heath Park

*Tulip tree in flower in Highbury Park.*
*Picture courtesy of Martin Richards*

HPF c/o York Supplies
55/57 Waterloo Road
Kings Heath, B14 7SD

## Management Plan

Alf Dimmock, Senior Park Ranger is in the process of drawing up a management plan for Highbury Park. The Friends group is represented on the working group. If you have ideas or views you would like to feed in please let us know

## Discover Water Habitats in Highbury Park

Do you know how many ponds there are in the park? Or where the Shuttock stream runs to? Our very informative leaflet about water habitats in Highbury Park was launched at the AGM. It was produced by Ellen Pisolkar and Catharine Clarke. You can pick up a copy at York Supplies and it will soon be posted on our website, to download. Many thanks to Ellen and Cathy for all their hard work.

## New booklet

JOSEPH CHAMBERLAIN'S HIGHBURY: A VERY PUBLIC PRIVATE HOUSE. By Stephen Roberts, Fellow, University of Birmingham 1986-2012.
It can be obtained from Amazon at £3.99 + p&p