Winter Bulletin
February 2025

HIGHBURY PARK Friends

Welcome to our Winter Newsletter.

Crunching in the frost, gazing at the stars, admiring tree silouettes, sunrise and sunset, whether its wind, rain or sometimes even sun on the face you'll always feel better after a tramp around our lovely the park. Pictured above are highlights from the last month. Enjoy the park!

Flood Management

In our last bulletin we told you about the Council's plans to improve flood management around Shutlock Lane. Over the last 50 years annual rainfall locally has increased. Rainwater that flows down the slopes at Highbury results in properties off Shutlock Lane being flooded on a fairly regular basis.

The first phase of improvements involved widening the Shuttock Stream and this has recently been completed. The bank has been levelled off and a lovely meander inserted. One outlet for the stream is close to the entrance to the Highbury Community Orchard. The brickwork around the outfall at the other end at Shutlock Lane has been raised. Excavation resulted in a lot of mud and a large pile of soil being left on our lovely hay meadow. The excess soil will be moved by mid-February so as not to damage our wild flowers and prevent them flowering this summer.

Phase 2 of the works will involve the creation of two swales (seasonal scrapes) that can store water coming

(continued overleaf...)

Flood management continued

down the meadow slopes and floodwater from the stream. We don't have an exacts start date but hopefully it won't be too long. Geotextile and Type 1 gravel are to be placed over the muddy, informal path to the south of the bridge that is frequently very muddy. We will keep you updated.

Network Rail Works

We had little notice from Network Rail that they intended to fell 57 mature trees along the railway line. Unwelcome news but there was nothing we could do to prevent it happening; we are as eager as you are for Kings Heath station to re-open, and none of us wants to see a mature tree falling onto the track.

There was a strict time table. From 10th – 24th December some preliminary work took place to clear the way for equipment. Protective matting was put in place to make a temporary track through the meadows. Over Christmas came four days of felling trees. Work was carried out round the clock and created a lot of noise and nuisance for local residents. Heras fencing closed off half the car park and the upper meadow near the railway line. Sometimes the entrance from Shutlock Lane was closed to vehicles. Finally. in the first week of January,

tree trunks were cut into logs and left in the woodlands to enhance the ecology of the area. Some were chipped and can be used around the estate. We took care before work started to protect sensitive areas of the woodlands.

There was one spin off for the park as we had requested some of the logs be placed on the main drive to stop "off piste" driving. We've been trying for the last five years to have tree trunks placed on the edge of the meadow where there are regularly tyre tracks from drivers who prefer to drive over the meadow than to brave the speed bumps. We're not sure why but logs were only placed

on the one side of the drive; this, however, is still a big improvement and will help preserve our flower meadow. We hope to obtain logs for the other side in the not too distant future.

The woodlands along the railway line provide an important habitat for the park. They are home to pipistrelle bats, foxes, great spotted woodpeckers, mistle thrushes and many smaller birds such as goldcrests.

The earth now needs time to settle and in due course we will be replanting with smaller trees such as hawthorn, hazel, privet, spindle and crab apple to restore the woodlands.

We hope they will flourish again in time, as they are an important green corridor connecting Highbury with other local green sites.

Kings Heath station is due to re-open later this year. In the photo above you can check out progress. A bit different from how the station looked previously in the lovely postcard provided by HPF member Gail Pittaway in the next article.

Highbury's Neighbours Part V - Kings Heath Station

A lovely old postcard view of an Edwardian gentleman waiting on the northern platform at Kings Heath Station for a train into Birmingham.

Postcard of Kings Heath Station
from a private postcard collection

The Birmingham and Gloucester Railway acquired land from the then Grange Estate, Kings Heath and the railway line opened in 1840. The original terminus was located at Camp Hill and was later extended to Curzon Street and then to New Street in 1854. Local passenger services ran until the 1940's until demand fell into decline and local stations were closed, due in large part to the rise in car ownership and the introduction of local bus services. The line continued in use carrying freight trains and some long distance passenger trains. It is set to re-open for local passenger services

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Kings Heath Station continued

*t*his Autumn re-instating Pineapple, Kings Heath and Moseley stations. The railway line played a significant part in Joseph Chamberlain's decision to build Highbury in it's current location providing him with convenient, local access to trains to and from London to his parliamentary seat and to his London home. The majority of the station buildings, small businesses and road access were originally located on the southern (High Street) side of the railway line.

Gail Pittaway HPF Jan 2025

Keep Kings Heath Park Plant Nursery open

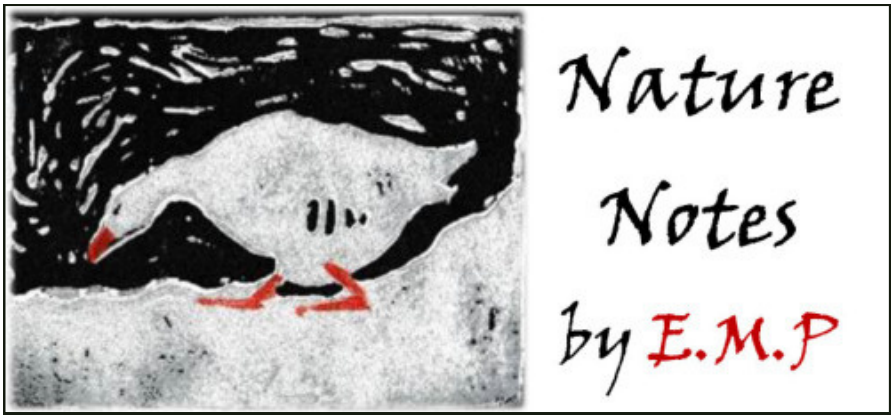
Birmingham City Council are considering proposals to close the Garden Centre at Kings Heath Park for good as part of the re-organisation of the parks department. They also plan to drastically reduce the amount of plants produced and sold to the public at Cofton Garden Centre.

A petition has been raised on Change.org to demand that Birmingham City Council recognise the importance of Kings Heath Park Garden Centre as a community asset and to do everything in its power to keep it open, growing and selling plants to the public. You can access the petition via Change.org

Or scan the QR code here.

Catkin Colour

If you're looking for a little winter colour we have green, pink and purple catkins. The green ones are Hazel and the other two are Alder.



Mentioned earlier, the removal of the large trees adjacent to the railway line for saftey reasons looks a scene of devastation at the moment. Hopefully in time, the area will be filled with wildlife-friendly scrub and small trees that won't pose a threat to the railway. The patches of Wood Anemone and Greater Stitchwort were protected during the works. With the addition of dense planting perhaps Woodcock will again be seen in the park.

Much as I enjoy winter and the bare branches, the first signs of spring feel celebratory. The Song Thrush started singing from his high perch early in January, Woodpeckers are drummingand soon the snowdrops will bloom (look near the Italian garden).

The City Council flood alleviation works on Shuttock Brook (see earlier story) have widened the channel to hold back the flow, adding meanders and shallow slopes. The bare slopes will be seeded with wildflower mixes. Both Grey and Pied Wagtails are now regularly seen foraging within the channel. However the water quality still needs to be improved.

Pied wagtail, illustration in charcoal by a member

Forthcoming Events

We look forward to seeing you at one of our events. if you're planning to attend, please wear footwear suitable for uneven and muddy ground.

View the 2025 Events Programme:

Look ahead to see the events planned for the rest of the year on our website (scan the QR code) and follow us on social media for the latest announcements.

If you are interested in volunteering with Highbury Park Friends please email: info@highburyparkfriends.org.uk

Contributors to our Winter Bulletin - Anne Gilbert, Sam Gamblin, Sarah Tomlinson, Gail Pittaway, Ellen Pisolkar and Sarah Hill-Daniel.

Our next issue is out : Spring 2025

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

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