Summer Bulletin 2026

HIGHBURY PARK Friends

Welcome to Highbury Park Friends Summer Newsletter!

Summer has arrived, and Highbury Park is full of life. From flowering meadows and busy pollinators to butterflies, nesting birds and newly emerging plants, it's an excellent time to explore the park and discover something new with every visit.

This edition looks back at two enjoyable spring events - our International Dawn Chorus walk and a fascinating exploration of Highbury's historic hedgerows - and shares some of the wildlife highlights recorded across the park recently. You'll also find a glimpse into Highbury's history, news of forthcoming events, and ways you can help build our knowledge of the park's wildlife by sharing your sightings.

Whether you're a regular volunteer, a keen naturalist or simply enjoy spending time in the park, we hope you find something of interest. Thank you for your continued support, and we look forward to seeing you in Highbury Park over the summer.

Birmingham's Volunteers Making a huge difference

What great news to hear the difference Friends Groups and volunteers make to Birmingham's open spaces. Highbury Park Friends is entirely volunteer-run and contributes to this incredible total of 120,094 hours between April 2025 and March 2026, worth £1.6 million, helping Birmingham's green spaces thrive through conservation, events, litter-picking, administration and community engagement.

Spring International Dawn Chorus Day
3 May 2026

It was a cold, damp morning but it didn't stop a small group of enthusiasts from gathering in the car park on International Dawn Chorus Day. Chris Millward from Team4nature led the event. This was a citizen science experiment for participants to record for the first time at Highbury which birds sang in the dawn chorus, which were prominent, when did the chorus start and what time did it peak.

There was an occasional tawny owl hoot as we gathered. The park was pitch black and eerie but dawn arrived swiftly. Gulls had been active from 3.30am, and blackbirds, which were probably the most frequent participants, commenced singing beautifully before 4.30am. Wrens were also prominent. Robins were early joiners. At 5.04am a song thrush sang, followed by 3 others at intervals. Then followed Goldfinch at 5.25am. 5.35am Blackcap. 5.45 Chiffchaff.

Late joiners were also recorded; 5.55am Nuthatch, 6.03am Parakeet, 6.15am, 3 Stockdoves,6.15am Great Tits, 6.25am Dunnock, 6.30am Goldcrest. By 6.30am the chorus evened out and subsided. We were kept entertained in between times watching 3 ducks waddle up in a line for the long walk from the stream to the car park where they breakfasted and then flew back.

Why do birds sing at dawn? Chris informed us that it's to mark territory and find a mate. They also sing before they seek their breakfast. He noted that the birds on the side of the park by the High Street where it was lighter because of being closer to the main road, sang much earlier
than birds in the central woodlands where it was dark. Chris reminded us that 15 minutes of being in nature reduces cortisol levels, the stress hormone, by 20%. What a lovely thought!

This, as well as our delight in the soaring bird song, made us think the early start had been worth it. A big thank you to Chris for all his enthusiasm and knowledge shared.

Highbury's Hedges: 2 May 2026

Above: the newly laid hedge (L) and the ancient hedgerow at the Henburys (R)

In recognition of National Hedgerow Week, Local Naturalist Alf Dimmock led an event to celebrate Highbury's Hedges. We were blessed with a sunny day and walked around the park, exploring hedges from different time periods and learning about their importance both historically and ecologically.

1. At the Henburys we witnessed the remains of an ancient hedgerow, probably several hundred years old
2. Around the Old Bowling Green we studied the varied species of a one-time ornamental hedge
3. We examined a partially defunct or remnant hedge marked on the 1838 OS map and now largely disappeared.
4. There is a suggestion this old hedge line continued up to Moor Green Lane, although this section has been lost over the years
5. We were delighted by the newly planted hedges along older lines – Poor Barley Field, Six Day Math and Spring Meadow all of which have identifiable lines of oak trees have recently been enclosed with a mix of hedgerow species including Alder, Buckthorn, Hazel, Hawthorn, Crab apple, Cherry and Oak. The upper section was recently re-planted by a group of the regular park volunteers.

A huge thank you to Alf and all our attendees for their lively participation.

🌟Alf has written up a beautiful and detailed account of our hedges which you can read on the Highbury Park Friends' website.
Scan here:

Nature Notes by E.M.P

June/July 2026

The vegetation along the railway line continues to burst with life – many species are being recorded that are new to the Park.

This is a large area of disturbed ground and has favoured plants and invertebrates that are quick to colonise such open areas. In addition the tree stumps are sprouting and the newly planted tree saplings are growing. In addition species such as cornflower have appeared, probably as a result of scattered seeds. Nearly 100 plant species have been recorded. I was particularly happy to see Elm sprouting as one of the larger Elms (although still small) had been removed for access during the railway works. The caterpillars of the White letter Hairstreak butterfly (pictured below), found in the park a few years ago feeds exclusively on Elm.

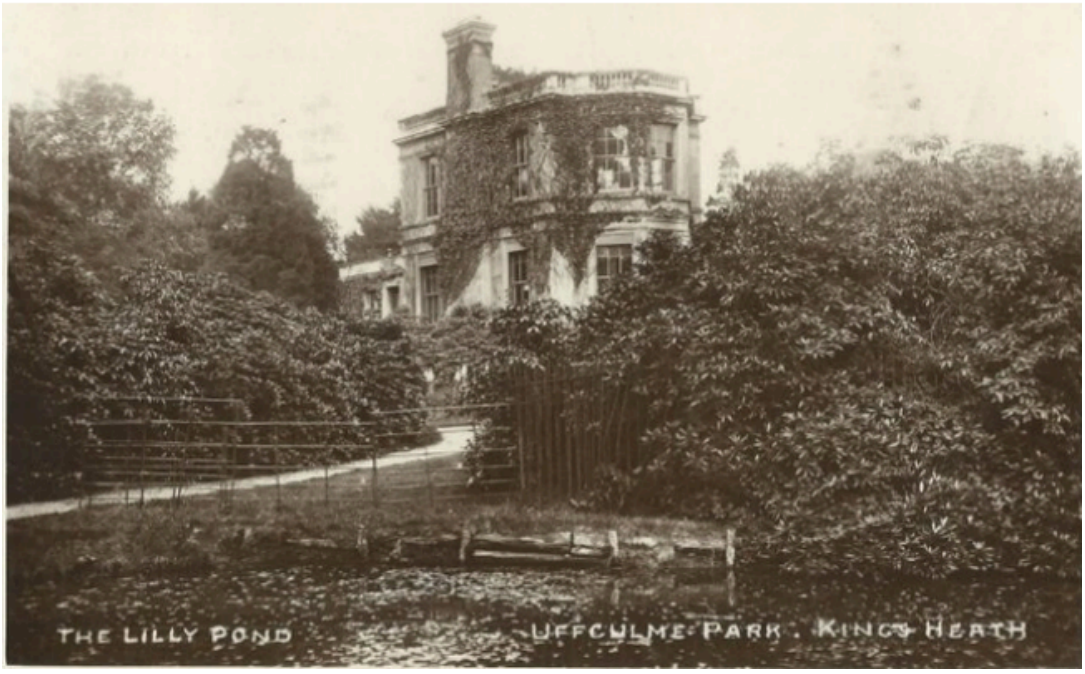
Creeping thistle – not everyone's favourite plant but in the Hopyard meadow near the railway is a large patch. Caterpillars of Painted Lady butterflies are munching the leaves, the adults having migrated north from Africa - taking several generations to do so and will migrate south again in the autumn.

Numerous little holes have appeared along the well worn path between the car park and Shuttock Stream. These have been made by ground nesting bees of which there are many species. I have loitered nearby waiting for an individual bee to pose for me, without success.

L: White letter Hairstreak butterfly; R:Painted Lady butterfly

SHARE YOUR SIGHTINGS OF PLANTS AND WILDLIFE:
Send photos and details to EcoRecord and by email to:
info@highburyparkfriends.org.uk
These records all provide valuable information about the biodiversity within the park.

Highbury's History: Highbury's History



🌟View more historic photos on the Hghbury Park Friends website.

Scan here:

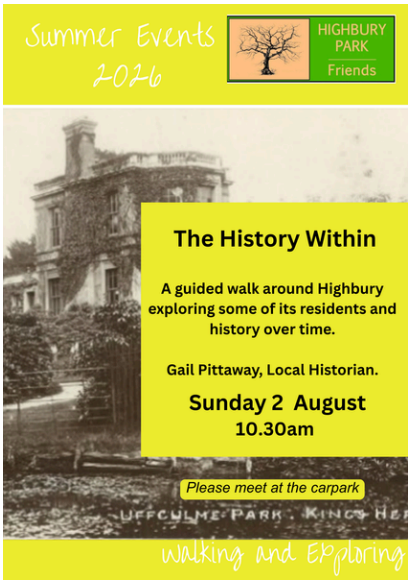
The Henbury's estate once stretched from Queensbridge Road to Dad's Lane and along Shutlock Lane. The grounds of the once large house now form part of the north eastern section of Highbury Park (from the children's play area to the new station and Queensbridge Road approximately.) The lily pond, as shown here, can still be found today as can a number of other features of the gardens which once belonged to the house.) In its heyday the house, which was approached by a carriage drive, also included an elaborate series of inter-connected gardens, a summer house, an orchard, kitchen garden and pools.

Over time the house and estate changed hands between a number of wealthy Birmingham metal manufacturers before finally being purchased by Richard Cadbury in 1892 for the development of the Uffculme estate and house and the old house on the Henbury's estate was mostly demolished. In 1916 Barrow Cadbury, son of Richard Cadbury, gifted part of the Uffculme estate to the City of Birmingham for public benefit. In 1923 the Birmingham Civic Society purchased the rest from the Cadbury Family and gifted it to the city to form Highbury Park circa1930. The Bunkums tea rooms, all that had previously remained of the Henbury's house as seen here, was later demolished in the mid-1900.

Above: The Lily Pond, Uffculme Park, Kings Heath from the private collection of Gail Pittaway

Gail Pittaway, HPF member, July 2026,

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 2026 Events Programme - scan here!

AGM - SAVE THE DATE!

The AGM for Highbury Park Friends will be at Highbury Hall.

Tuesday 13 October

6.30pm - 8.30pm

A warm welcome to all our members. Invitations will be sent our nearer the time.

Join the Friends!

Highbury Park Friends is volunteer group that cares for and celebrates Highbury Park, Birmingham. We welcome anyone who would like to help protect, improve, and enjoy this special green space. If you'd like to become a member, send an email to:

info@highburyparkfriends

Membership is £6 per household or £3 low waged.

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

Contributors to our Summer Bulletin - Anne Gilbert, Sarah Hill-Daniel, Gail Pittaway, Sarah Tomlinson and Ellen Pisolkar. Our next issue is out : Autumn 2026.

www.highburyparkfriends.org.uk

Share your Park experiences!

Here at Highbury Park Friends, we use social media as an additional way to share information about the park, news, wildlife, conservation updates, events and photos. You can also use these platforms to share your park experiences and photos.

@Highburyparkfriendsbrum **@Highbury Park Friends** **@highburyprkfriends.bsky.com**