

# FRIENDS OF MILL HILL PARK

**Spring 2005**

**Circular No. 12**

## Chairman's Message

I knew the replacement of Ted Anderson as Chairman would be a hard act to follow – and I was right. In 2004, following Ted's resignation, I was voted to replace Ted as Chairman and, having accepted the job, I realised how small an idea I had of the amount of work he and his wife, Joanne, had cheerfully undertaken for the Friends of Mill Hill Park. Ted had been an excellent Chairman, steering the Group safely through its early days, representing the Friends at numerous meetings organised by Barnet Council, organising Park Audits, discussing problems with the park keeper and dealing promptly and efficiently with any problems which arose in connection with the Park. His decision to stand down as Chairman after 7 years was understandable and we were fortunate that he agreed to continue serving on the Committee, as his experience, advice and support is invaluable. To commemorate Ted's Chairmanship of the Friends of Mill Hill Park, a tree was planted near the tennis courts on a chilly but fine day in December 2004 at a special ceremony attended by a group of members and Council officers. An excellent plaque for the tree had been made by Barnet Council and was approved by me at that ceremony. However, it has still to be put in place by the Council.

Joanne Anderson, our Secretary for 4 years, also resigned in 2004 and was sadly missed as her humour, common sense (and excellent coffee!) lightened many Committee meetings. At the AGM in 2005 we were sorry to accept the resignation of Jim Rea following changes in the Greenspaces Department of Barnet Council. His experienced advice and help on the green areas and trees in the park had been very much appreciated. We were very fortunate in 2004 in obtaining the services of another excellent secretary, Jean Smith, who

was joined on the Committee by her husband, John Smith, following his election in 2005. Both are most welcome additions and the present Committee, as elected at the Annual General Meeting on 9 April 2005, is:

- Marion Dewing (Chairman)
- Jean Smith (Secretary)
- Joan Telfer (Treasurer),
- Ted Anderson (Committee Member)
- David Bailey (Committee Member)
- John Smith (Committee Member)

We would welcome at least two more Committee members, so if you feel you would like to help us in the care of Mill Hill's most loved and popular park, please ring Marion on 8959 5013 – even if you only wish to ask questions about the amount of work involved if you joined the Committee.

2004/5 has been a good year for Mill Hill Park. Nominated by Barnet Council as one of the Borough's PREMIER PARKS, the Council intends to concentrate on improving the Borough's 16 Premier Parks to meet the Government's Green Flag standard and a 5 year improvement plan will be drawn up for the park before the end of this year.

The play area in our park is always very popular and attracts parents and children from a large area in the Borough. As will be seen from the Park Audit details below, plans are in hand to refurbish this area, which is becoming rather shabby through constant use. The park's wide, green open spaces and trees give peace and pleasure to many: it is possible to find a quiet spot to read a book, space to wander round or walk your dog, space for children to play games, for cricket and bowls, and a coffee/sweet shop where families and friends can sit down. One member of Friends of Mill Hill Park told me she started to count the number of people in the park on a sunny day last year – but gave up counting after reaching 175!

## Park Audits

These useful meetings (held twice a year) between Committee members, a local Councillor (Cllr Wayne Casey) and a representative from Barnet Council's Greenspaces Department (Mark Evison) give us an opportunity to bring to the Council's attention matters which need to be dealt with. Some of the matters discussed in recent Audits are listed below:

- \* Replacement of the tennis court net fencing behind Court 2 (damaged by fallen oak in 2004). (*actioned*) \*The fallen oak tree stump (*will be re-aligned this year and carved into a 'sofa' to make a feature of this tree*)
- \* Re-surfacing of footpaths on south-east boundary, bowling green paths and alongside tennis courts (*actioned*)
- \* Install new sign at main entrance in Wise Lane (*for action*)
- \* Planting of pyracantha against Wyevale Garden Centre wall to prevent graffiti (*planting done, additional planting planned for action*)
- \* Convert damaged pond area to a wet area for frogs and remove damaged platform (*for action this year*)

## Park Café

We understand a new lease has been offered for the park café and it should be opening soon.

## Park Keeper

A full-time park keeper is still based in Mill Hill Park, although he could be called away to other parks if the situation demanded it. Monday and Tuesday are his days off. A request was made at the AGM 2005 that the park keeper should be more easily identifiable.

## Skateboard Area

More than 2 years ago Marion Dewing expressed concern to the Committee about the increasing numbers of young skateboarders using the paths in the park as they had nowhere else to go. The Committee

agreed it could be dangerous and the possibility of obtaining grants to create a skateboard area in the park was discussed through 2004. Additional support was given to the need at an Area Forum in 2004, when 11 year old Ewan Collinge and 2 friends made an appeal for a skateboard area in Mill Hill Park to a crowded room including a number of Councillors and Council officers. The Forum voted unanimously in favour of creating one. The pros and cons were discussed at our Committee meetings during the year, with Barnet Council and local Councillors; letters also appeared in local papers (both for and against the idea) and at the 2005 AGM there was a lively discussion on the subject, at the end of which it was agreed members of Friends of Mill Hill Park should be consulted and given details of the arguments for and against a skateboard area (see enclosed sheet). Councillor Wayne Casey stated he would put forward a motion to the Council and invite Ewan Collinge to speak at the June meeting of the Council.

## Greenspaces Forum

It was with great regret we learned Barnet Council did not intend to arrange any further Greenspace Forums. These meetings had been attended by representatives of societies across the whole borough. They had proved a useful source of information and much had been learned from the meetings. The Barnet branch of London Wildlife Trust felt very strongly about the Council's decision and decided to organise a similar Forum independently. On 11 January 2005, 32 representatives from societies across the Borough met at Mill Hill Golf Club for a Greenspaces Forum organised by London Wildlife Trust (Barnet). Ted Anderson and Marion Dewing represented Friends of Mill Hill Park. The meeting, chaired by Clive Cohen, was a great success. All present appreciated the opportunity to share views and discuss common problems. A further Forum was held in Finchley on 11 April 2005.

## **SKATEBOARD AREA**

**Site Proposed:** Concrete area to the rear of the Barnet Council/T.S. BAROSSA building plus a possible small extension into the grassed area to obtain right size. Your Committee is strongly opposed to any idea of placing the skateboard area in the larger green area of the park.

### **Some Arguments For:**

Obvious need for this facility  
Strong local support (as shown at the Area Forum)  
Possible danger from skateboarders using footpaths  
Complaints from Bowling Club about disturbance caused by skateboarders jumping from pavilion to path  
Parents' wish it should be near Daws Lane  
Interest in skateboarding has not waned with passing years  
Ability of Friends' group to apply for funds for this purpose

### **Some Arguments Against**

Large increase in noise  
Possible increase in vandalism and anti-social behaviour  
The site could be listed on the web, attracting large numbers

### **Your Opinion**

Please ring Marion (8959 5013) and let her know if you are in favour or against the proposal.