

# FRIENDS OF MILL HILL PARK

Spring 2007

Circular No.15

**Notice is hereby given that the ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING will be held Saturday 31<sup>st</sup> March 2007 at 10.30 a.m. at the Bowling Club.**

## Chairman's Message

It is ten years since the Friends of Mill Hill Park was formed with the aim of working with the London Borough of Barnet and others, to protect the beauty and amenity of the park, and to represent the interests of users. This is a good time to acknowledge the part played by David Bailey and Ted Anderson, who were responsible for the establishment and subsequent development of the organisation. It was **David Bailey**, who first had the idea of forming a group, and who took the initial steps to bring this about. **Ted Anderson** then accepted the position of Chairman, an office he held for the next seven years, providing vigorous and wise leadership. He subsequently continued to serve on the committee, but is now standing down. David was also a valued member of the committee during this first decade, resigning last summer. We wish to acknowledge the debt owed to both of them, and to express our gratitude.

We must also express our appreciation of the part played by **Jim Rea**, who retired from the Council in January, and has now moved from the area. Jim will be known to many members for his work with Barnet Council over decades. He has a vast knowledge of trees, plants, wildflowers and wildlife, and his wealth of experience in parks and countryside management, was invaluable. He planned and developed the nature reserve and most, if not all, of the tree plantations in the park over the last 30 years. Jim has thereby become a lasting influence on the character of the park. Also the Friends

were very fortunate to have his input as a member of our committee for several years.

As we seek to build on the work of these three 'stalwarts', we need the continued support of our members, so please come to the AGM and help us plan for the next ten years.

## Green Flag Award

There was much activity in the park last year in order to bring it up to the standard required for this award, and we were delighted when all the hard work by Council officers and ground staff resulted in the Green Flag coming to Mill Hill Park. The test this year is to retain it, and, to achieve this, progress will have to be maintained and further improvement demonstrated. Community involvement is one of the key components considered in achieving the Green Flag award. The award would not have been given had there not been an active Friends of the Park group and so our role is very important.

## Playground

Last year we distributed questionnaires to users of the playground (or rather their parents), as part of a process in which we intended to apply for charitable funds for improvements to the existing playground. We wanted to have views regarding the current facilities and suggestions for improvement. The **good news** is that Barnet Council has now allocated resources to provide an extension to the playground and new equipment, selected by us. This is planned for 2007, which is obviously much earlier than would have been the case if we had had to embark on the laborious (and uncertain) business of applying for funds. Anyone who has visited the park during holiday time will

know how overcrowded the playground is, and how important it is to provide extra facilities **now**.

### **Café**

The reopening of the café last year was a major boost to the facilities provided by the park, and we are very pleased that it appears to be operating successfully. The fact that it has stayed open throughout the winter is an encouraging sign, and we wish the owners every success. We hear favourable reports, and have been able to sample their coffee and biscuits for ourselves on a number of occasions – most notably after the ceremony of ‘unfurling the Green Flag’! There is, of course, much more on offer.

### **Toilets**

The availability of toilet facilities is an important part of the overall amenity of the park, and there have been times when visitors could not gain access, and were consequently desperate! We are thankful, those days seem to be over, with either the park keeper or café staff unlocking in the morning, and the latter locking at night, when the café closes. The toilets are cleaned daily by contractors, and, on the occasions we have inspected, have been found to be in a satisfactory condition. We know from one of our members, however, that this has not always been the case. There have also been times when blockages have occurred (one cause being disposable nappies!), resulting in the closure of a toilet until the situation has been rectified. The lack of basic amenities, such as toilet roll holders (toilet paper is provided ‘free standing’) is unsatisfactory, to say the least, and we are doing our best to have this put right. Issues concerning the ‘accessible toilet’ were identified during a recent inspection by a representative from DAbB (Disability Access in the borough of Barnet), and it seems that ideally a complete refurbishment should be carried out.

### **Shrub border and fence in Daws Lane car park**

You may remember our previous efforts to persuade Wyevale Garden Centre to fulfil their contractual obligation to maintain this area were unsuccessful. The fence partly collapsed during storms in January, which prompted us to try again. This time the matter is in the hands of the Property Services section of the Council, and the initial response is more encouraging. We hope for a satisfactory outcome! (Apparently, the company has changed hands twice since 2005.)

### **Trees**

We are fortunate to possess a magnificent collection of trees in our park. These range from the original Oaks that were part of the field boundaries before the park was created, to a large variety of young developing specimens from recent plantings. Not including a number of immature trees, we have around 45 species. For those who saw the death of the English Elms from Dutch Elm Disease, in the 1960s, it is particularly gratifying that the trees planted to replace them have developed well and are part of the park’s beauty. They include Poplars, Field Maples, Norway Maples, Planes, Rowans, Cherries, Alders, Hawthorns and many others. Anyone who would like to know more can contact John Smith (see below)

<b>Subscriptions:</b> renewal forms are attached, only for those members whose subscriptions are due in April.
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### **Committee Members**

Marion Dewing (Chairman)	8959 5013
Jean Smith (Secretary)	8959 7138
Joan Telfer (Treasurer)	8959 1499
Ted Anderson	8959 2979
Chelle Paice	8959 4504
John Smith	8959 7138