

FRIENDS OF MILL HILL PARK

Spring 2009

Circular No.19

Notice is hereby given that the ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING will be held Saturday 4th April 2009 at 10.30 a.m. at the Bowling Club.

Future of the Park

News appeared in the *Barnet Press* at the end of last year regarding possible changes to Council services. A report was being prepared, entitled 'The Future Shape of the Council', and it was said to be looking at 'ways in which services such as refuse collection, parks maintenance and the upkeep of roads could be managed and delivered by a joint venture between the council and a private company or a private company on its own.'

The Committee was apprehensive about what this could mean for Mill Hill Park, and in January we wrote to Councillor Andrew Harper, Cabinet Member for the Environment, expressing our support for the way the services are organised at present, and voicing our opposition to privatisation of the parks. In our view, any change that resulted in the loss or disruption of the current management structure - with its direct responsibility to the Council - would result in permanent damage. We expressed doubts about whether a private contractor, whose main concern would be to obtain a good profit, would provide a better service at lower cost than that at present provided by the Council's expert and dedicated management team. The Friends of Mill Hill Park has, as one of its principal aims, a duty to *preserve and protect*, and we must hope that our views will be given proper weight.

Councillor Harper has replied sympathetically to our letter. He said that the status quo is not an option because of the ever tightening financial environment. He is against unnecessary disruption but would favour change if he "was confident it would bring significant improvements in quality and value for money." One of Barnet's greatest assets if its parks and open spaces, and these must be preserved for future generations.

SINCE THE LAST NEWSLETTER

Restoration of the Pond in the Nature Reserve: this was duly re-dug and relined in the autumn, and has steadily been filling up with water during the winter. As it is 3-4 ft. deep in the middle, a fence has been placed around it to keep children (and dogs!) out. Plants will shortly be introduced into the pond by a specialist firm; eventually, further planting will screen the fence.

Garden for Nursery children: this is coming along well, and has received help from various quarters. The Council did the important work of fencing off the area to create a safe space for these very young children; parents and other park users have contributed containers; Wyevale Garden Centre have donated seed, and plants have come from other sources.

Toilets: as part of the refurbishment, new heavy doors were fitted some months ago to provide better security and deter vandals. (They are still waiting for a coat of paint.) Unfortunately, people are still putting unsuitable material down the toilets, and when this happens the toilet has to be closed until plumbers can rectify the problem. This is frustrating for park users, and for the Council, whose aim is to provide a clean and well-maintained facility.

Gates onto Wise Lane: following a petition from dog walkers last year, the Council agreed to close one of the two gaps in the hedge opposite Arrandene, and to install swing gates in the remaining gap and at the pedestrian entrance near Parkside. At the time of writing, one gap has been closed, and we are trying to get information about when the swing gates will be installed. The need is still urgent, and we hope to be able to report progress at the AGM.

National Tree Planting Week: we joined council officers (and groups of school children) in planting trees in November. Our particular remit had been to transplant oak saplings from the Nature Reserve into the park extension

(adjoining Flower Lane), but these proved to be impossible to dig them out, except for one good specimen, which was replanted beside the dead oak. It will become its replacement when the dead tree is eventually removed. We then helped to plant 'whips' provided by the Council. The children also planted wild flower plugs in this area, and it is intended that part of this area will be left to develop as a wild flower area.

Resignation from the committee: we were very sorry to receive the resignation of Marion Dewing after twelve years on the committee. She played an important part in the development of the Friends, having served initially as Secretary and later for a period as Chairman. She is stepping down because of ill-health, but her interest and commitment to the park is as strong as ever. Members will wish to join us in expressing our thanks.

FUTURE HAPPENINGS

Tree walk Sunday 31st May between 3-4 p.m. This walk will be led by our Chairman, John Smith who has identified 46 species of tree in our park. Anyone who would like to learn more about the park's trees is invited. Meet at 3.00 p.m. by the flagpole at the main Wise Lane entrance to the park.

85th Anniversary of the opening of Mill Hill Park: the park opened on 24th July, 1924, with great ceremony. This followed a procession from the railway station, led by St. Vincent's Orphanage band. The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, the Rt. Hon. Josiah Wedgwood, dedicated the park as "an open space for the benefit and enjoyment of the public forever". The 24th July is on Friday this year, but we suggest that Saturday 25th and Sunday 26th could be designated as the anniversary weekend. Make a point of visiting the park – bring a picnic if you wish – and just reflect on the significance of the day.

Childrens' events:

Rolling Base – this consists of a specially equipped bus, which provides an accessible youth facility, offering a wide range of activities, mainly for children of 8+. It is hoped that this can be available during Easter and summer

holidays, but arrangements have yet to be confirmed. We suggest you keep a close eye on the notice board in the park (by the café) for precise details, as these become available.

Barnet Play Rangers – again, watch the notice board for details of holiday activities

Community events:

Sponsored dog walk on 21st June organised by Maccabi GB in aid of disability charities.

National Scoop-the-Poop week (also in June). See notice board for details of event organised by Diane Trinder, local police community support officer.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Please join us if you can (notice on front page). Tea, coffee and biscuits will be served before the meeting, so come a few minutes early.

Committee members

John Smith (Chairman)	8959 7138
Jean Smith (Secretary)	8959 7138
Joan Telfer (Treasurer)	8959 1499
Peter Keeley, Chelle Paice, Liz Reid, Philippa Welch	

Subscriptions: renewal forms are attached, **only** for those members whose subscriptions are due in April.