

# FRIENDS OF MILL HILL PARK

Spring 2010

Circular No 21

**Notice is hereby given that the ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING will be held on Saturday 10th April 2010 at 10.30 a.m. at the Bowling Club.**

## Playbuilder

By the time this Newsletter is received this new addition to the play facilities in the park should be complete and ready for action. As it has all happened very quickly, some background may be helpful. In September the *Edgware & Mill Hill Times* reported that Barnet Council had been awarded £1.1m under the Playbuilder scheme and that the Council had allocated it to be shared between 22 sites. Three weeks later we wrote to the Greenspaces Services Manager enquiring how this would affect our park. Unfortunately, we were never properly consulted.

On 2nd December we received an email from another officer, who it seems did not know of our enquiry, informing us of the scheme and that Mill Hill park was one of the places in which it was to be installed. She said that time was short, as the playgrounds had to be finished by the end of March and that another officer would contact us to arrange "a community consultation meeting before Christmas". On 16th December we emailed that we had not had that contact and that time was running out.

On 23rd December we had a reply saying that they had not had time to meet us, but that they had completed consultations with local schools. A plan and some small-scale drawing were enclosed and we were invited to a meeting of "stakeholders" on January 6. Then came snow and ice and we emailed to see that we could not get to

the meeting. We were told that it would probably be cancelled because of the conditions. We therefore sent our comments that (1) the site chosen was unsuitable because it is a very wet area, and suggested that they use part of the field behind the pavilion instead, and (2) that the features seemed to be more suitable for younger children, whereas we had had comments from parents that there was a need for equipment for older children. No meeting ever took place. We regret that the installations are proceeding as originally proposed and unaffected by our representations.

It is difficult to visualise how it will be when operational. We know that as well as a maze, mounds, logs and other features, there will be a basket swing and a climbing frame. We hope it will fulfil its purpose of providing activities to be enjoyed by the age group specified. The initial reaction from those members of the committee who were able to download illustrations from their computers was that it would not provide sufficient interest or challenge. However, illustrations could be wrong, and we need to see how it works in practice.

While according to reports in the local press, the scheme is viewed as controversial in some areas, there is no doubt that it is a big undertaking for Barnet Council. Councillors would have been heavily criticised if they had not taken up this opportunity to extend play facilities for children in the Borough.

## Playground

Reference was made in the last Newsletter to the fact that many items of equipment in the Playground are nearing the end of their life span, and will need to be replaced. We were exploring the possibility of obtaining

charitable funding to replace the large multi-play unit, which had had an expensive repair carried out four and a half years earlier, but was deteriorating further. Unfortunately, we have to report that our efforts have been unsuccessful, despite many hours of work by John Smith.

The first application was to the Millie Apthorp Trust, which has been a valuable resource for many local projects over the years. There was an expectation that any shortfall in funds given would be made up by Barnet Council, but when we came to submit the application we were by told by the Trust that it would not be considered unless we could show that we had "a funding strategy" in place. Accordingly, we obtained a list from Rob Wiltshire, our Greenspaces officer, of other suitable charities, so that we could remedy that deficiency. John investigated all those that seemed appropriate, but none were willing to consider an application from a group such as ours, particularly for a large sum.

We had to abandon our efforts, therefore. Some weeks later we heard that the Millie Apthorp Trust was to be wound up. No one seems to know why the Trustees had taken that decision, but the situation may have had some bearing on why our approach was not acceptable.

With charitable avenues closed, Mill Hill park's playground will obviously need considerable investment by Barnet Council at some stage if it is to remain viable.

*For those people who have been waiting for over a year for the repair to the large swing, we have been told this will be carried out in April.*

### **Trees**

To mark its 60th anniversary, The Mill Hill Preservation Society has had a number of new Elms planted. This is an American variety that is understood to be resistant to

Dutch Elm disease. Also, near the playground, Mill Hill Residents' Association has planted a Norway Maple to celebrated the Association's centenary 1909 – 2009. A number of trees that were diseased or dying have been felled. These included some Hornbeams and Oaks. Some short stumps have been left. This is temporary. Eventually contractors will remove them all with machinery, in one operation. Some sections of trunks have been left lying on the ground and they are to be moved to locations suitable for natural play for children.

In the Park extension, that is, the Flower Lane side, a line of posts has been put in place. The purpose is merely to remind the mower operator to keep inside this line as a large number of whips (small saplings) have been planted to the south of the line.

### **AGM**

We have been very grateful in the past for the interest and commitment shown by members who have attended the AGM. This year we need you as much, or indeed more, than ever. Do come if you can (notice at the head of this leaflet), and let us know your views, as there are bound to be difficult times ahead. Last year members unanimously rejected any suggestion that parks should be privatised, but this possibility remains. Whatever happens, finance will be severely constrained. Come early and enjoy a cup of tea or coffee before the business starts.

#### **Committee Members**

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

**Subscriptions:** *renewal forms are attached, **only** for those members whose subscriptions are due in April 2010.*