

# FRIENDS OF MILL HILL PARK

Spring 2011

Circular No 23

**Notice is hereby given that the ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING will be held on Saturday 16th April 2011 at 10.30 a.m. at the Bowling Club.**

## Playground

In our last newsletter we described the state of the playground and our application for a grant of nearly £50,000 for new equipment and features from *Changing Spaces*. The application is a two stage process and our Stage 1 application has been successful. For stage 2 *Changing Spaces* appoints a Facilitator who assists applicants in organising the work necessary to meet the requirements for completing a successful application. We now have a small group of the chairman, secretary, Peter Keeley, Clare Zinkin and Cara Demetriades working on this and the group has had a meeting with our facilitator.

Among the many steps we have to take is a wider consultation within the community, which involves seeking the views of children and parents. Clare Zinkin and Cara Demetriades undertook to carry it out. They devised and distributed a questionnaire for parents, made posters, and prepared material to be used to gain the views of children in the classroom or nursery. This involved enlisting schools willing to take part. At the time of writing they are collating information and assessing to what extent the original scheme needs to be amended.

We hope to be able to submit our application by the middle of June, but at the moment we don't know if that aim is realistic. There still seems to be a mountain to climb, with many legal and

technical requirements to be met. Barnet Council is to act as our 'accountable body', which means they will deal with the tendering process on our behalf, and, if we are successful, with subsequent follow up. This is a significant addition to the already very heavy work load of council officers.

Once the application is submitted it will be ten weeks before we are notified if we have been successful. Council officers are aiming to organise things so that work can begin as soon as possible after this. If anyone doubts that this development is absolutely vital, they just need to take a look at the empty space in the playground. Because of the loss of play facilities for 3 – 7 year olds, many parents are taking their children further afield (by car).

## About the park

There was much discussion at last year's AGM about the problem of **dog fouling**. Our intention to do something about it was deflected by the amount of work involved in applying for the grant for the playground. The position became much worse a few months ago, however, when the nursery at the back of the Pavilion reported that it was a real hazard for children attending. The worst affected area is around the Pavilion, especially the rear where the entrance to the Nursery is situated.

The chairman wrote to the Greenspaces Services Manager and Councillor Coleman, Cabinet Member for the Environment, requesting action. In response the Council's impressively named **Priority Intervention Team** has made regular visits to the park and have handed out penalty notices to dog walkers who did not pick up after their dogs. We have also pressed for notices to be produced and

fixed to the railings of the playground, the pavilion and at entrances, warning that it is an offence not to pick up, and including a phone number for the public to report such an offence. We will continue to press for action on this: it seems that the Council's procedures for reporting the offence, and for enforcing penalties when it has occurred, need clarification.

We are grateful for the action of the 'PIT' team. We also must express appreciation for the role played by the **Park Keeper**, Bruce Warner, in 'encouraging' dog owners to behave more responsibly – he has supplied bags when necessary, and has succeeded in changing habits in a few cases. We owe him wider thanks, however, for all the work he does on behalf of park users, and for keeping us in touch with what is going on.

**Hedge bordering Wise Lane:** members will recall that gates were installed a few years ago (a great expense) to facilitate movement of dogs between the park and Arrandene Open Space. It now appears that some individuals are not satisfied with this, and have started to break through the hedge again. This negates the purpose of the gates, which was to prevent accidents caused by dogs rushing across the road, attracted by scents or sounds in Arrandene. In the long term, the Council hopes to extend the metal fencing along the hedge, as funds become available, but this is an unnecessary call upon tax payers' money.

**Trees in the park:** last year John Smith took interested members on a tree walk in May, and there have been requests for him to repeat this. He is unable to do so this year, but members may like to know that the local branch of the Workers' Educational Association (WEA) is presenting a Day School on Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> of July on *Appreciating Mill Hill's Trees*. The tutor Letta Jones, is a highly experienced lecturer. The morning session will be in

class. The afternoon session will move to Mill Hill Park., and John Smith will then be guiding the group to the location of species. Fee £15. Pre-booking essential. For information phone Moira Eagle 8959 1230.

**AGM 2011** (*See notice at the top of this Newsletter*)

**Resignation of Treasurer:** the committee was very sorry to receive the resignation of Joan Telfer, as from the AGM next month, because of health problems. We wish her well in her forthcoming medical treatment, and will do our best in her absence. Joan has been the first and only Treasurer in the history of the Friends, and it is impossible to do justice in speaking of her contribution to our group. She has said she is available for advice, and that the job of Treasurer is straightforward. We hope that this will encourage a successor to take up the challenge (not necessarily for thirteen years!), and if any member is willing to take on this job would they please phone John or Jean Smith 8959 7138.

We would encourage you to attend the AGM. The support and interest of members has been much appreciated in the past, and is particularly important in the present climate of local government cuts. Tea and coffee will be served, as usual, before the meeting, thanks to Jeanne Bailey and Betty Gibb, so come a few minutes early. It is a good time to see the park, too.

#### **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 2011*