

Friends of Mill Hill Park

Autumn 2013

Circular No: 28

All Change At the Top

This may come as a surprise for those of you who were not at the AGM last April.

John and Jean Smith have retired this year, after six years as Chairman, and nine years as secretary, respectively. We owe them a huge debt of gratitude for all the hard work they have put in during these years and we are most grateful to them. We are delighted that John has agreed to remain on the Committee as our tree man. His detailed knowledge will be invaluable.

Our new officers are Chairman Philippa Welch, a long-time resident of Mill Hill who regularly uses the park for dog walking and tennis; secretary Ariella Lister, a relatively newcomer to the Committee who joined just two years ago, and who takes a lively interest in the playground area, and Treasurer Ann Robinson, who has very kindly taken over from Ingrid McKeown, who has moved from Mill Hill.

We do need your support and help in keeping an eye on the Park, so do please contact us at any time – email addresses at the end of this newsletter.

Park Audit

We conducted a Park Audit on July 11th, and contacted Barnet Council

on several areas that we felt needed attention.

The most important one was the state of the toilets. We were told that they were going to be enlarged and improved, and indeed this has been done. The new toilets are easier to keep clean, but the soap and paper provision is still lacking sometimes. We do check regularly and email Barnet if necessary.

We were disappointed that the flowerbeds by the cafe and the bowling club were so neglected. There was no new planting and they were full of weeds. After informing Barnet, they were at least cleared, but it was too late in the season for any planting. We will see what happens next year. We also felt that several of the notices by the toilets and on the tennis courts were either misspelt, too numerous, or in the wrong place. So far nothing has been done about this.

Trees



An outstanding feature of Mill Hill Park is its range of trees. It could be

classed as an arboretum. We have over 60 species of mature trees.

These include seven species of Oaks, eight Maples and six Poplars. We also have a few trees of additional species planted in the last five or six years that are developing quite well – Wild Service, Rain tree and Oriental Plane.

We have two Zelkovas, which are members of the Elm family. These are uncommon and people would usually only see them on visits to Kew Gardens or other collections. We do not know exactly when they were planted but it must have been 30 – 40 years ago. The progress of one of them, a *Zelkova serrata* near to the tennis courts, is being impeded by a Maple that was planted too close. Last November we asked the Council to remove it to allow the Zelkova to flourish and after inspecting it the Tree Officer agreed, and it has been marked with a cross cut in the bark. We are pressing the Council to speed this up.

We have also asked the Tree Officer to consider removing a failing Goat Willow near the Parkside side of the park. Three years ago an attempt was made to revive it by severe pruning but it has not recovered. Willows need lots of water and as this is on high ground, water is draining away. The other Goat Willows along the zigzag path lower down have developed well.

Litter and Dog Fouling

We have been pleasantly surprised with the overall cleanliness of the Park. Of course there have been occasions after a very sunny weekend when there is an abundance of litter early in the morning, but the two men on the team certainly do their best. We will be keeping a close eye on this to make sure it continues.

As to Dog Fouling – this does seem to be on the increase, and with a lack of a Park Keeper, there is no one on hand to take immediate action. Perhaps a warning notice would help. Again, we will be watching events.

Future Problems Ahead

Mill Hill Car Park Charges

The Council was proposing to charge park users to park in the Daws Lane and Wise Lane Car Parks.



The argument they put forward is that they are used by all-day commuters, but research by John Smith reveals that they are used by people working in Mill Hill Broadway. The various rates of charging they put forward were impractical and complicated, also difficult to enforce. They also

wanted to charge at weekends – the commuter argument rather falling down. Along with the Residents' Association and Mill Hill Preservation Society, we objected strongly. The last email we had indicated that they were not taking further action as yet, and that they were dealing with two other car parks at present. We seem to have been put on the back burner at present, but we will be watching. Charging, especially at weekends, would be disastrous for many users of the Park, and would cut down on many of the organised activities.

In addition we are very pleased to see that the Council has installed fencing between the Car Park and the Playground making it much safer for the children. It has the equally useful effect of preventing vehicles from driving into the Park as has happened in the past.

Membership

We are most interested in increasing our membership, and would urge you to join, if you have not already done so, as there is strength in numbers, and we feel we could influence the Council's opinions if we had a larger membership.

To this end we would like to leaflet the surrounding area, but we need volunteers for this. If you are interested in joining the Friends of Mill Hill Park or can help in any way, please contact the Secretary, Ariella Lister – email: mail@busylisters.com or mobile 07960 014908, or any Committee member mentioned at the end of this newsletter.

Subscriptions

We have managed to keep our membership fees at the same low rate as last year - £3 for a single member and £5 for family membership. Attached to this newsletter are membership forms as well as Standing Order forms. If you are able to opt for the Standing Order payment, you would be making life easier for our Treasurer, and also avoid the necessity of having to remember when your own membership expires.

Several members forgot to pay their subscription last year. We would be grateful if they could remedy this as soon as possible as we really need their support over the coming year.

Committee Members

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A FURTHER PLEA FOR ANYONE WHO CAN OFFER THEIR SERVICES AS SECRETARY TO THE COMMITTEE. PLEASE CONTACT CURRENT SECRETARY ARIELLA LISTER.