

FRIENDS OF MILL HILL PARK

Summer 2000

Circular No. 6

FOCUS GROUPS

These are the flavour of the month. In accordance with Central Government policy the Borough of Barnet is holding focus groups on every area of their responsibility and, it seems, beyond.

Your Chairman attended the grandly titled group on Sustainability Strategy for Parks and Open Spaces. 120 invitations had been sent out for two sessions but only 8 people attended the evening session. The issues raised covered the question of improving our green spaces for people and nature and making them safe for everyone. We also discussed the issue of encouraging both young and old, from all backgrounds, to feel at home in the parks and make good use of them. The discussion went on for three hours and the council officials made copious notes.

As far as Mill Hill Park is concerned our needs are well known to the council - good maintenance, satisfactory supervision and policing and adequate facilities, including toilets.

GRAVEL CAR PARK

A number of incidents have taken place in this car park. The Council is going to reduce the height of the boundary hedge but say this cannot be done while birds might be nesting. Some time ago we asked for the car park hedge next to Wise Lane to be removed and the area extended to the Wise Lane boundary hedge, and all to have hard standing but finances do not permit.

THE CAFÉ

Two serious burglaries have taken place at the café since it opened in April. On each occasion entry was gained through ventilators in the flat roof. The 'stable door' has now been closed and bars placed across the ventilator shafts. Losses were considerable in stolen stock, damage to property and loss of trade.

It has been most upsetting for the Danielwicz family after they put so much effort into making

the café so attractive. They are now back in business and we wish them well.

The police have been asked to spare some of their resources to prevent crime and vandalism in the park. A response is awaited from the council regarding installation of CCTV.

BASKET-BALL COURT

As a result of a Friends of Mill Hill Park initiative, one of the tennis courts has now been converted to dual use as a basket-ball court. Guy Patton, Committee Member and former National League basket-ball player, organised a petition last summer among the youth of Mill Hill. In response to this demand, Barnet Council quickly agreed the funding to erect the basket-ball boards and rings. The new court is already well used with up to twenty young players present on fine evenings and weekends, and it is anticipated that this will continue. In the main, young people of today tend to attract bad publicity and it is hoped that this sports leisure facility will provide a positive outlet for youths to channel their energy. However, the court is not exclusively for the young and it would be good to see more older players participating. The Council is to be congratulated for its prompt action, and this new facility takes us another step towards meeting the needs of all ages and sections of the local community

PARK MAINTENANCE

Our Chairman, Ted Anderson, invited a council representative to come to see the unkempt state of the flower beds in the park. The official was appalled by the amount of weeds and promised to get them dealt with. Following his visit the beds around the pavilion have been replanted and also the bed on the main path from Wise Lane. As of 16th June the area around the cafe, the shrub beds and the "rose bed" by the tennis courts remain to be tackled. We hope that by the time you receive this newsletter things will have improved. The wooden seat by the tennis courts, which has been totally destroyed by our local vandals, has been removed and we have requested a replacement. This depends, as always, on the availability of funds.

JAZZ IN THE PARK

As a part of the Millennium Jazz Weekend, on Saturday 8th July starting at 1.30pm The Franklin Street New Orleans Jazz Band will play on their way from The Broadway to the park. From 2.30pm to 3.30pm the Mill Hill County High Jazz Band will entertain in the park near the cafe.

For details of these and other events planned for that weekend contact Paul Amsterdam on 020 8958 4834.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Our Third AGM was held in the Bowling Pavilion on 15th April. In spite of the atrocious weather 32 persons attended in addition to the committee. Councillor Wayne Casey and WPC Anne Bellamy were invited guests. Jo Stevenson, reporter from the Barnet Press was also present although we were disappointed not to see a report in the newspaper.

Below is a brief summary of the content for those unable to attend.

Our park-keeper, Andrew Hunter, was introduced to the meeting by the Chairman who said how pleased we were to have him with us. His job description extends to two pages and includes graffiti removal, monitoring the toilets, dealing with incidents of vandalism, ensuring the park is free of litter (and there is noticeable improvement in that area), safety and the collection of leisure fees.

The provision of public conveniences is still quite unsatisfactory. We continue to aim for improvements and better availability. The single toilet for the disabled next to the café, at the front of the building is now open for the use of everybody on most days and guarded against vandalism which caused considerable problems

We welcomed the imminent opening of the café (although as mentioned earlier in this newsletter they had problems almost immediately).

Dog fouling continues to be a serious nuisance and a risk of infection to children. The Council is taking powers under dog fouling legislation to impose fines on owners of offending dogs.

Graffiti continues to be a problem here, as it is across the borough. We would like to see more efforts made to catch offenders and give them meaningful penalties.

The Friends are entirely separate from the Council. Although we co-operate closely, if needs be we can and do press our point of view. A considerable re-organisation of Council officials has been taking place and is nearly complete. Our main contacts are with the Neighbourhood Management, who look after grounds maintenance and the park keeper, and the separate Leisure Services responsible for scheduled maintenance, repairs, development and the recreation and parks services.

Committee members attend various meetings such as Area Forums, Community Safety Strategy meetings and others so that the Friends have a voice.

Among other items covered during the year were car parking, cycle routes, use of sports facilities, tree planting, maintenance, repairs etc. We try to keep our members informed of these issues by way of these circulars.

The Council is to develop a strategy to deal with parks and open spaces in the borough, and all Friends' groups have been asked to assist with framing a questionnaire for residents, and then, no doubt, obtain the answers. The aim is to find out how parks are used and then finances and resources will be allocated on that basis. The worry is at what level they will decide a park is not viable.

The Officers and Committee were elected for another year and Mr David Welch was re-elected as auditor.

A lively discussion followed. It is most useful to have the views, opinions and suggestions of Friends and indeed any park user,

MEMBERSHIP

One or two members have still to rejoin. We hope that they will and attach a form only for those who may need one.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Ted Anderson (Chairman)	8959 2979
Joan Telfer (Treasurer)	8959 1499
Joanne Anderson (Secretary)	8959 2979
David Bailey	8959 2373
Marion Dewing	8959 5013
Guy Patton	8959 5442
Jim Rea	8200 5770