

Friends of Mill Hill Park

Autumn 2014

Circular No: 30

Our Local Park



I wonder if we realise how lucky we are to have so many different facilities in our park. Most of us perhaps only see it from one or two perspectives, walking the dog or playing bowls, but so many other activities take place over the year.

For a start it is a beautifully wooded area. Over the years as many as sixty different types of trees have been planted, some very unusual. As you enter the Park from Daws Lane

at Park the second tree on the left along the fence is a Cypress Oak which grows upwards like a poplar. This is an exceptionally rare tree; nearby is a magnificent Scarlet Oak which has glorious colour in October and November. Again this is quite a rare tree. Of course there are the original sturdy oaks all over the park, there before the land was handed over to the then Borough of Hendon to be held in perpetuity for the community. Some of these old oak trees have lost quite large branches this year. After a few reminders to the council most have been cleared. Several

other trees have been trimmed and dead wood removed, a great improvement. We are never sure what damage the autumn gales may bring.



There is the delightful wild flower meadow on the right as you walk up from Daws Lane Car Park. In May and June it was majestic. There are so many different species, among them meadowsweet, rose bay willow herb and several daisy varieties, a joy to walk through.

Sports and Leisure



Then we come to all the sporting opportunities. We have the thriving Bowl's Club, the tennis courts and the basketball court, the areas for cricket and football in their season, the crazy golf and the newly installed and very popular outdoor gym equipment. Of course one of the main attractions is the very much enhanced playground, which the Friends of Mill Hill Park, aided by

an incredibly hard working subcommittee, managed to get funded by a Lottery Grant, and installed by The London Borough of Barnet. The Cafe is extremely popular and has been really busy during the past good weather. Walking through on a September morning, it was very encouraging to see so much being used: youngsters being coached in football skills; gym equipment busy; and play on the tennis courts; joggers and dog walkers; the park being put to full use.



Litter and Toilets

We are glad to report that the litter clearance has been very good this year, in spite of the increased numbers using the park. It would be an advantage if some members of the public would be more responsible in clearing up their own rubbish, but sometimes the bins are full after a busy day and the foxes and magpies distribute anything left in bags on the ground. If you have a family picnic or group event, try to not overfill the bins and if possible take the rubbish home as it will make for a cleaner park.

There are of course downsides. As ever when areas are so well used there is intensive pressure on some facilities - especially the toilets!

Without regular inspection by a park keeper, now sadly deemed no longer necessary, the cleanliness has been hit and miss, and some visitors have had really bad experiences. At the moment the contract cleaners come once a day we are told, but how efficient they are is questionable. We have been told that a new company will be taking over so we do hope for improvements. The members of the committee do check when they can, and inform the Council of any problems they find. It would be most helpful if people would let us know of any bad conditions they come across. Our contact numbers are on the Park Notice Board near the Cafe.



Dogs

Most dog owners are very responsible and clear up after their animals, but some may be walking ahead and genuinely not notice, and need a gentle reminder. It is a civil offence not to clean up after your dog and it attracts a fine. It is not a matter of choice but part of being a responsible owner or minder of a dog. Unfortunately there some who do not care at all, and can be abusive if approached. If you are a dog owner it is useful to offer a spare bag and hope for the best! Mill Hill Park is one of the few areas where dogs can be exercised off the lead, which is good for them. There are Dog Patrols and we will encourage their presence in Mill Hill Park.

Dog safety is also something to be mindful of and again most responsible owners are aware of their dog's temperament and if they react to children or other dogs, will keep them on a lead. The committee is keen to enhance dog awareness and education for all who use the park and is considering the best way of achieving this. Your ideas are welcomed.

Moving Forward

Our main objective this past year has been to try to persuade the Council to install a small skateboard area. The 10 to 15 year olds seem to be the only age group not very well catered for and the nearest place to skateboard is more than an hour's bus ride away. Being inclusive and ensuring all enjoy and have the benefits of the local park will enable our community to thrive and for young people to feel a part of this. We are independently pursuing possibilities. We think this is the only thing necessary to make our park suitable for all age groups.

As always it is the members of our society who can help us by being our eyes and ears. Our membership is not large, so if you have friends who use, or have an interest in our park in any way, please urge them to join us in continuing to keep it in good condition and a main focus for activity for our community.

Footnote: Today, September 21st, a game of rounders was being played in the park, and for the first time a sedate game of croquet, set out with hoops, red and blue balls and proper croquet mallets. Two more to add to our list of activities.



Subscriptions

Renewal forms are attached **only** for those members whose subscription was due in April 2014. Please forward if you can. (You may like to avail yourself of the standing order facility, which means you will not be troubled again!)

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