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A.G.M.

The Friends of Highlands Gardens AGM will take place on Tuesday 10th May at 8.00pm at 18 Abbots Road. Everyone is welcome. If you have any ideas about how to improve the park, source funding, run a community event, or you would like to get involved, please come along. The main meeting usually finishes within an hour. If you can't make it on that evening or have an idea, send us an email or pop a note into 18 Abbots Road or 122 Leicester Road. Please include your name & address so we can give you some feedback.

HIGHLANDS GARDENS is located at the junction of Abbots Road and Leicester Road.

Highlands Gardens was full of spring flowers. We enjoyed the crocuses, snowdrops and a good show of daffodils. A lot of these bulbs were planted by members of the Friends group three autumns ago and we should continue to enjoy them well into the future. Up in the wild flower meadow there were primroses and later flowering plants too. The new beech hedge running around the perimeter is just coming into leaf.

Spring time

In the stream there was masses of frog spawn, which could be easily seen in the mornings before the stream pump turned on. At the moment the pump is out of synch after a succession of power cuts last autumn, we have requested that the timer is readjusted. The ducks are back on the pond, so I am hopeful that we may have ducklings there in a few weeks, however they may not be very safe as there is also a family of foxes in the Gardens.

Barnet Council has installed a land drain near the arch at the lower end of the ponds. This allows the water leaking from the pond to be drained to the road drains, keeping the paths in the Gardens dry. Unfortunately it does not mean that the pond has stopped leaking and as a Friends group we are applying for grants to assess and repair the pond lining. But this is a long process and there are no easy short-cuts. We are continuing to put more donated plants in around the lower pond - more donations always gratefully received.

From the Barnet Times 31st March.

"A group of toddlers spent a morning in Barnet's very own secret garden sowing seeds as part of a campaign to restore it with the help of Lottery cash. The 18 youngsters, aged between two and four, planted a range of plants in Highlands Gardens, in Leicester Road, New Barnet, which were once part of a house owned by amateur astronomer Bevan Braithwaite. They were left to the people of Barnet in the 1930s, but now a Friends group has been set up to try and restore them to their former glory. Pauline Congdon, the owner of Little Acorns Nursery, which is in the



Anthony, and Jack, both aged 4, enjoyed the planting along with Alice, 3, and Kyla aged 2

same road, said the children had learned a lot from the project. She added: "We use the gardens a lot and we thought it would be nice to join the Friends of Highlands Gardens to give something back.

"The children thoroughly enjoyed the activity and in fact we extended it when they got back to the nursery and did some digging in our garden." The group is now hoping for a £50,000 Lottery grant to help restore the gardens and reopen and clean up a clogged up stream which runs through them".

Little Acorns

Thank YOU

A big THANK YOU to everyone who uses Highlands Gardens and picks up the litter left by less tidy people. It really makes a difference. Barnet Council do still regularly empty the bins and tidy up, including painting out the graffiti, but anything we can do to keep our space looking good and feeling welcoming can only benefit us.

Many Hands

We have been approached by a few community groups who wish to assist in looking after the Gardens. You may have seen a local children’s nursery (see above) or a Scout Group doing their best to look after and improve the gardens and learn as they do it. Let us know if you’d like to get involved.

Golden Memories

Local legend has it that the large flat stone near the bottom of the waterfall in Highlands Gardens was once used as a platform for diving. The story of how the pond was used as a Victorian swimming pool was told to a young Barnet boy by his grandfather in the 1930s.

That young boy - Leonard Matthews - still lives in the neighbourhood. Born and raised within a stone’s throw of Highlands Gardens Leonard remembers how it looked nearly 80 years ago. His earliest memory is being wheeled in a pushchair by his grandfather;

“The gardens weren’t as colourful in those days as there wasn’t as much planting. A lot of the beds were laid to lawn. To a young child it still seemed as though there were huge trees but obviously they were a lot smaller than they are today. There were two park keepers – and in those days if you were told to stop running about you stopped! The waterfall was always working... and I can remember the ponds looked good.”

The ponds may have looked a little bit too good for young Len’s liking...

“On one occasion I was leaning over the bridge over the pond at the bottom end of Highlands Gardens. As I was leaning right over my fountain pen dropped out of the pocket of my school blazer. So if you’re ever cleaning the pond out and find a fountain pen there - you’ll know it is mine!”

When war broke out in 1939 the Gardens were put to use. “Within 12 months the grass at the Leicester Road end was dug up and deep air raid shelters were built. You went down 10 to 12 steep stone steps. The inside was supported with pre-constructed concrete” Not that the shelters were any use; “They were half full of water much of time. I don’t even know if they were ever used. The watercourse wasn’t switched on during the War but because of the ponds up above there was seepage and, of course, water will find the lowest point”.

Len remembers the 1950s as being Highlands Gardens’ glory days. “A lot of money was spent on the Gardens at that time. There was an aviary and small animals were kept at the top of the park. I do remember that after the bulbs had flowered they dug them all up again. Why they didn’t leave them to naturalise I’ll never know”.

Thanks Len - Do you have any memories of Highlands Gardens? If so please contact Rebecca on 07968375204 or bexsternator@gmail.com and we’ll try to include them in the next newsletter.

Grants

The Friends of Highlands Gardens have applied for grants to improve the gardens and unfortunately were unsuccessful in both. We are now looking at alternative sources of funding and would appreciate it if anyone has any special skills in obtaining grants or knowledge of Bio-diversity, Heritage, Learning, Participation or Conservation could get in touch.

Safer Neighbourhood Team


If you spot any anti-social behaviour or anything happening in and around the gardens or area that you are concerned about you can contact the local Safer Neighbourhood Team (SNT).

Their numbers are: Office 020 8721 2846,
Mobile 07887 633343.

They do not work 24 hours so you may get the answer phone. You should leave a message as each incident is recorded and can help determine the priority areas for foot patrols. Of course in an emergency you should dial 999.

Clean pair of heels

A big thank you to those responsible owners who clean up after their pets. To others - please remember that the gardens are not a dog toilet.



Welcome if you are a new resident.

Contact

Visit our website at www.highlandsgardens.org.uk or email us webmaster@highlandsgardens.org.uk

Support Us

We ask for a small suggested donation to help us with the administrative costs (which are very small) of the Friends of Highlands Gardens. The donation also covers the cost of public liability insurance which is necessary so we can have working parties in the garden and hold community events, like the picnics of previous summers. In the past we have also raised money for bird boxes, some of which are being used this year. Please drop it in to Helen Oubridge (Hon Treasurer). Please make cheques payable to Friends of Highlands Gardens and send them to 122 Leicester Road. Many thanks.

Name/s _____ Address _____

Email _____ Please tick if you are an existing member.