

FRIENDS *of* LONG LANE PASTURE

NEWSLETTER

No. 14 December 2009

A Very Happy Christmas and New Year to all our Friends

After our grand opening in June, we are very pleased to report that there has been great progress with a number of major projects. Firstly, renewal of the dilapidated *footpath fence* has at last been completed - a major achievement. This was identified in our Management Plan as the most expensive task we had to address. The old fence was in very poor condition, falling down in several places and had been temporarily patched up for many years. Every year intruders managed to access the Pasture and some go on to steal tools and equipment from huts on Pointalls Allotments. Thanks to a very generous grant from the City Bridge Trust, a new fence is now in place. This stretches over 100 metres along the edge of the public footpath. It is a strong and secure 7ft high galvanised palisade fence, and at the railway bridge end has a second pedestrian gate on to the Pasture.

This *new gate* leads on to an area at the top of the embankment with a splendid view over Finchley. When we have raised money for it, we hope to provide a vista sign here pointing out local landmarks. A newly created and quite steep path leads down from here to the Pasture and links up with existing grass paths to provide a greater choice of routes and access. The existing hard-standing path at the Long Lane end of the Pasture has now been *resurfaced*, making it much smoother and easier for pushchairs and wheelchairs - though it has yet to be tested.

Recent weeks have seen a lot of rain and the Pasture has become very wet with some areas now likely to be permanently underwater until the spring. Because of these ground conditions and on-going works, including landscaping after construction jobs, it has been decided to *close the Pasture to visitors until March*. Work parties will continue to take place on Saturday mornings (10-12 noon) and we would very much welcome more helpers, of any age and ability. Make sure you have waterproof footwear!

In order to *strengthen the bank of the pond*, particularly in times of flood, a strong layer of green mesh has been fixed into the ground. This will be seeded in the spring and hopefully full of wildflowers. A drainage pond has been excavated on the far side as an overflow in times of heavy rain.

Visit our new website at:
www.longlanepasture.org
for information and inspiration
including a photo gallery of wildlife
and the Pasture through the seasons

The busy planting season has begun with one thousand native *English bluebells* put in the area of embankment next to the main entrance gate. This proved to be a challenging task because the ground was full of a dense network of ivy and hop roots, but despite this a number beds for the bulbs were eventually prepared. During the course of this work an old horse harness was unearthed, a relic from days when horses and ponies grazed here. Many of the bluebells were planted out on 15 November - Mitzvah Day. Over 20 children with accompanying adult volunteers came along from the Finchley Reform Synagogue to help - in very muddy conditions.

The Pasture has now had its *annual mow*. This removes and discourages any bramble re-growth from areas previously cleared and manages the grassland to encourage native wildflowers. All the cut grass has to be raked up and piled in heaps to rot. These piles provide good habitat for many creatures including small mammals.

On 28 November we took part in *National Tree Planting Week*. Blackthorns and hawthorns were planted in gaps in the hedgerows, a number of wild pear tree whips planted on the embankment and a few additional flowering shrubs added to the Butterfly Border. And, at the top of the Pasture, a special *Princeton Elm* was carefully established in a place which we hope will attract the unusual white-letter hairstreak butterflies. This is where one was seen earlier in the year and elm is its food plant. The Princeton Elm has been specially bred in the US to be resistant to Dutch elm disease.

Many visitors have seen a *heron* in or next to the large pond. And with the coming of winter, flocks of well over 200 *starlings* fly across the Pasture to roost nearby. Lots of *Goldfinches* are feasting on the teasel seeds. A bird feeding station has been set up - and is proving very popular with *blue tits* and *robins*. Any contributions towards the cost of the bird food would be gratefully received.

Sad to report, *Foxy Boy* is no longer with us. He has not been seen for a couple of months. However, another very shy fox with a distinguishing pale tail has been seen on occasion and may have taken over his territory.

If you have one, can you please send your e-mail address to Ann Brown: annbrownster@gmail.com so that we can send your Newsletter to you electronically. We would like to reduce the cost of printing and delivering paper copies – which detracts from funds available to look after the Pasture.