

FRIENDS *of* LONG LANE PASTURE

NEWSLETTER

No.2 April 2005

Over the autumn and winter months regular work has been going on at the Pasture. This has focused on opening up **pathways**, which has revealed some interesting features as well as helping in the compilation of wildlife records (which are essential if we are to prepare a plan for the future). It has also enabled us to clear rubbish and litter as well as ensure the site boundary is more secure.

Brambles have been a major obstacle, and still are in many places. However, after cutting back a lot of this vicious vegetation (all by hand and with a variety of implements) we now have clear pathways to all the key areas. Some of the cut material has been stacked as habitat piles and some of the rest removed by the Council as part of their greenwaste disposal service. Much of this work has now stopped because birds are beginning to nest but minor cutting back will be required throughout the year. Places where there are ditches or pits across the pathways (a legacy of Fairview) have been marked.

The amount of **water** in the Pasture seemed excessive until we discovered a major leak in one of Finchley`s water mains. Temporary repairs have been carried out but more substantial work is needed. At present parts of the Pasture resemble a lake rather than a meadow.

Litter is cleared every time we visit the Pasture. It is always most noticeable along the boundary by the North Circular Road footpath where drink cans and packaging from takeaway snacks are thrown over the fence (along with dumped undelivered free newspapers and schoolwork – the path is a main walking route for schoolchildren). An analysis of what had accumulated in one fortnight revealed 143 snack and sweet wrappings, 17 bottles, 27 drink cans/cartons, 79 bits of plastic, paper and bags, and – slightly more unusual – a football and some headache pills!

The Group has to ensure that the site **boundary** is kept secure (it`s one of the conditions in the licence) and this has proved a challenge as the fences are in a very poor state. There have been two break-ins, both damaging the fences, by thieves and vandals wanting to gain access to the adjacent allotments. However, with the help of Frank Derrett and Wayne Armsby – and with some ingenuity – these places have been promptly

repaired, weak places strengthened, and gaps temporarily blocked. This serves to reinforce the need for good boundary fencing to be put in place as soon as permission and funding can be obtained.

We are still waiting for a **lease**. As far as Council officers are concerned, this is a minor matter that can be put on the back burner – permanently, it would seem. However, we continue to bring to bear what pressure we can and know that councillors are firmly on our side. (For the current state of play you will need to attend the meeting on 28th April.)

We would welcome more **volunteer helpers** on site visit days. These are held on Saturday mornings (10 a.m. to 12 noon) every fortnight. Future dates: 30th April; 14th and 28th May; 11th and 25th June.

The richness of the **wildlife** continues to surprise us. Spring brought out a large number of daffodils. Also in flower were lesser celandine, snowdrops, white deadnettle, and dandelion. As the season proceeds more will be revealed, but the dominant plant at the moment is undoubtedly bramble, which marches relentlessly forward if not kept under firm control. We have, incidentally, uncovered a hybrid variety – Himalayan Giant.

The fox and two field voles have been seen. Recent sunny days brought out the butterflies: peacock, small tortoiseshell, brimstone and holly blue. There have also been a few seven-spot ladybirds about.

It has been a treat to hear the song thrush but the most common call is that of the wren, so powerful for such a small bird. Three redwings and a thrush from Scandinavia were seen on a hawthorn in the middle of a bramble patch. This particular tree is much favoured by birds: it is also a half way stop for the tits as they cross from one fence to the other. The jackdaw puts in an occasional appearance, usually sitting on the chimney of a house in Long Lane.

[Don't forget the meeting in the Sea Cadets Hall in Long Lane on Thursday, 28th April, starting at 7.30 p.m., when we will be looking at the plans for the future of the Pasture.]