

**FRIENDS of
LONG LANE PASTURE**

NEWSLETTER

No 29. Spring 2015

Welcome to another edition of the Pasture Newsletter. Please feel free to share this file



with anyone you know who may enjoy reading it.

Officially it is now spring and we have had some lovely warm days

emphasising this change of season. The welcome snowdrops have already bloomed and departed and the Pasture is currently dotted with patches of crocus and daffodils before bluebells & summer snowflakes take their turn to please.

Winter Blues

The weather during the winter never got too severe. Last year came to an end with some brief snow showers shortly after Christmas and



we've had some harsh frosts this year but nothing too dramatic or long lasting.

There was however a moderate fall of snow during the early hours of February 3rd.

The morning was a photo opportunity not to be missed in case this was as cold and wintry as the Pasture was ever going to look, so numerous photographs were taken to record the event.



Of course, we did have several spells of rain, sometimes with slow-moving weather fronts depositing appreciable amounts over Finchley.



This led to the inevitable re-appearance of the fabled Strawberry Vale Brook, a local stream that apparently makes its first above-ground appearance on the Pasture at the base of what we've affectionately named Octavia's hill.

The dip in Long Lane under the North Circular Bridge is evidence of a definable valley, and the subterranean brook eventually appears as a fully formed stream flowing from a brick culvert near Joint Road in the St Pancras and Islington cemetery, East Finchley.

During the wetter months, some of the brook's water is encouraged to flow towards the main pond keeping it topped up while the remainder floods the lower part of the Pasture before disappearing into the sodden earth to continue its mysterious course heading east.

It is planned to continue making this natural resource a more defined and attractive feature, with a series of holding pools, as well as helping to alleviate the flooding on the lower part of the site.

Winter Maintenance

Work does not stop on the Pasture due to the colder weather. An intrepid band of volunteers gathers each Saturday morning come rain or shine to help maintain the site.

Scrub clearing, pruning, tree planting, bramble removing and pond upkeep are some of the necessary tasks done to keep the Pasture from returning to an overgrown impenetrable field.

When the ground is wet weeds are easier to remove; however, just walking repeatedly over

the same area can cause damage as grass paths turn to mud. For this reason it becomes necessary to keep the gates locked when the Pasture is saturated.



During National Nest Box Week (14-21 February) we put up half-a-dozen new nesting boxes on the trees to attract more garden birds to breed

on the Pasture. The allotments to the northwest fortuitously provide a varied diet of juicy caterpillars and bugs for the busy parents raising their young during May; their unstinting quest benefits the plottolders too!

Many new saplings have been planted on the raised southern bank. This not only shores up the land from future land slip, but in time will give additional screening from the adjacent North Circular Road.

Grant Success!

Last year, Barnet Council announced an exciting scheme where each of the three Parliamentary Constituencies in the Borough would have £100,000 made available for local community projects. There were certain rules attached to applying for these grants, and the maximum any group could apply for was £9,999.

Projects had to be something needing a one-off payment requiring no on-going running costs. Other desired aims were that the grants would benefit communities, promote health and well-being, be educational, and ideally, be environmentally advantageous as well.

For some time the Pasture Management Committee has wanted a shelter to enable our list of annual events to continue whatever the weather. Financing any expensive item is always a problem, so the new Community Grant scheme seemed like an ideal opportunity to fund our objective.

A summary of our bid for the grant was as follows:

We require an open structure built over the hard standing area adjacent to the Pasture's large pond. This will be a bespoke open-sided wooden gazebo, constructed with



pressure-treated wood and shingle roof built by a local craftsman at a cost of £2,200 for materials and

labour.

This will give a much needed shelter to groups of people, work parties and school classes visiting the Pasture, enabling talks and study to take place whatever the weather, and ending the disappointment of events being cancelled due to rain.

When school classes visit or when we have pond-dipping days, butterfly days and volunteer working groups visit, there will be a shelter to sit under to hear talks, discuss work plans and even eat lunch, protected from the sun or rain. It will improve the conditions for all visitors and volunteers.

Also required is a 130 metre long fence to surround an expanse of the Pasture we refer to as the Undisturbed Circle. This is an area where the Pasture is not disturbed by human intervention, allowing the grasses and wildlife there to flourish naturally. The fence will enable this attractive tranquil feature to survive unharmed, providing a unique wildlife habitat for visitors to enjoy and study.

This too will be built of pressure-treated wood also by a local craftsman assisted by volunteer help at a cost of £2,800 for materials and labour.

The Pasture offers an attractive and peaceful setting in Finchley for people to visit.

We positively encourage community participation. The laid path from the entrance to the main pond is pram and wheelchair accessible. In 2014 Long Lane Pasture won a Green Flag award and a London in Bloom award for being 'outstanding'. This was the only green space in the Borough of Barnet to win these awards apart from the Westminster owned cemeteries. Total of the grant Long Lane Pasture Trust is applying for is £5000. Visitors and residents benefit from having this 'jewel of Finchley' to picnic on, pick blackberries, watch birds and butterflies, or to study a traditional hay meadow on one of the last wild remnants of the historic Finchley Common. We urge everyone to visit the Pasture, especially during the spring and summer; or, even better, to volunteer each Saturday between 10 a.m. and noon.

We also needed to satisfy several other criteria regarding safety, community engagement and planning. On January 15th the awards were discussed amongst a group of Councillors at the Finchley and Golders Green Area Committee meeting, where the Pasture Trust's application was approved unanimously with some very complimentary comments about the site and the work we have done in the past. A great result!

Well done to all those involved in working on the application, and to the Council Officers processing the grant. We hope to have both these projects functioning soon, with the fencing already nearly completed.



The first post is driven in

Featured Tree

When Long Lane Pasture was first handed over to members of the Trust a decade ago, one of the first native trees planted was a Corkscrew Hazel - ***Corylus avellana*** Contorta. It sports noticeably long flowing catkins that appear in



February, many weeks before the leaves show.

The branches are delightfully twisted making for a very attractive tree that in ideal conditions could grow up to 15 metres. Like all hazels, it produces edible cob nuts in the autumn. Although the tree is very hardy, it is slow growing. Thankfully our specimen is looking remarkably healthy, if only four foot high!

Garden Bird Watch

During February the usual suspects were seen during the RSPB Garden Bird Watch weekend. Not in any order: robin, dunnock, blackbird, carrion crow, magpie, blue tit, great tit, house sparrow, a charm of goldfinches, greenfinch, starling, wren, pigeon and wood pigeon were all noted; especially around the bird feeding station!

You can now monitor Pasture activity on

Twitter. Please follow: [@LLPasture](https://twitter.com/LLPasture)

Please visit our website:

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With special thanks to:

