



# NEWSLETTER

**No 31. Autumn 2015**

Another year gradually winds down from the bustle of summer. The inevitable signs are all around us; the cooler temperatures, shortening days and the leaves turning to their glorious



autumnal hues. The clocks have now lost that summer hour and the heating bills are starting to rack up. Soon it will be Christmas and the depths of winter; but before that depressing thought takes hold, we will take a warm look back at what's been happening on the Pasture since June.

But to begin with, here is a note from our Chair of the Long Lane Pasture Trust:

*As you will read elsewhere in this Newsletter, for several years running now LLP has been awarded the highest possible standards in both the Green Flag Award and London in Bloom. No other comparable green space in the Borough of Barnet has achieved such results.*

*I have always maintained that this is due to our hard-working Management Committee and our regular volunteers.*

*Why not join us? We do need more volunteers for two hours only every Saturday morning (10:00-midday). It is now during late autumn and winter, when we prepare the Pasture for next year.*

*So please find two hours, wear old clothes and waterproof footwear, and come along prepared to dig ditches, cut back bramble, sort out the butterfly border, strim overgrown grass, flatten out the*

*footpaths, and so on. We will provide you with any gloves and tools you might need.*

*Join us, to help keep 'Barnet's best kept secret' the treasure it is for all our visitors and for the benefit of the threatened wildlife.*

Dennis Pepper - Chair

## **Official Opening of Gazebo!**

This joyous occasion was reported both in the Hendon Times and The Archer newspapers, and also features on the front page of the latest edition of the Finchley Society Newsletter; but here is a more detailed version of events...

We generally try to hold an annual summer event in June to celebrate the handing over of the stewardship of the land to the Long Lane Pasture Trust. Some years this has had to be cancelled due to inclement weather. This year there was no possibility to cancel as we were planning to have the official opening of the Barnet Council Grant funded gazebo and corral fence.

Choosing the date was crucial but depended on receiving the grant in the Trust's bank account before we could purchase the materials needed for the gazebo. The date of Sunday June 14



was finalised and invitations sent out to all the local Councillors in the surrounding Wards, and special invitation dispatched to the newly appointed Barnet Mayor, Cllr. Mark Shooter.

Unfortunately bad weather & the unavailability of our chosen skilled craftsman also meant time was getting tighter. However, Committee members and volunteers nobly assisted in marking out where the structure was to be



sited; and were also on hand to ably assist the local carpenter Paul in early June when he was able to make a start.

As the 14th approached it was apparent there wasn't going to be enough time to complete the roofing felts... but no problem, the daily weather forecasts for the coming weekend got better and drier as the final week progressed!

Sunday arrived and tables were set up, paths swept, grass cut and food and drink laid out. 4 pm approached and The Worshipful the Mayor of the London Borough of Barnet arrived with his delightful wife Melissa and their young daughter Eva.



Committee Members Dennis Pepper and Harriet Copperman took the Mayoral party on a brief tour of the Pasture, pointing out its many splendid features before returning to the gazebo



by the main pond for the formal opening ceremony.

The Mayor gave a complimentary and amusing speech before cutting the all-important symbolic ribbon. Several Councillors turned up, as well

as London Assembly Member Andrew Dismore and the redoubtable Brian Coleman, who was Barnet Mayor at the original handover of the



Pasture to the Trust. We were also pleased to have two members of staff from Barnet's Area Grant department join us. Together with members of the public and other invited guests, everyone enjoyed a rather wonderful afternoon tea, with a variety of delicious foods and drinks available, including a honey cake, plum jam scones and elderflower cordial; all made with ingredients produced on the Pasture.

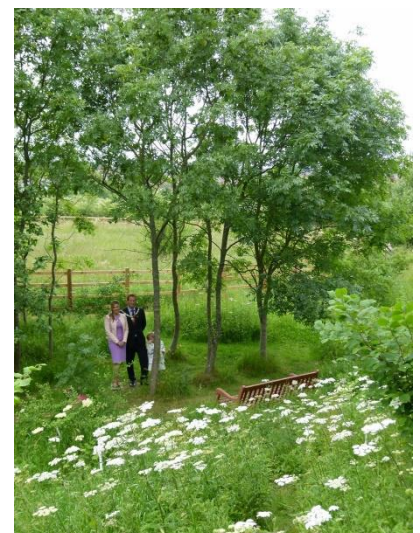
The gazebo was decorated with several dozen A4 photographs showing the wide variety of wildlife and plants to be found at the Pasture, which elicited many appreciative comments.

With vibrant dragonflies over the adjacent pond, colourful butterflies flitting by, the warm sunny weather, pleasant conversation, wholesome food and wine flowing; the afternoon event passed all too quickly.

The Mayor had to depart for another engagement and guests began to drift home.

The Committee members cleared up and by 7pm you would never have known what a fabulous and rewarding time we had all shared.

Thank you to everyone who came, and those who helped, to make the day so special.





## Butterflies

Although the summer wasn't a scorcher, it wasn't too bad either; certainly not the wash-out of previous years. Nineteen butterfly species were again seen, as expected, and although no new ones were sighted, we haven't lost any.



We sent several specific timed surveyed reports to Butterfly Conservation, so the species data could be added to their annual national summer Butterfly Count census.

Every species we counted at the Pasture was at one time also seen on the butterfly border. This is the strip of land on the north-eastern perimeter and is established with plants that are beneficial and attractive to butterflies.

The orange tip, brimstone, green-veined white, and painted lady were only ever seen on this border, proving that it really does attract these colourful dainty insects. The grassland species; skippers, meadow brown, ringlet & gatekeeper were again in profusion during July and August.



## East Finchley Festival

On Sunday June 21 the annual summer festival took place in Cherry Tree Woods, opposite East Finchley station. As usual Long Lane Pasture had booked a pitch, and from 10am Committee members arrived & erected the pop-up gazebo and folded tables to set up an attractive stall. From noon the steady stream of visitors increased rapidly to crowds of people enjoying the warm sunny weather, live music and dance displays. Dozens of colourful stalls offered a



wide variety of merchandise and all types of local businesses were plying their services.

Along the tree-lined edge of the park a dozen or more wagons offered a tempting selection of freshly cooked foods from traditional roast hog to falafels & seemingly everything in-between; and of course the ever-busy beer tent!

On the Pasture stall we had homemade jams, tomato plants, and packets of wild flower seeds; also some books, pencils and calendars, with six good months still to run! We raised much needed funds to assist in keeping the Pasture the exceptional place it is. But in many ways, more important was letting new people know about the Pasture and signing up additional members to our mailing list.

It was a great day out, with lots to see and a wonderful opportunity to engage with so many lovely people. Many thanks to all those who organise and run this great festival. Long Lane Pasture Trust will definitely be back next year.

## More Gazebo News!

It was a great relief when the final roofing felt tile was fixed into place on the gazebo roof in September! The delay was caused by the inevitable juggling of variable factors; i.e. when

our volunteer builder was available when it wasn't too hot or too wet to work on the roof! If too hot due to sunshine, pitched felt roofs can be easily damaged if walked upon as they become soft. If wet during rain, all roofs are dangerous to work on and best avoided for obvious reasons.



The gazebo has proved a great success and a focal point for anyone visiting or working at the Pasture. The unexpected good acoustics of the structure makes normal conversation a pleasure for those sheltering underneath it.



It now keeps the rain off and offers much needed shade when the sun shines; and it looks great in photographs, giving scale and structure. It's become a place to sit, to affix information and has become the place to locate dropped toys!

### **Frances Loveday**

The loss of one of our stoic volunteers, Frances Loveday, who sadly passed away in June while tending her allotment, pained us greatly, and reminds us all of our own brief time on this

earth. The service held at Golders Green Crematorium was attended by hundreds, with family and friends from the many organisations she had taken an active part in.



At the Pasture we have chosen to remember Frances with a pyrography engraved wooden plaque bearing her name fixed to a rafter on the gazebo. When at coffee time we look up, we will see her name, and hope too she is looking down on the Pasture where she enjoyed many happy hours volunteering.

### **Restorative Justices Service**

The Long Lane Pasture Trust has continued over the summer, working with Barnet Council's Restorative Justice Service, as reported in the last edition. This has proved mutually beneficial to all three parties involved.

The Restorative Justice Service have another outlet for their worthwhile programme; the supervised young people get to do something useful and acquire new skills, with the ever-important fresh air and exercise as an added bonus. The Pasture Trust gets extra pairs of hands on a Saturday morning to assist in the on-going maintenance required to maintain the tranquil nature of the Pasture.

### **Pasture Spiders**

Although not everyone's favourite creature, spiders are one of the most interesting and useful members of the natural world.

Collectively they eat a great many bugs, and are themselves food for birds and other animals. They are all part of the food chain and if you



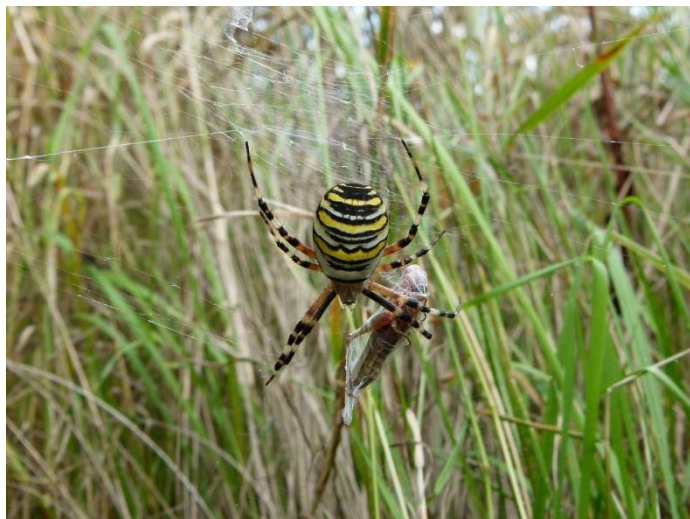
are not freaked out by them, they are fascinating to study.

On the Pasture we see many different species, and as with other invertebrates seen, we are gradually compiling a list. There have been at least 650 species noted in the UK, and we have



so far recorded just 20, so we have a lot more work to do!

Seen in August was this white crab spider that sits on flowers and physically catches its prey when it comes within range. It had caught a gatekeeper butterfly, and was enjoying its meal of eating an insect that feeds entirely on nectar; sweet!



In September this impressive wasp spider was photographed holding on to its freshly caught and bound grasshopper. Its chaotic mish-mash of a web stretched between grasses works just as well as the perfectly formed and beautiful webs spun by the orb spiders.

Nursery spiders are often seen on the grasses near the ponds and so named because of the marvellous structure they build for their young.

When gently tapped the freshly hatched spiderlings become very active; and it's not something you would want to accidentally disturb...!



### Other Wildlife News

The resident moorhens raised two broods during the year but sadly we believe none actually survived to adulthood. Of course we could be wrong and the one surviving juvenile we saw may have flown the nest. They are secretive birds and at one time we counted 5 chicks being fed at various hiding spots in the reeds around the edges of the pond.



Slowworms, frogs and newts have been seen again this year, and the presence of voles and field mice is still evident.

Around the ponds the usual beetles, moths and mayflies were busy on sunny days, while seven species of Dragonflies and damselflies were noted this summer; with a blue-bodied chaser that seemed to patrol the same pond every day for at least 3 months! It may have been a succession of several different ones through the season, but I sincerely hope it was the same



one, it certainly seemed to get used to me and wasn't as skittish as when first seen in late May.



It's always encouraging to see these insects actively laying eggs, knowing that the next generation will emerge in up to two years' time in the case of some species. Here we see a spectacular emperor dragonfly, several of which



were seen laying eggs on the main pond. During the year when it's dry we set up a moth trap overnight, to count and try to identify the different species the following morning as they gleefully fly away. The most impressive one



seen this year was this male Jersey tiger. Its crimson underwings looked stunning as it flew away in the sunshine.



Also in the trap was a lesser stag beetle. This was a great discovery as we could not find a recorded sighting of it being in this area of London. Two more have since been found by the wormery. There is still so much to discover about the wildlife that lives on the Pasture; we would welcome anyone with knowledge or enthusiasm to assist us in documenting it.

### **Green flag award**

For the fourth year running Long Lane Pasture has been awarded a Green Flag Community Award. Apart from the Westminster owned cemeteries in our borough, and the City of London operated Golders Hill Park, who won awards in a different category; Long Lane Pasture was the only green space in Barnet to receive this honour.



It is testament to the continued work done by our volunteers that we have maintained a high standard of cleanliness, safety and a well



maintained interesting green space. This was further validated later in the summer when we heard we had also won another London in Bloom Award! Again, the only one in its category in the London Borough of Barnet! Well done to everyone who made this remarkable achievement possible.

### **Lunar Eclipse & Rainbow**

On September 28 there was a total eclipse of the moon. The Pasture is adjacent to a large allotment site, so at night the immediate area is much darker than the surrounding street lit roads.

The less light polluted atmosphere makes it possible to take better photographs of the night sky when there has been a particular reason to observe something special.



Thankfully during the early hours the clouds stayed away and I was able to get some reasonable photographs of the lunar eclipse, which itself was exceptional as it also coincided with a 'Supermoon' i.e. the moon was much closer to the earth in its orbit than at other times of the year and so was around 14% bigger than average.

An eerie glow was cast over the landscape during this time and the stars were visible quite near the darkened disk. I would imagine most creatures of the night on the Pasture would have gone about their business as normal as if it were a moonless night.

Also seen in the sky above the pasture was this spectacular rainbow on September 2. This too was exceptional, lasting over an hour as a particularly narrow band of rain cloud passed

overhead heading south east, allowing the sun to shine brightly throughout the intense shower.



It was a particular feature of this summer that it never got too hot or too wet, allowing the trees and shrubs not to get stressed in the growing season. This has led to one of the best autumns in recent years, with glorious colours in the leaves all around. Please take the time to stop and stare, and take in the beauty that surrounds us.

### **NCS Visit**

Once again we were delighted to have the services of a team of young people from the National Citizen Service who visited the Pasture in October to carry out some essential tasks.

Soil was moved about the site in barrows to fill uneven ground and drainage ditches cleared to ease winter flooding. Brambles were removed and cut grass raked away and compost heaps turned over and tidied up.

Many hands do make light work, and it's amazing what can be achieved in a few hours that would normally take weeks to complete. The NCS team also helped in fund raising away from the Pasture and we are very grateful for all their help and eagerly look forward to another group returning next year.



## Blackberry Harvest

The blackberries this year appeared earlier than usual and the season seemed to be over in just a few weeks; however the quality of the fruit was superb! Members of the public came every day to pick berries from all the areas we are happy to have the brambles grow; and we assume and hope pickers deposited some money in the donations slot by the main gate as they departed.



There are also several varieties of plum growing on the Pasture which are collected to make jam to raise funds, or left for the wildlife to enjoy. Unfortunately there have been episodes when trees have been stripped of their produce.

While on the subject of antisocial behaviour, litter has been a minor irritant throughout the year, even though bins are provided near benches and by the main entrance.

Committee members diligently remove any rubbish seen on most days; though it would be interesting to study the psychology of those who think leaving litter is acceptable behaviour.

## Pond Works

We are grateful to those hardy souls who venture into the main pond each autumn to



remove the excess reed mace, that if left would

cover the pond in a few seasons. Several large illegally introduced goldfish were also spotted this year which is not good as they will eat much of the pond life! However, a grey heron has recently been seen paying great attention to the pond...

## Christmas is coming....

As usual, the Pasture Trust plans to produce a wall hanging calendar for 2016. It is in the process of being formatted so not even I know what's in it; but it will include photographs of wildlife, views and activities on the Pasture over the past year. We hope to offer it as an A4 booklet that when hung, opens out to A3 size, with more space to write notes.

On sale from mid-November they will again cost £5 and include an envelope. They will make excellent Christmas presents...



## Final note

I hope you found something interesting about the Pasture in this Newsletter. It has been another good year, and as Dennis mentioned, we welcome people to join us and get involved; any Saturday 10am-midday, we will be glad to hand you a shovel! Bye!

You can now monitor Pasture activity on Twitter.

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

Please visit our website:

[www.longlanepasture.org](http://www.longlanepasture.org)

Email: [longlanepasture@gmail.com](mailto:longlanepasture@gmail.com)

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This Newsletter is issued by the Long Lane Pasture Trust:

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Registered Charity No: 1122236

With special thanks to:

**BARNET**  
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Financially assisted  
by Barnet Council