



# FRIENDS of LONG LANE PASTURE



## NEWSLETTER

### No 33. Late summer, early autumn 2016

Welcome to another bumper issue of the Long Lane Pasture Newsletter! This is the 10<sup>th</sup> edition I have edited since being given the task back in September 2013; and as I stare at a near blank page on the monitor, I truly wonder what else is there to write about this special two acre patch of land...?



Well thankfully, as it happens quite a bit! Like anywhere on this planet, change is inevitable, whether imperceptible or dramatically, a place over time will alter. Even if somewhere looks the same, change has taken place gradually as seasons advance, plants grow and concepts evolve. And so the Pasture slowly transforms as paths are improved, trees managed and ideas are discussed at committee meetings.

We hope our visitors have noticed and approved the gradual alterations we have made to the Pasture over the years; with secret peaceful nooks, interesting plants, improved pathways, and amended signage. We can also assure our visitors nothing radical is planned either; just the usual annual maintenance and small improvements, as and when finance allows us to do so.

If ever you want to assist in the upkeep of the Pasture, please come along on any Saturday morning from 10am 'til noon, to meet the team and help us preserve this tranquil jewel in Finchley's crown.

### All Change

We would like to publically thank our outgoing Chair Dennis Pepper, who has recently stepped down from the role. Dennis, with his energy and drive has led the Long Lane Pasture Trust for several years, and we are very grateful and all the wiser for his tireless stewardship of the Committee; and for the countless hours of physical toil he and his wife Ann have carried out on the Pasture for over a decade.



Unfortunately, health and family commitments means both have less time to offer and Dennis felt it prudent to hand over the reins of the Trust to someone else whilst still in a capacity to mentor a successor. Donald Lyven has taken on the position of Chair; and we also welcome one of our stalwart volunteers Oli Kane, onto the Pasture Committee.

### Let's Talk About the Weather...

At the Pasture another strange year of weather has been observed. Both winter and spring arrived late, and this summer has never really got going. While it hasn't been a wash-out like some years, an extended period of hot weather never materialised either; so consequently summer thunderstorms have been sparse too.

In general it's been a rather mixed bag. Alarming, around the world the weather has been hitting the headlines all too often.

Words like drought, flood, heatwave and wildfire, if put into Google and you click on the News filter, will bring up countless horrendous stories and video clips of extreme weather events that have occurred this year. Nearly always with affected people commenting that *'it's never been this bad before!'*

Daytime heat records keep being broken, and many severe rain events have washed away infrastructure; whether in Texas, Macedonia Japan or Nepal, all have been harrowing to watch. The odd tornado has also been seen in several area around the globe not usually affected, and large-hail storms; a fearful and damaging phenomenon, are on the increase.

Extensive wildfires have been a problem too in many places; with Portugal, Canada and California of particular note this year with their respective fire seasons starting earlier than usual. NASA already predicts 2016 will be the hottest year on record. Wildlife will suffer.

Several years ago a particularly strong circulatory wind tore the roofing felt off some sheds as well as other damage, on the neighbouring allotments to the Pasture!



I'm just grateful our ever-changing Maritime UK weather is not usually prone to worrying

extremes that other countries have been experiencing.



Because of the weather, butterfly & dragonfly sightings have been down on previous years at the Pasture, but bird numbers are much the same; with new broods of robin, dunnock, blackbird, starling & house sparrow consistent with preceding years.

As always, we can only hope that next year will be better, with the seasons occupying their proper timeslots, and with a glorious long hot summer!

### **Oh So Many Moths!**

Apparently around 2,500 species of moth have been recorded in the British Isles, with about 800 regular species. On several warm summer nights this year, we have set up a moth trap to see what species we have in the area.



The trap consists of a special bulb, giving out a spectrum of light which appeals to moths, in a container full of old cardboard egg boxes. These give ample hiding spaces for weary moths to settle into after a night's flying.



The interesting part for us is examining the boxes the next morning to see what we have attracted! We identify them as best we can from an assortment of reference books and field guides before the rudely awakened moth warms up and flies away.

Trouble is, so many of them look similar, being mostly brown and small. The larger colourful ones can be truly magnificent & a lot easier to identify, like this six-spot burnet moth in flight!



Each year our list of identified species grows that little bit longer as our knowledge and identifying skills improve. We always welcome anyone with knowledge and enthusiasm in helping us improve our understanding about

the flora and fauna on the Pasture; so please don't hesitate in contacting us if you can assist.

### Green Flag Award

For the fifth year running Long Lane Pasture has been awarded a Green Flag Community Award, 2016/17. Apart from the Westminster owned cemeteries in our borough, and the City of London run Golders Hill Park, who all won Green Awards in a different category; Long Lane Pasture was once again the only other green space in Barnet to receive this honour!



It is witness to the unstinting work carried out by our volunteers that we have maintained a high standard of cleanliness, safety and a well maintained interesting green space to visit.

Our pride in this accolade was further boosted when we heard we had also won another London in Bloom Award, in the 'It's Your Neighbourhood' category.

These are some of the judge's comments:

*'This is a wonderful hidden gem. The space is well maintained with a small group of volunteers dedicating their free time to its upkeep. I liked the cut pathways and the wild flowers which lead through to the shelter, not a drop of litter on view. The green space is used by young and old, young families with their children for picnics, or older folk for a place to come and relax and reflect.'*

*The variety of plants, trees and features was interesting. I liked the willow shelters too; these were used for compost heaps. The variety of planting is great for bees and other wildlife too, e.g. butterflies. There is enthusiasm amongst the group to develop the green space further. The site is well maintained and managed by the group and they have ensured that it remains an interesting open space. There was no evidence of fly tipping, dog fouling or graffiti. There is plenty to explore in this small, but deceptively large green space, it's a bit like a Tardis.'*



Along with Friends of Childs Hill Park, we are the only two green spaces in the London Borough of Barnet to receive an award from London in Bloom. Well done to all our helpers who made this year another successful one, and keep the Pasture such an award winning place!

### **Good Gym**

During the late summer an organisation called Good Gym contacted us and put forward a pleasing proposal. They had recently formed a branch in East Finchley, and the aim of the group is to combine running and exercise with doing good deeds in the community!

An excellent idea we thought; and this was definitely an offer of volunteer labour we couldn't refuse...

They were starting their first outing on August 16, and gathered outside the Phoenix Cinema. Shrewdly, they had arranged for the Mayor of Barnet, Cllr David Longstaff to launch their first altruistic foray into the wide world.



After some inspiring speeches, the group set off, enjoying a stimulating run through the streets of East Finchley towards the Pasture, where members of the Committee had gathered to welcome them, and had laid out various tools and gloves for the working part of the activities.



It wasn't long after they'd set off at around 7:15pm before they arrived; and they weren't the only ones who came... The Barnet Council Mayoral diesel powered Jag was pulling up!

Several Barnet Mayors have visited the Pasture over the years, but this was the first time one was arriving on a surprise visit!

A few more encouraging words were spoken, before the joggers sprang into action, donning gloves, picking up the rakes and pitchforks and setting to work.



It was remarkable to witness so many fit people enthusiastically raking up the areas of mown grass into piles and transporting the hay onto the compost heap!

The collective time of all the souls working for twenty minutes was equivalent to around 7 hours for one person to have done the same



amount of work, with Councillor Sachin Rajput also lending a hand! It was awe inspiring to watch.

Meanwhile, our Vice Chair Harriet took the Mayor and Madam Mayoress on an impromptu walkabout across the Pasture, showing all that is beautiful about this special place in the reddening hues of the approaching twilight.



After the much needed raking, the Good Gym members made their way to the picnic circle and began various exercises.

Oh to be that young and able to stretch and move about energetically like spring lambs; and after all that vigorous work too!

Even more amazing was that once they had finished exercising, they made their way to the main gate, and without pause began running back to the starting point of their jaunt, the Phoenix!



We really enjoyed having Good Gym visiting the Pasture and happily welcomed them back again several weeks later. Because of their help, we have been able to get ahead of our annual cut of the Pasture's meadow areas for the first time in several years, and eagerly await Good Gym's next available visit.

## National Citizen Service

We also appreciated having our annual visit from the young volunteers of the NCS in late August, who not only put in many hours work, but also raised money and our profile locally as part of their service.



This year's students were very enthusiastic and took to the various tasks given to them willingly; barrowing materials around, helping with planting and principally assisting in the yearly late summer cut of the expanses of grassland. The sun shone and they enjoyed their packed lunches under the shade of trees.

They had visited a week before to get an understanding of the Pasture and the importance of areas like this in a built up district, for wildlife and for the benefit of the



human soul. They came at the right time too, as our delicious blackberries were everywhere,

ripe, sweet and gleefully consumed by many of the group.

Just as with the visit from Good Gym, it was very satisfying to see the potential hours of back-breaking toil working on the land, reduce at a phenomenal rate as much fitter people tackled the clearing of dead grass, wizened plants and prickly brambles; and pitch-forking them up into an ever-growing stack!

The Pasture Committee are very grateful for the NCS, and the excellent work they do in shaping young minds; and very much look forward to their continued involvement in helping at Long Lane Pasture in the years to come.



## More Willing Workers!

We also had Cubs from the 1<sup>st</sup> Finchley Scout Group visit the Pasture on Monday September 12 at 5.30 pm. The eager children busily set to working on the land with the tools provided; again mostly assisting with the summer hay raking, and learnt about the importance and history of the Pasture. We are very grateful for their help and hope they and accompanying parents enjoyed their evening at the Pasture.

## Featured Plant

Growing on the bank by the fence next to the path that runs alongside the North Circular Road, are some hops. Hops are the flowers of the hop plant *Humulus lupulus*. They are used

primarily as a flavoring and stability agent in beer, to which they impart their distinctive flavour; though they are also used for various purposes in other beverages and herbal medicine. The hop plant is a vigorous, climbing, herbaceous perennial.

Many varieties of hops are grown by farmers around the world, with different types being used for particular styles of beer.

The first documented use of hops in beer is from the 9th century, though originally, hops used in England were imported from Europe. It was not until 1524 that hops were first grown in the southeast of England, where they



were introduced as an agricultural crop by Dutch farmers in Kent. Therefore, in the hop industry there are many words which originally were Dutch, like oast house; a building with a specially shaped cowl used for drying the flowers. Hops were subsequently commercially grown locally near breweries for convenience.

Nowadays hops can often be found growing wild in hedgerows; though it is interesting to think that without the intervention of humans, so many plants we take for granted growing in the UK and enriching our lives, would probably never naturally reach our shores. The fresh green colour of the hop plant is a welcome addition to the Pasture.

## Pond Maintenance

The annual excess reedmace removal from the main pond has taken place. This is to ensure the pond doesn't become overgrown, which if left unchecked, would undoubtedly see the pond disappear after several years.



As usual, the reeds are left adjacent to the pond for a week or so, to allow any creature a chance to nip back into the water before the mace is taken to the compost heap. After drying out, the reeds also become considerably lighter to move!

## Up Above

Back in July there was a noisy commotion high in the sky over the Pasture. It was squawking carrion crows, objecting most vociferously to what appeared to be a circling buzzard!



They weren't only voicing their disapproval of the hawk, they were aggressively 'dive bombing' the harassed bird. For a couple of minutes the

reeling melee drifted overhead with the buzzard resigned to the unwelcome attention; but then with a few beats of its broad wings, it gained height & distance from the aggressors and rapidly glided away out of sight.

It was great to witness, and similar to when the crows unfairly harass any passing grey heron making its way to the pond at the base of the Pentland building.

Keep watching the skies; you never know what you might see! And this leads nicely on to the next photo.

Last year the charity, London's Air Ambulance, finally raised more than £4m to purchase another McDonnell MD902 Explorer helicopter. The second-hand machine was appropriately kitted out and entered service this year.

With two helicopters in the fleet, it should ensure a continuous daily service as a machine will always be available when essential maintenance needs to be done on the other, and it reduces the wear and tear on having just one aircraft.



This was the first time I'd seen G-LNDN fly over the Pasture, and a welcome reminder of the great work the advanced trauma team do at the Royal London Hospital, Whitechapel.

The service costs £6m a year to run and relies on the generosity of Londoners and sponsors to keep it going. The service is 24/7, with

rapid response vehicles operating during the hours of darkness.

If you wish to help maintain this service by donating, please check:

[www.londonsairambulance.co.uk](http://www.londonsairambulance.co.uk) to find out more.

### **Mutant Snail**

Several weeks ago, one of our volunteers came across this fascinating garden snail. Snails are creatures with ommatophores; eyes on stalks. This one had obviously had an injury where



the stalk had been severed; however, they have an incredible ability to regenerate them within a few weeks! This double mutation of the damaged eye is not unknown, but still very unusual and an amazing find. We hope the snail goes on to live a long and happy life on the Pasture, and stays away from the adjacent allotment site!





## Special Thanks To Our Helpers

The continued success of the Pasture winning awards and being such a special place is all



due to the priceless effort put in each week from a happy band of volunteers. Some can commit to only a few hours a month, others have helped as part of community work programmes; and we've always welcomed those wanting to volunteer with us as part of their Duke of Edinburgh Award tasks.



A range of skills can be acquired during the year, from bulb planting, weeding, coppicing, brush cutting, haymaking, strimming, mowing, pond maintenance, and last but not least, drinking coffee!

Apart from fresh air and exercise, you get to experience the seasons at close hand, learn plant names and experience the pleasure of working in all types of weather! Just being

able to move a wheelbarrow about is a great help! Please consider joining us.



Here is a call out to those individuals who have recently assisted the Long Lane Pasture Trust in their endeavours: Wayne, Dennis, Oli, Harriet, Maureen, Donald, Linda, Bob, Sarah, Paolo, Ben, Gwynnevere, Zoe, Pia and Lea.



Thank you all very much; and to all our visitors we also say a big Thank You for all your kind comments and generous donations popped in the money slot at the entrance to the site; it really does help with our work.

## Geocache!

Do you know what Geocaching is? Long Lane Pasture now has a Geocache! Confused? Let Wikipedia explain:

*'Geocaching is an outdoor recreational activity, in which participants use a Global Positioning System (GPS) receiver or mobile device and other navigational techniques to hide and seek containers, called 'geocaches' or 'caches', at*

*specific locations marked by coordinates, all over the world.*

*A typical cache is a small waterproof container containing a logbook (with a pen or pencil). The geocacher enters the date they found it and signs it with their established code name. After signing the log, the cache must be placed back exactly where the person found it.*

*Larger containers such as plastic storage containers - Tupperware or similar - can also contain items for trading, such as toys or trinkets, usually of more sentimental worth than financial.'*

Apparently there are nearly three million Geocaches around the world to be found in over 180 countries! Since going live, the Pasture geocache has been located several times in just a week! Further details of the Geocaching phenomenon may be found by going to: [www.geocaching.com](http://www.geocaching.com)

Good hunting!



### **Long Lane Pasture Calendar 2017**

All being well, and if there are no production difficulties, the new Pasture calendar for 2017 should be available to purchase next month. Like last year it will be A4, that when hung on the wall opens out to A3, with space to write notes.

As always, the monthly photographs will be of views of the Pasture, along with some close-

ups of wildlife seen at the Pasture this year. Since 2013 a print run of only 200 of our unique calendars are ever produced, so it's almost a collector's item, other than a predictor of time!

This will be the 7<sup>th</sup> in the series. The first calendar was produced in 2011, with only 12 printed; a very rare first edition indeed!

I believe 120 were printed of the 2012 edition and 200 copies each year subsequently. We know some have ended up in America and Australia, and even hung in the corridors of power in Westminster. So don't miss out! They should be available to purchase every Saturday morning from mid-November up to Christmas from the Pasture; and the Pasture Trust will have a stall at the Martin Primary School Christmas Fair on Saturday October 10, from 12 to 3pm. With our Calendars at only £5.00 they are an absolute bargain!



Well, that's about it for this edition; I hope you enjoyed reading it and learnt something new, or at least found an item of interest.

Until next time; bye! Donald

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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