



May – June 2009

Meet Rob Smith, Park Keeper

Hi folks, I have been trying to track down Rob Smith, our new park keeper, on my regular park walks, and managed to spot him in his white van today.



We had a good chat, and he told me he has made a start on cleaning up the stream, which had become very silted up at the road end. He has been tackling the weeding and tidying up generally in the Italian and Rose gardens, both of which are looking better for his efforts.

Rob is hoping that his presence in the park will help to discourage vandals, as he makes regular patrols. If you spot Rob in his white van, flag him down for a chat. We know he wants your input and feedback.

This point was underlined by Quadron MD Clive Ivl at the 16 May BOSF event as he said that staff would happily 'get out of their vans' and engage with the public. You heard it here first!

Quadron Environment: a winner

The Hall Green parks contract is now with Quadron Environment, and we have good things to say about them even at this early date. The company makes a distinctive effort to be part of client communities, through high quality work (as shown by Green Flag, Green Heritage, and other awards), enhanced service provision, and innovative, community-focussed engagement. One example of this is the role of a Horticultural Development Manager to "liaise with all the many stake holder groups, in particular Birmingham Open Spaces Forum and other local community groups". It's about more than mowing!

This is good news, making Quadron something other than a one-size-fits-all contractor.

We have a promise to meet with senior staff during the year, but anyone can make immediate contact via their website at: http://www.quadronenvironment.com/customer_feedback/contact/.

And do say hello to the crew as you see them!

Unearthing the agricultural past



Ellen writes: One of the most exciting things about Highbury Park is the visible evidence of layer upon layer of people's activities in the landscape. The corrugated appearance of many of the fields have long been a mystery but in March, city council archaeologist Mike Hodder led a fascinating walk around the park. We learnt about ridge and furrow ploughing, measured distances between the ridges and learnt to look at the landscape in a different way.

More background details from Mike: "Ridge and furrow is probably the most common archaeological earthwork in the country but in urban areas like Birmingham it only survives in parks and other open areas and well-preserved and extensive ridge and furrow is relatively rare. In Highbury Park the ridge and furrow is part of the long history of the landscape, along with prehistoric burnt mounds and of course the gardens of Highbury Hall and the Henburys".

Ridge and furrow, a 'corrugated' ground surface, is the remnant of former cultivation in which the ground was built up into ridges. Ridge and furrow is very difficult to date. Measurement of the width of the ridges revealed the variations in ridge width within each area and between different areas. Much of the park's ridge and furrow is fairly narrow, around 2.5 to 3.5 metres wide, and is likely to be of 18th or 19th Century origin.

The survey results have now been included in the Sites and Monuments Record, Birmingham City Council's archaeological database and will be published at our website.

Section 106 projects

The latest news about S106 money is that the bulk of it will be put toward safety improvements, starting with drainage across and above the Long Pond footpath and repairing the Henbury Garden wall. The drainage

will be addressed at first by looking at the various springs and sources of runoff. We anticipate that the solution will be two-fold: a means of channelling water under the footpath, and a comprehensive approach to drainage and footpaths in the areas above the pond.

Discussion about these is under way, so some answers should be ready later this year. Other work will be carried out on the Henbury garden wall.

Mullaney Promotion

Cllr Martin Mullaney has replaced Cllr Ray Hassall as City Cabinet member for Leisure, Sport and Culture. Councillor Mullaney has an active interest both in Highbury Park and the Chamberlain estate. He has recently focussed on bringing the Farm Bailiff's house back into use as offices for the Four Seasons garden project. His efforts represent a two-fold success in keeping Four Seasons on site and keeping the house from ruin. We value his enthusiasm and support and look forward to working with him in his new role.

See related item: Highbury Trust @ Moseley Forum

Litter Pick

Our litter pick on Saturday morning 16th May bagged us 12 large sacks of litter. Concentrating on the area bordering the allotments and around the small pond, we collected an assortment of rubbish including an electric shaver and a range of bathroom and kitchen consumables clearly used by someone who had been making the park a temporary residence. The number of bottles and cans recovered also highlighted the park's use as an alternative party venue.

We were ably and cheerfully assisted by two park staff, one of whom was the new Park Keeper, Rob, who supplied us with those oh so essential gloves and litter pickers. Rob has already identified other areas where there are problems with litter and is keen to organise another 'pick' later in the year. Future litter picks will be advertised on the website and noticeboards, so please keep a look out.

Forthcoming Events

Art Walk (Festival of Walks No. 4)

Sunday 31 May 11am, meet at Alcester Road entrance

Join botanical artist Catharine Clarke for a gentle meander around Highbury Park. Hear how the park and its history have inspired new artworks currently being created by her. Do bring along cameras or sketchbooks if you wish, and maybe get creative too!

This is the latest in our series of creative walks, and part of the ongoing *Festival of Walks* in the park.

Highbury Trust @ Moseley Forum

Monday 29 June 7:30pm, The Cross (upstairs room).

Moseley Forum are sponsoring a public discussion about Highbury Trust with city councillors. If you are

concerned about the future of Highbury's land, buildings or activities, or about the council's role in managing the Trust, please attend. Queries to David Butlin on 07817 806844 or davidbutlin@gmail.com

For background see 'A Vibrant Future for a Historic Resource' in the Ongoing Projects section of the HPF website, and at the Moseley CDT website: <http://www.moseleycdt.com/highbury.php>.

Big Kings Heath Party

Saturday 4 July, King's Heath

The Big Kings Heath Party, incorporating the Kings Heath Festival, will launch the 2009 Floral Trail on the 4th July. The Kings Heath Centre Partnership tells us that there will be events throughout the day at All Saints Church, Kings Heath High Street, York Road and Poplar Road. Bunting, balloons, street entertainers, live music and stalls will make for a carnival atmosphere. A charabanc will traverse the High Street, and Alys Fowler of Gardeners' World will be launching the Floral Trail at Fox Hollies school.

Highbury Park forms part of the Floral Trail. Look out for the Highbury Park Friends' gazebo beside the main footpath through the park, 11 AM to 3 PM.

Subscriptions

Our membership year runs from 1st September to 31 August. Subscriptions are £5 or £3 per household. The money is used to help cover the costs of the newsletter, the website and public liability insurance. Cheques may be left at York Supplies, Waterloo Road, in Kings Heath, or posted to Highbury Park Friends at our address below. Please note that we can save paper and postage if you take the newsletter by email.

Useful contacts

HPF Committee

David (242 1845) or Ellen (444 0819)
HPF c/o Flat D, 65 Oxford Road, B13 9ES

E-mail

contact@highburyparkfriends.org.uk

Website

www.highburyparkfriends.org.uk

District Parks Manager

Sue Amey: 464 8728

Ranger patrol

454 7810 (use this to report urgent matters)

Birmingham & District Beekeepers Association

John Madgwick: 558 8623

Local Councillors

Emily.Cox@birmingham.gov.uk
Ernie.Hendricks@birmingham.gov.uk
Martin.Mullaney@birmingham.gov.uk

Police non-emergency calls

0845 113 5000