

. BARN HILL CONSERVATION GROUP

Registered Charity No. 1085476

'Keeping in Touch'

Issue 81 – August 2021

Note our new website is: www.bhcg.chessck.co.uk

From rubbish tip to wildlife meadow

Mason's Field, located at the most northerly end of Fryent Country Park has been many things over its long history – woodland, farmland, a sports field – and eventually left and used as a rubbish tip..

But several years ago Brent Council had plans to make it into a nature reserve. Up for such a challenge was Barn Hill Conservation Group, and what a challenge for our volunteers. With the help of a grant for the purchase of plants we proceeded with the task.

We removed 273 bags of rubbish, 12 mattresses, 9 chairs, 3 tables, and numerous other large items.

We then planted over 5000 wild daffodil bulbs and snakeshead fritillary, over 30000 wild flower plugs together with wild flower seeds. 92 species of flowers and grasses were planted – including yellow rattle, vetch, sorrell and cranesbill. To help with this task students from Alperton High School came along. Wildlife scrapes were also made, bird and bat boxes erected, seats and information boards erected and a small orchard planted.

Fast forward to the summer of 2021 and we now have a wonderful mature meadow covered in wild flowers with clouds of butterflies – meadow browns, gatekeepers, peacocks, red admirals and marbled whites, and an unknown number of other insects and birds.

We have recently harvested the field of hay to be used for animal fodder.

Kim



Carol carrying a sheaf of ragwort prior to hay harvesting

Walled Garden

Last year at the walled garden we had a bumper crop of vegetables and fruit. The cherry trees produced a really sweet crop as did the grape vine. Unfortunately it's not the case this year. We are struggling to grow beetroot and carrots and our parsnips have failed to germinate. We have also had a surfeit of slugs and snails which have scooped their way through most of the seedlings. However, we have had success with potatoes, onions and runner beans. Also the chard is doing well.

The wildlife pond which we relined last year has been covered in blanket weed, but thankfully it is starting to disperse and the water is looking a lot clearer. We have recently purchased four pond oxygenators which we hope will keep the pond clear.

On a positive note we are pleased to see our newts thriving following the relining of the pond. The newt population seems to have increased and there is evidence of lots of 'baby' newts.

Helga has been collecting rainfall statistics for the environment agency for over twenty years, but unfortunately she is no longer able to do this. This job has been taken over by John East . Carol

Being Green Video

We have been included in a promotional video called 'Being Green' produced by the Brent Council 'Being Brent Project'. We play quite a significant part in the video, showing our volunteers working in the Garden. The video demonstrates what you can do, at any age, if you roll your sleeves up and get down to hard work. The video can be seen on the web site <https://youtu.be/j-KJdzng0Mk>

Our Garden has volunteers from all walks of life, young and old. In the words of one of our young volunteers from a few years ago. 'It's not just a volunteering role; it's about being part of something bigger and belonging to a community.' Bernard

Fryent Country Park

We are happy to report that we have been awarded a grant from Being Brent Heritage Wellbeing Fund to restore the Gadebrook stream, its main catchment ditch and surface water source to a near natural state. This will reduce surface water in winter on many of the footpaths in the Gadebrook area.

In this project we intend to involve volunteers from a broad section of the community. We have started this process by deploying a number of staff from British Gas who have volunteered their time to be part of the project. They joined with a group of our own members to cut back bramble, and cut overhangs along the Gadebrook stream from Fryent Way to the bridge over the Jubilee railway line. Bernard

Hairstreak Butterfly in Fryent Country Park

On 14th August on the Beane Hill Butterfly Transect study a butterfly was resting on a plant and opened its wings. It was unmistakably a female Brown Hairstreak – the first adult ever seen at Fryent Country Park. This confirms the presence of the Brown Hairstreak at the Park following the first record of eggs on New Year's day 2019. The Brown Hairstreak is an elusive butterfly to observe and has only recently moved into North and West London, and depends on blackthorn for the larval food.

Kim

We are open at Roe Green Walled Garden Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays from 10 am to 2pm. Sundays we are out in Fryent Country Park from 10 am to 12.30 pm carrying out conservation project work, subject to social distancing. Our new programme of projects will start again in September. Please see the web site below for details, or telephone the Garden. Feel free to join us in our conservation projects at Fryent Country Park or Roe Green Walled Garden. We are still collecting old pottery garden pots. We also collect scrap metal such as copper, brass, aluminium, which help in fund raising.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

General Meeting Saturday 11 September 2021 10.30am

Contact number: Garden 0208 206 0492 (answerphone if we are unable to answer)

Email: barnhillconservationgroup@gmail.com

Our new Website: www.bhcg.chessck.co.uk