

**FRIENDS of
LONG LANE PASTURE**

NEWSLETTER

No 28. Autumn/Winter 2014

Welcome to this bumper edition of the Pasture Newsletter. Please feel free to pass this newsletter pdf file onto anyone you know who may enjoy reading it. Much has been happening on the Pasture since spring and hopefully over the next few pages you will get an idea of the change of season and what you've missed if you've been unable to visit the Pasture during the summer. Some of the activities and wildlife seen has been lovingly put together in the new 2015 Long Lane Pasture Calendar, only £5. See pages 5 & 6 for details.

But first as always, a word from our Chair...

It's been a good year for Long Lane Pasture. We've been awarded a Green Flag as one of the best community green spaces in the country and London in Bloom has again placed us in its 'outstanding' category, the only place in Barnet to be awarded this status. Funding from the People's Postcode



Lottery Trust has enabled us to buy a ride-on mower and a brush cutter, while the Panton

Trust has helped us replace worn-out hand tools and buy new equipment as well as build up our reserves.

*You will read elsewhere about the day spent with 60 young volunteers from NCS, a marvellous boost for us which we hope will be repeated next year. Long Lane Pasture depends entirely on grants, donations and the work of volunteers. If you live nearby and would like to be involved in our pioneering work, drop in on Saturday mornings (10 a.m. to midday) when you can boost our small band of regular volunteers and make LLP even better in 2015. **Dennis Pepper***

Whatever the Weather....

It's been another strange year with a mixed bag of weather that never really followed a set pattern. May had some very warm days, boding well for the summer, but it never really continued, with several periods of rain and



nothing exceptional regarding temperatures. Ex hurricane Bertha passed over the UK on the weekend of 9/10 August, bringing yet more wind and rain.

The unsettled weather probably had a mixed effect on creatures of the Pasture; with those dependent on water for part of their life cycle faring better than those who prefer long periods of warm stable conditions.

The entire character of the Pasture changes when the sun shines. On hot summer days it's alive with grasshoppers chirruping away; bird song fills the air with the distinctive screech of swifts acrobatically dashing above; hoverflies,



dragonflies and delightful butterflies and day-flying moths are seen on the wing. Colourful nectar-producing flowers attract diverse species of bees and a medley of iridescent bugs and beetles producing that distinctly summer's day buzz. With our blue sky, yellow sun and fluffy white clouds, is any other planet as pretty? The warm summer air is a myriad of different pleasing aromas of scented flowers, and even the enticing whiff of distant barbeques...



This contrasts starkly with a wet day when the dominant sound is that of faraway traffic, as the

noise of tyres on wet roads travels more easily in the denser damp air. Flying insects (especially butterflies) seem absent and there's no comforting background summer sound. The invertebrates must all still be there but are sheltering under leaves or low down in cosy nooks & hollows, conserving energy while waiting for the better weather. The slate-grey sky mirrors the duller flora as flowers close or droop and tall wet grasses lie flat and lifeless. Thankfully of course, living in the UK our weather rarely stays the same for long; change is typically always a few days away; the sunshine returns and the Pasture magically itself transforms again. But whatever happened to those long hot summers we remember?

Bugs & Critters

Every year we have kept a casual count on species of birds, moths and butterflies seen over the seasons. It gives an indication on how prolific the year has been as well as alerting us to any loss of species. We realised some time



ago that we should extend our recording of other no-less important bugs, like the humble hoverfly, beetles and spiders, etc. To this end we are gathering a photographic record of the creatures we see and identifying them. Over time we hope to identify some of our rarer visitors. We also record species of grasses and

wild flowers growing on the Pasture. The wasp spiders were again in evidence with their chaotic-looking web, and a black and white



hoverfly, *Scaeva pyrastris*, and this large Pellucid Hoverfly *Volucella pellucens*.

Visit by NCS

Earlier this year the National Citizen Service contacted Long Lane Pasture. They are an enthusiastic organisation that provides useful and practical experience for 16 and 17 year olds. The NCS organizes working parties and hostel accommodation as part of a certificated scheme which helps to bolster the young people's CVs.



Following a visit from the Group Leader Beth McGlue, who liked what she saw, we agreed to find work for up to 60 volunteers. They came in

late September to help us in any way they could.

They really were a godsend as there is only so much the usual weekly year-round volunteers can do every Saturday. In autumn we cut much of the Pasture to stop the grasses rotting down and enriching the soil, so that we maintain the low-nutrient meadowland. There are always brambles to cut back, weeds to clear and ground works to do in order to manage the drainage on the naturally sloping site.

NCS gave us a modest grant to buy the hand tools, gloves and those ever-useful plastic trugs they would need.

When the day arrived the weather was perfect:



the sun shone and there was a gentle breeze and, most important of all, the ground was dry.

The group arrived promptly at eleven o'clock and after brief introductions and explanation about who we were and what the Pasture was all about, groups of eager teenagers set off to tackle their various tasks.

A few days earlier five huge bags of sharp sand were deposited just outside the main gate. These had to be moved inside the Pasture, a distance of about ten metres, but it would have taken days for a few volunteers to barrow through. However, about a dozen eager members of the group swiftly organised themselves into a working gang and set about shovelling the sand into buckets and wheelbarrows and, like worker ants on a

mission, spent the next few hours filling sacks inside the gate as those outside were emptied one by one. On the Pasture areas of previously trimmed grasses were tidily raked and taken away to be added to growing compost heaps, as were the hacked down swathes of dense bramble. Soil too was dug from undulating ground and used to fill depressions to even-out a newly formed picnic area.

At one o'clock the students stopped to eat their



packed lunches in the autumn sunshine before continuing their good works. Eventually, tools and equipment were gathered together and the exhausted volunteers sat in a circle while Committee members thanked them and explained more about how important it was to get involved to defend and preserve places like Long Lane Pasture.

It had been a good day and a positive experience for everyone involved, with many difficult and mundane tasks completed; and the Pasture Committee would be very grateful to have another visit from NCS next year!



Pond Maintenance

Every autumn, reed mace is removed from the large pond. It is a tall bulrush that looks magnificent with its distinctive seed head, but left unchecked would happily propagate across the pond reducing the surface area of the water, preventing waterfowl landing as well as



crowding out all other pond plants.

Canoes have been used in the past to get to the mace, but nothing beats a fit, willing individual in a pair of fishing waders slipping into the pond and pulling the whole plants from the mud. The seven foot tall stems are then hauled out and after allowing time for any aquatic critters to sneak back into the water, piled onto the compost heap.

The centre of the stem is edible, but we currently have an abundance of other foods in which to feed ourselves nowadays. Some



interesting creatures found were remarkable shape-shifting leaches. Whether they were blood suckers or decaying vegetation eaters we never fully investigated and put them back into the water where they purposefully swam away....

Featured Plant

Honeysuckles are shrubs or climbing twining vines in the family Caprifoliaceae, and native to the Northern Hemisphere. There are approximately 180 species of honeysuckle; 100



of these occur in China, while about 20 species occur in Europe, India and North America each. A widely seen native species in the UK is *Lonicera periclymenum* - common honeysuckle or woodbine.

Honeysuckle is a decorative and useful plant, with its ability to cover walls and garden structures. The abundant tubular flowers emit an intense fragrance, especially during the night. The plant is usually pollinated by moths or long-tongued bees and develops bright red berries that are loved by many bird species.

Honeysuckle is often found in woodland, hedgerows or scrubland. There are several areas on Long Lane Pasture where it has established, including by the boundary fence bordering the Northern Line; and was still flowering well into November. Here too is a sign attached to the fence indicating to rail



passengers they are travelling past Long Lane Pasture!

The Pasture Calendar 2015

The ever-popular Long Lane Pasture calendar for 2015 is available now! With all new photographs taken during the past eleven months, it gives an insight into the wildlife that can be seen and activities undertaken at the Pasture during the year. Copies of last year's calendar were sold and posted to various parts of the world, with one even known to be hanging in Parliament!



Only 200 of these exclusive calendars are printed and at £5 with envelope they are an absolute bargain. They will be available to buy every Saturday morning at the Pasture or the East Finchley Christmas Festival on Saturday 6th December from the Long Lane Pasture stall.



We hope to see many of you there!
The photograph used for the ninth month was a long exposure taken by Lucy Nowell during the evening of the harvest moon in September. The Pasture was lit up, and though we have additional lighting from the nearby North Circular Road, the moon was casting shadows. It would have been essential in ancient times for assisting with the gathering of crops during harvest time before autumnal weather set in. The evening is also the time for a whole range of nocturnal wildlife activities on the Pasture. Moths, bats and foxes are all active at night,



along with hedgehogs and various creepy crawlies.

Special Thanks

We wish to thank the **People's Postcode Lottery Trust**, the **Panton Trust**, and the **National Citizen Service Big Challenge** for their help and donations without which the Pasture would not be the special place it is. Special thanks are also due to J E (Betty) Burgess, the Daniels family, Sharon Hughes, Jane Ingram, Manorside School, Guy & Adele Nevill, PE Pickering, the Sayers family, Margaret & Roy Satterthwaite, Graham & Mary Stacy, P S Snook, and Bart Van Haesebroeck, and to the many visitors who made a donation on site in the collection box, (raising over £500) and those buying from our stalls at Finchley festivals. The Pasture Trust also wishes to thank the sterling work put in by those valiant volunteers who turn out each week, rain or shine, to do the physical work on site maintaining the paths, clearing the litter, and preserving the nature of the pasture by managing the flora.

Finally, a Merry Christmas to one and all!

You can now monitor Pasture activity on Twitter. Please follow: [@LLPasture](https://twitter.com/LLPasture)
Please visit our website:

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This Newsletter is issued by the Long Lane Pasture Trust: 256 Long Lane, Finchley, N3 2RN
Registered Charity No: 1122236

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