

Hackney Marshes Newsletter. January 2005

Activities:

November 14th 2004 (120th meeting). Coppicing in Wick Woodland. HMUG and Springfield Conservation Group undertook another session to coppice the willows in Wick Woodland. Many of the willows have not been coppiced since they were planted in 1996, so they were very tall and woody. Many were cut back, and the Tree Gang came along later to cut the stems which were too thick for our saws. The willows along the edge of the A12 serve as a barrier, keeping down the air and noise pollution from the A12. And so they were left until another year. Cutting back the willows lets in the light and encourages other plants to grow. Robins and green woodpeckers have moved into the area.



Coppiced willows. Birches and rowans in Wick Woodland.

November 28th 2004 (121st meeting). Care of the hedge along Homerton Road. The hedge was planted two years ago. It is doing well, but there are some gaps where rubbish has been dumped, quad bikes have been driven onto the Marshes, and people have trod on the young trees. Trees planted- field maple, blackthorn and hawthorn. The

hedge was mulched with wood chip provided by Rangers and Tree gang. A hedge made up of hornbeam has been planted in the Tree Nursery.

December 4th 2004. (122nd meeting). Tree Week: Planting and Care of trees in Friends Wood. Nine people worked in the woodland planted in 2001/2. Many of the trees are doing well- the wet weather this summer was much better for them than the hot summer of 2003. Collected three bags of blown rubbish, mostly of plastic bottles, crisp packets and polystyrene cups. Filled some of the gaps where trees have died or have been damaged, with hornbeams and some oaks, and put wood chip round some trees. In the longer grass there are holes being used by mice and ant hills which provide a good food source for green woodpeckers.

December 10th and 11th 2004. (122nd meeting) Opening of Path on Mabley Green and Planting along A12. This was organised by Groundwork East London and Lucy McMenemy from Hackney's Cultural Development, and Hackney Environment Forum. The path was formally 'opened' by Cllr Narghis Khan, who arrived from Hackney Town Hall in a cycle rickshaw. Children from Kingsmead, Gainsborough, Mandeville and Daubeney School came to the opening and to plant trees along path. On Saturday people from local community came to look at the new path and to plant more trees.



December 12th 2004 (123rd meeting). Tree Planting and Care in Kingfisher Wood. Small group of Users planted trees in Kingfisher Wood, filling gaps where trees have died. The trees planted were hornbeam, true service trees (grown from fruit collected from trees in Clapton Square), oak and chestnut (from conkers growing on East Marsh). Collected two bags of blown rubbish. Thanks to Rangers for transporting trees and equipment.

Solstice Tree Planting. To celebrate the winter solstice on December 21st, a large English Oak and lots of sweet chestnut were planted on the East side of the Main Marsh. Many thanks to Rupert and Groundwork Hackney, and park staff for digging the hole for the Oak tree.

These activities were supported with funding from Green Gateway.

Filming on Marshes.

A pilot programme for television series was made on the Marshes. The series is about helping people to improve their local environment. The pilot looked at water quality in Lea Navigation. Some Users were interviewed for the programme, including Brian Chubb who fishes in the Lea Navigation.

Cow Bridge. The bridge is in a poor state and has been closed to vehicles. It can still be used by pedestrian and cycles. A new gate has been installed to allow better access for bikes, wheelchairs and pushchairs, which found it difficult to manoeuvre round the old gate.

Pedestrian and Cycle Path. Work is under way on National Route 1 pedestrian and cycle path through the Marshes. The works are to sections around north changing room and along towpath past Wick Woodland and Arena Field to White Post Lane and Carpenters Road. There will be improved access to the path at Marshgate Bridge and Eastway. The work is expected to be completed by March 2005. There are concerns about whether the better surface will mean more speeding motorbikes and better access will increase the amount of illegal dumping. The works do not cover the section along the towpath from Princess of Wales, past Middlesex Filter Beds, to Cowbridge. Cyclists and pedestrians will still need to negotiate the puddles and slippery mud patches along this section.



Pedestrian and cycle path after works Without improvements

Rubbish under A12 has been removed. A successful end to a long campaign to get rid of a nasty eyesore, six months after the caravans moved from the site and the dumping started.



Model aircraft. Complaints about the noise of model aircraft. We are asked whether Hackney Council have given them a licence or are operating illegally.

Arena Field. Planning permission for work which has taken place on Arena Field included conditions about tree planting and grassing over the area to allow it to be used for sports. There are no signs of grass or tree planting and we are in contact with Planning Enforcement. In spite of claims that the site would be secure as a result of the work, there is a burned out car in the middle of Arena Field, and a pile of tyres at southern end. The hedge along fence on towpath side has grown very tall and needs cutting or layering. Lots of plants have started to grow on the soil, including fumitory with purple flowers and starling and green finch are feeding on them. Sparrows nested in bushes near the towpath and are still living there.



Arena Field

Replacement of Temple Mills Bridge. Work continues. Traffic is using a new bridge and old bridge is being pulled down. A pontoon has been put across the river, attached to elder on Main Marsh bank and Norway Maple on East Marsh bank.



Information boards. The four sculptures on the Marshes still wait for their information boards. The boards were put together by Groundwork East London with assistance from Users. We hear they are waiting for Hackney Council to give their approval.

Olympics News. Details about the Bid were submitted to IOC in November. IOC visit London in February 2005. Stickers opposed to the Olympics Bid – ‘Scrap the Bid. Save the Marshes’ have appeared around the Marshes. To find out more go to their website- www.noLondon2012.org

Wildlife on Hackney Marshes

Birds. There are now lots of over-wintering birds to the Old River Lea. There are now up to 55 teal, 30 tufted duck, and five gadwall, as well as the regulars- mallard, kingfisher, heron, cormorant, moorhen, and coot.

The bushes by towpath next to Arena Field are home to house sparrows. Sparrows are becoming rare in London- these are the only sparrows known to nest on the Marshes. If the Olympic Bid is successful, these bushes – and the sparrows’ nesting site- will be destroyed within in a year to make way for the Olympics Precinct and Loop Road.

Trees. Most trees have now lost their leaves. Those with some leaves, providing colour and shelter for birds, include Balsam poplar along Homerton Road, birch and field maple in Wick Woodland, elder and bramble around the Marshes. Evergreen trees include yew, holly, holm oak. There are brown leaves on oak, hornbeam and nothofagus on East Marsh.



Flowers. Mallow tree on towpath by Arena Field is still in flower. Gorse bushes with yellow flowers; pale pink flowering prunus on East Marsh. In spite of some frost and cold days, there flowers can still be seen, including scabious and knapweed on meadow, black horehound, white dead nettle, sow thistle, hedge mustard, and ragwort.

News of Hackney Marshes. December 2004

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News of Hackney Marshes. November 2004

November 12th 2004. Work has started on cycle path from Friends Bridge to Carpenters Road, along tow path. Work is expected to continue until March 2005. It means that path will be disrupted at times. Where the towpath is narrow it may be closed for the work. The project is managed by Lee Valley Park and work is bring undertaken by Southern Landscapes.

Funding News. Green Gateway is to support activities in Hackney's Lea Valley. Hackney Marsh User Group and Hackney Environment Forum were successful in a bid to Green Gateway for funding for activities related to trees and woodland management in Hackney's Lea Valley.

Filming on the Marshes. Thanks to John Zeraschi, Marsh Manager, the company using the Marshes for filming this month have given a donation- we hope to use it to enhance and improve the wildlife of the Marshes- perhaps by purchasing wheelbarrows and tools.

Over-wintering birds returning. Teal have been returning over the last few weeks- at least 33 reported on November 14th, also 6 little grebe on River and two on Navigation. First pair of tufted duck have returned. Several sightings of kingfishers- fishing and flying along Lea between bridge onto East Marsh and Flood Relief Channel.

November 14th 2004 Tree Work, Wick Woodland

(120th meeting). HMUG joined with Springfield Conservation Group (SCOG) to cut back willows in Wick Woodland. On a lovely sunny day twelve people cut back a large patch of willows on A12 side of Wick Woodland. The willows were planted in late 1990s to protect the woodland from noise and air pollution from the nearby A12. They had done well but were very tall. We left some to act as a barrier but cut back many to allow the other trees and shrubs such as alder, spindle, yew and hawthorn to grow and increase the diversity of trees and shrubs. We discovered some spindle bushes which were producing seeds, in spite of the competition from nearby willows. The willows were shading out the ground underneath: cutting them back will let in more light and give the path through the

Woodland a more open feel. The willows cut back last winter are growing again- producing stems which can be used as garden stakes and for basket work.

Saturday October 30th 10.00 to 1.00 (119th meeting). Work Walk. Warm and sunny day. The Marshes being well-used by walkers, rowers, and people playing football. Also the whine of model aircraft. Eight people and two dogs checked on progress of trees, planted and mulched several trees and collected 14 bags of rubbish. The conservation areas are full of rubbish again.

Marshgate Bridge area. Lots of rubbish collected from Crescent Wood and Homerton Road hedge. Malcolm, the gardener, has cleaned the Notice board at Marshgate Bridge. Gaps in fencing at Marshgate Bridge and along Homerton Road provide easy access for unauthorized vehicles - there are tracks where quad bikes get onto the Marshes.

Wick Woodland. Young people's camp now has several armchairs as well as its tarpaulin. Hedge along Homerton Road is being cut- this should encourage it to thicken up. Would benefit from planting some hawthorn and field maple. Rubbish along Homerton Road bank - Malcolm has cleared lots of dumped rubbish. Collected rubbish in woodland - but the safe dumped on the bank is too heavy to move. Woodland edges make good wildlife habitats- straight paths allow sun in and good sight lines- to discuss with Malcolm a few more straight paths. Variety of ashes: galls on some and moth which lives on two of them.

Bindweed and cleavers cleared from around some trees. Set rubbish bin upright- five or six people needed. Motorbike traveling at great speed- no registration number. Young oaks have seeded themselves - probably from turkey oaks by depot. Bee on comfrey and dragonfly on log in the sun.

Homerton Road and Lower Level Path. Evergreen in first prefab garden- to free from ashes. Prefabs boarded up.

Gate and fence in poor state- give bad impression of Hackney's parks. Bridge across River Lea being replaced - pontoon across the river, tied to elder, enables contractors to work on bridge supports. Collected rubbish on banks down to the Lower Level.

Trees along Lower Level. Checked on recently planted trees, cut back dead wood when could reach it. Four new trees downstream of East Marsh Bridge doing well- small leaved lime, Pinus pinea, Foxglove tree and Catapla (bean tree). Five black poplars planted in about 1998 growing well.

Upstream of East Marsh bridge. Twenty young black poplars planted in 2003: some lost soon after planting, and one destroyed by Quad bikes. Twelve are doing OK. Black poplars became rare because only males were planted. We now have eleven female, so we may have self seeded black poplars in the future. Yews planted in 2001/2 doing well- some would benefit if elders cut back. Nine other trees planted in 2003: three are dead (Yellow ash, lime and pear), we pruned one (Sophora Japonica?) and five are doing reasonably well- three lime, elm. Red Oak in good colour. At the top of the steps, cleared blackberries around loquat. Red admiral in sun. Over 20 teal along Old River Lea, also heron, cormorant. A Giant Hogweed plant on bank.

North Car park. Planted and mulched four young trees to replace ones planted in late 1980s but since lost (as in photos taken in 1985). A mix of oak, hornbeam, sweet chestnut, plane, and Service Tree (grown from seed from Clapton Square). A dragonfly and white butterfly seen. Cow Bridge gate has no padlock- a vehicle let itself in and out.

Wildlife

Still leaves on many trees: black poplars very green, although also brown and yellow leaves on other trees and a some trees almost bare. Lots of flowers - mallow, yarrow, comfrey, black horehound, red and white dead nettle, burr marigold, sow thistle. Many plants have started to grown again, including cow parsley, cleavers, cinquefoil, Japanese knotweed, Lots of berries- viburnum, rowan, dwarf elder. Birds seen and heard- robin, long tailed tit. On River- teal are returning- about 20 reported, heron, cormorant.



Saturday October 16th 10.30- 2.30pm. (118th meeting). Coppicing in Wick Woodland. Session with HMUG and SCOG (Springfield Conservation Group). A damp day which dried up later. Lots of willows cut back in the south west corner of Wick Woodland. This lets light into the woodland, and encourages a greater variety of bushes and plants. The willows cut back last winter have grown back well and would make good material for basket weaving. We hope to have another coppicing session early in 2005. Many thanks to Annie Chipchase who provided tea and coffee from her boat. In the Woodland the large patch of dwarf elder is covered in black berries, and rose hips are looking good. Spotted fox and wren. Goldcrest reported by regular bird watcher.

Oct 8th 12-4 pm. Opening of the Tree Nursery (117th meeting). The Tree Nursery on Homerton Road, next to Car Park and Depot, was set up with funding from Groundwork East London, Green Gateway and Hackney Biodiversity Partnership/ NFR. Tree Nursery has beds for sowing tree seeds, polytunnels in which to pot up young trees for planting out in Hackney's parks and school grounds. There is also space to store larger trees until they can be planted out in parks and streets. The Tree Nursery was opened by Hackney's Speaker, Cllr Geoff Taylor, with staff, Marsh Users, and children from Kingsmead, Mandeville and Clapton Girls Schools.

There were lots of tree and wood activities- wood working- making furniture, baseball bats etc using pole lathing and wood bending, story telling, bubble blowing, planting acorns and horse chestnuts, making bird boxes, painting notices for tree planting sessions, and organic lunch for everyone. The opening was reported in Hackney Gazette and Hackney Today.

Cow Bridge gate is to be replaced with one which allows access to Marshes by wheelchairs and push chairs.

Quad bikes are continuing to race round the Marshes, creating a hazard for themselves and others as well as churni

ng up the Marshes and destroying plants and shrubs. There are deep tracks on Lower Level and the river bank, and on paths through Wick Woodland. Tower Hamlets Council have issues bikers with Asbos. We are asking Hackney Council to organize something similar.

Rubbish under the A12. It is still there. Six months after the dumping and in spite of commitment by TfL to get it moved, it is still there, an unpleasant site and reminder of what has happened so often when caravans move into this area.

Daubeney Green. A request for benches. There are some benches near the new play area but others needed in other areas of the park. Also benches required for Wick Woodland, the Dip and East side of Main Marsh.

Trees on Lower Level. Tree gang are doing some clearance on the Lower Level - to cut back some elders to let more light in and encourage more plants under the large trees.

Waterways Conference at St John School October 14th 2004. Attended by Malcolm, from the Marshes gardeners, and Anne from HMUG. Children reported on their visits to Lee Navigation, what they liked and disliked and their suggestions for improvements. Rubbish and graffiti were two main dislikes. Their suggestions for improvement included rubbish bins, dog bins, bird boxes, flowers along the canal, picnic tables, plants to cover surfaces to minimize graffiti.

Olympics Bid. Objections to the use of East Marsh as coach park raised at GLA. The concerns of local people were dismissed with talk of 'temporary' losses and more open space in the future. Mature trees lost to a coach park are lost for ever. Arena Field will be lost for up to 14 years- that's hardly temporary. And can we trust them after they reneged on previous commitments to replace the open space of Arena Field . Where would the money come from? No one is saying where the money to create and maintain any new open space would come from.
