

Hackney Marsh User Group

Annual Report: September 2006- August 2007.

1. Tree Nursery and Edible Garden.

Sessions fortnightly over the winter, weekly from April 2007. A total of 35 sessions with 5 and 14 people attending each session.

On Friday mornings to allow contact with staff at Marshes. Start at 9am and continue until 11.30 or later. Break at 11ish to discuss activities, decide on jobs and materials required and to plan activities and discuss issues.

- Lock ups reorganised, with shelving and spaces for saws and sharp things;
- Watering systems- hoses, support, and trolleys with bottles;
- Five seats (cast offs from Hackney Downs);
- Visit from a team from House of Commons Library (June 2006);
- New gate and some new fencing.
- Leaflets about Tree Nursery & Edible Garden, Black Poplars and Elms launched.
- June 23rd 2007 Open Morning and Flower Session at TN.
- A list of plants and a photographic record of activities on Marshes, at Tree Nursery & Edible Garden.

Tree Nursery.

A large collection of trees some ready to plant out on Marshes and in other parks.

Activities include:

- Growing trees from seed, seedlings (donated by Hackney Recycling, and many individuals) and cuttings from Black poplars in Wick Woodland;
- Potting up young trees ready for planting out in parks;
- Planting trees especially fruit trees, walnuts, shrubs and bushes in Tree Nursery, and around the Marshes;
- Mulching, watering and weeding trees and roses;
- Cleaning and maintaining equipment.
- Hedges and some trees to be destroyed when constructing the Travellers site and new access road to Depot have been moved.

Edible Garden.

The Edible Garden was created in 2006-2007.

- Preparation started in autumn 2006, researching, marking out the area, and moving some shrubs.
- Though the year worked to suppress the grass and improve the soil by covering it with cardboard, wood chip, soil and fibrous material, growing green manure and alders to fix nitrogen.
- Compost heaps made by Dave and Tony and supplied with fruit and vegetables from Spitalfields Market by Jax.
- Planted fruit trees and bushes (apple, pear, cherry, mulberry, walnut, crab apple, quince, hazel, raspberry, gooseberry, currant, rhubarb, herbs and vegetables).
- Weeded, watered, and harvested fruits, herbs and vegetables;
- School children helped with weeding, potting up, watering, and raking grass.
- Monitoring: photographically and a plant list.

Creation of the Edible Garden was lead by Annie Chipchase and Jax Sheehy with Dave Rackstraw. Also thanks to Dave and many individuals for donation of bushes, plants, and seeds, and to the Tree gang for digging holes for trees.

Pond and bog garden.

Ponds planted up. Managing blanket weed has been a major task undertaken largely by Tony. Dave and Rowan built and planted up a base for the pond near

polytunnels.

July 20th 2007: Pond training session for volunteers and park staff by Mark Gallant from Lea Rivers Trust.

2. HMUG Meetings. Meetings addressed issues such as:

- Forest Garden (Sept 22nd 2006).
- Interests and responsibilities of management group and Management plan for conservation areas (October 7th 2006).
- Green Pennant (Jan 26th 2007)
- Proposed development at Lesney's site with Telford Homes (June 1st 2007).
- Ecoactive about working with Youth Offending Team (June 8th and August 23rd 2007).
- Visit from LWGS to monitor success of their funding (July 27th 2007).
- Meetings with LDA and Hackney Olympic Team about Travellers site and new access road to Depot (Oct 23rd 2006, March 26th and 29th, May 25th (they cancelled), August 3rd and Sept 7th 2007).
- Proposals for the Marshes with Martin Jones from bdp (Nov 10th 2006).
- Welcomed Paul Foinette as new manager of Marshes (August 2007).
- Continuing issues have been safety (including scramble bikes in Wick Woodland and attacks along towpath) and rubbish.

3. Planting and Tree Care on Hackney Marshes.

Planting trees including fruit trees and bushes, filling gaps, mulching and weeding:

- Jubilee Wood (Oct 21st 2006);
- Friends Wood (Nov 18th 2006);
- Kingfisher Wood (Dec 9th and 28th 2006);
- Rowan Wood (Dec 9th 2006)
- Chestnut Wood (Dec 28th 2006 and Jan 27th 2007);
- Wick Woodland Work Walk (Feb 17th 2007);
- Coppicing and clearing trees in Wick Woodland (March 3rd 2007);
- Saturday March 31st 2007. HMUG participated in Celebration of Trees at Round Chapel School Room, Lower Clapton Road, E5.

4. Walks and surveys.

Bat walks. A survey of the bats on Hackney Marshes:

- October 10th 2006; June 11th (over 60 people); August 23rd 2007.
 - Lead by Annie Chipchase and Alison Fure from London Bat Group.
- Information from 2006 walks on a map available on website. 2007 information still to be added. Sent to London Bat Group and LNHS.

Other walks.

- Jan 7th 2007 New Year walk round Hackney Marshes.
- Feb 17th 2007 Wick Woodland Work Walk.
- March 11th Walk round Northern part of Olympics site with NE London Ramblers.
- March 18th Exploring the spring flowers of Hackney Marshes.
- April 15th 2007. Black Poplars in Hackney: walk and launch of leaflet.
- May 5th Dawn Chorus Walk. Lead by Gary James.

Gary James has undertaken a bird survey and Neil Anderson a survey of the plants and insects of Hackney Marshes. Reports are due soon.

5. Sessions with school children.

Sculpture sessions in Wick Woodland: October 10th, 17th, 31st, November 14th and 21st.

Planting and caring for trees and hedges and nature walks: Nov 28th (Marshes) and Dec 5th 2006 (Daubeney Green); March 1st and 8th (edge of south car

park).

In Tree Nursery & Edible Garden.

Nov 10th Kingsmead School Refugee day; Feb 9th Daubeney's Nurture group; March 20th potting up and drawing trees; June 12th, 13th, 19th, 20th, 26th and 27th nature walks and children working in Tree Nursery and Edible Garden and harvesting fruit.

Activities recorded and dvd made of planting on March 8th.

Ecoactive brought Young Offenders to work in Tree Nursery (September 2007).

July 2007. Schools informed that given the uncertainties of the construction of new access road to Depot and Travellers site, HMUG could not offer a safe and secure for working with school children.

Ecoactive produced a set of leaflets 'Hackney Marsh Detective' for use with schools: Spring is in the Air; Autumn Seeds and Berries; Winter; Trees; Flowers; Minibeasts, together with a set of Teachers notes.

Sessions elsewhere in Hackney Parks.

Feb 1st and 28th 2007. Planting hedge, London Fields.

March 13th 2007. Sculpture sessions, Clissold Park.

Sessions recorded and dvd produced by Parks team.

Total of 22 half day sessions. About 550 children and 200 adults and volunteers engaged in activities and walked on marshes and in Hackney Parks.

Thanks to Balavant and rangers for their support and contribution, especially Carol Sanderson and Sue Toogood who lead the nature walks.

6. Olympics.

Main issue this year has been the proposal to relocate Waterden Road Travellers to sites within Hackney, including Hackney Marshes. This involves:

- loss of part of the Tree Nursery to new access road to the Depot;
- loss of green space and trees on the part of the Marshes allocated for the Travellers site;
- and disrupts HMUG activities at the Tree Nursery and with school children.

BBC team attended several meetings to monitor the impact of the Olympics for local communities. Some key dates.

October 16th 2006 HMUG allowed to have a stall at Hackney Wick meeting.

Oct 23rd 2006 Meeting with LDA about Travellers site.

Oct 2007. Planning application for Travellers site and new access road submitted. HMUG submitted objections.

Nov 10th 2006 Meeting with Martin Jones from bdp about Proposals for Marshes. Southern hub on green space next to south car park, with changing facilities, classroom and viewing facilities, new pedestrian bridge and path.

Dec 2006 Arena Field handed over to ODA as part of land deal.

January 2007. HMUG pointed out the inadequacy of the tree list submitted by LDA. Key trees and hedges of mature cypresses omitted.

Feb 12th 2007. Planning permission given for Travellers site on Hackney Marshes (described by Inspector in his report on CPO enquiry as 'inappropriate development').

March 2007 White Hart Field fenced in, cycle and pedestrian path to Stratford closed.

March 2007 New Olympics Planning application. This:

- Dispenses with the Grampian conditions, no mention of replacement land etc.
- Arena Field to become Media Centre with 5 story car park (described as 'eyesore' by Hackney planning). To be left as 'legacy'.
- River to be impounded- reducing its tidal quality.

March 26th 2007 Meeting with LDA and 29th pegging up of site of Travelers site.

May 25th 2007. LDA cancelled meeting at short notice. Neil Best agreed to submit

our queries to LDA.

June 2007 HMUG takes part on auditory trail of Olympics area with 'We sell boxes we buy gold' (an arts organisation).

July 2007 Arena Field lost. Huge blue fence along the towpath. HMUG protested about the loss of trees, but received no response to request for information about which trees are to be destroyed. HMUG not invited to a meeting about Arena field.

Morris and Weekes Fields lost. Waterden Road still open because bus garages and Travellers have not yet been relocated.

August 3rd 2007 Meeting with Hackney Olympics Team. They confirm that East Marsh will be required before 2011 (the date given in Land Deal).

Sept 7th 2007 Meeting with LDA about Access road and Travellers site.

Sept 21st 2007 Meeting with Travellers coordinator.

REAP funding for improvements.

Nov 2006 HMUG bid for project 'document the Marshes 1984-2007'

August 2007 Bid rejected as having no benefits for the Borough.

Groundwork East London also submitted bid to include some planting on Hackney Marshes. No information about the progress of this bid.

7. Publicity .

Events and activities advertised through notices boards on Marshes, HMUG mailing lists (email and snail mail), Hackney Marshes pages

on www.hackneytoday.org.uk, relevant email networks, London 21. Also submitted to Hackney Today but rarely make their information page.

Leaflets: about Tree Nursery and Edible Garden, Black Poplars, Elms in Hackney.

Bat walk: information submitted to LNHS and London Bat Group.

Newsletters: Five circulated and out on website. Winter 2006/7, Spring 2007, Early summer 2007, Late Summer and Autumn 2007, Winter 2007.

8. Support from Parks staff and others.

Ian Graham, Steve Mayhew and Tree Gang: ordering materials, supplying wood chip, digging holes, coppicing and Tree work, advice and support.

Hackney Marshes Manager John Zeraschi, Paul Foinette, Alan and gardeners, Dave Proll.

Dave Scrivener and Essex Bottle group for bottles and containers excavated on Morris Field.