

# BARN HILL CONSERVATION GROUP

Registered Charity No. 1085476

## 'Keeping in Touch'

Issue 59 – April 2014

### **Roe Green Walled Garden**

Since November a lot of work has been happening at the garden. Jim and Dennis, despite the mud, have removed the conifers at the back. There is so much light and space now. It's been heavy work and not for the faint hearted. John East has resolved the problem of the blocked drain at the entrance with hard work and perseverance.

Anju has tidied up the office and cottage (whilst 'hibernating' from the cold). Spring cleaning has also been extended to the workshop and barn.

The Metropolitan Trust donated hundreds of spring bulbs which were planted around the whole garden. We expect quite a show this spring. Rose is working on the vegetable patches making them a more manageable size. The long border has been weeded and strulched. We expect to propagate a lot more plants this year and work has started on this project. Suti

### **Fryent Country Park**

It has been like the rest of the country- wet, very wet at Fryent Country Park, but the Sunday team has continued to work on each project. Getting the wheelbarrows with the tools to the project site has been quite a challenge – but we managed.

The Park is rich in acid grassland habitats, which is rapidly declining in lowland Britain. London is one area that is showing a decline mainly caused by building. Acid grasslands have characteristic flora and dependent species that include some butterflies, the Yellow Meadow Ant and the Green Woodpeckers who feed on these ants. Our project work is aimed at preserving our acid grassland on Barn Hill by widening and linking the surviving paths and glades to restore a 'ring' of acid grassland around the mid-upper slopes. Part of the clearance work entailed removing two heavy safes dumped in the hedgerows – not easy but we did it.

We have had two training courses on pruning fruit trees, organised by the London Orchard Project and these have proved very useful – on one course we had 35 people and Kelly's kettle came in very useful for the refreshments.

The ten year hedgerow survey has also been completed, to be published shortly in the London Naturalist. Our survey teams also survey the butterflies, birds, frogspawn and hay meadows. These extra tasks are achieved by members of our volunteers working extra hours. So thank you to Simon, Michael, Leslie and John B. Geoff is also a great help clearing litter in the Park. He is frequently out with his litter picker and sack. Kim

### **Winter landscape**

To me, there is something quite magical about midwinter landscapes and skies, so one day in early January – and when the rain had finally stopped – I set off for a walk round Fryent Country Park.

The sun had just come out and all the wet bushes and trees shone and sparkled in the light. Birds appeared as if from nowhere and started to twitter and call, then settled to feeding. A large flock of Redwing with a scattering of Fieldfare hurtled out of a hedge at breakneck speed and disappeared down a line of trees. These birds are a type of thrush and come from Scandinavia to feed on berries and fruit. Hence our numerous hedges provide rich pickings

for them in winter. I have often wondered why both the Redwing and Fieldfare seem so especially nervous of mankind, so frantic in flight. But perhaps I have a clue.

I have just been reading an extract of a diary by Gilbert White , an ornithologist noted for his observations on birds . In the winter of 1788/9 he was pleased to find three Ring Ouzels (also a type of thrush) in his Sussex garden (Ring Ouzels are very rare and normally only found in the North in remote areas). So what did he do? Did he write to The Times? No he shot them. Then he ate one – and declared it to be ‘juicy and well flavoured’! So it certainly seems that it might be have been common practice to eke out winter rations in this way at that time (not forgetting ‘the four and twenty blackbirds baked in a pie’), But what I am wondering is whether some of our wild birds species might have hidden memories from earlier times?. It definitely seemed a possibility as I walked across the Park, with panicking flocks of Redwing all around. Ten days later they had all gone and the hedges had all been stripped of the berries.

Maureen

#### John Muir Award

There are now eighteen youngsters doing the John Muir Award. This nationally recognised award promoted by The John Muir Trust awards a certificate which acknowledges the recipients commitment to environmental conservation. The group are doing the award at different levels. Last year's group ( nine in all ) have moved on to The Explorer level requiring a deeper commitment. Nine more are starting the Discovery Award. The groups meet together on the 1st Saturday of every month but the participants are also encouraged to help in all our activities in the garden and on Sundays in Fryent Country Park.

Dave

---

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. Our new programme of projects will start again in May. 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. Training and Refreshments are provided. A free Green Gym at your disposal!

Many people come with suggestions as to what we can do to improve Roe Green Walled Garden . Why not come along and implement your ideas. There is no joining fee.

We are now collecting old pottery garden pots. We collect scrap metal such as copper, brass, aluminium, including aluminium cans, which help in fund raising.

#### **DATES FOR YOUR DIARY**

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Annual General Meeting                                 | Saturday 31 May 2014 10.30 am at Roe Green Walled Garden              |
| Newt Club :  | Saturdays 3 May, 7 June, 5 July, 2 August, 6 September. 1pm to 2.30pm |
| John Muir Explorer Award and John Muir Discovery Award | First Saturday of each month at Roe Green Walled Garden at 11am       |

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

Website: [www.bhcg.btck.co.uk](http://www.bhcg.btck.co.uk)