

# BARN HILL CONSERVATION GROUP

Registered Charity No. 1085476

## 'Keeping in Touch'

Issue 73 – December 2018

### **Walled Garden**

We are proud to report that we have been awarded the Gold standard by London in Bloom and have been chosen as the best small conservation area in London.

Our younger volunteers are undertaking a number of projects in the Walled Garden for the Duke of Edinburgh award. They have constructed a 'bug house sculpture' and are now clearing the mounds at the back of the shed to prepare for an additional sculpture.

We have had donations of three pairs of antique wrought iron sides from old benches, and Jim has restored them like new and created three smart benches. Bernard

### **Mistletoe in the Walled Garden**

Mistletoe is a parasitic plant most commonly found on apple trees, but can occasionally grow on other trees. For hundreds of years it was thought to have mystic properties. The mistle thrush was known to crush the white berries on the bark of trees, and mistletoe was found to grow from there.

Ten years ago we decided to try to graft mistletoe on our apple trees in the Garden by pushing the berries through the trees. We tried eight apple trees in total and on one of the trees the trial succeeded. Mistletoe started growing. Over the last ten years it has grown into a huge plant as in the photograph.

So plenty of mistletoe for the Christmas season.

Kim



Mistletoe grafted on to apple tree in walled garden

### **Activities in Fryent Country Park**

The Park gained a Gold Award in the London in Bloom competition for 2018, which is proof that our volunteer work has paid off. We have worked on the Humphry Repton landscape in this the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his death. A book has now been published on his work in the London area including his work in Wembley.

The two butterfly transects walked each week in the Park between April and September have shown good results this year and the report has been sent to the National UK Butterfly Monitoring scheme.

The report makes interesting reading. The Ringlet was first recorded at the Park in 2016 when 10 were recorded. In 2018 53 were recorded. A marbled white was recorded in 1996 and not again until 2011 and 2016, but in 2018 32 were recorded. This butterfly has wings like a chess board and likes open grass land areas.

The purple hairstreak was seen on Fryent for the first time since 1995 and likes to live in oak canopies. We had the best count for brimstones which lay their eggs on alder buckthorn trees. The small Essex skippers had larger numbers than recent years. Also recorded were gatekeepers, speckled wood, comma, holly blue, common blue, small copper, peacock, painted lady, small tortoise shell, red admiral, and of course meadow brown which is our most numerous butterfly with 2241 recorded in the year.

Our thanks to the recorders Simon, Michael, Tara and Leslie. Our work making more habitats in the park is definitely encouraging more wildlife.

Number crunching - bags of rubbish collected

2015 – 1043 bags	2016 – 351 bags	2017 – 319 bags	2018 – 260 bags
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plus many large items such as TVs and carpets.

It appears from these figures that the problem of litter is improving year by year.

### **Birdwatching in Fryent Country Park, December 2017 to November 2018**

I do regular bird counts in the Park, walking a fixed route which includes samples of all the main habitats. Walks start between 8 and 8.30am and last about 2 hours. Over the last 12 months I have paid 29 visits and have recorded 48 different species. 7 species were recorded on all visits (Blackbird, Carrion Crow, Great Tit, Magpie, Ring-necked Parakeet & Robin), with several others not far behind. The highest counts on a single visit were for birds which go around in flocks or small parties (Carrion Crow – 70, Redwing – 90 & Woodpigeon – 56). Of the two resident thrushes Song Thrush (encouragingly) was recorded on 19 visits, while the Mistle Thrush managed just 4. The top finches were Chaffinch (17 visits) and Goldfinch (16 visits). The Greenfinch, whose population has been a cause of concern for some time, was recorded on just 3 visits. The commonest warblers during the breeding season were Blackcap (12 visits) and Chiffchaff (11 visits). The Stock Dove, a smaller relative of the Woodpigeon, is often overlooked, but occurs in areas where there are more trees, and can be seen in the open fields feasting on seeds after the hay has been harvested (20 visits). Occasional visitors included Little Egret (January 1<sup>st</sup>) and Meadow Pipit (February 24<sup>th</sup>). I have recorded Jackdaws on 11 visits (mainly around the edge of the Barn Hill woodland). Red Kites now regularly fly over the Park, and Buzzards are seen high up from time to time.

John Barrington

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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 January. 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!

We are now collecting old pottery garden pots. We collect scrap metal, but it has to be **non-magnetic** such as copper and brass. We sell this, which help in fund raising.

### **DATES FOR YOUR DIARY**

General Meeting

Saturday 19 January 2019 10.30 am

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

Email: [barnhillconservationgroup@gmail.com](mailto:barnhillconservationgroup@gmail.com)

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