

Bromley Town Parks

News & views from the - *Friends of Bromley Town Parks and Gardens*
Promoting Bromley's green centre

www.bromleytownparks.org.uk

Focus on...Martin's Hill

*"On this, the people's piece of land,
May builder never ply his skill.
May never innovating hand
deprive the town of Martin's Hill."*

So wrote an anonymous poet in the Bromley Record when rumours of re-development threatened Martin's Hill. This was a realistic fear since parts of the hill had already been sold off in 1858 to Mayor William Starling who built for himself Hill House later to be used by the Territorial Army and the speculative developments The Hollies and Glebe Knoll which is now a locally listed building. Owned by the Church Commissioners, the Hill was finally purchased by the town in 1878 and set out as **Bromley's first recreation area**.

This is where the Broom plant, after which our town is named, can be found. It was re-established after disappearing for some years. Broom is in flower from late April into early May and should not be confused with the much more common Gorse.

These slopes are categorised as acid grassland. This is recognised in Bromley council's Biodiversity Action Plan (BBAP) where this is specifically men-



Daffodils & War Memorial, Martin's Hill

tioned. I quote "Acid grassland occurs on acidic, nutrient poor, generally free draining soil. They are characterised by fine-leaved grasses such as common bent and fescues, with typical herbs such as sheep's sorrel, tormentil and heath bedstraw. In Bromley they are generally found on the gravels and sands of the Blackheath Pebble Beds and Woolwich Beds. In the UK lowlands, **acid grasslands are now rare and those of Bromley are limited in extent and much fragmented**. The BBAP aims "to protect the current area of unimproved and semi-improved grassland, enhance the quality of these grassland areas by appropriate management, increase the extent of species-rich grassland in the Borough, es-

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Membership gains ground

At our AGM in January we agreed our aim to significantly increase our membership during the year. Several members have already distributed around 600 leaflets to some streets around Bromley town centre. This has already had some success with new members joining to date. If you wish to help with a leaflet drop in your area please con-

tact the Editor (details on page 4). We also hope to use the Friends' Forum caravan in the town centre later in the year.

If you know of anybody who wishes to join our group please look on page 4 for how to do this.

Issue 18—Spring 2009

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Important dates for your diary

Walks: Starting from Church House Gardens Lodge, Church Road.	Meet at 11.00am Wednesdays April 8 & 22 May 6 & 20 June 3 & 17
Easy walking with some slopes.	
Lasts about 1 hour	
Thyme Out Taster Day: Canteen, Civic Centre, BR1 3UH	Tuesday April 21 1.30-3.30pm
Broomtime 2009: Exhibition. Bromley Central Library	Saturday April 25 to Saturday May 9 Open during normal library hours
Working Parties:	Refer to our website for details.

Thyme Out project

Our group is supporting Bromley council's project to provide free gardening and life skills for people with learning difficulties. This 3 year project which has received Lottery funding, will be based in the grounds of the Civic Centre, itself one of the public green spaces in our remit. Our members will be working with the people on this project in a number of ways. The first visible event will be a Taster Day on 21 April 2009 when along with other activities we will be leading small groups around this historic area.

The Civic Centre grounds are an important historic public space largely unknown to most of the general public. Formerly the location of a palace for the Bishop of Rochester, then a 18th

century mansion (Grade 2 listed), a teachers training college and now the council's offices. Also located in the grounds are several historic garden features (Grade 2 listed).

If you wish know of people with learning difficulties who may wish to take part you should call either of-

Louisa Allen on 020 8302 4796

Debbie DasGupta on 020 8467 2732

Members who wish to help on April 21 should contact the Editor (see Page 4).



Bromley Palace facade from grounds

Focus on...Martin's Hill

(Continued from page 1)

pecially where they connect existing areas and monitor, survey and appraise grasslands quality".

With help from BTCV volunteers we have so far removed the brambles from the upper slopes of Martin's Hill as part of our objective to restore these slopes and increase its conservation value. These brambles, with their rampant spreading habit, threatened to over-

whelm this area. As agreed with Bromley's Countryside Officer the management plan for this area is to control this encroaching scrub in order to maximise species diversity. We have already discovered an unusual lichen on these slopes and we hope to encourage many more acid tolerant plant species along with associated insects, etc.

For more information on this visit - www.bromleytownparks.org.uk

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Celebrate Bromley

Bromley council have released details of Celebrate Bromley 2009. This consists of two events; **Creative Bromley** a series of competitions for paintings, photographs or poems, and **Beautiful Bromley** which seeks horticultural entries in a wide number of categories from residents, communities and business. This is your chance to demonstrate either your artistic temperament or green fingers.

Events take place throughout July and will culminate in a showcase event on 12 September in Queen's Gardens when awards will be presented. Our group will be involved in this latter event.

Leaflets can be obtained from libraries and the Civic Centre main reception., and entries must be in by 18 June.



Colourful flower beds © Jeff Royce

Nature Notes

As Spring arrived the short period of warmer weather was inevitably replaced by colder temperatures and showers! This however has not put off the plants and birds. Almost every day in our parks additional early spring flowers have come into bloom; **daffodils** on College Green or Martin's Hill, **primroses** in Dickerson's Copse, **wild cherry** adjacent to the Mill Pond and many more to follow.

Similarly bird song is increasingly heard as they start announcing their territories and their desire to find a mate. Of course a few birds, such as the **robin**, defend a territory through the winter. Near the Mill Pond a **grey wag-tail** can be observed catching insects.

In our **woodlands flowers** seize the chance to bloom and hence attract pollinating insects before growing tree canopy shades out the woodland floor. Such plants include bluebell, herb robert, red campion, primrose and wood sorrel (picture below).



Male robin calling © Barry Wooding

Bumble bees can be seen in warm days from early spring. They are followed, as the days lengthen, by various beetles, butterflies and moths exploiting these and later flowers.

Valley School Pond Update

In a previous newsletter I reported that the historic Field Pond at the Valley School had been filled in. The School had been concerned over water depletion following construction of the adjacent Glebe Knoll development in 2004/5. Our research revealed there should have been a channel connecting the pond to a spring in the woodland on Martin's Hill just the other side of the School boundary. Our water flow tests showed a consistent 90 gallons per day from the spring no longer reaching the pond. Patrick Phillips, Head of Parks & Countryside kindly offered the assistance of the Country-

side Rangers to help dig out and re-instate the pond. The School remained unconvinced that the water supply could be restored but at a top level site meeting agreed to a trial pond being dug. This was done on March 31st and all present were moved to see a joyful flow of water returning to this magical and historic site. The trial pond has maintained a constant level and we are grateful to the School for allowing myself and own Anna Martin, an Environmental Scientist, to monitor progress which we hope to report in the next newsletter.



Countryside Rangers digging trial pond with our own Anna Martin (right)

Ancient Roads, Hayes

On 3rd March 1908 Messrs Thomas Wood & Sons of Crockenhill wrote to Bromley Rural District Council, the local highway authority " We are about to haul Road Material over the Road leading from Locksbottom to West Wickham, and with a view to avoid any further unpleasantness we are prepared to meet the Council by payment of 3d per ton of all material so hauled." The Council agreed on 10th March in the following terms

"That for the period April 1st to September 30th in each year the rate to be 3d per ton, and for the period 1st October to 31st March in each year at the rate of 1/- per ton, with the following reservation viz., that material shall only be drawn when the weather conditions are satisfactory, this being a matter to rest with the Highway Surveyor of the district"

From the Minutes of Bromley Rural District Council. Submitted by Paul Rainey

You may find this historic item interesting in reflecting on changes in road conditions over the past century—and the costs involved.



LOST PINE—a poem by Joan Winter

No 'Cherry Orchard' here.

No Chekhov I.

No 'poem lovely as this tree'.

Alone, but loved,

it stood

majestic all the year.

—

The saws teeth rend the air

the final death

a pounding of the ground

the ultimate sound.

"I rule here", in vain.

The air holds silence

on its breath.

—

Crows, bewildered, wait;

seek to relocate

their flight path

seek tomorrows throne,

no man to reconstruct their home,

Land Grab a more

important craft.

Area Action Plan Update

In February your committee presented their report on **Bromley Town Centre Area Action Plan (AAP)** to the Council. The AAP's recommendations significantly impact our parks.

A short update on some of the key sites.

Site B (Tweedy Road): The ministry inspector report is awaited imminently.

Site L (Westmoreland Road): Planning application has been withdrawn by the developer prior to its consideration by the council's planning committee. This planning application had been criticised by many groups including ourselves. This item was reported in a recent edition of the Bromley Times.

Queen's Gardens: The Fire Brigade have expressed concerns over the safety implications of the proposed additional cafés etc. adjacent to the Glades.

We've come to the end of the council's own consultation process and there is no further opportunity to influence policy. A final draft plan will be issued shortly. Any comments will now go direct to the Secretary of State for consideration along with the final draft. Although there have been many positive revisions there is still serious concern about the impact of opportunity site developments on the conserved green environment of the town which we will have to take to the Secretary of State.

Tony Banfield

Contributors in this issue include Tony Banfield, Paul Rainey, Barry Wooding and Joan Winter. Thanks are due to them as there would be no newsletter otherwise. If you wish to submit an article, however small, for a future issue or just comment on previous ones please contact the Editor. As Editor I reserve the right to edit any items submitted to fit in with the Newsletter and to conform to the FoBTPaG objectives.

Contributions for the Summer edition should be sent to the Editor by 14 June 2009

To respond or provide items please contact:

The Editor

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This newsletter was printed by Bromley council's Leisure and Culture Division, within Environment and Leisure Services. We thank them very much for this important support.

About Us

We are a local volunteer group whose aims are to, in co-operation with the London Borough of Bromley, secure the preservation and enhancement of the parks and gardens adjacent to the centre of Bromley and which are environmentally contributory to the Town Centre Conservation Area namely *Library Gardens, Church House Gardens, Martin's Hill and Queen's Mead, Queen's Garden, College Green, Civic Centre Grounds*. In addition the Friends have the same objectives for areas adjacent, in particular *the wooded slopes and verges of Beckenham Lane, the Valley School Field and Grounds, The 'Bromley Oak' and landscaped verges of Kentish Way, the Ravensbourne reservoir and Glassmill Lane.*

Also we aim to encourage the responsible use of these public spaces for both informal enjoyment and public entertainment.

If you are also interested in these green spaces why not join us. It costs only £5 per year for each household. For further details either look on our website or contact us (see details on top left of this page).

Useful emergency contacts for parks

- Graffiti or fly-tipping: (020) 8313 4471
- Ward Security: Daytime - 0845 847 6180 Out of hours - (020) 8464 4848
- Bromley Police station - 01689 891212
- General parks issues - (020) 8313 4471