



Friends of Pinner Village Gardens

NEWS
covering
Autumn
& **Winter**
2023 -
2024

FRIENDS' REPORT GETS ACTION ON PATH REPAIRS

A report to Harrow Council by the Committee of the Friends of Pinner Village Gardens has resulted in much needed action to repairs to uneven paths in the park.

Visitors will have seen this winter green markings on some of the paths around the park. These have been replaced with new asphalt patches.

This is a result of a report by the Friends of Pinner Village Gardens committee to Harrow Council.

The Committee had been concerned for some time about the dangerous conditions of some of the park's paths.



Marked for repair

The uneven surfaces were a risk to park users including young people who take part in the weekly parkrun as well as the park's more senior visitors.

Collaboration with Harrow Council's infrastructure team was key to getting the work completed. In August 2023 the Friends drew up a detailed report for the Council highlighting the condition of the paths.

The report included a map that graded all paths in the park on a traffic light system - Green for good condition, Amber for paths assessed as needing repair in the next 18 months and Red for needing immediate attention.

Continued page 3

NEWSLETTER
for FoPVG
Members

The FoPVG newsletter for Life and Annual (individual and household) Friends of Pinner Village Gardens and later put on the website.

Question

What bat is heard in the park?

In this issue:

- Founder's work recognised
- Pond news

OBE for Treasurer

Those signing up to membership of the Friends may not be aware of what Committee members do or have done in 'previous lives'. However, the spotlight has been thrown on FoPVG's treasurer & membership secretary Professor Stephen Spiro.

It was announced in The King's Birthday Honours of June 2023 that Professor Stephen Spiro was to be honoured with appointment to Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE). This is to recognise his services to hospice care in his role as vice-president and lately chair, Rennie Grove Hospice Care. Professor Spiro's clinical background is in respiratory medicine.

Chair of FoPVG Dodie M-R said: "We are honoured that Stephen volunteers as the Friends of PVG treasurer & membership secretary, to help us maintain Pinner Village Gardens park – especially as we know that fresh air and parks are so important to people's well-being."



Accompanied by wife Alison and their son Michael in February, Professor Stephen Spiro at Windsor Castle to be presented with the OBE by HRH The Princess Royal.

FOUNDER Of FRIENDS of PVG HONOURED BY MEMBERS

At the Friends annual general meeting (AGM) in Summer 2023, the Friends of Pinner Village Gardens voted to officially recognise the great contribution to improvements in the park by Helen Ryan.

This Helen achieved as founder and first chairperson of the Friends of Pinner Village Gardens, which she founded in 2015.

Raised concerns

In 2015 Helen Ryan raised her concerns about Pinner Village Gardens (PVG) at a surgery with the local councillors representing Pinner South Ward at Pinner Library. With the councillors encouragement Helen set up the preliminary meeting for the Friends of PVG.

At that time Harrow Council was also in the process of setting up the Parks Forum to encourage Park User Groups to form as an interface between Harrow Council and the community.

Extensive neglect

The first meeting was in October 2015 at the Milmans Centre, where concerned park users expressed their critical views of the maintenance of PVG as it was a place of extensive neglect with overgrown flower beds, very few benches, an unattractive and underused playground, a place avoided by many in the community.

In the early days Helen Ryan, worked with others including John Bugler and Natasha Zealey to establish the Friends, getting a constitution drafted and liaison with the council's maintenance team.

Fitness equipment

Attending the Harrow Parks Forum meeting, Helen asked the council for fitness exercise equipment which was supplied.

Green grid funding

An application for the Green Grid Fund achieved the first phase of welcoming planting at the Compton Rise entrance.



Helen Ryan

Paths were repaired and the Rose Circle was retained despite the Council proposal to grass it over, while a successful bid resulted in new trees to encircle it.

Helen's determination

All this was achieved by the end of 2016. Helen's determination to see the park's improvement continued as she was part of the team to make major improvements to the children's playground.

In recent years Helen has served as a community representative on the FoPVG committee. However in summer 2023 Helen decided to stand down from that role.

Keeping her eye on the park

Just before Christmas, Helen celebrated a special birthday. She describes that birthday as having "two very round numbers" and that from now on, she is no longer counting.

Helen is seen daily in the park with her dogs - and continues to keep her eye on the park's maintenance.

FRIENDS' REPORT GETS ACTION ON PATH REPAIRS

Continued from page 1

Emailing proved difficult for transmission of the chunky report with its colour photos and map.

A printed hard copy of the report was submitted to a Harrow Councillor and Harrow officials in November. The wheels then started to turn.

As a result, in mid-February 2024 Harrow council's Infrastructure lead and landscape architect visited the park and marked up areas for attention. The official wrote to the Friends explaining:

"We do take public safety seriously however; there is no statutory requirement for councils to survey park footpaths and no particular specification for repairs so we have used our highway footpath investigatory intervention measurement of more than 25mm for our survey and have identified 10 small areas that are more than 25mm.

"I will provide an estimate for temporary repairs for our parks operational team as this is not in scope of capital works, but is revenue maintenance works and that should address the immediate public safety issues you have highlighted."

The path patch repairs started on 17 February 2024 and were completed a few days later.



Newly repaired path near Compton Rise entrance

Team work and perseverance by the Committee has paid off.

The Committee members are relieved that the paths are safer than they were.

The Committee will keep an eye on the paths and submit a second report if and when paths deteriorate to the 25mm level.

WANTED – VOLUNTEERS

Its not all gardening!



EARLY FLOWERING SNOWDROP

The first Snowdrop, *Galanthus elwesii*, in bloom in the park was seen in the bed near the tennis courts on 30 November 2023.

WINTER TEMPERATURES in the PARK

Very cold for London temperatures were again experienced in the park this Winter 23/24. In January temperatures dropped down to between -6C and -8C (18F) for three nights. There were a number of nights at -3C.

However in January & February we have had warmer days and some nights, which have reached between 12C -14C (53-57F). March had days reaching 17 and 18C (over 64F).

Ha - Ha! Members see very rare historic books

The Lindley Library at the Royal Horticultural Society HQ in London opened their historic rare books archive to members of the Friends of PVG and Pinner History Society. The visit was arranged by the FoPVG committee and the host was RHS's London librarian Susan Robin.

Sue Jull, FoPVG member & volunteer describes the visit

'Herbals' were botanical encyclopaedias and described plants and their uses, giving information about suitability for safe use in health care by physicians, barber-surgeons and apothecaries.

Susan showed us an edition from 1636 by Gerard, who further developed the herbal by writing in English, as opposed to Latin, making the knowledge more accessible.

drives away venomous things

One entry was for Fleabane, which when burned in the home "*drives away venomous things*" like fleas. The herbal also contained the first illustration of a potato!

Books from the 17th century start to show plants from different regions and how they could be used in garden design.

The archive includes nursery catalogues - the first dating from 1783. These are invaluable when undertaking garden restoration as the dates that plants became available can be found. Unlike modern catalogues, which are printed cheaply, produced seasonally and made to be discarded, these were made to last. Prices were separate, avoiding reprints.

We were shown a beautifully illustrated 18th century example from Germany. By this time the horticultural trade had developed to so far to include price lists in half a dozen languages. We were also shown an Edwardian catalogue; a 1920s 'chocolate box' cover, a bulky pre-war example followed by a war-time emergency edition, and finally a garish 1970 version. The library has numerous books on garden design: A delightful volume by famous 19th century designer Humphrey Repton, showed one of the first uses of 'before and after' and humorous illustrations of redesigned landscape gardens for the very wealthy.

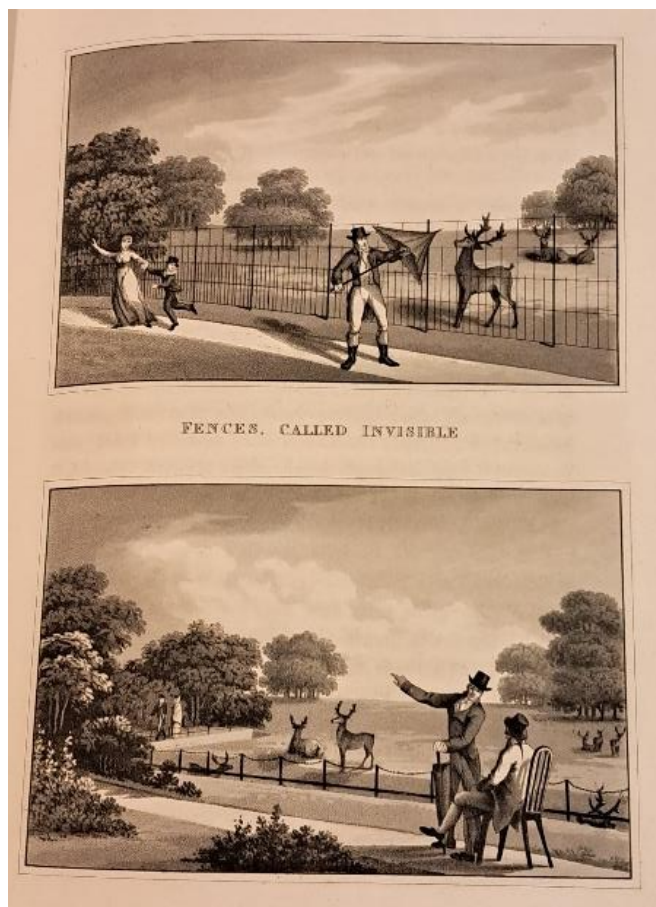
Tudor reprint of book from ancient Rome

The oldest book held by the library is a 1550s reprint of Pliny the Elder's book on natural history written in 77AD. Pliny died in the eruption of Vesuvius in 79AD.

We were shown prestige books and tourist postcards that are invaluable records of garden history and applied to the restoration of formal gardens, such as the National Trust garden at Dyffryn, near Cardiff.

With many thanks to RHS librarian Susan for her time as our visit was much longer than intended as we had so many questions on the fascinating books!

For more information on the RHS Library: <https://www.rhs.org.uk/education-learning/libraries-at-rhs>



Repton's design: Before (top) After (bottom)
Safely and elegantly protected by ha-ha invisible fence.



MORE THAN KNEE DEEP

Geocachers joined FoPVG volunteers to thin out plants in the pond this winter three times.

This is particularly important for a number of reasons. Despite the previous year's efforts, a few species had grown faster dominating and out competing others.

Successful bid

Also space was needed for the new pond plants. This resulted from FoPVG's successful bid made in early 2023 to Harrow Green Grid fund.

From bid to final delivery takes time allowing for evaluation and detailed planning. The project is in two parts.

New plants for the pond to provide interest, variety and support wildlife diversity. Delivery planned for late spring 2024.

The other part concerns two 'wings' - planted in Autumn 2023 - beside the pond and currently temporarily fenced.

Protect new small plants

This is to protect new small plants and bulbs that were planted in the autumn. These have been chosen to be suited to wet meadows – it is a little experimental as the area can be extremely wet and plug size plants are very small.

Plants include Primroses that are already in flower and bulbs *Camassia cusickii* that are growing strongly.



Maintaining Pinner Village Gardens park costs the Friends of PVG nearly £4,000 a year, which is equivalent to nearly £11 a day.

Annual individual membership of FoPVG is just £10 per year.

The list below covers the wide range of items that that we need to buy or have donated through 'hidden' donations.

Your membership is very much valued, please continue to renew it.

If you are not a member of FoPVG please join us to help to keep Pinner Village Gardens looking lovely.

<https://www.pinnervillagegardens.org.uk/join/>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • bamboo canes • batteries • border forks • border spades • brass polish • brooms • buckets • building sand • bulbs • cable ties • cement • composts • cordon tape 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • delivery costs • disposable gloves • drill bits • dustpans • electricity • first aid kit • plant feeds • grass rakes • hammer • hand forks • hooks • horticultural gravel • horticultural sand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • insulation • lawn rakes • leaf grabbers • leaf rakes • litter pick tips • long pond gloves • loppers • mulch • nails • nematodes • paint brushes • paint • paper 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • plants • plastic shovels • plumbing fittings • posters • printer ink • sand paper • saws • screw-driver • secateurs • soil rakes • string • taps • tree & rose stakes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • thornproof gloves • trowels • VAT • warning signs • water butts • watering cans • WD40 • weeding tools • wire • wheelbarrows • and other items we have forgotten to list
--	--	--	---	--

▶ **PIPISTRELLE FLY PAST FOR BAT NIGHT** ◀

Pipistrelle Bats demonstrated low fly pasts in Pinner Village Gardens in Autumn 2023.

Well known nature advisor Simon Braidman, led a bat watching evening in the Autumn. The evening was well attended; participants including families with teenagers.

Bats were seen and heard as a series of clicks on bat detectors. Common Pipistrelle is our commonest bat species.

The most active area for the bats was around the pond. The habitat around the pond is of a woodland grading to grassland. The backbone of the park is an avenue of old Oaks (*Quercus*) along Centre Walk East – where the mass of snowdrops bloom in late winter.

Pond provides dinner

For the bats, the pond provides dinner as the insects hatch out from their pupal and larval skins. Bats need to eat a couple of thousand tiny midge sized insects each night.

Answer to page 1 Pipistrelle bat

Bats also need warm, dry sheltered spots for breeding such as buildings. They will nest in bat boxes if they are carefully sited and even better if they are heated.

In winter they need damp, cool conditions and unheated buildings above or below ground are desired properties.

Bat roosts are protected by law, but foraging habitat is not protected. Pinner Village Gardens with its mixture of grassland (some long) to its tree lines is a vital resource for local bats.

BAT FACTS

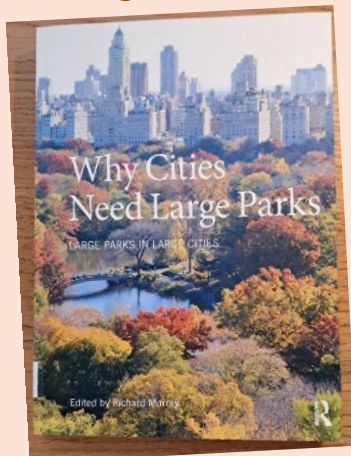
- Bats can control their body temperature from 36C down to the surrounding ambient conditions;
- Bats' heart rate can range from:
 - 800 beats per minute when flying to,
 - 200 beats per minute resting, to
 - 10 beats per minute in hibernation.
- To learn more about bats please see: **Woodlandtrust.org.uk**

NEW BOOKS

Why Cities Need Large Parks

Edited by
Richard Murray

Including the history of urban parks starting with the Industrial Revolution, this book illustrates importance, diverse uses and many benefits of large urban parks across 30 major cities.



NEWS FLASH Thursday 28 March 2024

FoPVG volunteers found many large dead branches under a tree in the park's Compton Copse and took immediate action to protect park users. Sadly the tree is believed to be dead and will have to be felled.



We would love to hear from you on topics or questions we might briefly cover in the newsletter.

Email us via website contact page
<https://www.pinnervillagegardens.org.uk/contact/> or email
friendsofpinnervillagegardens@gmail.com
Editor: Dodie, Chair, Friends of Pinner Village Gardens

© **Published by Friends of Pinner Village Gardens.**

We aim to get it right. Please forgive us if we get it wrong.

www.pinnervillagegardens.org.uk

This Newsletter is sent to paid up subscribers first, that is Life Members, Individual & Family Annual members. Later it will be added to the website. By not being a member you may miss opportunities such as exclusive visits or gardening advice.