



# Friends of Pinner Village Gardens

NEWS

AGM  
22 July  
2024

## ANNUAL REPORT 2023 / 2024

### Crowning Achievements

2023/24 will always stand out in our minds for two reasons: The Coronation Picnic Party with its wonderful participation by the local community and then the excellent outcome of the Path's report to Harrow Council.

**The Coronation Picnic Party** in early May 2023, organised by the Friends of Pinner Village Gardens. was without doubt a highlight of 2023. Many people came and had a great time enjoying the music, stalls, rides, dog show and their own picnics. The rain stopped just in time for the grass to be cut the week before the event.

We were also honoured that King Charles III's representative, Deputy Lieutenant for Greater London Simon Ovens came to the Picnic to read the new King's message to us all. We were also delighted that then Harrow Mayor Janet Mote attended too. After the event, many regular park visitors said how much they enjoyed the event and encouraged the Friends to repeat it in Summer 2024.

#### Paths resurfacing

The repair of the paths in the park was another very significant success. The uneven surfaces of the paths were a concern given the park has elderly visitors and youngsters who take park in junior park run each Sunday.

Having logged the problems on the Council's website without success, the Friends produced a 'traffic-light' survey report with maps and photographs to be presented to the Council. This resulted in action with the resurfacing of the most denuded areas in early 2024. The full story was reported in the FoPVG Newsletter for Autumn/Winter 2023/24.

#### Junior parkrun runs and runs

Junior parkrun, for which the initial licence fee was raised by the Friends of Pinner Village Gardens has gone from success to greater success – please see full story page 8.

#### Making a difference

We continue to make a difference by maintaining the park, making it a welcoming place, keeping it clean and thus discouraging anti-social behaviour. Continued on page 2



Centre DL Simon Ovens

**Please become our Ambassadors by encouraging your friends, relatives & neighbours to join us as volunteers & become paid up Friends.**

**And please keep encouraging our volunteers and Community Payback groups when you see them in Pinner Village Gardens.**

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This Annual Report covers Financial Year April 2023 / March 2024  
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#### Format

We are continuing this format for the Annual Report of the Friends of Pinner Village Gardens.

We hope it makes it easy to read and highlights what you wish to know.  
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**Question**  
What invasive weed tried to take over the Rose Circle?

**Answer**  
Page 3

## Making a difference with everyday day tasks

Continued from page 1

These are the aims that led to the Friends being formed – thus we are continuing with the everyday tasks that are carried out by volunteers and the Community Payback (CP) groups. We also see the difference we make working with those sentenced to CP community service as they learn from the experience of their unpaid work being appreciated.

We aim to keep a balance between the open areas for recreation by people of all ages and dogs, cultivated areas providing colourful plants and interest all year, wild parts for natural biodiversity. We support activities such as junior parkrun and other events.

We also have a social role in chatting to park users, giving them social interaction that may be missing from their lives, and by their encouraging words feel they are still contributing to the community. Volunteering with us also helps people to keep fit as well as also enjoying a chat. The work of volunteers greatly appreciated:

*“The park has never looked better in the nearly 20 years I’ve lived here”, said a park visitor.*

## Maintaining the park needs two things especially: volunteers and funds

Volunteers to share the work and funds enable up to keep up the quality and state of the planting. Without volunteers to the various tasks in the park simply will not get done. The current volunteers are putting in significant hours and even turning out when it is raining to get the job done. For example planting bulbs last autumn went on into the New Year; and we got away with it, but it would have been better if the bulbs were all in the ground sooner.

For more on Volunteers please see page 3 and Community Payback page 4

## Funds needed to fill the gaps

### While new big projects may be eye catching, the existing borders and shrubberies need refreshing

The weather of 2022/23 was both hot & dry, followed by a particularly cold winter and then hot temperatures again in summer 2023.

All of this, plus the age of many of the plants has resulted in plants’ demise, creating gaps. Those gaps need filling to keep the park looking beautiful, and to provide a variety of support for wildlife.

To fill those gaps successfully we need to improve the soil and buy plants suited to the park’s conditions. The soil needs to be improved as it has fed the plants on it for decades, so in much of the park its larder is bare. It also helps growth and options if we can improve drainage. We need to choose plants from reliable suppliers, that are suited to the various conditions around the park – full sun, wet, deep shade, clay soil etc.

Looking to the future this is why FoPVG has launched the ‘Fill The Gap’ project with the aim of raising £5,000 to buy plants and soil improvers and composts to ‘Fill the Gap’.

Please help us  
**FILL THE GAP**

There many gaps between the park's shrubs caused by the stresses of:

- hot dry Summers 2022 & 2023
- very cold Winter 2022/23 and
- old age of many plants

To help us reach our target of £5,000 to fill the gaps, please donate to the Friends of Pinner Village Gardens 'Fill the Gap' project.

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

**Friends of Pinner Village Gardens**

## Volunteers & Work Parties

**We have held regular weekly work parties on alternate Tuesday and Friday mornings throughout the year mostly with four or five volunteers.**

Individual volunteers have focussed on the Rose Circle and each of the four entrances as key aspects of the park.

A particular weed being tackled in the Rose Circle was the creeping potentilla – highly invasive and needs keeping on top of.

We have also had focus on the azalea beds and North Green wild flower area. Other parts of the park have received occasional, although often intensive attention.

### **Bulb planting**

Bulb planting is an intensive task thorough autumn. The weather was not always kind to us during latter months of 2023. But the results were worth it – especially at Whittington Way where the orange *Ballerina* tulips dazzled park visitors along with other tulip bulbs: *Ronaldo*, *Princess Irene*, *Purple Prince*, *Toronto* and multi-headed *Purple Bouquet*.

We ran some short late Wednesday afternoon work parties during the summer 2023 and some ad hoc sessions which have helped to boost the amount we are able to do.

### **Corporate volunteering**

We were also approached for a day's corporate volunteering by a firm of accountants BDO to work with us weeding in later Spring. Looking forward we hope to increase these opportunities. If you know of groups who would welcome a day of volunteering in the park, please let us know.



Above: Tulips at Whittington Way beds: top of photo *Ballerina*, closer *Princess Irene* (orange & purple) and dark *Ronaldo*.

Below: Volunteer campaign poster



### **Work Experience student**

Through this academic year we have had regular assistance from a student who is undertaking a horticulture course at Capel Manor College and wants to go on to study and work in this field.

He has done useful work including pruning roses, shrubs, and willow wigwam, weeding, planting bulbs and cutting bamboo sticks for the bee hotel.

### **Geocachers**

We are grateful to the volunteer geocachers who don waders to help us manage the pond in Autumn & Winter ready for new planting.

## Volunteers & Work Parties continued



### Maintenance team

The team completed installing the tap at Rayners Lane, to replace the previous awkward to access handle.

They have dealt with numerous loose stones on the walls in particular addressing the wall outside the Rayners Lane entrance. Attention will now return to keeping the benches in repair and looking good.

This small, hard-working group of volunteers give invaluable help.

### Community Payback's second year with FoPVG

FoPVG's partnership with Ministry of Justice Community Payback scheme began in March 2022. Thus this is Community Payback's second year working with the Friends of Pinner Village Gardens. This has given us the benefit of some 1,400 hours annually from Community Payback groups.

Community Payback have generally been very regular in their attendance on Wednesdays and have done some very useful work. We notice when they do not work with us, as was the case for a few weeks last September. This was owing to the lack of a Justice/Probation Service supervisor for a number of reasons. As the park does not have a toilet nor shelter Ministry of Justice provides a Welfare vehicle and driver, so if a driver is not available, we miss a session.

While some are not very conscientious, there are many who are hardworking and contribute well. They are supervised by a member of staff from the Ministry of Justice' Probation Service, advised/directed by Friends' representative who works alongside the group.

They have made a noticeable difference in several areas of the park e.g. preparing the ground for the new wildflower area near the pond, raking up newly cut long grass, weeding behind the pond and the azalea beds on several occasions. They also undertake tasks such as watering, cutting back grass around benches, bed edges, and bins, bagging up fallen leaves for leaf mold, which gives FoPVG volunteers valuable time to concentrate on more skilled gardening tasks.

They also created a new wood chip path along the side of the children's playground (see page 6) and new bed for Spring bulbs at the Rayners Lane gate. Each week they were keen to see the very visible result of their efforts from the bulbs first showing to then coming into bloom. Once in full flower the results were also visible from the opposite side of Marsh Road.

This is a very worthwhile initiative which is good for the park and the Payback people. It is particularly gratifying when park users thank them for the work they do.



Community Payback planted bed at the Rayners Lane gate.

## Around the park

### Others learn from FoPVG's great idea

All were delighted at the waste management plan for the Coronation Picnic Party. Recycled white bags, left over from delivery of composts and construction materials were positioned around the park, pegged down and labelled 'litter'. Visitors to the park put their rubbish in the bags, the bags were tied up ready to be taken away by the council after the Bank Holiday.

A walk round the park during the following Bank Holiday Monday morning showed very little escaped litter.

We know the idea has been copied by other parks in Harrow, and FoPVG planned to repeat the method as thoughts turned to repeating the picnic event.

### Waste Management and Bins

As reported in last year's Annual Report the Friends' volunteers realised that a waste bin was required at 'the Arc' benches by the pond and provided a 'home-made' bin. The volunteers continue to empty this bin, placing the full rubbish sacks ready for the weekly collection by Harrow's Green Team alongside one of the black council-provided bins.

This continues along with management of the area to keep down the amount of litter. However, wildlife such as foxes, squirrels and magpies sometimes disturb the bin's contents hoping to find 'tasty' contents. The wind also plays its part. Such disruption also occurs at other waste bins around the park. A contributing problem is pizza boxes that have not been folded up and thus cause obstruction reducing the capacity of the waste bins. This occurs especially within the children's playground, which is disappointingly also a frequent source of wrappers and bags from children's treats. Additional bins are not available from Harrow council.

### Green Team

We were pleased to again have the assistance of a small team from Harrow's Green team to undertake heavier cutting back with power tools in February 2024. A team of 2-3 people was with us for mostly 3 days for each of 4 weeks. They were however, hampered by the incessant rain making some places inaccessible.

### Bramble Management Plan

In 2022 we submitted to L. B. Harrow a five-year-pruning regime for brambles developed by the Friends. Its aim is to enable a mix of new growth, flowers, fruit and mature stems, that provide food and homes for birds and insects. Without management the brambles out compete other plants in the park.

We have applied it, as we work with the Green Team on annual heavier pruning and aim to keep the long runners from advancing over the grass verges on to paths or encroaching shrub areas. As mowing teams change, we aim to directly speak to them so that they understand the importance of mowing the margins. (Please also see Mowing page 7)

## Around the park continued

### Dragonfly pond and wildflower 'Wings' area

The pond planting and wildflower Wings results from another successful bid by the Friends of PVG to Harrow Green Grid.

We are grateful to the Geocachers (volunteers) who again helped us manage the pond in late 2023. While the previous year's thinning out looked significant, by autumn 2023 much growth had come back, and so we needed their help again to be ready for the new pond plants arriving in the warmer months of late Spring 2024.

The Community Payback team and Volunteers had prepared ground to plant wild flowers and bulbs in the 'Wings' areas during the previous autumn.

In Spring the new primroses *Primula vulgaris* and cowslips *Primula veris*, blue flowered bulbs *Camassia cusickii* and purple snakeshead fritillary *Fritillaria meleagris*, were particularly successful, showing that they really do like wet meadow conditions as they were underwater for some time. We hope that they will now spread.



*Camassia cusickii*



*Primula veris*



*Fritillaria meleagris*

FoPVG aims to continue to bid to Harrow's Green Grid Fund, if available, to add to the park's landscape to keep it interesting, attractive and good for wildlife.

### Cheap solution to a muddy problem

The well used path from the Grove Estate through Pinn Gate into Pinner Village Gardens had become very muddy. This meant that people were detouring into the children's playground - which is not allowed for those with dogs for health reasons especially. Some dogs are also too large to carry.

The Friends having had a delivery of fresh wood chip decided that a good use for it would be on that path. This provided another task for the Community Payback group who quickly barrowed the chippings along the path and raked it level.



Residents using the path have expressed their appreciation for this improvement which was a simple and cheap solution to a muddy problem.

## Around the park continued

### Mowing and the weather

Hot & wet summer 2023, wet winter & spring 2024

The weather clearly affects the park and volunteers. It can be too hot to spend very long gardening. It can prevent mowing because its too wet and prevent weeding because it is too dry having baked the clay soil rock hard. Here is a quick review of the weather during the year.

Grass mowing in the year 2023/4 was mixed. In the early part of the year, Spring 2023, everyone was asking when the grass was going to be cut. There were rumours of 'No Mo May' and 'Its not-mow-May', but was allegedly no-mow-staff'. Our mowing regime that was submitted to L. B. Harrow in October 2022 aimed to achieve a balance of long grass for wildlife and short for amenity, safety, maintaining views, preventing bramble encroachment, has been broadly been followed.

Spring 2023 was wet, the ground was saturated, but Green Team managed to cut the grass in time for the Coronation Picnic Party on Sunday 7 May 2024.

**The Met Office said:** *'Record-breaking June temperatures means that the UK has had one of its ten warmest summers on record, despite an unsettled July and August, according to provisional Met Office figures'*.

And:

*"of the ten warmest summers on record by mean temperature, summer 2023 is the wettest"*.

However, despite above average temperatures for the season, it was also a wetter than average summer, with July leading the way in terms of rainfall; which was provisionally the UK's sixth wettest July on record. The wet weather also made planting difficult in autumn '23 and spring '24 with some volunteers getting wet through, and leading to delays in planting and of course grass cutting until conditions improved.

Close to the end of the mowing season, between the rain, following a request from the Friends, the Green Team just managed to get in a last cut around the pond, but had to leave the section that was under water, before mowing stopped for winter 2023/4.

But then it rained and rained and continued raining through the Spring into April and May.

For March 2024 the Met Office said that:

England, and in particular the southern part, have seen above-average amounts of rain for this time in the month.

A map on the Met Office website shows that our part of England received around 200% of the rainfall as a percentage of the 1991-2020 average.

**The UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology** reported soils across most of the UK remained saturated in March 2024.

But the rain did not stop there. We saw standing water over much of Pinner Village Gardens and very squelchy conditions until mid-May 2024.

When the ground is saturated by rain, and squelchy and standing water visible, grass cutting is simply not possible.

Long uncut grass in a parks like Pinner Village Gardens can result in many unseen hazards including:

- Uneven ground risking injury;
- Fox poo contaminating children, dogs and adults;
- Dog poo being harder for responsible owners to pick-up;
- Seeds in eyes and ears of children and dogs, resulting in medical treatment or vets' bills
- Increase in anti-social discarding of drink cans, glass bottles and glasses that may break on landing, or when chewed up by mowing machines increasing the risk of injury to people of all ages and animals.
- Fallen branches hidden by long grass damaging mowing machines.

## Sport in the park

### 100 not out - junior parkrun continues to run and run

Pinner Village Gardens *junior parkrun* had its 100th event in February 2024 which coincided with its second birthday celebration! The day was quite chilly but 103 children along with countless adults took part and demolished the abundant supply of cakes and treats.

This hugely popular weekly event continues to attract large numbers of children and their families making it a regular fun, social event so if your child is between 4 and 14, do come along at 9am each Sunday morning.

To date, well over 1,000 different children have taken part in our parkrun and we regularly have over 100 children run, walk, skip around the 2km course – twice round Pinner Village Gardens - on a Sunday morning along with 40 plus adults.

The event is only possible due to the commitment of the volunteer core team who plan and manage each parkrun and turn up each week whatever the weather - a huge thanks to them and the other volunteers who ensure the enjoyment and safety of the children.



The funds for the licence to have parkrun were raised by the Friends of Pinner Village Gardens.

What is also important is junior parkrun's continued support of the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme which has a number of children from many of our local senior schools regularly helping out at parkrun.

Everyone is looking forward to another year of junior parkrun.

## PAY-TO-PLAY TENNIS COURTS

The Friends of Pinner Village Gardens have and continue to keep Harrow informed of the state of the trees alongside the courts, of the fallen tree crushing new fencing in early January 2024, of blocked drains flooding the courts, while doing our best to keep the external gutter clear of fallen leaves in autumn and winter. However, the tennis courts and their playability are a matter for PremierTennis and London Borough of Harrow.

As a reminder to readers: Harrow Council decided to proceed with Pay-to-Play on its tennis courts in the borough following a public consultation. This was in response to a grant from the Lawn Tennis Association offering to bring all the courts up to a good standard on the condition that the Council would agree to maintain them. Harrow said it could only accept this offer if it charged for the courts use and brought in a booking system.



## Focus on Friends

### Resignation: Thank you to Jackie

Committee member Jackie Lindop has decided that other matters need more of her time and so is leaving the committee.

Jackie has been a committee member for eight years. Playing her part in committee decisions Jackie has always thoroughly researched the item under consideration be it how to improve woodland soil, local tennis court facilities or plants suitable for a small boundary hedge.

**Delighted**

FoPVG chair Dodie said: "We are delighted that Jackie will continue to manage and work on the North Green wildflower meadow that she has led from the start. Many people say how beautiful the meadow is. If you want to know about use of Yellow Rattle in developing wildflower meadows and buttercup seeds Jackie is the person to ask."



## Communications, Membership, and Finance

### Communications - facebook

Friends of Pinner Village Gardens has around 1,300 followers on **facebook**.

This number has steadily grown over the years.

We aim to continue to share news of the Friends achievements, highlights of coming events in the park, and seasonal pictures through facebook and the newsletters.

### Finance

**As at the end of FoPVG's financial year 2023/2024**

| <b>Income</b>                                            | <b>£</b>     | <b>Expenditure</b>                                    | <b>£</b>     |
|----------------------------------------------------------|--------------|-------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| Annual Membership subscriptions<br>(net of bank charges) | 982          | General expenditure on<br>plants, composts, tools etc | 3,284        |
| Life Membership<br>(net of bank charges)                 | 687          |                                                       |              |
| Memorial Trees                                           | 950          | Memorial trees                                        | 871          |
| Donations                                                | 2,282        |                                                       |              |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                                             | <b>4,901</b> | <b>TOTAL</b>                                          | <b>4,155</b> |
|                                                          |              | <b>Excess of Income over<br/>expenditure</b>          | <b>746</b>   |

#### Comments:

1. Accounts are prepared on a cash basis.
2. This year's excess of income matched almost exactly last year's shortfall of £758.
3. Funds held at 31 March 2024 amounted to £4,048 much of which is pre-committed to mulch, bulbs and plants.

We would love to hear from you on topics in the Annual Report or our newsletter.

Email us via the **Contact** page at [www.pinnervillagegardens.org.uk](http://www.pinnervillagegardens.org.uk) or email [friendsofpinnervillagegardens@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofpinnervillagegardens@gmail.com)

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

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[www.pinnervillagegardens.org.uk](http://www.pinnervillagegardens.org.uk)