

NO.65 SPRING 2012

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THE FRIENDS OF



PROTECTING & ENHANCING



BLAKERS PARK

OUR COMMUNITY GREEN SPACE



NEWSLETTER

Birds are singing and bees are buzzing because it's time for the

Spring Clean

Saturday 31st March 12 noon to 3pm

Come and celebrate the reawakening of the park by joining the big community clean up to get everything ship shape

This will be the third year in a row that children, families, friends and neighbours will have got stuck in to spring cleaning Blakers Park so that it is spick and span for the year ahead. Some come for 10 minutes, others can't stop once they've started. We spruce up the paths, clear all the rubbish and feel good working with others in the fresh air, making our green space sparkle as good as new.

Everyone is welcome. "It's wise to wear sensible boots or shoes and gloves," says Emma Keane, the ranger from the Council's CityParks which is supporting the event. "We'll bring as many tools as we can but we usually run out with so many volunteers so it would help if people are able to bring brooms or shovels. Youngsters will have to bring their own adults because we don't have any of those to spare in the Council depot."

Community groups from local churches, the tennis club and schools will be coming. Do come and help make Blakers Park shine.

The Committee of the Friends of Blakers Park includes Margaret Bell (Membership Secretary), Caroline Bottrell, Marion Clark, Marjorie Cozens, Sally Cranfield, Gerry Faulks (Treasurer), Dominique Giudicelli (Deputy Chair), Max Glaskin (Chair), Sam Hart, Keith McMurray, Graham Preston, Dario Saracini, Jane Skea and Marsali Stuart. Philip Smith is our Honorary Life President.

Max is at 77 Chester Terrace, phone 07981 490516

Dominique is at 10 Southdown Road, phone 07772 040 733

Email us all via friends@blakerspark.org.uk

This issue was edited by Max, cowering under the steely gaze of the Committee. Every time anyone contributes items to the newsletter he feels less alone in his dark cell where the only noise is his frantic tapping on the keyboard and the steady drip of water from his brow. At night the light through the barred window is broken by the silhouette of a squirrel, which brings him news from the park and nuts for sustenance. You can help relieve the squirrel's burden by submitting items, stories, bare-faced fiction, drawings, photos, comforting homilies and strident opinions so Max can be released before the end of his sentence.

Road Safety Campaign Update

The road safety campaign, launched by Cleveland Road residents last Spring, exceeded its target and was able to deliver a 1900 signature petition, triggering a debate by the full Council in October. The upshot was that the matter was referred to a committee for further consideration. Unfortunately, nobody kept campaign organiser Noelle O'Riordan-Booth informed of what was happening and there was some confusion when, in January, Council officers recommended that there should not be a pedestrian crossing at the Cleveland Rd/Stanford Avenue junction. It then emerged that this recommendation had been part of a city-wide consultation which was only considering requests that had been made to the Council before the submission of our petition. What's more, our petition was not asking for a pedestrian crossing; it was asking for all options to be considered for improving the safety of the roads around Blakers Park. So we still have valid hopes that the Council will follow the path it has promised and steps are taken to improve safety of all the roads around Blakers.

Community Lunch Club every Wednesday at 12.30pm.

Freshly cooked two course lunch plus a cup of tea £3.00

Christmas lunch and summer outing

Any elderly person living alone is welcome

For further details or to apply

please ring Anne 509084 or Marjorie 508275

Venue: Stanford Avenue Methodist Church

Corner of Southdown Avenue & Stanford Avenue

Dawn Chorus Guided Walk

Sunday 13th May

6 am

Cleveland Road entrance

Spot the early birds as they catch their worms and sing to their hearts content. Top bird photographer and travel writer Mike Unwin will lead us around the park, quietly, and tell us how to identify the different species by their plumage, flight, songs and calls.

BRILLIANT IDEAS – After every Community Picnic people come forward to tell us they have a really good idea about how to make the day even better. Well, now's the time to let us know your thoughts as we plan for the 2012 version to be held on Saturday 16th June. Get in touch with Sam on 07740 531250 or email her via samhart2@btinternet.com

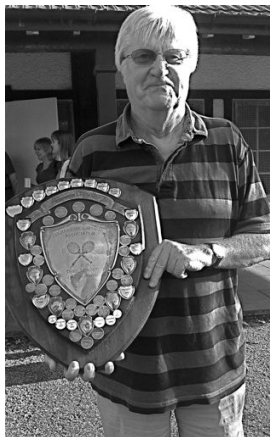
BLOOMING MARVELLOUS – Our pleas for volunteers to take responsibility for planting and maintaining the recently-cleared flower bed near the toilets were answered magnificently by Sue and Lydia. They have designed and planted the bed to attract bees – and so help to reverse the declining apian population. When they flower in the Spring, fans of Brighton & Hove Albion may also be pleased with the colour scheme.

AT THE OTHER end of the park, all around the old tree stump opposite the Preston Drove entrance, Martin Ashby and Mike Jones have planted another 100 crocuses (crocii?) to boost the dwindling numbers around the park. At the time of writing, some crocuses (crociae?) have been making colourful displays.

THE CLOCK TOWER flower bed was cleared in the autumn and CityParks provided compost. Now our regular volunteer gardeners Ed and Marion have planted a fine selection of grasses which will set off the park's Victorian centrepiece. Blakers is one of the few parks in the city which does not have a dedicated full time gardener so the Friends do what we can. If you would like to help, please contact our park ranger, Emma Keane, on 01273 292929.

THANKS TO: The BBC for showing interest in our Boxing Day Woollens Parade, The Mirror for publicising our hedge planting, Morgan Carn Partnership for lending us their meeting room, Wettons for cleaning the loos, Fiveways Directory for generously giving space to our news, Jenny Cooke for giving us an instant notice board, Philip Smith for his anti-graffiti work, Groundwork for providing yet more Community Games and Simon Bottrell at 7Creative for poster design.

Kodak may be in trouble but we are doing our best to keep them in business by taking photos of most events in the park with our trusty Instamatic. Of course, it takes a little while for us to finish a roll of film and get it back from the chemist, developed and printed, so that 's why some of these pictures come from events quite a few months ago. Better late than never. If anybody knows of a quicker way to do things, we'd love to hear from you.



Peter Travis, captain of Blakers second tennis team received the shield for winning Division 3 of Brighton & Hove Parks' league in 2011. The first team, unfortunately, has been relegated from Division 1 and the third team dropped to Division 4, where it will play alongside Blakers C, which enjoyed its debut season. The tennis club grew last year and is now at full capacity. League matches can be watched every Tuesday and Wednesday evening from mid-April. Practice sessions are on Saturday afternoons and Sunday mornings, whether needed or not.

The spirit moved visitors to come to Blakers Café's halloween event (*right*) from as far afield as Hastings. The

number of hits on the website soared as families checked the details of what has become one of the most child-friendly events in Brighton. Once again Sally Griffiths, Ian Lawes and others put on a frighteningly good show.



CityParks has a new website encouraging people to visit parks more often. Blakers was chosen as the venue to launch the new site and it gave the Friends (some of whom are pictured below) the opportunity to bend the ears of councillors and officers alike about what the community wants for our public open space.



The Woodland Trust donated 200 tree whips to Blakers Park so we could plant a new hedge on the road side of the copse at the top of Cleveland Road. Thanks to Sue, Bo, Sally, Marion and Pete for planting them. Zac, Gabriel and Ralph came forward to plant the special oak sapling which they can watch grow over the next 100 years.

Photo by Martin Burton



Terrific Trees went down a storm in Autumn half term, with children keen to answer the quiz, rub the bark and identify the leaves all around the park. Jane Skea and Sam Hart were kept busy checking answers and giving out prizes but that's not going to dissuade them from doing it again. Watch this space.



The Brighton Mummers and Brighton Brass Ensemble put on one of the park's best ever nocturnal events, just before Christmas. There was great story-telling around the flaming brazier, a rumbustuous play starring a wild set of characters including a forthright King George (*right*) and unrivalled musicianship to accompany the community carol singing. What more could you want? Roasted chestnuts? They had them, too. And hot chocolate. All thanks to Graeme, Keith, Kate and friends.



Tree Time

An update from Sally Cranfield on the park's most precious element
– and a chance for all to help protect the trees in our streets

It is good to see the half dozen new saplings in the park which have been put in by the Council during this planting season to replace most of those which were lost through lack of water and nutrients during 2011. It's hoped that the new arrivals will thrive, particularly since the Friends established a small working party at the end of the year to keep an eye on the trees and nurture them.

The working party started when we became concerned about the number of young trees which had grass growing right up to their trunks. The grass consumes the water and nutrients before it gets to the tree roots. So we have dug out the overgrown grass around some of the young trees which seemed to be suffering or even dying. Emma Keane, our park ranger, then provided us with mulch to help keep the bases of the trees free from grass and weeds. Sadly, it was too late for several of the trees because they were already parched and starved of nutrients. But at least now we have replacements and we hope to recruit more neighbours and Friends who will help to keep them growing healthily.

New trees have also now been planted in local streets (although we note that, regrettably, there are still several which were removed last year that have not yet been replaced). It would be good if at least one person from each street could keep an eye on the trees in their road and let us know if any are in need of attention. Then we can co-ordinate and help the Council's Arboriculturist Operations Manager to make sure we don't lose any more trees from the area.

If you would like to join the Friends' trees working party or put yourself forward as a trees street monitor, please contact Sally Cranfield on 01273 279 691 or email sally@massageforbabies.com

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Feel good about Blakers Park

Everybody likes Blakers Park. It's a gem. But it would be different if the Friends hadn't protected it from unwanted changes. Now the Friends keep an eye on it all, improve it and organise free events for everyone. So please join or renew your membership now – there are even two new categories, save households money and giving groups the chance to join. If you feel good about Blakers Park, join the Friends. Don't do it soon, do it now.

There are **two different** ways to show you care about Blakers. The **first** is the simple form you can fill in and give to us with cash or a cheque made out to "Friends of Blakers Park".

Name: _____

Address: _____

_____ Phone _____

Please write your email address below to receive news and events by email:

_____ @ _____

I enclose payment for the following (please circle):

One year's individual membership	£3.00
One year's membership students and unwaged	£1.50
Three year's membership	£9.00
Five year's membership	£15.00
One year's household membership	£5.00
One year's group membership	£30.00

The **second** way to join us is to complete this standing order mandate.

Standing Order Mandate

My bank: _____
Bank address: _____ Postcode: _____
My account no: _____
Sort code: _____
My name: _____
Signature: _____ Date: _____

Bank instruction: Please pay £3 beginning with immediate effect and on the same date each year to Friends of Blakers Park

Account no: 21262734; Sort Code 40-05-27; *HSBC 69 Pall Mall, London SW1 5EY*

This Standing Order Mandate supersedes all previous standing orders to Friends of Blakers Park

When you've filled in your name, address, phone & email details and completed **either** the membership payment panel (with payment) **or** the standing order mandate, please drop this in at either 77 Chester Terrace or 10 Southdown Road.

What's On?

This list is a mere snapshot so visit the What's On page of www.blakerspark.org.uk which is more up to date than tomorrow's tweets.

Saturday 31st March 12 pm to 3 pm

Spring Clean – see page 1

Sunday 1st April 10.30 am to 11.30 am

1st International Open Air Festival of Smalltalk – This year's topics: the weather, the price of veg, pets. Politicians banned.

Sunday 13th May 6 am

Dawn Chorus guided walk - Meet by the Cleveland Road entrance See page 3

Summer term half term Date and time to be confirmed

Terrific Trees - Activity for young people who want to know about the park's trees and win themselves some nice little prizes.

Saturday 16th June 11.30 am to 5 pm

Community Picnic and Summer Fair – more information and booking forms in next issue and at www.blakerspark.org.uk

Friday 20th June 5 pm to 8 pm

Community Games – celebrate the last day of term with those wild people from Groundwork and their ropes, hoops, sacks, spacehoppers etc

One Thursday evening in October Date and time to be confirmed

Annual General Meeting

Wednesday 31st October

Halloween – Blakers Café

Trick and treat, lanterns, pumpkin competition, face painting, dangling doughnuts, find the witch, spooky food, mummy contest, apple bobbing, scary dancing music.

Why did a helicopter land in the park? For the full story and video, and for more news from Blakers, visit www.blakerspark.org.uk and sign up for the email newsletter.



Photo by Dominique Giudicelli