



## Welcome to the Friends of Wickford Memorial Park Newsletter Spring 2021

We are a constituted group of volunteers working with Basildon Council Parks and Countryside Manager and the Park Manager to safeguard and improve the park.

### **Message from our Chair, Kim Oakes**

### **Park News**

- ❖ Friends' working parties have started to meet again. Depending on the weather we usually meet on Wednesdays and Saturdays at 09.30 and everyone is welcome to come along. You don't need to be a gardener or have knowledge of plants to join in so please look at the Events tab on our Facebook page for work party dates.



- ❖ In January the river Crouch was exceptionally high due to all the rain we had. It safely overflowed into the park but as a consequence the path and grass was very very muddy and the path may need some repair in places. Quite a lot of rubbish was left behind which needs to be collected up and disposed of.
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- ❖ Basildon Council Park staff will be preparing the soil in the wild flower garden and sowing wild flower seed. You may find the gates are locked but this will be temporary whilst the seed germinates. A few of the thousands of bluebells we planted last autumn are showing a few leaves so hopefully we will see some flowers in May. Dave Clarke, the husband of one of our committee members, has been busy making bug hotels. These will be placed in the wildflower area to provide homes for lots of insects to encourage them to stay and breed. Dave also made the bird boxes so we are very grateful to him. .
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- ❖ Basildon Council are now using What 3 Words to locate matters reported to them. What 3 Words is an app that can be downloaded onto your phone and it gives a combination of words unique to the location so makes tracking down the location of problems much easier. [what3words.com](http://what3words.com)
  - ❖ In February the group was told by Basildon Council that the insurers of the Highcliffe Community Centre in Rettenden View were insisting it was necessary to cut down 3 of the memorial trees in the Avenue of Rememberance as their roots are affecting the building. One of the Ash trees is diseased and another Willow is to be pollarded. After discussion with the Council it has been agreed that only the Ash will be felled and Willow pollarded. The Council will pay for the repairs and underpinning necessary to stop any further damage to the building by the trees and also to self insure the building against the usual hazards in the future. The group and the Wickford War Memorial Association are delighted with this outcome and are very grateful to Councillor David Harrison, Chair of the Neighbourhood and Public Spaces Committee and Council officers for arranging this solution. The Ash tree will be replaced with a Scots Pine which we are told will withstand the dry Essex weather and does not have a large root spread. A Scots Pine has been chosen because the serviceman who is commemorated by the tree was born in Scotland
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Work has now started on the new bridges over the ditches in Beauchamps Field to integrate it into the Memorial Park. There will be a new footpath, woodland, wetland ponds, nature reserve, wildflower meadow and a community orchard of fruit trees.

This is the current view of Beauchamps Field. When the work is finished it will be much easier to follow the public right of way along the river

- ❖ Last month 20 donated Oak whips were planted in the Silver Jubilee Wood. 200 more mixed species whips are being donated to the park by E Forests which we plan to plant on the 20<sup>th</sup> March. E Forests are a not for profit organisation run by volunteers to help combat climate change and to create and restore woodland
- ❖ Jack Green of Basildon Council Communications Department came to see a work party in action. Several of our group will be on YouTube and social media talking about the various projects we are currently involved in. Watch this space for details!!
- ❖ Over winter the Council park staff have been busy planting trees to replace those that didn't survive the lack of rain last summer. The group will be doing our best to water and care for them to ensure their survival as it's tough being a newly planted tree. 3 trees near the children's playground had to be replaced and also a memorial tree because they were vandalised last year. Clearly to see that a tree planted to remember a loved one has been pointlessly attacked and broken down is very distressing for the family concerned so hopefully the new trees will be left alone to grow and flourish.



At a recent meeting of Neighbourhoods and Public Spaces Committee Basildon Council agreed to allocate money for improvements to the signage and information boards in the park, at the Runwell Road Memorial entrance two vehicle passing points will be created and fencing added to protect the land. Footpaths and fences elsewhere in the park will also be repaired.

- ❖ Essex CC Locality Fund has recently given us a grant of £2000 which we have to spend before the 31<sup>st</sup> March this year. We are buying spring flowering shrubs, bulbs and plants. The aim is to create a spring colour for visitors to enjoy and to improve the diversity and habitat for early pollinators and insects.
- ❖ The changes to the boundaries and the loss of leaves over winter have revealed quite a haul of old rubbish including many, many plastic dog poo bags. I know the majority of dog walkers do the right thing but clearly a few do not. As a past dog walker I do understand it is not pleasant to walk about carrying used bags but it is important to keep our park clean so please do use the proper bins and remind others to pick up after their dogs and dispose of the bags in the proper bins.
- ❖ During the very cold weather a person was found to be rough sleeping in the park. If you are aware of a homeless person in the park or elsewhere who is in need of help please

contact StreetLink on their behalf. This is a not for profit organisation and does not find accommodation but will inform the relevant outreach people that there is someone needing their help. StreetLink ([streetlink.org.uk](http://streetlink.org.uk)) can be contacted by phone and email. Fortunately on this occasion various local people stepped up to help the person in the park.

### **Volunteering in the Park**

Graham Bradley is a member of our group and recently posted that thanks to the volunteering scheme his company Ciena take part in he has recently been able to donate £150 to Essex Wildlife Hospital and £150 to Takiwatanga. Graham says that the 17 hours of volunteering he has done in the park has converted to £320.78 which he can donate to local charities. The park group is not a registered charity so we can't benefit but we are more than happy to play a small part in raising money for other charities in the area. For those of you who are interested in this scheme

Graham has written the following :

I have been very lucky to work 17hrs down at the park throughout 2020 and have loved every minute of the time helping to improve the gardens, plant trees and paint the railings to make it more welcoming for the community. Being someone that has worked from home throughout the whole pandemic it also has really helped my mental health and wellbeing as it allows me to escape from work, the home and be outdoors. Our company have run a 'Wellbeing Wednesday' during the pandemic which has allowed people to use work time to get involved with the voluntary events, if it possible based around work demands, and then people have caught up on that work time at other times of the day.

I am sure others living in Wickford will have similar schemes with companies they work for and if they want to get involved with the Memorial Park group or any other charity then what better way to volunteer and give back.

### **Recent Events and Continuing projects**



#### **Crazy Golf**

We have restarted renovating the crazy golf but it has become clear that we need to go about things in a different way because the paint has started to flake off of the tyres. So we are giving them a good brush and sealing the surface before painting with a different type of paint. The holes are being refreshed with green paint and white edges. There are now 2 reclaimed benches and many thanks go to Derek and Janet Dunn and other volunteers for the time and effort they spent tidying the benches up. If anyone wants to give a hand painting please come along and join in a work party

### **The Home Front Garden**

The snow and heavy rain have taken a toll on the new plants in the Home Front Garden but the snowdrops, Crocuses and Tete a Tete daffodils are coming up. We had a working party to do some maintenance and weeding but will be leaving it alone for a few weeks to ensure

that plants not yet visible are not damaged. We will be adding to the planting in the coming weeks, particularly in the back border.



## New Projects

Please check on our Facebook and web page pages for further information about future events



### Screening the Council Compound

The Park manager has offered to put up a metal mesh on the fence so we can train various climbers up the fence to create a barrier and more pleasant aspect.



### The Spring Walk

Our big project this year is planting up and maintaining a Spring flowering walk behind the bungalows in Whist and Beauchamps Drive. More details to follow when we know them but the work should be completed by the autumn so the results can be seen Spring 2022.

So far our plans for 2021 include :

- ♣ Planting more whips (rooted cuttings) in the Silver Jubilee Wood
- ♣ Plant more Spring bulbs in various areas of the park
- ♣ Maintain the entrances to the park to keep them tidy and weed free.
- ♣ Discuss ideas for new projects with the Park staff and put together a plan for the future. One of the suggested areas for improvement is the Heroes Arboretum near the Runwell Road entrance
- ♣ Look at ways we can improve the environment in the park for the birds, bats, insects and wildlife generally
- ♣ Work with the Council staff to merge and develop Beauchamps field as part of

the park.

### **Thanks go to**

Basildon Borough Council Park staff for their enthusiastic support, all the volunteers who have given their time and worked so hard on our various projects and anyone who has donated time, money and equipment. Thanks also go to those who have posted photos of the park, some of which may have been used in this newsletter.

### **The mission of the Friends of Wickford Memorial Park is to:**

- enhance and protect the Memorial Park
- ensure that all visitors have a pleasant experience
- promote community spirit in Wickford
- encourage good health and wellbeing for the volunteers.
- ensure the park is open and accessible to all.

We have a small committee and we have lots of ideas for projects and we hope eventually to hold events for the public in the park. The committee are looking at ways to finance future ideas and we will be looking at applying for grants and support from local organisations. Please let us know if you can point us in the direction of grants and funding.

Email: [friendsofwickfordmemorialpark@hotmail.com](mailto:friendsofwickfordmemorialpark@hotmail.com).



:Friends of the Wickford Memorial Park

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

If you have any comments on the contents of this newsletter please email us or post on our Facebook page

Newsletter compiled by Marian Scott.