

**Message from our Chairman**

Well, what an amazing few weeks we have had! Not only has the gym equipment been installed this week, but with a deadline to meet by the end of May, Neil Bruce our sculptor finished our fantastic Wizard and Dragon bang on time, and our lovely new Information Centre was also ready for the official opening.

Our thanks must go, first of all to Neil, who has done an inspired and amazing job! Thanks also to all of our team for their hard work in completing the dragon base and preparing for the event. Charles Novis and Peter Hardiman together put in about 150 hours of work on refurbishing the hut, whilst Rosie spent many hours creating the display posters and editing the storybook.

We hope that you will enjoy the statues, use the Centre to find out more about our park, and enjoy keeping fit!

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**Information Centre**

From the start, we had always hoped to use the small hut as our information centre. Now, thanks to the help of



the Parks Manager and the grant from Essex Community Initiatives

Fund and Billericay Town Council, we have been able to see our dreams come true! (see p2) Cllr John Aldridge, Vice-chairman Essex County Council was given a guided tour by Chairman Jonny Garlick and Charles Novis, and he was impressed by all the work we have done in the park.

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In a message to us following the event, Cllr Aldridge said *“Clearly a great deal of effort has gone into the Wizard and Dragon project. Again it is another labour of love that will prove a major attraction for children over years to come. That so many people turned out on such a dreary morning is testament to the hard work put into the Park in general and this project in particular. I felt really privileged to be part of its unveiling. Thank you.”*

**Wizard and Dragon**



Sculptor Neil Bruce helps Cllr John Aldridge to unveil the Dragon on a very wet Saturday morning on May 23<sup>rd</sup>.

Then as the rain began to ease it was Wizard’s turn to be formally unveiled, along with the plaque on his purple robes. Luckily the baby dragons peeping out from his sleeve and from one of his orange slippers did not seem to worry about a few drops of rain!

We were joined by around thirty guests, all of whom have helped the Friends in some way during the past two years or so, since we first started our work at the park. A large group of local residents watched from under brollies and everyone agreed what a wonderful job Neil has done! We can all enjoy and feel proud of our very special statues!



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## Help needed!

It is hoped the new Information Centre will be open for short periods of time at weekends and during the week, but this all depends on the number of volunteers we can find to man it. We already have several people offering to join us, but we do need more.

Since the opening, we have been at the Centre on several days and have found people really interested in the park history and other information that is displayed.

**So come on everyone!** If you enjoy talking to people and love the park, please could you offer to man the centre occasionally? You don't need to be superman or superwoman! We will help by providing some basic guidance before you start. Please ring **07843 860 135**, call in at the centre when you see it open, or email [secretary@lakemeadows.org.uk](mailto:secretary@lakemeadows.org.uk) if you would like to know more.

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*Local residents have a vested interest in keeping their parks pristine and have also become increasingly active. There are now*

*5,000 local Friends of Parks Groups, which work with local authorities successfully in the UK.*

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## Outdoor gym equipment



The new gym equipment has just been installed this week near the swimming pool and chairman Jonny was one of the very first to check it out this week!

The official handover is on Thursday June 11<sup>th</sup> at 12 noon. A plaque will be installed to inform everyone that we commissioned it and the project was funded by Basildon Borough Council Investment Fund.

We hope that everyone finds it helps them to get fitter and that you will enjoy coming to the park to use it. Many people have commented already on how great it is. Yet another of our projects to be completed this month!

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## Garden of the Child

Following very wet conditions in the area last winter, due to broken drains, plans are now in progress to refurbish the garden around the statue of The Child in the Park. A design is currently being made and once funding is achieved, we hope that work will start in the autumn. With new paths to be laid and shrubs and perennials planted to enhance those already established, it is hoped that it can return to being a quiet garden where one can sit and enjoy the view down the lake.

## Storybook

Last September, we held two story sessions with children helping to create a story about the Wizard and Dragon.

Now, thanks to Emily Jones, a local writer of children's stories, who grew up and went to school in Billericay, we have our very own storybook.

Illustrated with photographs and pictures by Peter Mills, the story - 'Wizard, Dragon and her lost eggs' - is suitable for around 5 to 7 year olds and costs just £3. Copies can be obtained from our Information Centre, and Dragon Popcorn is also available!

You may not be aware that there are several large blue dragon's eggs, as well as the Wizard's yellow umbrella, hidden in various places around the park. They are there for children to find - please keep them a secret!

*P.S. Did you hear about our vice-chairman who had to ring the police one night to report the theft of a large blue, dragon's egg? It's true! Honestly! (It was returned!)*

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*Picture any city in the world, and it is likely to conjure up an image of a park. Central Park elicits indelible visions of Manhattan. Paris makes the Bois de Boulogne spring to mind. Barcelona has Gaudi's Güell Park. Birkenhead Park has one of the UK's first publicly funded civic park in 1847. And Billericay has its own beautiful park here at Lake Meadows!*

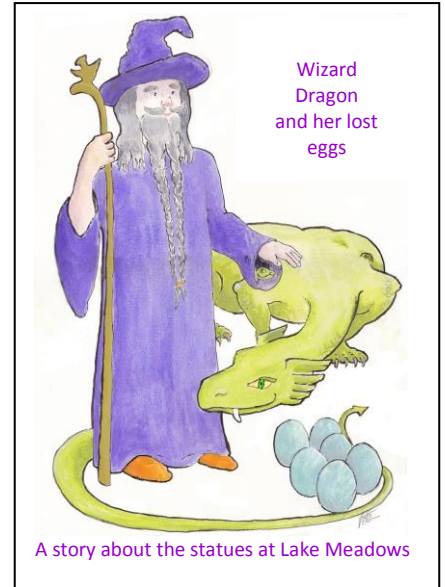
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## Flower Meadow

The area, around the Log Creature, which was such a success as the flower meadow last year, has been reseeded and the flowers should be appearing very shortly, under the watchful eye of the scarecrows. Sadly the scarecrows were vandalised some time ago, but our chairman and some helpers soon had them back on their 'feet', hopefully keeping the geese off the area.



We hope that the flowers will be just as colourful as last year and will provide everyone with enjoyment!



## Woodland Walk



In the past couple of months great improvements have been made to the small area of ancient woodland behind the tennis courts and pétanque terrain. A path of granite chippings now takes you on a circular walk around this area and is also suitable for wheelchairs. Thanks to the initiative of the new manager for Basildon Parks this project was funded by the generosity of Veolia North Thames Trust. It is hoped that an information board will also soon be in place.

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## Sensory garden

Thanks to Rob, our Park supervisor, the slabs around the sensory garden now look great! Many people, especially those in



wheelchairs have been enjoying the garden, especially the curry plants! Additional plants will be added in time, to make the garden more interesting. If anyone has any spare plants in their gardens that they could pass on to us, we would be delighted! Or better still come and help us do some gardening – now every Tuesday morning from 9.30am weather permitting. Ring **07843 860 135**

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## Fences

Nearby, you may have noticed the new fence around the compound, which tidies up that corner of the park and makes it more attractive, so that soil, cuttings and general garden rubbish from the park can be better managed.

Between the compound and the Lake Avenue entrance gate to the park, there have also been some changes. The boundary between the neighbouring garden and the park needed re-defining and the old laurel hedge had become untidy. A new fence and hedge are to be installed soon.

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## Rhododendron Walk

Whilst talking of fenced areas, the new rhododendrons, which have replaced an area of rather poor, mixed shrubs, have already started to bloom and give a taste of the pleasure that they will bring once fully established in a few years' time. Planned, and funded by Billericay Town Council, in partnership with Parks and with advice from the RHS at Hyde Hall, the varieties should provide a range of colours for everyone to enjoy. The fence, whilst rather on the large size, has been installed to keep dogs and youngsters out of the area until the plants are established.

## Peace Tree

We are looking forward to installing a circular bench soon around the Peace Tree planted in conjunction with the Billericay Mayflower Rotary Club. The olive tree which they purchased last autumn is doing well and the seat will help to promote and highlight their international Peace Fellowship, whilst allowing park users to remember those who died in the Great War.

We shall be laying crazy paving around the tree in coming weeks during our working party sessions. Why not come and give us a hand? Saturdays June 20<sup>th</sup> and July 18<sup>th</sup>.

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## In memory of Reg King



For many, many years Reg King was the resident park keeper at Lake Meadows, caring for it with his team of assistants.

Sadly we have learnt recently that Reg passed away at the nursing home, where two of us visited him last year.

We shall be considering a way of remembering him and all that he did for the park.

His pride and joy was the raised bed, which he designed and planted each year and he also planted many of the trees in the park too.

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## Tree walk

We are pleased to announce that our tree walk is now open. There are almost 40 specimens of different trees labelled in the park. Each tree is linked to a map and list. Both of these are available at our Information Centre or online on our website. Further information about each of the trees can also be viewed at the Centre or online soon.

A few small, new trees are not yet labelled and the magnolia is situated opposite the sensory beds, near the top of the shrubbery walk, not in the small triangle.

## Children's tree walk sheet

There is also a special sheet for children to help them find 10 different trees, identify the leaves and write the tree names. The sheet is linked to the main tree walk map, so you can help them find the specimens!

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*Victoria Park is the oldest public park in London. After the cholera breakout of the 1830's, over 30,000 local residents petitioned for an open space where they could have picnics and enjoy the outdoors. Today, it is still a breath of fresh air in the midst of the traffic in Hackney and Bethnal Green, and hosts a wide range of festivals and events over summer.*

## Children's Corner



Q. How can you calm down an angry dragon breathing smoke and fire?  
 A. Throw water at him and he will let off steam.


Q. Why are dragons good storytellers?  
 A. They all have tails.

Q. Why do dragons hate birthdays? A. They can't blow out their candles.

Q. What is a wizard's favourite lesson at school?  
 A. Spelling.

We hope that you love the friendly Dragon and Wizard in the park. Did you know, the story is on sale at the Information Centre, along with Dragon Popcorn! There is also a worksheet to help you find 10 of the named trees in the park – see if you can find them all.

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 *Royal Parks and Victorian parks share similar characteristics. These add up to what people tend to think of as the quintessentially British park - well laid out flower beds, sports facilities, grassed areas, picnic tables, woodland, play areas, a lake and some great statues. Oh, and a bandstand!*

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## Jazz in the Park

Talking of music ... this year's Jazz in the Park will be on Saturday July 18<sup>th</sup> from 4.30pm until 7pm. Bring a picnic and enjoy a pleasant evening by the lake. We hope to see you there! No tickets needed ... just come along!

Our regular players – the Daisy Bowlers will be performing, followed by Nimrod Margalit and his band, as well as some individual local singers and players.



If you play an instrument and would like to join in with the band, please let us know beforehand or just come along! Ring us on **07843 860 135**



We are very grateful to **Billericay District Residents' Association** for sponsoring the event this year.

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## Vandalism

We don't often get vandals at the park, but a number of incidents having sadly occurred recently. If you spot any suspicious behaviour at all, **please ring 101** and let the police know immediately. **Call 999 for real emergencies.**

## Photograph Competition

**Come on everyone!** Get those cameras and phones working by taking some photos of the park at its best! This is a great way to win £75 and only takes a minute or two to enter. Please see the rules and entry form on our website or ring **07843 860 135** and ask for details. Closing date - midnight on June 30<sup>th</sup>.



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## Membership

The committee is following up those of you whose membership has expired recently and hope that everyone will renew for at least another year! Having a strong membership helps us when we are applying for funds for different projects.

So if you are already a member, whether you actively help us or not, can we challenge you to find one or two friends or neighbours to take out membership us. It only costs £5 per household per year or we have a special offer of £20 for 5 years. This offer will not last forever, so tell everyone to hurry up and sign up now for a bargain!

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## Tennis coaching



With the Summer upon us and Wimbledon approaching it's a great time to take up the sport or to improve your game.

The tennis courts at the park are available for hire throughout the year at a reasonable charge - payment at the café or ticket office

by the bowls pavilion.

Jack Woollcott is available for private tennis coaching. 10% Discount to Friends of Lake Meadows members!

Please contact him direct on: 07833 438145 or email [kate@jwtennisacademy.com](mailto:kate@jwtennisacademy.com)



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## And finally a Special Message

*"I thought I must write to you to thank you for giving me the opportunity to visit Lake Meadows last Saturday. I had no idea that, right in the middle of urban Billericay, there was such a wonderful park that was cared for by the community (The Friends) and enjoyed by so many people who live in the area. By any estimate this is a rarity and the personal involvement of the Friends shows in the distinctive ambience of the place and that it looks really cared for."*

**Cllr John Aldridge Essex County Council Vice-Chairman**

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