

Chairman's Message

Welcome to the many new members who have joined recently. We are delighted that you have joined and hope that you enjoy our newsletters and that we shall see you at some events in the park this year! We are having a busy year, with several projects already completed, including the baby changing unit, the mushrooms and the planting in the Garden of the Child. We are hoping to find funding for the water station, but we will probably have to wait until later in the year for this.

Magic mushrooms

Amazing mushrooms appeared early one Saturday morning, before Easter, in the Garden of the Child.

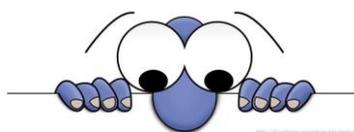


Thanks to the final phase of the Co-op funding, we were able to buy these well-made items to enhance the visitor experience of our younger visitors.

Despite them being securely fixed with concrete, sadly, a few weeks later, some idiots decided to pull them up and throw them in the lake. They were duly fished out by our wonderful Parks' team and they have dried out before being re-oiled. The news was quickly put on Facebook and a kind businessman has offered to reinstall them for us soon.

Through Your Eyes

Remember to send us a quick email or phone call if you see anything new of interest in the park, especially flowers, unusual birds, butterflies or insects. (Or vandals!)



"In a cowslip's bell I lie"



Walking through the park one April morning, we happened to peep through the railings around the boathouse. An amazing sight met our eyes – groups of large yellow cowslips in full bloom!

The cowslip, a cousin of the primrose, used to be a common plant on hay meadows, ancient woodlands and hedges. A serious decline in its populations due to the loss of these habitats has occurred in the past few decades. They are now a rare sight and need protecting. We are indeed very lucky to have them!

Cowslips are closely associated with English folklore and tradition; they used to be strewn on church paths for weddings and adorned garlands for May Day. Cowslip allegedly means cowpat! Our ancestors noted that they tended to flower where a cow had 'slumped'. Other names for cowslips include Freckled face, Golden drops, Bunch of keys, Fairies' flower, Lady's fingers, Long legs and Milk Maidens.

Keep an eye open for ox-eye daisies in the same area, which will be out in early June.

Springtime in England!

So many visitors have said how wonderful the park is looking this Spring. The early Spring flowers were a picture and now the rhododendrons are in full bloom. The trees are such vibrant colours and even the marigolds, in the sensory beds, are amazing! We are very lucky to have this precious jewel to visit!

Vandals

Fortunately, we have very little vandalism in the park, compared with other parks in the borough. However, a group of teenagers have been congregating in the evenings recently, smoking weed and generally causing concern to park users and staff alike. Fires have been lit, a tree broken and now the mushrooms have been criminally ripped out. The latest victim may have been the dragon, whose face has been broken. If you see or hear anything, please do not approach them, but do take photos of any evidence and send it with any information to us.

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FoLM Events

Jazz in the Park – Saturday July 6th 4pm
Nimrod and his band, with some of his students, will start the afternoon off. Then we have a lovely young singer Evangeline Brown followed by a new band this year 'Heads Up!'. It's a free event, just bring a picnic! Everyone welcome.

Name that Tree! A walk to identify the trees in the park: Wednesday June 26th 7.30pm. **Booking essential.**

Let's go Batty! – Our popular bat evening. Tuesday August 20th 7.30pm. **Booking essential.**

Who dug the Lake? – Talk on the history of the park. Wednesday September 4th 7.30pm **Booking essential.**

Book on-line or ring Rosie on **07843 860 135** to book a place for these small events.

AGM & Speaker September 26th 7.45pm at Christ Church, Perry Street, with talk about bees. Free event. Everyone welcome!

Carols in the Park – December 14th 4pm Free event. All welcome!

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Government announces £9.7 million for local authorities to improve their parks and green spaces. The announcement builds on action the government has already taken to encourage more people to make better use of parks. The government will continue to work with the Parks Action Group, which represents leaders from across the parks sector, to help ensure that current and future generations can continue to access safe, high quality, local parks.

The Communities Secretary said, "Our parks and green spaces are huge assets to our towns and cities, offering precious spaces for all of us to get together, to exercise and to play."

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The Flower Meadow has been reseeded and we look forward to a wonderful display this year!

Fred and Ginger



The winning names for our great crested grebes were recently drawn out of a hat. 'Fred & Ginger'. have been seen 'dancing' across the lake, closely followed by two young strictly chicks.

There are several Canada Geese families and a few coots, but no sign of any ducks this year! Do look out for them and send us any photos you get.

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Children's Corner



Q. What happened when the owl lost her voice?

A. She didn't care a hoot.

Q. Why did the scientist put a knocker on his door?

A. He wanted to win a Nobel prize.

Q. Why don't crabs share their sweets?

A. They are shellfish.

Q. How does the man in the moon cut his hair?

A. Eclipse it.

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Photography Competition 2019

This is your chance to win £100! Take any photos of the park and enter them in our competition – closing date October 31st. Adult & Junior sections. Rules and Entry form on our website.

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Park Survey 2018

Basildon Council Managers were impressed by the results of our survey last summer and were keen to share the positive outcomes with staff and agreed to suggestions that were made. It is hoped that the excellent partnership that has developed between the Council and the Friends will feature in the Borough newsletter later this year.

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Garden of the Child

This Spring, our gardeners developed the top corner of the Garden, an area that had needed improving for some time. The Parks staff rotovated it and our gardeners planted over £300 of plants including grasses, heleniums, verbena bonariensis, geraniums and some shrubs. A new FoLM member also donated shrubs for the area and hopes to encourage her grandsons to take a pride in the community.

Great Lake Race



The 6th Annual Great Lake Race took place on May 5th with 39 homemade boats taking part. Conditions for the race were cold with a slight breeze.



Here are the winners with their boat. Well done girls!

Thanks to all the helpers who gave up a Sunday afternoon to make the event such a success!

“Amazing family day. Thank you everyone for making it all possible!”
Urszula

Mayflower 2020

Next year is the four-hundredth anniversary of the sailing of the Mayflower to America. Many of you will know that four of the original Pilgrims came from Billericay. So, the town is celebrating the occasion by planning a number of events.



The Trustees decided last year that they would like to donate an oak tree, on behalf of the Friends, to commemorate the occasion. The raised bed in the gardens area will have a similar focus and next year's Jazz in the Park on July 4th will have an American theme. We shall keep you informed as our plans for the year develop.

Our volunteers ... continuing our series, we hear from 'An Information Hut Helper'.

“I have been helping to man the hut for several years now, with a friend. I wanted to help FoLM and enjoy talking to people, so this was something I felt I could do. We get there about 10am and, set up the table outside, collect a coffee from the café and sit back and wait for customers. We have various things for sale, as well as lots of interesting information, about the park, on the hut walls. Some people happily come and talk to us, others avoid us like the plague!

We are often asked questions about the park and I feel we do a really good job in promoting the work of the Friends. Our aim is to encourage people to become members. We have managed to get quite a few people to join up over the years, and some go on to help the Friends themselves.

Sometimes I may not feel like going to the park for my weekly duty, but I always return having enjoyed myself and feel uplifted from meeting some lovely people. I can recommend the role to you!” Anon

Information Hut

The Hut is usually open on Monday, Wednesday & Friday mornings, as well as some Tuesdays and Saturdays. If you would like to join our group of helpers and can spare an hour or so, each week or two, you will be very welcome to join our regular, friendly team. We need help on Thursdays and some other sessions. Do contact us soon if you can help!

Danish research has found benefits of access to green spaces. Children who grow up surrounded by green space are less likely to develop a mental health condition in adulthood, according to a new study. Danish researchers found children who grew up with greener surroundings were up to 55 percent less likely to develop a mental disorder later in life. It was found that more green space in the local area creates greater social cohesion and increases people's physical activity levels. This can improve children's cognitive development and impact upon their mental health.

And finally ...

There is lots of cow parsley in the park at the moment. Often called Queen Anne's lace, as it looked like the lace on the cushions her maids carried, as she enjoyed the country air. It was used in traditional medicines for stomach and kidney problems, breathing difficulties and colds.



Copies of this newsletter for our postal members have been printed by the Co-op Funeralcare Billericay, whom we should like to thank for their generosity and continued support.