

Chairman's Message

What a year it has been! I hope that you have all managed to stay safe and keep well. Looking on the positive side, many, many people have benefitted from using the park during the coronavirus pandemic. For some it has been a real lifeline, with many families picnicking and playing ball games together, as well as older people chatting with friends at a distance.

Although we have been restricted in what we could achieve this summer, we have not been totally idle! Two new information boards have been designed, and ordered, a further survey of wild flowers undertaken, meetings with another local Friends' Group arranged and an audit of the health benefits of the park undertaken - see more about the latter on page 3.

Our activities are gradually resuming, especially our gardening group and we have been pleased to welcome a number of new volunteers. Although our events have been curtailed this year, we hope that gradually things will return to normal.

I should like to thank the committee members and all the volunteers for their help during the past year.

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AGM Cancelled

Unfortunately due to coronavirus, the trustees have decided to cancel the AGM in September. All members have been notified.

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The Information Centre

We hope to be able to open the hut occasionally over the next few months. Our ladies will be pleased to answer any questions you may have or to sell you a History of the Park booklet or a story book about the Wizard and Dragon!



Lockdown Silver Lining for our Gardeners



Basildon Council paid tribute to the Friends of Lake Meadows in June, when our gardeners spent a massive 206 hours that month reclaiming the gardens from weeds, after missing ten weeks due to lockdown.

Pictured here in their new polo shirts, purchased with a grant from the council, our team have really worked hard to bring the gardens back into shape.

Rob Baker, the parks manager, recently wrote: "Covid-19 has been an extremely challenging time but it has reinforced the fact that we need to keep investing in our parks and even more so where we have the ability to engage and encourage volunteers. It has brought confidence that we can invest in projects that can be supported by our friends' groups and this is being reflected in other parks within the borough".

He thanked us all for our time and dedication in working with the council to provide a park of which we can all truly be proud.

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Good News

In June, our resident Great Crested Grebes produced their second brood of chicks and were seen feeding them fish. Well done Fred & Ginger!

Children's Corner

Q. What's black, yellow & covered in blackberries? **A.** A bramble bee!

Q. What did one blackberry say to the other one?

A. If you weren't so sweet, we wouldn't be in this jam!

Q. What do you call blackberries playing the guitar?

A. A jam session.

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Roundabout

A new roundabout, suitable for all children, including those in wheelchairs, has been installed by Parks in the children's playground and seems to be popular with the many who use it. Safety surfaces were renewed earlier in the year.

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The Water Fountain

After being stolen in May, the water fountain in the lake was replaced in June at a cost of over £8,000. It is good to see one working again to help keep the water aerated and fresh for the wildlife. Please alert us or the police should you see any further 'work' being carried out on it!

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Photography Competition 2020



With prizes of up to £100, now is the time to get those cameras clicking, so that you can send your entries in by October 31st. A photo of anything in the park, that you feel makes a good picture, can be entered and up to four photos per person are allowed. Entry is free! And there are good cash prizes for both adult and junior winners! Why not have a go?

Details are on our website, or if you are not able to go online, you can ring us and we will send you the entry form and rules.

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Wildflowers

Members of our small ecology team followed up last year's wildflower survey by spending further time in the park this summer checking for any additional flowers. Eighty-five different flowers have now been identified, including a few unusual ones. For a relatively small area of parkland, this is quite an amazing number.

We have developed a database, which includes all the trees, shrubs, wild and garden flowers, birds, bats, insects, and other creatures in the park.

Brambles or Blackberries



There are plenty of brambles in the park and over 330 species in the UK.

Picking brambles has long been a popular pastime for many children. The bushes are supposed to belong to the faerie folk and the first berries of the season must be left for them. If you do not, then any following fruit will be rotten and full of maggots.

According to folklore, blackberries should not be picked after Michaelmas Day - September 29th. When the devil was cast out of heaven by St Michael, he landed in a bramble bush and cursed it, spitting on the blackberries & causing them to become bitter and unpalatable.

Brambles were once widely used in traditional medicine for their healing and detoxifying properties. They were recommended for the treatment of burns, piles, skin ulcers and eczema, sore throats, diarrhoea, itchy scalps, rickets, whooping cough, hernias and rheumatism, as well as making a natural mouth wash.

Bramble flowers are an excellent food source for honey & bumble bees, as well as attracting nectar-feeding butterflies and hoverflies. The leaves are eaten by certain caterpillars and some grazing mammals, especially deer. Foxes, badgers and small birds eat ripe berries and disperse the seeds. Grass snakes also use brambles as a habitat.

Water Station

What a shame that the water station could not have been installed for this summer, especially as it has been such a hot one! Hopefully, it hope that it will be installed, as planned, next Spring, once we are all over coronavirus.

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Health for Parks Survey

FoLM is a member of the National Federation of Parks & Open Spaces, who recently passed on an offer from Tisdall Associates for a free Health audit of the park with the aim of identifying aspects that could improve the health of the community. The audit was not in any way a critical assessment, rather a positive thought-provoking process. After completing a questionnaire, we received a report, which has some clear pointers about what could be done by both the council and ourselves to develop certain things, such as providing clear information on health opportunities.

In order to improve people's health and well-being, health services nationally and locally are encouraging GPs and other practitioners to sign-post activities to optimise the use of parks for their patients. So, for example, if GPs know about the park and its health opportunities of running, walking or using the outdoor gym, or becoming involved with the Friends, they will be able to sign-post this.

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The Toilets

The toilets at the park are now fully open, with Covid regulations and are regularly cleaned three or four times a day by a dedicated specialist cleaner. Normally they are open until about 5pm each day in summer.

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Pollinator Action Plan 2019 – 2022

Last Autumn, Basildon Borough produced an action plan, which highlights how they plan to manage their parks and open spaces ecologically.

The plan aims to raise awareness of pollinators and to conserve and encourage them, by improving habitats and planting regimes and increasing biodiversity.

By working in partnership with organisations such as ours, the aim is to gather information about the park and provide advice for local residents. We already work closely with the Parks' team and have been the first park in the area to survey local wildlife and to install information boards, another two of which are currently on order and which, we hope, will be installed in the conservation area and the gardens before the autumn.

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Car parking

Basildon Council have agreed not to charge for car parking in the town, including at the park, right through until Christmas. Whilst this is good news for park users in many ways, it does lay it open to abuse from other people who come and park unnecessarily. The car parking wardens are visiting regularly and will issue fines for those abusing the car parking or who park in disabled spaces without a blue badge.

Electric charging points

Recently some large metal boxes have been installed at the top of the car park bank on the swimming pool side. They will be charging points for electric cars.

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Lake Meadows Flowers Wordsearch

H	S	M	L	E	S	D	N	U	O	R	G
E	O	L	M	L	K	C	O	D	R	U	B
R	R	C	L	M	U	L	K	H	T	O	M
B	R	A	M	B	L	E	N	L	M	L	W
R	E	T	E	M	L	D	A	I	S	Y	O
O	L	S	D	L	C	L	P	M	L	M	L
B	M	E	I	R	A	G	W	O	R	T	L
E	L	A	C	M	P	M	E	L	M	L	A
R	M	R	K	L	D	E	E	W	Y	A	M
T	H	I	S	T	L	E	D	O	C	K	L

Bindweed	Herb Robert	Ragwort
Bramble	Knapweed	Skullcap
Burdock	Mallow	Sorrel
Cat's ear	Mayweed	Thistle
Daisy	<u>Medik</u>	<u>Willowherb</u>
Groundsel		

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Litter

We should like to thank the Rotary Clubs for the litter picks that they have carried out at the park. Their help, along with several individual park users who also regularly pick up litter, is much appreciated. We are fortunate in that, generally, there is not much litter, but we hope that everyone takes their litter home, especially after their picnics. The Council now have a team of litter wardens who are able to give on-the-spot fines to anyone seen leaving litter.

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And finally ...

Keep safe! Keep smiling! It makes all the difference if we smile with our eyes!



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Due to the Coronavirus, copies of this edition of our newsletter for our postal members have been printed by the chairman on his computer.