

FRIENDS OF YEADING WALK SPRING NEWSLETTER 2024

'YEADING BROOK UNBOUND', update from Steve Whitbread, Project Manager

What is all the sudden, recent activity in Yeading Walk? Park visitors have watched amazed as large swathes of invasive Cherry Laurel was chopped back along the river bank, self-seeded non-native sycamores pruned to ground level and the bamboo growing into the stream reduced.

'Yeading Brook Unbound' is proceeding at full steam ahead.



Cherry Laurel cut back allowing more light to reach the stream, near Rayners Lane

This major new nature recovery project, with c £360,000 funding to date, and supported by the Rewild London Fund, the Environment Agency and the Crane Valley Catchment Partnership, was awarded to the London Borough of Harrow and will focus on a c 3.5 km of the river from Headstone Manor to Roxbourne Park, and adjoining allotments/open spaces. The project seeks to re-naturalise the western arm of Yeading Brook by 'daylighting' the stream and grading (sloping) the riverbanks. The project will also create wildlife habitats along the banks and support biodiverse planting in the parks. Working with existing Friends groups, Project Manager, Steve Whitbread, will be co-ordinating contractors and supporting local volunteers to deliver this ambitious project over the next few years.

There will be changes in the park and some visitors may be concerned. However, the project creates significant rewilding opportunities for native species, may reduce flooding risk and will tackle invasive plants - like Japanese knotweed. Increasing light benefits the health of the stream encouraging growth of aquatic vegetation, which strengthens the food chain - providing food for insects, birds and bats. We are excited about the current and future benefits the project will bring to Yeading Walk and sister parks.

More Questions? Don't miss the Project 'Walk & Talk' with Steve Whitbread next Wednesday 6 March. Meet at 11 am at Yeading Walk's main wooden bridge. All welcome!

You may also like to read Steve's full commentary on the project background, bat survey for the sycamores and future developments for Yeading Walk on the Friends website at friendsofyeadingwalk.co.uk

Harrow Green Grid funding & Crane Valley Partnership (CVP) awards

Sensible folk keep warm indoors during chilly autumn days, but enthusiastic Friends and corporate volunteers were on their knees in the rain, planting spring bulbs and plugs of native wildflowers to brighten the park in springtime. A swathe of daffodils 'Narcissus February Gold' and 'Toto' and snowdrops (*Galanthus Nivalis*) will brighten the Lincoln Road entrance, with crocuses, muscari and blue and white anemones in a new bed at the park entrance, including a few rose bushes salvaged from the Rayners Lane entrance. Along the Nature Walk, snowdrop bulbs, muscari, fritillaries, bluebells and primroses were planted along the Nature Walk, tracing the river. These bulbs and young plants will take a couple of years to become established, but will increasingly provide early spring nectar, fragrance and colour.



Connect Plus and Friends volunteers after planting daffodils at the Lincolns Road entrance



Siemens Financial Services volunteers planting viburnum shrubs at the Lincoln Road entrance. They then went on to plant wildflowers and bulbs in the rain, along the Nature Walk.

The Friends are very appreciative of 'Green Grid' funding from Harrow's Principal Architect in support of our planting programme and to the stalwart corporate volunteers from Siemens Financial Services and Connect Plus Services for their enthusiastic help in planting.

New Lectern highlights challenges to Yeading Walk stream environment



A new lectern provides helpful information about how to care for the river. This is part of recent project work managed by Harrow Council including revetments (retaining walls containing vegetated soil) supporting the riverbanks, a permeable stone chip-and-sand Nature Walk path and funding to plant native wildflowers, ferns and bulbs along the river and around the new stepping stones.

Getting it straight on how to protect the river

A new wooden bridge replaces the old iron and sleeper crossing near Rayners Lane. Our warm thanks to Harrow Council specialists for their skilled support and ongoing encouragement for the Friends of Yeading Walk.

Conservation Focus in The Nature Walk, Winter 2023/24.

Formerly an overgrown, muddy track, this area has been developed over the last couple of years. Initial efforts focused on re-establishing the path tracking the stream and reducing the extensive bramble banks to allow a greater variety of plant life. Funded by a Harrow's 'Green Grid' award, contractors cut back excessive, invasive cherry laurel and self-seeded sycamore saplings along the stream, to greatly increase the light reaching the stream, in order to promoting a healthier river ecosystem. The mature native trees are now visible and spring warmth will encourage a much more verdant area beneath.

Jacob, the Friends' Warden, has been busy creating a wood pile and a loggery - great for insects and beetles - which then become food for birds and bats. A pile of rocks and bricks, retrieved from across the park, now offers habitat for over-wintering frogs and nests in a quiet place against the fence bordering the allotments.



Jacob building the 'dead hedge' with varied park materials

Some cherry laurel has been retained to form a secret adventure den for children. This structure can also double as a bird hide. The 'dead' hedge built around the back provides cover to small animals and offers nesting options. Trial planting of aquatic /semi-aquatic plants will be taking place around the island area in spring. Preparations are required to develop planting locations and protect plants from the brook's highwater surges while they put down roots and establish.

The Bat & Bee Patch takes shape



A successful funding award from the Crane Valley Partnership supported initial planting for the Bat & Bee Patch created along the Shady Walk, where trees were earlier lost to Storm Eunice.

Honeysuckle and pyracantha are beginning to scramble up the park fence, with agapanthus, gaura, echinea, red-hot poker, lavender, blue meadow cranesbill, rudbeckia and buddleja chosen to attract bats, insects and other pollinators. Fragrant sage and thyme will spill over the path edges as the weather warms.

The bed will continue to mature with this year with additional planting support and participation from our young Eco Warriors.

Biodiverse planting to attract bats and pollinators

A fresh welcome for park visitors at Rayners Lane

The Rayners Lane entrance received a make-over in late November with planting of Nandina and Veronica spicata 'Icicle', interspersed with tulips – the latter courtesy of specialist bulb grower, Jaques Armand. This renowned, local supplier also provided the glowing, burnt orange tulips in the Rainbow Garden.



New Picnic Bench is a Winner

Park visitors may recall that volunteers from Friends of Yeading Walk installed two picnic benches in the park in 2019. The benches were very popular and attracted more people to the park, feeling safe and staying longer - especially during Covid lockdowns.

Unfortunately, one of the tables was destroyed by fire in the hot summer of 2022, possibly by an unauthorised barbecue or by vandalism.

Friends were determined to demonstrate our continuing commitment to keeping the park safe and welcoming. Funded by a grant from *Magic Little Grants* and additional funds from park user donations, committee volunteers Eddie and Jiri set to work during a hot summer's day, and replaced the picnic bench. Paving stones from excess stocks at Headstone Manor Park were used to provide a stable and durable base.



UPCOMING EVENTS:

- 'YEADING BROOK UNBOUND' Walk & Talk*** with Project Manager Steve Whitbread, Wednesday 6 March 11 am. Meet at the main wooden bridge. Don't miss it!
- LESS PLASTIC – FANTASTIC!!***
Calling all young Yeading Walk Eco Warriors for the BIG PLASTIC REDUCTION DRIVE, Saturday 16 March 2024. Meet at the Main Wooden Bridge. Start at 3 pm until 5 pm, (weather dependent)

This is a call for young artists and environmental campaigners (7 – 13 years) to create their chalk drawings and messages on the park pathway about the urgent need to reduce single use plastic production and packaging. Meet at the main wooden bridge at 3 p.m. sharp for a briefing. The Friends will supply the coloured chalks and prizes, you bring the ideas to shout out the urgent need to save our rivers and seas from plastic packaging, polluting the water and killing our wildlife.

You can take also part as a family or as a school/club in Greenpeace's BIG PLASTIC COUNT between 11 – 17th March, to see how much plastic you use in one week. Download your ACTION PACK from

[Home | The Big Plastic Count](#)

BUT ...we want to do more than just count plastic waste – we want to SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCE IT!
Watch for posters on the Park Notice Boards and JOIN US to Make a Difference.

3. *Support Yeading Walk at St Albans Fete, 8 June 2024*

The FoYW will be supporting the St Alban's fair by selling plants and good quality children's books. If you have children's books your family has outgrown, or plants to spare from your allotment, we should be pleased to have them to fund our work in the park.

Please send an email to FoYWgroup@gmail.com with St Alban's Fete in the subject line, and we shall arrange collection.

JOIN OUR MAILING LIST, support your park and become a Friend of Yeading Walk

Be a Winner with 'Harrow Wins'

This is a local Harrow lottery to benefit good causes in Harrow. Tickets cost only £1, of which 60p goes to your nominated beneficiary, which we hope will be Yeading Walk. Local lottery odds are so much more favourable than the National Lottery, and we have had some Yeading Walk winners, so support your park, PLAY TODAY and GOOD LUCK! See details at <https://www.harrowswins.co.uk>

Looking After the Park

We welcome families and volunteers to help us with projects and ongoing activities at Yeading Walk. We continue to raise funds to support and improve the park, and for specific projects. Just an occasional hour of your time makes a huge difference. Why not join our friendly group of volunteers for Project Saturday a.m.?

Your contributions, suggestions and comments are welcome and greatly appreciated. Visit our website at friendsofyeadingwalk.co.uk, or join our active volunteer WhatsApp group by sending us a request with your mobile number via email. Email: FoYWGroup@gmail.com

BANK: National Westminster

ACCOUNT NAME: Friends of Yeading Walk

ACCOUNT NUMBER: 21131511

SORT CODE: 52-10-33

We encourage everyone who loves Yeading Walk to support the park. As a Friend of Yeading Walk, **your annual donation of £5 /year works out to 1.4p/day - a bargain in anyone's books.** Please enable the Friends to care for your park by making your annual voluntary donation today. If donating by electronic transfer of funds, please give your name or that of your organisation as a reference. Do send us an email when you donate, using email address foywgroup@gmail.com with 'TREASURER – Payment' in the subject line, so that we can thank you for becoming a Friend and keep you updated with all the latest news.

Post Script

Email from Secretary, Harrow Parks Forum Harrow's Ecological Survey

Nomusa Duba (***pronounced Nom-Sah***) Harrow Council's Climate Programme Officer, is conducting a survey to get Harrow residents' views on the ecological management of urban green spaces including parks and verge grassland in the borough.

Please can you share the survey with your members. The survey will only take about 5 minutes to complete.

Link to survey - <https://forms.office.com/e/qKqvcLQNGA> any problems with access please advise. Registration is not required.

You may wish to complete the survey to give your views

Sincerely,

Committee, Friends of Yeading Walk.



Our resident egret, at home in Yeading Walk