

Long Lane Pasture Newsletter

No. 50 - Autumn 2025

On The Pasture

Big Progress in the Mini Forest

Since beginning the mini forest project in the paddock, our young trees have been growing along comfortably whilst our volunteers keep working hard at pushing back the brambles. Although our mix of oaks, sweet chestnuts, common hawthorns and others was quickly outgrown by wildflowers, thanks to our volunteers our trees are now on track to form a healthy young forest - in 10 or so years that is.

Meanwhile, around the boundary of the paddock we have been slowly but surely cutting back the brambles with the hopes of turning much of the area into a wildflower meadow. As may be becoming clearer, all the work around the paddock is very long term and is all geared towards increasing the ecological productivity of our reserve.

Big Pond Making a Comeback



After many months of struggle with dropping water levels, the Big Pond is finally looking better for wear. We spent the last few months very worried for the moorhens as we watched the pond water level drop to historic lows. Luckily with the rainy season coming in from late September – and some help from the friendly firemen across the street – the pond has started regaining its former beauty.

As a silver lining, our volunteers were able to reach the usually submerged Reed Mace, which every year slowly encroach on the available space around the pond and slowly nitrify and deoxygenate the water to toxic levels. Hopefully we are now through

the worst of it and with the winter steadily approaching we might even get to start worrying about the Big Pond overflowing!

Graffiti on the Pasture



An unfortunate issue we have been facing over the last month has been ongoing graffiti on all parts of the pasture. Although we haven't seen much graffiti on the reserve for a long while, there has been a sudden resurgence which has impacted the notice board, the central hut, the fencing around the mini forest as well as other parts of the pasture.

It saddens us a lot to think anyone would vandalise such a beautiful community space as the pasture, and our helpful volunteers have been hard at work cleaning away much of the paint. Whilst it is important that the pasture remains open to all who may want to enjoy time amongst nature, it is equally paramount that we all preserve and respect the reserve for our community.

The vandalism and efforts around the removal of the graffiti, which is not how any of our volunteers want to be spending their weekend, has also renewed talks about what to do about the platform which seems to be contributing to this kind of behaviour.

Wayne's Tree Planting

A year on from the sad death of Wayne Armsby, who's tireless efforts and commitment secured and

established Long Lane Pasture 25 years ago for the people of Finchley, his wife Elsie planted a silver birch in his memory, at the beginning of April. The commanding position of the tree means it will be seen by everyone who enters the Pasture.



As March and April were dry months, the ground in the chosen position was rock solid, but with the dedication of the volunteers and a pickaxe, a suitable hole was dug during a couple of Saturday volunteer sessions, and a date chosen to hold the planting ceremony.

On the day, many of Wayne's family and friends gathered in the warm sunshine, several bringing bottles of water to soak the root ball and excavation, to give the tall tree the best start.

Words of dedication and poetry were spoken, and many helped replace the soil during the planting. Elsie then handed out a wee dram of Wayne's favourite whisky to everyone, even giving a drink to the tree, and raised a toast to Wayne's life and to the Pasture's future. It was a sad yet uplifting occasion, with one of our volunteers, Maureen, thoughtfully planting forget-me-nots at the base of the tree.



Since that day, and especially during the days of high temperatures, Elsie and volunteers have brought water to the Pasture to ensure the silver

birch never lacked water. The tree wasn't staked to avoid attention, but has established itself well, standing tall and straight, and is a lovely and natural addition to the Pasture, and will always be looked after.

A few weeks ago, the first leaves showed signs of autumn colour, but like most trees at this time of year, the new leaf buds for next year's growth are already forming, and will lie dormant until the spring, where no doubt chiffchaffs will call loudly from its uppermost branches.



Events

Long Lane Pasture Awarded a Green Flag!

For the 14th year in a row, the Long Lane Pasture Trust has won a Green Flag Community Award!

The site is one of 2,250 in the UK to achieve the award, which is the international quality mark for parks and green spaces.

The news that Long Lane Pasture has met the standards required for the accreditation is testament to the hard work and dedication of the team that care for the green space so that visitors and residents alike can enjoy it.

Green Flag Award Scheme Manager, Paul Todd MBE, said: "Congratulations to everyone involved in Long Lane pasture who have worked tirelessly to ensure that it achieves the high standards required for the Green Flag Award.

"Quality parks and green spaces like Long Lane Pasture make the country a healthier place to live and work in, and a stronger place in which to invest.

"Crucially, Long Lane Pasture is a vital green space for communities in Finchley to enjoy nature, and during the ongoing cost of living crisis it is a free and safe space for families to socialise. It also

provides important opportunities for local people and visitors to reap the physical and mental health benefits of a green space."

The Green Flag Award scheme, managed by environmental charity Keep Britain Tidy under licence from the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, recognises and rewards well-managed parks and green spaces, setting the benchmark standard for the management of green spaces across the United Kingdom and around the world.

A Green Flag Community Award recognises quality sites managed by voluntary and community groups.

LLPT Chair, Donald Lyven, travelled to Bath in July to receive the award from Cllr. Liz Hardman of Bath & North East Somerset, and Alison Ogden-Newton OBE, CEO of Keep Britain Tidy.



Wildlife Highlight

The Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*



One of our most distinctive regulars at the pasture, occupying the bullrushes and yellow flag irises at the centre of the Big Pond, are our unmissable Moorhens. Remarkably well hidden amongst the vegetation, you would never think this little red-beaked yellow-legged black bird could be so hard to spot. But they are masters of camouflage. Moorhens are native to the UK one of the most wide-spread birds worldwide, where they are almost always found near bodies of water. They are mostly non-migratory, and their breeding season is in the spring when – if you are lucky – you might be able to catch a glimpse of the moorhen chicks with their more muted colours.

They aren't particularly picky eaters and will spend long portions of the day scouting their territory hunting after water plants and grasses, seeds and fruit, insects and even snails, small fish and newts. Although relatively safe inside the pond, they do face the threat of foxes and house cats looking for an easy meal.

Butterflies Around the Pasture

The butterfly year on the pasture ended in early October when the last species seen, small whites and speckled woods ceased flying as the weather turned cooler and wetter.

Overall, it was an average season with 20 species seen, but no Painted lady, small copper or clouded yellow were noted by volunteers.

The first species spotted were the usual raggedy peacock and red admirals that appeared on sunny February days, venturing out after hibernating.



Peacock - *Aglais io*

This was followed by the usual species progression of brimstone, orange tip and holly blue as the year progressed. Faded comma and small tortoiseshell, also hibernators, were noted too, with small, large, and green-veined whites also flitting about.

2025 was noted for some hot and dry periods in May and June which may have delayed the early

appearance of some of our grassland species. This resulted at the end of June with many species appearing around the same time! This gave rise to a haul of 15 species on the day Butterfly Conservation visited for an organised butterfly walk on Sunday, June 29.



Marbled white - *Melanargia galathea*

It was a lovely sunny warm day, and I was standing by the climbing oak tree when I was asked if purple hairstreaks had ever been seen at the Pasture, as they live high up in the canopy of oak trees. As I replied no, I suddenly noted a moth like fluttering on the leaves at head height, and goodness me, it was a purple hairstreak! Unbelievable, as every time I passed this tree over the years, I always looked out for them!

The purple hairstreak is one of those butterflies that annoyingly always rests with its wings closed, so the true beauty of its colouring can't be seen. However, it was a new species to add to the list of species seen at the Pasture, which now stands at 25, and its surprising discovery means it has been included in the new 2026 Pasture calendar!



Purple hairstreak – *Favonius quercus*

The 15 species spotted on that day were: small white, ringlet, holly blue, large white, meadow brown, large skipper, green-veined white, comma, small skipper, speckled wood, red admiral, gatekeeper, Essex skipper, a very showy and unmistakable marbled white, and the very welcome purple hairstreak!



White veined – *Pieris napi*

In late summer the dainty common blues appeared in the undisturbed circle and was the last of the 20 species seen. Hopefully the warmer weather this summer will result in even more butterflies emerging next year!



Oranged tip – *Anthocharis cardamines*

Lonely Bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*



On the edge of the main path near to where those plastic roadway barriers are, on the site where a wishing well will be built to conceal a water pump, there appears every April a solitary English bluebell!

It only lasts a few days before withering away, and we look out for it every year since it was first noticed about five years ago. Blink and you really will miss it! This April it appeared with another flower stem! So, under the ground, it looks like the process called bulb offset has occurred where the bulb has split to produce another plant!

We look forward to seeing what comes up next spring.

About the Editor

I am Samuel Bass, the new editor of the Long Lane Pasture Newsletter! I joined the pasture volunteers just over 6 months ago and have loved getting to know the pasture and its regular faces. A couple of months ago I decided to take over the role of bringing back the newsletter as a summary of what has been going on in the pasture, with the purpose of community outreach and archiving.

I am always welcome to contributions to the newsletter through articles, pictures or other to the newsletter so feel free to reach out via the email at the bottom of the newsletter.

My hope is that the newsletter continues to evolve and meaningfully reach as many of our community members as possible!

Thank you to Donald Lyven for his contributions to this season's edition of the newsletter, and for the many pictures which have made this edition all the more colourful.

Samuel Bass

New Calendar Arriving Soon!



It's that time of year again when thoughts turn to buying a calendar for the new year ahead.

Well, we have this covered with the new 2026 Long Lane Pasture Calendar about to hit the streets!

Currently in production, it should be available from the last week of November. We will let you know when we have them.

As there will only be 200 copies printed, make sure you get yours early to avoid disappointment.

This will be the Calendar's 16th edition and has scenes of the Pasture and close views of some of the flora & fauna that make the Pasture so special.

They will be available to buy at the Pasture on Saturday mornings during the volunteering session, or alternately, please contact Donald to reserve your copy on 07727748209. They will cost £6 and come with a cardboard envelope.

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