

Chairman's Message

Hopefully Spring will soon be making an appearance, with warmer days to raise our spirits. We have lots planned for the park in the coming year, but if we are to achieve all that we plan, we shall need more helpers. So, please, if you can, do respond to the pleas elsewhere in this newsletter.

This summer we are doing a **survey** to find out what people think of the park and what ideas you have for future improvements. Please do complete the attached survey for us, so that you can have your say! We look forward to hearing from you.

Great Lake Race



Our annual race across the lake will take place on **Sunday May 6th** at 2pm, with registration from 1.30pm. So start making your model boats and get ready for the big event!

Rules and entry form are on the website. Helpers needed to steward this event please.

Future Dates for your 2018 Diary

- Saturday July 7th at 4pm – **Jazz in the Park**
- A great line-up being planned, so put the date in your diary now – something to look forward to.
- Thursday September 27th – **AGM & Speaker** (tbc)
- Saturday December 15th – **Carols in the Park** (tbc)

See next page for some small events which you may like to come along to.

Photo Competition 2018



One of last year's entries was this beautiful shot by Jantz Lloyd Thompson of the lake in all its winter glory. This year's competition started in late autumn, so you should have some lovely autumn photos to enter, along with snowy ones too! Forms and rules are on the website now, so do get snapping!

Gardening Group

The gardeners usually start work again in the first week of February. Due to the cold, wet conditions, they have only managed to get out on four occasions during the first eight weeks.

The ground in the park is literally running with water and it has been difficult to walk, even on the grass, without trampling it into the mud. It is more than likely that we will have lost some new shrubs and trees, which just don't like standing with their feet in water. On a more positive note, the main beds are all weeded and signs of Spring were appearing at the time of writing.

If you enjoy gardening, then do think about joining our team. Gardening is good for both our mental and physical well-being. You don't need to be a Monty Don, just to enjoy pottering and doing easy jobs. Do stop and chat to us any Tuesday morning. We have lots of tools and we are a really friendly group!

New Interpretive Board



Our latest new sign has just arrived and will be installed soon, near the play area. We hope that you like it and that it tells you a little more about the different wildlife habitats in the park.

Small group events

We are planning some small events for you this summer, following their great success last year.

Saturday May 12th 7am An early start for our **Dawn Chorus walk** to listen to and identify birds and their songs

Tuesday June 26th 7.30pm – **The History of Lake Meadows** – an illustrated talk.

Tuesday July 3rd 7.30pm – **Tree Walk** to discover some of the unusual trees in the park

Tuesday August 21st 7.30pm **Let's Go Batty** looking for bats in the park.

September – an evening to be arranged about moths or reptiles – details in next newsletter.

Booking for all these events is essential! Members free, Non-members £2 per head. Please book on-line on our website, or by ringing Rosie on **07843 860 135** (answer phone) or email secretary@lakemeadows.org.uk

Children's Corner

Q. What bow can't be tied?
A. A rainbow.

Q. Why did the girl have a hole in her umbrella?
A. So she could see when the rain stopped.

Q. What is the easiest way to catch fish?
A. Get someone to throw them to you.



Look for **signs of spring in the park** – see if you can spot 10 different things that tell you the Spring is here!

Vandalism

There has been yet another spate of vandalism since Christmas, with more cherry trees snapped off, fir trees and shrubs damaged, a fire lit and the shrubs twice pulled up at the new Hillhouse gate area – two boys aged about 14 years were spotted.

Sadly, this is something that happens from time to time. It is certainly not a new problem. It was reported back in the late 1950s that youngsters were causing damage and there was a call then for dog patrols to be instigated in all the parks.

In this day of limited funding, options are limited. Basildon Council are currently up-grading their CCTV systems. We have informed the police and emailed local head teachers to ask for their help, with very limited response. It is hoped that parents and schools will encourage good citizenship and promote a positive attitude to the care of the environment.

You, our members, are our eyes and ears, if you see any vandalism going on, please report it immediately to the police on 101, However, on no account should any member of the public approach any vandals. – leave that to the police and park staff.

Working Parties

Our next working parties will be at 9:30am on Saturdays April 21st and May19th

Details coming soon.

More helpers are always needed, so please do think about coming along to give a hand.

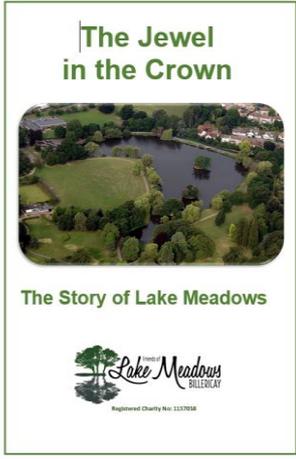
Spring Word Search

F	R	O	G	S	P	A	W	N	G	I	W	R	A	E
S	P	R	I	N	G	C	E	L	A	N	D	I	N	E
B	L	U	E	B	E	L	L	S	L	A	T	E	P	B
L	I	C	A	T	K	I	N	U	F	J	S	G	G	E
O	W	R	Q	H	F	J	O	N	Q	U	I	L	X	L
S	E	E	D	S	Y	T	Y	L	V	W	S	D	U	B
S	N	I	K	S	I	S	A	I	L	O	N	G	A	M
O	Y	Z	I	F	O	E	M	G	R	E	B	E	S	U
M	H	A	Z	E	L	N	K	H	P	N	I	A	R	B
F	D	C	O	O	T	S	G	T	U	L	I	P	S	Y

Birdsong	Earwig	Nest
Blossom	Eggs	Petals
Bluebells	Frogspawn	Rain
Buds	Grebes	Seeds
Bumble bee	Hazel	Siskin
Catkin	Jonquil	Spring
Celandine	Magnolia	Sunlight
Coots	May	Tulips
Daisy		

The Jewel in the Crown
The Story of Lake Meadows

If you are interested in the history of the park, from early times pre-1066 up to now, the second edition of our new booklet will be available soon at £5 each.



With chapters about who owned the land in the past, how it became a park in 1936, the Spitty and Spurling families, and memories and stories of the last 80 years, along with local crimes, tragedies and intrigue, it is not to be missed.

To order one, please contact Rosie as above or call in at the Information Centre when it is next open.

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Our Projects

We have three main projects for the coming months.

To complete the end of the lake project, we plan to plant a reed bed. We also plan to do some pond dipping, so that we can find out what lives in the lake, beside the fish and water birds. This will eventually enable us to complete another interpretive board and to offer pond dipping for families.



Next, we shall be developing the Conservation Area on the sluice banks over the next two years, to improve the habitat, encouraging native wild flowers to grow and a variety of insects, pollinators and small creatures to move in. Some of the grass will be removed and trial areas of seeds and plant plugs created, with paths mowed regularly between them.

Finally, we shall be starting work on the woodland project soon by mapping it and doing a survey of all the plants and trees, before finalising a management plan to improve the habitat and open up the woodland floor so more plants flourish, such as bluebells and wood anemones.

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What to look for in the Park in Spring

One of the earliest signs of Spring is the early-flowering witch hazel, which has been in bloom since early March opposite the fern bed at the Lake Avenue entrance.



Birds are nesting and the wood pecker can regularly tapping away and calling with its maniacal call. The green woodpecker was once known as the "Rain Bird" for its perceived ability to predict an imminent downpour by crying out loudly and repeatedly across the countryside. Nosey robins come and help with gardening, searching for worms and bugs amongst the wet leaves.

Pussy willow is appearing on willows, and in the Garden of the Child, you'll find male catkins on the contorted hazel, with the tiny red flowers on nearby twigs (upper right in photo).



Keep your eyes open for early dozy bumble bees searching for nectar on warm sunny days amongst the Spring flowers.

Whilst on the lake, the grebes are showing off their courting dance and early ducklings, moorhens and coots will soon be making an appearance.

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And finally ...

Five bird boxes have very recently been installed in the park by one of the park's team. There are four in the woodland and one in the Garden of the Child. These have been made by Peter, our Ecology chair. We had hoped that some birds were still looking for nest sites. The good news is that they have already moved in!



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