

Chairman's Message

Spring came early this year for a couple of weeks! The bulbs planted last Autumn are adding colour to the park and the gardeners are well ahead with tidying the gardens.

Welcome to new members who have joined recently and thank you to those who have volunteered to help us in different ways including a new gardener and several members interested in wildlife.

We have several new projects planned for this year, including a possible water bottle-filling station, a new baby changing unit and children's wooden stools for the Garden of the Child. Further improvements are planned for the garden areas and play equipment is being looked at. We hope that these will help enhance the park for different age ranges of visitors. We'll keep you informed about these & other plans.

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What to look for in Spring in the Park

The early coming of Spring this year meant we have all been in the park perhaps earlier than in other years. So, what can you look out for this month?

There are lots of catkins on the contorted hazel in the Garden of the Child, and camellias and rhododendrons are in bud, almost ready to burst into colour. A solitary bumblebee was spotted on February 21st, searching for nectar in the aconites and early blossom on the prunus trees.

The trees are already starting to show signs of colour, especially the willows which were waking as early as January. A pair of swans have been at the park recently, hopefully thinking about nesting. Soon after the park was first opened in the 1930s, a pair of swans was presented to the park and nested here for several seasons.

Other birds are starting to nest – traditionally birds pair up on Valentine's Day. Three more bird boxes, donated by one of our members, were due to have been put up recently and reinforcements made to the current boxes, which the squirrels have been interested in.

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Photography Competition

The winners of the 2018 photo Competition were announced at a small prize-giving event in Billericay Library in January, with a display of the finalists there throughout the month. Once again, we should like to thank all the sponsors for their generous funding



Left to right: Nigel Harris, Abigail Clapton, Sarah Clapton, Tom Gregory, Charles Novis (FoLM Chairman), Chelsea Cramp, Mike Conway (Lions Club of Billericay) Mia Parnaby, Simon Poole (Billericay Round Table), Peter Greene (Rotary Club of Billericay) and Colin Campbell (Rotary Club of Billericay Mayflower).

The four judges chose the winners which best promote the park and considered composition, originality, and the appeal of the photographs.



The adult winner was Sarah Clapton with her photo: **Gosling Love**

The Junior winner was Abigail Clapton with **Treebeard**

A selection of the finalists' photos can be seen on our website.



Photography Competition 2019

We hope that the inspiring winning photos in last year's competition will inspire you to take part this year. The 2019 Competition opened on January 5th and continues until October 31st. Entry is free and the rules and entrance form are on our website. Each entrant can submit up to four photos on any topic; they must be taken in the park but can be taken on any camera or phone or other device. The prizes will again be very good - up to £100 each. So, go on, have a go! We have already had an entrant!

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Do the Friends make a difference?

The importance of access to green, open spaces has been highlighted in relation to healthy living, especially the impact of obesity, stress and mental health. For children, the importance of natural play and the freedom to play imaginatively, as well as the physiological development benefits of outdoor activity, is now well recognised.

With funds for public services limited, the economic benefits of wellbeing, health and exercise, as well as the contribution of volunteers working in this sector, make a real difference to the way services can be delivered. Doctors are now starting to 'prescribe' voluntary activities!

Without our volunteers, there would be few additional improvements to the park. We are told by park users that we really have made a great difference. And as for maintenance work being undertaken – we like to think that our regular meetings with park staff help highlight work that needs doing to keep the park in good order. Have we made a difference in the past six years? We hope so!

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Park Survey 2018

The report about our survey of park users last summer will be on our website very soon. It makes interesting reading and shows that people have a very positive view of the park & what the Friends do.

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Membership

Considering we have about 40K people living locally, potentially there are many more people who could join us by becoming members. Please encourage family, friends and neighbours to join! And, by the way, people do NOT have to volunteer when they become a member! So, no excuses!

The more support we have the better. The steady income from memberships helps pay for everyday upkeep of the park, such as new plants. Membership numbers also provide evidence to show potential funders that we have the support of our community.

Through Your Eyes



When you are walking around the park, we are sure you'll notice many small things of interest as you go around. We would love to hear from you if you see anything which is of interest, perhaps a different bird, leaves appearing, a flower, the first ladybird, etc. We plan to add sightings to our website and Facebook page to try and encourage more people to take an interest in the park. We do already have many photos, but if you take one to illustrate what you have seen, that would be great.

Please contact Rosie on **07843 860 135** or email: secretary@lakemeadows.org.uk

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Name the Grebes – Prize for Winner!



We should like to make a regular feature of the Great Crested Grebes that annually raise their broods in the park. So, please can you help us by thinking up two names for them. There is a super prize for the winner! Send your ideas in as soon as you can to secretary@lakemeadows.org.uk

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A Selfish Act of Vandalism

has destroyed this Himalayan Birch tree, which was planted last year as a memorial to two very special people. We have already had to replace this tree once.



What is the matter with these thoughtless individuals? Whatever motivates them? What good does it do them?

If you have any information that helps prosecute this vandal, please contact us or report to <https://www.basildon.gov.uk/article/4651/Street-Scene-Reporting>

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Information Hut

The Hut will be opening in April. 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, who enjoy chatting to park visitors about what we do. Do contact us soon!

FoLM Events

Sunday May 5th Great Lake Race

Get your double-sided sticky tape and junk boxes and bottles out and start making your home-made boat ready for this year's race across the lake.



Rules and Entry forms are on our website or will be available on the day. Registration starts at 1.30pm at our Hut, ready for the 2pm Race Start.

Members free, Non-members £2 a boat. Prizes for the winners and best designed boat!

Sunday May 19th Early Bird Walk 7am



Join us for an early morning walk around the park to look out for some of the many birds that live in and visit the park.

The event is led by bird specialist Neil Sumner, who has a wide knowledge of British birds. **Booking is essential.** Please book online on our events page or ring **07843 860 135 (answerphone)**

Details of our other FoLM events planned for later this year, will follow in our next newsletter & on our website:

Jazz in the Park – Saturday July 6th 4pm
New bands this year! Free event. Bring a picnic!

Name that Tree? – A talk and walk about the trees

Who dug the Lake? – talk on the history of the park

Let's go batty! – our popular bat evening led by a member of Essex Bat Group

AGM & Speaker September 26th 7.45pm

Carols in the Park – December 14th

Watch this space for our special plans for the Mayflower 200 anniversary celebrations next year! It will be 400 years since several Billericay folks set sail aboard the Mayflower and we'd like to remember them!

Children's Corner

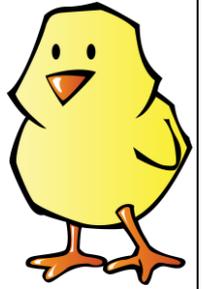
Q. What season is it when you are on a trampoline? A. Spring-time!

Q. Why can't you tease egg whites? A. They can't take a yolk.

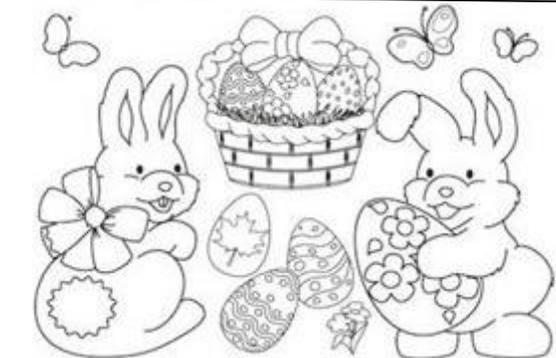
Q. How did the soggy Easter Bunny dry himself? A. With a hare dryer!

Q. How does a rabbit throw a tantrum? A: He gets hopping mad!

Q. How do you know carrots are good for your eyes? A. Have you ever seen a rabbit wearing glasses?



Spot the Six Easter Differences & Colour Me



Spring Clean the Park



Saturday March 16th 9.30am
Meet at the compound.

Come along and help us, for a couple of hours, to clean signs and notices, benches and railings and do 101 other small cleaning jobs.

Bring your buckets, rubber gloves & squeeze mops!!
Bring all the family - jobs for everyone!

Our volunteers

In this edition we hear from 'The Gardener'.



What made me join the gardening group? I read an article about the FOLM and thought this is what I needed to get involved with. I made contact and met with the group in June/July 2017.

My interest in joining as a volunteer gardener followed on from my previous involvement with a major conservation project, when I spent 3.5 years doing a variety of roles. Having also had gardens of my own in the past, as well as doing voluntary tasks, enabled me to gain knowledge of plants/shrubs/saplings, plus handling a variety of gardening tools.

What do I do? I help with the preparation for planting of shrubs or saplings, but also work alongside colleagues doing weeding and getting ready for smaller plants going in. The variety of jobs is a fluid process and maintains my interest.

How do I feel about gardening in the Park? Being involved with the gardening group in Lake Meadows is seasonal, each comes with its challenges and different weather conditions, but we remain a hardy group of like-minded folk. We feel appreciated by many park users and their compliments are always well received.

Overall, the benefits of taking part provide me with a sense of satisfaction, which remains a positive feeling. I am in no doubt that gardening achieves benefits for my well-being and 'it's better and cheaper than going to a gym' to quote Monty Don. In addition, being with like-minded people provides much rapport and support. I would encourage people to come and join us and be part of our happy band of gardeners. NDR

The Gardening Group meets every Tuesday morning from 9.30am in the garden area. Tools are provided. No specialist experience needed, just a love of gardening!

Spring in the park

Bulbs are flowering everywhere in the park as we go to print.

The purple crocuses by the swimming pool, donated eighteen months ago by the local Mayflower Rotary Club, were in full bloom in the recent Spring sunshine.



Little species crocuses are out in the Garden of the Child, along with aconites, and the grape hyacinths are showing buds.

In the sensory

beds, little tête-à-tête daffodils, blue anemone blanda and small purple irises are nodding in the warm breeze.



Whilst the daffodils are out in the rhododendron area and on the bowling green bank.

And finally ...

It is estimated that there are 2.5bn visits to public parks in the UK every year and there are now over 5,000 local Friends' Groups in the UK, which work with local authorities, many forming Local Friends' Forums.

Every Friends' Group encourages their local community to become involved in the protection and promotion of their park to ensure it continues to flourish in future years. Each group is run independently, but along similar lines, many establishing themselves, as FoLM has, as a Registered Charity with the Charity Commission.

The partnership between each Friends Group and their local council can be of great benefit to each side. Volunteers provide free, additional help in organising activities such as gardening, maintenance and innovative ideas, whilst councils, encouraged by those benefits, value their input and take renewed pride, increasingly relying on Friends' support, whilst maintaining higher standards than would perhaps otherwise be possible.

We are fortunate that we have such good links, not only with the Parks' team, but with management and councillors alike. We hope that partnership will continue to grow and become even stronger.

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.
