**Brent River & Canal Society
Newsletter**

**Spring 2017**

Welcome to our spring 2017 newsletter. Sorry it’s been so long since the last one. However, we have sent out a few email updates in the meantime and the web site has also been updated. If anyone would like to set up a Facebook page and Tweet for us, that would be great!

On this occasion there has not been time to produce our usual well-presented newsletter because we needed to get out notification of the AGM forthwith. But especial thanks to Phil Alford who wrote much of the material.

**Annual General Meeting**

**Thursday 27th April 2017, 7.30 pm**

**Brent Valley Golf Club**

**Church Road, Hanwell W7**

Existing committee members are prepared to stand but nominations for new members would be very welcome.

For various reasons there was no AGM in 2016. We aim to catch up this year.

**Experience with occasional pollution**

Phil Alford tells us what he has found out about pollution and how to report it.

There are a number of intermittent pollution events in the Brent River Park (BRP) at the moment, particularly from outfalls. The Environment Agency (EA) has been notified, but the intermittent nature makes the incident less verifiable when the sites are visited by the EA or Thames Water teams and they find nothing. This means there is a risk the location does not get prioritised.

Please can you report anything you see to the Environment Agency on a dedicated telephone number **0800 80 70 60.** The helpdesk is very friendly, takes details and provides an incident number. You do not need to leave your name and address, but on the other hand if you want an update they will undertake to call you back. As it is a centralised helpdesk, one thing they do need to know with as much accuracy as you can provide is the location – postcode, roads, bridges or landmarks help, and if you take a picture they can provide an email address to send the picture.

Examples of existing pollution locations are near: Hanwell Bridge; Mayfield Primary School; Bitterns Field.

**Please keep reporting (and re-reporting) what you see as it does make a difference, particularly for intermittent incidents.**

For example: after regular reporting of significant but intermittent river pollution at Boston Manor Park, Thames Water identified a collapsed sewer pushing sewage at peak usage into a river outfall.

**Vole patrol**

**More formally known as the Small Mammal Survey, London Wildlife Trust** are conducting a third and last small mammal survey in West London in March and April. This seeks out the secret wildlife that most of us would never normally see. For Ealing this means trapping (without harm) and surveying Long Wood and Tentelow Wood (next to Osterley Boundary Stream), plus Perivale Wood.

The hands-on work is done largely by volunteers who are trained and supervised on the job.

Here’s the link if you need more information: http://www.wildlondon.org.uk/vole-patrol-in-london. Or phone Huma Pearce on 07540 783609.

**Thames21**

**Thames 21** have some events planned for the river banks in Pitshanger Park with the local group - http://www.thames21.org.uk/events/ This is the next event:

**Pitshanger Park River Brent Clean-up.**

May 6 @ 11:00 am - 1:30 pm

Join Thames 21 and Ealing’s Park Rangers with the support of the Pitshanger Community Association, in cleaning up the River Brent.

Help create an inviting space for people and wildlife, no experience necessary, all tools will be provided (including boots and waders if you fancy a dip!). Just turn up on the day and be prepared to get stuck in!

Under 16s must be accompanied by an adult.

Meeting 11am at the Bandstand, next to the Will to Win cafe.

Please get in touch if you have any questions.

Organiser: Daniella Levene

Phone: 07501 697096

Email: Daniella.Levene@Thames21.org.uk

**Dragonfly Detectives**

Soon London Wildlife Trust will be helping with a survey of Dragonflies and Damselflies (scientific name Odonata). The surveys will be delivered with help from [British Dragonfly Society](http://www.british-dragonflies.org.uk/) (http://www.british-dragonflies.org.uk).

The project is collecting information on different freshwater habitats in London, no matter how large or small they are. Volunteers will be surveying rivers and streams, canals, reservoirs and ponds, looking for the creatures that find their home there.

http://www.wildlondon.org.uk/water-for-wildlife (Or phone Nic on 0208 930 4119.)

**“Ealing’s Forgotten Spaces”**

**This** is a group of self-motivated people who have started clearing forgotten or uncared for spaces, supported by Ealing’s Rangers. They have set up a Facebook page (https://www.facebook.com/EalingsForgottenSpaces/)

**Ealing Wildlife Group**

**This is** a recently set up Facebook group who share sightings and information about wildlife in the area. They have organised dawn chorus walks in Long Wood, and bat walks along the river near Wharncliffe Viaduct. (https://www.facebook.com/groups/ealingwildlife/)

**William Hobbayne Charity – Half Acre Field**

**This long-established charity (**http://www.williamhobbaynecharity.co.uk/)

continues to clear and replant their section of woodland near the viaduct. The river side is now more open and the river side more accessible.

**Hanwell and Norwood Green Orchard Group**

This recent group (well, recent compared with BRCS) has planted a number of mini-orchards in BRP with the support of Ealing rangers. Lots of events coming up (8th April, 6th May, 14th May, etc) so take a look at their web site: https://orchardtrail.wordpress.com/

**Warren Farm**

The Warren Farm saga continues. On 21st Feb the indefatigable Save Warren Farm campaigners had a day in court. It consisted of an application to a High Court judge to determine if there were grounds for a ‘Judicial Review’ of Ealing council’s plan to give away this large piece of public green open space to Queens Park Rangers football club. See http://www.savewarrenfarm.org.uk for more information. The judge turned down the application, although an appeal is possible.

The judge’s decision may be technically sound, but it flies in the face of natural justice. Our land, designated and supposedly protected as Metropolitan Open Land (MOL), should not be taken from Hanwell residents and given to a rich professional football club.

Whether the judge’s declared interest as a football supporter and previous job in football-related development influenced the decision we do not know. Or whether he is just being an ‘establishment’ figure, facilitating the privatisation of public assets.

**Gurnell .. and more to come ?**

Warren Farm is not the only part of the Brent River Park under threat. There is now a plan to build flats on another piece of the Brent River Park, the land around Gurnell Leisure Centre.

Warren Farm and Gurnell are not the only examples of Ealing council seeking to build, or help others to build, on Ealing’s open space. It is beginning to look like a systematic assault on our green open spaces.

**Next 3 years – some thoughts from Phil Alford**

I don’t profess to be knowledgeable in any particular field but rubbing shoulders with people and picking up some basic skills has been very interesting and I feel I have contributed to a better environment. Also seeing what has been achieved elsewhere on river environments makes me keen to ensure the River Brent gets its fair share of the pie.

From what I understand, it seems that responsibility and accountability for the river environment sits between several bodies so sometimes may get overlooked or not prioritised. However from what I have seen, often just a spark of enthusiasm or some attention helps attract resources and action – often the resources exist and are just looking for a way to be used.

So the more individuals talk and ask questions about the Brent River environment, and demonstrate their enthusiasm, the less chance it will be ignored and the more it will be prioritised. In another 3 years it would be great if Ealing could achieve similar established levels of activity and level of involvement in and around the river environment as Richmond, Hounslow and Hillingdon.

**Support BRCS !**

Various activities take part in the BRP and we support these and the groups which organise them. But only the BRCS champions the BRP itself and as an entity. So please support BRCS!