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Coldfall Woods in flood. Main photo by Adam Justice-Mills

Lake appears in Coldfall Wood

By Ann Bronkhorst

In early January, as heavy rain fell night and day and road run-off swelled the stream, the inevitable result was a lake in Coldfall Wood.

The seasonal pond became larger and deeper than any local residents could recall. Between 6 and 7 January the water level rose about one foot overnight, almost obscuring the long footbridge and noticeboard.

A small drain should take the water underneath Muswell Hill Playing Fields to join the stream in Islington Cemetery but was overwhelmed by the unusual volume of water. Several small springs had emerged in the wood, too, contributing streamlets that in some cases appear on old maps.

The fanciful name sometimes given to the seasonal pond, The Everglades, for once seems appropriate. One Friend of Coldfall Wood suggested that the notice board (if still visible) should advertise boat trips!

Horses return to Coldfall

By Ann Bronkhorst

If you see a large horse in Coldfall Wood this month your eyes aren't deceiving you and you haven't time-travelled back a few centuries. It will be there as a working animal, less destructive to woodland than machines and brought in to extract timber during a new programme of felling and coppicing.

The work was scheduled to start in late January, after the completion of similar work in Queen's Wood, and to continue through February. The aim is to coppice some hornbeam trees in one area of Coldfall Wood, and to take out a few trees, mostly oaks and hornbeams, each side of the east-west path through the wood, broadening it so that it becomes more like a woodland ride.

By letting in more light along that central pathway the now crowded trees will benefit.

Coldfall charcoal

The horse will pull away most of the felled branchwood towards Creighton Avenue; some will be stacked for access from the field.

Haringey's Conservation Officer Ian Holt has planned the project and has the support of the Friends of Coldfall Wood. A Haringey-based coppicing business will do much of the work assisted by Countryside Management students from Capel Manor College, with Hawthorn Heavy Horses supplying a key member of the team.

People may want to see the horse at work but there will be health and safety issues and at times parts of the wood, such as the central entrance from Creighton Avenue and the ride itself, will be closed. Look out for notices in and near Coldfall explaining Haringey's plans and advising the public.

Any reader who feels strongly about any matter is invited to use this "Soapbox" column. Please note that opinions expressed are those of the writer alone.

Goodbye, Cherry Tree Wood...

By Harriet Copperman

.... and hello, Cherry Tree Park? It is some months since I was in Cherry Tree Wood (CTW) and I was shocked but not surprised by the changes I saw. Whilst the saying 'Use it or lose it' may be appropriate for our High Road shops, it would seem to be 'Use it and lose it' for CTW.

It is wonderful that we have this remnant of ancient woodland on our doorstep for the young, old and four-legged creatures to use and enjoy. However what is deeply shocking is that whilst there are mature trees still standing, most of the wooded area is carpeted by leaves rather than regenerative undergrowth. Although a dense canopy of leaves may reduce the light and therefore the ability of the undergrowth to survive, it is more likely that the increasing use for recreational purposes is mostly to blame for the lack of undergrowth.

This results in a decreasing number of young saplings being able to grow and thrive to replace dead and dying trees and gradually greater areas are becoming available just for playing football.

It is debatable whether or not Barnet Council has a deliberate policy of neglecting CTW, so that eventually all they'll have to do is mow the grass and maintain the tarmac pathways, but there is a relatively simple and inexpensive solution which the council is either ignorant of, or unwilling to apply.

The usual way to manage woodland is by coppicing (cutting down) a few dense areas of trees and using the cut wood to form a restrictive fence around the area to keep out humans and dogs. This management scheme can be seen in Highgate Wood, which is organised by the Corporation of London.

For many years the 'Friends of Cherry Tree Wood' battled with Barnet to try to maintain some of the integrity of the woodland area, but I believe the group may have disbanded, faced with very little support or interest from the Council.

So, do we want our children and grandchildren to be able to learn about trees, flowers, birds and fungi and other aspects of the natural world, in a safe local environment, or do we want just a park and playground in East Finchley, in which to kick a football?



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