



# Autumn in an ancient wood

By Ann Bronkhorst

The horses have moved on, sadly, but one of the men who worked with them in Coldfall Wood, back in the early spring, returned recently to share his knowledge of trees.

Woodsman Iain Loasby led a dozen people, including children, on a walk through Coldfall on the last Saturday of September. We set off from the recently coppiced area bordering Creighton Avenue, where new growth is thrusting up from the coppice stools and woodland plants are emerging from the seedbank, now that there's light and space.

There's little plant growth on most of the woodland floor because of shade from so many hornbeam trees and compaction of the soil by human feet. It seems that plant roots and tree roots need oxygen, provided by worms, insects and fungi.

Iain showed us how to tell beech buds and leaves from hornbeam, now the dominant tree in the wood. Hornbeam ousted lime and hazel here centuries ago, though a few hazels have persisted and are watched over carefully.

### Growth and decay

We saw why quick-growers, like cherry, rowan and silver

birch, are called opportunists. Many of the silver birches scattered through the wood have finished their rather brief lives (usually about 40 years in woodland) and now make excellent homes for insects and fungi.

So do the far older "stag-horn" oaks with their bare branches, magnificent even in decay. Pests like the Oak Processionary Moth were mentioned but luckily not seen. Maybe our oaks will be spared.

Iain explained what goes on just beneath the bark of any tree, where the cambium, a narrow layer of living tissue, acts like the brain of the tree, responding to conditions and controlling growth. Damage the bark and you may kill the tree.

We strolled for an hour or two, absorbing not only facts but also the atmosphere of this small but ancient wood, its leaves just becoming autumnal. Next February Iain will lead another walk in the wood to look at winter trees. Visit www.coldfallwoods.com to see more walks and activities.

# Outstanding open pasture

The Long Lane Pasture Trust is transforming a neglected two-acre site in an area recognised as deficient in open green space, for the benefit of the local community and the increasingly flourishing wildlife.

For the second year running Long Lane Pasture has achieved the 'outstanding' level in the London in Bloom awards. It is the only scheme in Barnet to have received this award.

"We are absolutely delighted," said Dennis Pepper, chairman of the trust, "especially as such an award requires us to reach a very high level in community participation, environment responsibility and gardening achievement."

"Coming as it does on top of the Green Flag Award earlier in the year it reflects the dedication of our Management Team, and the hard work of our volunteers."

The London in Bloom scheme is part of the Royal Horticultural Society's initia-

tive to encourage and support groups in bringing about significant improvements in their neighbourhoods. For further information see: www.londoninbloom.co.uk

### Surviving and thriving

Long Lane Pasture, opposite the fire station, was taken over by the trust under a lease from the London Borough of Barnet which still owns the site though it makes no financial contribution to its upkeep. Costs are met by donations from supporters and grants from funding bodies.

It is open every day from 10am to dusk but may be closed occasionally during the winter depending on weather conditions. For more details visit www.longlanepasture.org

# Shy and ethereal: Lynsey de Paul

By Daphne Chamberlain

It was certainly a shock to hear of the sudden death of Lynsey de Paul so soon after seeing her at the unveiling of the Spike Milligan statue, reported in last month's issue. The singer-songwriter died of a brain haemorrhage on 1 October at the age of 64.

A long-standing friend of Spike, who nicknamed her Loony de Small, she had joined him in animal welfare demonstrations as well as on the stage, and was involved in The Finchley Society's rescue of College Farm.

In fact, she had strong North London links. Originally Lynsey Monckton Rubin, she was born and brought up in Cricklewood, and attended South Hampstead High School and Hornsey College of Art.

Rocketing to stardom in the early 1970s, she won two Ivor Novello awards, had five Top 20 UK hits herself, and wrote songs covered by US performers and theme tunes for television shows, including *No Honestly*. Later, she came second in the Eurovision Song Contest (at a time when her UK entry could still be called *Rock Bottom* with no sense of irony).

Remembered by many of us as a small blonde often at a large piano, she was described by Barbara Warren of The Finchley Society as ethereally beautiful, but someone who kept in the background, seeming rather shy.

### Booklet about Spike

Barbara, and all those who worked with her on turning the idea of Spike's statue into reality, must be delighted by the number of people posing for photos on the bench. Lynsey De Paul, who had many chats with the living Spike, was one of the contributors to a commemorative booklet about him, published by The Finchley Society. The sale of this, and other mementoes, will help



Lynsey De Paul shares a smile with film director Terry Gilliam at the unveiling of the Spike Milligan statue. Photo Mike Coles

reduce the financial shortfall on constructing the statue.

They can be bought at Stephens (formerly Avenue) House, or donations made through www.spikestatue.org.uk.

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