



Open Spaces Report April 2021

Adam Barnett Grounds Manager

Since my last report in February, we have been concentrating on the maintenance of the area and clearing areas ready for the spring season to start with the grass cutting. The usual jobs are being carried out with litter picking, raking the sand around the barge, and sweeping out the deck of sand daily. I have been in constant contact with the contractors in the play park to assist them when we can.

The traffic in the play area has started to increase now that we have had a couple of days good weather and a lift in the lockdown restrictions. This has increased the amount of litter that is around the playground especially the skate park. Government signs have been placed to let everyone know the rules. We have re-opened the tennis courts.

Work undertaken.

The hedge laying that was carried out over the last couple of months has been tidied up by the team so that it is more presentable to the public. We are hoping that in doing this to the hedges it will encourage more wildlife back into the area especially creatures like the field mouse that have seen a decline over the years. We have seen several birds flying in and out of them, but we have not seen any nests yet.

We hired in a chipper so that we could tidy up all the cuttings from the hedges and then these chippings were used to top up the entrance into the wood and the path along the side of the football pitch. This included the Christmas Trees collected from around the town from the Christmas lights committee.



As I have said previously the paths that we have started to chip and are working well, and we have been approached by some members of the public asking if this will be carried out each year so that the area is accessible all year round. We have several emails of feedback that they look great – See below:

From: XXXX

Subject: Herne Hill Nature Reserve

Message Body:

Herne Hill woods are kept in excellent condition by your guys and are to be congratulated on the excellent job they have done in layering the hedge looking out over the fields towards Donyatt. They also had the good sense to put down wood chippings on the mud to make it easier to navigate the footpath at the back of the doctors' surgery and also on the path adjacent to the stream.

It is great that you have people who obviously take great pride in their work and please pass on my thanks and from everyone who uses this great facility.

We have put in a handrail in the cemetery by the lodge as an elderly lady asked for this so that she can get in to visit a family members grave. Due to health and safety, we also have fixed the small wall in the entrance, as a large block had been moved and could have caused an injury if it had fallen.

The team have removed the Christmas wreaths from the graves, as this had not been done by the family and friends of the graves themselves.

Hayley and I spent some time in the cemetery looking at possible burial plots and we have managed to find several plots that can be used for both cremations and burials which will be used as and when required.

Willoway have started to cut the grass again which is quite long now so this will possibly leave an amount of dead grass lying around but once they have got it down to a workable level this will then stop happening and will leave the grass looking neat and tidy.

Nick has spent a considerable amount of time stripping the cemetery railings down to the bare metal so that he can then start to paint it with undercoat and new fresh paint. This has not been done for some time, so it has taken him time to get through 5 layers of paint. He will carry on through the summer until he has finished, once he has finished, he will then finish off the bottom fence where the community offenders had stopped.

We have cleared under the hedge on Canal Way so that the cycle and footpath now have enough room for both cyclists and pedestrians are able to use safely without having to dodge each other. Several members of public thanked us for doing this as we were working. There have been a few calls into the office, regarding how neat they look now. It will be easier to keep the weeds under control now that it is clear as well. We will also get the trees trimmed back so that the leaves will not be falling on to the path and contributing to the buildup that covers the paths in the winter.



A tree survey is underway of all the trees around the area so that we can put together a plan of work for coming years. This will then help us decide on which trees need work first, especially with the Ash dieback looming. We are going to discuss these with Chris Lee when he is in next as the trees will start to show us themselves if they have the disease and how bad they are being affected.

Future Work

The grass season is now upon us and we have started the summer routine now that the ground is dry enough for the tractor to be able to drive around. This takes up most of our time in the summer as you are all aware as we cut Britten's field, the rec, West Crescent, the 2-cricket pitch's twice a week, Winterhay, the churchyard, the playground, and the various places within Herne Hill on rotation. We also have the bin collection twice a week.

I am putting together a summer maintenance program for when we have a spare moment, with things like fence painting and fence repairs. These jobs will be squeezed in when we can in-between the larger jobs.

Chris Lee will be in, as I have previously mentioned, to maintain the trees that we have around the open spaces and the cemetery. Now that ITC own the Hammer Head at the entrance to the football carpark, we need to come up with a plan on what we want to happen there. There are 2 trees with TPO's on so we will seek permission to maintain these within the guidelines.

3 'NO CYCLING' signs have been purchased and have been put in Herne Hill as a deterrent against people cycling in the nature reserve. One has been put near the entrance to the wood on the ridge path, the second has been put at the kissing gate entrance on the bottom path from the farmers field and the third has been put on the gate at the western entrance. There is an old sign at the Donyatt gate entrance which we will refurbish on site over the summer as we are concerned if we try remove it, we will damage it and the wood needs to dry out.



