

Friends of Mycenae Gardens

NEWSLETTER NO 4 SPRING 2014

Sign up at
www.MycenaeGardens.org.uk

Next AGM at 7pm Tuesday 11 March 2014

The Friends of Mycenae Gardens, which launched in March 2011, will hold its third Annual General Meeting on Tuesday 11 March at 7.00pm in the Greenwich Steiner School, Woodlands, 90 Mycenae Road, SE3 7SE.

Anyone wishing to stand for election to the committee needs to be a member of the Friends and

must be proposed by two other members of the Friends. A form is available to download online at <http://bit.ly/zmtClq> or write with the appropriate signatures direct to The Secretary, Friends of Mycenae Gardens, 27 Mycenae Road, SE3 7SF to arrive seven days before, if possible.

Membership is free, and is available online at

<http://bit.ly/zLwwuw>. Existing members do not need to renew.

The Friends group does not ask for a membership fee, but relies on donations. Please send contributions to the secretary (address above) and make cheques payable to The Friends of Mycenae Gardens.

Gardens benefit from steps to welcome visitors and protect grass

Dear Friends

This year we have made excellent progress on a number of fronts. We have seen important reductions in pressures on the gardens, following a Steiner School initiative. We have also seen additional conservation measures by the Royal Borough of Greenwich.

We have managed to raise awareness of the gardens in the community and to make the entrance to the grounds more welcoming, thanks to the council and to a generous donation. We have improved facilities for visitors, with three additional picnic tables. We have also confirmed the popularity of the annual dog show, Canine Capers, among the dog-owning community of Greenwich, who supported our event strongly despite atrocious weather.

Smart new signs at the top and bottom of Mycenae Road now direct visitors to the gardens.

The entrance to the grounds sports a new weather-proof noticeboard. This allows us to display information and shows visitors they are welcome in this public open space. The noticeboard was generously donated by Wates – the building firm that has been creating the new John Roan School. The gift was part of the firm's contribution to the community through Mycenae House and Gardens.

Picnic tables

One of the aims of the Friends is to encourage improvement in the facilities for those who visit the gardens. So we were delighted when we were able to marshal support to buy new picnic tables for visitors.

The Westcombe Society, Vanbrugh Community Association, which runs Mycenae House Community Centre, and Greenwich Steiner School generously agreed to contribute equal shares with the Friends to purchase two very solid pine picnic tables with integral benches. The staff at Mycenae House volunteered to put the flat-packs together. We are very grateful for everyone's contribution.

The council also provided an additional weather-proof picnic bench.

School acts to safeguard grass

Greenwich Steiner School has tackled concerns about the grass by moving half the classes on to the heath for their outdoor activities, thus halving the wear and tear since September.

This promises to make a significant



Deep mulch protects roots of important trees

contribution to conservation and complements an initiative by the Royal Borough of Greenwich to further protect trees and wildlife.

After consultation with the Friends and the Westcombe Society, the council has laid a deep layer of natural mulch over the roots of the major trees to cushion them from trampling. It has also introduced natural low-level barriers on the west side of the gardens to guide users away from the undergrowth and rough woodland. This is to reduce the disturbance to wildlife.

Bat walks

The Friends are always keen to learn more about the natural history of the gardens and to encourage appreciation of the wildlife. Most of the mammal species active during the day are well known, but there was little information about the species that only come out after dark.

Fortunately a Greenwich bat expert was willing not only to investigate, but to show residents how to detect bats in the dark and how to tell different



Natural borders help guide human feet away



New picnic tables encourage users to linger



New noticeboard signals a welcome to visitors

species apart. Bee Twidale, a retired teacher, agreed to lead two "bat walks", so we organised one for grown-ups and one for children.

Unfortunately bats don't bother to fly in the wet, because their insect prey won't be flying either. So even with equipment to reveal the sonar sounds emitted by bats way above human hearing range it isn't always possible to detect them.

There was definite evidence of at least a couple of common bat species foraging over the gardens and under the trees when the human grown-ups were prowling in the dark, but sadly the children drew a blank a few weeks later.

Evidence of roosting was also elusive, so there may be potential for putting up some bat roosting boxes in consultation with the Royal Borough of Greenwich. Bats are completely harmless to people and in the open air are always able to make sure they avoid us, and don't get tangled in anyone's hair.

David Hall
Chair