

Friends of Ashby Bath Grounds

NEWSLETTER NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2020

Bath Grounds gain Green Flag Award Testament to the Power of the Community

Another milestone has just been reached in the history of our beloved Bath Grounds with the recent announcement that they have been awarded the coveted Green Flag Award. The Green Flag Award® scheme recognises and rewards well managed parks and green spaces, setting the benchmark standard for the management of recreational outdoor spaces across the UK and around the world.

The announcement by Ashby Town Council, last week, was welcomed by the Friends of Ashby Bath Grounds (FOABG) who have been heavily involved in planning, managing, securing funding, and actually carrying out many of the improvements to the Bath Grounds over the last six years.



The community group, which was set up to protect and enhance the BG for the benefit of public enjoyment, was pleasantly surprised at the announcement which is just reward for the support given by the Ashby community and the FOABG membership.

The Bath Grounds have been transformed over recent years following the formation of the FOABG whose initial focus was to prevent proposed development on the grounds. The community group



recognised that this much loved green heart of Ashby was in need of some additional TLC and embarked on the ambitious 'Heritage Path Project' raising some £65k in funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund and Leicestershire and the North West Leicestershire District Council. This led to the installation of the new all-weather Heritage Path around the Grounds, the various Historical Interpretation Boards and Mosaics, the archaeological survey and many other initiatives designed to lift the profile of the BG and highlight their historical importance.

The success of this project, together with successful 'Save our Bath Grounds' campaigns in 2014 and 2018, against development on part of the BG, raising a petition of 8,000 signatures, encouraged the Friends to continue to work closely with the Town Council, particularly the Town Clerk's office, in generating and developing further improvement projects around the Grounds. These have included:

- The installation of new benches around the Grounds with sponsorship kindly provided by caring Ashby residents with a love of the BG.
- Additional litter bins around the Grounds.
- Maintenance of the South Street flowerbed and painting of benches.
- Annual Litter picks
- The Castle View Wildlife Walk – This ongoing project



was started three years ago and involved the transformation of a dark, overgrown, unloved and underused footpath bordering the BG into a light, open, welcoming

thoroughfare which is widely used by residents and visitors alike. The project included the removal of a significant amount of self-seeded growth, dead wood, old fencing and general rubbish, followed by the preparation and planting of a wildflower verge along the full length of the path which provides a mass of colour throughout the summer as well as being a haven for insect life. Ten new oak and beech trees have been planted, with the Friends recently installing new tree supports to these trees. The Friends have also planted hundreds of bulbs along the Wildlife Walk and bird and bat boxes have been installed in the mature trees along the Walk.

The 'laying' of around 70M of hawthorn hedge along the northern edge of the Grounds – this was done with the close co-operation of the Heart of England Hedge Laying Group.

Over the years, the FOABG have benefitted from the support of the Ashby community and enjoy a wide following on social media from people who care deeply about protecting the Bath Grounds for the benefit of residents and visitors alike.

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The Friends close relationship with the Town Council and other Agencies has proved to be mutually beneficial and has led to many initiatives to reduce ASB, reduce the incidence of dog mess, help to prevent vehicles accessing the Grounds and generally helping to improve the overall environment and maintenance of the BG.

The prestigious Green Flag Award does however bring with it a range of specific responsibilities to maintain the standards upon which the Award is based.

A key element of the Green Flag Award is to be able to demonstrate that a suitable Action Plan together with a comprehensive Management Plan is in place relating to the Town Councils aims for the Bath Grounds.

The Town Council are to be congratulated on developing both the Action and Management Plans which will help guide and improve the maintenance and future enjoyment of the Bath Grounds.

Jez Birch, Chairman of the Friends, said, "The improvements to the Bath Grounds over the last six years, promoted by the FOABG working closely with the Town Council have played a major part in securing this Award, and all those involved, both directly and indirectly, should be justifiably proud of this achievement. The Friends will continue to work to safeguard and improve the BG and look forward to more members of the Ashby community joining them to help in look after this wonderful green heart of the Town."

Castle View Wildlife Walk – Hedge Laying

The volunteers from the **Heart of England Hedge Laying Group** did a fantastic job in laying the 30 year old hawthorn hedge that runs adjacent to the fencing along this stretch of the footpath. Friends members also lent a hand to lay the hedge and to plant additional whips, remove debris and to learn more about the skilled craft of hedge laying over the two days. The vision is to continue to lay the rest of the hedge and to maintain this hedge so that over the coming years it becomes much thicker and will protect and support many species of wildlife. Up to 200 additional hawthorn whips have been planted by friend's volunteers, to further thicken the hedging over time.



Annual General Meeting

Due to the Covid Lockdowns we have not been able to hold our AGM or General Meeting this year.

Work this year

- The Friends continue to hold maintenance meetings with the TC, following government Covid guidance.
- Work on the wildlife walk has continued through the year including weeding, planting of ferns and holly whips, annual cutting of wildflowers, maintenance of bird and bat boxes and hedge maintenance.
- Planting of daffodil bulbs, snowdrops, wild garlic and bluebell seeds
- Work on the South Street entrance flowerbed continues through the year.
- Litter picking by Ashby Residents

Membership for 2021

To achieve all our aims for 2021 we need your continued support. Your annual membership is especially important to us.

If you haven't already renewed, then please pay your £5 renewal subscription by;

Bank transfer to Acc no. 30039268 sort code 77-15-13 (please provide your name so we know who sent the money), or

Send a cheque payable to "Friends of Ashby Bath Grounds" to Geoff Bibby, Treasurer, 46 Pennine Way, Ashby, LE65 1EW.

Alternatively, you can also pay in cash and drop your monies off to the address above. Please ensure you write your name and address on the envelope and what the payment is for.

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