

Friends of Yeading Walk Newsletter

December 2024

Siemens Financial Service Corporate Volunteers set the pace in Yeading Walk

For the second year running, a group Siemens staff elected to contribute a day of corporate environmental volunteering in Yeading Walk. A beautiful, sunny autumn day saw Christine, Peter, Kevin and Qasim busy planting a variety of native ferns and bulbs along the Nature Walk leading to the stepping stones across the river and also at the side of the stone bridge near Rayners Lane.

A promise of mid-morning tea and biscuits saw the pace quicken. Afterwards the team got down on their knees to help FoYW committee members plant hundreds of wood anemone and fritillary bulbs - each one carefully positioned right side up - as well as primroses and primulas. All these will flower in spring, bringing welcome colour and nectar for the bees.



A big Thank You! to the Siemens team who gave so cheerfully and willingly of their time and effort to enrich our woodlands in Yeading Walk.

Trees for Life

The trees of Yeading walk give the park much of its special feeling of being in a hidden away space. The trees bring a high backdrop to the park, balanced and enhanced by the lower shrubs and lawn areas.

There is a variety of native species including oak, black poplar, sycamore, crack and weeping willow, hazel, silver birch, maple, horse chestnut, holly, yew and hornbeam. There are also a number of non-native ornamental trees. The orchard, comprising mainly apple trees, is situated by the Suffolk Road entrance.

Age and decay has resulted in the loss of a number of trees. Storms have felled others in recent years. The mature Black Poplars, near the Northumberland Road entrance, had been attacked by a fungus and needed reducing. Where spaces have been created, FOYW has started a hedgerow and planted some specimen silver birch. Along the Shady Walk replacement native trees were planted (a field maple, hornbeam and bird prunus) and these will take a couple of decades to mature. Hazel saplings have been planted along the sports field fence leading to Lincoln Road. Three ornamental pear trees and five alders were planted towards the Rayners Lane entrance.

This year we chose three species to give future 'big' trees, viz a sweet chestnut, a purple-leafed beech and a lime were planted in the Suffolk Road boundary. These should be nicely mature in about 300 years. Three spring blossoming crab apple trees – a boost for the bees - have just been added to the orchard.



Future plans for trees

A few trees around the park seemed to have struggled with the dry spell in 2023 and are all but dead. Some will be left to give habitat to many creatures and some will be replaced. There are a couple of dead trees along the Lincoln Road entrance. The crack willow - growing along the allotment fence – may require pollarding first to allow other trees to be planted and grow alongside them.

In the Nature Walk one large cherry laurel was removed in 2022, to let in light and enable a more diverse environment. The woodland is starting to grow saplings of sycamore and ash while additional daylight allows existing trees to flourish. Beyond the stepping stones, the Nature Walk was part of the allotments forty years ago. This area was set aside to be a nature reserve but it has not been managed since its original layout. A hedgerow mix was planted round the perimeter with a pond in the middle. Over intervening years several ash have grown from saplings into mature trees, bramble has taken hold and the pond gone. This shows what the park could become if we locked the gates and left it for a few years. This may sound attractive to a few people but the park's biodiversity would suffer. Nature conservation requires creating a balance with management of some species to allow others to have a chance. Greater variety of plants leads to improved habitat and more insect life, providing food for birds, bats and other animals.

What a difference an hour makes!



While the crunch of autumn leaves underfoot is very satisfying on a morning walk, wet and muddy leaves on the path can also be very slippery. For the sake of safety and to produce wonderful compost for the planted beds in the park, the Monday Morning Leaf

Sweepers have been kept extremely busy in November. You could eat your sandwiches off the path near Rayners Lane once they had cleared this section and an hour's sweeping filled the compost bins to the top. Inevitably, the effort has had to be repeated each week in November as leaves fall but these volunteers were undeterred. After a year of regularly turning over and watering the composted leaves, the result is crumbly, leaf mould which improves the park's heavy clay soil and promotes healthy insect life. (Fortunately, there are plenty of leaves along the Nature Walk for those who still want that 'crunch' effect underfoot).

This is just one of many volunteering tasks where an hour's effort produces real results and creates a real feeling of 'job-well done'. Do come and join our volunteering team in spring and throughout the year for the various activities planned.

The Making of a Woodland

One swallow does not make a summer, and one lone fern does not constitute a woodland, so we planted lots, and lots and lots of them. Yeading Walk has a new riverside woodland, planted on a barren stretch of compacted ground with sparse vegetation which neither fed nor sheltered anything. This section of river bank was ruled by visiting dogs, little boys throwing sticks into the river and sadly, a spate of unwelcome dumping of rubbish late at night. The concept of a woodland environment with planting on either side of the fallen tree trunk near Northumberland Road offered a chance to create habitat for bugs and beetles, food for birds, provide early spring nectar and enrich the biodiversity of the site.

The main component of the planting is British woodland ferns, with spring woodland bulbs (wood anemones and snakeshead fritillaries), plus primroses, primulas and purple-leaved bugle providing spring nectar. We added a few bomb-proof standards such as Alchemilla Mollis, some hellebores and heuchera for colour and variety of foliage. As the river bank opened out into full sun, several varieties of grasses provide height and tougher ground cover.

Plants arrived in October and the volunteer team set to work to enrich the site with a layer of woodchip and several large bags of soil. Many hours and some sore backs later, the plants were in the ground. All the tiny bulbs required individual attention to ensure they were planted right side up, and the wildflower plugs were coaxed into the ground. Warm thanks to Harrow Council's Green Grid Award for the plants and bulbs.



The new woodland will settle into place over winter, and slumber under a blanket of oak leaves, to wake in spring to fill out and delight us all.



JOIN OUR MAILING LIST, SUPPORT YOUR PARK AND BECOME A FRIEND OF YEADING WALK

harrowwins *Be a Winner with Harrow Wins*
Give a little, win a lot

This is a local Harrow lottery to benefit good causes in Harrow. Tickets cost only £1, of which 60p goes to your nominated beneficiary, which we hope will be Yeading Walk. Local lottery odds are so much more favourable than the National Lottery, and we have had a number of Yeading Walk winners, so support your park, PLAY TODAY and GOOD LUCK! See details at website www.harrowwins.co.uk

Looking After the Park

We welcome families and volunteers to help us with projects and ongoing activities at Yeading Walk. We continue to raise funds to support and improve the park, and for specific projects. Just an occasional hour of your time makes a huge difference. Join our friendly group of volunteers for Project Saturdays from 9.30 a.m. until around 12 pm. Visit our website at friendsofyeadingwalk.co.uk, or join our active volunteer WhatsApp group by sending us a request with your mobile number via email to: foywgroup@gmail.com

We encourage everyone who loves Yeading Walk to support the park. As a Friend of Yeading Walk, **your annual donation of £5 /year works out to 1.4p/day - a bargain in anyone's books.** Please enable the Friends to care for your park by making your annual voluntary donation today. If donating by electronic transfer of funds, kindly give your name or that of your organisation as a reference. Do send us an email when you donate, using email address foywgroup@gmail.com with 'TREASURER – Payment' in the subject line, so that we can thank you for becoming a Friend and keep you updated with all the latest news.

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Your contributions, suggestions and comments are welcome and greatly appreciated. Send us an email with your ideas and comments.

We wish you all our Friends a very happy Christmas and New Year. Huge thanks to everyone who has volunteered in the park, donated to the Friends and helped to protect and preserve our beautiful park.

Sincerely,

Committee, Friends of Yeading Walk.