



Friends of Pinner Village Gardens

NEWS
Autumn -
Winter
2024

IMPROVING BRIDGE STREET GARDENS

Local initiative aims to bring Bridge Street Gardens up to standard reflecting its position in the heart of Pinner

Where is Bridge Street Gardens?

At the very heart of Pinner lies the small rest and recreation space of Bridge Street Gardens (BStG).

This small green space is in a busy area of Pinner at the convergence of High Street, Bridge Street, Marsh Road, Chapel Lane and Station Approach.

Unfortunately and despite its important position, these Gardens had been in desperate need of some maintenance and improvements.



How it began

At the beginning of 2024, one of the Friends of Pinner Village Gardens committee members decided to try to bring about improvements to BStG and engaged with the London Borough of Harrow.

This resulted in an agreement with the council whereby community volunteers could make improvements with the support of Harrow council.

Continued on page 2

Bridge Street Gardens - photo credit: Richard Stiles of Harrow Litter Pickers



A review of the park and events of late 2024.

Also in this issue

- Amusing 'Tails'
- New-storey unfolds in Compton Copse
- Bat Walk and Pond Dip dates
- Helping to keeping the pond healthy

NEWSLETTER for Members

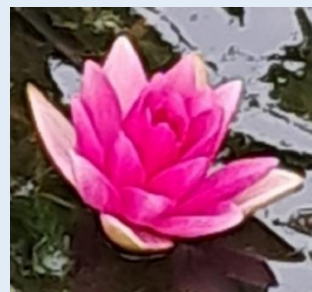
The FoPVG Newsletter is first sent to paid up Life & Annual (individual & household) Members of Friends of Pinner Village Gardens and then later posted on the website.

Question
What is the FoPVG Committee **not** planning to introduce into Pinner Village Gardens?

WHO EATS WHO IN THE WATERY WORLD?

Pond Survey shows 'Dragonfly Pond' is in good health

Read Nature Adviser Simon Braidman's article on Pinner Village Gardens' pond.



See pages 5 - 10

Improving Bridge Street Gardens continued

A second member of the committee joined this initiative and along with members of Pinner Association and Harrow Litter Pickers, a team was formed. Monthly working parties have been established since May 2024.

Umbrella constitution

In order to ensure that BStG received similar benefits to other parks within Harrow borough, this initiative needed a level of 'officialdom'. Rather than create a new Friends group or some other structure, it was agreed that the BStG effort should come under the 'umbrella' of the Friends of Pinner Village Gardens. The Friends of PVG held a Special General Meeting in October 2024 to enable Members to vote on a revised constitution to allow this. Bridge Street Gardens management, work parties and funds will remain separate and independent from that of the Friends of Pinner Village Gardens.

Much needed tools

Meanwhile the London Borough of Harrow approved the constitutional structure and facilitated funding for tools that are to be jointly shared with the Friends of Pinner Village Gardens (FoPVG). The tools were much needed by both groups. Further improvements are being planned to begin in Spring 2025.

Achievements so far:

- Completion of footbridge repair
- Shrubs pruned
- Hedge given rejuvenation pruning
- Monthly working party sessions
- Facebook page set up
- UKSPF grant for new shared gardening tools
- Constitution agreed



Bridge Street Gardens has an area of about 1,770 square metres and was created in the 1950s. The River Pinn cuts across the space and then flows at the back.

In the earlier part of the 1900s there had been buildings on the site including cottages, a small school and parish hall.

For details of what's happening at Bridge Street Gardens and contacting the team please see their facebook page.

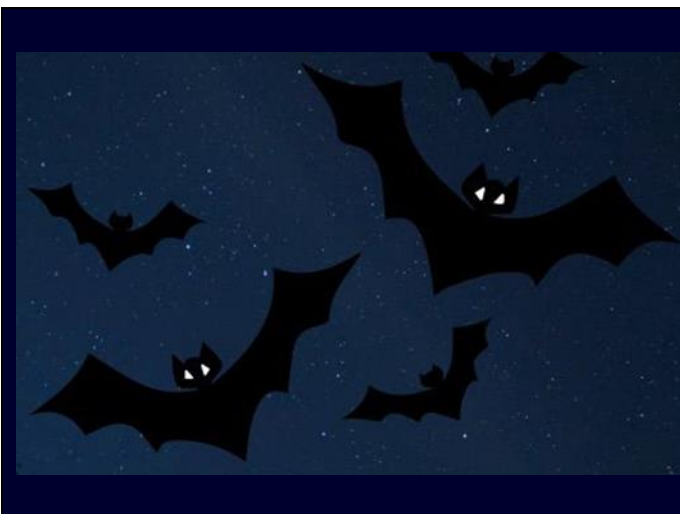


BAT WALK

Thursday 11 September 2025
evening 7.30pm - 9.30pm led by
Nature Adviser Simon Braidman
in Pinner Village Gardens

Booking essential

Details will be published via facebook
and on the park's notice boards
about 4 weeks in before event date.



New storey unfolds in Compton Copse

A bid by FoPVG to Harrow Council's Green Grid Fund for an under-storey of plants for Compton Copse has been successful. Brief outline bids had to be submitted by end of 2023, and following discussions with Harrow's Landscape Architect, plant lists were agreed and delivered in late Autumn 2024. The result is over 300 ferns, Primulas - both primroses and cowslips - and woodland bulbs. The aim is to provide additional interest in the park while attractively providing more diversity in plants to support wildlife.

Park visitors walking along the perimeter path, Compton Walk, will see new clumps of plants in the small woodland area known as Compton Copse.

The planting is being carried out by Community Payback supervised by FoPVG Committee Members. 'Payback' are people who have been sentenced in a Court of Law to community service instead of a prison term. One benefit of them carrying out this planting work is that they can see immediate and positive results of something for which they are not being paid, and which is appreciated by others.

None of the bulb nor fern species have been planted in the Copse before and so the outcome, especially of the bulbs is awaited with interest. The Spring flowering woodland bulbs are: snakes-head fritillary *Fritillaria meleagris*, quamash *Camassia*; woodland anemones *Anemone nemorosa*.

Aiming to support wildlife in the park, the woodland anemones are liked by hover-flies, which look like wasps, but the birds which feed on them can tell the difference. Primulas provide early nectar and pollen in Spring.

Cool cover for frogs

The ferns are: Hart's tongue *Asplenium scolopendrium*, male fern *Dryopteris felix mas*, scaly male fern *Dryopteris affinis*, and soft shield fern *Polystichum setiferum*. The ferns should provide cool shade cover for amphibians including frogs - often seen in the Copse - and insects.

Below left: *Asplenium scolopendrium* spores.



Above: Autumn leaves among new ferns.
Centre: *Polystichum setiferum*

360 million years ago

Ferns are an ancient type of plant that first appeared around 360 million years ago – they have been around so long they even provided food for herbivorous dinosaurs. Pre-dating flowering plants, they reproduce through microscopic spores.

Currently the Friends of Pinner Village Gardens committee has no plans to introduce dinosaurs into the park!!



MORE HANDS MAKE LIGHT WORK OF BULBS



Photo above: BDO Accountants kept their promise that that a second team from their staff would volunteer to help us plant bulbs in the autumn (see Summer 2024 edition). A magnificent effort in mid-December 2024 saw them plant three sections of the Rose Garden including the centre circle with tulip bulbs.

Gardening Tip: Tulip bulbs are best planted between November and New Year's Day.



Photo above: During 2024 Geocache volunteers came three times to help us in 2024 - in Spring pond planting, in Autumn pond weeding, and in December planting bulbs in the park.

We are very grateful to them, including Brian, former FoPVG Secretary, who is the Geocacher's coordinator, as its not only hard work, and this year transport difficulties - engineering works on the Underground - and the weather - very heavy rain - did not put them off. [Please see Pond Survey article page 5 and other Pond related items on pages 11 & 12.](#)

It's deep and its wet. We stand on the edge of Pinner Village Gardens 'Dragonfly Pond' look down into its depths and wonder what is going on down there.

WHO EATS WHO IN THE WATERY WORLD?

In his article *Simon Braidman* tells us what he found in his survey of the pond and reports on its health.

Why and what it tells us

Every so often, and twice in 2024, I carry out a survey of the tiny wildlife found in 'Dragonfly Pond' at Pinner Village Gardens .

I also look at ponds at Stanmore Country Park, Stanmore Common and Stanmore Marsh. Plus I am one of the surveyors of the Great London Pond Survey Project.

Surveys are done to assess the health of the pond and check there are no serious problems that could have even wider impact.

I had some provisional results from the Pond Dip we did with children at the Pinner Picnic in June 2024. This is softly educational - learning without knowing it - and great fun. But to see smallest and the most shy and microscopic bugs, quiet is needed with the water still and clear, not disturbed and cloudy.

BASIC FACTS:

Surface area: 100 square metres

Depth: too deep not to be wearing waders

Base: Concrete

Water supply: Rain and tap



What affects the health of a pond

The presence of various creatures will indicate water quality and also habitat quality, the pond habitats and its surrounds are key to its wildlife value.

A concrete pond with no aquatic vegetation, surrounded by mown grass with no close-by trees or hedges will have wildlife, but the number of species found would not be high.

The water supply to a pond is critical.

Ponds fed by urban streams and rivers are often in poor condition due to the pollutants and a high nutrient load owing to the washing in of contamination from various chemicals running off the land, even food being carelessly thrown away or misguidedly thought good for wildlife.

Left: Simon Braidman examining tiny pond animals with his microscope.

The Dragonfly Pond's construction and water supply

Built in the very early 1930s, the pond in Pinner Village Gardens is rain and tap water fed, and built of concrete. This means there may be tiny amounts of rainwater pollutants (oxides of Sulphur and Nitrogen). Tap water will contain Chloramines where chlorine is bubbled through drinking water with tiny amounts of Ammonia added. This is to kill harmful bacteria.

Sunlight helps breakdown chloramines

Chloramines are toxic to fish and amphibians in the larval state as it effects gill function. However the number of healthy fish found indicates Chloramine concentration is low. The openness of the pond helps as ultra-violet (UV) rays from sunlight, break down chloramines into less toxic nitrates and nitrites.

Filamentous algae can form mats at the water surface. Too much algae is a sign of too high a nutrient level and this can blanket the surface of a pond shutting out sunlight to the water below. It can occur during prolonged hot weather when the water becomes too warm and evaporates.

Pond scores highly on habitat quality

The most critical feature is habitat quality and the Pond scores highly – as it is surrounded by different habitats:

- Grass with some unmown areas of longish grass and plants surrounds the pond, providing a space for plants and animals to complete their life cycles undisturbed.
- The raised beds, effectively banks, are woodland belts providing shelter from northerly and westerly winds;
- The tall trees with an under-storey of bushes and excellent ground cover also provide lots of shelter.



- The pond itself is well vegetated with rooted submerged aquatic plants, floating waterlilies and emergent plants.
- Emergent plants – those that stand up above the water like Great Willowherb and rushes – enable larvae to crawl up out of the water and metamorphose into their adult bodies.

Above: Great Willowherb *Epilobium hirsutum*

Left: The delicate white flowers of *Alisma plantago-aquatica*, common name mad-dog weed.

Habitat quality continued

- The new gravel and stones (photo right) used to raise the pond bed level has allowed new native emergent plants that grow best in shallow water to be grown.
- The waterlilies provide both leaves to hide under and upon which to sit.

Structural complexity means good diversity. Improvements could include adding deadwood in water to the water that would enable invertebrates to complete life cycles and provide perches for insects, birds and small mammals.

The Willow Emerald Damselfly lay their eggs into woody branches over water.



Above photo: new gravel and planting.

What lives in the pond?

Inviting pond neighbours to dinner can be dangerous

Predators

Fish: We know and can easily see lots of fish; they are Carp. They will depress the levels of smaller animals as they are part predators.

Newts: We found Newts on the pond dip but not on the survey as I suspect the Newts may have left the pond after the breeding season in Spring.

Never before recorded in Pinner

Dragonflies and Damselflies: The major invertebrate predators are the Dragonflies and Damselflies. Six species were recorded this year – including the Azure damselfly never before recorded in Pinner.



Above: Azure Damselfly *Coeaerona puella* (male) dangerously close to a female Emperor Dragonfly *Anax imperator* (green form).

They are deadly both as adult aerial hunters and larval aquatic ambushers.

Fight to the death

The Emperor Dragonfly is the UK's largest species. This highly aggressive species will eat Damselflies and can fight to the death over territory with rival males and is found in PVG's pond.



Above: Common Darter dragonfly.
Photos page 7 © Roy Batute

Predators continued

..... a gruesome end

Pond Skaters: On the surface of the water are the pond skaters - *Gerris lacustris*. Having detected the ripples of a struggling small insect, the pond skater's hairy feet enable them to glide across the water to catch their prey. The predator then stabs their victim with their sharp mouthparts or 'beaks', to bring about the gruesome end.

An under water predator is the **Water Scorpion** (*Nepa cinerea*) which is an ambush hunter of worms and midge larvae.

Water Boatmen: Also called Backswimmers, they are predatory bugs with piercing mouthparts and with toxic saliva suck out the contents of the body. They feed on other insects but will attack fish fry and tadpoles. Breathing is via air trapped against its body by a dense mat of long hairs and short hairs called setae and microtrichia respectively. This air layer can last for 120 days underwater. Adults can fly between water bodies. There are 4 UK species of Greater Waterboatmen.

Leeches who are related to earthworms are common and the smaller species are predatory. The larger *Glossiphonia* species suck blood from fish and amphibians. Leech locomotion is undulating swimming and looping using the suckers on head and bottom.

Flatworms who are related to flukes and tapeworms are part predatory and part scavengers. The common species is *Polycelis nigra*. They glide along using tiny hairs or use powerful muscles to push themselves over surfaces.

A bug I had not seen for 15 years

Water Stick Insect: In Pinner Village Gardens pond I was delighted to see a bug that I had not seen for 15 years. During the September Bat Walk, a torch light shone into the pond revealed a water stick insect (*Ranatra linearis*). This is not a true stick insect but a predatory member of the bug family.

Grazers

Snails and molluscs graze by ripping plant tissue and algae with their radulae - a tongue like muscle covered in rows of minute teeth. Within the pond are ice-cream cone shaped Greater Pond snails, flat whorled Ram's-horn snails and bivalve-shelled Orb-shell Cockles are filter feeders.

Right: Simon has an audience

Midge larvae, worm-like and non-biting, are common and form major prey items for predators. They themselves feed on algae, plant fragments, wood fragments and silt. This material is rich in organic matter and death, moulting and faecal matter produces a rich soup coating plants, stones, the silt at the pond bottom plus nutrients suspended in the water.

Bat food

But the midge larvae that develop and grow to become flying adults are food for bats.

Scavengers

Shrimps and Water Lice The pond's scavengers include Water Lice which are aquatic versions of their terrestrial cousins and freshwater shrimps who are not shrimps at all but members of a distant branch of Crustacea, the *Amphiphoda* (who do not have a hard shell).

Often one sees a large male freshwater shrimp (of the genus *Gammarus*) grasping a female in a pre-mating hug to prevent other males getting a look in.



Tiniest creatures

It is the tiniest of creatures – plankton – that form the basis of the food web.

Plankton: There are both zoo (animal) plankton and phyto (plant) plankton.

Zoo plankton includes the **Water Fleas**, (although they are not actually fleas, as fleas are insects with 6 legs) but leaping and swimming crustaceans* who swarm in the surface and upper waters seeking phytoplankton attracted to sunlight.

fastest jumper in the animal world

Cyclops Related to Water Fleas is *Cyclops*, the *fastest jumper in the animal world*, however, the females often slowed down by towing two egg sacs like bags of shopping. Its single red eye giving the animal its name.

Ostropods Where the organic deposits are thickest there are Seed Shrimps (not shrimps) but another Crustacean group the Ostracods. These are thick shelled animals with two cases hinged together.



Simon Braidman samples the pond to look more closely at the microscopic and small creatures. The green weed is useful oxygenator *Ceratophyllum*.

Protista These tiny animals no bigger than a pinhead themselves feed on smaller beasts, microscopic transparent animals ranging from a tenth of a millimetre to sizes one hundred times smaller. Some are single celled animals, what used to be Protozoa, now part of a huge kingdom called the Protista.

build a protective house

In the water of Pinner Village Garden's pond there were some classic protists from the trumpet shaped *Stentor* to the 'plant vase' with its stalk *Vorticella*. They feed by creating a current using tiny hairs called cilia waving in the water.

There was the famous *Amoeba*, but in this case they were species that cement tiny sand or stone fragments to themselves to build a protective house called a test. This is the genus *Diffugia*.

Predators or parasites on those of their own kind

These tiny things are predators or parasites on others of their kind. Some feed on bacteria and organic matter, while others ingest microscopic plants and instead of digesting them enslave them exploiting the products of photosynthesis.

Not all these tiny forms are one celled; one group the Rotifers are complex with a primitive brain, kidneys (a pair of specialised cells called a flame cell and a tube cell connected by a duct), a stomach and gut and a full muscular and reproductive system.

Some are bag like and swim in open water, while others worm-like creep along like leeches and then can evert 'turn around' circular fields of tiny hairs or cilia and then swim off.

huge seizing jaws

Most feed with the cilia but a few have developed huge seizing jaws which they project to grab prey and a few have developed projection rods to form a net.

looks like a smile

The phytoplankton are microscopic and they too are varied with spheres of colonial single cell plants moving by synchronised use of whip-like hairs called flagella, single celled algae come in different shapes, but one *Closterium* looks like a smile.

Half plant but half animal

Other tiny one-celled organisms seem half plant-half animal. The *Euglenoids* are plant-like most having organs called chloroplasts which carry out photosynthesis, however, their cell walls are phospholipids (not cellulose) which you only find in animals.

Mucus slime to help them move

The diatoms are plants but their cell walls are made of silica (sand). Some diatoms can move - those species have grooves in their cell walls called *raphae* and pass slime (mucilage) down the raphae as they move over a surface like a snail or slug.

CONCLUSION :

All this can be found in the pond at Pinner Village Gardens. This is a high quality pond in high quality surroundings.



© Roy Batute

POND EXTRA

In the pink and looking good

In Spring 2024 the pond benefitted from Harrow's Green Grid for which the FoPVG submitted an outline bid at the end of 2022, the aim being to add to the variety of plants and subsequently diversity of life pond.

Planting in the pond was carried out with help from the Geocachers and a number of sessions with Community Payback members – including two gentlemen who opted to continue to get the planting finished although they had completed their Community Service hours and could have gone home.

Plants include Bog Bean *Menyanthes trifoliata*, Agrimony *Eupatorium cannabinum*, and pink waterlily *Nymphaea Darwin Hollandia*. The water lilies appear to have settled in well and given that it was their first summer in the pond with each producing more than five flowers.

The existing white water lilies have rescued from being choked by the rushes and have been repotted and repositioned in the pond.



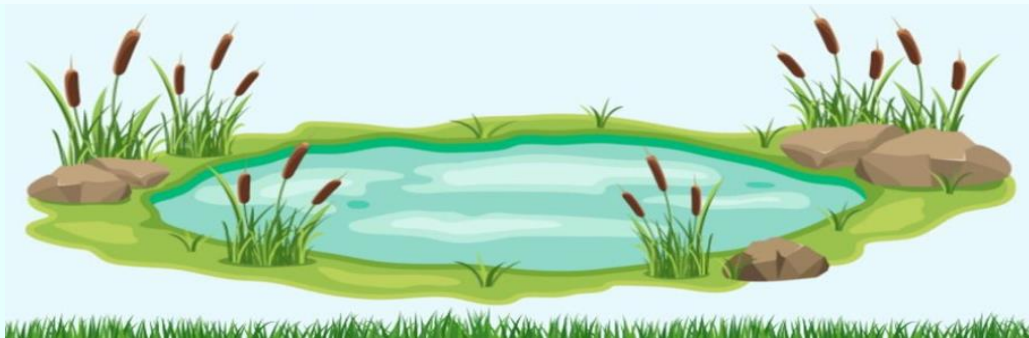
Above: Waterlily *Nymphaea Darwin Hollandia*

Please see Pond Survey article pages 5 - 10

SUMMER POND DIP

Join Nature Adviser Simon Braidman for a close up look at the wild life in Pinner Village Gardens' Dragonfly Pond

Monday 11 August afternoon 2 - 4pm : Booking essential



Booking details will be published via facebook & PVG park's notice boards about 4 weeks before the event date

Pond sampling is done from the side of the pond; children do not enter the pond and must be accompanied by parent of guardian throughout the event .

OXYGENATING PLANTS AND ALGAE

Do not confuse helpful oxygenating plants like the feathery *Ceratophyllum* with algae. Water that is not oxygenated will become stagnant, smelly and unhealthy. The submerged foliage of oxygenating plants produces oxygen throughout daylight hours, enabling a healthy ecological balance in the pond. Oxygenating plants also provide a safe habitat for insects, frogs and newts.

There are many types of algae. While some algae can be potentially harmful, algae are very important members of a healthy, well-balanced pond ecosystem, providing food for some creatures.



Ceratophyllum

POND EXTRA continued

HELPING TO KEEP THE PARK'S POND HEALTHY

Q. Why should unwanted fish not be dumped in the pond?

A. Please do not dump unwanted fish from your pond or aquarium in the park's pond as the fish will:

- upset the balance of life in the pond
- potentially introduce a disease that will kill some pond life, and
- usually die soon because their usual food source will not be available. Even if they are cold water fish from an aquarium, the water in the pond will be often colder, or in summer even hotter.

Q. What about Dogs 'wearing' flea treatment?

A. Dogs should be kept out of the pond as flea treatment will harm pond life & disrupt plants.

Q. Why is the fountain not on all the time?

A. The water from the fountain is chlorinated drinking water – that would be harmful to wildlife and plants, would soon overflow the pond, would disturb the wildlife and plants, especially waterlilies, and cost a lot of money. It is put on in hot summer when the pond needs an essential top-up owing to evaporation.



Reflecting the results of weeding - Pinner Village Gardens' *Dragonfly Pond* in Autumn 2024.

Locally handmade wooden bowls and bird boxes for sale



Bird boxes 30mm diameter holes suitable for Sparrows and Great Tits. All £5 each
All funds go to FoPVG to support improvements in Pinner Village Gardens
Please email dodie@pinnervillagegardens.org.uk to arrange collection and payment.



AMUSING ~ TAILS ~

A number of dogs who visit the park have thought that the fox in the mural is real and so stalk it – only to be disappointed.

~

Answer to question on page 1. The answer is 'Dinosaurs'.
Missed it? Please see article page 3 'New storey unfolds in Compton Copse'.

Please help to keep the park beautiful by volunteering &/or joining the Friends of Pinner Village Gardens

Since 2015 when the Friends of Pinner Village Gardens was established the park has been vastly improved with new flower beds, childrens playground, refurbished benches, numerous new trees & many volunteer working parties weeding and planting. However, to keep the park beautiful it needs regular funding. Each year we need to buy items such as mulch, composts, fertilizers, replace worn-out tools and protective gloves, and new plants to replace those lost to drought, winter cold and natural decline.

To help this continue please become a Member of the Friends or donate:

- Life £100
 - Annual Family £20
 - Annual Individual £10
- Additional donations help hugely

To join or donate, please go to:

<https://www.pinnervillagegardens.org.uk/join>



**Make new friends, learn new skills
Its not all gardening**

Email:

Volunteer@pinnervillagegardens.org.uk

We would love to hear from you on topics or questions we might briefly cover in the newsletter.

Email us via the **Contact** page on our website
www.pinnervillagegardens.org.uk or email
friendsofpinnervillagegardens@gmail.com

Unless otherwise credited photos and articles by
Editor, Dodie M-R

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We aim to get it right. Please forgive us if we get it wrong.
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