

HARROW HERITAGE TRUST

Caring for the built and natural environment

Message from the Trustees

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Attendees at our Wild Harrow Bat & Moth night at Bentley Priory.

At our July meeting Chair Marilyn Ashton brought us up to date on the changes made to planning and how it changes decision making about development in the Green Belt. Harrow has always sought to protect the Green Belt. Now, however, Green Belt land can be downgraded to "Grey Belt" if inspectors do not deem it of good enough quality. One of the criteria to designate a plot as Grey Belt is its proximity to public transport. If a plot has nearby public transport then the quality of the Green Belt land was not a deciding factor - only transport links mattered. She told us several such decisions had already been made around the borough, and she mentioned some specific instances in Stanmore. It appears that local authority powers and local objections now lack the power they once had. It is sad to think that London and other cities might face losses to Green Belt land which has, heretofore, provided amenity and helped to clean the air we breath not to speak of the home Green Belt provides for local wildlife.

Our next meeting will be a combined AGM and Executive Committee Meeting. The date will likely be October 5th and invites will go out in due course. Meanwhile, mark your calendars.

HARROW HERITAGE TRUST

Charity No. 1072773

Trustees Executive Committee

President (*ex officio*): The Worshipful The Mayor, Councillor Yogesh Teli

Honorary Officers

Chair: Marilyn Ashton

Vice-Chair: Janet Mote

Treasurer: Leslie Bolsover

Secretary: **Vacant**

Membership Secretary: **Vacant**

Local Authority Members

Cllr Janet Mote

Cllr Michael Williams

Cllr Anjana Patel

Executive Committee Members

Stephen Bolsover (Harrow Nature Conservation)

Margaret Huitson (Harrow Nature Conservation)

John Orchard (Heritage Grants)

Angelique Soon (Harrow Rivers)

Simon Braidman (Work with Young People)

Meena Gosrani (Hatch End Association)

Vacant (Stanmore Society & Brown Plaques)

Robin Youle (Pinner Association)

Minutes Secretary: Nik Jackson

Heritage Grants

Chair: John Orchard

Grade II listed entrance piers to Canons Park Estate

With regard to the proposed restoration and refurbishment of the entrance piers to the Canons Park Estate, Canons Drive, Edgware, a planning application (PL/1656/26) has now been submitted by Canons Park Estate Ltd to the London Borough of Harrow for Listed Building Consent for the repair and conservation work to the southern-most gate pier. Harrow Heritage Trust has agreed to an offer of £6,500.00 towards the cost of the pier works and payment of the grant contribution will be upon the satisfactory completion of the pier restoration works.



Canons gate piers showing the remains of the damaged pier on the left hand side of the picture.

The gate piers, built 1712, once formed the grandest of the four entrances to Canons House which was the home of James Brydges, the first Duke of Chandos. Harrow Heritage Trust was a contributor to restoration efforts to the piers in 1998, along with other funders, the Georgian Group, English Heritage, and Heritage of London Trust. Fate struck in 2022 when one of the piers was crushed by a falling tree. The gate shards were saved and have been resting in storage waiting for restoration efforts to come together. The restoration is being managed by the Heritage Of London Trust and the collapsed pier is being rebuilt using salvaged original material, lime rendering, and matched natural stone capping with support from: The Jones Day Foundation, Graham and Claire Buckland, and others.

Harrow Rivers Group

Chair: Angelique Soon

We attended the Brent Monitoring Group workshop for passive monitoring boxes. This workshop gave us a broad overview of the technical development of the boxes and how they are being used in the Brent Catchment. The Brent Monitoring group aims to have 40 boxes in place in their rivers. The idea, and what the environment agency wants is that they will collect baseline data for understanding the river. Passive monitoring boxes can also be used to collect data that captures pollution events as they happen. However we learned that even a very well organised group like the Brent Monitoring Network with all the technology and data has difficulty getting results with pollution improvement as resources put aside by the big organisations to tackle these issues are finite. Very often reported misconnections, which are a source of pollution are classified as a category 3 by the Environment Agency, which means they do not need to investigate and take action, however as there are hundreds of misconnections these add up and are creating a serious continuous pollution issue in our rivers.

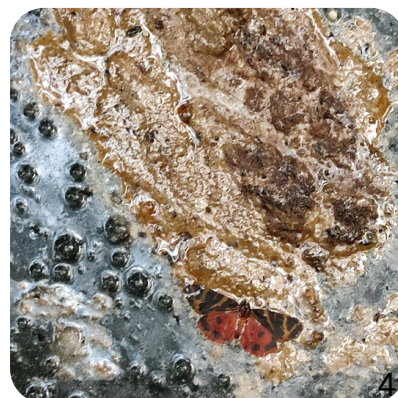
Huge amounts of filamentous algae growth have been appearing in rivers and this prevented Riverfly survey at Yeading Walk North Harrow in May. This alga growth usually may appear in the hot summer months but this year it has been present all winter. Additionally, serious sewage pollution was also reported at Roxbourne park on the 25th May.



We installed a Passive monitoring box CVP 8 on the Roxbourne. This is a highly polluted brook which has had ongoing problems for many years and has had multidisciplinary meetings which included Local MP Gareth Thomas, Harrow Council, the Environment Agency and Thames Water. Despite all this attention the watercourse is still very heavily polluted. Environment Agency Sonde devices have previously been placed in the Brook to monitor it.

Picture of CVP 8 surrounded by the polluted water in Roxbourne Brook

Close up of some of the wildlife damaged by the pollution in the Roxbourne Brook



Harrow Heritage Trust

End of March 2026 financial report

The Trust's funds totaled **£187,909** at the end of the financial year March 2026. Four funds totaling **£156,290** were designated as restricted to the uses described. These are Heritage Grants (**£30,933**), Public Works of Art (**£19,258**), Work with Young People (**£2,353**) and Headstone Manor (**£103,746**): commitments or expenditure plans exist for parts of these. There is also an Unrestricted General fund of **£31,619** which includes the activities of Harrow Nature Conservation, Harrow Rivers, and the Brown Plaques committee as well as admin and one-off charitable donations. A full statement will appear in the next issue.

Membership

Membership numbers are static at 50 of which 27 are Lifetime Members. The position of Membership Secretary remains unfilled. Please contact info@harrowheritagetrust.org.uk if you would like to become our Membership Secretary.

Harrow Nature Conservation (was Forum)

After years of discussion among members, Harrow Nature Conservation Forum has finally dropped the "Forum" from its name. The reason many were dissatisfied with the name is that they felt "Forum" implied we got together to talk about nature conservation rather than actively doing conservation work in Harrow nature reserves. Now the name implies action rather than talking. And more changes are coming.

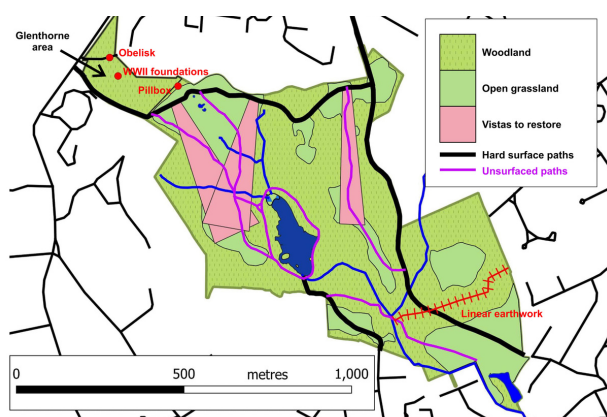
Harrow Nature Conservation is also just about to launch an updated website. In fact, it can already be seen here: **www.HarrowNC.org.uk**. It is still a work in progress and the old website is still live - but won't be for much longer.

Our new site concentrates on promoting our events, both our practical conservation days and our member led events exploring nature such as guided walks and bat detecting evenings. Our event scheduling on the new website is integrated with a booking site called Eventbrite which will be familiar to many. We are already using that feature but remain open to email bookings as well. We hope it will generate more participation in Harrow's fantastic green spaces.

Harrow Nature Conservation

Chair: Stephen Bolsover

The dry hot summer has left many of our sites looking yellow rather than green, but we can be thankful that there has been no serious damage. Fires have burned small areas of Stanmore Common, Stanmore Country Park and Bentley Priory, but were put out thanks to attentive members of the public and excellent rapid responses by the Fire Brigade.



Map of Bentley Priory Nature Reserve showing some of the areas we will be working on.



As recently as 2014, one could sit on the bench at the top of "The Greensward" in Bentley Priory and see a long vista over Harrow and the London basin to Box Hill in Surrey. This is no longer possible.

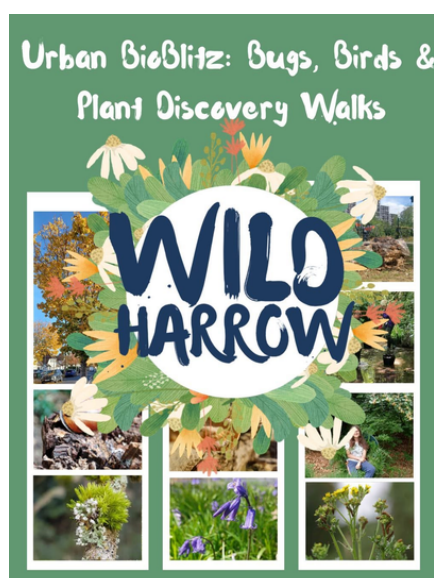
In the last newsletter I wrote about the mysterious obelisk standing in the Glenthorne area of Bentley Priory, and said that I was hoping to apply for funds to carry out stabilization works on the obelisk and to get research done to find out more about it. We have been successful in our application to the Heritage Lottery Fund, being awarded £124,743 over five years to carry out a number of projects at that site. (Bentley Priory lies north of the Uxbridge Road in Stanmore; the most popular entrance is at the north end of Old Lodge Way, postcode HA7 3LY).

As well as the work on the obelisk, we will repair a World War II pillbox that is a prominent feature at the north of the site. More excitingly, we will investigate a linear earthwork in the south of the reserve. This long raised mound has been variously identified as part of the Dark Age Grim's Dyke or a part of a medieval deer enclosure. We will use professional archaeologists to dig an exploratory trench through this structure; volunteers will then sift the earth. The hope is that we will find something that is both interesting and which helps date the structure and reveal its purpose. We will use a professional historian to research the obelisk and a nearby set of World War II foundations; we hope to find out who commissioned and who designed the obelisk, and to perhaps find diaries or letters of service personnel who lived or worked in the buildings during the War.

In the late 19th century the lands of Bentley Priory were modified to create a parkland that fitted with the ideas of the time and in particular the theories of Sir Uvedale Price. This included creating vistas from the house at the top of the hill over parkland, trees and lakes to a distant view of Harrow on the Hill and then London. In time these vistas have largely been lost as woodland encroached on the open grasslands. We will fell a small number of trees and clear some scrub to restore three vistas.

The grasslands at Bentley Priory are glorious, full of wildflowers such as pignut, agrimony, knapweed and bedstraw. Even in late August, after the blistering summer, you can see plenty of Devil's Bit Scabious in bloom. However in recent years the flower-rich grassland has been invaded by bramble. Each autumn for the next five years we will cut the bramble, which will then be raked off and piled in woodland areas below the grassland. We rake the cut material off for two reasons: to prevent a thick mulch forming that would suppress the growth of more delicate plants, and to ensure that as the bramble rots down the nutrients run off into the woodland, not onto the grassland. Nutrients promote the growth of ranker plants such as bramble, nettle and willowherb; by keeping nutrient levels low we preserve the species-rich grassland. The hope is that after five years the bramble will be considerably weaker and can be kept in check by the cattle that graze the site.

WILD HARROW



Harrow Nature Conservation and **Harrow Parks Forum** have teamed up with a **Voluntary Action Harrow** led initiative running throughout the summer and, potentially, into the new year, called **Wild Harrow**. The Wild Harrow program of events is designed to get more Harrow residents into Harrow green spaces.

It is also designed to introduce attendees to the fantastic number of green spaces the borough has and the many ways to become more involved with Harrow green spaces either within Harrow Nature Conservation & Harrow Parks Friends groups or on your own.

You can find a full listing of events on the Voluntary Action Harrow website :
<https://www.vah.org.uk/wild-harrow/>

Remembering Bentley Priory Warden Peter Peretti



Carol Lis and Chair Marilyn Ashton unveiling the info board at Summerhouse Lake



Harrow Heritage Trust Chair Marilyn Ashton beside the info board

There is now a more permanent reminder of Harrow's longest serving nature warden, Peter Peretti.

Peter was chief warden of Bentley Priory from 1989 to his death in 2022. As well as looking after the day to day work, Peter was also instrumental in implementing several improvements such as the marsh at the north end of Summerhouse Lake. He also opened up the Glenthorne entrance replacing the dark, gloomy Laurel with Hazel and created the chain of ponds, known as the Dragonfly Ponds at the top of Spring Meadow. After much debate on a suitable reminder of his work, it was decided that the smaller of the two islands in Summerhouse Lake would be called Peretti Island. An information board describing that and Peter's work was installed at Summerhouse Lake for visitors who may have never known how much of Bentley Priory was touched by Peter. On June 28th this year it was unveiled by our Chair, Cllr Marilyn Ashton. Many thanks go to Carol Lis for organising the unveiling and a reception afterwards at the Masfield Building.



Former and present wardens and assistant wardens in Harrow Nature Conservation plus interested public listen to a short recap of Peter Peretti's life and volunteer service before attending the reception in the Masfield Building kindly organised by Carol Lis.