



Newsletter: July 2020



We are nearly back! It has been a long time since our last work party in February, but we hope to be able to restart soon. Watch out for further information.

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The Site

The site is owned by Barnet Council and is open and is free to enjoy. It is about 10 minutes' walk from West Finchley underground station and just a couple of minutes' walk from the Finchley Way/Nether Street stop on the 326 bus route.

Turn left out of the station, walk to the mini-roundabout, turn right into Finchley Way and a few yards along on the right, you will see the site. The main entrance is opposite 5 Finchley Way, London, N3 1AH. Since the lockdown came into force it has become more and more popular with families for picnics and recreation. So, it's more important than ever to make it a more pleasant place to sit and to play.

Friends

Work on the site is organised by the Friends' committee and needs to be agreed with Barnet Council, who arrange to collect the litter, cuttings and other debris.

The Friends hope to re-start work on the site from next month, assuming lockdown restrictions are not re-imposed.

While the Friends group only got going in December last year, we had managed two shifts of a couple of hours before the lockdown. It's amazing what a small team working together can do in such a short time.

Please circulate this newsletter to friends and neighbours and encourage them to become Friends.

Membership of the Friends is free. You will receive a monthly newsletter by email telling you what is happening on the site, asking your opinions on ideas for how the site might benefit the community and more.



Social Media

There is a Facebook open to all FOFWOS members

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1385689341590473/>

Please log in to see what's happening and post photos and messages for Friends

Volunteering

Do you have time on your hands and want to meet some new people?
Want to add to your CV?

There are a number of volunteering opportunities to support the Friends. These include:

- setting-up and developing a website;
- contributing to the monthly newsletter by writing short pieces and/or contributing photos;
- organising events and publicity based on your ideas and those from the committee and other Friends;
- working on the site to keep it clean and tidy;
- helping to make the site a more pleasant place to sit and to play;
- delivering leaflets;
- helping to consult neighbours and;
- joining the Committee.

No previous experience is necessary. We can provide support to get you started.

If you would like to volunteer please contact Suzanne and Alan via our email at FOFWOS@gmail.com

Fund raising

You might remember that we submitted an application to Barnet Council for a grant to help make the part of the site that is very overgrown more accessible to the local community. We have been asked to provide further information and told that we should know the outcome of the application by 17th July. So, watch this space and keep your fingers crossed



Overgrown area that needs some work

Augustus Cooper Charity

There has also been progress on rejuvenating the Augustus Cooper charity that was set-up in 1960 to manage the site. Hopefully we will have more news for the August newsletter.

Augustus Cooper bequeathed the site to the 'people of Finchley' in his Will. See the history section below for more on this.

These developments mean that we have put other plans for fundraising on hold until we know what this grant might cover and the relationship that the Friends group will have with the Council.

However, we still welcome donations. The Friends group has a community group bank account with NatWest. For details of how to donate please email Suzanne and Alan at fofwos@gmail.com



Litter

There have been a lot more people using our site recently with the fine weather and lockdown. This is great news. However, there is more litter being left - not by "Friends" we are sure. So, if you see anything please put it in the bin outside the entrance in Finchley Way, but take care if anything looks dangerous, or hot.



Results of a barbeque

Animals and plants

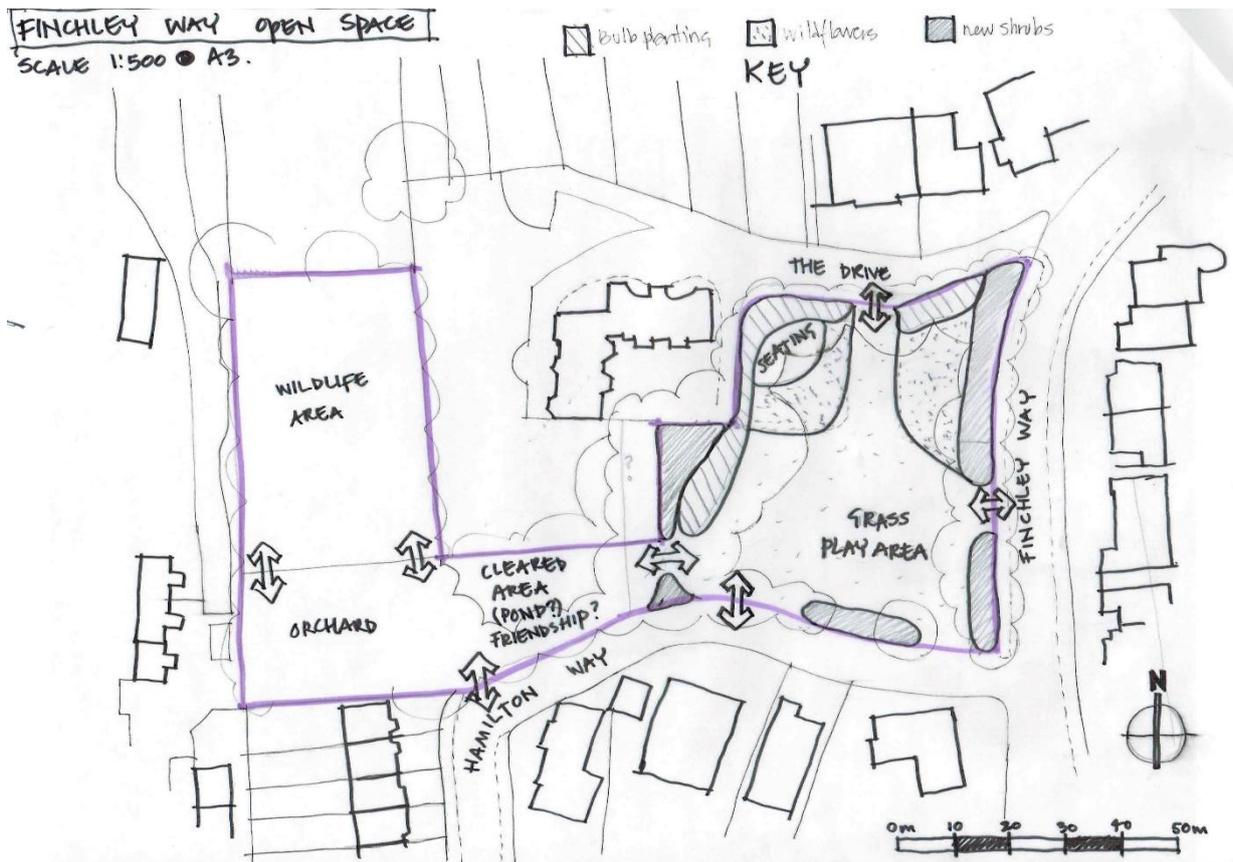
Badgers have been seen in nearby gardens.

The Plan

The sketch below shows the initial ideas of the Committee based on feedback from Friends and neighbours.

Our plan must be agreed with Barnet Council and we will actively consult with those living close to the site.

Please email your thoughts on our ideas to FOFWOS@gmail.com



History of the site

The area first appears in records in the mid-fifteenth century when it was known as Warren's Gift.

More recently it was the site of Brent Lodge house and garden, built in 1810, owned by Mr F A Hamilton from 1865 until 1902. Brent Lodge was put up for sale in 1907 with an estate of 26 acres. It was then a substantial mansion described as "in the Italian style".

The house and gardens were the site of an early 20th century experiment in co-operative housekeeping pioneered by Alice Melvin, a Finchley resident and supporter of the garden cities movement.

Brent Garden Village Society was formed in 1910 to undertake the development.

The aim was to try to resolve the 'servant problem' for middle class households by providing a cooperative kitchen, dining hall, nursery, laundry and servants' quarters in Brent Lodge. Members of the co-operative would live in houses or flats built in the 26 acres of grounds of the Lodge.



Brent Lodge

Photo of Brent Lodge taken from 'The Finchley Charities 1488-1988' by Fred Davis, Finchley Charities, London, 1988

The original plan envisaged four quadrangles of flats for single people and 114 houses. Only one block of flats, Cedar Court (built in 1912 and now Grade II Listed) and some of the houses (some of those on the south side of Finchley Way) were built.

The homes had only small sculleries and kitchens as residents were to eat communally.

In 1911 the first tenants moved in and by 1914 there were 33 households, although there had been a move away from collectivised housework.

It seems that some of the land (probably that along the west side of Nether Street), was sold for development to finance the co-operative buildings.

Historic England in their comments on the draft West Finchley Neighbourhood Plan advised that: *“The open setting of Cedar Court is an aspect of its significance and so should be conserved or enhanced”*.

In 1922 Brent Lodge and grounds was sold to Augustus Cooper, a watchmaker, who died in 1939 leaving the house and grounds (which did not include the Garden Village houses, or Cedar Court and its grounds) to Finchley Borough Council subject to a life interest which expired in 1960. (His Will allowed his sister to live there until her death, which was in 1960.) The council then set-up the Augustus Cooper charity to manage the site.

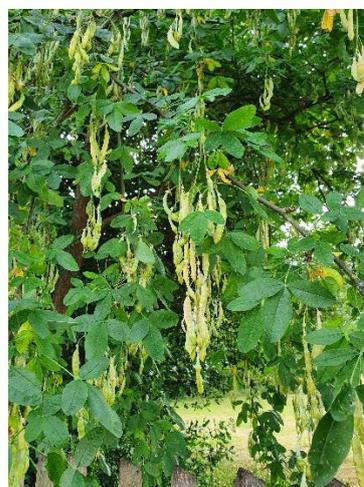
His Will gave the Council discretion to pull the house down (which it did in 1962) but it required the garden and grounds to be *‘retained always as an open space for the use and enjoyment always of the public’*.

The kitchen gardens in The Orchard were let as allotments and abandoned circa 2006. Although the site is now derelict and overgrown, traces of the

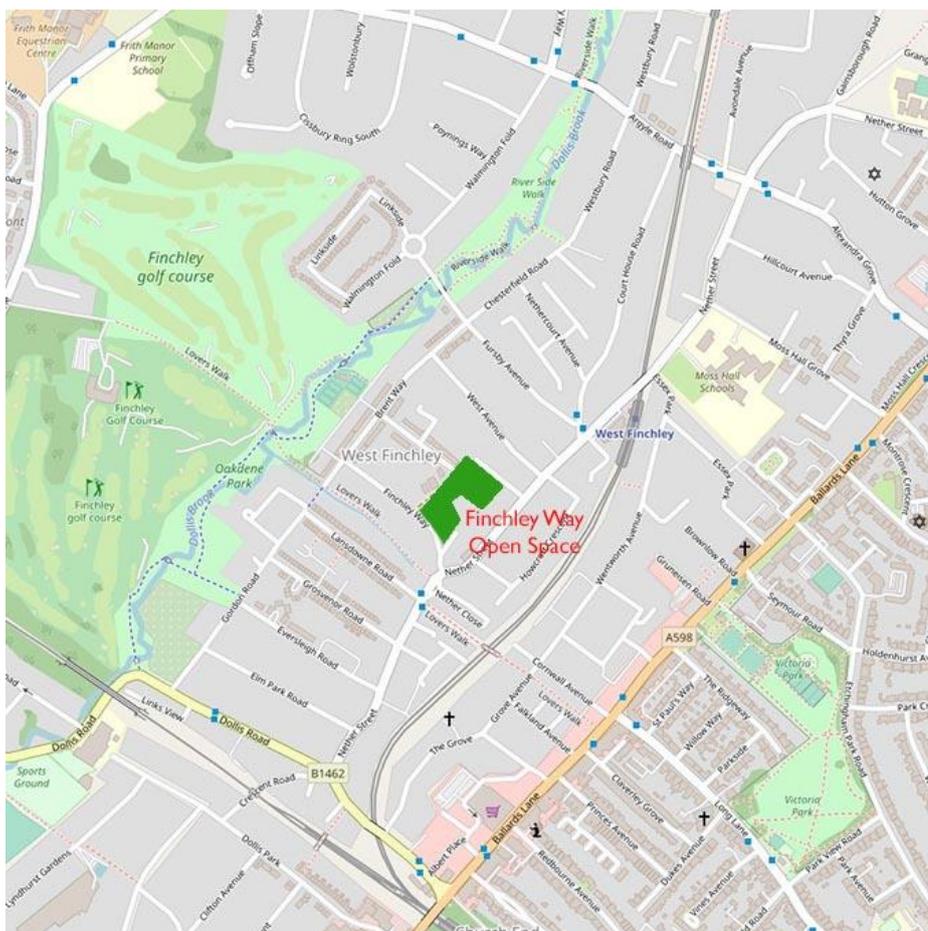
allotments in The Orchard and the paths through The Copse can still be seen. There was a well and a subterranean watercourse along the boundary with Cedar Court.

Competition

Well we didn't get any entries for the tree identification last month. Why not have a go this month?



Location of the site



If you have been following our Facebook pages this will mean something to you
fancy.wide.penny

It's the location of the entrance to our site in Finchley Way.

The app **what3words** lets you find the location of anywhere in the world. The whole world is divided into squares 3m x 3m and given a unique three-word reference with a dot between each word.

It is free, works on desktops, Android phones and iPhones. It's particularly useful where there are no obvious signs to tell somebody where to meet e.g. by a big tree half-way down a long road!

Try it out.

Thank you for your support

Contributors - Suzanne King, Alan Douglas and Arlette Garcia

To contact the Committee, some of whom live within sight of the site, just email FoFWOS@gmail.com

You can **unsubscribe** from this list at any time by emailing fofwos@gmail.com. You can request that all your details and email history be deleted at any time.