

The green flag flying high over our parks

Park Life

- ▶ Not one, not two but three awards for borough parks
- ▶ 'Friends of' groups win praise for their support

JON WEISGARD

THREE of the borough's most beautiful parks are flying a green flag of success after being named among the country's best open spaces.

Ravenscourt Park, Frank Banfield Park and Margravine Cemetery have all won prestigious Green Flag awards, putting them on a par with the best parks in England and Wales.

These are the first Green Flag awards achieved in the borough.

This honour is the national standard for parks and is managed by Keep Britain Tidy.

H&F Council has pumped £6million into its many picturesque parks and open spaces, as well as teaming up with award-winning grounds maintenance experts Quadron Services in May 2008.

H&F cabinet member Paul Bristow said: "This is absolutely wonderful news.

"Our ParkLife campaign has shown all residents just how highly we value our parks and to win three Green Flag awards is amazing.

"Winning one award would have been fantastic – winning two would have been extraordinary, but to win three awards at the same time is practically unheard of."



FRIENDLY PLACE: H&F cabinet members Paul Bristow and Frances Stainton (front) at Margravine Cemetery with 'Friends of' group members Jethro Lee-Mahoney, Derek Lamden, Sarah Lamden, Robert Stephenson, Ruth Savery, Helen Savery, Mary Hickson, Tigg Savery, Charles Spooner, Sarah Taylor, Sally James, Eileen Moore, Tony Moore and Janine Mitton. Inset right: Ravenscourt Park PICTURE BY JUSTIN THOMAS

As part of the awards the council had to demonstrate how residents are involved in their local park. H&F has established 'Friends of' groups to enable residents to enhance their park working with local authorities.

MARGRAVINE CEMETERY
THE cemetery near Barons Court has long been regarded as one of the borough's most beautiful open spaces.

It was opened in 1869 and more than 83,000 burials have taken place since then. It is now closed to burials except into existing family graves.

Its location means it has become a busy thoroughfare from Barons Court tube to

Charing Cross Hospital, and has a very active 'friends' group.

The cemetery's rich variety of trees attracts at



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least 25 species of bird, including the great spotted woodpecker, the long-tailed tit and the goldfinch.

The council has worked hard to spruce up the cemetery recently. This has included planting flowers such as hydrangeas and geraniums, extending hedges, resurfacing the path and painting the gates.

The Friends of Margravine Cemetery have also been very active. Ruth Savery from the group said: "We are delighted to have worked with the council in achieving a Green Flag award.

"The judges were impressed not only by the planted and mown parts but

equally by the areas of wild flowers and native hedging where wildlife and nature abounds."

FRANK BANFIELD PARK
THE Hammersmith park has also seen major improvements recently and was officially reopened in October last year.

It now features a new children's play area, attractive new landscaping, improved railings and gates and new benches.

The park is named after a former mayor and alderman of the borough.

Doris Banfield, widow of the late Frank Banfield, said: "This is fantastic news and I am delighted that the park has won. I was only in the park last weekend with my son and we both thought it was looking wonderful."

RAVENSCOURT PARK
LOCATED in the heart of Hammersmith is a scenic green space with tennis courts, basketball court, bowling green, lake and a cafe.

Beyond the cafe and by the entrance to Paddenswick Road, a beautiful walled rose garden is tucked away.

The council has been working hard to reinvigorate flower beds, clean the lake and restore the 100-year-old ornamental gates which can be found at the entrance to the walled garden.

For more details visit: www.lbhf.gov.uk/parklife

Park police catch two teen girls red-handed with a safe

JON WEISGARD

IT HAS been a busy few weeks for the council's parks constabulary as they continue to tackle crime and antisocial behaviour in the borough's 54 parks and open spaces.

They made seven arrests in the last month for offences including burglary, drug dealing and shoplifting.

On Saturday, July 18, two parks constabulary officers arrested two teenage girls who were caught red-handed with a safe in Bishops Park, Fulham. It had been stolen from the Fulham Palace Play Project which had suffered significant criminal damage during the break-in. Officers were called to the scene after the caretaker heard the alarm.

Two men were spotted running from the scene of the crime and inquiries are continuing to trace them.

Police are also investigating break-ins at the Fulham Palace Bowls Club and cafe that took place on the same evening.

The parks constabulary were also in action on Monday July 13, when they worked with the police to arrest a drug dealer in Hammersmith Park. In a separate incident, another dealer was caught in Gwendwr Gardens, Barons Court.

Both men were found to be carrying a substantial amount of what is believed to be a class A drug.

H&F cabinet member Greg Smith said: "We have some beautiful parks and open spaces. But unfortunately an unruly minority think it is acceptable for them to be used as havens for criminal behaviour.

"Our parks constabulary will continue to put all their efforts into fighting crime in our green spaces.

"These recent arrests should show criminals that we are determined to track them down."

Meanwhile, on July 14, officers were called out to Wormwood Scrubs and arrested a youth who was riding a stolen motorbike across the park.

They also helped to arrest a shoplifter in Tesco, Brook Green, following a violent argument with a store detective.

The council's parks constabulary comprises one inspector, 21 constables and three sergeants and operates 365 days a year. Patrolling starts at 6am daily and finishes at 12.30am during the summer months and at 10pm during the winter months.

'RUNDOWN' BROOK GREEN IS BEING REVITALISED

HANG ON: Stefanie Gilmour and her daughter Martha enjoy the play area at Brook Green, which will receive new equipment



PICTURE BY LEIGH QUINNELL

BROOK Green in Hammersmith is the latest park in the borough to have benefited from major refurbishments.

H&F Council has been working hard to upgrade the tennis courts, replace fencing, improve access and pathways and refurbish the dog exercise area, and more than £100,000 has been spent on a wide range of improvements.

New park benches and bins have also been installed and grass areas improved. There are plans to build a cafe and to tidy up the adjoining Little Brook Green and

the area next to the tennis courts.

The park is also one of 22 open spaces that will benefit from new natural play equipment over the next few years, with the council earmarking more than £1million to spend across the borough. It will be working closely with residents' group the Brook Green Association.

H&F cabinet member Paul Bristow said: "I am sure that residents will be very pleased with the improvements we have made to Brook Green. We really have turned it into an inspirational space."

Edmund Sixsmith of the

Brook Green Association added: "The green is looking vastly better.

"It had got very run down in recent years and it is wonderful that the backlog of repairs has been dealt with, and numerous improvements realised.

"The local kids have shown remarkable patience in keeping off the new grass and we hope they will now cherish the revived kickabout area.

"We look forward to working with the council to look after what we have and to plan and achieve future planting and other improvements."

Jon Weisgard