

Brent Island Trust

Newsletter, December 2020



Season's Greetings!

This is my first newsletter as Chair of the Brent Island Trust, having been elected at our recent "virtual" AGM. Previously, having returned to South Brent last year after finishing work, I had been serving as Membership Secretary and Vice Chair.

I am sure that many of you, like me, would have relished being at our AGM in person, seeing and chatting to both old and new friends and colleagues, but, sadly, that was not possible in the current circumstances. I would like to thank all members and trustees for their continuing support in the ongoing maintenance of our wonderful Brent Island for the pleasure and use of the local population. In particular, I must thank our outgoing Chair, Guy Pannell, who has put so much effort and enthusiasm into the Trust over many years, indeed, having been involved in the purchase of the Island and setting up the Trust! He continues to serve as a valued committee member.



Graham at a recent working party

I sincerely hope that this newsletter finds all of our members in good health and looking forward to Christmas and the New Year. This year more than ever I think we all need some respite from the current situation to relax, and hopefully many of us will have the opportunity to meet up with at least some of our family or friends.

Finally, due to the current restrictions, I cannot remind you about any upcoming events currently planned but we all hope that this will be resolved in the New Year and that we will once again be able to meet up and participate in events and working parties.

I wish you all a Happy and Healthy Christmas and New Year!

Annual General Meeting

As you may well have noticed we opted for a thoroughly distanced AGM by post and email this year. Thank you to everyone who voted for the 2020/2021 committee and for acceptance of the annual report and minutes of last year's meeting. In fact we finished up counting more votes than at the normal face-to-face meeting with 18 postal responses and 41 by email. The vote was a resounding 'yes' for all items and so your committee is:

Name	Position
Bridie Kennerley	Committee
David Worrall	Committee
Felicity Ferry	Treasurer
Graham Royle	Chair
Guy Pannell	Committee

Name (cont.)	Position (cont.)
John Hoare	Committee
Laurette Guest	Committee
Phil Dean	Secretary
Rob Wills	Committee

Also, thanks are due to those who praised the work of our committee and working party members who look after The Island. Among the feedback we had one very interesting question which hadn't crossed our minds— *"Can we introduce native British freshwater fish into the leat? Stickleback, Roach, Tench etc."* We consulted the Avon Fishing Association for their views. Of course, the leat is sourced from the River Avon and then feeds back into it and so any introduced fish would soon find their freedom. In general, the view is that the river is probably too rapid-flowing for the survival of these fish and there is apprehension about artificially introducing species into a natural environment. However, we know there are both Salmon and Brown Trout in the river and, recently, when the leat was drained for repairs to the bank there were several eels in the remaining pools.

Another comment was about the fallen 'Elephant' Beech tree which was in full leaf this summer despite its new horizontal resting position. A member suggested that *"It will continue to be a valuable habitat and visual spectacle for decades to come - provided it is not removed or 'tidied up'. I strongly urge the committee to leave the tree in situ: its removal seems totally unnecessary."* The tree certainly offers no hazard to visitors to The Island but we are keeping an eye on it to make sure that debris doesn't build up to create a dam and so raise the water level. We'll discuss the proposal at the next committee meeting.

We'll create 'minutes' of the virtual meeting so we have something to approve in the 2021 AGM!



The 'Elephant' Beech on 4th December

The Working Party

Our thanks to the members of the Trust who came to The Island in early November for our autumn working party. Fortunately the weather was good and we managed to attend to all the tasks we'd set ourselves. These included clearing growth around the linhay and across adjacent paths as well as weeds from between the granite sets at the front. The linhay display was also cleaned having somehow gained a smearing of egg as evidenced by fragments of shell clinging to the frames. A mound of grass from the meadow mowing was relocated, trees were pruned, overhanging branches were cut back, signs by the gate were cleaned, the leat mesh was cleared and several other maintenance jobs were dealt with. All is now set for the winter before the next working party in spring 2021.



Four members of the working party

The Leat – an Epilogue

The saga of the leaking leat and its repair has (we hope!!) come to an end. The repairs seem to be holding the water back and there is no longer a steady trickle escaping from the leat. There is still a wet area on the path mid-way between the gate and the bridge but a long-standing member tells me that it's always been like this and so we'll monitor the situation in case it gets any worse. In the spring we'll put some more aggregate on the path to restore it to its former glory.

Many thanks are due to an extremely generous member who made a donation to help with the maintenance of the weir/leat and we also have been awarded a grant by a Devon County Council councillor towards the repairs.

Castleford Engineering who carried out the repair work for us will return when the river flow is reduced to give the weir a thorough check.

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