

FRIENDS OF GREENBANK

Friends of Greenbank first started in 2003, the idea came from Eve Chapman who has lived in the area for at least 30 years. There may have been a group before but enthusiasm often dies and then groups pack up. Our first meeting was held in the library and we had an amazing turn out, about 50 people; not only representatives from Leisure but from the NHS, Police, Local Councillors but a real back up from local people. It was actually a pretty busy time as we got grants from Vam, Change and also the NHS and we achieved in quite a short space of time.

In 2003 there were about two benches in the whole of Greenbank, a couple of litter bins and approximately one dog bin. Within a year there were about four picnic benches and more dog and litter bins. It only took about two days for the benches to be moved and one is still on the move, residing over by Manor Road. VAM gave us more funding for a Fun Day and although things don't always go as planned, it was a beautiful day and everyone seemed to enjoy themselves. The face painting and tarot cards were particularly popular.

Two more grants enabled us to erect a fence to be erected down the side of Manor Road.

We also had a day when school children from Ceder Mount came and helped the gardeners plant saplings near Manor Road. A grant from Manchester Impact fund enable us to purchase £300 of plants, these included daffodils and crocuses which are planted amongst the trees opposite the Bluebell and climbers for the Fence behind Rushmere Avenue. Unfortunately only a few of these have survived as the gardeners have sprayed them! We have organised clean up days and other events and have had coverage from the South Manchester Reporter.

When Dappa Homes appeared on the scene we were rather seduced by the idea of them spending a lot of money on Greenbank and at initial meetings the scale of their operation was not apparent. The top of the park had always been used for football so it seemed to make sense. However, it soon became clear that this was not the case and Greenbank Residents Association formed and fought the whole thing tooth and nail. So, in the end the scheme was abandoned. Friends of Greenbank has dwindled to just a few members and I am happy to be part of Greenbank Residents Association, to help with plans and put forward a few of my own. There is still some opposition to winding up Friends of Greenbank but I intend to work with Greenbank Residents Association in any way I can. In the last few years Greenbank has moved on from being a forgotten park into a place where people are happy to be and want to use. Future plans will make it even better.

Written by Judith Gabler.

THE JOYS OF AN ALLOTMENT

I've had an allotment for just over 2 years now. After lots of hard work and a bit of trial and error it is finally just how I want it, keeping me in vegetables for most of the year. People get allotments for different reasons. Obviously growing your own veg is high up the list but it also a great place to meet others, to swap gardening tips and grumble about the weather. It is also a great way to stay fit (much cheaper than gym membership) and also somewhere to get away from the hustle and bustle in your own bit of green space.

Like a lot of people, I spend most of the week indoors, looking outside longingly from my desk. For me, there is nothing better than getting up early on a Saturday morning and cycling down to my plot to see how things are doing. It is the anticipation of wondering whether my seedlings have come up or suffered an overnight raid by the residents slugs or whether the grape vine is going to come back to life after a bit of overzealous pruning. It wouldn't be fair to say that it is all sunshine and flowers, as we do live in Manchester. However, this does mean that my plot has hardly seen a hose this year.

In years gone by many allotments were threatened with development, only surviving thanks to the tenacity of a handful of determined tenants. Nowadays, having an allotment is back in fashion and the waiting list for a plot can stretch to several years in some places. However, don't let this put you off as we are particularly well-blessed in Levenshulme with literally hundreds of plots and so you shouldn't need to wait long for your chance to lease your own 150 square yards of soil. After all, what could be better than picking your very own sun-ripened tomatoes or tasting the first of the year's homegrown raspberries. For more information on getting an allotment either speak to the Manchester City Allotments Manager on 0161 226 3322 or call down to your local site on a Sunday and put your name on the list. You'll never look back!

Written by Paul Seaby
winner of 5, 1st prizes at Tonbridge Allotment 2008 Show

CARROT CAKE

INGREDIENTS

300g plain flour / 2tsp cinnamon
1tsp baking powder
Bicarbonate of soda
200g soft brown sugar
4 eggs
250ml oil
1 orange and 1 lemon, zested
200g carrots, finely grated
150g walnuts
227g tin pineapple pieces, well drained and chopped (optional)

FOR THE CREAM FROSTING

125g unsalted butter at room temperature
50g icing sugar
250 g cream cheese

METHOD

Heat the oven to 150C/fan 130c/ gas 2. Line a 20cm, 10cm deep cake tin. Sift the flour, cinnamon, baking powder and bicarbonate of soda together and stir in the sugar. Beat the eggs with the oil and citrus zests. Stir in the carrots and fold everything into the mixture. Fold in the walnuts and pineapple (if using). Spoon the mixture into the tin and bake for 1 hour 20 minutes or until a skewer comes out clean. Cool.

For the frosting, beat the butter and icing together until soft and then beat in the cream cheese. Chill the mixture until it's tick and spreadable. Spread a thick layer on top of the cake, making sure the side of the icing is flat and continues upwards from the side of the cake.