

A short distance from the hustle and bustle of Borehamwood's centre are some green 'hidden gems' which a small but dedicated team of volunteers help to manage.



Hertsmere Borough Councillors and officers, and members of the Friends of Four Parks Association with the 2011/12 Green Flag Award

Walk down Shenley Road any day of the week and it's hard to imagine that just a stone's throw away there is not just one or two, but four havens for wildlife and people alike.

Clarendon Park lies behind Barclays bank, off Clarendon Road. Though tiny, it has a long history and is cherished by people living nearby.

Maxwell Hillside Park is an oasis of trees and shrubs, with a stream running through it. It can be reached via a footpath at the back of Tesco.

Meadow Park, off Brook Road, is a huge open space, which every year plays host to the Borehamwood and Elstree Festival family day, and visiting fairgrounds.

And a short 10 minute stroll up the road takes you to Aberford Park. It has been transformed from a landfill site into the largest of the four parks and a Green Flag Award-winner for four consecutive years.

Volunteers from the Four Parks Friends Association work with Hertsmere Borough Council (HBC) who manage and own the parks, and Countryside Management Service (CMS) to promote the interests of all park users.

The 20 members, which includes a core group of 10, are committed to making the parks as good as they can be for everyone who uses them, but chairman Judith Sear fears many people don't even know the parks exist.



Clarendon Park

She said: "Lots of people have no idea. Both Maxwell Hillside and Clarendon Park are hidden away. There are no roads going past them.

"Aberford and Meadow Park are better known, but even then there are areas, that people don't notice.

"When the Green Flag judges visited Aberford Park earlier this year, they said 'We hope your local residents realise how lucky they are to have a place like this.'



A swan nesting in Aberford Park

“It is beautifully looked after by Hertsmere Borough Council and contractors John O’Conner, but I worry that not enough people realise how special it is.”

Aberford Park has benefited from extensive investment by HBC. A skate park was unveiled seven years ago and Aberford Park café, picnic area and toilets followed four years later.

The lake, now home to a rich variety of waterfowl and wildlife, has been widened, railings and shrubs installed around the edge.

In 2008 Aberford Park secured its first Green Flag Award, given for excellence in parks management, and has received one every year since.

A conservation area in a part of the park has been overhauled recently by HBC and CMS to encourage new growth.

Friends volunteer and conservation enthusiast Simon Braidman is keen that people open their eyes to the wildlife around them.

He said: “In some ways, the parks are as good at night, as during the day. They are great for bats. I regularly do bat walks and I see loads of them, and more than one species, and there are kingfishers. There is absolutely loads of wildlife, but no-one notices them.”

Each park has historic links with the community, at least two pre-date World War Two.

Judith, who has been chairman of the Friends group since 2006, said: “Meadow Park is an open space, which has been used to hold fetes and fireworks displays, and that has been the case since the 1930s.

“Clarendon Park was used between the wars for church fetes. There are old pictures of girls dancing round the maypole.”

Councillor Jean Heywood, portfolio holder for the environment said: “Not only is Borehamwood surrounded by Green Belt, but we have these beautiful green spaces in the heart of the town.

“Working in partnership with the Four Parks Friends Association, we’ve striven to raise the profile of the parks and keep them maintained to the highest standard.

“So next time you have a spare hour and want to get away from the rat-race, why not head along to one of these parks? Nature is closer than you think.”

Anyone who would like to find out more about joining the Friends group should call Hertsmere Borough Council on 0800 731 1810 or email parks@hertsmere.gov.uk



Maxwell Hillside Park