



Friends of Grosvenor & Hilbert Park Newsletter 33 Winter 2019



Making apple juice!

This year we had a fruit-themed trail in the orchard and the usual home baked apple-y goods. On the craft table there was colouring and apple-related things to do thanks to the National Fruit Show.

And for the first time we had a real, live apple tree to raffle off, also donated by the National Fruit Show. The winners will plant it on their Hilbert allotment.

Autumn Fun on Apple Day

Despite a mixed weather forecast, Saturday 5th October started off clear and bright. The sun kept on shining and we had a pleasant, early-Autumn day for our Apple fun.

Once again we were incredibly grateful to Downingbury Farm, in Pembury, for free access to their windfall apples, which we collected to use on the day. This supply of apples means we can put on a successful event, with plenty of juice to go round.



The craft table



The apple tree raffle

We welcomed around 70 on the day. Most people who come to the event are surprised how labour intensive the whole apple pressing process is. First you need to wash the fruit, then chop it into chunks.



Washed apples



The apple choppers

The next step is to put them into the scrapper and turn the handle to crush them into smaller pieces. Finally, the crushed apples go into the press, wrapped in cloth, we turn the handle and out comes apple juice.



Crushing apples in the scrapper



Loading the apple press



Turning the press



Apple juice!

Although the event was less busy than previous years, the people who came stayed for longer and got more involved with the process. A special mention must go to Matthew, Oliver and Elise, who stayed the whole time and never seemed to stop. Oliver was particularly impressive on the scratting machine!



Thanks also to all the FoGH volunteers who came to help. We really appreciate you giving up your time to make this event such a success.
Emma Melville

Chairman's Report

This year's weather seems to have gone from one extreme to the other: a cold, wet spring, then low rainfall and record-breaking temperatures in summer. Now there's enough rain and wind to make me forget all that summer heat! Despite all these challenges, the Park has looked well maintained and green, attracting compliments all round.

We were delighted by the discretionary RHS Parks and Green Spaces Award, which is given in recognition of an exceptional publicly owned park or green space that is free to enter and managed for the long-term benefit of the local community .

It is a challenge for a volunteer-based group such as FoGH to take forward the activity and enthusiasm that our successive Community Engagement Officers have generated with Park users. Although we can't hope to keep up the number of events going that a full-time position can provide, we have kept busy since Emma Peters left, thanks to the wonderful input from all those who have so kindly offered their help.

With the May Bank Holiday falling on a Friday in April 2020 to accommodate the VE Day anniversary celebrations, FoGH have decided not to hold our Family Fete this year. However, we are already planning an interesting calendar of other events throughout next year. Cally Fiddimore from the Kent High Weald Partnership will lead volunteers every first Thursday in the month to conserve habitats in the Park for the resident wildlife. Extra volunteers are always very welcome for all of these activities.

And so, as the year comes to an end, I would like to offer my thanks and good wishes to all our loyal members and volunteers for a very happy festive season and a successful new year.

Liz Edwards



Outstanding – Park is Triple Award Winner

In July Grosvenor & Hilbert Park was judged for this year's Royal Horticultural Society's South and South East in Bloom competition. The judge, Jean Griffin, BBC Radio Kent's Sunday Gardening Guru, was last here in 2014 before the major restoration work, so she was delighted to see the improvements.

The Park won Gold in the Large Park category and FoGH were again judged Outstanding in the 'It's your Neighbourhood' section. The judges also awarded an additional special discretionary Parks and Green Spaces Award. This is to recognise the collaborative work achieved by the TWBC Parks team led by Peter Every, Park keeper Tony Cheeseman and FoGH.

To celebrate these achievements, Jean presented the awards in person to those involved in the Park. She presented the Friends of Grosvenor and Hilbert Park with their It's your Neighbourhood award, Peter Every received the Gold award on behalf of the Parks department, whilst Park keeper Tony Cheeseman accepted the Parks and Green Spaces award. Jean commented on the way FoGH and the Parks Department work together and praised the volunteers who contribute time and effort in helping to achieve these awards.

Chris Hughes



Update from the Parks Department

This year has been another successful year for Grosvenor and Hilbert in the Bloom competition and I'm pleased to report the Park retained its Gold award for another year. Our excellent gardener Tony also received recognition from the judges for his hard work and dedication to the Park.

The Town also received Gold in South and South East in Bloom and for the first time Gold in the National Britain in Bloom competition. Although the judges don't visit Grosvenor, the contribution of the Friends and the volunteers is recognised and goes towards the award.

We have replaced one of the Pines we lost. Although we were unable to replace like for like, we did find a similar Pine with advice from the experts at Bedgebury. Pinus wallichiana, the Bhutan Pine, has a similar shape and needles to the tree we lost (Pinus strobus, the White Pine) and can be seen at the Auckland Road entrance.

Sodexo have been busy in the Park over the past few months working with the Bowls club to level a few dips and hollows in the green. Winter maintenance will continue with spiking and top-dressing taking place before the start of the new season. Over the next few months Tony will start the annual prune of the pleached Limes and box headed trees, which is vital to maintain the shape of the trees over the summer period.

The work on the lower football pitch has unfortunately been delayed owing to collapsed drains found during the survey. However, we are looking at how we can resolve the problem within the budget we have available to us. Enjoy the Park over the winter period and do say hello to Tony, who may be up a platform pruning when you walk past! If you have any questions about the Park please do contact us on parks@tunbridgewells.gov.uk

Peter Every – TWBC Parks & Sports Team Leader



FoGH Events Roundup



Ian Beavis leads the guided walk

Heritage Open Day

It is lovely to be part of Tunbridge Wells Heritage Open Days (HODS), and share the history of the Park.

We were fortunate this year to have Dr Ian Beavis available to lead the guided walk, and we decided to have the exhibition on one day – Saturday – with the walk mid-day.

It was a lovely sunny day, but that might have been against us, as the Park was very quiet. This did mean the volunteers had time to speak to most of the visitors, answering questions about things beyond the Park, like the Baltic Saw Mill in Goods Station Road.

There was the annual excitement from those who didn't know there used to be a swimming pool here: we had a now and then map to show the location. We are considering different ideas for HODS 2020, possibly moving to the Oast House and exploring the Hilbert side more. Watch this space for details!!

Carolyn Gray

Bird, Bat & Bug House Building

Our annual Bird, Bat and Bat Box Building event was again very well received. To make it easier all the boxes had already been cut to size and made into 'kits', so it was just a choice of which one to make - a bird, bat or bug box?

Once the choice was made it was just a case of putting the box together. This involved using hammer and nails, so the Park was soon a very noisy place. Then the finished results were decorated, resulting in some very colourful boxes. The finished boxes were taken home – hopefully they will be attractive to wildlife .

We again brought in the Kent High Weald Partnership to help us run the day. We can tap into their expertise and they have all the equipment that is needed for the day. A big thank you to all their volunteers who made up the kits used on the day.

Chris Hughes



Construction for nature taking place!



The replanted baskets

Refreshing the Baskets

The baskets around the Hub and bowls green have been colourful through the summer. However, they start to look a bit tatty as they fade and the plants are not frost hardy. Autumn is a good time to refresh the baskets, so we tidied them up and added winter pansies and primroses on Saturday 19th October. Thanks to the volunteers who removed the old plants, added fresh compost and replanted.

Children's Halloween Party

Saturday 26th October started dry, but a steady drizzle soon set in, which we believe limited numbers slightly. However, plenty of families braved the weather to join in with the fun, many in fancy dress. Generous donations meant that FoGH were able to cover the cost of running the event – thank you very much!

This year we concentrated on craft activities, making pom-poms, boxes, plate ghosts and spiders. There were masks to be coloured in and Halloween transfers, as well as a lucky dip. Decorating biscuits instead of cakes worked well – much less messy!

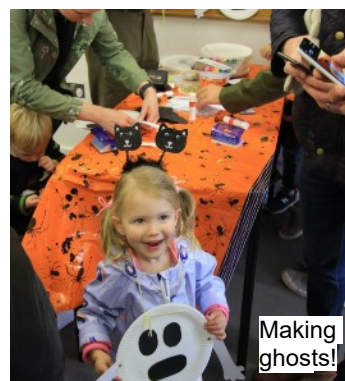
As always, sincere thanks to the hard-working volunteers, including Kathy who stepped in at the last minute! **Mary Hughes**



Craft tables in the Hub



Decorating biscuits



Making ghosts!



Colouring masks



In fancy dress!

The Park during World War II

Changes in the rest of the country before, during and after the war were reflected in the Park. Although international tensions eased after the 1938 Munich agreement, air raid preparations continued. In Tunbridge Wells, unemployed men dug trenches in the recreation grounds, including one for 200 people at Hilbert. Imagine what they were like – in February 1940 urgent work was done to improve their drainage and structure.



Allotments in Hilbert 1946

In 1939 the UK imported 75% of food and the Germans attacked shipping, attempting to starve the nation. The Dig for Victory campaign began in 1939 and the council's War Horticulture committee arranged more allotments at once.

Food rationing began in January 1940, but vegetables were never rationed. In the Park, land by the former gasworks became allotments in 1940, followed by more near the electricity substation in 1941. 1 ½ acres (now the community orchard) were ploughed and planted with potatoes, in 1941 and 1942. Much of Hilbert Recreation Ground became allotments (see the 1946 aerial photograph) until food rationing ended in 1954.



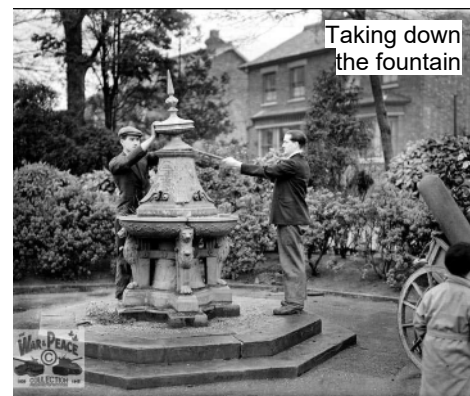
Digging a trench in London

Another change was from the drive to collect metal for war use. The railings at Upper Grosvenor Road entrance were cut up. The drinking fountain by Auckland Road entrance (presented by Mrs Stone-Wigg, the first Mayoress) in April 1891 was taken.

British Restaurants, run by the Women's Voluntary Service, were set up to reduce the severity of rationing, selling basic meals at reasonable prices. The food was available without using ration coupons and menus were designed by nutritionists, to make



Cutting up the railings



Taking down the fountain



The picture shows (l to r) Alderman R H Burslem, Mrs Burslem, the Mayor (Alderman C E Westbrook, the Mayoress and Sir Eyre Gordon (Divisional Food Officer) entering the new restaurant.

sure the population stayed healthy despite food rationing. If there was no pre-existing building, a Nissen hut was put up, as in Grosvenor Recreation Ground, which opened in November 1942.

Under the headline "Mayor and his guests were their own waiters and waitresses", the Kent & Sussex Courier describes the opening of the Grosvenor Recreation Ground British Restaurant. Led by the Mayor and Mayoress, Alderman and Mrs Westbrook, local dignitaries and council members ate the first meal in the restaurant.

They were "treated as ordinary customers"....."expected to take up the trays, knives and forks and spoons, together with their portions of meat, vegetables and sweets". The choice was stewed steak or curry, with potatoes, cabbage, creamed carrots, then American pinwheel pastries. "The dining room.....is well-appointed with smart-looking tables to seat four people at each." There was space for 250 people and frescoes painted by Art School students. Meals cost one shilling for adults and fourpence for children.

In June 1945 there was a Children's Victory tea at Grosvenor British Restaurant, then free pony rides at Hilbert. Entertainment was from a comedian and conjurer, with music from Mr Blackmore's Band and Accordion Trio.

The Restaurant closed to the public in April 1946 to become the town's school meals centre. Every day over 300 meals were served on the premises and hundreds were sent to schools in containers. Then the building was used as the canteen for St Barnabas School until 1958. It was then the Satellite Youth Club and a nursery, until demolition in 2003.

Now the only sign that war affected the Park is a few

manhole covers where the British Restaurant once stood – and of course our missing fountain! **Mary Hughes**



The British Restaurant building

Sources: The Rex Cadman collection from Kent Photo Archive, Kent Environmental Record, Fred Scales & Kent & Sussex Courier 1873-1950 (©Local World Ltd courtesy of The British Library Board) via British Newspaper Archive.

Looking for Dormice in the Park

Whilst the main part of the Heritage Lottery funding the Park received was spent on renovations and improvements, funding was also provided for other activities including training volunteers. By developing the skill set of the parks volunteers, an ongoing resource would be available to manage events and activities in the Park. The training included First Aid courses and use of equipment like strimmers.

There were also wildlife projects, and one was to see if there were any dormice in the Park. This was because there are areas of ancient woodland and areas of hazel that have been coppiced over a long period – all suitable habitats. This kind of managed woodland offers the range of food that dormice need – they eat flowers and insects, then fatten up for hibernation on fruit, berries and hazelnuts.



A dormouse



Typical hazel coppice

The Park is also potentially 'linked' to other woodland areas through the railway embankments. There have been no sightings of dormice in the Park, but this did not mean that none were present. The only way to find out was to undertake a series of surveys and see for ourselves if we had any.

To survey for dormice, you need a Licence issued by Natural England as they are a protected species. It was agreed that two members of the Friends Group (myself and Liz Edwards) would be funded to gain their Licences to survey for dormice.

The next steps were to find a trainer, attend specific courses and do a survey programme in the Park. Steff D'Agorne (the CEO at the time) sorted out all the details. She found our trainer – Steve Songhurst – and arranged for us to attend two courses at the Wildwood Trust* near Herne Bay.

Steve proved to be a real find as he has a huge amount of knowledge and regularly surveys hundreds of dormouse boxes a month in and around the area. He felt that we should start by establishing whether there were actually any dormice in the Park, rather than putting up expensive wooden boxes.

So we put up 30 survey tubes – simple structures that dormice would come across and hopefully use to nest in. We spent a day putting up the tubes in areas of the Park that Steve thought would most likely suit dormice. We would then check these monthly over a 6-month period for any evidence of dormice.



A dormouse survey tube



The training course

After undertaking a couple of monthly surveys, we attended our two training courses. Each was a day long and quite intensive. On the first course we learnt all about the life cycle and ecology of dormice, as well as survey techniques. On the second we actually handled real live captive dormice (part of the breeding programme at Wildwood).

Having carried out all our surveys we found lots of slugs, woodlice, spiders and so on but sadly no dormice. As we did not even find any other evidence of dormice, we have had to regretfully conclude that at present they are not to be found in the Park.

However, the story does not end there, as Steve kindly offered us the chance to carry

on our training. We would need to undertake our surveys at another site with some 70 boxes and regular dormouse finds.



We jumped at the chance so find out how we got on in the next newsletter. **Chris Hughes**

*Wildwood Trust is an animal conservation charity dedicated to saving Britain's most threatened wildlife. For more information see <https://wildwoodtrust.org/>



A captive-bred dormouse

Moth Mornings August & September 2019



What's in the moth trap?

The second and third of our three 2019 moth mornings revealed very different catches, showing how the range and abundance of moth species changes over the course of only a month. Interestingly, the number of individual moths was very similar – 92 in August and 97 in September – but the number of different species declined sharply as we moved out of late summer into early autumn. The August list comprised 27 species, but there were only 9 a month later.

The most interesting find from the August catch was the White Point, named from its most distinctive marking. This is a migratory species from the near Continent which is usually found in coastal areas of Britain. We also had two examples of the Dark Swordgrass, which is a much more abundant migrant species.

The wonderfully named Setaceous Hebrew Character may also be a partial migrant, with incomers boosting the late summer and autumn generation. This is much more abundant than the spring brood: we caught 12 of these in August and 8 in September. Other August finds included the Spectacle, which has tufts looking like 'glasses on its forehead', the pale iridescent Mother of Pearl and the Six-striped Rustic, which particularly favours wetland.



White Point



Dark Swordgrass



Setaceous Hebrew Character



Spectacle



Mother of Pearl



Six-striped Rustic

Most of the September total was made up by just two species – 32 Large Yellow Underwing and 47 Lunar Underwing. The Large Yellow Underwing has a long flight period across summer and autumn, with a peak in early autumn. Our catches reflected this, with only 5 in August. This large and lively species is one of the commonest urban moths. It only reveals its brightly coloured yellow underwings when disturbed, relying on momentarily distracting a potential predator with a flash of yellow. It flies off in an erratic fashion, which we saw when the trap was opened.



Lunar Underwing

The Lunar Underwing is a distinctively autumnal species, so we saw none in August. The large number in September showed the variety of colour forms of this species. It gets its name from a white crescent mark on the hindwing, usually concealed by the folded forewings. The caterpillars feed on various native grasses, so the Park, with its many open grassed areas, can support a large population.



Large Yellow Underwing

The September catch included two other autumn specialities – the Black Rustic and closely related Deep Brown Dart, both flying in September and October. The Black Rustic is more elegant, with a bright white or yellow mark on a velvet-black background; its relative is less distinctive with few obvious markings.



Black Rustic



Box-tree Moth



Box-tree Moth caterpillar

We also had three examples of the very striking black and white Box-tree Moth, which is such a recent arrival in Britain that it doesn't appear in most current moth books. It was accidentally introduced from south-east Asia to Kent in 2007, and has since spread across London and the South-east, its caterpillars becoming a notable pest of cultivated box plants.

Local gardeners should beware and look out for the caterpillars on their prized topiary!

Ian Beavis

Meet the Committee



Carolyn Gray

I have lived almost next to the Park since 1996. In 2011 I went to one of the first meetings about forming a Friends group, to support a Heritage Lottery Bid.

It was literally at the point of leaving the meeting I realised I would regret not getting involved – I felt I wanted a

say in the future of the Park.

Since then I've been involved with the newsletter, and history research – and met some interesting people. I've written articles for external publications, helped with the Facebook page, and recently set up Instagram. Maybe most significantly has been organising events for the Park, which has led me to arrange other events beyond the Park.

I walk through the lake side of the Park 3 or 4 times a week, watching the seasons change, so I can't imagine not being part of FoGH. **Carolyn Gray**

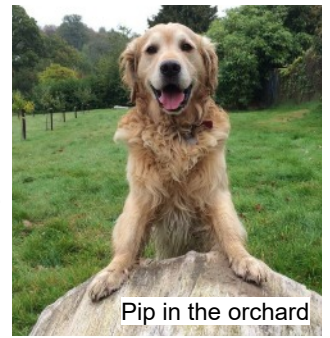
Dogs in the Park

Just over nine years ago, an excitable Golden Retriever puppy set off on his first walkie adventure. It was to our Park and changed his life.

Fresh from the Sissinghurst farm where he was born, the vista amazed him. Streams, grasslands, hedges, woods, mud and marshy areas. More importantly, friendly people and dogs of all shapes and sizes having fun! Since then, our Park has been Pip's favourite place.

In the Year of the Dog, Pip began sharing adventures and thoughts on Twitter. His followers worldwide have praised our Park for its natural, dog-friendly environment. Now a senior dog, Pip has seen our Park transformed. In his quiet doggy way, he thanks everyone who's helped to make such a difference.

Follow Pip on Twitter at www.twitter.com/PipTheDog5 and see some of his adventures at www.instagram.com/pip.the.golden.retriever



Pip in the orchard

The Winter Lantern Parade 2020 Saturday 8th February



The 2019 Parade

The February 2019 parade started in the town centre and wound its way along Camden Road and into the Park – we were really pleased to be a part of it, and are looking forward to hearing more about the plans for 2020.

The first Tunbridge Wells Winter Lantern Parade was in December 2008, partly as a fundraiser for the community play *The Vanishing Elephant*. The idea came about because TWBC don't pay for Christmas lights at the lower end of Camden Road (from World of Sewing down to Quarry Road). So the first event lit up the street before Christmas – shops stayed open late and there was a party atmosphere.

The CREATE group formed in 2009 and decided to have another lantern parade in February 2010. The parade is now an established community event, brightening up the lull after New Year. Each year has a theme, with local groups creating incredible lanterns carried by several people.

The theme for the Winter Lantern Parade 2020 is Magic. Lantern kits will go on sale before Christmas, so you can make your own 'magic lantern' to carry in the parade. Workshops will run on the weekends leading up to the parade and volunteers for the day are being sought. Of course, you can just watch from along the route!

The back-up date in case of bad weather is 22nd February. Keep an eye on <http://www.winterlanterns.org/> and <https://www.facebook.com/WinterLanternParade/>

The Parade will be happening thanks to CREATE, Royal Tunbridge Wells Together, COOK Monson Rd, and RTW Round Table.

Sport Report

Bowls (see <https://www.grosvenorbowls.co.uk/>)

We had fantastic weather on our finals day and got through all the initial rounds, with plenty of spectators watching! The rest of the finals were played the next week, with trophies awarded at our November AGM.

After the season closed, we went to Hawkenbury and played the TW Royals Indoor Bowls Club, and came away with a rare win indoors! We are looking forward to the New Year, our post-Christmas meal, and a brand new season!

Jo Cartwright

Football (see <http://www.wksl.org.uk/>)

Wet weather postponements mean that St John's Yard didn't play in October and only had two matches in November. One win, a draw and three losses so far in the league leave them sitting seventh out of nine teams in Division One. In the Senior Cup, one draw and one loss means they still have a chance of qualifying. Look out for them playing in gold and black on the top football pitch on some Sunday mornings. **Mary Hughes**



Lovely weather on finals day

Winter Event Highlights

KHWP Volunteer Day.....Thursday 5th December 10am – 3pm

Meet at the Hilbert Road gates & wear suitable clothing & footwear.

Kent High Weald Partnership volunteer days take place on the first Thursday of every month.

Carols with the CREATE choir.....Sunday 8th December 2 – 3.30pm

Join FoGH at the Hub to celebrate the season with our favourite carols.

Refreshments available – mulled wine, fruit juice & mince pies. Suggested donation £2.

Children's Christmas Craft Activities.....Saturday 14th December 2 – 3.30pm

Get into the festive spirit with Christmas-themed crafts at the Hub.

Children must be accompanied by an adult. Suggested donation £2.

The Swimming Pool in the Park.....Sunday 19th January 2.30 – 4.30pm

There was a swimming pool in the Park for over 80 years, but there's no trace of it now.

History talk in the Hub. Light refreshments available.

Big Garden Bird Watch.....Sunday 26th January 10 – 11.30am

Take part in the largest wildlife survey. Meet at the Hub, with binoculars if you have them.

Wear appropriate shoes & warm clothing. Children must be accompanied by an adult.

Basket Making Workshop.....Saturday 1st February 9.30am – 4.30pm

Learn how to make a traditional willow basket from expert John Waller.

Full day course at the Hub. £45 per adult (£40 for FoGH members). Booking details TBC.

Winter Lantern Parade.....Saturday 8th February from 5.30pm

The annual parade along Camden Road. Get involved by making a lantern & joining the parade.

See <http://www.winterlanterns.org/> & <https://www.facebook.com/WinterLanternParade/>

Tunbridge Wells before the Wells.....February Date & Time TBC

Learn about the area before the chalybeate spring was discovered in 1606.

History talk at the Hub with Ian Beavis. Light refreshments available.

Moth Morning.....Saturday 29th February 11am – 13pm

Join Ian Beavis to identify the moths caught overnight in the Park.

Free drop-in event at the Hub. Children must be accompanied by an adult.

Amazing Astronomy.....March – Date & Time TBC

Mid-Kent Astronomical Society will show us how to truly appreciate the night sky.

At the Hub. Children must be accompanied by an adult. Booking details TBC.

Orchard Pruning Workshop.....March – Date & Time TBC

Hands-on tuition in the orchard from fruit tree expert Roger Worraker.

Meet at the Oast House, bring secateurs if you have them & dress appropriately.

The Great British Spring Clean.....March – Date & Time TBC

Become a litter here! Join FoGH on a litter pick to tidy up the Park.

Meet at the Hub, wearing appropriate shoes & clothing. Tools & equipment provided

For more information about any of these events, see social media & look out for posters in the Park.

FoGH events: www.fogh.org.uk Facebook www.facebook.com/GrosvenorHilbert

Twitter <https://twitter.com/FofGH> or Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/ghparkfriends/>

KHWP volunteer days & events: www.khwp.org.uk/

FoGH Contact Details

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or 15 Dorking Road,

Tunbridge Wells, TN1 2LN

To join, contact the Secretary at 41, Dorking Road, Tunbridge Wells, TN1 2LN or on Friendsghrp@aol.com

Our sincere thanks to Tunbridge Wells Borough Council for all their support in printing and collating hard copies of this Newsletter



Other Contacts & Useful Information

TWBC Parks Service

01892 554031

Out of Hours Service

07920 534369

Toilets: Opening Hours

7am - 6pm

Photos courtesy of Dave Barnett, Ian Beavis, Gillian Douglas, Carolyn Gray, Lauren Gray, Chris Hughes & Emma Melville.