



Friends of Grosvenor & Hilbert Park Newsletter 37 Winter 2020



Replanting the Baskets

The lockdown in May prevented us from replanting the baskets by the Hub with our usual Summer display. The plants in the baskets didn't seem to mind and still gave a good display throughout the summer and autumn.

However, by October not only were the plants looking very tired, but so were most of the liners. We think they came in useful making nests for families of birds.....

FoGH bought new coconut fibre liners, then Royal Tunbridge Wells in Bloom kindly offered to give us enough plants and compost to enable us to replant all 22 baskets. These were left over from the town centre plantings: primroses, polyanthus, pansies, maidenhair fern and winter flowering heathers.



Clare plants a basket



Pansies & heather add brightness



A freshly planted basket

We usually make this a Community event, but we had to make sure we stayed within Covid guidelines. So early November saw a couple of volunteers from the Friends group remove all the old liners, compost and plants.

The new liners were fitted, we added compost, and a selection of plants was put in to make a lovely winter display. Sincere thanks to TWBC and RTW in Bloom for the plants, compost and their support. **Chris Hughes**

Chairman's Report

This past year has certainly tested the resilience of us all, not least those isolated in restricted living spaces and those working with the vulnerable and unwell. The availability of accessible open green spaces has always been important, but the value to our physical and mental health of these public areas has never been more apparent than during this health crisis.



Thankfully there was consistent good weather from March to September. People on furlough and working from home have made outings on a 'just around the corner' basis, with picnics, games and walks added to visits to the playground. While gyms were closed, the Park has offered the opportunity for adapted exercise routines in the open air. The allotments have never looked better, with a fantastic variety of crops and flowers.

The Park has never been so busy, clearly showing the importance of promoting, defending and improving our public green spaces, so they can continue to give valuable health and well-being benefits to the community. But increased littering continues to be a problem, both in the Park and nationwide. I would like to thank those who clear up after themselves, as well as the supporters who regularly litter pick in the Park.

Additionally, on behalf of us all, I offer warmest thanks to Tony Cheeseman, our wonderful park keeper, the KHWP volunteer team and the Parks Team at the council led by Peter Every. They have worked so hard all through this difficult year to keep our Park open, well maintained and safe for us all to enjoy.

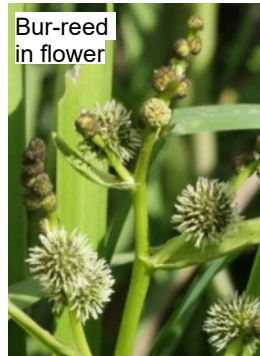
FoGH has entered the It's Your Neighbourhood section of South & South-East in Bloom since 2014, but this year was desktop judging only. We put together a portfolio, showing what we had planned and how we moved some events online. We received a Certificate of Recognition for our efforts with the community.

In conclusion I would like to wish everyone a very happy festive season, wherever and however we are able to celebrate. I'm hoping that 2021 turns out to be a more positive year. **Liz Edwards**

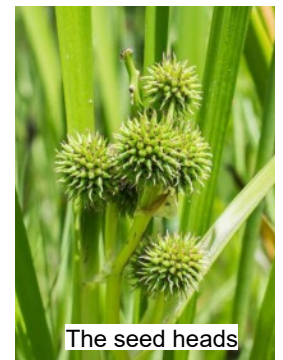
Work in the Wetland

Branched bur-reed is a common marginal plant that loves growing by the water edges or in ponds, marshes, ditches, and other wetland areas. It has distinctive spherical flowers in summer: the smaller male flowers sit above the white female flowers. These are followed by spiky seed heads.

It is native to the UK but tends to grow vigorously and can take over a pond if not managed. The plant particularly likes slow moving or still water as it is easily uprooted. Fortunately, this makes it easier to pull!



Bur-reed in flower



The seed heads



The contractors at work on the largest pond

In the past couple of years, KHWP volunteers have hand pulled some of the bur-reed out at the end of the summer. However, the bur-reed was growing faster than we could manage. So special contractors with diggers were brought in this September to get a decent amount out, hopefully leaving it more manageable going forward.

KHWP volunteers, with the help of Tony, the grounds keeper, also removed some of the bur-reed from the middle wetland pond, which is less accessible for machinery.

All the work was carried out sensitively and carefully to ensure minimal disturbance to wildlife and park users. The pulled reeds were left on the banks for a few days, so any insect life in the roots and plants could return to the water.



A messy job for the volunteers!



The finished results

The wetland area is a fantastic asset to the Park and provides excellent habitat for a variety of wildfowl, birds, amphibians and insects. Our legendary local entomologist Ian Beavis can often be found surveying there in the summer with fascinating results – follow him on Twitter to find out more. So it is very important that we continue to manage the wetland to ensure it

supports our valuable local biodiversity.

Cally Fiddimore, KHWP Partnership Officer

Winter News from the FoGH committee

We were fortunate in September and October to be allowed to have Rule of Six meetings in a well-ventilated Hub. But in November we had our first Zoom committee meeting – interrupted by fireworks and internet issues...

I've used some of my exercise time to join Dorothy and Lynda on dog walks to catch up. Lynda helped me create the Halloween 'Scavenger Hunt' and Poppy Appeal activities. These, our online Heritage Open Day self-guided history walk, and one off litter pick, have been our autumn events.



Part of the Halloween 'Scavenger Hunt'



Edward Elvy Robb, Mayor 1903-04



The bandstand (demolished 1935)

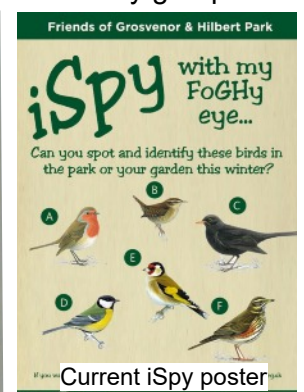
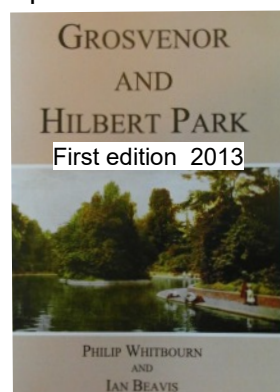
Following HODs, Mary and I, via email, helped another Friends group – Stow Maries Great War Aerodrome in Essex – with some research. The Mr Robb who paid for the bandstand in our Park (installed 1899) became a Major in the RAF, working for the Buildings Dept in the Air Ministry. He was project lead on the Stow Maries site improvements in 1918 – hopefully more on this in another history article! It's good to be able to help other Friends and community groups.

I mentioned in the autumn news that Dave was updating the website – still a work in progress – and he's also working on a new version of the Grosvenor and Hilbert book. You may have noticed the 'i-spy' posters around the Park, a collaboration between committee members Dave, Liz and Emma. They were based on work by Stephanie Johnson when she assisted Cally, when she was CEO.



Very much missing mince pies, mulled wine and carols in The Hub – but a Happy New Year to everyone.

Carolyn Gray



Current iSpy poster

Meet the Committee



Mary Hughes

I moved close to the Park in 1994 and immediately loved it, so it was natural to join FoGH when it began in 2011. I ended up on the committee and found myself agreeing to do a quarterly newsletter with Carolyn Gray – a steep learning curve!

Thirty-seven newsletters on, I'm still doing it and have found a taste for history, researching in the British Newspaper Archive. It takes time, as I get side-tracked by juicy local history..... I've learnt a lot about the Park and Tunbridge Wells. I'm particularly involved with the Community Orchard and getting the baskets on the railings planted up (sadly limited this year). You'll find me helping out on the FoGH desk at many of our events.

The Park enriches all our lives and it's a real privilege to be involved with a group of like-minded people who cherish it as I do.

Mary Hughes

Dogs in the Park

My name is Mr Hicks and I've been enjoying the Park for nearly six years. I live nearby in Dorking Road, so I don't have far to walk to get there.

I was rehomed from the Dogs Trust when I was a year old and I'm now 8½. People often ask what breed I am. The vet thinks a Chihuahua x Norwich Terrier cross, but no one has ever been quite sure.

I love chasing squirrels, playing on the beach, snoozing, chasing a ball and best of all, cuddles with my Mum. I may be small but don't be fooled, I'm in charge and I'm not afraid of telling off dogs much bigger than me.

I love my job as a therapy dog at Hospice in the Weald and have just received my 5-year service award. Everyone there knows me and I get lots of treats. I can't wait to go back there when it's safe – woof woof woof!

Clare Kelly

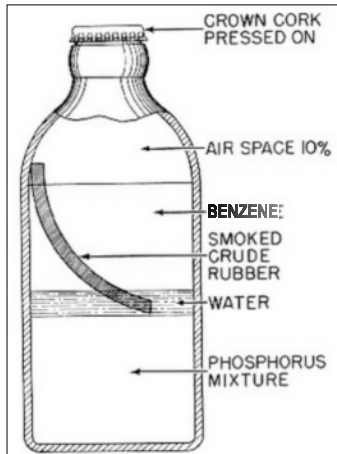


Mr Hicks

Bomb Disposal in the Empty Swimming Pool

During Heritage Open Days week in September, FoGH used Facebook to promote our History Trail. A post about the former swimming pool stirred memories of bomb disposal in the empty pool. Investigations into back copies of the Kent & Sussex Courier took me to November 1951, when a WW2 bomb dump was found.

"A tractor struck a piece of corrugated iron at the Agricultural Show Ground on Eridge Road" (now the Showfields estate). "The driver notified the police, who, after enquiries called in the Army authorities. Excavations were made and on Sunday a dump of nearly 450 phosphorus bombs was unearthed."



Millions were made in WW2 – glass bottles containing white phosphorus, benzene, water and a strip of raw rubber, which dissolved to make the contents sticky. When thrown at a hard surface, the glass shattered and the mixture ignited to produce choking fumes and high heat. Mostly issued to the Home Guard to use against tanks in case of invasion, many caches were mislaid and the hazardous contents discovered later.

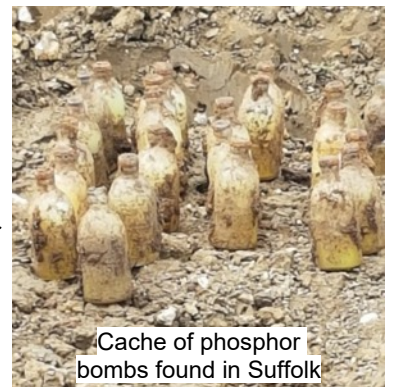
"The difficult work of recovering the bombs was not without its danger. Some bombs were broken, others were loose from their boxes and there was a continuous danger from the contents that had seeped out. Loose bombs were exploded on the Show Ground and one soldier was treated for a badly burned hand. A fireman also injured his hand slightly. Major D Sharpe (Senior Inspection Ordnance Officer in charge of the operation) was doused with water when his coat caught fire."

Each box was carried to an army van and immersed in a tank of water. A non-stop convoy of a police motorcyclist, a police car, fire engine, army wireless van, ambulance and two army dispatch riders escorted the van to Grosvenor Recreation Ground. Altogether 443 bombs were recovered, with the last box of 24 destroyed on Monday afternoon.

At the Recreation Ground the bombs were removed and thrown into the empty open-air bath, where they exploded and burned. Firemen hosed the surface down frequently, as phosphorus lying dormant on the wet concrete will burst into flames as the surface dries. There were frequent inspections and a continuous watch was kept until all trace of the phosphorus disappeared.

It must have been a spectacular sight!

Mary Hughes



Cache of phosphorus bombs found in Suffolk



Phosphorus bomb detonated on a Sussex beach

Source: Kent & Sussex Courier 1873-1978 (©Local World Ltd courtesy of The British Library Board) via the British Newspaper Archive

Winter Lanterns February 2021

Normally at this time of year, our friends in CREATE would be organising the Winter Lantern Parade..... But instead they have an at home lantern event for the weekend of 5th – 7th



February 2021. They suggest using front gardens, cars, houses, windows or even garden gates to make trails of light through the streets of Tunbridge Wells. Improvise – use and adapt last years lantern, your Christmas lights, glow sticks – use your imagination! See www.facebook.com/createTW/

Please support them and we can light up the town at what can be a dark time of year.



Sport Report

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

It's been an unusual season, with no matches against local clubs and not being together during the summer. We quickly got used to the system of booking rinks, sanitizing equipment, and only using 3 of 6 rinks. We had plenty of practices and fun small-scale games among ourselves.

The highlights were the occasions when we could enjoy our bowls as a club, playing together! One sunny September afternoon club secretary Norman Barton organised a pairs competition, won by Mike Hobden. There was good turnout for a fun afternoon. In October we played a reduced numbers version of our annual match against TW Royals at the indoor bowls club in Hawkenbury. We came away with a creditable draw.

Thank you to everyone who has supported the club this year and we hope to be back for a more complete season next year. All being well, we look forward to inviting you onto the green from May.

Jo Cartwright



At the pairs competition

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

The West Kent Sunday Football League were able to play in September and October, before the latest lockdown began. St John's Yard play in Division 2, using the top football pitch and wearing gold and black. Their league season hasn't got off to the best start, with 2 losses and 2 draws.

The 2019-2020 WKSFL cup competitions were at an advanced stage when the season ended prematurely, so these are being played to a finish. St John's Yard are through to final of the Intermediate Cup – good luck to them when the match is eventually played!

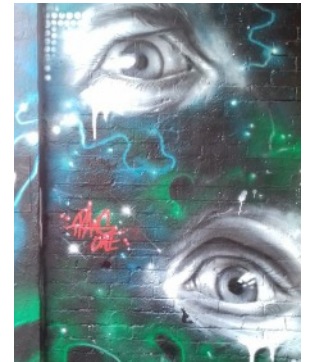
Mary Hughes



Graffiti in the Park



It may cause controversy, but it's amazing that such images are made using spray cans.



FoGH Contact Details

Liz Edwards (Chairman)

chair@fogh.org.uk

Jane Melville (Secretary)

Friendsghrp@aol.com

Website

www.FoGH.org.uk

Facebook

www.facebook.com/GrosvenorHilbert

Twitter

<https://twitter.com/FofGH>

Comments or contributions to

Newsletter editors at

editors@FoGH.org.uk

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, Jo Cartwright, Carolyn Gray, Chris Hughes & Clare Kelly.