

# Friends of Grosvenor & Hilbert Park

## Newsletter 49 Winter 2023



The fallen oak in Roundabout Woods

### News from the FoGH Committee

Hello everyone. This year has flown by, it seems the long nights have come around far too quickly. We had incredibly warm days in October, followed by three storms (Babet, Ciarán, Debi) and what feels like endless rain. While the Park is full of autumn colour, underfoot is very wet, and many leaves have already fallen. And it's not just leaves – recently a very large oak tree in Roundabout Wood suddenly fell onto the skateboard area, damaging some of the railings. The skate park remains closed until further notice, and Treeworks are tidying the woodland area.



The tree canopy fell on the skate park

It's hard to think back to the sunny days of September and early October, when we were celebrating the successes of both the Green Flag Award and In Bloom. In early September, we celebrated raising the new Green Flag with a tea-party. This was just before the birthday of park-keeper Tony Cheeseman, so we ensured he had some cake before he helped us raise the new Green Flag. Once again we would like to thank Tony for all he does for the Park, and also the help he gave to FoGH with Apple Day.

There are several levels of 'Britain In Bloom' judging. In South and South East In Bloom, there were two awards for Tunbridge Wells: Gold and Winner in the Small City category, also Gold and Winner in the Best Community Engagement section. Grosvenor and Hilbert Park won Gold in the Large Park category. FoGH achieved level 5 Outstanding in the S & SEIB It's Your Neighbourhood section. A new Community Participation award has been introduced for It's Your Neighbourhood – we were awarded Gold and judged Winners! Well done everyone!

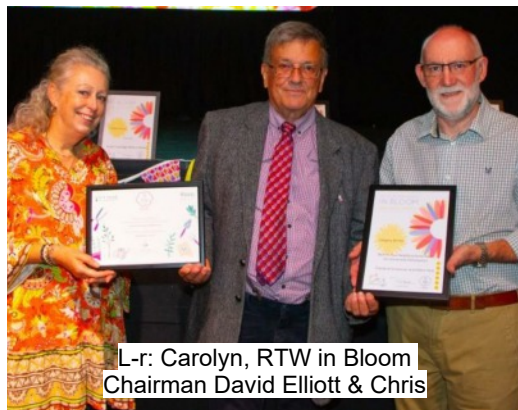


Raising the Green Flag



Chris Hughes and I went to the RTW In Bloom Awards ceremony at The Assembly Hall to pick up our community awards, and to cheer on all the local residents, schools and businesses collecting their awards. On October 23rd the National Britain In Bloom Awards were held in London, and featured on BBC One Show. The Small City national category winner was Newcastle-under-Lyme, who were also Overall Britain in Bloom winner.

It is the spirit of these 'green' groups that we would like to bring to the Park, with the support of Tunbridge Wells Borough Council/ RTW In Bloom.



L-r: Carolyn, RTW in Bloom Chairman David Elliott & Chris

This project is in the planning stages, and we'll be announcing more about this in the new year. Working alongside TWBC is something we continue to do. In September, a few of the committee met with members of TWBC Parks Dept, KHWP, and U3A Gardening Group, to discuss working work better together in 2024 and beyond.

I also attended the TWBC 'Better Streets Workshop' in The Hub. Ideas were being collected across the St Johns and St James Wards, and the morning highlighted issues on many local roads with parking and crossing problems. I suggested (again) lighting along the cycle path in the park and double yellow lines in front of the Auckland Rd gates.



It's been another busy year for all our volunteers and the committee, with a full and varied programme of events – many thanks to everyone for our 2023 achievements!

I send Seasons Greetings and Best Wishes for 2024 to you all!

**Carolyn Gray, FOGH Chair.**

## Events & Activities

In late August KHWP ran a **Bat Walk** in the Park. It started at the Hub, with a talk on bats, then craft activities and a fun game of bats versus moths. Then it was off into the Park with the bat detectors!

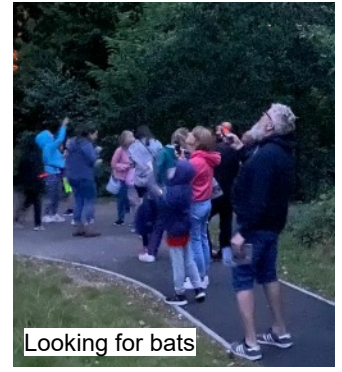
As it had rained, the only bats seen were Common Pipistrelles, but they put on a great show over the beaver dam. Many thanks to Steph and Tirzah for a fun evening.



Bat crafts



Bats versus moths



Looking for bats



Visitors at Apple Day



The National Fruit Show stand

**Apple Day** was held on the last Saturday in September, in glorious sunshine. This year FoGH purchased apples from an orchard in Matfield, as well as using fruit from the orchard.

We were joined by Mandy and Ann from the National Fruit Show, with apples to sample, children's activities and information on fruit.

Iron Springs Morris kept us active with dances to try. FoGH had an information stand and sold plenty of apple themed cakes and biscuits. Over 200 people came along, and many helped with apple preparation and juicing.

A major incentive was helping to make and taste the freshest possible apple juice! Sincere thanks to all the heroic volunteers for chopping loads of apples, scratting, juicing and clearing up!



Morris dancing



Volunteers chopping apples



Scratting cuts apples smaller



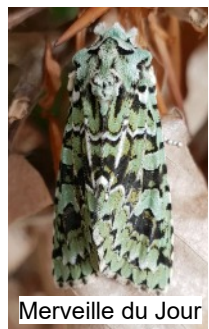
Loading the apple press



Pressing apples



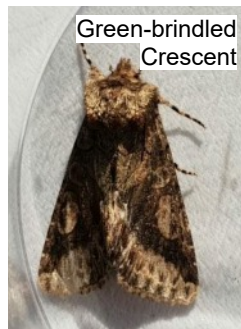
Pouring apple juice



Merveille du Jour



Angle Shades



Green-brindled Crescent

The last **Moth Identification** event of the year took place in mid October. 18 moths of 13 different species were found after a fairly warm night. The star find was a freshly emerged Merveille du Jour (marvel of the day). We also had children's colouring and our pre-loved book stall. Over 60 people attended during the morning.

FoGH held a **Quiz Night** on 21st October. Participants grappled with questions, enjoyed delicious half-time fish and chips from St John's Fish Bar and helped to raise funds to extend the Park's wild-flower meadow.

At the end of October, Keith Palmer led a **Fungal Foray** through the Park. On a wet day, an intrepid few sheltering under umbrellas were amazed at how many different kinds of fungus were found.



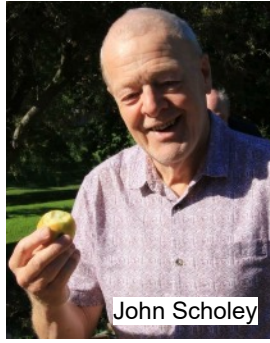
Quiz Night fish & chips



A few of the fungi found

*Mary Hughes*

## Meet the Committee



John Scholey

I first came to Tunbridge Wells in the late 1990s when Liz and I became a couple; we married in 1999. I have lived in Redleaf Close since then, from which time I have often visited Grosvenor & Hilbert Park.

In 2006 I was appointed as the Official Town Crier for Tunbridge Wells and thus proclaimed on

occasions in the Park. Over the years we had grandchildren to mind on a regular basis, so the Park provided the perfect recreation area. The figure 8 cycle track proved an ideal place to teach bike riding. After I finally retired in 2018, I started volunteering for some tasks in the Park. As one thing led to another, I put myself forward for the FOGH committee when a space on it became available.

I am a folk fan and a morris dancer; I play music for local side Iron Spring Morris which, unsurprisingly, has danced at events in the Park. **John Scholey**

## Dogs in the Park

This is Dali. Named by my son, who thought his moustache reminded him of Salvador Dali. That is the only resemblance to Salvador though!

Dali is a schnauzer which is a German breed not Spanish. However, he is a little confused as he was born in Wales! Being twelve years old, he is starting to feel a little more tired and has got much more stubborn.

His biggest phobias are water, especially at bath-time, the vets and the dog clippers. His favourite spot in the Park is under the table outside the cafe, where he loves to sniff and hopefully find food that may have been dropped by some poor soul.

Dali is a very friendly dog and good with children. So please feel free to say hello and give him a stroke. Like most dogs in the Park, he loves to chase the squirrels. Even though he is far too slow to catch one, he never gives up on the idea! **John Lines**



Dali



## Hard at Work in the Park

Volunteers have again been busy in the Park with a number of tasks. Early September saw work start on extending the Wildflower Meadow in the Orchard. This is a joint initiative with Kent High Weald Partnership (KHWP), who have secured a grant from the Sussex Lund Trust to buy a heavy duty scarifier for the project. To encourage wildflowers to grow, the grass and thatch needs to be removed.



Volunteers scarifying & raking

So the grass was cut as short as possible (strimmed and mowed repeatedly), then the area was scarified. This was time consuming, as after each cut or scarify the grass needed raking off and removing. Over two days three long strips were completed, leaving bare soil ready for seed to be sown.

We sowed yellow rattle, which will overwinter in the soil before germinating in spring. Yellow rattle is a semi-parasitic annual that feeds off the

nutrients in the roots of grass. By weakening vigorous grasses, it helps more delicate, traditional species thrive.

At the end of September, KHWP volunteers were working in the wetland area. Using a power scythe, the grass and sedges in one area were cut and removed for composting. Some willow was cut down (it will grow again), as it can become quite invasive and encroach into the ponds. The area is being managed to provide greater biodiversity through a number of different habitats.

Working with the TWBC Parks Team, FoGH



Planting near the Hub

Community Planting days took place in early October. The deal is they provide the plants and we provide volunteers to put them in. Over the years some plants have failed, so this allowed us to fill some gaps. The first day we planted the borders by the bowls green and Hub area, then around Marnock Lake on the second day. The plants went in well and look as though they have been there for some time – Finally, we planted another 500 purple crocus bulbs at the Upper Grosvenor Road entrance, to enhance the spring display. The bulbs were provided by RTW Rotary Club to raise awareness of their 'Purple for Polio' fight for a polio free world.

Many thanks to all our volunteers! To get involved, please see [www.khwp.org.uk/](http://www.khwp.org.uk/) and [www.fogh.org.uk/index.php?inc=community](http://www.fogh.org.uk/index.php?inc=community)

**Chris Hughes**



Sowing yellow rattle



Wetland area before scything



Wetland area after the work

## Winter Events

### **Santa in the City.....Saturday 9th December start 2pm**

3km Fun Run suitable for all abilities. Children can run for free, but must be over 3 years of age.

Find out more & register on <https://saintinthecity.co.uk/event-info-tw>

### **Christmas Carols with the CREATE Choir.....Sunday 10th December 2 – 3.30pm**

At the Hub. FoGH invite you to join us for this seasonal celebration – there will be a Raffle.

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

### **Community Orchard Apple Howling.....Saturday 6th 2024 January 2 – 3pm**

Meet FoGH & the Iron Springs Morris Dancers in the Oast House car park.

Bring something to make a noise with – a saucepan & wooden spoon will do!

Wrap up warm & wear suitable footwear. Refreshments available. Donations welcomed.

### **Orchard Pruning.....Sunday 4th February time TBC**

The apple & pear trees need their annual prune, to keep them well-shaped & improve fruit production.

Any help much appreciated: please bring secateurs/loppers if possible & wear suitable clothing/footwear.

### **Winter Lantern Parade.....Saturday 10th February from 5.30pm**

Starting from Calverley Precinct & ending at the Auckland Road entrance, the theme is 'Dream Destinations'

There will be lantern making workshops in January: see [www.winterlanterns.org](http://www.winterlanterns.org)

Reserve date in case of bad weather: Saturday 18th February.

### **KHWP Volunteer Day.....Thursday 15th February 10am – 3.30pm**

Woodland Management – work on the woodland pasture in Appledore Wood.

Tea, coffee & biscuits provided: bring a packed lunch if you are staying all day.

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

### **The Fun FoGH Quiz Night.....Saturday 17th February 7pm for 7.30 start**

At the Hub. Time for another mental workout! Tables of 6 if possible: price to be advised.

Fish & chips included, as well as condiments. Please bring your own drinks & glasses.

Booking essential by phone or text on 07972 592799 & please advise of any dietary requirements.

### **The FoGH Annual General Meeting.....Thursday 14th March 7 – 7.30pm**

Join us at the Hub to help shape the future direction of FoGH.

Only paid-up members can vote; please contact the Secretary to check via [members@fogh.org.uk](mailto:members@fogh.org.uk)

### **Insects & Flowers of G & H Park.....Thursday 14th March 7.45pm**

Talk by Ian Beavis following on from the AGM. Find out more about the plants & insects found in the Park.

More information to follow – please see our website, social media & posters nearer the time.

### **KHWP Volunteer Day.....Wednesday 20th March 10am – 3.30pm**

A day in the Community Orchard: mulching around the trees & checking the wildflower meadow.

Tea, coffee & biscuits provided: bring a packed lunch if you are staying all day.

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

**## Please note: children must be accompanied by a responsible adult at all events. ##**

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

FoGH website: [www.fogh.org.uk](http://www.fogh.org.uk) Facebook [www.facebook.com/GrosvenorHilbert](http://www.facebook.com/GrosvenorHilbert)

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

To learn more about conservation volunteering days with KHWP, see [www.khwp.org.uk/](http://www.khwp.org.uk/)

### **FoGH Contact Details**

Carolyn Gray (FoGH Chair)

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or 15 Dorking Road,

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<https://twitter.com/FofGH>

Tunbridge Wells, TN1 2LN

For information on how to join the Friends group, please see our website [www.fogh.org.uk/index.php?inc=community](http://www.fogh.org.uk/index.php?inc=community)

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, Tirzah Bottomley, Carolyn Gray,  
Chris Hughes, Clare Kelly, John Lines, Kasia Olszewska-Martin & Sarah Wood.**