



Friends of Grosvenor & Hilbert Park

Newsletter 36 Autumn 2020

Summer in the Park

How lucky we are to have access to this lovely remnant of countryside. A place to exercise and play during lockdown, now hosting family picnics and lots of fun in the playground.



Buzzard over the Park



Apples ripening in the orchard



Looking across the wetland



The wildflower meadow



Flowering rush



Male Emperor Dragonfly

Chairman's Report

At the heart of what we try to achieve as a group is to raise the profile of the Park as a superb community resource. During the past five months, more than ever before, easy access to good quality green spaces has been increasingly valuable as we all adjust to the changing limitations of the pandemic.

Providing opportunities for community interest and participation has been challenging for all. Committee member Mary Hughes has produced an interesting and comprehensive leaflet to accompany a self-guided walk of the Park. This is for Heritage Open Days, from Friday 11th to Sunday 20th September. Please go to our website www.fogh.org.uk to download the map and leaflet.

We have continued to collect data on the wildlife in the Park. The latest moth trap in July revealed a record number of 169 moths from 56 different species. Future records will be collected in late August.

One of the downsides of the increased use of the Park has been the quantity of litter left by a minority of unthinking visitors. I am frequently asked why anyone would wish to degrade the quality of our Park in this way – a question that I am unable to answer sensibly. FoGH are launching a campaign to try and encourage the majority of caring park users and supporters to volunteer to help us all clear up this most unwelcome sight.



If we could all spend a few minutes picking up some of the items left strewn around it would help our lovely park keeper, Tony, with this daily task and help to keep our Park as it deserves to be. Please go to the 'Contact Us' section of our website and click on the Volunteer Newsletter section to find out more. Joining in with our initiative for litter clearing can show what a difference a community spirit can give to us all.

Liz Edwards



Update from the Parks Department



Over the past few months we have seen a huge increase in visitors using the Park, many discovering Grosvenor and Hilbert for the first time. Sadly, we have also seen an increase in the volume of litter and vandalism. Green Flag alongside Keep Britain Tidy are running a campaign asking people to respect our open spaces. Of course, we have signed up, you will no doubt see the posters around the Park. Alongside this the Friends are also trying to find volunteers to help with litter picking and we will be supporting their efforts.

Over the next few weeks the Kent County Council Help team will be present in the Park around the Hub for five Tuesdays, starting on the 8th September. The team will be there to provide advice and offer help to families who may be struggling in the current crisis. Of course we are more than happy to welcome them to the Park and support their programme.

We hope the Dripping Wells will soon be working again: the company who maintain them for us tell us there is a fault on the circuit board, causing the pumps to trip out. The company have agreed to forward their scheduled maintenance visit to rectify the problem. With the pumps working this will help to circulate the water around the Lake, which should improve the water quality. We will monitor the Lake over the coming months.

If you have any suggestions or wish to contact the parks team, please email parks@tunbridgewells.gov.uk

Peter Every – TWBC Parks & Sports Team Leader



Marnock Lake & the Dripping Wells

Graffiti in the Park



There's always something new to look at on the Legal Graffiti Wall, as well as on the railway footbridge. The butterfly was for a birthday celebration.

Update from Kent High Weald Partnership

Completed boardwalk repairs



It has been a challenging year so far, but we were delighted to get our volunteers back out and about after lockdown. Over the last 2 months we have been running a restricted programme to keep everyone safe.

Numbers of volunteers for each task are limited and each task needs to be pre-booked. We have new health and safety procedures in place (you may have noticed our hand-washing station!) This does mean that we are currently unable to advertise the volunteer programme or take on new volunteers at present.

Since restarting we have done a few jobs in Hilbert Woods LNR. These include repairing the broken boardwalk as you enter the woods from Redleaf Close. Due to restricted numbers this took longer than normal and

we replaced the section over 3 days. The physical work may have been a bit of a shock for us and our volunteers, having been less active over lockdown, but we are pleased with our work and hope park users are too.

To help the Tunbridge Wells in Bloom team we also planted up the beds by the bowling green with moth friendly plants: thanks to Tony for his help preparing the beds. Most recently our team of volunteers got stuck in and cleared the debris built up behind our 'leaky' dams in the woodland stream. These leaky dams are designed to allow the normal water flow but to hold back storm water during very heavy rainfall. They also make nice habitat features for small creatures.



Clearing the 'leaky' dams



If you have any questions for KHWP please do get in touch by emailing cally@khwp.org.uk

Cally Fiddimore, Partnership Officer

Meet the Committee



Richard Woodfield

I've been a user of G&H Park for several decades. In the early 1990s, when we lived in Southborough, it was a treat for our children to visit the playground. We watched the trains at what we then called 'the helter skelter park'.

Two more recent highlights have been watching the development of the wetlands area and several sightings of a kingfisher at Marnock Lake.

This year during the months of lockdown I've often included the Park on my jogging routes. It has been so therapeutic to trot in pleasant surroundings in the cool of the early morning. Over the years I've done a fair amount of litter picking in the Park.

More recently my role with the Friends group has been mostly behind the scenes: taking minutes at the committee and helping to organize our participation in Heritage Open Days.

Richard Woodfield

Dogs in the Park

Ripley is 11 months old, a smooth black and tan female dachshund. She is small as her father is a miniature and her mother is a standard daxie.

We got her last October from a breeder near Ashford after wanting a dog for many years. She has seamlessly fitted into our family and we can't imagine life without her.

She is named after Ellen Ripley from the Alien films. Her name is fitting because she is sassy, feisty and full of character. She is also cuddly, loving and loyal and has many 'special people' that she is particularly fond of in the Park (you know who you are).

We are convinced that Ripley thinks she's a big scary guard dog, as that's how she behaves whenever someone knocks on our front door. Ripley usually wears a recognisable dragon winged harness and a rainbow collar in the Park, which seems to attract lots of attention.

Ripley



Claire Simpson

Mighty Moths garden

In July, Kent High Weald Partnership volunteers and the Royal Tunbridge Wells in Bloom team renovated the herbaceous beds by the bowling green. We created a moth friendly garden, to attract these fascinating creatures to this area of the Park.

Moths are an important part of the ecosystem, with over 2,500 species in the UK. However, the overall number of moths has decreased by 28% since 1968. Southern Britain is particularly bad, with numbers down by 40%.

Planting pollinator friendly gardens and maintaining wildlife habitat is important to conserve moths (visit www.butterfly-conservation.org).



The finished moth garden

Moth caterpillars feed on native trees in the Park, like oak, birch, hawthorn and blackthorn. Un-mown meadow areas, and common plants like ivy, dandelions, nettles and brambles, provide shelter for moths at every stage of their lifecycle.

Our garden is decorated with children's posters from the Mighty



Mighty Moths posters

Moths art competition organised by RTW in Bloom, KHWP and the Cross Pollination Project. Our selection of plants will attract a variety of pollinators including moths. Traditional garden plants include *Sedum spectabile* (Ice plant), *Dianthus barbatus* (Sweet William), *Erysimum* (Wallflower), Phlox and Verbena.

There are night-flowering plants – *Matthiola bicornis* (Night-scented stocks), *Hesperis matronalis* (Sweet rocket) and *Oenothera biennis* (Evening primrose). The tubular flowers of *Nicotiana alata* (Tobacco plant) attract moths.

We used strong-scented plants, like climbers *Lonicera* (Honeysuckle) and *Trachelospermum* (Jasmine). Also the herbs Oregano, Marjoram, Thyme and Lavender.



Evening Primrose



Sweet Rocket

The winners are:

Edith Ricketts (from Southborough Preschool)

Leo Heathcoat, Lydia Knight, Amelie Nyeman & Martha Ashworth (from St Johns School)

Blake Johnson, Kalvin Derrick, & Lauren Tamkin (Oakley School)

Kasia Olszewska-Martin, Parks Technical Officer

News from the FoGH Committee

Coronavirus restrictions have eased since the last newsletter, so we have held two small committee gatherings, with the discussions fed back to the wider committee. In July five of us met outside The Hub, with the main topic how to run Heritage Open Days in September. We decided to create extra information to go with the existing Heritage Trail: a self-guided history walk.



Ian Beavis
identifying moths

The need for social distancing means the moth trapping and identification events will be held in gardens by the Park, with information shared online. It's hard to run our usual community planting events with social distancing, so the existing plants will remain in the railing baskets until autumn. We made some basic posters to go on the park boards to promote the Friends group to new visitors.



The 'committee'
meet by the Hub

In August six of us went to The Allotment pub garden – a nice change!! We agreed that events in 2020 are unlikely, so sadly this will include established events like Apple Day, Halloween and Christmas Carols. We are sharing information on social media, and Dave is updating the website, but we realise this is hard for members not online. We hope we may gain new members, as people are finding the website via mobile phone searches – we think while looking for information on opening, toilets, parking etc.

The hot topic at the August meeting was LITTER. As with all other open spaces across the town, there has been a lot of litter in the Park this summer. We appreciate more people equals more rubbish, but quite a lot is not put into the bins, with some left by full bins, then torn open by foxes, creating more mess. People have offered to help litter pick, but a proper event falls under the current groups of 6 guidelines. We agreed to try and establish monthly events for this, hopefully in the autumn.



While we have all been discussing Park matters by email since March, it was good to meet face to face and talk. Autumnal weather might make this harder again.....

Carolyn Gray



August meeting
at The Allotment

Sport Report

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

When outdoor sports like bowls got the go-ahead to start again, Grosvenor Bowls Club made sure we had safety measures in place. We want members to enjoy themselves with confidence that they are safe. Rinks must be booked online and there are precautions to follow.

Although all competitions have been cancelled, and local friendlies are not yet achievable, members are playing. We have had practices, singles and pairs challenge matches, and hope to have a day-long competition.

We encourage anyone interested to contact us via our website, or come and chat on the green! **Jo Cartwright**



Socially distanced bowls

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

West Kent Sunday Football League matches start in the Park on Sun. 6th September: St John's Yard v Nomads.

FoGH Contact Details

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Comments or contributions to

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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,
Ian Beavis, Nick Sangster, Claire Simpson & Richard Woodfield.*