

### **Summer Photos**









This summer we've certainly had variable weather! But the showers have given us lots of growth and grass that's green even at the end of August.

# **Acting Chair's Report**

Six months have passed since I took on the baton of Acting Chair following Liz's admission to hospital. The committee understands she is slowly progressing in her recovery. We wish her well and look forward to her return to the Park. Liz is such a font of knowledge on wildlife matters that I feel inadequate in that sense. However, I have been working part time recently, so have had the chance to help at the FoGH volunteer weeding sessions by the bowls green.

But I have been left to query the value of our time removing 'weeds' for the sake of specially selected plants, a point I considered recently in 'Town Crier' magazine, and again in these pages (see page 4).



One of the current buzzwords alongside 'Climate Change' is 'Biodiversity'. You may have seen the amazing photos of shire horses mowing the wildflower meadow at King's College, Cambridge. My Grandad worked his whole life with horses on farms in East Kent, so these photos were particularly cheery to me, and a time to reflect on our current digital lives. They brought back memories of the heavy horse events we held in the Park, when the orchard log seating was constructed. We will be looking back on the farm history of our Park at Heritage Open Days, under the theme of 'Edible England'.

Cambridge University is not alone in its wildflower work: a whole article recently in 'The Observer' reported on various projects around the UK.

Pulling out a few points – seven out of ten English councils have reduced mowing to boost flowers; Brighton and Hove Council allowing an under used golf course to be restored to chalk grassland and opened to the public; Leicester bus shelter roofs planted with flowers – 'Bee Bus Stops'. We have our small section of meadow in the orchard, and this year it's been a pleasure to see the flowers have seeded further around the area, alongside our other 'low-mow' sections.

I recently caught up on last year's Panorama special on Wild Weather. It reported on 2019 and 2020 with floods, droughts, wildfires, and coastal erosion. The programme looked towards future predictions on temperature increases, and how heatwaves produce heavy rain downpours during summer – something we have seen again in 2021. It would seem mindful to consider, in the same way I currently temporarily hold the baton of Acting Chair within FoGH, that all humans currently hold the baton for the future of the planet, and to be mindful of the condition we pass it on to those in the future.

## Update from the Parks Department

As you may be aware the current Grounds Maintenance contract expires at the end of this year, although we will be extending for an additional year while the Council considers the best Tunbridge options for the delivery of the service for the future. Within the new contract, the Council will need to think about our response to carbon reduction in the delivery of the contract. Therefore you may see some changes in the way our contractors operate. We will of course keep you updated as the project progresses.



Our contractors, Tivoli, welcome a new contract manager and supervisor to the Tunbridge Wells contract. Mark Worsell takes the roll of contract manager and comes to us from a contract in Bexley, and Philip Priest joins us as Supervisor. Both bring plenty of experience in the industry and will be making changes over the coming months. Don't worry - Tony will be staying in Grosvenor!

Since the last newsletter it was necessary to drastically reduce the large Lime tree near to the café, this was the result of a large split developing in the trunk. In addition, we reduced two sycamores near to the football pitches which showed signs of decline and fungal infection. On a more positive note, we will be ordering some replacement trees for planting in the winter.

This time of year is fairly quiet other than the routine maintenance. However, a project for the coming autumn will be the refurbishment of the bowling green beds with permanent herbaceous planting. We will be selecting pollinator friendly plants to attract a wide selection of insects. The Parks team would like to thank the FoGH volunteers for their continuing hard work on these beds.

If you have any suggestions or wish to contact the Parks team, please send an email to parks@tunbridgewells.gov.uk Peter Every - TWBC Parks & Sports Team Leader

# Tunbridge Wells Fringe Festival & CREATE in the Park

This Summer has felt like a resurgence of creativity and community in Tunbridge Wells. Lots of local people making 'stuff' happen while they can as restrictions have started to lift. It's been so exciting to be involved with the creation of the first Tunbridge Wells



Fringe Festival this Summer – even with the delay in restrictions lifting. We were incredibly grateful to have Grosvenor and Hilbert Park as one of the fabulous venues for the workshops at the Fringe!

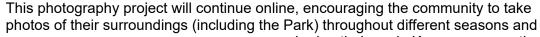


HUMOR showed some young budding artists how to spray paint. we had storytelling with Ghost Light Theatre, a Sacred Circle with Essence Tunbridge Wells, Rhyming limerick workshops with Flitt & Folio and a very creative arts and drama workshop with Creatables. A big thank you to all the artists who delivered these workshops, the volunteers from Tunbridge Wells Fringe and to TWBC Parks Department for letting us be there.

As well as helping organise the TW Fringe, I'm also chair of CREATE and we loved getting involved with the

workshops for the festival. We revived The Imaginarium and built Lanterns in the Hub at the Park. The imagination of those who got involved was incredible: stories were written, drawings created and bunting made.

One of our newest members of CREATE, Jos, put on a photography workshop! It was great to see so many people getting involved, photographing items in the Park, as well as in the Hub when it got a little too wet outside.



sharing their work. Keep an eye on the CREATE social media for more information.

I'm excited that CREATE are going to be involved in many more community projects this year, including the Southborough and High Brooms Festival on September 18th and 19th.



from The Imaginarium

Creative writing

Then there's a project to build your own charms to celebrate Camden Road. We're currently applying for funding in the hope we can hold the Winter Lantern Parade again in February 2022, ending in Grosvenor and Hilbert. Next year is looking pretty exciting.

Nell Price. Creative Director. Arty Farty Retreat



#### **Events & Activities in the Park**

### **Great British Spring Clean**



FoGH has previously held litter picks in the snow, but Sunday 13th June saw very hot weather. We took Covid precautions and used our online booking system to allocate timeslots, so not everyone came at once. But we did manage to pick the day of England's first match in the Euros, against Croatia, so we had families without football fans!

One participant joined us on the spur of the moment while taking her dog for a walk. At the end she said that she had been feeling really down but doing something positive had cheered her up.

Plenty of rubbish was picked up from around the Park: many thanks to all those who came along and to TWBC Parks department for Mary Hughes

lending us the litter pickers.





## **Britain in Bloom Judging**

On Wednesday 23rd June the Park was judged in the Britain In Bloom competition. After last year's 'virtual judging', it was good to welcome Royal Horticultural Society judge Sorin Caraiman in person and show him the Park.

We started at 9am with judging for the South & South-East in Bloom 'It's Your Neighbourhood' category, which is for community groups. We visited the Orchard and Roundabout Wood, discussing the work done by volunteers in both locations. We looked at the young trees at the Upper Grosvenor Road entrance, ending up with the Hub and Bowls green baskets. We told the judge about other FoGH activities.

At 2pm we reconvened with Peter and Kasia from the TWBC Parks Department, to help with the Large Park category. This looks at the way the Park is managed and how visitors use it. We visited Marnock Lake, the playground and bowls green. We met Lindsay Hasell from U3A at the bee beds, as their volunteers now look after these beds.



We were keen to tell the judge about the great work Tony does and how much he is valued by Park users.

We will have to wait to find out how we did in both categories, as the judge gave nothing away, but hopefully we impressed him with everything that goes on in the Park. Chris Hughes



#### **Moth Identification Events**

We have held two so far this year, with Ian Beavis setting up a moth trap in a garden close to the Park. Then we see what's been found at the Hub the following morning. In June, Covid restrictions limiting the numbers inside venues meant we moved outside, once some moths were identified and put in pots for closer examination. This attracted more passers-by and we did the same thing again at the August event with the same success.

Learn more about what we found in the next newsletter.

Mary Hughes

### FoGH Weeding

I would personally like to say a big thanks to our mini team of volunteers who have been weeding the bowls green beds. They have also been keeping the baskets looking tip-top, deadheading and weekend watering, and adding home-grown plants to the borders.

We have been meeting on a very ad-hoc basis, due to weather and

Another barrow full of weeds

personal commitments, but generally at 1.45pm. We break at 3pm for refreshments from Table 8 and a chat. Mondays once a fortnight seemed to be best, but some

volunteers are popping along on their own when they are free. Gold awards go to Lynda Steers and John Telling, and Silver to Chris Hughes and Derly James, with Bronze to all the others who have helped out. (And a Gold to you as well Carolyn – MH)

Between us we have got lots of bindweed and couch grass out of the beds, to reveal some of the moth friendly plants, put in as part of RTW In Bloom during summer 2020 (see the Autumn 2020 newsletter). Not all these plants survived, so we are working with Kasia Olszewska-Martin at the council on a longer term solution. Carolyn Gray



#### **Weeds or Wildflowers**



In our Spring 2021 newsletter we shared a piece from Kent High Weald Partnership about "Making Your Garden More Wildlife Friendly". This included scattering wildflower seeds and allowing a patch of grass to grow longer. While I claim to be no horticultural expert myself (despite about 30 years of gardening, including having an allotment), this year I have been thinking about the wilder areas of the Park.

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council has a biodiversity plan, dating back to 2008, before FoGH was formed. For quite a few years this has allowed leaving areas of grass in the Park to grow longer during the summer, and encouraging wildflowers to grow, as well as FoGH supporting the

work on a wildflower meadow in the orchard. But on our recent 'weeding afternoons' I have been contemplating the fine line between weeds and wildflowers!! Many of the plants we removed have herbal uses, and support wildlife – so should we just leave them to grow?

I've also been reading about how the ongoing changes in climate may impact on the plants that will grow well in this country – should we be planting high maintenance flowers, that need watering and pruning, when other flowers grow naturally? All the following can be found around the Park (this is not a totally inclusive list), starting with the top three that we have been removing around the bowls green and along the borders.

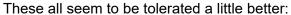




**Number 1 for 2021: Cleavers (Galium aparine)** with its sticky seeds, Cleavers can be a good addition to a wildlife garden. Viewed as a herb, they have many benefits, (but remember your research before picking any plants as herbal remedies!)

Continual Number 2: Hedge Bindweed (Calystegia sepium) shouldn't be eaten, but it supports a moth caterpillar.

And at Number 3: Stinging Nettles (Urtica dioica) These are good for wildlife and for human consumption (when cooked).



**Brambles** (*Rubus fructicosus*) are great for wildlife (flowers and habitat) and of course produce blackberries.







Dandelions (Taraxacum officinale)

Buds, roots, leaves and flowers are all edible for humans, widely used in herbal medicines, and a rich source of pollen and nectar.

White Clover (*Trifolium repens*) Part of the bean family, the leaves can be cooked and eaten like other 'greens'. Valuable to wood mice, bumblebees and common blue butterflies. It's also great in your lawn as it doesn't go brown in dry weather.

**Daisy** (*Bellis perennis*) Leaves, flowers and roots are edible. It is both an anti-inflammatory herb and a

vulnerary (improves circulation) herb.

Green Alkanet (Pentaglottis sempervirens) A relation of Forget-me-not, Comfrey and Borage, this has sprung up all around the Park, and it's pretty blue flowers have generally delighted humans as well as bees, butterflies, moths and flies. A few humans feel it is a weed that needs removing. It's roots





produce a red dye – part of its common name 'alkanet' derives from the old Arabic word for Henna, al hinna.





Common Mallow (Malvaceae sylvestris) and Greater Musk-mallow (Malva alcea) both have beautiful flowers, various species of Mallow are eaten across the globe as a vegetable, or tea. It is also very attractive to bees.

Cow Parsley (Anthriscus sylvestris) has been used in traditional medicine for centuries, mainly through a tonic made from the roots, be careful not to confuse it with hemlock though.

root, the yellow flowers are a good source of pollen and nectar.

Silverweed (Argentina anserina) apparently has a tasty

Continued on page 5.

#### Weeds or Wildflowers continued

Buddleia (Buddleja davidii) 'Butterfly bush' is also attractive to bees and moths, this is an introduction from China, so not a native wildflower! But it has established itself in several parts of the Park. It is well used in traditional medicine, and for skincare.

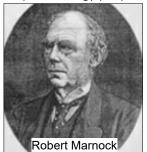
I think we all agree these two are a valuable part of spring in our Park:



Wild Garlic or Ramsons (Allium ursinum) An ancient woodland indicator plant. The second half of the Latin name, ursinum, refers to the fact that brown bears eat the bulbs.

Bluebells (Hyacinthoides non-scripta) Another ancient woodland indicator plant. Many insects reap the benefits of bluebells, which flower early: a valuable source of nectar for woodland butterflies, bees and hoverflies. Due to their toxicity, they have been little used in modern medicine. However, their bulbs have diuretic (increases urination) and styptic (helps to

stop bleeding) properties, and research on their use against cancer is ongoing.



We seek to retain the trees and plants of our ancient woodlands, so should we let the main areas of our parks reflect their natural beginnings, rather than a Victorian perfectionist vision? Robert Marnock (the landscape designer behind Grosvenor Recreation Ground in 1889) was

considered to be the best exponent of the Gardenesque style.

carefully placed trees in open grass areas, long

The main characteristic of this style is trees, shrubs and plants in scattered planting, positioned to display each plant to its full potential. He used

structured views, and 'natural' landscapes with flowing contours. In our Park, the curving paths, as well as the landscaping of the Lake with the Dripping Wells and island, are all Marnock's original design.

We know from pre-1889 newspaper reports that the old swimming pool was surrounded by brambles - should we let them return in abundance instead of removing them? Carolyn Gray

Marnock Lake & island

(Information gathered from a variety of online resources, as well as some gardening books.)

# **Sport Report**

Bowls (see <a href="https://www.grosvenorbowls.co.uk/">https://www.grosvenorbowls.co.uk/</a>)

The 2021 season has been good for Grosvenor Bowls Club, with new members to welcome and only one fixture cancelled due to rain. We have enjoyed restarting games against local clubs and renewing friendships. The matches are great fun and, although the result is secondary, we have won most of them!

In the Tunbridge Wells Triples League, Grosvenor went into the final game second on shot difference and on the same points as Grove A. They took maximum points and won the top division for the first time in the club's history! And we have new league players this season: their enthusiasm is encouraging.



Jo Cartwright



In early August, several of our members took part in the Tunbridge Wells Tournament, an open competition held jointly at Culverden and the Grove bowls clubs. Grosvenor bowler Graham Bridges played some superb bowls to win the singles competition. He was also runner-up in the pairs with former Grosvenor member Stuart Moaby. Congratulations to them both.

Sunday 5th September will see Grosvenor playing the finals of our club competitions, with 6 trophies up for grabs, so we will be hoping the sun shines on us. Spectators are welcome! If you are interested in giving bowls a try, come and have a go on Wednesday evenings between 6pm and 8pm, or ring secretary Norman (01892 542032) to arrange a time that suits you.

Feel free to come and talk to us – we're a very friendly club!



This newsletter has followed the fortunes of St John's Yard FC in the West Kent Sunday Football League since 2014, as they played in the Park. In future their matches will be played at Hawkenbury, so to follow local Sunday league football, see the WKSFL website. Mary Hughes





Buddleia

Bluebells

## The Grosvenor Bridge Area

During the 19th century Tunbridge Wells continued to grow, with the population increasing from 1,600 in 1810 to 8,300 in 1841. The Grosvenor Bridge area was always significant, supplying stone for the upmarket Calverley Park development from the quarries in the Quarry Road area. The water for the development came from Calverley Water Works and the reservoirs close to the quarries.

Once the railway arrived in 1845 and the Goods Station opened, the cost and speed of moving freight reduced, fuelling urban expansion. Traffic increased rapidly and the area would have been a hive of activity. Supplies for the town were unloaded from trains and carted away with horse-drawn transport. In 1872 there was a large goods shed, and sidings to Medway Coal Wharf and the Timber Yard.

In the 1890s there were repeated complaints from the Tradesmen's Association about inadequate access to the Goods Station. There had been no improvements for the last 40 years and population and traffic had doubled. "There is only room for 6 trucks at a time in the





Goods Shed and sometimes there are 60 trucks a day coming down." It's hard now for us imagine how busy the area was before widespread road haulage: most goods were brought in by train.

By 1897 the number of sidings had proliferated and a second goods shed had opened. Tunbridge Wells Corporation opened their Electric Light Works in 1895, using steam-driven turbines to generate electricity. Water from Jackwood Spring was heated in coal-fired boilers, so the Works had its own sidings for coal trucks.

The Corporation Stone Yard was by the Goods Station, also with sidings. To maintain the roads, rocks quarried in Sevenoaks were brought in by train. The rocks were broken up with a stone breaker, then carted to where they were needed.

The Baltic Saw Mills were located close by: first in Commercial Road, then in Goods Station Road. So around Grosvenor Bridge was now a thriving industrial area. Although a source of much employment, there were disadvantages to working and living there. Smoke from trains (passing and shunting in the goods yard) and the

Electricity Works, dust from the coal yards, dust from the stone breaker and the roads. And plenty of noise!

The area continued busy and prosperous, although railway freight declined steadily from the 1930s, as roads improved and the cost of road haulage reduced. Medway Coal Wharf closed during WW2, becoming an additional Corporation Yard.

Changes after WW2 heralded the start of the slow decline of the area. The railways were nationalised in 1947 but changes to the freight service failed to stop the move to transporting goods by road. The goods station closed in 1980, with the buildings demolished in 2007 as the area was opened up to residential development.

The UK electrical power industry was nationalised in 1947, when over 600 power companies were merged into 12 area boards. South Eastern Electricity Board (SEEBOARD) took over Tunbridge Wells Electrical Works. In March 1969, Mayor Kenneth Morrison turned off the turbines at the Electricity Works for the last time, after 74 years of

Corporation
Yard

Corporation
Yard

Electricity
Works

Si James's
Primary &
Junior Schools

1960 Ordnance Survey map



operation. The 180ft

power station chimney stack was demolished brick by brick in 1970.

Some buildings from the industrial past still exist. The Baltic Saw Mills building on Goods Station Road is now Southpaw. Near Grosvenor Bridge is the Trident Trailers building, previously the turbine hall for the Electricity Works. It's sad to see this remnant of the town's industrial heritage in such a decayed state.

Mary Hughes

Sources: Kent & Sussex Courier 1873-1950 (©Local World Ltd courtesy of The British Library Board) via British Newspaper Archive, maps National Library of Scotland.

#### **Meet the Committee**



As my house overlooks the Park, I have always had an interest in it. I became more involved as a volunteer with KHWP in 2007 as they manage the Hilbert Woods Nature Reserve in the Park. Having joined the Friends group when it started in 2011, I joined the committee a few

years later. I started as deputy Treasurer, then stepped up when John Bushell retired from the post.

As Treasurer I manage the day to day finances of FoGH, like paying in money, paying any expenses and preparing the annual accounts. It also encompasses raising funds for the group, which includes applying for grants, looking for sponsorship or running our fish & chip quiz nights.

My key objective is to ensure the group has a strong financial base, which will allow it continue thriving and developing in the future. *Chris Hughes* 

## Dogs in the Park

This is Bella, our four year old Cocker Spaniel. Bella came home with us when we bought our first house in 2017 and will always be our first baby.

She has since become a wonderful fur sister to our son Ezra, they are two peas in a pod! She is extremely loving



and affectionate and loves to cuddle her soft toys.
Bella has lots of friends she loves to play with in
Grosvenor Park – canine and human alike. She
especially loves park warden Tony, who will throw a
ball for her and pay her lots of attention!

You can most likely find Bella paddling in the stream in the woods or lying on her back waiting for a tummy rub from any passer-by! Her best doggy friends at the park are Luna, Reggie, Jett and Pi. The Park is a wonderful place for Bella to play, and to meet other dogs and dog lovers!

\*\*Abbie Luck Gibbs\*\*

# **Volunteering During a Pandemic**

The last 18 months has certainly been a challenge for us at Kent High Weald Partnership, as it has been for everyone. Luckily for us, being outdoors is probably one of the safer places to be during a pandemic! During the first lockdown we





suspended all our activities from March until July, when we resumed some work under new strict safety measures. One of the first things was to repair the boardwalk by the culvert near the Redleaf Close entrance.

Despite suspending activities again from January to March this year, we managed to achieve some tasks in the Park since last July. These include maintaining the leaky dams in the woods, managing the wildflowers in the orchard, mulching the orchard trees, and helping to clear some of the bur-reed from the wetland area. Our colleagues at the KCC flood management team have recently installed a new leaky dam just downstream from the beaver sculpture.

Our most recent endeavour at Hilbert has been to start building steps up the steep and slippery path from the woods to the Redleaf Close entrance. We have been continuing to pull up Himalayan Balsam in the Park. Himalayan Balsam is a non-native invasive plant that likes damp areas, particularly next to streams and rivers. Although an attractive plant, it spreads quickly and prevents our native plants from growing as well as causing soil erosion.

I am pleased to say we are heading back to normality and are now able to welcome new volunteers. There has been increasing demand for volunteer activities over recent months, so we are glad to offer opportunities for those looking to get involved. We are looking forward to more regular volunteering again and hopefully with some new



faces. We are planning to replace some of the broken rustic benches in Hilbert and help reinforce the hazel woven fence near the orchard.

Hilbert and help reinfo
We have also been for running our community and therapeutic space of things to come out of and importance of green has proven benefits to Tunbridge Wells to have

We have also been fortunate during the pandemic to be able to continue running our community allotment at Hilbert, providing a much welcome and therapeutic space for adults struggling with poor mental health. One of things to come out of this challenging period is the wider appreciation and importance of greenspaces and access to them. Being out in nature has proven benefits to our mental wellbeing and we are lucky in Tunbridge Wells to have so many beautiful greenspaces to enjoy.

For our latest volunteer programme or for more information, please get vp.org.uk Cally Fiddimore, Partnership Officer, KHWP

in touch with me by emailing cally@khwp.org.uk

### **Provisional Autumn Events**

FoGH AGM......Thursday 9th September from 7pm

Join us at the Hub to help shape the future of FoGH! Only paid up members can vote.

Please contact the Membership Secretary to check your membership status or to join.

FoGH Litter Pick......Saturday 11th September 2 – 4pm

Help to keep the Park tidy by joining us to look for litter.

Meet at the Hub to collect your equipment. Timeslots can be booked at our website

Heritage Open Days Exhibition.....Sunday 19th September 11am – 4pm

Join FoGH volunteers at the Hub to learn more about the history of our Park.

The 2021 HODs theme is Edible England, so we have new display material on the farm here before the Park.

Heritage Open Days Walk......Sunday 19th September 2.30pm

Ian Beavis leads a walk through the Park with insights into the history & wildlife.

Meet at the Hub from 2pm for this popular event. Please book places through editors@FoGH.org.uk

Moth Identification......Saturday 9th October 10.30am - 12.30pm

Join Ian Beavis to identify autumn flying moths caught in a moth trap overnight in a local garden.

At the Hub. Free drop-in event suitable for all ages.

Apple Day......Saturday 23rd October 11am – 3pm

At the Oast House. Join FoGH for activities, games & refreshments.

We'll be making juice with our apple press: bring bottles to take some home.

Volunteers needed to help cut up the apples! Any clean bottles welcomed!

For more information & in case of change or cancellation, see social media & look out for posters in the Park.

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

or Twitter https://twitter.com/FofGH

## Skateboarding & BMX at the Olympics

This summer saw the final arrival of the Tokyo 2020 Olympic games. Skateboarding made its debut at the Aomi Urban Sports Venue, where the BMX biking also took place. Skateboarding has two disciplines: Park and Street. The Park version takes place in a 'bowl' with assorted curves. 13-year old Sky Brown won Bronze for Great Britain in Women's Park.

The Street course is like the skate park at the Park, with ramps and rails



to resemble a street. Judging considers the degree of difficulty of tricks, height, speed, originality, execution, and the composition of moves, before awarding an overall mark.



There were Gold medals for Team GB in BMX events. Charlotte Worthington won Gold in BMX Freestyle, which is the sort of biking you will see at the skate park, with tricks on ramps. Bethany Shriever won gold in BMX racing, on a course to replicate racing along bumps and tracks. There were also some men's medals, Kye Whyte won Men's Racing Silver, and Declan Brooks took a bronze in Men's Freestyle. These medals hopefully help to confirm the value of the skate park in the Park.

Carolyn Gray

#### **FoGH Contact Details**

Twitter

Carolyn Gray (Acting Chair) Jane Melville (Secretary) Website Facebook chair@fogh.org.uk Friendsghrp@aol.com www.FoGH.org.uk www.facebook.com/GrosvenorHilbert

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 15, 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