



Friends of Grosvenor & Hilbert Park

Newsletter 30 Spring 2019



Heritage Lottery Funding ends this year

Over the past five years, with the help of Heritage Lottery Funding (HLF), we have enjoyed a full programme of activities and events in the Park. Some events are put on by us, the Friends, but many are organised by the Community Engagement Officer (a position funded by the HLF).



The HLF funding, and with it the role of Community Engagement Officer (CEO), is finishing this year. Looking to the future and life in the Park without the CEO, the Friends are searching for different ways to continue the excellent work and range of programmes set up by the CEO – currently Emma Peters.

Your Park needs you

By broadening our pool of volunteers, we hope that we can carry on with some of the activities and events set up by the CEO. To get more people involved we are launching a special newsletter to tell people about the opportunities to volunteer in the Park.



Building boardwalk in Roundabout Woods

Volunteers are involved in a range of activities – from standing at the gate for an hour at the Family Fete, to helping with a wildlife survey.

Did you know that volunteers planted 7000 bulbs in the Park in 2017? And that volunteers built the boardwalk through Roundabout Woods? And that the Family Fete is organised and run by volunteers?

To sign up for this newsletter simply visit the new page on our website

www.FoGH.org.uk/volunteer and fill in



Crocuses on a bank



Snowdrops near the lake

the form. We've split the different roles into different categories:

- Gardening
- Family and community events
- Refreshments and baking
- Surveying wildlife
- Park maintenance work
- Admin support

You simply tick all the areas you are interested in and fill in your email address. We will send you a tailored newsletter to let you know about opportunities to get involved.

If you are interested in finding out the different ways that you can help, visit www.FoGH.org.uk/volunteer and fill in the form and let us know what kinds of volunteer roles interest you. You can sign up for one area – or all of them! You're not committed to anything, just signing up to receive information. Please sign up to help our Park thriving.

Emma Melville

Subscribe to Volunteer List

* Indicates required

We, the Friends, in association with the Council and Kent High Weald Partnership put on a wide variety of events in the park every year, if you think you can help in some way sign up below and we will email you when appropriate.

Email Address *

First Name *

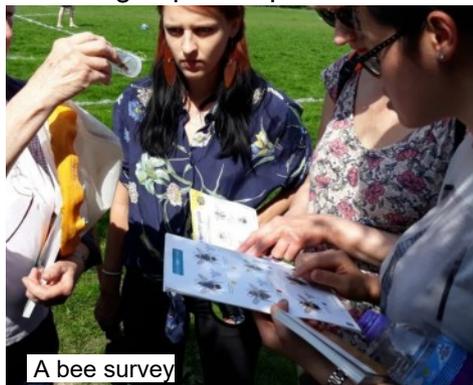
Last Name *

What type of events are you interested in? This will help us to ensure you only get requests for relevant events and activities.

- Family Events
- Social Events
- Garden Gang
- Practical Work Party
- Baking
- Committee

We guarantee we won't pass on your details to anyone or send you any information we don't think is relevant.

Subscribe



A bee survey



The FoGH cake stall at the Fete

Chairman's Report

With the unusually warm weather and more spring flowers showing every day, it really seems like the new year has properly arrived. This year brings in changes and big challenges as the five-year support in funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund comes to an end. These funds, administered through TWBC, have not only paid for all the refurbishment of the Park but also for our salaried Community Engagement Officer (CEO) since April 2014.



We've had the good fortune that our three successive CEOs - Cally Fiddimore, Steph D'Agorne and Emma Peters - have all been brilliant in the role. In addition to support for the upkeep of the Park, they have arranged a constant stream of interesting and innovative events, directed to a wide array of interests. As that role comes to an end there will be a marked difference. Decisions need to be made about which, if any, of those events can be continued as a legacy from their programme. Not only will this be dependent on finances, but crucially on whether there is enough interest from voluntary help to put on events.

As you will see in this newsletter, we have been giving this much thought. We have produced an initial invitation for those who might like to register an interest to be an active part of the FoGH volunteers. Every segment of help, however small that might be, would make a significant difference to what could be achieved.

We also are keen that other organisations see the Park as a good venue for their activities, so it was especially welcome that CREATE chose the Park as the destination for the Winter Lantern Parade on February 9th. It was lovely to see a spectacular evening enjoyed by so many of our local community. Thank you to all the hard-working members of CREATE (in partnership with Tunbridge Wells Round Table) who arranged the event.

We already have a programme of events planned for early this year. Let's hope we are lucky with the weather as the year goes by and that there is something that interests most of you. Thank you to all those loyal volunteers that have helped us in the past. Thank you and a warm welcome to anyone who feels that they might like to be a part of our very friendly team in the future.

Liz Edwards

The Legal Graffiti Wall

This still commands attention. There is always interesting transient art to see and here are couple of examples.



Local resident Pete Smith passes by the wall often and documents the frequent changes.

Update from the Parks Department

Since the last newsletter all has been rather quiet over the festive period and January. Tony has continued to keep on top of things in the Park. He is making some headway with the local youths and tells me he has seen a reduction in litter and broken glass. You'll see him working around the Park keeping on top of weeds and pruning shrubs. Tony has been nominated for Sodexo employee of the month, so fingers crossed his hard work gets recognised.



Our Britain in Bloom and Green Flag entries have been submitted for 2019, so the hard work begins for us all, making sure we can present the Park in its best possible light for the judges. The Royal Tunbridge Wells in Bloom team will once again be attending the FoGH Family Fete with plants, seeds and goodies to give away.

This year we welcomed the Winter Lantern Parade to the Park for the first time. This is a wonderful community event that has been going for a number of years, and I hope has found a new finishing venue. Apart from a couple of grumbles the feedback has been positive.

As we approach March, the HLF project will finally come to an end with a last visit from our monitoring officer. Community Engagement Officer Emma is working on a small celebration to mark the event for everyone who has been involved or has given us valuable feedback during the process. Despite HLF no longer visiting we will make sure we maintain the Park to the high standard expected by all our visitors and our Friends group.

Please continue to enjoy the Park over the spring and look out for the flowers and bulbs emerging from winter. As always, if you have any questions about the Park, please do contact me on parks@tunbridgewells.gov.uk

Peter Every – TWBC Parks & Sports Team Leader

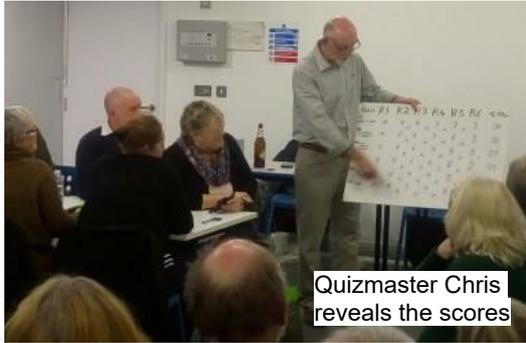
FoGH Events Roundup



Quiz Night

The Friends group quiz nights have become a regular feature, a good way to have fun whilst raising funds for FoGH. After the November event, part of the proceeds went towards new plants and compost to freshen up the baskets for winter. Luckily this time the lighting was working, and everything proceeded smoothly.

Quizmaster Chris Hughes likes to keep the participants on their toes. A round on Tunbridge Wells revealed the town's motto ("Do Well Doubt Not"). Other rounds were general knowledge, UK bridges, scientific discoveries, national fruits and all things American.



Quizmaster Chris reveals the scores

Fish and chips fortified us at the halfway stage. Rather embarrassingly, as quizmaster's wife, I was on the winning team! I can assure you I don't even know what the rounds are about until the event. The team I was on had a wide range of knowledge and good retention of obscure facts. Look out for the next one on March 16th: please see page 8 for how to join in for a fun evening of quizzing!

Mary Hughes

Christmas Carols with the CREATE choir

Early December is when Christmas suddenly seems much closer, so what better time for FoGH to welcome the CREATE choir to the Hub? This popular local community choir was led by the energetic and enthusiastic John Cornford on keyboards.



The audience in the Hub

The mild weather enabled us to have the doors open, so those who couldn't fit in could still enjoy the singing.

We joined in with many popular and well-known carols, sustained by biscuits and mince pies. The mulled wine and fruit juice also went down a treat. There was an interval to give the choir a rest, and an opportunity for us all to stock up on refreshments.

FoGH would like to thank the CREATE choir and John for making it such a fun afternoon, and all those who came along. Thank you

Mary Hughes



The CREATE choir

The Winter Lantern Parade Comes to the Park



The Parade coming down Auckland Rd

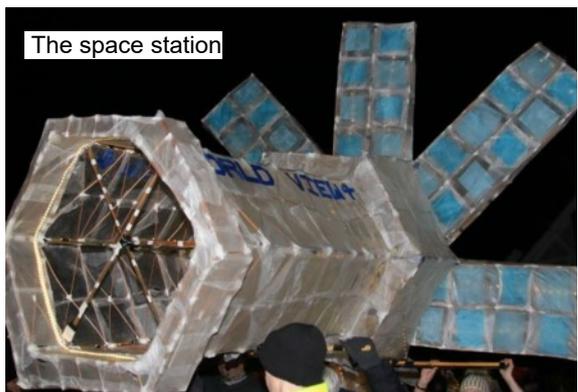
This year, the Winter Lantern Parade had an outer space theme, with a slight change in route. Starting in Calverley Precinct, the parade went along Camden Road, Albion Road and Auckland Road, to the Park. There was music from Bloco Fogo and TS Brilliant, food at Table 8, and a bar from Tonbridge Round Table. Lantern making workshops led to the most amazing creations which rested around The Hub for an hour!

Well done to CREATE and Tunbridge Wells Round Table.

Carolyn Gray



Bloco Fogo & the spaceman lead the Parade.



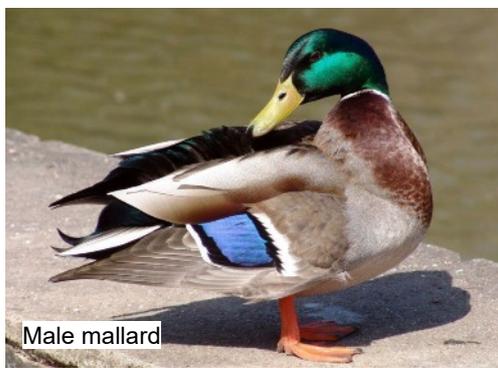
The space station



A clanger takes a break



Terry Pratchett's Discworld



Male mallard

Please don't feed me bread

The Friends group want to help you feed our ducks the right food. From March you will be able to grab bags of bird and duck-friendly seeds in Table 8. Simply pop a donation in the box and have fun feeding the ducks.



Although many people bring bread for the ducks, it is not a healthy food for them. It does not provide the nutrients they need and can lead to dietary problems. Overfeeding ducks bread means their ducklings may become malnourished, which can stunt their growth and development.

Added to this any uneaten leftovers (we've all seen untouched slices of bread floating in the pond) go soggy and rotten causing greater algae growth that can clog waterways. This mouldy bread can also cause aspergillosis in waterfowl, a lung condition that is contracted from inhaling fungi spores. If not caught early or left untreated, it is fatal to ducks and waterfowl.

Other options for duck-friendly food include: Peas (defrosted) Oats Birdseed Cooked rice
Sweetcorn Cut seedless grapes Lettuce, torn into small pieces

Look for the bags of seed in the café and help our waterfowl enjoy the right diet.

Emma Melville

Emma's Update

It's been a cold winter so far, but signs of spring have finally started to arrive in the Park – I've been enjoying glimpses of snowdrops and tree buds starting to creep back in whilst our winter migrant birds are here. Like the redwings you'll see in the hedgerows and foraging on the ground, it's been a busy time in Grosvenor & Hilbert!



Volunteers coppicing in the woodland

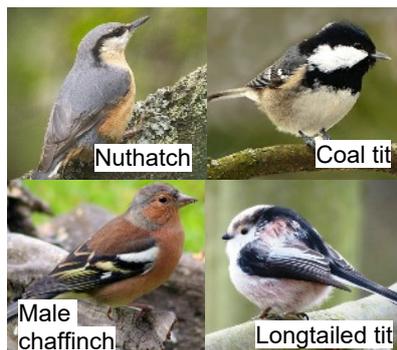
The volunteers have been hard at work coppicing and processing wood in the woodland, surveying birds, creating new dead hedges, and helping plant trees. Volunteering covers many areas and interests such as nature surveys, one-off event assistance, and conservation work to keep the Park looking great. If you would like to volunteer with us, (and we are always looking for more volunteers!), please email me at emma.peters@tunbridgewells.gov.uk



We wrapped up 2018 with several Christmassy events, including wreath making, and natural decorations making. Then we entered 2019 with the return of Storysock reading wintery tales in the woods and lots of you creating your own storybooks for National Storytelling Week! We recently took part in the RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch again, spotting 21 different species of bird throughout the Park. This included the elusive nuthatch, as well as various tits and finches.



Making Christmas decorations



Nuthatch

Coal tit

Male chaffinch

Longtailed tit



Storysock in the woods



Creating storybooks

I have been planning the summer events for the Park, and getting ready for the end of the HLF funded project in March. There is an exciting video celebrating the project to look out for in April (eagle-eyed visitors may have seen this being filmed in October last year...). There will be a wide range of activities to see everyone through until the end of July, including a one-time-only Bioblitz in June, amongst crafts and plenty of other nature themed events.

Keep an eye on our Facebook page, Twitter feed, and in-park posters to get more information. If you would like to be on our events mailing list or find out more about anything going on in the park, please do email me at: emma.peters@tunbridgewells.gov.uk

Emma Peters, Community Engagement Officer

The Open-Air Baths From 1900

In the Spring 2017 newsletter I explored the history of the Open-Air Swimming Baths until 1900. Continuing into the 20th century, the Baths were well-used during the summer seasons. The Council's Baths Committee managed them and the Indoor Baths at Monson Road.

The Baths were mainly used by men, but "ladies bathing" was on Saturdays and weekdays, 12 – 2. Family bathing one afternoon a week began in 1912, after long discussions at a Council meeting. "Ladies must be accompanied by husband, brother or children, and gentlemen by wife, sister or children." I don't know how the attendants checked the family connections! From 1914 it was just called mixed bathing, and from 1920 was allowed every morning.



The former turbine hall (Photo Chris Hughes)

possibly permanent closure. After long and heated discussions at two separate meetings, the Councillors voted to keep the Baths open. (The May vote was 15 – 11 and in June 15 – 13.)

Comments at the meetings show what conditions were like. Cllr Cross had visited and "found the water stagnant and dangerous to the health. The water.... ran off the railway, the surface was covered with blacks, and flies walked along the top." "The bottom ... was covered with rotted leaves." Cllr Miss Condon suggested that "from a health standpoint, a great deal would have to be spent..... Whenever she had visited..... the swimmers seemed to be bathing in pea soup."

The Council agreed to renovations, and in July the Courier reported that the "open-air swimming bath..... has been as popular as ever." Good weather in 1932 and 1933 meant that the takings were highest on record, helped by the 1932 decision to allow mixed bathing at all times. There was a sunbathing terrace, diving board, water chute and a giant water ball.

The purity of the water was again an issue in 1943, with the Baths Committee wanting a chlorination plant. Because of the cost (£303), the solution was frequent emptying and refilling. The baths opened late in 1946 and 1947 as it was hard to find "an attendant who was a competent swimmer and lifesaver." The baths were "getting in worse condition every year", with insufficient funds to do more than essential repairs.



The empty Baths in 1949

was filled in from 1954: the end of an era. From eyewitness accounts, the swimming pool was not removed and still remains deep beneath the hardball court and the play area!

Mary Hughes

Sources & images: Kent & Sussex Courier 1873-1950 (©Local World Ltd courtesy of The British Library Board) via British Newspaper Archive. Aerial photograph Kent History & Library Centre.



The Open-Air Baths: 1947 aerial photo

Problems with the water supply to the spring fed Baths began in 1927. The Council had its own electricity generating company in Quarry Road. You can see the former turbine hall near Grosvenor Bridge, along the footpath into town. The springs that fed the Baths ran under the Electricity Works and they diverted the water, making the supply erratic.

The Baths were now filled from the town water supply, which was charged to the Baths Committee, increasing running costs. One bather commented that "he would prefer the bath to be filled with spring water. Vegetation grows more quickly in town water."

This came to a head in 1932, when the water supply failed. The Baths Committee recommended closure for the summer, and



Fun on the water chute

The Baths closed on 30th July 1948 as "bacteriological examination showed that the water was unsafe." The baths were not cleaned and refilled as "funds for the purchase of water" had run out and there was "necessity for economy in the use of water." "Cllr Muffett enquired whether any cases of diphtheria resulted and was told there were none."

In 1949 the Baths remained closed as an estimated £3645 was needed for repairs. In 1950 there were discussions about reopening, but despite local regret and many letters to the Courier, it cost too much. It

Birds of Marnock Lake & the Wetland

Two species of waterfowl habitually call the Park home. Then there's also over-wintering gulls and infrequent visits from herons.

The **moorhens** love the refurbished wetland and moved straight in, raising two broods last year. These dark brown and black birds have a red bill with a yellow tip and long green legs with very long toes. It's hard to distinguish the slightly larger males from the females. Moorhens are generally monogamous and pair bonds can last for several years. The nest is built on the ground in dense vegetation and both parents incubate and feed the fluffy black young. These fledge after 40 – 50 days become independent a few weeks later. They eat a wide variety of vegetation, invertebrates and small aquatic creatures.



Mallards are social birds, often found in groups. The colourful males stand out from the brown females, but both have a patch of iridescent blue on their wings. They form pairs during October and November, then the female lays her eggs in spring, protected by the male. After that his role is almost over. After about 28 days incubation the eggs hatch and the ducklings are led to the water. They stay with their mother for 50 – 60 days to learn how to forage, and for warmth and protection at first. Mallards are flexible in their diet of insects, seeds and plant matter.

Black-headed Gulls

over-winter in the Park, noticeable in Marnock Lake and on the football pitches. They use a wide variety of habitats and are often found inland. Colonial nesting takes place on cliffs, the ground or on buildings. During the summer breeding season, they have a dark brown head, but in winter they have a white



head with black spots. Males and females look similar and juveniles have brown

markings on the upper part and a black band on the tail. They too have a varied diet of insects, fish, grains, berries and discarded food.

The occasional visits of **Grey Herons** certainly cause anxiety to local residents with fishponds! They often stand hunched but are up to 1 m tall when upright. Adults weigh from 1 to 2 kg (2.2 – 4.4 lb). The body and wings are grey above whitish-grey under-parts, with a white head and neck and a black stripe from the eye to the crest. They live in wetland areas including lakes, rivers, ponds, marshes and on the coast. Breeding is in spring, colonially in "heronries" high in trees. Herons eat mainly fish, but also take amphibians, crustaceans, and small birds and mammals like ducklings and voles.



Mary Hughes

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

Halfway through the season, St John's Yard are still in second place in Division 2 of the West Kent Sunday Football League, behind runaway leaders Insulators. As this is their first season in this Division since they won promotion, it's an achievement.

Of the four League matches they've played since November, they've won two, lost one and drawn one. A close game with Cassidy's Phoenix saw the Yard win 3 – 4. Speldhurst Rangers (promotion rivals last season) gained some revenge with a 1 – 0 victory. A 7 – 0 win against Brenchley was a help to the goal difference.

The recent 2 – 2 draw against Petts Wood Old Boys could be costly. It leaves the teams level on points, with the Yard ahead on goal difference. But Petts Wood OB have what could be a vital game in hand.



Despite a good start in the group stages of the WKSFL Senior cup, two recent losses leaves them in fifth place in Group 2. Their chances of qualifying for the knock-out stages are slim, after an 11 – 0 thrashing by Green Street Blues on 3rd February. The unfamiliar artificial pitch may well have been a factor.

Hopefully they can continue their promising start in the League, and remain in contention for the WKSFL Intermediate Cup. Look out for the team in black and gold on the top football pitch. **Mary Hughes**

Volunteering in the Park



Boardwalk at Sherwood

I started volunteering in the Park over 10 years ago with Kent High Weald Partnership, who manage the Nature Reserve in the Park.

Over this time, I have undertaken many tasks, including coppicing, dead hedge building, helping plant Appledore Wood and building

the 283 metres of boardwalk through Hilbert Woods.

I have helped to sweep up tonnes of gravel, as well as weeding and planting around Marnock Lake. I have learnt many new skills and have a much better understanding of the wildlife in the Park.

It's a great way to get a work out and keep fit with a group of other liked minded individuals. There's a fantastic sense of camaraderie in the tasks we do and we are all keen to help the local community. It's very rewarding when people say what a difference our work has made to them.

Chris Hughes

Dogs in the Park

This is Flo. She is a springer spaniel who is six years old. She came from the Duke's estate in Arundel when she was ten weeks old.

Flo is from working stock but has been bought up in our family as a pet. She joined us first and has done a great job adjusting to life with two inquisitive children. She's recently started listening to commands from our four-year-old and it's lovely to see them playing together. She loves nothing more than a long walk around Grosvenor & Hilbert Park or on the beach. Before the regeneration she used to love going into the 'swamp', but following a bit of training is now very good at avoiding this area.

Flo would do anything for a tennis ball! From finding the most stagnant and smelliest puddles to springing through dense brambles, she's a lovable beast, still as crazy as when she first arrived.

Jenni Mathews



Flo with a ball

Heritage Lottery Funding – 5 Years on

The front page of the FoGH newsletter in Spring 2014 had the news from Peter Every that TWBC had been successful with the Heritage Lottery bid. £2.3 million had been awarded for refurbishing the Park. For those living here at the time, this was great news, and the Park is lovely now. However, looking back, I realised anyone new to the area will be unaware of the amount of work needed.



The old outdoor café & pavilion

The biggest change for the community has been 'The Hub' (maybe one day we can call this The Liz Edwards, as the town centre hub will be The Amelia Scott?) We at FoGH think that a very cold meeting with HLF officials in the old bowls pavilion helped secure funding for the transformation to the larger room, office, indoor cafe and toilets. This room is now well used by many, for many things!

One of the greatest things as a Park regular was having a new bridge by Folly Shaw. The old bridge had been repaired with pallets, but was washed away in stormy weather at Christmas 2013. A temporary restoration was made by KHWP volunteers in February 2014, before the 2015 rebuild. The state of the old bridge was a great shame for a council park.



The broken pallet bridge



Old playground equipment

I'd forgotten what the playground looked like, with the central wooden mound fort. The new equipment is particularly popular, especially in the summer holidays. Of course, around the Park paths, entrances and water features have been repaired and restored, and there is much new planting.



Rochdale Road entrance was bricked up



Pre-HLF wetland - no boardwalk

The community orchard is now fully planted, and this area will continue to develop over the years. The wetland is becoming an exciting ecosystem, attracting plenty of wildlife.

During the five years we have had great support from Community Engagement Officers Cally, Steff and Emma. Much else has happened: FoGH won a Love Where We Live Award for Best Group. Community projects led to the legal graffiti wall and the rock sculptures, all extra to the Heritage Lottery money.



Grosvenor Rocks



Zephyr

We hope the refurbishments will aid your enjoyment of the Park for years to come. Since the Friends formed in 2011, the Park has gone from the town's hidden gem to a well-known place to visit.

Carolyn Gray

Spring Event Highlights

FoGH Fish & Chips Quiz Night.....Saturday 16th March 7pm

At the Hub. The popular brain-testing quiz returns! Tables of 6: £10 per person.

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

Spring Babies.....Tuesday 12th March 2.30 – 4.30pm

Craft event themed around the new Spring life in the Park.

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

Great British Spring Clean.....Sunday 24th March 2 – 4pm

Join FoGH on a litter pick to tidy up the Park. Tools & equipment provided.

Meet at the Hub, wearing appropriate shoes & clothing. Children must be accompanied by an adult.

FoGH Spring Photography Walk.....Sunday 7th April 10.30am – 12pm

How to spot perfect photo opportunities. with photographer Rosie Harris.

Meet at the Table 8 cafe. Bring your camera & wear appropriate clothing and footwear.

Spring Spotters.....Monday 8th April – Monday 22nd April

Pick up a free spring spotter trail from Table 8 Café to see what you can find in the Park.

FoGH Easter Egg Hunt.....Easter Sunday 21st April 2 – 3.30pm

Meet at the Oast House. Come & hunt for Easter Eggs in the Park!

Free event, no booking. All ages, children must be accompanied by an adult.

Green Fingered in National Gardening Week.....Monday 29th April 2.30 – 4.40pm

Celebrate by creating wildflower seed bombs or grass/cress heads at this free drop-in event.

At the Hub. All ages. Children must be accompanied by an adult. Suggested donation £1.

FoGH Family Fete.....Bank Holiday Monday 6th May 12 – 5pm

An afternoon of music & entertainment. Bouncy castles, donkey rides, wide choice of food.

Opening at 12pm with Mayor Len Horwood & TS Brilliant Sea Cadet Band.

FoGH Dog Show.....Saturday 18th May 10am – 12pm

Choice of classes to enter. Basic agility course. Refreshments.

On the lower football pitch. £5 suggested donation. See posters & social media for more details.

Plant a Basket for Britain in Bloom.....Sunday 19th May 2 – 4pm

Help FoGH plant the baskets by the Hub for the RHS *It's Your Neighbourhood* campaign.

Tools, plants & equipment provided: wear appropriate clothing & footwear.

FoGH Annual General Meeting.....Thursday 23rd May 7pm

Join us at the Hub for cheese & wine. Help shape the future of FoGH.

There's a lot of challenges ahead with the end of HLF funding.

May Half Term Trail.....Monday 27th May – Sunday 2nd June

Bring a crayon & pick up a free rubbing trail from Table 8 Café to see the different textures in the Park.

Moth Blitz.....Saturday 8th June 11.15am – 1pm

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

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

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

or Twitter <https://twitter.com/FofGH>

For all other events: contact Emma Peters or see www.facebook.com/GHParkHLF/

FoGH Contact Details

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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 Carolyn Gray, Chris Hughes, Jenni Mathews, Emma Peters & Pete Smith