



# Friends of Grosvenor & Hilbert Park Newsletter 34 Spring 2020

## Winter Lanterns Parade 2020

What a spectacular evening of light! The Winter Lanterns Parade took place on Saturday 22nd February, leaving the town centre at 5.30pm. We were led into the darkness by samba band Bloco Fogo, who really give us the atmosphere the parade needs. The theme this year was Magic - and it really was.

When we entered Grosvenor and Hilbert Park you could really see the imagination of the lantern makers coming to life! I believe there were more lanterns this year, but perhaps not as many people watching or joining the parade. This could have been due to the unfortunate postponing of the original date because of Storm Ciara.



The Parade coming down Auckland Road



Coming into the Park

The culmination of months of work and 2 months of workshops, Winter Lanterns is truly something Tunbridge Wells can be proud of. It brings the whole community and families together in such a creative way.

So many people and groups to thank! First the CREATE team and its volunteers, who make Winter Lanterns happen. Royal Tunbridge Wells Together and the BID funded the parade and workshops this year and RVP gave use of an amazing space to hold the workshops. The Tunbridge Wells Round Table supported us with the road closures and the Friends of Grosvenor and Hilbert Park gave help and support.

Finally thanks to all the local shops who have supported us in so many ways – and everyone else who has done so much to make this happen! It is these 'grass roots', community events that bring out the best in everyone, bringing them all together to light up the town.

Special thanks to David Smith, who helped us transport all those lanterns backwards and forwards voluntarily! If you'd like to support the Winter Lanterns next year, please get in touch – [support@winterlantern.org](mailto:support@winterlantern.org)

**Nell Price, Project Manager**



The Park lit up by lanterns

## Chairman's Report

As I write, Storm Dennis is tearing down the valley through the allotments, hot on the heels of Storm Ciara. Unfortunately, an oak falling in the severe wind has caused serious damage to the boardwalk in Roundabout Woods. We are lucky that Cally Fiddimore and the Kent High Weald Partnership volunteers are willing to restore the structures – our special thanks to them.



So far this winter we have had few days with truly freezing temperatures, only quantities of mud, but there could still be enough time for snow and frost. Some of the trees are beginning to move, the grass has hardly stopped growing, and primroses, crocuses and snowdrops are in flower in sheltered places.



Following comments from users, FoGH have looked at ways to make the Upper Grosvenor Road entrance more enticing. The more open aspect has been welcomed but the ornamental prunus trees have been missed. So we have purchased and planted, with help from the KHWP volunteers, a mixture of flowering cherries and crab apples. They will provide spring blossom, some fruit for the wild birds and autumn colour.

On a gloomy winter's day it takes imagination to plan for events in spring and summer, with the promise of longer days and warm sunshine. We are working on a schedule of events of varied interest and are delighted that the Mid-Kent Astronomical Society are to return on

Saturday 28th March for a celestially inspired evening. Let's hope that there are clear skies so that we can see the moon, planets and stars through their telescopes.

Other community events include an Easter Egg Hunt, the Dog Show and a quiz night, wildlife surveys and more. Also events to help with Park upkeep, like pruning in the Community Orchard, a spring litter pick and planting the baskets by the Hub. All participants are most welcome: we look forward to seeing you. **Liz Edwards**

## The Legal Graffiti Wall



Sometimes it's just tags, but often there is well executed and interesting artwork. Here's a couple from the last few months.



## Update from the Parks Department

We start the New Year with the sad news that we have lost two large mature oaks in the woodland, as a result of the high winds and extreme levels of rainfall. Unfortunately, one of the oaks came down across the board walk and caused quite a lot of damage. However, Kent High Weald Partnership have spare boards and will be able to repair the damage.

Both trees were considered veteran trees and of great value to the woodland ecosystem. With this in mind, we have decided to leave as much timber as possible in the woodland, in habitat piles to support woodland species.

As I'm sure many of you have found out, the Park is extremely wet and in places very muddy resulting in some grumbles. This is not just in Grosvenor and Hilbert but at other sites. Whilst we do understand your frustration, I'm afraid there is little we can do other than keep the drains and paths clear.

The weather has impacted on the Sodexo winter programme, although Tony is working on pruning the pleached limes and square headed trees. The winter work to the bowling green has been delayed for some weeks now. As soon as ground conditions allow and the green dries out, work to prepare for the new season will continue.

On a brighter note, we will soon start work on revamping the two flower beds in the bowling green area with the theme of a night garden. Plants will be selected to attract moths and will be scented in the evening during the summer months. The plant list includes phlox, sweet rocket, honeysuckle and verbena, so keep an eye out over the summer and see what moths you can spot.

If you have any suggestions or wish to contact the Parks team, please email us at [parks@tunbridgewells.gov.uk](mailto:parks@tunbridgewells.gov.uk)  
**Peter Every – TWBC Parks & Sports Team Leader**

## FoGH Events Roundup



Intense concentration all round

### Another Fun Quiz Evening

FoGH continues to run two quiz nights a year, partly as a fundraiser and also because they're fun! This one was at the end of November, perhaps too close to Christmas. It's a good social occasion, with smaller groups joining to make teams.

We were quizzed on general knowledge, Christmas, desserts, art and literature, and film quotes. A picture round on French Impressionist painters sorted out the eventual winners. We had the right names but not necessarily in the right order!

**Mary Hughes**

### Christmas Carols

Well, it wouldn't be Christmas without the now firmly established FoGH and CREATE Christmas Carol afternoon! The December 2019 event saw so many people we had to open the doors, so people outside could hear the choir. During the interval there was much chat, over mulled wine and mince pies.

This year, with no Heritage Lottery Funding to support our events, we suggested a minimum donation and were pleased to cover our costs. Thank you to Jane and Alastair once again, for preparing the mulled drinks. We are also grateful to the CREATE choir for their singing, with traditional sing-a-long carols and a few special pieces.

If you'd like to help with the 2020 event, please register your interest on our website.



The CREATE choir

**Carolyn Gray**



Having fun at the craft tables

### Decking The Halls With Homemade Decorations

In December we ran a Christmas craft event for families. We spent a busy couple of hours gluing, colouring, painting and making a bit of a mess. The three tables were set up with different craft options. There were wooden decorations to colour in and a bright red Father Christmas decoration to construct with red paper and cotton wool.

The mug painting was a hit and lots of Grandmas, Grandpas and other relatives must have woken up on Christmas morning to find a personalised mug under the tree! Thanks to the volunteers that gave up their time to help with this event – Liz, Jane and Leila. We couldn't do it without you.

**Emma Melville**

### A Basket Weaving Workshop

On Saturday 1st February we held a day of willow basket weaving under the tuition of John Waller. John owns a green wood workshop at Bore Place, Chiddingstone and holds courses making products from material sourced from his coppices and plantations. Last year he helped us construct the living willow dome between Folly Shaw and Roundabout Woods from his own willow.

He brought more of this lovely material for us to weave into baskets. It takes a lot of room for each worker. We have to shape and bend the rods before working in the weavers. It looks like you are trying to create order from a tangle of hedge cuttings. With John's excellent guidance we produced some attractive and useful baskets by the end of the day.

**Liz Edwards**



A basket in use

### Two FoGH History talks in the Hub



The swimming pool pre-1905

Both these very different history talks were being delivered for the first time. I have researched the swimming pool in the Park and collected images, so I put this into a talk and slide show. The pool opened in 1869 and closed in 1948. We went from the Victorian heydays of Aquatic Fetes and water polo through changing social history to the 20th century decline and closure.

Ian Beavis gave his fascinating new talk on Tunbridge Wells before the Wells for the first time. He started in the time of the dinosaurs, then we learnt how people from the Stone Age through to Tudor times were using the area and moulding the landscape. Information on the earliest times comes from archaeology, then from historical maps and documents.

Many thanks to all those who came and made these events a success.

**Mary Hughes**



The multi-stemmed oak

## Fallen Trees in Roundabout Woods

Many park users will have noticed the multi-stemmed oak which damaged the boardwalk, but the second fallen tree is harder to spot. It is on the woodland margin by the orchard and it is resting against some holly and on its branches. Part of the roots are still attached, so it may continue growing. But for safety reasons and because of its position, it will need some attention.



The oak near the orchard



The branches rest on the ground

Although it's a shame to lose trees, it is worth remembering that it is part of the natural cycle of woodland renewal. Much of the timber will remain in habitat piles, as a resource for insects, fungi and wildlife.

**Mary Hughes**



## FoGH Family Fete – a Personal View

Since the 'Jubilee Party in the Park in 2012, in the first year of FoGH, I have taken on an increasingly large role on the Fete Committee. I started by handling the stall bookings, but after the member in charge of the risk assessment left, I took that on too. This goes with booking the stall holders and getting them safely on and off site.



The 2012 Jubilee event



The Dog Show at the 2014 Funday

2016 saw the Grand Reopening following the Heritage Lottery Funded (HLF) Restoration, and in 2017 we had a year off. We downsized the day in 2018, as the event funding from HLF was ending. The Dog Show became a separate event and we restricted the number of stalls and attractions. 2018 and 2019 both went well, with a real community feel.

However, a month before the 2019 event Kent Police sent me an 11 page terrorism document to read, and learn. A bit like being back at school, I bored several people with my revision..... Fortunately my revised risk assessment passed and the event was allowed to go ahead.

As a committee we

were just congratulating ourselves on how well 2019 had gone, when the government announced that they were moving the early May Bank Holiday. The day would move from a Monday to Friday 8th May to celebrate 75 years since VE Day. We considered all the options and discussed their future plans with some of our attendees. We finally decided to have another year off and hope the local community can join other town wide events over the weekend.



FoGH



Crowds in 2019

Personally I would like to step down from the Fete Committee, but I am willing to assist anyone willing to take over. If you are interested, why not come to our AGM in May for a chat?

**Carolyn Gray**

# The Tunbridge Wells Cygnus Swimming Club

## – part of the history of the Swimming Pool in the Park

During the Victorian era swimming was incredibly popular. Public baths were built all over the country and it was the golden age of the swimming pool in Grosvenor Park.

A group of local philanthropists and enthusiastic swimmers formed Cygnus Swimming Club in 1882. Cygnus is Latin for swan and the club had a distinctive swan emblem. Their aim was teaching swimming, life-saving and "Life Restoration". At this time drowning was a common cause of death, as few people learnt to swim. Schoolboys were offered a free weekly swimming lesson, increasing to twice weekly from 1885. Apparently, this "was not universally popular due to the coldness of the water".



The swan emblem

1885 Fete	PROGRAMME.
1.	HANDICAP FOR BOYS UNDER 16, residing in Kent or Sussex, Open. Two lengths. First Prize, value £1 10s.; second prize, value 15s.; third prize, value 10s. Entrance fee, 6d.
2.	HANDICAP FOR MEMBERS OF THE TUNBRIDGE WELLS "CYGNUS" CLUB ONLY. Two lengths.
3.	EGG DIVING COMPETITION. Open. Entrance fee, 6d.
4.	RACE FOR BOYS UNDER 14, residing in Tunbridge Wells. One length of Bath. No entrance fee.
5.	HANDICAP RACE. Heats. Open to all Amateurs. First prize, Three Guinea Cup; second prize, value Two Guineas; third prize, value One Guinea. Entrance fee, 2s. 6d.
6.	DIVING COMPETITION. Open. High Diving and Spring-board Diving. Entrance fee, 6d.
7.	SWIMMING ON BACK. One length. "Cygnus" Club only.
8.	OBSTACLE RACE. One length. "Cygnus" Club only.
9.	PLUNGING COMPETITION. Open. Entrance fee, 6d.
10.	TUB RACE. One length. "Cygnus" Club only.
11.	LONG DISTANCE SWIMMING UNDER WATER. Open. First prize value £1 1s.; second prize, value 15s.; third prize, value 10s. Entrance fee, 6d.
12.	WATER POLO MATCH. Twelve a side. Teams to be chosen from the Entries. Twelve prizes. "Cygnus" Club only.
13.	OPEN RACE, in Coats, Trousers, and High Hats. (Ordinary wearing attire, to be approved by the Judges). One length. Entrance fee, 6d.
14.	FINAL HEAT OF OPEN HANDICAP RACE, No. 5.
15.	BLINDFOLD RACE, across the Bath and back to Platform "Cygnus" Club only.
16.	CONSOLATION RACE. One length.

Length of Bath 88 Yards.

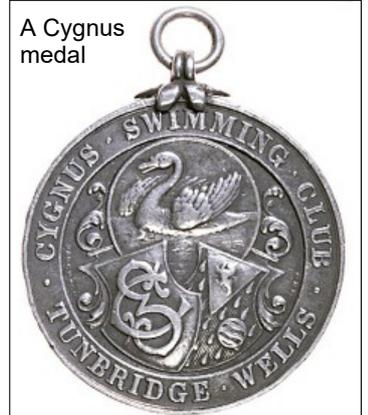
In 1882 Cygnus organised frequent races and their first Aquatic Fete. They ran annual Aquatic Fetes for 23 years until 1905. These were a real highlight, widely advertised and reported in detail. A local band played and there was a bar and refreshments. The baths were decorated with flags and bunting and in good weather attendance could be over 2000.

This 1885 programme gives a list of events. The Handicap Race attracted entrants from leading clubs in the south and further afield. Average entry was between 40 and 50 swimmers, so preliminary heats led up to a thrilling final.

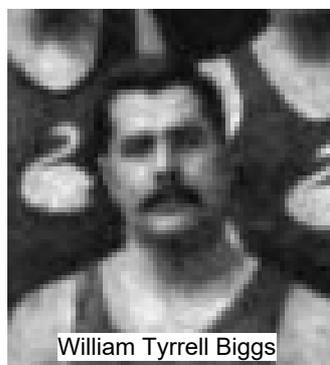
The entrance fee was 1 shilling (2 shillings for the "reserved enclosure") on the day, but half this price if purchased in advance. To my regret I can find no images, although according to reports photographers were present.

Frequent swimming races were held throughout the summer season. Cygnus presented silver medals for certain races – 6 for seniors and 6 for juniors. The club organised water polo matches at home and away.

In the mid-1880s the club was described as "flourishing",



A Cygnus medal

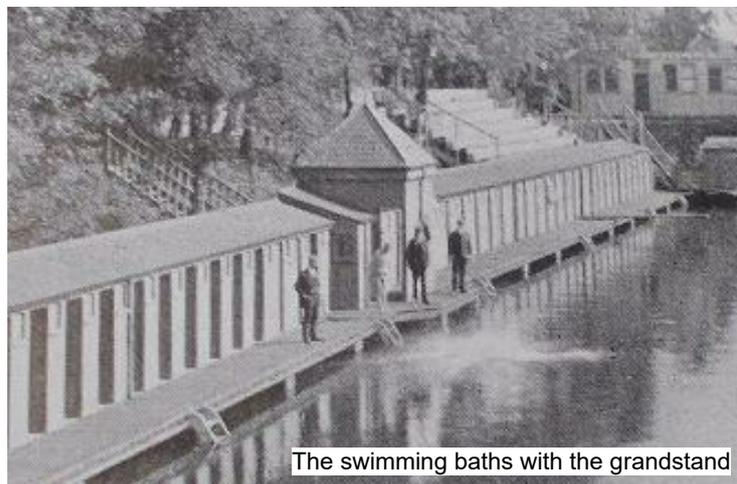


William Tyrrell Biggs

arranging a "capital programme for its members and the efforts that the club is making to promote the useful art of swimming deserves full recognition."

The club was run by a committee and were fortunate in their Club Secretaries, who were described as "capable and energetic". The Secretary took the lead in organising the Aquatic Fetes, as well as the programme of races and water polo. Mr N Strange was Secretary 1884 – 1891, then in 1892 William Tyrrell Biggs took over at the age of only 20.

Cygnus Swimming Club rented the baths from the Council from 1891 and seemed to run them competently. They made enough money from tickets and swimming Fetes to employ an instructor, provide equipment and still offer free lessons to children.



The swimming baths with the grandstand

However, the indoor baths at Monson Road opened in 1898 and the open-air baths became less popular.

A bad season in 1903 due to poor weather left the club broke, with no reserves left, so in 1904 they stopped renting the baths. The club continued to decline, holding one last disastrous Fete in 1905. Wet weather and the cost of hiring chairs (the grandstand was condemned as unsafe just before the event) meant they made a loss. Winding up was discussed in 1907 and William Tyrrell Biggs resigned as secretary.

Cygnus Swimming Club was disbanded in 1908. Their legacy was popularising swimming in the town and teaching hundreds, if not thousands, of Tunbridge Wells children to swim.

**Mary Hughes**

Sources & images Kent & Sussex Courier 1873-1950 (©Local World Ltd courtesy of The British Library Board) via British Newspaper Archive, Tunbridge Wells Museum & The Strand Magazine.

## Grosvenor Bowling Club

The club formed in 1912, initially created for the working class men of St James's area. The already-existing Culverden Bowling Club (still going today) was intended for men of a higher social class..... Society and bowls have changed a lot since then, thank goodness. The club and the sport welcomes anyone wishing to participate.



A friendly match at Groombridge



Last year, Grosvenor BC enjoyed another successful season, making the most of good weather to play the sport we love. We played 25 friendly fixtures against other clubs in the area and won a majority of them. Mixed friendly games are usually played on a weekend afternoon, and half-way through the match we stop for tea before completing the remainder. It is a fun, sociable activity for all ages and abilities, and very easy to get involved.

On the competitive side last year, Grosvenor finished second by a point in the

top division of the Tunbridge Wells Triples League. The runner-up position was a good achievement as we were promoted in the previous season.

Our ladies had a good year in the county competitions: a Grosvenor pair reached the area final. Jo Cartwright became Kent champion in two-wood singles, going on to play in the national finals. Three of our ladies entered county competitions for the first time, meeting new people and going to different clubs within Kent.



Jo at the national finals

The men also provided plenty of entries in the county competitions, with some excellent battles taking place. In the Tunbridge Wells Bowls Tournament, Grosvenor's Graham Bridges was runner-up in the singles, and our players provided their many spectators with lots to cheer about during the tournament.

We held finals day for our club competitions in September and gave prizes at our AGM in November. Each year, someone new wins a trophy in the competition purely for new bowlers. In February we had our annual meal – purely a social occasion. We can enjoy the company of Grosvenor bowlers,



A match at our finals day

family and friends. We have curry nights a few times in the season too.

Our 2020 season begins during April, and our first home game is Saturday 9th May. Spectators are always welcome – there are lots of benches around the bowling green. We invite anyone curious about bowls to join us for our regular Wednesday evening practice sessions from 6pm once the season starts. Grosvenor Bowls Club can't wait to get on the green again!

For more information see [www.grosvenorbowls.co.uk](http://www.grosvenorbowls.co.uk) **Jo Cartwright**



The Grosvenor annual meal

## Football in the Park

Action near the goal



St John's Yard have only played five matches since mid-November, as wet weather has rendered pitches unplayable. Their first match in the Intermediate Cup (against Goudhurst United) has been postponed three times. Frequent postponements may mean that players lose interest or find other things to do on Sunday mornings.

It's not unusual for a team to be unable to find enough players for a match, so the points are awarded to their opponents. St John's Yard couldn't raise a team for a league match against Artois United in early January, so lost 3 points.

The Yard have played 4 matches in Group B in the Senior Cup, losing 3 and winning 1. With 2 games to go they have a slim chance of qualifying if they win their remaining games and Charcott lose both of theirs. In 2019 the team have only played 2 league matches – drawing 1 – 1 against Pembury Sunday and being thumped 0 – 9 at home by Green Lane. So far the team have played 8 matches, winning 1, drawing 2 and losing 5. This leaves them seventh out of eight teams, with 6 league games to go.

They play in black and gold on the top football pitch. Let's hope for some dry weather and better results for St John's Yard in the rest of the season. To learn more see <http://www.wksl.org.uk> **Mary Hughes**

## Meet the Committee



Jane Melville

Having spent years taking Guides and Brownies to the Park in the summer, I have good memories of time spent there. The girls enjoyed the freedom to run around, play games and explore.

When a Friends of the Park group was proposed, before the Heritage Lottery Funding,

I felt I had to join. At first we worked hard to establish how the Park was used and discuss initiatives.

It has been worth it, as I have made new friends and met many interesting people. As a committee member I can join in activities which interest me – there is no question of having to do everything.

My husband Alastair helps at some events, often manning the FoGH desk. For him the most exciting event of the year is the Christmas Carols, with saucepans filled with mulled wine and jolly guests singing along with the choir.

**Jane Melville**

## Dogs in the Park

5-year-old Magic is a striking pure white greyhound, with a spot of grey on his head. I saw a photo of him on the Whittingham Kennels website (in Waltham Abbey and part of The Greyhound Trust).

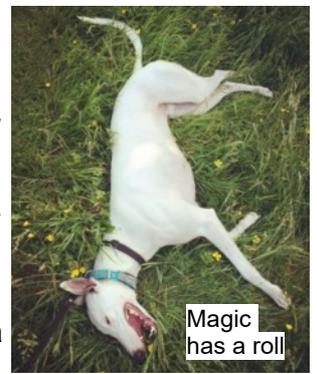
Greyhounds make great pets, only needing two short walks a day, with an occasional sprint.

At first Magic had wanderlust, escaping 3 times. But luckily he was found: he's now laid-back and settled.

Magic adores the Park, especially the ancient woodland, where he likes to paddle and drink in the stream. He loves children and is especially drawn to babies in the pram. One of his favourite pastimes is to roll in long grass, as you can see from the photo.

He will eat virtually anything and loves hummus and avocado! I could never imagine my life without this beautiful Magical man. If you see us he would love you to come and say hello!

**Amanda Gazidis**



Magic has a roll

## RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch in the Park

Every year the RSPB encourages a Big Garden Birdwatch in late January to collect data on how the populations of our wild birds are faring. Starting over 40 years ago, this is the world's largest garden wildlife citizen science project, with over half a million people taking part. As the survey format has stayed the same, the data can be compared year-on-year. Sadly, it has recorded declines in many species.

On Sunday 26th January, a group of 16 met up and walked around the Park, recording what we saw. The lakeside area often produces good results and we saw large numbers of goldfinch. This is possibly encouraged by local enthusiasts feeding them with niger seed, providing important oils and protein to help them through the winter.

Our resident pair of grey wagtails were busy catching small insects by the water and mallard, moorhen and black-headed gull were showing signs of pairing up for the springtime.

This year there are increasing numbers of magpies in the Park; other corvids seen were carrion crow and jackdaw near the Hub.

Then we explored the woodland areas. Both Roundabout Woods and Folly Shaw give shelter and food for some interesting species.

We had a wonderful close up view of a goldcrest who was busily searching out insects and spiders and completely unconcerned by a row of 7 to 8 spectators. Britain's smallest bird weighs around 5g – the same as a 20p coin.

Other woodland specialists were several nuthatch, a tree creeper and great spotted woodpeckers. We also saw long-tailed tits, great, blue and coal tits, more goldfinch, wrens, robins, blackbirds, and a song thrush venturing into full song.



Grey wagtail on the island



Carrion crow



Jackdaw



Nuthatch



Treecreeper



Goldfinch



Moorhen



Goldcrest



Wren

The keenest participants spent a full 2½ hours watching and listening to a rewarding number of birds that the Park supports. I will be leading another birdwatch walk in April, where we should be able to enjoy plenty of birdsong.

**Liz Edwards**

## Spring Event Highlights

### **Amazing Astronomy.....Saturday 28th March 6.30 – 9.30pm**

Join experts from Mid-Kent Astronomical Society to appreciate the night sky.

To learn more & to book see <https://buytickets.at/friendsofgrosvenorandhilbertpark/349993>

### **The Great British Spring Clean.....Sunday 29th March 2 – 4pm**

Join FoGH at the Hub for litter pick to tidy up the Park. All equipment provided.

Please wear appropriate shoes & clothing. Children must be accompanied by an adult.

### **KHWP volunteer day.....Thursday 2nd April 10am – 3pm**

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

### **Easter Sunday Sunrise Celebration.....Easter Sunday 12th April 8.30am**

Meet near the Auckland Road gates for a 30 – 45 minute service.

Followed by a continental breakfast at Church of Christ, Commercial Road.

### **Easter Egg Hunt.....Easter Sunday 12th April 2 – 3.30pm**

Meet at the Oast House. Explore more of Hilbert Park by following our Easter trail!

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

### **The Fun FoGH Quiz.....Saturday 18th April 7pm**

At the Hub. Tables of 6 if possible: £10 per person including fish & chips. Please bring your own drinks.

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

### **Spring Birdsong Walk.....Sunday 19th April from 10am**

Join local expert Liz to identify & watch the birds found in the Park in spring.

Meet at the Hub, with binoculars if possible. Wear appropriate clothing & footwear.

### **The FoGH Annual General Meeting.....Tuesday 5th May 7pm for 7.30**

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

Only paid up members can vote: please contact the Membership Secretary to check or join.

### **KHWP volunteer day.....Thursday 7th May 10am – 3pm**

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

### **The FoGH Dog Show.....Saturday 9th May from 10am**

Choice of classes (£5 suggested donation to enter). Registration from 9.30am.

On the lower football pitch. See posters & social media for more details.

### **Plant a Basket for Britain in Bloom.....Sunday 24th May 2 – 4pm**

Help FoGH brighten up the railings by the Hub & Bowling Green.

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

### **KHWP volunteer day.....Thursday 4th June 10am – 3pm**

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

### **Moth Identification.....Saturday 13th June 11am – 1pm**

Join Ian Beavis to identify the moths caught overnight in the Park.

Free drop-in event at the Hub, 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](http://www.fogh.org.uk) Facebook [www.facebook.com/GrosvenorHilbert](https://www.facebook.com/GrosvenorHilbert)

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

KHWP volunteer days & events: [www.khwp.org.uk/](http://www.khwp.org.uk/)

### **FoGH Contact Details**

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Twitter

<https://twitter.com/FofGH>

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To join, contact the Secretary at 41, Dorking Road, Tunbridge Wells, TN1 2LN or on [Friendsghrp@aol.com](mailto: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 Liz Ager, Dave Barnett, Jo Cartwright, Amanda Gazidis, Carolyn Gray, Chris Hughes & Pete Smith.*