



Friends of Grosvenor & Hilbert Park Newsletter 35 Summer 2020

Chairman's Report

I think spring is probably my favourite time of year in the Park and countryside. The fresh leaves in the woodlands were almost a luminous green in the bright sunshine and the wildflowers under the shelter of the trees have put on a wonderful display.

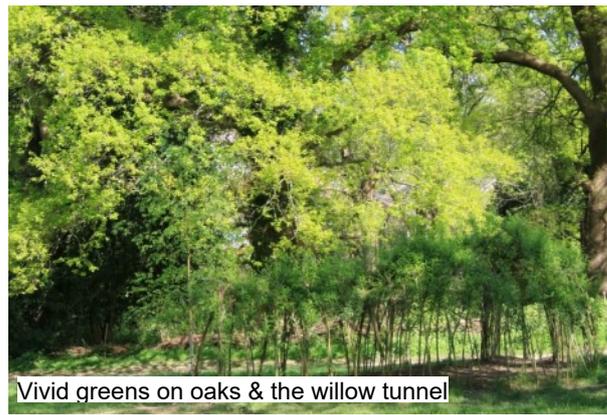
We managed a couple of spring events before the lockdown. Ian Beavis set up a moth trap in late February to look for late flying winter and early flying spring species, but a wet and windy night limited the catch to five. In early March, Roger Worraker visited the orchard and held a workshop on best pruning practices. He made favourable comments on the healthy growth and development of the trees. They certainly looked wonderful with blossom this year, the best show yet. I am hoping for more fruit this year, so long as we get sufficient rain. The new trees at the Upper Grosvenor Road entrance seem to be settling in well, adding ornamental and wildlife friendly value to this area of the Park.

The current changes that all of us have had to make to our daily lives has been beyond anyone's imagination. It has been disappointing to call a halt to all our plans so far this year, but the severity of the situation has in other ways brought us more together as a community. There could not have been any better endorsement of the value of our People's Park than the availability of a calm and beautiful space in which to escape the confinement of the current lockdown. I have seen families eagerly walking there to enjoy the space, then scampering around or just stretching their legs. The allotments are looking amazing, as those fortunate enough to have one can spend more time perfecting their plots.



I would like to thank all essential workers for carrying on with their duties, enabling us to enjoy the Park as a highly valued outlet for the community during this most difficult of times. While this virus continues to be such a deadly threat, I would like to send my best wishes to everyone to keep safe, and above all keep well.

Liz Edwards



Vivid greens on oaks & the willow tunnel

Spring in the Park

Despite the current difficult times, the warm sunny weather has led to a glorious spring. Here are a few images to celebrate Grosvenor & Hilbert Park: the jewel in the heart of the town.



VE Day mural on the Legal Graffiti wall



Bluebells in Hilbert Woods



Azalea by the Lake



Cherry blossom



Fern near the café

Update from the Parks Department



We start this update hoping you are all safe and well in these strange times. Thankfully, the Park has stayed open although, under Government guidance the play area and skate park are closed and remain unavailable during this second phase of lockdown. We appreciate this is very frustrating, but there is still a risk of contamination from surfaces, and social distancing is difficult to maintain in a fenced off area. Please be assured as soon as the advice changes, we will open the play areas.

As I'm sure everyone is aware, you can now spend as much time in the Park as you wish within the guidelines, although we are seeing an increase in litter around the Park. Please remember to either take your litter home or use the bins provided.

Many of the projects scheduled for this year have been cancelled, along with Britain in Bloom, although the regional competition will still go ahead as a desk top exercise. We are busy putting together a Portfolio to show what has taken place in the Park and our ambitions for when we return to some form of normality.

With the warmer weather over the coming months we are once again in BBQ season and, while we do allow BBQ's in the Park, we ask that a few simple rules are followed.

- No BBQs in the Meadow Areas or after 9pm.
- Disposable BBQs **MUST** be placed on metal stands or bricks, NOT Park furniture or other items.
- To avoid accidents, keep children & pets away from the BBQs. No throwing or sports games near the BBQ.
- Never leave the BBQ unattended & ensure it is completely cool before attempting to move it.
- Before disposing of a used BBQ ensure it is totally extinguished. We recommend bringing water to put it out.
- If your BBQ group will be more than 5 people, you must seek permission from the Parks Team.

As always, you can contact the Parks team at parks@tunbridgewells.gov.uk

Please work with us during these difficult times and remember to maintain social distance in the Park.

And finally, please do stay safe and well.

Peter Every – TWBC Parks & Sports Team Leader

Royal Tunbridge Wells in Bloom 2020

Following Government guidance on the Covid-19 situation, the Royal Horticultural Society has taken the difficult decision to suspend the 2020 Britain in Bloom UK Finals. South & South East in Bloom will continue, but in a reduced format with desktop judging. Hopefully, this stops the year being a complete loss, and recognises what has been achieved.



In Calverley Grounds
– Louise Mimms

The RTW in Bloom committee decided to cancel the main Bloom social events of 2020. All volunteer sessions are suspended and the school competitions are cancelled. The local gardening competition this year is reduced in scale, for **residential entries visible from the street only**. We aim to do the judging in July/August (subject to review).

The competition categories are as follows:

- **Best Basket**
- **Best Street & Flats**
- **Best Wildlife Garden**
- **Best Front Patio/ Balcony**
- **Best Planter/Tub/Container**
- **Best Front Garden**
- **Best Allotment**

The entry form can be found on the RTW in Bloom website:

www.royaltunbridgewellsinbloom.org.uk Exceptionally this year, if you can't

post the form or take it to the Gateway, you can enter by phone: please ring the Parks Department on 01892 554031.

RTW in Bloom have other competitions for children and adults to enter:

- the **Blooming Marvellous Photo Competition** (this year's theme is Trees of Tunbridge Wells)
- **Being 10**: a writing competition for children born in 2010, celebrating RTW in Bloom's 10th anniversary
- and our **Weekly Photo Competition**.

Please post photos of your garden, windowsill, basket or pot on our social media pages. We will select a winner every Friday.

The photos on this page have both won the Weekly Photo Competition.

Please see our website to keep up-to-date with any developments, and for competition rules and how to enter. Many thanks for your support.



Blue Buzz
– Jenni Mathews

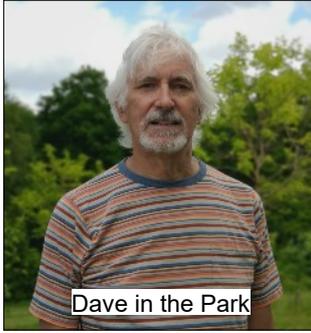


Kasia Olszewska-Martin, Parks Technical Officer

Facebook: [@RoyalTunbridgeWellsInBloom](https://www.facebook.com/RoyalTunbridgeWellsInBloom)

Twitter: [@RTWinBloom](https://twitter.com/RTWinBloom)

Meet the Committee



Dave in the Park

I have lived next to the Park since 1986, my children learnt to ride on the cycle track and it has been an oasis of green through most of my adult life. So when the idea of a Friends group was first mooted in 2011, I didn't hesitate to join. Hopefully my skills with websites and social

media helped raise the Park's profile during the long process of getting Lottery funding.

I have also designed and published most of the posters for the several hundred events we have now put on. In normal times I can often be seen going round the Park putting up the next batch of events.

10 years on and I'm currently rebuilding the Friends website to see us through the next decade. I hope to soon produce an updated version of the booklet, written by Philip Whitbourn and Ian Beavis, that FoGH first published in 2012.

Dave Barnett

Dogs in the Park

Lulu is a bulldog who came to our family from a rescue centre two years ago, having been used for breeding. Now six or seven years old, she takes up most of the sofa (she thinks she is small!)

She loves cuddling with my daughter first thing in the morning. Lulu is loving and friendly, but unsure of other dogs as she probably missed out on socialising as a puppy.

We have all benefitted by having Lulu as she is such a loving character. In our eyes she is beautiful, but others may think differently! She makes us take her for a daily walk, which is good for us and her.

Lulu loves the Park. The boardwalk has plenty of interesting smells and she ambles along making the most of them. Her favourite place is the community orchard, especially when the grass is long and she 'frolics' around like a puppy.

Anna Ford



Lulu in the orchard

Dragonflies in the Park

Grosvenor & Hilbert Park is a good place for spotting dragonflies on account of the water features. Dragonflies tend to stay close to water because that is where they breed, their larvae or nymphs living as underwater predators for a year or more. Unlike many insects, dragonflies have no chrysalis stage, transitioning straight from the larval to the adult stage. When fully grown, the nymphs climb tall plants like bulrushes or irises that grow out of the water. There they shed their skin, which is left behind on the plant, and the emerging adult waits to expand and dry its wings before flying off.



Large Red Damselfly (M)



Large Red Damselfly (F)



Azure Damselfly

Dragonflies fall into two main groups – the larger, more robust species, and the smaller, more delicate looking damselflies. The latter often fly together around the water's edge in close proximity. Species commonly found in the Park include the Large Red Damselfly, usually the earliest to emerge in spring, and the vivid blue Azure Damselfly.

Males of the larger dragonflies are highly territorial, defending a patch of water against rival males, to give them a monopoly of any passing females. Aerial fights between males are common, as is female egg-laying where they dip the tip of their abdomen into the water or among

aquatic plants. In some species, pairs may fly 'in tandem', where the male supports and guards the female as she lays her eggs.

Of the larger dragonflies with territorial males, the most frequently seen in the Park are the Broad-bodied Chaser, with its relatively short and wide abdomen – blue in the male and yellowish brown in the female – and the more elongated green and blue Southern Hawker. A regular medium-sized species is the Common Darter, with orange-red males and yellowish females: this often carries on flying very late in the year.

The earliest dragonflies emerge in April, with further species following through May and June. As adults they can live for up to six months, depending on the species: a few may carry on flying as late as December in mild winters. The most obvious place to see them in the Park is the wetland area, but they can also be found at Marnock Lake now that it has more emergent vegetation.

When hunting – they feed on other insects which they catch in mid-air – dragonflies may stray some distance from water, so individuals may be seen in other areas of the Park. They also travel in search of new habitats, readily colonising new garden ponds.

Newly emerged dragonfly



Damselfly larvae



Broad-bodied Chaser (M)



Broad-bodied Chaser (F)



Southern Hawker



Common Darter

Ian Beavis

News from the FoGH committee

Well, that escalated pretty quickly didn't it? Our last normal committee meeting in The Hub was in early March, when we made plans for our summer event programme. I've just looked back at the Spring newsletter, which was optimistic about the summer, following the storms in February. But even as those newsletters were printed in early March, the Amazing Astronomy event on 28th March was being postponed. And each day the news surrounding Covid-19 got more intense.



Ben (10) & Tess (8)



Charlotte (7) & Becca (6)

Things changed so fast: on Friday 13th March, emails show that we thought putting on the Spring Clean Event would be alright. But by the following Wednesday we had cancelled all upcoming events, including our committee meetings. Instead of the Easter Egg Hunt, we tried a virtual egg decoration and Easter themed event. We had a few entries all with different ideas and mediums, as you can see from the photos on this page. Sincere thanks to all those who had a go.

The Internet has been a blessing, as the committee has been able to stay in contact. And through emails and social media we have kept in touch with residents, the TWBC Parks Department and the Kent High Weald Partnership. After the lockdown began

on 23rd March, we received a flurry of social media posts about concerns in the Park, but things seem to have settled down now.

TWBC set up a borough-wide emergency system, and FoGH signed up on the town volunteering list – but there were more volunteers than calls for help. So FoGH have not been involved apart from keeping an eye on our local community. The redeployed Assembly Hall staff have constructed this website, which includes walks and open spaces: <https://twsocial.co.uk/>



Broken boardwalk near Redleaf Close

Our superb Park keeper Tony has continued to work hard and we are most grateful for his efforts in these difficult circumstances. Peter Every from the Parks Department has been very prompt in replying to questions, including about permission to jog and teens in the skate park. We are pleased KHWP are still active and, when allowed, they and their volunteers will return to work in the Park (including repairs to the boardwalk near Redleaf Close).

We held our April and May committee meetings online, and in lieu of the May AGM, agreed to co-opt Chris Hughes and Dorothy Swann back onto the committee, and prepare AGM documents to be posted to members.

The committee is a varied group of individuals, and we all have our own experiences of life in lockdown, which hopefully have balanced our overall view to questions and responses from the wider community. Our June meeting will be by email, and we remain here for you all.

Carolyn Gray

Clearly it's not possible to hold our usual events at present, but if circumstances and government advice change, please check our social media pages and look out for posters in the Park.



Isla (7)



Charlie (4)



Charlie (4)

FoGH Contact Details

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Jane Melville (Secretary)
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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, Sara Borton, Anna Ford, Carolyn Gray, Chris Hughes, Ian Beavis, Emma Melville, Nikki Stokes & Hayley Walker.