



# Friends of Grosvenor & Hilbert Park

## Newsletter 39 Summer 2021

FoGH is 10 years old! 2011 – 2021

Special Feature on pages 4 & 5

### News from the FoGH Committee

When I wrote for the Spring newsletter I was over optimistic about the weather getting better. It remained chilly most days, and April was very dry. There are many signs of spring around the Park, with an amazing display of bluebells in the woods, and lots of ducklings on the lake, but not many picnic opportunities. Then in May the April showers arrived with a vengeance.



At Easter, Churches Together in Tunbridge Wells ran a treasure trail event around the Park, which was very successful. The FoGH committee have agreed to keep our volunteering events pre-booked for now, to ensure they remain Covid-19 compliant. The ticket system we set up before the pandemic has proved very useful. At the moment our events are for gardening and litter picking, ahead of the Royal Tunbridge Wells In Bloom judging in the summer. Luckily the rain held off for the May planting events.

A small scale community orchard pruning event was held in early spring. We are looking for more members to join the orchard committee, and also looking to form a weekday gardening group to look after the flower beds around the Bowls Green. Please let us know if you'd like to help. We are pleased to welcome TWu3a gardening group to the Park: they are now looking after the 'Bee beds' by the allotments. Further details about TWu3a can be found on their website: [www.tunbridgewellsu3a.org/](http://www.tunbridgewellsu3a.org/)



Cllr Wormington & Carolyn

FoGH welcomes new St James ward councillor, Rob Wormington, who lives close to the Park, as well as congratulating Cllr Ben Chapelard on retaining his seat. I've met with Cllr Wormington and had a walk around the Park, pointing out the benefits of the Heritage Lottery Work, and the areas Kent High Weald Partnership look after. The FoGH Committee have also been involved in the Grosvenor Bridge Underpass art project (more information on page 3).

Our current plan is to hold our AGM in The Hub on Thursday 8th July, this is based on restrictions being eased on Monday 21st June. Confirmation information about this will follow soon. We look forward to seeing you then. **Carolyn Gray**

### Volunteers at Work in the Park

On Saturday 22nd May Carolyn, Dorothy and Chris from FoGH, with Caroline Auckland from the Soroptimists, emptied the 22 FoGH baskets. The plants were replanted in the nearby borders to brighten them up. The following day FoGH volunteers added new compost and planted up the baskets ready for the summer.

Thursday 27th May was the turn of the Kent High Weald Partnership volunteers. Grass was cleared around the base of all the Community Orchard trees and a woodchip mulch applied. The Willow Tunnel was tidied up and a start was made on weeding the flowerbeds by the Bowling Green.



Tackling the overgrown beds

These beds are planted with moth-friendly plants, to benefit these often overlooked pollinators. Sincere thanks to all the volunteers for their hard work and for generously giving up their time.



Emma & Tess plant a basket



Keith mulching in the orchard

Sincere thanks to all the volunteers for their hard work and for generously giving up their time. **Mary Hughes**



## In appreciation of Alastair Melville 1941 – 2021

The Friends group is sad to announce the passing of Alastair Melville, a long-standing member, supporter and volunteer.



At a Halloween party

I first met Alastair through his wife Jane, who was a founder member of FoGH. We found ourselves sitting together at the FoGH desk at many events, as he was always generous with his time to help the group.

Many of you will remember Alastair cheerfully dispensing mulled wine at our Carol singing events at the Hub, often wearing a festive hat! At the Children's Halloween Parties we sold tickets for face painting and explained what craft activities were on offer. It was always a challenge trying to make ourselves heard over the background noise!



Serving mulled wine at Carols



A FoGH Fun Day Tombola

At the FoGH Fun Days Alastair coped heroically with the frantic pace of the tombola stall, selling tickets and giving out prizes. Once the tombola ran out of prizes, he would subside gratefully into a chair at the FoGH desk. But this wasn't to take a rest – he would help at the desk, dealing with enquiries, signing up new members to the Friends group and taking membership renewal payments.

These events won't seem quite the same without his reassuring presence, useful suggestions and great sense of humour. Alastair will be sadly missed, by FoGH and his friends and family.

**Mary Hughes**

## Work on Trees in the Park

Work has recently been carried out on some trees in the Park. The large lime near the Hub was pollarded as a crack appeared in the main trunk, making it a health and safety risk. An old sycamore near 1 Dorking Road was pollarded due to decay at the base and dieback in the crown. Another sycamore between the wetland and the lower football pitch has crown dieback and fungal growths at the base.

*Ustilina deusta* or Brittle cinder causes soft rot and can cause sudden breakage of a tree. This tree will certainly be pollarded and may be removed because it is so close to a busy path.

**Mary Hughes**



The sycamore near 1 Dorking Road



The lime by the Hub

## Update from the Parks Department

It seems we are finally heading back to some kind of normality, although the weather this spring has been far from normal and the Park is probably around a month behind where we should be for this time of year. Over the past twelve months the Park has played its part in providing a place for people to find respite from the pandemic.

During this time, our park keeper Tony has worked hard to make sure the Park is as clean and tidy as possible. I'm sure you would all join me in passing on thanks to Tony for his work and for being such a friendly face in Grosvenor and Hilbert. We are still seeing high numbers of visitors and I'm afraid more litter than usual. We would encourage visitors to take their litter home or dispose of litter in the bins around the Park.

In the next few weeks, you will see a new recycling bin outside the café. This is in support of the Tunbridge Wells Soroptimist campaign to collect tins cans to aid the purchase of toilets for third world countries. Can I please encourage all to use the bin but please do remember the ladies from the Soroptimists will be sorting through the rubbish, so please refrain from putting anything other than tin cans in the bin.

As we see the warmer weather arriving and more of us staying at home over the summer, I'm sure many people will think about BBQs in the Park. While we do allow BBQs, we do have a few simple rules to follow:

- 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: let it burn out & go cold or pour water on.

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.

If you have any suggestions or wish to contact the Parks Team, please send an email to [parks@tunbridgewells.gov.uk](mailto:parks@tunbridgewells.gov.uk)

**Peter Every – TWBC Parks & Sports Team Leader**



## Grosvenor Bridge Public Art

You may have noticed this online, or perhaps seen the numerous posters in the Park advertising an 'open-call' commission competition. Artists were invited to submit proposals for a new permanent artwork to be situated beneath Grosvenor Bridge. Some fantastic creative responses have been received from artists local to the area, as well as from across the UK and beyond. The selected proposal and successful artist will be announced soon.

The commission process was open to all artists at any stage in their career. It was requested that proposals 'reference the history and setting of the area in which the underpass is located, and to improve the appearance and user experience of this site, which connects residential houses and apartments with open parkland, allotments and play areas.'

Remedial work will take place to help clean the site and to prevent pigeons and other birds nesting beneath the bridge.

All proposals are initially shortlisted, with three selected to present their idea to the artist commission selection panel. This comprises local councillors, the Friends of Grosvenor & Hilbert Park, and representatives from the local community, arts and culture groups.

The project is part of a section 106 (S106) agreement between Fairview New Homes Ltd and Tunbridge Wells Brough Council. The funding for this particular activity was provided by Fairview through a

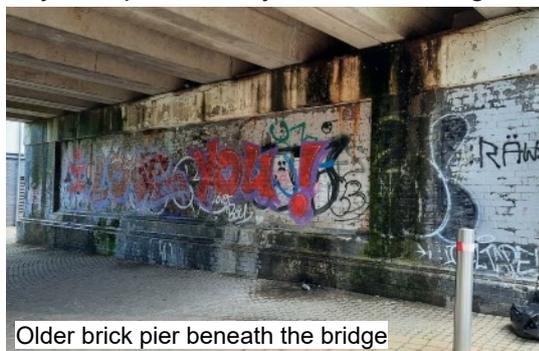


Concrete pier under Grosvenor Bridge

requirement within their planning application (initiated in 2006) and the subsequent construction of the nearby residential apartments.

S106 agreements are legal agreements between Local Authorities and developers. They are often linked to planning permissions and can also be known as 'planning obligations'. S106 agreements are put in place when it is considered that a large development or masterplan may have an impact upon a local area, and which could be mitigated through various funded projects.

For example, a new residential development can place extra pressure on the social, physical and economic infrastructure which already exists in a certain area. An S106 obligation will aim to balance the pressure created by the new development with improvements to the surrounding area, ensuring that, where possible, the development will make a positive contribution to the local area and community.



Older brick pier beneath the bridge



Grosvenor Bridge underpass

"Culture is an essential ingredient for fulfilling a richly rewarding life. Creativity helps us to see the world differently and understand our place within it. A rich cultural heritage builds our sense of who we are and where we are from, affirms our identity and helps us to build our resilience and self-esteem."

(Kent County Council, Cultural Strategy "Inspirational Creativity: Transforming Lives Every Day", 2017 – 27)

The commissioned artist will develop their proposal with local history, heritage, and community groups through research sessions, displays and workshops. It is through these sessions that the fascinating and varied stories of this location, past and present, will be explored and help inform the creation of the final piece.

To find out more about this project please contact [Arts@tunbridgewells.gov.uk](mailto:Arts@tunbridgewells.gov.uk) or keep an eye out for information posted on the notice boards within the Park and the Hub.

**Luke Currall, Cultural Projects Manager, The Amelia Scott, Tunbridge Wells**

It's been really great for TWBC to get FoGH involved in the early stages of this project. Luke Currall has attended a couple of committee meetings, starting back pre-covid in 2019.

It'll be exciting to have some more art in the Park. This piece will go with the earlier pieces on the 21st Century Cycle path (Grosvenor Rocks and Zephyr) and our Legal Street Art wall.

FoGH have also worked alongside Tunbridge Wells Fringe Festival and CREATE to bring some workshops to The Hub during July – more information on that soon. (Look out for posters in the Park and see social media.) We'd like to thank TWBC for their help in getting these events booked and ready for the local community.



Grosvenor Rocks



Zephyr

**Carolyn Gray**

# 10 Years of the Friends of Grosvenor & Hilbert Park 2011 – 2021

## In the Beginning

FoGH started on June 8th 2011 at a meeting in St Barnabas School Hall, as a result of flyers sent out to local residents by TWBC. 18 local residents and four members of TWBC met to discuss the formation of a Friends of the Park group. An application had been made to the Heritage Lottery Fund for money to improve the Park and a Friends group was felt to be essential. Dave Prodrick from CREATE chaired the meeting – his advice was a great help.



A follow-up meeting at the bowls pavilion on Wednesday 6th July was attended by 64 residents.

The name of the group was confirmed as the Friends of Grosvenor & Hilbert Park and a committee was elected. Starting a group like this from scratch is quite an



undertaking. There were aims and objectives to agree, a constitution to draw up and events and activities to plan. It was a steep learning curve, which seemed like a slow start to some members.

The FoGH logo was designed by Rosie Harris of Girl Friday Graphics. It reflects the three large oaks on the lower football pitch, the curve of Marnock Lake and the Park's popularity with families. The constitution was drawn up by Ian Beavis, Liz Edwards and Sue Kaner, and agreed by the members at the first Annual General Meeting in May 2012.

So that's how the Friends of Grosvenor & Hilbert Park started and here some of the things we've done since!

## The Heritage Lottery Funded (HLF) Improvement Works



One particular reason to start a Friends group was to work with TWBC on the HLF application and make sure that the planned work was suitable and what the community wanted. Members of FoGH were on the Project Board, which met regularly throughout the process. It began with a bid for preliminary funding to develop a detailed application, which was successful in 2012. £2.3 million was awarded in 2014 and the work was finally completed in 2016. It's worth looking back at what was achieved.



From outdoor kiosk and cold pavilion to the Hub



The Rochdale Road entrance was opened up



Dark and intimidating to welcoming: the Upper Grosvenor Road entrance



The Marnock Lake area was completely renovated



Unusable pallets became the Folly Shaw bridge



The boggy scrape was transformed into a wetland area with boardwalk



## 10 Years of FoGH Events & Activities

The first ever FoGH event was Carol singing at the bowls pavilion on Sunday 11th December 2011. We followed this with an Open Morning at St Barnabas School Hall in January 2012, attended by TWBC, local organisations and a host of local residents, many of whom joined FoGH.

Next was an Easter event, then the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Celebration on Monday 4th June 2012. This was the beginning of our popular summer Fun Days and laid the foundation of FoGH's current financial security, as the event generated more funds than we expected.



The CREATE choir in 2011



The Queen's Diamond Jubilee Celebration

There have been six FoGH Family Fetes or Fun Days, offering a variety of catering, entertainments and activities, all attracting large crowds.

We have been proud to showcase local musicians and organisations. Regular features include donkey rides, constant queues for bouncy castles and ice creams, the FoGH tombola and cake stall, and a wide variety of food choices.

As the Friends group gained more experience in running events, we developed an annual range which seem to suit the local community: the Easter Egg Hunt, Picnic in the Park, Heritage Open Days (display & history walk), Apple Day, Children's Halloween Party and Carol Singing.



Heavy Horse Day 2015

Two marvellous Heavy Horse Days took place in 2015 and 2016 but sadly we have been unable to repeat these as the Working Horse Trust had to close.

More recently we have included Moth Identification events with Ian Beavis, to monitor the local moth population.

In 2014 FoGH first entered South and South-East in Bloom's It's Your Neighbourhood Scheme for community volunteer groups. We were judged to be 'Developing'.

Six years on, FoGH has reached the highest level: 'Outstanding'. The judges are also very appreciative of the Community Orchard.

Running events takes a lot of time and commitment from volunteers

and FoGH would like to thank them for all the hard work over the years.



Apple Day 2019



Eyed Hawk Moth



FoGH Baskets 2017



## Looking forward - The next 10 years

Covid-19 has shown us the vital role and importance the Park and its facilities provide. Our key aim will continue to be supporting a well maintained and safe park, which enhances the quality of life for the local community.

We have a number of objectives that will help us to achieve this and the key ones are:

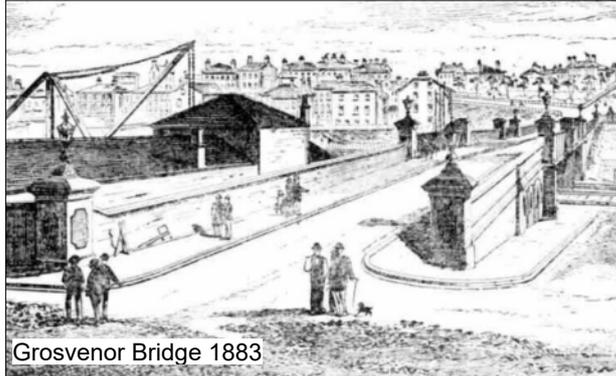
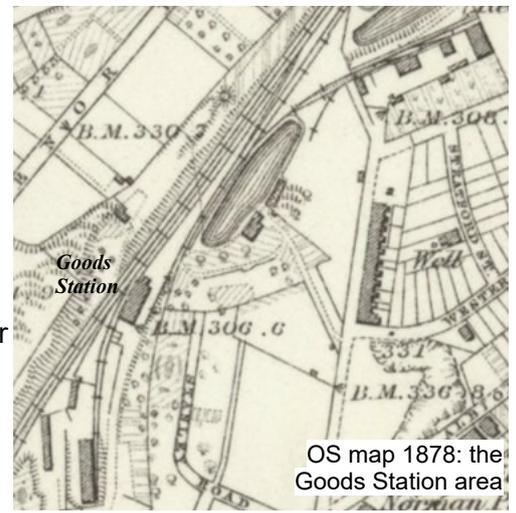
- Ensuring that the FoGH Committee remains active & continues to represent the views of Park users in planning, decision-making & Park management
- Increasing both membership of the Friends Group & the number of volunteers in the Park
- Raising funds to maintain & improve facilities in the Park
- Assisting other Groups & organisations to become actively involved in the Park
- Continue working closely with TWBC Parks Department & Kent High Weald Partnership to manage the Park & nature reserves
- Encouraging the local community to take an interest in the history, ecology & wildlife of the Park

The committee will continue to work to fulfil these aims and make the next 10 years as successful as the first.

## The History of Grosvenor Bridge

In the 19th century Tunbridge Wells was a growing town and the coming of the South Eastern railway in 1845 accelerated the expansion. The first passenger station was 'Jackwood Spring', later to become the Goods Station. Once the Wells Tunnel was completed and Tunbridge Wells station opened in November 1846, Jackwood Spring became Tunbridge Wells Central Goods station. The area developed rapidly: it was the logical place for industries. Housing was built for the people who worked in the industries, goods station and shops in the Camden Road area.

As housing on either side of the railway continued to develop, the need for a road bridge over the railway became apparent. The Ratepayers Association wrote to the Local Board in January 1875 and negotiations began with South Eastern Railway Company in July that year. In 1880 tenders to construct the bridge were invited and a Local Government Board Enquiry allowed £10,000 to be borrowed to fund the construction.



The bridge was opened on March 7th 1883 by Mrs Stone-Wigg (wife of the Chairman of the Local Board) and the Kent & Sussex Courier included a special section. The bridge was constructed with three ironwork spans supported on red brick piers, with three 12ft arches under each of the approaches. These arches were intended to be let out as storerooms but three became the town mortuary and others were used by the Local Board for storage.

Structural problems with the bridge began in the early 20th-century, with restrictions on heavy vehicles considered in 1907. From 1929 "vehicles passing over the bridge were not to exceed

a total weight of 10 tons, including load, with the speed not to exceed 5 miles an hour." The wrought iron in the bridge was not strong enough for the amount of traffic and increasing vehicle weights.

The original road surface was wood blocks covered with a thin layer of tar, which needed frequent repairs, causing depressions which filled with rain. But no heavier surface could be used because the iron structure could not support it.

In 1961 the Borough Surveyor was concerned about the structure, in particular the girders and decking plates. In 1965 the bridge was closed to traffic for urgent repairs and metal fatigue was found, with the plates supporting the carriageway corroded. The road could not be surfaced properly and the 18 foot wide carriageway was below the 24 foot



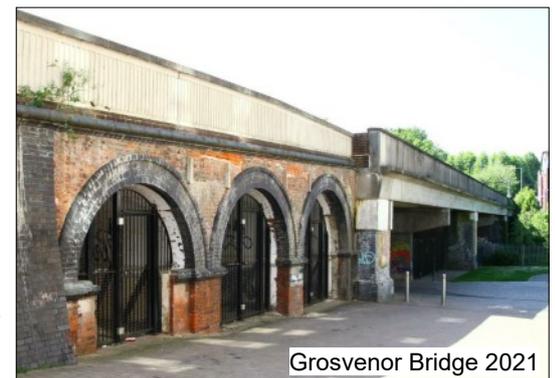
requirement. Design work began on a new bridge and in 1967 an application was made to Kent County Council. Negotiations with British Rail allowed work across the tracks and ensured worker safety.

In 1968 Grosvenor Bridge was closed from March to October for rebuilding. The three span wrought iron bridge was demolished and replaced with five spans of prestressed concrete beams. The original brick arches at Quarry Road end of the bridge were retained: now bicycle parking for the nearby flats. Grosvenor Bridge was reopened on October 11th by the Mayor Ald Kenneth Morrison.

Then in 2017 the bridge was closed for seven months when two of the supporting concrete pillars were rebuilt. The road was also resurfaced.

The inconvenience was a reminder of the continued importance of Grosvenor Bridge, as a major route through town and for local people. **Mary Hughes**

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



Look out for a future article on the industries and other activity in the area.

## Meet the Committee



Emma Melville

I have lived in Tunbridge Wells for 10 years, always in houses near the Park. I've spent many cold, wet and windy hours in the playground. Had hundreds of picnics in the field. And played hide and seek countless time in the woods.

During the first lockdown we went for a walk every day in the Park after home schooling. It made such a difference to be able to visit an open space and spend some time close to nature. My mission has been to drag FoGH into the 21st Century! Members can now pay online via direct debit, using GoCardless, or using our card reading machine. Online ticketing helps organise events in a COVID-safe way. I have set up a volunteer database and send regular emails to those interested in helping in the park. If you want to sign up just email:

[volunteer@fogh.org.uk](mailto:volunteer@fogh.org.uk)

**Emma Melville**

## Dogs in the Park

Lottie is a Heinz 57 dog of uncertain ancestry – some cocker spaniel and poodle, as well as Biewer and Yorkshire terrier. Here's what she has to say:

"Mummy was looking for a young small dog about 1 year old when she heard of a 5 month old puppy in need of rehoming. My photo made mummy and daddy decide to come and see me.



Lottie

Mummy came and YES she liked me and collected me the next day! I'm very spoilt with lots of cuddles from mostly my dad. I have a lot of walks down the Park and have made many friends. My best friends are Woodie and Tony the park keeper.

I like to get muddy but mummy tries to stop me: giving me a shower makes her very wet. I love watching the ducks and ducklings and also retrieving the ball (but only for treats!)"

**Lynda Steers**

## Newts

In February, FoGH was alerted through Facebook that there were newts emerging from hibernation, heading for Marnock Lake. We put up some posters to alert park users around the Lake, then in March more newts were spotted, this time heading towards the wetland area. These mass migrations prompted us to learn more about newts.



Smooth newt pair

The smooth or common newt is the UK's most widespread species, found throughout Britain and Ireland. They grow up to 11cm and are generally brown in colour, with small black spots on their yellow/orange bellies. During the breeding season, males develop a wavy crest along their back.

Newts hibernate between November and February. As overnight temperatures drop, their metabolism slows and they enter a largely dormant stage. Newts generally spend winter on land in a damp frost free place, possibly in a compost heap, under paving slabs, in a log pile or around the banks of a pond. During spells of milder weather, they move around and forage for food.

On land, they eat insects, caterpillars, worms and slugs. When they are in water, newts hunt insects, tadpoles, water snails and small crustaceans, such as shrimps.

Newts start heading for ponds for breeding from February. Some research suggests that this is linked to moon cycles and the mass emergences seen in the Park did take place during a full moon. Once in water, males court females, waving their tails to waft a glandular secretion before dropping a sperm packet for the female to collect. She lays up to 300 eggs individually on aquatic plants, wrapping them inside the leaves, but only a few survive to hatch.

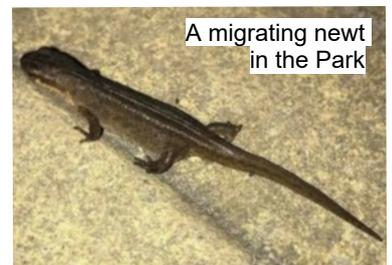


A newtlet or eft

The larvae hatch out 2 to 4 weeks later and have feathery gills around the head. After a couple of months, newt larvae start to grow their front legs. You can distinguish frog and toad tadpoles because they lack feathery gills and grow their back legs first. Juvenile newts (known as newtlets or efts) leave the water in late summer after absorbing their gills.

There are two other newt species found in the UK. The palmate newt is similar to the smooth newt in colouring and size, but lack spots on their throats, which are pink or yellow. They are named after the webbing found on the hind feet of the males during the breeding season. The great crested newt is the largest, reaching up to 17cm in length. They are darker in colour than the other species, with bumpy skin and bright orange bellies with large blotchy dark spots. The males have a toothed crest along their back in the breeding season.

**Mary Hughes**



A migrating newt in the Park



Male great crested newt

## Provisional Summer Events

### **Moth Identification.....Saturday 26th June 10.30am – 12.30pm**

Join Ian Beavis to identify late spring moths caught in a moth trap overnight in a local garden.  
At the Hub. Free drop-in event suitable for all ages.

### **FoGH AGM.....Thursday 8th July from 7pm**

**The AGM is postponed due to ongoing Covid restrictions: now on 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 Picnic in the Park.....Sunday 18th July 12 – 4pm**

**This event had to be cancelled due to ongoing Covid restrictions.**

### **More Moth Identification.....Saturday 14th August 11.30am – 12.30pm**

Join Ian Beavis to identify summer flying moths caught in a moth trap overnight in a local garden.  
At the Hub. Free drop-in event suitable for all ages.

### **Heritage Open Days.....Friday 10th – Sunday 19th September**

HODs is England's largest festival of history and culture. This year's theme is Edible England.

FoGH will participate but see posters & social media for more information nearer the time.

**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](http://www.fogh.org.uk) Facebook [www.facebook.com/GrosvenorHilbert](https://www.facebook.com/GrosvenorHilbert)  
or Twitter <https://twitter.com/FofGH>

## Sport Report

### **Bowls** (see [www.grosvenorbowls.co.uk/](http://www.grosvenorbowls.co.uk/))

On Saturday 1st May we played our first outdoor game with another club for 18 months at Wadhurst Bowls Club. We are thrilled to be back with a full programme of fixtures: friendlies with local clubs, Wednesday evening roll-ups, league games and internal club competitions.

Our Tunbridge Wells Triples League team played their first match on Thursday 3rd June and came away with maximum points against Calverley 'B' – a great start! We've been pleased to welcome new members this year and are looking for more. Join us at Wednesday evening practice from 6pm (wear flat-soled shoes like trainers), see our website, or ring our secretary Norman on 07944 697061.



**Jo Cartwright**

### **Football** (see [www.wksl.org.uk/](http://www.wksl.org.uk/))

In early March the West Kent Sunday Football League Management Committee met to decide the fate of the 2020-21 season. Clubs in Division 1 would conclude their league matches but the Division 2 and 3 programme was declared Null and Void.

These teams were entered into the Spring Cup but St John's Yard didn't get through the initial group stages, despite a couple of wins. But their season wasn't over, and concluded with the long delayed final of the 2019-20 Intermediate Cup.

The Yard won in a tough and closely contested match: AFC Valour 1 – 2 St John's Yard.

Congratulations to the team and let's hope the next football season can run more normally..... **Mary Hughes**



St John's Yard FC WKSFL Intermediate Cup winners 2019 - 2020

## FoGH Contact Details

Liz Edwards (Chairman) [chair@fogh.org.uk](mailto:chair@fogh.org.uk)  
Jane Melville (Secretary) [Friendsghrp@aol.com](mailto:Friendsghrp@aol.com)  
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Comments or contributions to  
Newsletter editors at  
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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](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 Dave Barnett, Ian Beavis, Luke Currall, Brian Ecott,  
Carolyn Gray, Chris Hughes, Lynda Steers, & Cllr Rob Wormington.*