

## Goodbye & Best Wishes to Steff

In July we were surprised to learn that Steff D'Agorne, our very popular Community Engagement Officer, had secured a new position, starting in August, as Warden for Romney Marsh Countryside Partnership.

When Steff arrived in July 2015, the refurbishment work was in full swing and some areas were closed due to the construction work. This included the playground for the imminent summer holidays. Brilliantly, thanks to her quick thinking and the support of the Heritage Lottery Fund, she arranged a whole programme of outdoor activities with children in mind.

Families had the options of rock climbing, archery, circus skills, outdoor theatre, bug hunts, woodland crafts and forest fun, skateboard and





football coaching, and bird box building. In addition, there was a variety of volunteer tasks for parents and children, all free of charge.

Since then, Steff has continued to arrange a fantastic cascade of events incorporating all interests and ages. Local schools have been encouraged to be part of a vibrant conservation volunteer team, who meet regularly to survey and enhance the habitat for wildlife. Her contribution to the community involvement has been wonderful.

We all wish her the very best for her exciting new post. Romney Marsh Countryside Partnership are very lucky to have such a capable and hard-working addition to their team.

Liz Edwards

## **Chairman's Report**

There have been a variety of activities since our Family Fete in May and the Park has been busy with picnickers, children and the early morning dog walkers. Considering the lack of rain and soaring temperatures in June and July, the Park is looking surprisingly green now we have had some rain. The streams in the woodlands have continued to flow and, in the wetlands, there is still plenty of water to support the wildlife. This is thanks to the drainage modifications made when the boardwalk was built.

Recently Sodexo have assigned us a new Park keeper, Tony Cheeseman, who has worked very hard to clear weeds in the planted areas. He has kept control of the hedges and made sure that the

playground is safe from litter and broken glass early every morning, amongst many other things. His improvements are already drawing appreciative comments.



During the early summer, we were visited by the Green Flag Award judges, who renewed the award. Jim Buttress (well known from his TV appearances) came to judge our entry to the RHS 'It's Your Neighbourhood' scheme as part of Royal Tunbridge Wells in Bloom. He gave good feedback and made positive comments about the community involvement FoGH have encouraged. I hope we do well – the results are announced in the autumn. This will reward the hard work by the Parks teams and the volunteers.

We will really miss Steff, but her assistant, Emma Peters, is taking over most of her activities for three days a week, and will be taking over Steff's role full-time later in the autumn. Many of you will already know Emma from the Forest schools and wildlife activities, and she has already made a significant contribution. I am so very glad that she is here to carry on the momentum.

There are plenty of events and activities planned for the autumn season, and I hope that the weather is kind so we can all continue to enjoy the Park in the coming months. **Liz Edwards** 

## **Update from the Parks Department**

As you will already be aware, our Community Engagement Officer Steff has moved on to another job at Romney Marsh Nature Reserve. We were all very sad to see her leave us after all the amazing work she has done, but we wish her well and good luck. One of the projects she worked on was the Tesco Bags of Help grant funding. She secured funding for an assistant to help during the summer and we were very lucky to find Emma Peters.

Emma has stepped into the role vacated by Steff, and I'm very please to say she has been appointed as the new Community Engagement Officer. Emma comes to us from the National Trust at Morden Hall and brings a huge amount of knowledge and experience to keep the project going. If you see her around do stop to say hello.

Over the past couple of months, Marnock Lake has been emptied on a few occasions to enable contractors to repair the dripping well pumps and the pump housings. We are aware of the comments about the fish and I think it is worth noting that any fish that have found their way into the Lake are by third party introduction or by migration. The Lake was never intended to have fish and is simply an ornamental feature.

We also have a new Park Keeper for Sodexo, Tony Cheesman, who has made a big impression on the Park and is slowly catching up on work. Tony very often calls in at weekends to make sure work is carried out and never seems to stop. Let's hope we can keep him in the Park for a while.



We have successfully retained the Green Flag for another year, with some very positive comments from the judge, who was impressed with the Hub and the play area. We still await the results from the Britain in Bloom judging, but fingers crossed we can improve on the Silver Gilt Grosvenor & Hilbert won last year.

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

## Royal Tunbridge Wells in Bloom 2018

In July, the town was visited twice by Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) judges. This was first by horticultural experts from the South and South East in Bloom region (S&SEiB) and then by the Britain in Bloom national judges. Tunbridge Wells sits in the 'Large Town' category of the Bloom competition.







The town won Gold in the S&SEiB competition in 2015 and 2016, but in 2017 we were the overall winner. Because we have done so well at the regional level over the past few years, S&SEiB decided to enter us to the national finals! So, this year we are competing with 9 other towns across the UK at the national level in the Large Town category. Last time we took part in this was in 2013, when we were awarded Silver.

In preparation for both judging events, the Bloom team, volunteers and contractors worked tirelessly on creating new floral

displays, maintaining parks and keeping streets and town furniture clean. Extremely hot weather put additional pressure on our flowers and gardeners.



Grosvenor & Hilbert Park, along with Dunorlan Park and Calverley Grounds, were entered in the S&SEiB competition under the 'Large Park' category. The Park was visited and judged on 26th June by the RHS legend Jim Buttress.

When judging a park, the RHS experts look not only at quality of horticultural displays, but also give points for community involvement, environmental responsibility. heritage and conservation, communication and

education. Jim seemed to enjoy his visit to Grosvenor & Hilbert Park and he was truly impressed with ongoing work of FoGH, Steff and Emma. In 2017 the Park was awarded Silver Gilt – we hope for Gold this year!

Our local Royal Tunbridge Wells in Bloom competition organised for residents, schools and local businesses has grown, with a record number of 280 (!!!) entries received this

who helped us to judge the gardens.

Kasia Olszewska-Martin, Parks Technical Officer









Planting in Calverley Precinct

The FoGH baskets

by the bowling green

### Summer Fun & Games in the Park

#### FoGH Picnic in the Park





We have held events for July's Love Parks Week over the years of the Friends group. Last year we had a community picnic in June for the Great Get Together. With limited volunteers, we combined

the events, and had a community picnic in Love Parks Week.

Sunday 15th July we thought – back in the winter – first weekend of the week - best time to do it. Then at our June committee meeting we twigged it was Wimbledon Men's Finals Day, and the World Cup Final. Ha! Well England won't be in that we thought...... Tensions were high by Wednesday 11th July when England reached the semi-finals.





We considered a short picnic, ending by 4pm in time for the final. While wishing the team well, there was some relief that they played on Saturday, so we had four hours of picnic on Sunday.

We used some Heritage Lottery event funding last year to buy games, and added two pop up badminton sets to this. Volunteer members of the committee laid out the games on the lower football pitch, then sat in the shade, on what was a very hot day.

Fortunately people joined us, and after lunch, had a go at various games - from

croquet to sack racing. The event is informal, and everyone made up their own teams and rules. Meeting over lost balls and beanbags was a good way to get chatting.

3:30pm came, and people started to wander off to watch France win the World Cup, but we had some equally competitive games going on, particularly the egg and spoon race. Please feel free to join us in 2019, with picnics, chairs and enthusiasm. Now – when is Wimbledon next year?





Carolyn Gray

## **Playday**

Face painters

at work

Playday is the national day for play in the UK, held on the first Wednesday in August. From small-scale community events, to thousands of children taking part in events organised in parks

and open spaces, Playday is celebrated by each community in its own way. As well as a celebration of the right to play, Playday is a campaign that highlights the importance of play in children's lives.

This year's event in the Park took place on Wednesday 1st August and proved very successful. To find some welcome shade, we were in and around the woodland near the skateboard park. There was a host of activities for the children to enjoy, from arts and crafts to the more physical, to burn off some energy.

Making bows and arrows was as popular as ever, with a constant stream of budding Robin Hoods. The face painters

were kept busy all day, which added to the fun. The mud kitchen was muddy fun, with lots of 'meals' being prepared for

lucky (?) mums and dads. Old boxes become boats

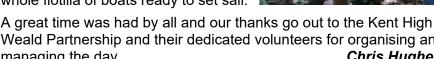
For the sportier types, there was badminton, quoits, football and numerous games made up as they went along. It was amazing to see what children could do with some old boxes. At the end of the day we had a

whole flotilla of boats ready to set sail.

Weald Partnership and their dedicated volunteers for organising and managing the day. **Chris Hughes** 



Bows and arrows



## Steff's Final Sum Up

As you are probably aware by now, I have moved on to pastures new (or should I say habitats new), as from mid-August I take up a new post in Romney Marsh. I am very sad to leave the Park and all the lovely people I have met. However I know I will be leaving you in Emma's capable hands and I am excited about the new opportunity that awaits me.



The past few months have been a busy one, as always in the summer. We have had visits from four different schools, including three year groups from The Wells Free School. We have taught them about the invertebrates (bugs) that live in the Park, in the wetland and meadow areas. The best catch of these sessions has to be the huge dragonfly larvae that now live in our wetland pools. Their extra large size, compared to the rest of the insects from the wetland, always astounds.





The volunteers with

their haul of litter

The volunteers the last few months have been weeding, surveying and litter picking the Park (as well as doing many other bits and pieces). They managed to clear a metric tonne of litter from in Hilbert Woods, which was fantastic to get rid of. It had accumulated over the years from people leaving behind bits they had made dens and camps with in the woodland.

We have been doing our Bee Walk survey every month, which gets sent through to The Bumblebee Conservation Trust to help them monitor bee populations in the UK. On our latest survey walk we managed to count 93



different individual bees (6 different species – white tailed,

buff tailed, garden, red-tailed bumblebees, as well as honey and mining bees). If you would like to help with these surveys, please contact <a href="mailto:Emma.Peters@tunbridgewells.gov.uk">Emma.Peters@tunbridgewells.gov.uk</a>.

Our summer events have been as busy as ever, with 40 people having a go at building dens (and roasting marshmallows) in Hilbert Woods. 28 people attended our Flower Power event, where flower crowns were

made, and each family learnt how to identify some of the common flowers in the Park.

Playday was incredibly busy,

we saw at least 300 people in the woodland where they managed to make their own bows and arrows, as well as taking part in many other activities. We caught a record number of 46 different species of moth during our Moth Trap blitz in June (see page 6 for more information. Thanks to Ian Beavis for identifying all of these.

Finally I would just like to say a huge thank you to everyone I have met over the course of this job role, whether you are a member of the

Friends, a kindly volunteer or an event-goer. I have thoroughly enjoyed getting to know you all and loved coming up with all the different events and activities in the Park for everyone to enjoy.

Steff d'Agorne



# **Heritage Open Days 2018**

FoGH are again taking part in Heritage Open Days (HODS), with a history display in the Hub, and a Guided Walk led by Chris Hughes. Due to other bookings in the Hub, we'll only be there on Saturday 8th September 11.30am – 5pm. Please join us, we'll happily chat about all aspects of the Park, not just the history. Chris will lead the walk around the Park at

heritage open days

2.30pm, exploring the history and wildlife.

Also on Saturday 8th September, St Barnabas School are open from 9:30am - 3:30pm. School Archives and old photos will be on display, and an exhibition about Belgian Refugees in Tunbridge Wells. A great loss to HODS 2018 is Geoffrey Copus, history archivist at St Barnabas Church, who passed away on 10th June 2018. Geoff's display shows the local area evolving during the Victorian era, and many interesting characters. The church will be open for HODs on Saturday 15th September 10am – 5pm and also Sunday 16th 1 – 5pm.

HODS is a national event over two weekends in September, and there are many local events, so see the website <a href="https://www.heritageopendays.org.uk/visiting">www.heritageopendays.org.uk/visiting</a> to see what's on.

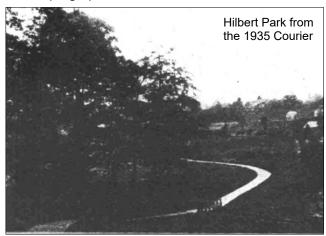


### **Hilbert Recreation Ground**

In November 1930 Councillor Edward Jeffrey Strange offered to donate 18 ½ acres (7.5 ha) of pasture land and woodland adjoining Grosvenor Recreation Ground. The land was "for rest and recreation, with no buildings.....except in this connection."

The Mayor was pleased to accept this "generous gift", commenting on the "charming character of the ground and the importance of preserving it for all time as an open space, so that the people could enjoy some of the beauties of the countryside." The land was inspected by the Kent and National Playing Fields Associations, to look at the potential for developing sports facilities.





In 1931 Councillor Strange offered to sell the council an additional 6.6 (2.67 ha) acres of land £975. This included the 2.2 acres (0.89 ha) of the Charity Farm allotments on King George V Hill. The whole area was named "Hilbert Recreation Ground" after Cllr Strange's mother. Her father, William Hilbert, was the first waterworks engineer, and in charge of the old waterworks which became the former open-air baths.

The ground was visited by Council members, and plans for development included children's playgrounds, football and cricket pitches, a model yacht lake and tennis courts. Unemployed men laid paths in 1932, with their wages paid by the Winter Distress Fund set up by Mayor Albert Dennis.

In Apri

1932 two park keepers were appointed for Hilbert, at a weekly wage of 35 shillings. They were sworn in as special constables due to "undesirable practices having taken place in certain parts of the ground". "Rough characters had congregated there"........"for the purposes of gambling".

Plans to develop Hilbert proceeded slowly. During 1933 a piece of marshy ground was filled in and three rustic bridges costing £54.12 shillings were installed. An optimistic application to Kent County Playing Fields Association for a grant to build a boating lake was turned down. Grants were only given for schemes including playing fields.

Looking towards Hilbert Woods

Councillor Strange donated another 3 acres (1.2 ha) of land in 1936, to improve the Hilbert Road entrance. This included a "cottage and oast house barn." He paid for the

Packs in the Wood

cottage to be reconditioned and it was renamed "Packs in the Wood", reverting to an earlier name. This final gift of land brought the total extent of Hilbert to 26 acres (10.5 ha). There is a 1935 description "the Hilbert offers all the charm of the countryside with its grassy slopes and rugged trees, through the centre of which flows a stream, a picturesque bridge making contact with that part of the ground which could be used either for football or cricket."

Hilbert Recreation Ground was never formally laid out, apart from the paths and the football pitches (look out for another article about these). A five-year

programme was adopted in 1939 "including foot paths, fencing, hedges, land drainage, lawns, botanical gardens, conversion of the oast house to conveniences and shelter, electricity and water services." This would be carried out "as and when funds are available for the purpose."

However, post-war austerity meant this plan was never fully realised, so Hilbert Park has remained a piece of countryside within the town.

\*\*Mary Hughes\*\*

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



### **Moth Morning June 2018**

The first of this year's moth mornings was held on Saturday 16th June. The overnight catch was the largest so far, with 46 species and many more individuals. It was a great opportunity to see a wide range of the fascinating and often beautiful creatures that make their home in the Park but are rarely seen.





The most impressive finds were three species of hawk moths, members of a family that includes Britain's largest moths. We had two each of the Eyed Hawk, with startling eyespots on its hind wings that it uses to distract predators when disturbed, and the Poplar Hawk, whose strange wing shape and resting posture imitate a bunch of dead leaves.





The third species – Elephant Hawk – has an attractive pink and green colour scheme that seems to match the larval food plant Rosebay Willowherb. The name actually refers not to the adult but to the extensible front end of the caterpillar.

The Burnished Brass is one of several moths and butterflies whose caterpillars feed on nettles. It belongs to the 'Plusia' group which may be seen visiting garden flowers at dusk.

Many of this group have distinctive metallic patterns, and the Burnished Brass has a particularly striking arrangement of green-bronze patches on its forewings.

The Buff-tip, whose caterpillars feed on a variety of trees, is a remarkable example of camouflage when at rest. Its silvery forewings fold over its back to give a convincing match for a birch twig. The 'buff tip' completes the illusion by suggesting that the twig has been snapped off. The head is tucked under the thorax, giving the 'twig' a truncated appearance.









Other interesting species included one of the few truly green moths, the delicately coloured Light Emerald, which rests with its wings outspread. The Clouded Silver is brilliant white with cloudy blackish markings. Its caterpillars feed on hawthorn, blackthorn and various fruit trees found in the Park. It was quite scarce but numbers have increased since the 1970s.

From a nature conservation viewpoint, the best capture was a

single Great Oak Beauty. Characteristic of "large long-established oak woodlands with mature trees", this large subtly patterned moth is rated as Nationally Scarce. The caterpillar feeds on oak foliage and hibernates on twigs high in the canopy. In early spring, before the leaves open, it nibbles twigs and buds. This is another indicator of how special the Park's two areas of ancient woodland are, despite their relatively small size. *Ian Beavis* 

## **Sport Report**

**Bowls** (see <u>www.grosvenorbowlsclub.co.uk</u>)

The season has been very enjoyable for Grosvenor Bowls Club. The long hot spell meant few cancelled games, and quicker playing surfaces. We welcomed new members and renewed friendships with other local clubs.

We have celebrated success for Grosvenor on the greens. Our league team came top of Division Two, winning promotion to Division One next season! Graham Bridges won the singles competition at the Eastbourne Open and in the Tunbridge Wells Tournament. Then, playing with Steve





Jenner and Mike Smithers, Graham won the triples at the Tunbridge Wells Tournament. Great achievements!

We have had a lot of fun during our friendly matches and we are near the end of our club competitions. Grosvenor Bowls Club invites anyone interested in trying bowls to join us on Wednesday evenings from 6pm (just wear flat-soled shoes like trainers). **Jo Cartwright** 

Football (see http://www.wksl.org.uk/)

After a triumphant season, coming top of Division 3, getting promoted and winning the Junior Cup, St John's Yard hope to build on this success. The team play in gold and black and the first home match is against Crowborough Town on Sunday 16th September. *Mary Hughes* 

## Volunteering in the Park



One of the major benefits of the Heritage Lottery Funding has been the establishment of a volunteer community to support the Park and its staff. I became involved in the Park through KHWP, initially with coppicing and the annual meadow grass cut, then with boardwalk construction. I

also helped out with children's events, which ties in nicely with other volunteering I do in schools.

I started volunteering over 30 years ago with the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers. Then with the RSPB Tudeley Reserve and Kent Wildlife Trust, latterly at Bough Beech. This led to a career change! Volunteering has clear well-being benefits. If you are not involved now. please give it a try, as it does not have to be physical. If you have hobbies or interests, activities in the Hub could extend the benefits of this lovely Park to a wider community. John Telling

### Dogs in the Park

Rusty is a 3 year old purebred Border Collie, easy to spot because of his unusual colouring. He is an EE red, a colour from Australia. He came from the Isle of Sheppey.

He is often at the Park with one or two of his 7 brothers and sisters. We have 6 Border



Collies and two Lurchers. All compete, or have done, at flyball and/or agility. Soon we will welcome more dogs into our home as Rusty becomes a dad.

Rusty can usually be found soggy in a river, stream, pond or puddle chasing a tennis ball. As he loves a ball, he spends weekends training and competing at flyball with Underdogs Flyball Team. This often means camping, which he loves.

Two evenings a week Rusty trains at Agility and won into grade 3 at Just Dogs Live on 8th July, purely from his love of the weaves and tunnels. Most of all, he's a big softie and loves to cuddle! Abbev Rance

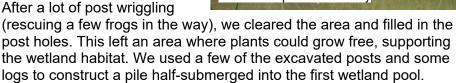
The habitat pile as it is today

#### The Wetland Habitat Pile

As you walk through the wetlands, you may notice a small, inconspicuous pile of logs on the left-hand side of one of the pools. This small addition to the wetlands provides a safe habitat for many species.

Steff d'Agorne, myself, and a team of about eight volunteers spent a mild day in April taking down the fence posts from the wetlands verge, and assembling the log pile structure. The work was hard, as many of the fence posts were deeply embedded into the ground. There was a lot of

wire fencing overgrown with grass in between.



Getting the fence posts out

Wellies had to be worn by all, as the ground was

very boggy and slippery (and some of us – ahem – nearly ended up in the water...). The half-submerged pile means that several rare types of invertebrate larvae can develop and emerge, as they prefer the wet woodland habitat. This species list includes hoverflies such as Chalcosyrphus eunotus, and endangered cranefly species like Lipsothrix nigristigma. The logs also serve as a home and food supply

Banging in posts



for caddisfly larvae living in the pool.

The completed habitat pile

Hopefully, we should start to see more of these species emerging and thriving in our wetlands. Over time, we may need to replenish the log pile as it sinks further into the wetland. For now, we can enjoy knowing that our work has contributed massively to the biodiversity and richness of Grosvenor and Hilbert Park's wetlands. A big thank you to everyone involved for all their hard work.

If conservation volunteering sounds like something you'd be interested in, please contact me on emma.peters@tunbridgewells.gov.uk or 07917 643961. Emma Peters, Graduate Wildlife Events Assistant

## **Autumn Event Highlights**

Heritage Open Day.....Saturday 8th September 11.30am – 5pm

At the Hub. Displays by FoGH about the fascinating history of the Park & the refurbishment.

Heritage Open Day History Walk.....Saturday 8th September 2.30 – 4pm

Meet at the Hub. Chris Hughes from FoGH will lead a walk about the Park's history & wildlife.

Drop-in session at the Hub. Children should be accompanied by an adult. Suggested donation £2 per child.

Bird, Bat & Bug House Building.....Saturday 29th September 10.30am – 1pm

Join KHWP & FoGH for a morning of making homes for wildlife. All ages. By the Hub. Tools & gloves provided, children should be accompanied by an adult.

Moth Identification......Saturday 6th October 11am - 1.15pm

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

Investigate late-flying nocturnal insects. Drop-in session at the Hub, suitable for all ages

The Big Draw......Friday 12th October 3.30 – 5.30pm

The theme is PLAY, so join us to draw your favourite way to play in the Park. All ages.

At the Hub. Children should be accompanied by an adult. Suggested donation £1 per child.

Apple Day......Saturday 20th October 10.30am – 3pm

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

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

Children's Halloween Party.....Friday 26th October 2 – 4pm

Join FoGH for a fun party! Face painting & lots of themed art & craft activities.

At the Hub. Come in fancy dress. Children should be accompanied by an adult.

National Stress Awareness Day......Friday 2nd November 3.30 – 5.30pm

Tips & tricks to stay calm in a stressful world. Calming art activities & easy mindfulness techniques.

Drop-in event at the Hub, suitable for 5+. Suggested donation £1 per person.

Carols with the CREATE Choir.....Sunday 9th December 2 – 3.30pm

FoGH invite you to join us for this seasonal celebration.

At the Hub (outside if the weather is good). Mulled wine, juice & mince pies.

Christmas Greetings......Tuesday 11th December 4.30 – 6.30pm

Have a go at making your own greetings cards. Suitable for all ages.

Drop-in event at the Hub. Children should be accompanied by an adult. Suggested donation £2 per person.

Feeding Frenzy.......Wednesday 19th December 3.30 - 5.30pm

Give the birds a helping hand in the colder weather by making food balls for them.

Drop-in event at the Hub. Children should be accompanied by an adult. Suggested donation £1 per person.

Tree Dressing.....Friday 21st December 2.30 – 5pm

Make a natural decoration to dress our festive tree. Suitable for all ages.

Drop-in event at the Hub. Children should be accompanied by an adult. Suggested donation £2.

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**

Liz Edwards (Chairman)
Jane Melville (Secretary)

Website Facebook

Twitter https: To join, contact the Secretary at 41, D

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Comments or contributions to

Newsletter editors at

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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