



# Friends of Grosvenor & Hilbert Park Newsletter 32 Autumn 2019

## Playday 2019

For the last 5 years Playday has been funded as part of the Heritage Lottery project, but as that ended earlier this year, the popular event was at risk. FoGH agreed to fund Playday 2019, so Kent High Weald Partnership organised and ran the event as usual.

The event took place on the mini football pitch by the skate park, and in and near the outdoor classroom in the woods.



At the Playday



Making bows & arrows



Firing the finished articles

Hundreds of children of all ages came along, some dropping in for a short time and others staying for most of day. The shade on the lower football pitch made a great place for picnics.

KHWP volunteers Mark and Mike were busy making individually tailored bows and arrows all day. Shooting practice was of course carefully supervised!

The parachute is always popular for families, then the choice of games included giant jenga, quoits, hula hoops, footballs, skittles with cans and beanbags, tug-of-war and fishing for ducks in a blowup paddling pool.



Planting with Ellen

Versatile cardboard boxes are limited only by the child's imagination and this year the robot was the star build.



The cardboard-box robot

Ellen from the Cross Pollination Project had pollinator-friendly planting, Roger from KHWP made bug hotels for them to live in and John Telling ran the bug hunt.



Making bug hotels



Bug-hunting!



Mug painting with FoGH

The artistic side was fulfilled by mug painting at the FoGH table, which kept us busy all day. Also colouring and drawing with various pens and pencils.



Sincere thanks to Cally, the two Nicks, Ian and volunteers from KHWP and to the volunteers from FoGH. We hope that everyone had a great time and that we'll be able to run the event in 2020!

## Chairman's Report

It has seemed rather quiet outside for the past few weeks now that the heat of July has dissipated, and the acrobatic families of swifts have flown away south. The dazzling weather of June and July attracted everyone to enjoy the outdoors and our annual 'Picnic in the Park' brought even more families along to join in with the games. This was followed by a busy Playday in August, again with a great selection of things for children to do. As you will see, we have plans for more family events this autumn.



Our park keeper Tony has been doing brilliant work keeping on top of all the weeding, trimming and mowing. The pleached limes beside the pathway from Auckland Road to Marnock Lake have grown very quickly despite the dry conditions between May and late July, so he is planning to make an early start on the pruning when the leaves have fallen.

There is at last some progress on the re-roofing of the Oast House, raising hopes that it will be fully weatherproof before any more significant rain. The scheduled work to improve the drainage of the lower football pitch has been approved and should start soon. The spring water that appears at the northern end of the pitch will be diverted to flow under the footpaths and into the spring that flows through Folly Shaw.

Jean Griffin, known to many gardeners from her Sunday morning gardening advice on Radio Kent, came to judge the Park in July for our Britain in Bloom entry. Her last visit was before all the HLF work had taken place, so she was impressed by all the improvements. The results are due any time soon so I very much hope that we do especially well reflecting all the hard work of staff and volunteers. Wishing everyone a good autumn and thank you to all those who make such an important contribution to the Park.

**Liz Edwards**

## Graffiti in the Park



We've featured the stunning new Paint Mechanics mural on the zigzag bridge and an interesting recent addition to the transient artwork on the Legal Graffiti wall.

## Update from the Parks Department

This July saw the Parks Team meeting and greeting judges for both South and South East in Bloom and the national Britain in Bloom competitions. Grosvenor & Hilbert was judged on 11th July, although we won't know the results until September, we are quietly confident we will continue to retain our Gold award from last year. Sadly, we don't have the opportunity to show the national judges Grosvenor & Hilbert due to time constraints. However, the work carried out by volunteers features in our display boards and in the portfolio. Our judges were both impressed with the community involvement and volunteer work carried out in the Park.



On the morning of the judging there was a break in at the Hub, which gave us another headache, and we needed to alter the judging schedule while the clean up took place. Fortunately, nothing was taken as thankfully we had moved all the valuable equipment to North Farm Depot a couple of weeks before. Unfortunately, the images on the CCTV could not be used to identify the culprits, but we have made arrangements to secure the roof lights to prevent any further access. The Park has been targeted a couple of times over the past few months and I would ask if you see anything suspicious please call the Police immediately.

In the next few weeks we will start work on the lower Hilbert football pitch to resolve the springs on the corner of the pitch. We are delayed on the project, as a survey of the drains leading to the stream identified a couple of collapses and blockages, which will need to be resolved as part of the work. On completion, the problem of water flowing over the footpath will be resolved and should make the path safer during the winter period.

Enjoy the remainder of the summer and as always if you have any questions about the Park please do contact me on [parcs@tunbridgewells.gov.uk](mailto:parcs@tunbridgewells.gov.uk)

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

## FoGH Events Roundup



### Community Planting



Families planting baskets

As the weather warmed up at the end of May, it was time to plant the baskets around the Hub and the bowls green ready for summer. As usual, FoGH bought plants from local independent garden centre Brookside in East Peckham. We mixed peat-free compost with water retaining granules and plant food to keep things growing well over the next few months.

Local families and volunteers planted the baskets with a mixture of colourful annuals and the job was soon done. We are fortunate that the park keepers kindly water the baskets during the week, then there is a rota for the weekends. Thanks to Brookside, the volunteers and the park keepers for all their help.

**Mary Hughes**

### Picnic & Games

This our third Picnic with Games, this year as part of Local Parks Week. It's one of our easier events to organise, as we bought the games in 2017 and 2018 (apart from the risk assessment for each activity.....) The games are stored in the Hub, so we just need to do pre-event promotion, then wheelbarrow the games, first aid kit and gazebo onto the field (and back again).



Using the parachute & the Jenga

Then it's down to the attendees to prepare their picnics, and bring rugs, chairs etc. This year wasn't as hot as previous years and saw plenty of picnickers (we estimate over 150). People quickly started playing games, although the younger members made their own rules on some.... However, Jenga IS merely a set of wooden building blocks! Big thanks to Mary Hughes for researching how to play croquet (note to self: use level ground next year...) The badminton sets, parachute and balls were well used all afternoon.



Playing badminton

Thanks to everyone who came along. If you'd like to help with events, please fill out the form on the website. You can find us now on Instagram as @GHParkFriends – a new way to spread the news about events, activities ... and the lovely flowers in the Park. **Carolyn Gray**



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**LOVE PARKS** **KEEP BRITAIN TIDY.**

### Royal Tunbridge Wells in Bloom 2019

RTW in Bloom was revived by residents and TWBC in 2010 and is now an annual event in the town's calendar. The town has won Gold in the South & South East in Bloom competition for the last seven years. In 2013 we received a Silver Award at national level from the RHS Britain in Bloom judges and in 2018 we took part in the Britain in Bloom finals again, winning Silver Gilt.

Since 2016 we have entered all seven RTW parks and open spaces in their own categories – with great results (4 Golds and 3 Silver Gilt last year). The RTW in Bloom team welcomed the Britain in Bloom judges on Monday 5th August 2019. We were proud to represent the South & South East region in the Large Town category in the finals of the national competition 2019.



Hanging baskets at the Town Hall



Lovely sunflowers

The RTW in Bloom campaign promotes floral beauty in our parks and town and improves the streetscape with help from local residents, businesses, schools, Friends groups and community groups. Our local Bloom competition is growing stronger year by year, with a record number of 284 entries in 2018. Our campaign is organised by a committee of volunteers with professional support from TWBC and the Kent High Weald Partnership.

The RTW in Bloom Awards Ceremony will be held at One Warwick Park Hotel on Thursday 26th September. **Katharina Mahler-Bech**



Learn more on social media – our website is : [www.royaltunbridgewellsinbloom.org.uk](http://www.royaltunbridgewellsinbloom.org.uk) Facebook: RoyalTunbridgeWellsInBloom and Twitter: @RTWinBloom

## Cally's Catch up

You may remember that I was the original Heritage Lottery Funded Community Engagement Officer, before returning to work for Kent High Weald Partnership in 2015. The HLF project has now come to an end and the lovely Emma Peters left at the end of June. However, with the remaining funding I have taken over leading the weekly volunteer group until the end of August, as well as hosting KHWP volunteer days year all round. So here is a little update on what we have been up to over the summer.



### Wildlife events...



Identifying a bee on the Big British Bee Count

This summer has been busy for our Park wildlife. On 27th June we carried out the Big British Bee count on a fortunately lovely sunny day! The Park was buzzing with bees and we counted very healthy numbers of honeybees, white, red, buff tailed and tree bumblebees, carder bees, and solitary bees.

Our Cross Pollination Project flower beds near the allotments are also doing a lovely job of attracting pollinating insects.

Thanks to a small group of CPP volunteers who are kindly surveying these beds over the summer, we are gathering important data on how attractive these plants are to pollinators. If you visit these beds on a nice day you are sure to see numerous bees, hover flies, moths, butterflies and wasps busy at work.



The Cross Pollination Project flower beds



On the bat walk

On a beautiful evening on 15th July, David from the Kent Bat Group led a bat walk around the Park. After a very interesting talk about all things batty to our group of 20 enthusiasts, we headed off round the Park armed with bat detectors. Our first encounter was the Soprano pipistrelle, soon joined by the common pipistrelle around the woodland edges. We also were treated to a display by Noctules over the wetland.

### Volunteering in the Park...

The Thursday group of park volunteers have been hard at work over the summer. The jobs we have been doing include mulching the community orchard trees, wildlife surveys, tidying the willow dome, litter picking and removing invasive plants from the nature reserve.

One of the non-native invasive plants we have here is Himalayan balsam.



Himalayan balsam can take over nature reserves

Although it has an attractive pink flower and some bees like it, it grows and spreads very quickly.

This smothers other vegetation, reducing the floral diversity and altering the ecological balance of the habitats.

Himalayan balsam has an explosive style of seed dispersal, so it is important that we get to it before it seeds. Fortunately, it is quite easy to pull up and rather satisfying! So if you see a group of people pulling up balsam by the streams in the Park, you know why.



Volunteers mulching in the Orchard

Although the HLF funded weekly volunteer task days ended at the end of August, Kent High Weald Partnership will continue to run monthly volunteer days. These will take place on the first Thursday of each month over the autumn and winter through to spring.

Our volunteer day starts at 10am and finishes at 3pm, with a tea break at 11am, then lunch around 1pm. It is a very friendly group, and all tools and instructions are provided. If you would like to get involved, please email [cally@khwp.org.uk](mailto:cally@khwp.org.uk) or meet us on Thursday mornings at 10am by the Hilbert Road gates.



A shaded lunch for the volunteers



**Cally Fiddimore, Partnership Officer, Kent High Weald Partnership**

## Grosvenor & Hilbert in the 1930s

James McNab was the gardening correspondent for the Kent & Sussex Courier from 1934 until 1941. We have him to thank for three lyrical descriptions of the Park in 1937, 1938 and 1939 (regrettably not illustrated). The Head Gardener at the time was Mr H A Greenslade, "who stands high in his profession."

On each visit Mr McNab entered by the Grosvenor Bridge entrance and walked down towards Marnock Lake. He describes "grand specimen trees of London plane, horse chestnut, lime, beech and elm." He was particularly taken with the evergreen shrub *Olearia x haastii*, also known as the daisy bush, mentioning "many exquisite specimens"... "arrayed in tresses of creamy white clusters." "Scores of golden privet neatly trimmed were interspersed throughout the entire dell, they looked very effective amongst the multifarious collection of shrubs."



Trimmed golden privet

The trees and plants around Marnock Lake are appreciated. "There is a beautiful pond with an island in the centre, embowered in trees and flowering shrubs, hydrangea and olearia being the most conspicuous." "A spacious path goes around the pond" and there are "several weeping ash and elm trees with seats" He notes a "delightful grotto or dripping well" and a weeping birch on the island.



*Olearia x haastii*



The island in Marnock Lake



Standard heliotrope with geranium Paul Crampel

Moving on to look at the flower borders, Mr McNab is full of praise. At this time bedding plants were extensively used in flowerbeds, sometimes in colour schemes that modern day eyes would find garish.

"On the south side of the bowling green is a superb ribbon border effectively arranged with geraniums, heliotropes, marigold, lobelia and begonias." "There is a very lovely border.....the brilliantly coloured geranium Paul Crampel intermingles with some exquisite standards of heliotrope."

There are borders of "up-to-date dahlias, penstemons, salvias, autumn flowering chrysanthemums and herbaceous plants." "In front of the pavilion there is a magnificent bed of dahlias, comprising all the best varieties. Some of the blooms measure 10 to 12 inches in diameter." The 1920s and 30s were a golden age of dahlia breeding, with new varieties appearing all the time.



A bed of dahlias

Climbing a trellis adjoining the tennis courts are "several magnificent specimens of *Cobaea scandens*, which as a general rule receive greenhouse treatment." The spectacular cup and saucer vine has flowers up to 2 inches (5 cm) in diameter. Mr McNab saw hundreds of the "deep purple, bell-shaped and pendulous flowers". A native of Mexico, it is not hardy in the UK, but can be grown as an annual in a sunny position.



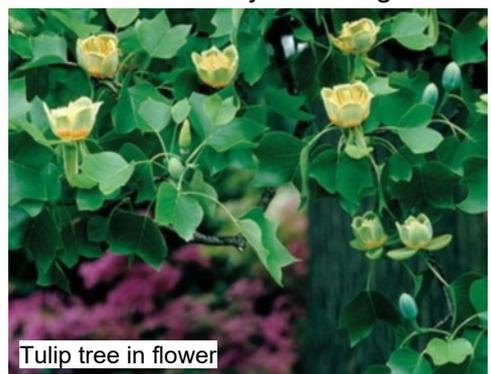
Tender climber *Cobaea scandens*

On two sides of the bowling green are "hedges composed of the dainty climbing rose, Dorothy Perkins." Also mentioned is "a very fine hedge of golden privet" which is found in front of the superintendent's residence.

There is a "spacious lawn .....studded with handsome trees. The most noteworthy were some fine specimens of purple beech, silver birch and..... a model specimen of the tulip tree." He mentions a purple beech, which we can still see today, between the graffiti wall and the railway bridge. Finally, Mr McNab went to Folly Shaw "to revel in the solitude of the woodlands".

Thanks to these articles we can look back to an era with enough staff and resources to maintain this floral splendour in the Park. **Mary Hughes**

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



Tulip tree in flower

## Moth Morning June 2019

Another season of moth mornings in the Park began on 8th June this year. The moth trap was run overnight in a nearby garden, and the catch was about 30 individuals of 14 different species. Moths can be very mobile during their nocturnal flights looking for nectar to feed on, a mate, or suitable foodplants to lay their eggs, so a static trap will over time build up a good picture of what can be found in a particular locality.

Each species has its own flight period, so trapping at different times of year produces a range of moths. The habitats favoured by particular moth species reflect those of the food plants for their caterpillars, so a site with diverse wooded, open, and wetland habitats like Grosvenor & Hilbert will produce a corresponding variety of moths.

The star of the show on this occasion was a splendid freshly emerged specimen of the Privet Hawk, one of the largest of all the British moths. The forewings, patterned to resemble tree bark, give good camouflage when at rest by day, hiding the bright pink markings of the hindwings and abdomen. Although according to the books this is a not uncommon species, it seems scarce in the High Weald and this is the first record from in or around the Park.



Privet Hawk



Privet Hawk caterpillar



Wild privet

The equally impressive caterpillars feed on privet, but need wild bushes or the big old-fashioned garden variety rather than the tightly clipped small-leaved hedges in most modern gardens. It also feeds on Ash, which might be an alternative foodplant within the Park's woodland.



Pale Tussock



Pale Tussock caterpillar

A more common urban species, the Pale Tussock, rests with its fluffy forelegs stretched out in front, which may help to break up its outline and distract predators from the head. Their caterpillars feed on a wide variety of trees and shrubs and before pesticides were often found devouring hop foliage. They were known to the pickers as 'hop dogs'.

Full-grown caterpillars sometimes appear wandering across footpaths and pavements in search of pupation sites. Their vivid yellow-green colour and long hair tufts often attracts

attention, even from those not interested in smaller wildlife.

Reflecting the Park's wetland habitat was the Middle-barred Minor, a smaller species with a broad band across its forewings. Its caterpillars feed on grasses in damp areas, and like many grass-eating butterflies, they overwinter in that stage, completing their growth and pupating in the spring.



Middle-barred Minor



Treble Lines

The Treble Lines has a name reflecting its distinctive feature, which stand out against a quite plain background of varying shades of brown. We found several of this grassland species, whose caterpillars feed on low-growing plants including dandelions and knapweed.

**Ian Beavis**

## Sport Report

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

The Grosvenor outdoor season is coming to an end, with only 5 matches left, apart from our internal club competitions. Our finals day take place on Sunday 1st September.

It has been a successful season in competitive terms. Our Tunbridge Wells League team were runners-up in Division 1, after being promoted last season. Jo Cartwright won the Kent ladies' two-wood singles title and competed at the National Championship finals in Leamington Spa (reaching the last 32 in the country). Graham Bridges was runner-up in the Tunbridge Wells Tournament singles, losing by a single shot.



A sunny practice session

On the friendly side, we have enjoyed many excellent games (and teas!) with other local clubs, renewing old friendships and establishing new ones. We welcomed new members to our club and invited anyone interested to 'have a go at bowls'.

To learn more, join us at our regular Wednesday evening practice night from 6pm (just wear flat-soled shoes), or see our website. **Jo Cartwright**

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

St John's Yard are in Division 1 of the West Kent Sunday League. They play on the top football pitch in black and gold, with the first home match against Simla on Sunday 15th September.

**Mary Hughes**



Jo with her trophy

## Volunteers in the Park



Ian identifies a bee

Ian Beavis was a founder member of the FoGH committee and has similar roles in other groups, including the Friends of the Commons and of Dunorlan. A native of Tunbridge Wells, Ian went to St James' and Skinners', then took a BA in Classics at Exeter. He did a

PhD in *Insects and other Invertebrates in Classical Antiquity*, then joined Tunbridge Wells Museum & Art Gallery in 1985. He is currently Research Curator.

Ian visits the Scilly Isles regularly, advising the Wildlife Trust, writing for local journals and delivering events.

Well-known for bug-hunting Park Safaris and guided walks on local and natural history, Ian writes and lectures regularly on these subjects. A particular interest is entomological recording in the local parks, commons and nature reserves, and he advises on their wildlife management.

## Dogs in the Park

This is our pickle of a Rottweiler, Lola. She turned one on the 18th May and already weighs 29kg. As we're both dog lovers, we thought it'd be nice to own a dog from a puppy while we were still young. My husband found a breeder based just outside Ashford and, after weeks of me saying I wanted a pup, he surprised me with 'Miss Purple' (the colour of her first collar).

Lola loves her tennis ball and will toss it to us ready to play. For a Rottweiler, she's also very good at bringing it back to us! She'll happily spend time splashing about the streams around the town. We've recently bought some agility training bits and she loves it, so we've entered the Muddy Dog Challenge for Battersea in September. Lola has plenty of energy to burn!

She's a friendly, affectionate young lady and we are pleased to see attitudes towards Rottweilers are changing for the better.

**Anna Bert**



Lola in the Park

## The Wildflower Meadow

In the three years following the completion of the restoration work in the Park there has been sufficient growth to cover the scars from the hard landscaping. As the Heritage Lottery project came to an end, wildflower seed was sown around the orchard margins, to encourage and support a growing variety of wildlife.



Annual flowers in the first year

In the first year the meadow was full of annual flowers like poppies, blue cornflowers, corn marigolds, corncockle etc. Since then a growing number of perennial wildflowers have established (see the list below). This year has produced the best display yet. Try spending a little time there next summer to see how many different plants are in flower at once.

The diversity of species has attracted an increasing variety of insects. Many of the plants are specific foodplants for certain insect species. The caterpillars of the Common Blue butterfly (abundant this year) and the Six-spot Burnet (a striking day-flying moth) both feed on bird's-foot trefoil.



Bird's-foot trefoil



Common Blue



Six-spot Burnet

The mixed grasses support the caterpillars of the meadow brown, ringlet and gatekeeper butterflies, all seen in large numbers this year.

Late July's rainfall has encouraged an extra flowering season this year. Many plants have already set seeds but are reappearing for a second time. In September we will be

cutting the wildflower areas with a scythe and leaving the cuttings where they fall for a couple of weeks. The seeds will have time to fall to the ground, ready to grow into fresh plants next spring.

We will also be sowing some yellow rattle, an attractive plant that is parasitic on the roots of grasses. This will help curb the grasses to the benefit of the other species.

**Liz Edwards**

### Perennial wildflowers in the meadow

red campion	common knapweed	ox-eye daisy
cat's ear	red clover	rough hawkbit
yarrow	wild carrot	lady's bedstraw
betony	meadow cranesbill	musk mallow

selfheal
ribwort plantain
bird's-foot trefoil
scarlet pimpernel

salad burnet
field scabious
sneeze wort



The meadow interpretation board



The meadow in flower this summer



Meadow cranesbill



Yellow rattle

## Autumn Event Highlights

**Reed Clearing in the Wetland**.....Thursday 5th September 10am – 3pm

KHWP volunteer day. Meet at the Hilbert Rd gates & wear suitable clothing & footwear.

**Heritage Open Day**.....Saturday 14th September 10am – 4pm

The Hub will be packed with displays & information about the Park & its history.

**Heritage Open Day Walk**.....Saturday 14th September 10.30am – 12.30pm

Ian Beavis leads a walk through the Park with insights into the history & wildlife.

Meet at the Hub. Please book places through [editors@FoGH.org.uk](mailto:editors@FoGH.org.uk)

**Bird, Bat & Bug House Building**.....Saturday 28th September 10.30am – 1pm

Join KHWP & FoGH at this drop-in event by the Hub to make homes for wildlife.

All ages, children must be accompanied by an adult. Tools & equipment provided.

**Moth Morning**.....Saturday 28th September 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.

**Woodland Edge Management**.....Thursday 3rd October 10am – 3pm

KHWP volunteer day. Meet at the Hilbert Rd gates & wear suitable clothing & footwear.

**Apple Day**.....Saturday 5th October 11am – 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.

**Tree Walk & Talk**.....Saturday 5th October 12 – 1pm

Learn about the trees in the mini Pinetum around the wetland & the HLF project.

Meet at the Oast House. Approximately 45 minutes, all on surfaced paths.

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

Join FoGH for a fun party! Cake decorating & lots of themed art & craft activities.

At the Hub. Come in fancy dress if you like. Children must be accompanied by an adult.

**Hazel Coppicing in Roundabout Woods**.....Thursday 7th November 10am – 3pm

KHWP volunteer day. Meet at the Hilbert Rd gates & wear suitable clothing & footwear.

**The Fun FoGH Quiz**.....Saturday 30th November 7pm

At the Hub. Tables of 6 if possible: £10 per person. Fish & chips included.

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

**Water Management In the Woods**.....Thursday 5th December 10am – 3pm

KHWP volunteer day. Meet at the Hilbert Rd gates & wear suitable clothing & footwear.

**Carols with the CREATE choir**.....Sunday 8th December 2 – 3.30pm

FoGH invite you to join us for this seasonal celebration at the Hub.

Refreshments available – mulled wine, fruit juice & mince pies. 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](http://www.fogh.org.uk) Facebook [www.facebook.com/GrosvenorHilbert](http://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>

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 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 Dave Barnett, Ian Beavis, Anna Bert, Jo Cartwright, Stef D'Agorne, Roy Delves, Cally Fiddimore, Carolyn Gray, Chris Hughes & Katharina Mahler-Bech.*