



Friends of Grosvenor & Hilbert Park Newsletter 46 Spring 2023

News from the FoGH Committee

Welcome to the spring newsletter. Spring is my favourite season, which I look forward to from January onwards, as catkins appear on trees and green shoots of bulbs push through the ground.

For the committee, the new year means lots of event planning, including for our Annual General Meeting on Thursday 11th May. In our early days, as we applied with TWBC for the Heritage Lottery Funding, our AGMs were very well attended. Since the work was completed in 2017, numbers have slowly decreased. The pandemic meant we had one online year (2020), and one year (2021) with the meeting held in September. Now we are back on track, with the AGM meetings in the Hub in mid-May.



Spring crocuses in the Park



Ian Beavis
looks for insects

Our summer events this year will

focus on nature in the Park. So for the AGM we have invited Kent High Weald Partnership to give a talk about the nature reserves and the plan to increase wildflowers in the Community Orchard. There will be refreshments, including cheese and wine, as well as updates on our achievements over the past year.

We are currently a ten-person committee instead of 12, and would welcome anyone who would like to join us. The committee meets monthly, on the first Wednesday evening, usually in The Hub over tea and coffee. We have been using Zoom for our winter meetings: we'll vote in October on the best option. I often wonder how committees existed in the past, as we also email and Whatsapp between meetings, mainly about event planning, but joining in with this is optional.

You need no special skills to join the committee, but it would be good to represent the opinions of some under 40s. From this year we'll have no committee members with primary school children. We also lack members connected to the sports that occur in the Park. Please contact me at chair@fogh.org.uk if you would like to join the committee at the May AGM.

The Park retained its Green Flag status, then we were sent a questionnaire about how we operate, and our achievements and hopes for the future. The committee agreed it would be good to have a separate meeting to discuss the main points. Once the questionnaire is submitted, Green Flag will comment on our good and bad points! The questions included a skills audit, which confirmed that the current committee have a wide range of skills from their personal and work lives, and some learnt during their time contributing to FoGH.



The Green Flag



The gates back in place

Last December we enjoyed our first Christmas committee social event – thanks to Clare and Mark for hosting. This event was just before the wedding of former Chairman Liz Edwards and Pete Smith, so we raised a glass to them. Congratulations Liz and Pete! Additional congratulations to Clare and Mark, who got married at the start of January! There must be something in the water.....

Carolyn Gray, Chair FoGH

Auckland Road Gates It's nearly a year since these were damaged. We are so pleased to finally see them back in their rightful place!





During the work



The repaired path

Issues with Paths

Our Park hasn't looked too glamorous this winter, with three sets of works going on on the paths. The first, by Folly Shaw Wood and the football pitch was finished quite quickly. Regular Park users will have noticed that the natural spring water was wearing away the path.

Where the water flowed over the path, there was the potential for the dangerous hazard of ice in cold weather. Also the narrowed path was a challenge for both pushchairs and wheelchairs. A drain now takes the water from the football pitch, under the path and down into the woods. The

path has been repaired: in time the bare soil will grass over and KHWP have sown wildflower seed.

At Redleaf Close, there have been repairs to the culvert path that broke a while ago. At the time of writing FoGH are in discussions with TWBC and KHWP on some sort of path, as the work has left the ground incredibly muddy.

Southern Water have been carrying out the biggest work, to fix a broken waste pipe from a neighbouring property. Unfortunately, the repair was slowed by winter weather and wet soil conditions. Some trees had to be removed, which Southern Water have replaced. I'm sure everyone is pleased now that this work is completed, and the vehicles have left Dorking Road.

I would like to thank Kasia Olszewska-Martin at TWBC Parks Department for keeping me up to date on the works, and answering all my queries!



The Southern Water work

Carolyn Gray, Chair FoGH



Sally Balcon

In Appreciation of Sally Balcon 1933 – 2022

I first met Sally in 2006 when she moved to Tunbridge Wells. We became friends walking our 'new' dogs in the Park, with regular morning meetings, coffee meet-ups and trips to dog friendly locales. Her wide range of interests went from the arts to the environment, with an amazing knowledge of flora, fauna and trees.

Sally was always interested in local affairs and got involved when the development of the Medway Depot site by the railway threatened to close an entrance to the Park. We gathered evidence and got it designated as a Public Right of Way by Kent County Council. That's why there is still an entrance into the Park by Grosvenor Bridge.

We attended the early meetings of FoGH, joining as soon as possible, with Sally nominating me for the committee in 2017. She went on to support many FoGH events. I miss her and our walks whatever the weather, although I now have her dog Buddy to

remember her by. Sally is hugely missed by her family, and all her friends in Tunbridge Wells. **Dorothy Swann**

A Discounted Visit to Wisley

During our January 2023 committee meeting I was reminded by Treasurer Chris Hughes that FoGH is affiliated to the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS). This means we have a card which gives 50% discount for two FoGH members to any RHS Garden. Then I read about the 'Houseplant Takeover – Deep Sea Dive' in the Glasshouse at RHS Wisley (which ended March 12th). With a 22 year old houseplant enthusiast still living in our house, we thought we'd have a trip – the first time any of us had been there. We had a great time, although it was very cold, with grey skies. The

Glasshouse event was amazing, and we also were in awe at the display in the Alpine Houses.

Anyone who is a paid up member of FoGH can borrow the RHS card. There is a £10 deposit, which should be given to Chris Hughes, FoGH Treasurer. Please contact him via editors@FoGH.org.uk or at 15 Dorking Road. There is lots to do on a day out and from 20th March the Old Laboratory will open to the public. The car park was busy, but we will visit again. We can test more coffee and cakes, and enjoy flowers in bloom!

Carolyn & the Gray family



Houseplants take over the Glasshouse!



The discount card

Royal Tunbridge Wells in Bloom 2023

The town is taking part in South & South East (S&SE) in Bloom again this year. Tunbridge Wells will represent the region in the Britain in Bloom National Finals in the Small City category! The local campaign launches on Friday 21st and Saturday 22nd April at Calverley Precinct 10am – 3pm. We'll have free plants and seeds available. Please get involved: find out how to do this at the launch event.

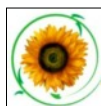
RTW in Bloom Competition – Residential & Commercial categories.

Photo Competition – Portrait of a Wildflower – Open to adults and children. We are looking for photos taken this season in Tunbridge Wells borough. Can you capture the beauty of wildflowers, in a meadow, park, garden, woodland or farmland?

Children's Art Competition – British Garden Birds – Use various art media to create a poster a garden bird.

Open Gardens 2023 – In support of Hospice in the Weald on Sunday 11th June from 11am – 5pm.

Try volunteering – There are opportunities in local parks or nature reserves. Please contact TWBC Parks at parks@tunbridgewells.gov.uk or Kent High Weald Partnership at www.khwp.org.uk



ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS IN BLOOM

You can find out more at our website

www.royaltunbridgewellsinbloom.org.uk/ or by emailing competition@royaltunbridgewellsinbloom.org.uk

Kasia Olszewska-Martin, Parks Technical Officer



The RTW launch event in 2022

Events & Activities in the Park



An elusive song thrush

Birdsong in the Park

I've been back at work full time, so I have missed out on the Monday Wellbeing Walks** in the Park. My future daughter-in-law introduced us to the Merlin Bird ID app, which has made my solo walks more interesting. Using the sound option, the app records your walk (including any conversations!) and identifies the bird song.

I was hoping to use this for the Great Big Garden Birdwatch, but realised it was hard to count the actual birds. My other main observation is I have seen a lot of magpies in the Park, but they are very quiet! But the hard to view robins and song thrushes are very vocal and are in all our woodland areas. I'm looking forward to hearing what spring brings to the park-bird-world.

Carolyn Gray

** Held every Monday morning (except Bank Holidays) from 10.30am, lasting approximately 60 minutes. Meet at the Hub.

Our Little Christmas Crafters

The FoGH Christmas Elves were rushed off their feet when nearly 150 children and parents came to the Children's Christmas Crafts event on Saturday 26th November last year. The Hub was alive with the sound of excited children trying out the different activities on offer.

Whether designing a reindeer crown with red bobble nose, or



Loo roll tube snowman

decorating a card gingerbread man, the enthusiasm was exuberant. The children threw themselves into decorating wooden hanging decorations and turning loo roll tubes into snowmen. And for those feeling peckish, there were melting snowmen biscuits to decorate or chocolate biscuits to turn into Christmas puddings!

There was a surprise visit from one VIP guest, Father Christmas, to the delight of old and young alike. Before

leaving, he told us he met lots of good children, with impressive creativity and big happy smiles.



We could not hold events like this without the wonderful volunteers who put so much time and effort into the preparations, at the event itself and clearing up afterwards. We would also like to thank all our supporters too. FoGH will put the money raised from donations towards extending and managing the wildflower meadow in the Orchard.



Father Christmas



A busy craft table



Melting snowman biscuit

Clare Kelly

Events & Activities in the Park *contd.*

Christmas Carols

After a pandemic break, on Sunday 4th December 2022 we were able to have our afternoon of festive cheer in The Hub, with the CREATE choir. The choir were in fine voice, with a mixture of traditional and less well-known songs. Thanks to Jane and Emma Melville for making mulled juice and wine. We had a range of nibbles – mince pies, lebkuchen and shortbread – to get us all into the right mood for Christmas.

Fortunately, the snowy weather arrived the week after our event! The 'Christmas Carols' with the CREATE choir in 2011 was our first ever FoGH event, and it is so nice that this community event has continued and remains popular.

Carolyn Gray



Joining in with the choir

A Hullabaloo in the Community Orchard

A big thank you to all who came along to the inaugural Apple Howling in the Park on Saturday 28th January. The FoGH volunteers and joint host Iron Springs Morris were bowled over with the numbers who braved the cold. Towards 100 people came along to wake up the trees in the Community Orchard, sing, dance and have fun.



Iron Springs Morris dance at the Oast

The event started with a Morris dancing demonstration and explanation of Apple Howling at the Oast House. Then nearly 100 enthusiastic flag waving revellers processed to the Community Orchard, where we gathered around the largest tree. Apple cake was placed in the branches and cider sprinkled around its roots.

A traditional invocation was read and then we all made as much noise as possible, to wake the trees and chase away any naughty spirits lurking about. Then it was back to the Oast House to share spiced apple cake and mulled cider or apple juice. There was more Morris dancing, with the audience joining the dance 'Tinner's Rabbit'.

The orchard trees can't still be asleep after the hullabaloo created that afternoon. With the worshipful ceremony complete, surely we must be due a bumper harvest later this year? Come along to the annual FoGH Apple Day in October (date tbc) to find out, and to taste juice squeezed using traditional methods from apples picked from the orchard.

The Apple Howling event will be held again next year (2024!) on Saturday 6th January 2 – 3pm. So

pop the date in your diary and join us for more mid-winter revelry.

If you would like to join the Iron Springs Morris Dancers please contact the group through their Facebook Page, 'Iron Springs Border Morris' www.facebook.com/IronSpringsMorris/ All new members are warmly welcomed. No previous dancing experience is needed as full training is given. Just bring with you a good sense of humour and a love of tradition!

Clare Kelly



Jenny & her daughters

Pruning the Community Orchard

On the day following the successful Apple Howling event, three FoGH volunteers met to do some winter pruning in the orchard. A cold, drizzly day is not the most salubrious for this task, especially when all three were wearing glasses. The day was brightened by the arrival of Jenny Heyling-Smith and her daughters to prune their tree. Sadly they were the only sponsors of trees in the orchard to attend.

We would love to encourage more people to join in with these important maintenance tasks. They are necessary to keep the trees to a manageable size, as well as productive and healthy. There are other opportunities to help out in the Park, so please sign up to our volunteer newsletter through the FoGH website: www.fogh.org.uk/index.php?inc=contact

Mary Hughes



Sprinkling cider around the tree



Making a noise in the orchard

Events & Activities in the Park *contd.*



The parade in Calverley Precinct

Another Dazzling Lantern Parade!

Tunbridge Wells Winter Lanterns Parade lit up the town once more on Saturday 4th February. This annual event is organised by local arts organisation CREATE and supported by the Round Table and Royal Victoria Place, featuring amazing music from bands Bloco Fogo and TS Brilliant.

The parade started from Calverley Precinct at 5:30pm on Saturday evening and made its way through the town, finishing at Grosvenor & Hilbert Park. On arriving at the Park, participants were able to enjoy refreshments from a selection of food and drinks vendors. Bloco Fogo played for another half an hour, while people took a closer look at the large lanterns, which were

arranged for display in the Park once the parade got there.

This year's theme was 'Our Secret Garden' and the parade featured an array of colourful lanterns, both large and small, all inspired by the secret garden theme and created by local families and artists. So that everyone can join in the fun and make their own lanterns, each year CREATE sells kits and runs workshops in the weeks leading up to the event.



Garden-themed lanterns



Insects also included



Bloco Fogo playing in the Park



Amazing giant frog!

Although many people think the Lantern Parade celebrates the Lunar New Year, its origins are much more local. On the lower part of Camden Road, beyond the traffic lights, there are no Christmas lights. So in 2006, a group of local people (already involved in the community play 'The Vanishing Elephant') got together to organise the first parade of light from the town centre down the full length of Camden Road.



A detailed bird

What started as a fundraising event for a community theatre production has become a staple part of the Tunbridge Wells events calendar. It is now a beloved tradition in the town, showcasing creativity and allowing everyone to come together and enjoy the beautiful lanterns.

The Winter Lanterns festival is funded by donations each year, with both CREATE and the parade run solely by a small group of local volunteers. If you would like to get involved with CREATE or the Winter Lanterns Parade 2024, please get in touch at on hellocreatetwells@gmail.com

Katy Borluvie

The Fun FoGH Quiz

Quizmaster Chris Hughes has a hard task striking the right balance with the questions. They need to be challenging, but not too difficult that none of the quizzers can answer them. One particularly testing round was the pictures: knowledge of opera houses of Europe seemed limited..... Another test was greetings in ten languages.

As usual, we paused after first three rounds for fish & chips, then followed with the final three, before drawing the raffle and presenting the prizes. It's heartening to see that, despite the pandemic disruption, the FoGH quiz is still popular. Tables were booked up fast, with some teams returning. Many thanks to all those who came, quizmaster Chris and his assistant Carolyn Gray. **Mary Hughes**



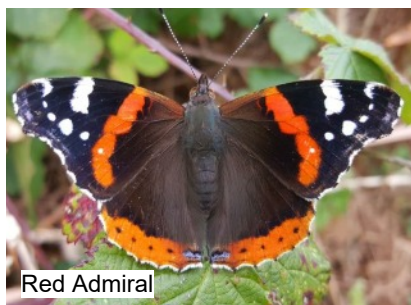
Deep concentration from the quizzers!

The Earliest Insects in Spring

As I write this on the second day of March, the start of the spring insect season is pretty much on hold due to low temperatures, particularly at night. One brave solitary bee – a Buffish Mining Bee – was out in the sunshine in the Park today, sitting on a dandelion but very sluggish. Any widespread insect activity is likely to wait until milder conditions return.



Buff-tailed
Bumblebee



Red Admiral



Buffish
Mining Bee

There are a small number of day-flying insects that are winter-active and likely to be seen on any mild sunny day throughout winter. These include the Buff-tailed Bumblebee, three species of hoverflies, and a few flies of other families such as bluebottles. Honeybees may also venture out in winter, as may the Red Admiral butterfly, which has a poorly developed hibernation instinct and used not to survive the English winter.

The day-flying insects that are true signs of spring usually appear in two phases. First come the solitary bees, like the one that appeared today. The usual first arrival is Clark's Mining Bee, with an orange thorax, black abdomen and golden pollen baskets in the female. The males, which are less distinctive, have a characteristic courtship display flight, spiralling up light-coloured tree-trunks. Another early one may be the Hairy-footed Flower-bee, with females that resemble a small all-black bumblebee and bright brown males with long plumes of hairs on their middle legs.



Clark's Mining
Bee



Hairy-footed
Flower-bee



Red-tailed Bumblebee



Early Bumblebee

About the same time, queen bumblebees like Red-tailed Bumblebee and Early Bumblebee start to emerge from hibernation and search for suitable sites for new colonies. These queens are the sole survivors of summer's colonies, digging themselves into the ground to await the start of a new season. Until around the turn of the millennium all bumblebees followed this pattern, but milder winters – especially in urban areas – have enabled Buff-tailed Bumblebees to maintain colonies through the winter. Other species may follow this trend in the future.

Then following on behind come the ex-hibernation butterflies. Butterfly species have a variety of life cycles and can spend the winter in any one of their four stages from egg to adult. The adult hibernators comprise five common species. Easiest to recognise, even at a distance, is the lemon yellow male of the Brimstone – the paler females could be mistaken for a premature Large White. The males rarely settle, but constantly patrol paths and woodland edges in search of a mate.

Then there are the Red Admiral, mentioned earlier, and three of its relatives from the nymphalid family – the Comma, Small Tortoiseshell and Peacock. These are



Comma



Small Tortoiseshell



Male
Brimstone

distinctive enough when settled, but can be confusing in flight. Look for the dead-leaf camouflage of the Comma, with its jagged wing edges and the Small Tortoiseshell's multi-coloured pattern – orange, yellow and black. The unique eye-spots of the Peacock help to ward off predators.

These five butterflies respond to the same environmental cues and are commonly seen emerging simultaneously in favoured spots. An example in the Park is the woodland edge by the community orchard. They will stay here for a while before dispersing across the landscape. They seem to have a remarkable ability to judge whether spring weather has definitely arrived, and they are rarely deceived by a 'false spring' earlier in the year. It follows that their emergence time can vary dramatically from year to year, ranging from mid-February at one extreme to the first days of April at the other.



Peacock

Ian Beavis

Ian will lead a Bee Walk on Saturday 20th May & a Butterfly Walk on Saturday 29th July.

Meet the Park Volunteer



Caroline Auckland

I am often in Grosvenor & Hilbert Park wearing a yellow Hi-Viz jacket with the words Si Tunbridge Wells printed on, emptying the rubbish bin next to the Hub. This is supposed to be for aluminium cans only, but it gets used for general waste....

My first recollection of the Park is walking from St James' School (then in Albion Road) in the 1960's, to the top pitch for sports day. Not being naturally sporty, I was only in the egg and spoon race! In my teens I used the Park as a shortcut from TWGGS to Ferndale with my friends. But never in the wintertime, as it was very dark on the pathways (still a thing!)

I frequently take my camera to the Park, capturing the changing seasons and checking the trees planted by the Soroptimists at the Upper Grosvenor Road entrance. I particularly enjoy walking around Marnock Lake and the Dripping Wells. **Caroline Auckland**

Dogs in the Park

Ziggy is a four month old Pomsky (half Pomeranian and half Husky), from Last Chance Animal Rescue near Edenbridge. The breed is small to medium size, but from the size of his paws he may end up more Husky.....



Ziggy

As the only unreserved puppy from his litter, clearly we were fated to have him! I was adamant that he would be a downstairs dog, but now he sleeps in his bed next to mine. Normally he is chilled out, except for a couple of times a day, when he gets the 'Zoomies' and will launch himself at everyone and everything!

Ziggy especially likes stealing underwear from the clothes dryer and runs off quickly so you can't get it back again! He is great with other dogs and loves people. His ears go back, and his tail wags as soon as he meets anyone new. He loves the Park, as there are always plenty of people to see. **Jonathan Hillary**

Kent High Weald Partnership Volunteer Work Updates

Our volunteers have been hard at work over the past year at Grosvenor & Hilbert. One of the biggest tasks has been the management of the wetland area of the Park, which we completed towards the end of last year. Species such as willow and alder have thrived in the damp conditions since the creation of this wetland area. Combined with the surrounding scrub and tussocky grasses, it has grown to become ideal habitat and cover for lots of wildlife.

However, occasional mowing and coppicing is needed to ensure natural regeneration doesn't slowly turn this area back into woodland.



Removing bur-reed in the wetland

Cutting different areas each year, and leaving others long, creates a variety in vegetation age, providing a mosaic structure and variety of habitats.

Work at the wetland has also seen volunteers back in waders, removing the fast growing and invasive bur-reed and pond weed, in order to keep open water habitat. It is a mucky but satisfying job!

Looking forwards to this year, we have another exciting project, funded by The Sussex Lund and FoGH. This will be in the Community Orchard, where we will work to improve the grassland by sowing yellow rattle. It gets the name from the brown seedpods, which make a rattling noise in summer when brushed past. Once used to indicate poor grassland, now it helps to make meadows.

This species is one of our most important wild meadow flowers. Being semi-parasitic, it seeks out nutrients from the roots of dominant grasses. Weaker grasses will allow smaller and more delicate flowers a chance to flourish. The seeding of yellow rattle will therefore, in time, allow the grassland in the lovely orchard to become much more attractive to our essential pollinators. (And to Park users!)



Yellow rattle in flower



Yellow rattle seed head

Due to very wet weather conditions towards the end of last year, we will be starting at the end of summer: it will be exciting to get underway! The grass will be mown, then scarified to make bare patches to sow seed.

If you have any questions for KHWP or if you are interested in joining our volunteer work parties, then please see our website at www.khwp.org.uk

Steph Dowling, Partnership Officer, Kent High Weald Partnership

Spring & Summer Events

Moth Identification & Make Seed Bombs.....Saturday 1st April 10.30am – 12.30pm

Join Ian Beavis to identify spring-flying moths caught overnight in the Park.
Make seed bombs that will encourage pollinators, plus other crafts!
Free drop-in event at the Hub. Suitable for all ages.

Easter Morning Worship.....Sunday 9th April from 8.30am

Please join us near the Auckland Road entrance – turn right when you're in the Park.
We can share a short time of song, prayer & reflection.

FoGH Annual General Meeting.....Thursday 11th May 7 for 7.30pm

Join us at the Hub for cheese & wine. Help shape the future of FoGH.
Only paid-up members can vote; please contact the Secretary to check via members@fogh.org.uk
There will be a talk from KHWP on plans for extending the wildflower meadow in the orchard.

Bee Identification Walk.....Saturday 20th May 10am – 12pm

It's World Bee Day! Celebrate by joining Ian Beavis for a walk in the Park to look for bees.
Meet at the Hub. The Park is home to a variety of bees, so come along to find out more.

Build a Bee & Bug Hotel.....Saturday 20th May from 2pm

Help wild bees & other insects by building them a desirable residence in the Park!
Look out for details nearer the time, on posters & via social media.

Plant a Basket for Britain in Bloom.....Sunday 21st May 2 – 4pm

Help FoGH brighten up the railings by the Hub & Bowling Green.
Tools, plants & equipment provided: please wear appropriate clothing & footwear.

Moth Identification.....Saturday 27th May 10.30am – 12.30pm

Join Ian Beavis to examine some fascinating night-flying insects caught overnight in the Park.
Free drop-in event at the Hub. Suitable for all ages.

Bat Walk with KHWP.....Wednesday 31st May 9pm

Full details will be available nearer the time. Suitable for 7 years & over.
Booking essential: tickets available from 10th May via the FoGH website at fogh.org.uk/tickets

Tree Walk & Talk.....Sunday 11th June 3 – 4.30pm

Join TWBC's Landscape Officer David Scully to learn about the trees in the Park.
Meet at the Hub. The walk focuses on the wetland conifers, ancient woodland & important native trees.

Tunbridge Wells Fringe Festival.....Saturday 1st – Sunday 16th July

Showcasing creative arts performances in venues throughout the town, including the Park.
For more information & tickets from 30th April, please see twfringe.com/about/

Community Picnic.....Sunday 2nd July 11am – 2pm

On the lower football pitch. Bring a picnic & chairs or a rug. Games & activities provided.
We hope our friends from TW Fringe will be joining us to make this a memorable event!

Please note: children must be accompanied by an adult at all events.

For more information about any of these events, see social media & look out for posters in the Park.

FoGH website: www.fogh.org.uk Facebook www.facebook.com/GrosvenorHilbert

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

FoGH Contact Details

Carolyn Gray (FoGH Chair)

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Comments or contributions to

Newsletter editors at

editors@FoGH.org.uk

or 15 Dorking Road,

Tunbridge Wells, TN1 2LN

For information on how to join the Friends group, please see our website www.fogh.org.uk/index.php?inc=community

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, Henrietta Breitmeyer, Steph Dowling, Carolyn Gray,
Jonathan Hillary, Chris Hughes, Clare Kelly, , Kasia Olszewska-Martin & Basia Wesolowska .**