



Park Life

News from the Friends of Grosvenor and Hilbert Park



Autumn 2026

Following a summer of heat and drought, the recent rain has been most welcome and not a moment too soon. It's felt very much like a Mediterranean climate over the last few months, with many areas looking really parched. There have also been a few casualties, where recently planted trees have suffered, and not been able to cope with the conditions. In particular, the Vietnamese Golden Cypress, planted to celebrate 100 years of Bedgebury Pinetum, seems to have succumbed, despite being regularly watered through a water bag. The subject of climate change was on the mind of the judge for the RHS In Bloom competition when we walked around the Park at the end of June. He was mindful that when planting, both FoGH and the TWBC Parks team probably need to think about more drought resistant plants and consider the species of trees that are planted in the future.



Talking of drought, our basket watering volunteers have had no let-up in keeping the baskets by the Children's Playground and Bowls Green well hydrated. We have a rota system, with each volunteer taking it in turns to water the baskets for a week. As a result, the baskets have thrived and we have had some fantastic displays this year. However, with climate change in mind, and water becoming a precious commodity, maybe we should think about the

plants we use in the baskets. In future we will look at using those that are more tolerant of dry conditions and require less watering. It's something we will be investigating for the baskets next year.

I hope that you have now had the chance to see the new graphics in the Children's Playground. It was commissioned and funded by FoGH, inspired because for some 80 years there was an open-air swimming pool in the Park. Opened in 1869, it had a colourful history, with many local children learning to swim in it over the years. It sat right beneath where the playground now is and once extended past the hard ball court right up to Marnock Lake. After the Second World War it fell into disrepair and was finally filled in around 1954. You can learn more from the Discovery Trail on the FoGH website at www.fogh.org.uk/tour. The new playground graphics are a nod to this bit of lost history, and we are currently finalising an interpretation board about the swimming pool to go near the Hub.



As you can see from the events guide, we have a busy schedule of events lined up to the end of the year. We try to put on a good range of activities that appeal to a wide range of people but if you have anything that you think we could put on, please let us know by emailing editors@fogh.org.uk I can't make any promises, but we are always willing to look at any suggestions and take it from there.

Chris Hughes – FoGH Chair, September 2026

Events Round Up

Moth Identification Mornings These events on 20th June and 15th August were well attended and yielded plenty of moths. The moth trap is set up in a garden next to the Park on the previous evening, then taken down to the Hub. It's great to see so many children coming along, and they enjoyed catching any moths that escaped and flew around the Hub. Once caught, Dr Ian Beavis was on hand to identify and catalogue them. We

had an abundance of Elephant Hawk moths in June, then in August we found 63 Large Yellow Underwings. One interesting find was European Corn-borer, which we haven't recorded in the Park before.



Bug Hunt This took place on 26th July, which was a glorious day. Dr Ian Beavis was once again out in the Park, leading our investigation of the insect life in the Park. Starting from the Hub, we worked our way through the beds by the bowls beds. Then we meandered through the Wetland and up through the woods, ending up in the wildflower meadow in the Community Orchard. Here we found a real highlight – a stripey wasp spider, which we watched wrap up a grasshopper that blundered into its web! Not one for the squeamish..... We also saw Gatekeeper,

Common Blue, Small White and Small Copper butterflies, along with Buff and Red-tailed Bumblebees.

Bat Walk We met by the Hub on 30th July for an introductory talk about bats, before heading off for a walk around the Park equipped with bat detectors. Lead by David Scully of the Kent Bat Group, this was an entertaining way to spend an evening. The detectors convert ultrasonic bat calls into sounds that we can hear and shows the frequency which identifies what species of bat it is. As we walked around, not only did we hear the bats, but we saw some of them flying around. The Noctule is easier to spot as its larger, but we also saw Common Pipistrelles.



WaterAid Talk On 26th August we were pleased to welcome WaterAid volunteer Paul Kent to the Hub. The water shortages we all suffered last December paled into insignificance after hearing about the daily troubles elsewhere in the world. WaterAid works with communities to improve their lives and donations are always welcome via their website at www.wateraid.org/uk – thank you!

Autumn & Winter Events in the Park

Wetland Management.....Wednesday 16th September 10am – 3pm
KHWP volunteer days.
Thursday 17th September 10am – 3pm

Tea, coffee & biscuits provided: bring a packed lunch if needed.
Meet at the Auckland Road gates & please wear suitable clothing & footwear.

Green Flag Raising.....Wednesday 23rd September 11am

FoGH & TWBC Parks Dept were pleased that the Park retained its Green Flag for 2026/2027.
Please join us by the Hub for cake, biscuits & hot drinks as we raise the flag.

Wetland Management.....Wednesday 23rd September 10am – 3pm

Kent High Weald Partnership conservation volunteer day.
Tea, coffee & biscuits provided: bring a packed lunch if you are staying all day.
Meet at the Auckland Road gates & please wear suitable clothing & footwear.

Apple Day.....Saturday 3rd October 11am – 2pm

At the Oast House (by Hilbert Rd entrance). Join FoGH for children's craft activities & refreshments.
We'll be making juice with our apple press: bring bottles & any spare apples from your own tree.
Lots of volunteers needed to help cut up the apples! Free event but donations welcome.

Moth Identification Morning.....Sunday 4th October 10.30am – 12.30pm

There are 59 types of butterflies in the UK, but over 2500 moth species!
Join Dr Ian Beavis as we investigate the moths caught overnight in a garden by the Park.
All the moths are released safely after the event finishes.
At the Hub. This free drop-in the event is suitable for all ages.

Fungal Foray.....Date & time to be advised

Discover the Park's fungi on this exploration & identification walk with a local expert.
We'll meet at the Hub before heading off to explore the Park.
Limited tickets (£2.00) for this event will be available at fogh.org.uk/tickets

Halloween Crafts.....Sunday 25th October 2 – 3.30pm

Get the family into the spirit of Halloween at this themed event.
Cake decorating, also art & craft activities. Optional fancy dress (just for fun).
At the Hub. Free drop-in event, run by the Fiends of Grosvenor & Hilbert Park.
We suggest a donation of £2 towards the cost of materials.

Community Basket Planting.....Saturday 7th November 11am – 1pm & 2 – 4pm

Help FoGH get the Hub & Bowling Green baskets replanted for winter & spring.
We'll be planting daffodil bulbs & colourful plants to brighten up the Park into next spring.
Tools, plants & equipment provided: please wear appropriate clothing & footwear.

Christmas Tree Festival Crafts.....Sunday 29th November 2 – 4pm

Get crafty & help us create decorations for the FoGH Christmas tree.
We'll make these from natural materials, reflecting the Park's landscape.
This is for the Christmas Tree Festival at King Charles the Martyr Church (10th – 13th Dec).
At the Hub. This is a great festive way to support a local community event.

Christmas Carols.....Sunday 6th December 2 – 3.30pm

At the St Barnabas School Hall. Join FoGH & the CREATE Choir for this seasonal celebration.
A chance to sing along to favourite carols with this local choir.
Refreshments available – mulled wine, fruit juice & mince pies. Suggested donation £2.

Apple Howling.....Saturday 2nd January 2027 2 – 3pm

Join FoGH & Iron Spring Morris to scare bad spirits away from the Community Orchard.
Follow the tradition of wassailing to wake the trees so there's a good harvest in autumn.
Meet at the Auckland Road entrance for refreshments & dancing, before we go up to the orchard.
Please bring pots & pans, whistles & drums to make as much noise as possible.

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

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

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

Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/ghparkfriends/>

To learn more about conservation volunteering days with KHWP see www.khwp.org.uk/