



Spring 2026

Welcome to the first Parklife of 2026. Spring is in the air! It's great to see Mother Nature wake up and start to show us what we've been missing over the winter. The bulbs and crocuses have sprung to life and provide welcome colour in the park. The baskets by the Hub and Bowling Green are in full flower, providing a lovely splash of colour as well.



As a group we have been busy since the start of the New Year, with several events having taken place. At the start of the year, we had our annual Apple Howling and later in January we held a Bird Walk around the Park, led by Andy Appleton. This was to link up with the RSPB Big Garden Bird Watch. This was quickly followed by the Winter Pruning in the Community Orchard and a Fish & Chip Quiz Night at the end of February. The Committee have spent quite a lot of time planning events for the rest of the year, including many of your favourites, plus a few new ones as well. I would once again like to thank the Committee for all the time and effort they put into planning and organising the events. And of course, running the events themselves!

Several of our long-term projects are now starting to come to fruition. In April we will be sowing seed in the orchard to extend the wildflower meadow area. On the same day we will be holding our first ever 'Blossom Celebration' which is very exciting! It's inspired by the celebrations held in Japan every year to mark the cherry blossoms.

In addition, we have worked with the Parks Department to agree new playground graphics, replacing the existing one that is now very faded. Taking inspiration from the history of the park, it will represent the swimming pool that was here for some 80 years, the remains of which lie beneath the playground!



In Tribute – John Scholey (1948 – 2025)



It was with sadness that we heard of the passing of John in December 2025. John was a well-known local figure in Tunbridge Wells as Town Crier, a dedicated Morris Dancer and a member of the FoGH committee, before poor health forced him to stand down. He was a supporter of FoGH from the start, opening our May Family Fun Days in his role as Town Crier. He planted a tree in the Community Orchard, and supported Apple Day and Apple Howling as part of the Iron Spring Morris. Several of us attended his memorial at Salomons in mid-January and, true to John's ethos, it was a celebration of his life, with everyone present joining in a final Morris dance. It was quite a sight to behold.

Chris Hughes – FoGH Chair, March 2026

A Round Up of Events & Activities in the Park



This year's Apple Howling event in early January was a very colourful one, as we were joined by the Loose Women Morris. Along with our local Iron Spring Morris, they entertained everyone with their multicoloured costume and enthusiastic dancing. Having made our way to the orchard, we placed spiced apple cake in a tree, poured cider over its roots and sang an invocation to encourage the trees to grow strong and bear fruit.

Our RSPB Big Garden Bird Watch Walk was well attended, and we noted some 20 species. Heading around Marnock Lake we saw a good number of moorhens, mallards and woodpigeons. Working our way back past the Hub and into the woodland areas, we were pleased to see a treecreeper, a nuthatch and a goldcrest, and we heard a song thrush. Many thanks to Andy for leading the walk and identifying the birds



We held two pruning sessions in the Community Orchard and were pleased that a good number of volunteers came to help. The winter pruning is for apple and pear trees, many of which needed quite a bit of work. It's easy to forget that they were originally planted over 10 years ago and can easily get too big to manage. A few trees had suffered breaks in the summer, due to the amount of fruit on them, and required a major overhaul.

At the end of February, we had a fun evening at our Quiz Night. As well as testing our general knowledge there were rounds on gardening, Royal nicknames and literature. After three rounds we had a break to eat our fish & chips and draw the raffle, and then it was onto the final three rounds. In the end it was a close-run thing, with the winners only being decided in the last round.



Did you know that as member of FoGH you can get a 50% discount for up to two people when visiting any of the five Royal Horticultural Society gardens? With the current standard entry price of £18.60 per person, this is 'buy one get one free'. To get the discount you will need to use our RHS card, which can be obtained by emailing editors@fogh.org.uk. The nearest RHS gardens are Wisley in Surrey and Hyde Hall in Essex. There are others further afield – Bridgewater in Manchester, Harlow Carr in North Yorkshire and Rosemoor in Devon.

Spring & Summer Events in the Park

FoGH Annual General Meeting.....Thursday 19th March from 6.30pm

Join us at the Hub for light refreshments & to help to shape the future of FoGH.

Local expert Martin Barrett will give a talk on Bees, Hornets & the Asian Hornet threat.

Only paid-up members can vote: to join please see our website <https://www.fogh.org.uk/join>

Bird Box Making Workshop.....Wednesday 8th April 10 – 11 & 11 – 12

By the Hub. Build and/or decorate a bird box to take home at one of 2 sessions.

Run by Kent High Weald Partnership as part of TW Community Nature Reserve.

Booking required: <https://buytickets.at/kenthighwealdpartnership/2084931>

Wildflower Meadow Seed Sowing.....Saturday 18th April 10.30am – 12pm

Join FoGH volunteers as we sow seeds to extend the wildflower meadow.

The yellow rattle sown in 2023 has weakened the grasses

At the Community Orchard – please wear suitable clothing & footwear.

Sakura (Japanese Blossom Festival).....Saturday 18th April 12 – 3pm

At the Hub – Japanese food & drinks for sale, as well as Japanese crafts & a kimono to try.

In the Orchard – enjoy Japanese storytelling for children, suitable for different ages.

12.30 & 1.30 suitable for Reception to Year 4, 1pm & 2pm suitable for Year 4 upwards.

Bring a picnic or buy Japanese food to enjoy in the Orchard underneath the blossom.

FoGH Dog Show.....Saturday 25th April registration at 9.30am

On the Lower Football Pitch. Prizes & treats for all entrants, & refreshments for the humans.

Much-loved park keeper Tony Cheeseman will be Head Judge, with compere Mark Sparrow.

See posters & social media nearer the time for more details.

Pond Dipping.....Sunday 10th May 10.30am – 12.30pm

Discover the creatures that live in the Park's water habitats with local expert Martin Sutton.

We'll be meeting at the Hub before heading to the Lake & wetland area to investigate.

Plant a Basket for Britain in Bloom.....Sunday 31st May 10am – 12pm & 2 – 4pm

Help FoGH brighten up the railings by the Hub & Bowling Green.

We'll be tidying the baskets & adding colourful flowering plants for the summer.

Tools, plants & equipment provided: please wear appropriate clothing & footwear.

Moth Identification Morning.....Saturday 20th June 10.30am – 12.30pm

There are 59 types of butterflies in the UK, but over 2500 moth species!

Join Dr Ian Beavis to see moths caught overnight in a garden next to the Park.

Free drop-in event at the Hub. Suitable for all ages.

Invasive Species Removal.....Wednesday 24th June 10am – 3pm

Kent High Weald Partnership conservation volunteer days

Thursday 25th June 10am – 3pm

Non-native Himalayan Balsam shades out native plants & spreads rapidly along streams.

Tea, coffee & biscuits provided: bring a packed lunch if you are staying all day.

Meet at the Hilbert Road gates & wear suitable clothing & footwear.

Tunbridge Wells Fringe Festival.....Saturday 28th June – Sunday 13th July

Showcasing creative arts performances in venues throughout the town, including at the Hub.

For more information & tickets, please see twfringe.com/events/

Invasive Species Removal.....Thursday 16th July 10am – 3pm

KHWP Volunteer Day. Tea, coffee & biscuits provided: bring a packed lunch if needed.

Meet at the Hilbert Road gates & wear suitable clothing & footwear.

Meadow Bug Hunt.....Sunday 26th July 10.30am – 12.30pm

Dr Ian Beavis will lead this exploration of the creatures hiding in the grasses.

We'll be meeting at the Hub before heading off into the Park's meadow areas.

Please wear suitable clothing & footwear.

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/