

friends of **Waterlow Park**

The Voice Of Park Users



AGM 14 May 2018: Report from the Committee 2017-2018

Overview

This was a year of consolidation and steady progress with the highlight of a new park publication '*In Living Memory - the benches of Waterlow Park*' by Towyn Mason. The biggest issue has been the management of barbecues [BBQs] which continue to cause some difficulties.

Relations with Camden, TAG and the future of the park

The Waterlow Park Trust Advisory Group [TAG] has begun to work more effectively and now has its own chair. Sue Tatum was appointed in the late summer of 2017. FoWP is a key member of the group as the 'voice of park users' and many of the issues raised at TAG emanate from FoWP. We have spent some time clarifying the difference in roles between TAG and FoWP. TAG is charged with a strategic overview of the park while FoWP, as a major stakeholder, raises questions for TAG to consider and focuses on operational matters and the representation of the views of park users. BBQs are the issue TAG is dealing with most - trying to get better notices and bins and ideally some BBQ-free areas in the park.

FoWP continues to work closely with Camden Parks department and attends quarterly meetings of the Camden Friends groups. The Friends also work closely with the Head Gardener, who is a real asset to the park. FoWP collaborates with other groups of Friends across London, through the London Friends of Green Spaces Network (LFGN). In the context of a growing threat to parks through austerity-driven cuts the LFGN has played an increasingly important political role in arguing for statutory support for public parks and engaged with politicians on these issues, as well as using the local elections to lobby. Christine Farrell is our lead on these matters.

The properties in Waterlow Park

The three rented properties are continuing to contribute income which - once all the costs incurred in renovating them are met - will be a good income stream for the park. The tenants of the two lodges seem to enjoy the park and though there has been some turnover in Swain's Lane there was not much income loss. LUX, the international arts charity, have settled in well to the Park Centre and have fully embraced the opportunities the building and the park give them. We feel lucky to have them as active tenants. This year they have tackled the restoration of their private garden area aided by the FoWP horticultural team and thanks must go to Patricia Walby and April Cameron for all they did. Lauderdale House goes from strength to strength and the café is now open. Plans are underway to landscape the front and side gardens now building work is over.

Horticulture and volunteering

Our small team of committed volunteers worked hard to maintain ornamental areas of the park including the area around Lauderdale House, rose and hydrangea beds, sun and shade borders, a sedum circle and half circles on the terrace below the parterres.

Following the November 2016 replanting of the fragrant border using monies raised by friends of Ina Duffley, a short memorial dedication took place in early summer. This border is maintained by the park gardening team, but we keep a watching brief and pitch in to help when necessary.

We continue to grow plants in our nursery both for supplementing planting in the park and for sale to fund our various activities. In the kitchen garden, Highgate School pupils planted a sunflower plantation as part of their Environment Day activities. This year the plan is to focus on bees and butterflies and create an herbaceous bed and wildflower area which will attract both.

With the help of corporate volunteers from RBS, Santander and Cloud Space we were able to tackle several quite major projects including revamping the sensory border, planting wildflowers near Lauderdale House, creating squirrel-proof enclosures for plants in the nursery plus clearing and replanting an herbal garden behind the Park Centre for LUX.

In February, Capel Manor students came to prune the roses and mulch both this and the hydrangea border. Camden replaced the posts and swag ropes in the rose garden over the winter. We continue to maintain the Swain's Lane Lodge garden planted in January 2016.

Plans for the forthcoming year include work on the sedum circle to improve its visual impact and wildlife borders (as mentioned). We continue to welcome school and corporate groups to the park and will increasingly liaise with the supportive gardening team to ensure the groups make a positive contribution. We continue to work with other Highgate institutions, the cemetery and the Green Gym.

The community orchard

2017 was not a great year for the orchard. A few of the trees were sadly damaged by an over-zealous group of partygoers and some enforced pruning was carried out under the instructions of Camden Council, rather than our trained orchard leaders. We are hoping they will fully recover this year and we will be able to reshape them better over the next few years. Also, the main stem of the Tomcot apricot died, and we had to cut it back to the root stock. It is as yet unclear whether the stem that is now growing is an apricot or the quince that made up the root stock.

We had four or five fruits on the Czar plum. We sampled a couple – they were juicy, ripe and deliciously sweet. The fruits we left on the tree were gone by the next day, so we hope they were fully appreciated by whoever enjoyed them. The fruit crop otherwise was not great. The Core Blimey put out a good eight apples, but they were taken early in August when they were neither fully grown nor ripe. They all disappeared in one day, so we suspect human interference.

Both pears had one fruit each by the start of August, but both ended up on the ground with (we believe) squirrel tooth marks on them. The John Downie crab apple fruited well, and we hope that the fruits were sufficiently ripe when they were taken to at least make a nice jelly. We hope for better this year.

Kitchen garden

This was a fairly quiet year in kitchen garden. We again participated in the London Open Squares weekend in June and this attracted a small number of extra visitors, but it was decided to have a break in 2018 until a new chair of the plot-holders' committee was in place. Christine Farrell, who had very successfully supported the kitchen garden since its beginning in 2011, worked hard to ensure that a full complement of 10 groups were in place before she stepped aside after leaving the FoWP committee last year. Some plots continued to be gardened enthusiastically while others needed renewed care and attention. This year the communal beds towards the bottom of the garden were planted with sunflowers by Highgate School to mark their environment day. A new chair and secretary have now come forward and are energetically preparing for the new season. Future events planned are a composting and seed swap in May, a harvest celebration in mid-September and an apple day in October.

Trees, views and maintenance issues

The trees in Waterlow Park are much appreciated as we could all see in the many artistic responses to trees by the students from Central St Martin's in the Art in the Park event in January 2018.

We produced a new tree trail which is very popular and are in contact with someone who is both knowledgeable about trees and willing to lead walks in Waterlow Park. The tree trail can be downloaded from our website.

As noted earlier, this year has marked the establishment of the Waterlow Park Trust Advisory Group [TAG], who have responsibility for the strategic policy on trees in the park. We continue to be consulted and informed, sometimes, on actual tree works. We have monitored the trees during the year though, for instance, the felling of the ash near the Eagle Steps took us by surprise. Colleen O'Sullivan at Camden Council is in touch with Ian Henghes on the TAG's trees committee.

This year our main concern was to work with the TAG to get Camden to agree to making an exception of Waterlow Park to the overall Camden tree policy. We would like to see a variety of trees planted in the park, whereas under the Camden policy they will only allow native species. We would like to see some trees' crown reduced, or even removed, to preserve and enhance the views, particularly that from the statue of Sir Sydney Waterlow looking out over the city. Unfortunately, as yet, neither the TAG nor The Friends, have been able to convince Camden to treat Waterlow Park as the 'estate', arboretum and formal garden that historically it has been.

Wildlife

Work on developing wildlife initiatives has been on hold this year. We were very saddened by the death of Maurice Melzak in September. He was a former committee member and played a key role in working to support wildlife in the park, establishing bird boxes and bat boxes as well as arguing for good practice management for wildlife in the upper pond.

Sport

FoWP has long wanted to develop a strategy for sport in the park, but we are still unable to put any real resources to this. Among the things we would like to see are more productive use of the tennis courts which encourages children and young people to use the courts and therefore the park more. The courts have recently been beautifully refurbished, but we would still like to see the lower courts marked up for other ball games, so they could be used through the winter for basketball or netball. We would also like a discreet outdoor gym and a petanque pitch. There is some public support for this and FoWP have offered to meet a significant part of the costs. Discussion is underway with Camden.

Communications - website and social media

Along with direct mailings, the website www.waterlowpark.org.uk continues to be our main channel of communication with members and Park users and the public about developments affecting the park and events taking place. We are developing the site to make it more informative and attractive but do need someone willing to take on the responsibility for regularly updating the site. It has also not proved possible to provide a periodic newsletter for our members, again because of lack of time in committee members' busy lives. We hope to reinstate this in the coming months.

The website also has an active twitter feed focusing on current images and information.

Follow us on Twitter @WaterlowPark and @WaterlowPkOrchd. The Park also now has a Facebook page (www.facebook.com/waterlowpark).

Events

Some events are regular fixtures, such as participating in the Highgate Fair, and for the second time this year we had a stall at the Heritage Fair at Lauderdale House, while successful bulb and plant sales are held several times a year. We also hold trail and explorer afternoons during school holidays where children and adults are encouraged to identify natural or historical features within the park.

Special events this year included another well-attended fundraising classical concert in Dyne House together with the Friends of the Harington Scheme in June, and in December the launch of the book *'In Living Memory - The benches of Waterlow Park'* edited by Towyn Mason. Towyn has traced the families of some of the people who have memorial benches in the park and provided moving and interesting accounts of the lives of the people who are commemorated. This has proved to be a most interesting project and we are very grateful indeed to Towyn for all the work he put into this book.

FoWP - organisation, membership and publicity

We have continued to maintain our membership this year with over 160 paid up members and over 300 people on our mailing list. Our annual subscription is £5 a year and it is regrettable that more people will not become members. To encourage membership, we suggest people sign up to a direct debit. Increasingly people are doing so, which helps maintain numbers and reduces the administrative work involved in renewals. This year sees the implementation of the GDPR data protection legislation on 25 May and we are seeking guidance on what we must do as a very small local membership organisation for people to agree to us keeping them on our database.

The committee this year comprised: Marcia Beer [Secretary], Fiona Brown [press and PR], April Cameron [horticulture], Robin Cartwright [trees and views], Louise Lewis [membership and trees], Shona Paton [general issues and BBQs], Ceridwen Roberts [chair] and Richard Shipman [Treasurer]. Brian Haddon volunteered to cover sports but resigned during the year. Patricia Walby was co-opted for a year to develop events.

Ceridwen Roberts is standing down as chair. April Cameron and Shona Paton continue. Marcia Beer, Fiona Brown, and Robin Cartwright are eligible for re-election. Patricia Walby is eligible for election for a new term. There are vacancies for Chair, Co [or Deputy] Chair and Treasurer and one further member. We are particularly keen to recruit someone for the committee from south of the park as this area is still not represented on the Committee. All the committee deserve our thanks for combining their work for FoWP with busy domestic lives and day jobs.

Future plans

We are looking at 2018-2019 with some hope of being able to tackle some of the areas of park life which had to be postponed this year. This includes sorting out the mound which is being treated for invasive perennial weeds. When this is completed it is planned to plant wild flowers there to make it a more attractive feature. We also would like to do more activities with children and young people.

We ask you to support FoWP to look after your beautiful park.

Ceridwen Roberts

Chair, FoWP on behalf of the committee

14 May 2018