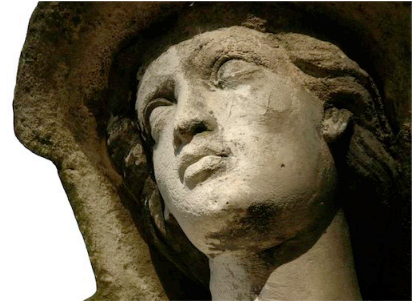


friends of **Waterlow Park**



AGM: 3rd June 2009 **Report from the Committee**

Overview

Since FoWP was re-launched last May the committee has been quite busy. Almost all committee members were new to FoWP though not to the park. Highlights of the year include the launch in December of our lovely website www.waterlowpark.org.uk, and two very good meetings where we had the inspirational speakers Pam Cooper and Stephen Crisp. Pam talked about the history of the park, drawing on her beautifully illustrated book and she also, on another occasion, led a guided walk around the park pointing out things to an appreciative group.

Stephen Crisp, the illustrious Head Gardener at Winfield House, home of the US ambassador in Regent's Park enthused us all with his stunning pictures of the gardens there but very particularly by the approach he was adopting to managing his gardens in an economically and environmentally friendly way.

Relations with Camden

FoWP has been active in meeting Camden through our liaison officers and more broadly relating to members of the Parks department and the Ecologists. We are very grateful to, initially Gaby Howard and latterly Charles Kyprianou and now Patrick Buttress for their friendliness and willingness to listen and help us. Regular meetings enable us to raise issues of concern which members and park users bring to the committee. Most of these issues relate to general maintenance but there are also major issues which are discussed below.

The big issues, of course, this year was the decision by Camden to apply for DCFS monies to build a play area for older children. An additional play area was part of the successful Heritage Lottery Fund bid in 1997 and FoWP had agreed a particular area with Camden. As members know, in the event, a different area was chosen by Camden and FoWP was then caught in the middle between Camden and a wide range of views among our members and park users. We tried our best to improve upon the limited consultation which was originally carried out and our efforts were instrumental in helping Camden limit the area finally chosen. However, this placed considerable strain on the committee in terms of the time and effort the campaign required of us.

The play area has now been erected and is much enjoyed by many children and their parents. We are mindful that everyone has "moved on" but at the same time some members and park users have been very worried about the "encroachment" in the park and have even queried the current sparrow's project which has required parts of the park to be temporarily roped off. It is clear that we must be ever vigilant in developing a good relationship with Camden so that all park users' interests may be met.

Current issues

A variety of issues are being discussed with Camden. We have been trying to get **the Aviary** used more attractively, ideally with domestic birds such as budgerigars and canaries. The sorry state of **the upper pond** has also been an issue. Intended to be a wildlife area accessible to escorted school parties, it is clear that the area has suffered from the lack of any clear management plan and it is a pity that, 5 years down the road, the dominant plants should be nettles and thistles. The area is unsightly, vulnerable to vandalism and offers no signage to explain why it has been closed off. We hope the arrival of the new Environmental Officer, Richard Harris, will lead to some changes here and we understand that he will be applying for grants to facilitate the creation of an area that is attractive to both visitors and to wildlife.

The **Lodge in Swain's Lane** has now been let, on a temporary basis, to a Camden tenant. Previously used, again on a temporary basis, to house the garden company Glendale, FoWP has expressed concern that this Grade 1 property is not being properly looked after or indeed appropriately used. FoWP must now come up with some sensible suggestions to Camden for how this Lodge should be used once the tenancy ends in 2010.

Concern has been raised about the state of the **old Kitchen garden** near the Park Centre. Latterly it's been used as a temporary allotment and subsequently as a school orientated project. Now, however, it is very overgrown and very unsightly. We have discovered that the earth is apparently contaminated so not suitable for growing any food produce. We are trying to find out more. But clearly an objective for this coming year is to work with Camden to get a good, garden friendly solution.

FoWP the organisation, membership and publicity

Over the last year we have been cleaning up our membership records to generate a list of actively paid up members. This means our membership has technically fallen but we are also trying to encourage more people to join. Our membership campaign necessarily has had to be low key but will be an important objective this year. We are also asking members for their email addresses so we can communicate with them more frequently and cost effectively. We hope too that our website will increasingly be used as a source of regular information. Articles have been written for Buzz and relationships developed with the local press. This will continue. But we know the best way to attract new members and retain existing ones is to have a lively feel, to organise some interesting activities and to meet members and park users' expectations about what a Friends Group is about. To do this we need your active support and so do feel you can offer to help the committee with suggestions and involvement.

The committee this year comprised Paul Andersen, Avril Castellazzo, Louise Lewis, Maurice Melzack, Mel Manhine, Stephen Panke, Ceridwen Roberts and Catharine Wells. During the year Maggy Meade King resigned and Ian Henghes was co-opted. Paul and Stephen are standing down at this AGM. They and indeed all the committee deserve our thanks for combining their work for FoWP with busy domestic lives and day jobs. We would welcome fresh committee members to make their contribution to Waterlow Park.

Ceridwen Roberts

Chair, FoWP on behalf of the committee

May 30th 2009