

Minutes of FoWP AGM 25 May 2017 held at LUX, Park Centre, Waterlow Park

Present: 41 members

FoWP Co-Chair Christine Farrell introduced the guest speaker, Tony Leach, Director of Parks for London, which was one of two new parks organisations and was started 3 years ago in its present form as a charity. He summarised how as a Londoner – whose local park is now Brockwell Park – he was introduced to gardening on a very small scale in oil drums and a window box as a young child. He later obtained a degree in horticulture and trained as landscape gardener. He had been a local government employee, a consultant, and had set up and worked for London Parks and Green Spaces Forum. Most recently Parks for London had been started from scratch after Greenspace folded.

A major part of the work is advisory and encouraging sharing good practice. An advocacy organization London Green Spaces Friends Groups Network [LFGN] was set up. It has a lobbying role with candidates at elections and aims to promote/celebrate parks, which are under increasing threat as funding has dropped or is at risk of considerable reduction. It works with elected members in London Boroughs and provides briefing for practitioners and Friends' groups. Income is provided mainly by LBs and all but 5 boroughs participate. Grants have dwindled and there is no membership charge. The annual meeting will highlight the problem of reinforcing bylaws – for example, the problem of picnic litter as disposal of waste is very expensive. Full details of Parks for London's activities can be accessed at www.parksforlondon.org.uk

Current issues include:

- evidence being made available about why parks are good for people - air quality, preventing runoff, cooling, biodiversity, resilience
- the government report on parks has been affected by the general election; it contains some good recommendations but does not go far enough
- the 2012 national planning framework favours development so that green spaces need vigilant protection
- the new mayor's plan contains a two-level framework to protect green spaces but it is not watertight
- interesting initiative in the Isle of Wight where local group has taken over the botanic gardens in Ventnor – very successful but it does not work everywhere
- horticultural practice changing – for example, flowerbeds to grass
- it is estimated that £27 income is generated for every £1 invested in parks.

In the area of maintenance and management, direct employment is disappearing and many parks have become trusts. Idverde [which has the contract in WP] now manages much of South London. Some boroughs are bringing maintenance back inhouse although with skeleton staff which leads to loss of skills. LBs are changing their way of managing for both financial and ecological reasons and Friends' groups are important and growing and becoming strategic. Corporate volunteers may be better used as a fundraising aid rather than as working volunteers.

Questions to the speaker covered:

the experience of leaving parks open at night; difficulties of accommodating large picnic gatherings; importance of using Friends' groups to resolve conflicts; options for fund-raising; privately owned parks; problem of lack of skills development for staff; importance of encouraging children to relate to parks; need for local authorities to be more flexible and to focus on health benefits; good relations between LAs and public need to be fostered. The meeting was appreciative of Camden's efforts to protect parks and maintain the park budget in the coming years.

A short film of the Waterlow 125 *Lark in the Park* in September 2016 was shown [now on website]. Thanks were expressed to Fiona Brown for producing this, and to LUX for organizing the showing and for use of the building.

The formal business of the **AGM** was introduced by Co-chair, Ceridwen Roberts. The minutes of the 2016 AGM and other papers had been circulated.

1. Apologies from Jan Morgan [Highgate Society].

2. The **minutes** of the 2016 AGM were formally accepted.

3. A detailed **report of the 2016-2017 committee year** was presented by Ceridwen Roberts [available on the website] and attention was drawn to future developments and activities as well as achievements over the past 12 months. Click [here](#) for the full report.

The Co-Chair highlighted:

Reorganisation of the Park management structure [TAG]. The Park is fortunate that it is a Trust which provides a basis for fund-raising activity to address the anticipated £250K shortfall for the Park. Possible solutions include an endowment fund and suitable events. Various local stakeholders are being brought into the Trust Advisory Group, whose work is getting underway with a tree policy and preserving views as well as discussion of discrete signage [see committee report for more details].

The huge effort made by the Friends and supporters to put on the *Lark in the Park* in September 2016 was acknowledged. Special thanks were paid to the contribution made by Patricia Walby and Richard Shipman. This had been a memorable occasion and a worthy celebration of 125 years of the Park.

Thanks were also paid to the *volunteer horticulturalists* – led by Patricia Walby and April Cameron. They had worked closely with the head gardener over the year and built up resources and a plant base to save funds. Corporate volunteers were also involved on occasion.

Committee membership. The Co-Chair, Christine Farrell, was stepping down from this role and the committee. The meeting thanked her for her stalwart support over many years, particularly in representing the Friends' group in the wider London scene and in guiding the kitchen garden. She would remain as the FoWP external representative in the London Friends' Group Network. The Group was particularly in need of new members with expertise or interest in sport and wildlife.

Questions

Gym equipment – this was being considered to address the health improvement role of the Park. A low-tech, discrete option might be acceptable. The Friends have proposed a petanque area in the flat space by tennis court; tai chi and other classes have been suggested; these initiatives are difficult because flat space is so scarce.

BBQs - this was a very contentious issue and not yet resolved. While some people are concerned about the high level of pollution produced by BBQs, others point to the mental health benefits of these activities. Objectors have to lobby their councillors. Instructions need to be clearer and enforcement should be improved. If there is a problem, park users need to alert the person on duty [usually near tennis court]. FoWP have argued that BBQs should not be allowed all over the park. People do not take rubbish home and hot ashes disposal is a problem. Exceptionally big events are very concerning.

Disappearing views – the TAG is trying to get agreement on careful pruning and crown reduction of trees which would mean changing Camden policy. This is a test case for the management relationship between the TAG/Camden.

4. Finance report

The Treasurer, Richard Shipman, introduced the accounts. This had been a very significant year for FoWP and transactions were dominated by the Lark in the Park. Full details of the annual accounts and the

accounts for Waterlow 125 are available on the website. The Friends had received many donations as a mixture of loans and gifts. £8000 grant income had been secured. After the final reckoning £57 profit was made for the Lark, which was a success as the intent was not to make money but to celebrate and to involve people/children.

During the year bulb sales and merchandising had made profit and the concert raised £1519. The year ended with a surplus of over £4200 which provided a cushion against future needs, and ideas were invited for projects such as a drinking fountain. More details are on the website. Thanks were expressed to the Treasurer for his hard work throughout the year and the 2016-7 accounts were accepted.

5. Elections

Three current members were standing down: Christine Farrell, Mel Manhine, Patricia Walby which meant four vacancies existed. It would be important to refresh the committee with new members bringing in enthusiasm and ideas. The following were nominated and elected:

April Cameron [horticulture]

Shona Paton

Brian Haddon [sport portfolio]

Afternote: Patricia Walby was coopted on to the committee as its first meeting in July to develop a programme of events.

6. Other items

Thanks were expressed to the committee, and Lauderdale House thanked FoWP for keeping the lawn area and border looking good.

Members were reminded of forthcoming June events and their practical help and support were requested - Highgate Fair, Open Garden Squares with plant sale, and the 2017 joint concert with the Harington Scheme as well as school visits to the kitchen garden

The meeting ended at 9 pm.

Secretary
Friends of Waterlow Park
mb/FOWP/AGM2017