

Friends of Waterlow Park

AGM: 9th June 2010: Report from the Committee

Overview

This has been a year consolidation with increased emphasis on the horticultural side of the park especially after the setting up of the horticultural committee and on the ongoing development of our lovely website [HYPERLINK "http://www.waterlowpark.org.uk" www.waterlowpark.org.uk](http://www.waterlowpark.org.uk) . Among the activities we have undertaken were a Tree Walk and Tea in July which attracted a large group of people and a Memories of Waterlow meeting and tea in May. We also held a small Christmas party for all the park workers both in Glendale and Camden to thank them for their activities on our behalf. We have interviewed park users about their wishes for the park and linked this to the Aviary consultation held in December. And the committee is now getting more systematic in its thinking about its objectives and strategy with respect to park issues.

The horticultural committee and issues

Set up this year the committee has worked very hard. Patricia Walby and Christine Farrell have been very busy looking at the original planting plans and working with Camden staff to help replan some of the herbaceous borders. Key to the horticultural work has been both the institution of regular walkabouts with Shaun Kiddell and his team to look at priorities and the enthusiasm and hard work of the committee. Shrubberies have been reduced, dead trees removed, invasive plants attacked and replaced as well as concerns raised about treatment of special trees and the areas round the ponds. Progress is also being made on having proper composting on site which FoWP welcomes. The committee worked with the Green army volunteers in November to plan and plant the new border by the Lauderdale lawn. The maintenance contract was up for tender this year and Glendale was not successful in getting it renewed. Connaught now has the responsibility for looking after the park.

Relations with Camden

A good working relationship with Camden is essential and we feel this has continued to improve. We have 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 all for their willingness to listen and help us and we welcome back Gaby Howard as our main link person here. 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. This year we have also met with other friends groups across London. In Camden, Shaun Kiddell has organised regular chair meetings which is a helpful way of keeping up with Camden issues but very importantly enables us to hear what other Camden friends groups are doing and swap ideas. We have also represented Waterlow at meetings of the London Parks and Green Spaces Forum and of course represent the park users when the Green Flag or London in Bloom judges visit the park. **Congratulations Waterlow and Camden on another Green flag and a gold in London in Bloom!**

Current issues

A variety of issues are being discussed with Camden. The consultation about the re-introduction of domestic birds such as budgerigars and canaries to **the Aviary** was a big issue this year. Though the majority of responses supported this, some hostility was aroused by the suggestion. It has been put on hold while a **review of the Park Centre** takes place and this is underway now. FoWP will be

contributing to this and will be seeking park users' views. The sorry state of **the upper pond** has also been an issue but last year's criticisms are being met under the lead of the Environmental officer Richard Harris. Some volunteers have been used to clear and the area is now open on a permanent basis though there are concerns about how this affects wild life.

A suitable use for the **Lodge in Swain's Lane** is a growing concern and has been discussed with Camden. Currently let, on a temporary basis, to a Camden tenant the tenancy lapses this year and FoWP will be pressing Camden to release this Grade 1 property for a more suitable use. FoWP has made some suggestions to Camden for this but it is essential to move this forward **now**.

Steps are being taken to sort out the **old Kitchen garden** near the Park Centre. After discovering that earth is apparently contaminated so not suitable for growing any food produce directly it has been decided to use raised beds so it can be used again to grow vegetables and fruit. This is planned for later this year although some fruit trees have been planted already.

The second year trial of the wild flower meadow is under way and we will be keeping a close watch on this and asking RSPB for information about the return of sparrows.

FoWP the organisation, membership and publicity

Last year we cleaned up our membership records to generate a list of actively paid up members and began a low key membership campaign. This continues to be an important objective as we do need more members both for the income [£ 5 p.a.] but more importantly to ensure we are properly reflecting all park users' views. More members now have / have given us email addresses so we can communicate with them more frequently and cost effectively and the website goes from strength to strength as a source of information about the Park and the Friends. We have developed email bulletins for both members and those who wish to be kept in touch about the Friends and send paper copies to those members who have not provided us with email details. Articles continue to be written for Buzz and other local journals .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 : Christine Farrell, Ian Henghes [secretary], Louise Lewis [membership], Maurice Melzack, Mel Manhine, Patricia Walby, Ceridwen Roberts [chair]and Catharine Wells [treasurer]. During the year Avril Castellezzo resigned. All the committee deserve our thanks for combining their work for FoWP with busy domestic lives and day jobs. **We would welcome additional committee members to make their contribution to Waterlow Park.**

Ceridwen Roberts

Chair, FoWP on behalf of the committee

7th June 2010