



Annual Report for the year 1 MAY 2019 to 30 APRIL 2020

HIGHLIGHTS

A new website www.waterlowpark.org.uk and a new logo. We are very pleased with the site's fresh new look and easy navigation. The news page is now prominent and frequently updated. We continue to tweet @waterlowpark regularly and the twitter feed is on the website.

A trial of zoned areas for barbeques in the Park in the summer of 2019. New large self-standing posters were installed, stencilled signs on pathways and special bins were provided for bbq coals.

A 1,000 – strong bluebell dell was planted on a bank on the north-eastern side of the bottom pond.

The pétanque pitch finally came into being last September, a bit too late to do any grand openings. More on that when sport is opened in the park again.

The Friends had two stalls at The Fair in The Square on 15 June 2019, one in the High Street outside what was then Waterlows estate agents for plant sales and one in Pond Square for a membership drive and to sell eco friendly coffee mugs. This was a good division and resulted in £900 plus in plant sales as well as several new members. A bulb sale was held in the Autumn in the Park and in time for Mother's Day, March 2020.

This February we organised a gardens outing, the first for quite a while. 20 plus people went to see Benington Lordship carpeted in snowdrops and Cambridge Botanic Garden in its winter glory. It was a

delightful trip and our horticulturist April Cameron provided an impromptu commentary around the Botanic Garden. More trips are planned.

MEMBERSHIP

We have 488 subscribers who receive all our newsletters. A smaller proportion are paid up members, namely 127 who paid £635 in membership fees. A good 100 members renew regularly but others join and then lapse. Following our membership renewal notice in May 2020, 70 people have renewed their membership already and others have standing orders that will come in during the course of the year.

A further £513 came from donations often alongside membership payments. Numbers have dropped over the last few years with one exception (2016, Lark in the Park year) and this year alas continued the downward trend, but only by a few. So we plan a concerted membership drive next year, keeping the subscription at £5.

Joining is a simple process on the website. You can renew your membership by online banking (your name as reference) or by paying in at any Barclays Bank, to credit Friends of Waterlow Park, 20-36-16, account number 80268283 or by sending a cheque to the Membership Secretary at the Friends address below.

We did not get as many new members this year as we usually do partly, because of necessity in the crisis, we have been less visible although just as active dealing with park issues, selling plants and organising our garden trip.

We have had many appreciative messages for the work we do.

BARBECUES

The new BBQ zones were set north and south of the tarmac circle. People observed the new restrictions and the Pond Meadow (as it used to be called) was left smoke free for people to enjoy. Two of your committee joined with the Trust Advisory Group (TAG) to assess the initiative and make recommendations for improvements for the next summer. With COVID-19 upon us now there are for the moment no BBQs allowed in the park. Alas not all park users are honouring the ban.

At the time of writing Camden is strengthening its supervision and communications for this issue.

HORTICULTURE AND PARK UPKEEP

Volunteering

We again thank our loyal group of Thursday volunteers for helping us to maintain various areas of the park. We benefitted from the efforts of volunteers from Capel Manor College, Deutsch Bank and Santander to help with rose pruning & mulching, wildflower mound maintenance and planting up a small bed near Lauderdale House.

Bluebell Dell

The Bluebell planting was achieved with support both financially and physically from a group of Deutsch Bank volunteers. We hope to expand the area with further planting in Autumn 2020.

Cancellation of 2020's Fair in the Square, means we will lose our main plant sale opportunity for raising funds to support our work. However, Patricia Walby spent considerable effort & hours setting up plant sales via our online shop. This has been a great success and we thank the Friends and park users for their support.

It is lovely to receive positive feedback from Friends and park visitors to know that our efforts and those of the gardening team are greatly appreciated, this year more than ever as a result of the 2020 lockdown. Mark Walters, the park Head Gardener and his team are generous in support of our efforts. As with each Christmas we like to give the team a little Christmas Box to show everyone's appreciation. We are also grateful to Park tenants Lauderdale House and LUX for their ongoing support.

Camden continues to ensure that all 26 acres are beautifully maintained and that for the moment budget is made available to sustain that. Outside organisations such as film crews who occasionally use the park also contribute financially but of course COVID cut off that source of funds after March 2020.

Drinking Water Fountains

The promised drinking water fountain offered by Thames Water for free was rejected by a majority vote in TAG mostly on aesthetic grounds. TAG has now taken over the restoration of the existing drinking water fountains in the park.

Restoration

Restoration of the stone eagles below Lauderdale House will go ahead when COVID restrictions permit. We have produced a survey of other damaged statuary which we will also consider for repair.

The Orchard

The Orchard continues to flourish and has given much pleasure to people as all the blossom bloomed in Spring. A replacement apricot was planted but will not be allowed to fruit till next year. Winter pruning was done by volunteers who put down a mulch of cardboard and woodchip. We hope we shall get some fruit this year.

Biodiversity

An initial report looking at Biodiversity in the park was produced and will be picked up again when events permit.

The Kitchen Garden (from their committee)

Elaine, Plot 1, is now in charge of the waiting list and we are hoping to have an AGM in September. Until then people can contact either myself, Jose Nicolson or Paula Woodman (chair). We do not have any empty plots at present. Last summer we had more thefts of produce than ever before, a bit depressing when people put lots of time and energy into growing. We are at a loss as to what we can do to discourage this behaviour. Anyway, hopefully we can all get back to a new normal sometime soon. (Contact Jose or Paula via the general form on the Friends website and it will be forwarded to them).

LOCAL EVENTS AND FUTURE PLANS

In addition to the events mentioned above we again this year took part in Lauderdale House's Heritage Day and the Highgate Festival. A considerable amount of work went into organising our contribution to the Festival which featured a children's art display in the park on climate change involving one year group from every primary school in Highgate.

The brilliant Waterlow Art Park exhibition of sculpture, art and film put on in the park by Central St Martin's has become an annual fixture and so we were pleased to welcome as keynote speaker, the School's

Curriculum Leader in Fine Art on the Foundation Course, Adrian Scrivener to last year's AGM. This year's event of necessity was a digital iteration via LUX's website on 22 April 2020. The videos from the Green Space Exhibition can be found on LUX Events Archive and are definitely worth viewing. www.lux.org.uk

We have plans to hold a Mini Lark in the Park on **19 September 2020** with a brass band and events for children. We applied for and were granted funds from Camden Events for the day. If it is possible for it to go ahead it will hopefully lift spirits after a difficult few months.

As Lockdown approached we made representations to Camden on the importance of keeping the park open for people during Lockdown and happily that was Camden's intention too. We were concerned about a 24/7 opening but with the exception of some renegade barbeques and occasional late night revelries it has provided a much needed outdoor sanctuary for everyone. At the beginning of Lockdown our Trails guru, Louise Lewis produced a Things To Do list to liven up the then limited exercise hour for children and families. This is on the Park notice boards and on the website.

SUMMARY

It was the aim again this year to try and bring some long-discussed projects to fruition and so we were particularly pleased that the petanque pitch finally became a reality and our very overdue new website also saw the light of day. The latter's content will be added to as we go along and we welcome your ideas.

In 2020/2021 we look forward to reporting on new planting in the park. And on all matters related to Waterlow Park we are here to put forward

your views to TAG and to Camden Council Green Spaces department and give them a wider airing through the local media as appropriate. This Report and the Finance report will be published on the website. There will be a webinar AGM hopefully in mid July 2020. Subscribers will be notified and details posted on the website and via Twitter.

Note: Strategy for the Park

Waterlow Park was originally bequeathed in Trust to the people of Highgate and is now managed by Camden. There is one Trustee for the Park who is an employee of Camden Council. Now that the council has set up a Trust Advisory Group (TAG), the Friends are represented on this Group. Camden also has a representative alongside other local neighbourhood groups such as the Dartmouth Park Neighbourhood Forum and the Highgate Society. TAG provides a forum for devising an ongoing strategy for the park and keeping a watching brief on the day to day life of the Park. You can contact TAG through its website or its constituent groups www.waterlowparktrust.org.uk to put forward your ideas or concerns.

Should you witness any antisocial behaviour in the park you can also email direct to parks.officers@camden.gov.uk and communitysafety@camden.gov.uk

Fiona Murphy
Chair, Friends of Waterlow Park
31 May 2020