



Friends of Waterlow Park

REPORT TO ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 11 JUNE 2025

FOR THE YEAR MAY 2024 TO APRIL 2025

HIGHLIGHTS

Gross takings at volunteers' plant sales: £5,673.00

20 new members signed up at the June Fair in the Square, total c.200

Four Pop-Up Proms in August featured London music students and graduates

New BBQ Working Group reported September 2024, re-convenes 13 June

New compost bins built in the Kitchen Garden by Camden

Looking ahead

Parterre replanting should reach 7-8 by year end 2025

A Butterfly walk with Steve Bolton is scheduled for Saturday 19 July

Sir Sydney statue *key and garden for gardenless* plaque to be re-instated

A few key signposts nearing installation in the park

THE 2024 AGM

Speakers

Our keynote speakers Peter Reader and April Cameron discussed their plans for the regeneration and sustainable revitalization of the parterres. This regeneration involves analysis and enrichment of the soil where necessary, and the need to choose low maintenance plants because of the tight budget. Along with the rest of the park, box hedging will be eliminated because of box moth damage. It was noted that more diversity was planned for the wildflower mount and the general importance of maintaining biodiversity in the park was emphasized.

Barbecue Working Group

The AGM allowed for written and spoken comments about barbecues in the park and whether they should continue. As a result a new working group on the issue was promised. This was convened under the chairmanship of Francis Wilkinson of Highgate

Society in conjunction with Ian Henghes, chair of the Trust Advisory Group. It met three times over the 2024 summer and reported in September, sending the report to TAG which adopted it and sent it on to Camden Green Spaces for their consideration. Representatives from the Council, Green Spaces, Highgate Cemetery, the Iranian community, TAG, and local Amenity Groups including the Friends and local residents contributed. The recommendations fell more or less into three camps: ban barbecues altogether, ban charcoal and install electric BBQs or continue as at present but with better supervision and toilet signage. After the two large Spring festive gatherings with BBQs, at the beginning of this year (2025), some individual complaints to us and to Camden, a local petition against BBQs, and press coverage presenting pros and cons, Camden imposed a temporary ban and the Working Group has been re-convened for later in June 2025 to review the options it originally put forward.

VOICE OF PARK USERS

This role of the Friends is paramount and is honoured through various methods of communication. The website, the designated site for Waterlow Park, provided news throughout the year with more than 20 regular posts with images to keep the public UpToDate with events and other developments. New pages on ornamental planting, the Physick Garden and the Mount were also added last year.

Always there is scope for anyone to send us their thoughts on the park (info@waterlowpark.org.uk) and these are recorded, acted on or forwarded to Camden as appropriate. The X (formerly Twitter) platform records scenes from the park's passage through the year and posts information on events, changes in opening times and occasionally re-posts local news. The membership secretary also sends out information during the year as do the Biodiversity and Plant Sale organisers. Activity reports also go TAG and the Highgate Breakfast Club.

CONSERVATION

In early April 2025 the Heritage of London Trust was in conversation with Highgate Society and The Friends, inviting suggestions for restoration projects in Highgate and the park. The Trust 'restores the buildings and monuments that tell the story of its city and people' and had suggested restoring the lanterns on the 'Lion' gates opposite Highgate Cemetery west entrance. Your committee felt cleaning the Sydney Waterlow statue and restoring the garden for the gardenless plaque and key was preferable to the lanterns but both our and Highgate Society's suggestions were declined. The concerns about new glass and metal lanterns is repeat vandalism and lighting provision and maintenance. Meanwhile your committee thinks we can fund the restoration of the plaque and key and we have embarked on that project.

New look statues in Waterlow Park

The Friends of Waterlow Park were very pleased when Camden Green Spaces announced a programme of statuary restoration for the park. The shepherd and

shepherdess, next to Lauderdale House, were the first to get the deep clean treatment and the Friends contributed funds to this. The floral urns around the House lawn followed in Autumn 2024 and the sundial there has also been restored.

SIGNAGE

The park would benefit from some signposts to key points of interest. This idea has been long in the making but finally between Lauderdale House, LUX and the Friends we have researched best options and put a plan to Camden. We hope that in 2025 we will see the signposts in the ground.

SECTOR REPORTS

Horticulture

Our loyal team of gardening volunteers continues to maintain areas within the park plus they help with the sales that we hold each year: Plant Sale early summer, Spring Bulb Sale in autumn and Christmas Wreath Sale (all made by volunteers) in December. We welcome new volunteers to join our gardening groups on Monday and/or Thursday mornings from 10 am for 2, 3 or 4 hours depending on the job. We ask that volunteers always work within their capabilities and time they have available so aim to be as flexible as possible. It is a very friendly and social group but we are quite task focused.

Areas we look after:

- All planted areas on the Lauderdale House Terrace
- Fragrant shrub border Lower Terrace
- The Physick Bed Lower Terrace. QR code added to identify planting
- The Mount wildflower planting and new QR code
- The half circles on the St Joseph's terrace
- The herbaceous borders below the park centre
- The pollinators' bed in the Kitchen Garden
- The Prairie Beds at the bottom (SE area) of the park
- The Community Orchard - winter and summer pruning

In conjunction with the *idverde* Gardening Team:

- The parterres on the lower terrace
- The Hospital border (opposite Centre of Mental Health)

Other

Swains Lane Lodge Garden

Lux Garden in conjunction with Lux

We are a little behind schedule this year as a result of the replanting we are doing on the parterres. We hope to have 7-8 parterres completed this year.

Other Volunteer Groups

- The Good Gym visited on 15 March to help us with grass removal on The Mount prior to reseeding and are due back in July for a session
- Deutsche Bank sent a big group on 22 August 2024 to help with preparation and planting of the parterres; a smaller group is due in on 11 July 2025

Fundraising Events

Gross sales totalled £5673: Spring/Summer Plant Sale £2087, Spring Bulb Sale £2738, Xmas Wreath Sale £848.

We thank our members for their valued support of our fundraising activities plus our volunteers who help prepare and run the sales. We hope you enjoy the results of our efforts which would not be possible without close collaboration with the *idverde* gardening team.

New Trees

Just one tree was planted last winter, *Cladastris kentukea*, an American yellow wood in the south of the park on the southern perimeter of the lower barbecue zone.

April Cameron

BIODIVERSITY

We made good progress last year in setting up a customised biodiversity database of Waterlow Park. FoWP member Gill Lawton and myself [GC] had a meeting a few weeks ago with our new biodiversity volunteer software analyst Riki Choudhuri. Gill has now entered most of the biodiversity data we have collected so far onto an Excel spreadsheet, except for those entries already entered into GiGL (Green Space Information for Greater London) by April. The new Spring bulb survey results will be added plus all survey data collected this summer and any future data.

Riki will do a specimen webpage, which can be saved and attached to the FoWP website, or connected to it via a link. It needs to be easily accessible and sympathetically designed for public use, from the young to the elderly.

Meanwhile we need to finally decide which subject categories we would want to highlight on the survey spreadsheet. For example, do we want to leave space for including birds, mammals, insects etc? So that we can have input from Friends and committee members, we will email members and ask for suggestions and comments.

The recent bulb survey was interesting but far from conclusive, partly because the season is so spread out (we didn't get the daffodils, or the bluebells, or irises, for instance). What stood out was the importance of location (especially the many shady areas); and also the relative lack of quantity of bulbs (and primroses) throughout the park, except for a few very obvious spots. Some thought is perhaps needed before the spring bulb planting planned for later in the year.

Given the amount of work involved, the botanical surveying is being reduced this year to once a month, with a view to completing and ending it in the autumn. We have covered most locations within the park at least once and hope to cover everything before signing off.

However, the botanical surveying need not be abandoned if other people want to continue, since the infrastructure is now there, and more data entered in different years will only add to our understanding of our park's biodiversity. Botanical surveying could still be a regular offering for park volunteers, as it a very rewarding way of closely looking at nature.

Ginnie Cumming

KITCHEN GARDEN

The kitchen garden in Waterlow Park continues to run smoothly.

We had the great joy to see the compost bins finally rebuilt just at the beginning of this growing season, this after two years of negotiation Valerie has followed with Camden Council. Camden has now done us proud, with beautifully designed bins that fit into the garden perfectly.

There are quite a number of new plot holders, and following on from wishes expressed by Martin Payne, Camden's representative, most represent local groups. One bed is now run by a group from St. Michael's Church, Highgate Village. Another by a group from the Holly Lodge Estate, on behalf of Makepeace Sheltered Residents. Another by a Slovak family group resident locally. Finally, Jane Faulkner, of North London Mental Health Partnership, now runs a bed for mentally vulnerable people in her care. This has taken quite a bit of time to organise but has fallen into place well.

We continue to value hugely the input April Cameron gives to us, and her advice. We also value hugely our relationship with the Waterlow Park gardeners.

We continue to be a very happy gardening group in the beautiful kitchen garden!

Valerie Doulton

Membership

We had nearly 200 members last year and 109 members have renewed so far this year. We have held our subscription to £5, which is a sum we feel almost everyone can afford but we are fortunate that many people add a donation. This gives us a solid, regular, income. We also have a further 400 people on our mailing lists, so we can publicise events and reach many people with our mailouts.

Louise Lewis

Events

Fair in the Square June 2024

We again took a stall at the annual, very well attended (estimated at 10,000) Fair in the Square. We sold plants and ran a Nature Quiz. A total of 20 new members signed up.

Summer Proms in Waterlow Park August 2024

Four concerts were held in the park on Sunday afternoons during August, celebrating our fourth season. The focus was on youth and we were fortunate to be able to engage students and recent graduates of London's key music schools.

The groups were the Guy Dempsey Jazz Trio, The Astral Quartet saxophone foursome, Gus McQuade and Eleanor Grant with vocals, guitar and double bass and the Joe English Jazz Quartet who will be making a welcome return in 2025.

As the events are in the open air the audience drifts in and out but we estimated an average attendance of about 200 people at any one point. The students were extremely talented and feedback was very positive. Next year (2025) the Proms will be on Sundays 3, 17 and 31 August.

A much-appreciated grant from the Camden Community Festival Fund contributed to the funding of the artistes' fees and staging costs, Lauderdale House again supplied electricity and technical help. The Friends' group of volunteers provided set-up and stewarding. Patricia Walby kindly returned to her role and helped run the concerts.

Butterfly workshop

A Butterfly Workshop and Walk will take place 19 July 2025 under the guidance of butterfly expert Steve Bolton. This is a free, members-only event. Details to follow.

Heritage Weekend Lauderdale House

The Friends received a generous gift of books from the estate of a local resident, Maureen Tayler's late husband, Richard. It included Pam Cooper's definitive book on the park and a re-published guide to the park from the 1800s. So our theme for the 2025 February Heritage Saturday became **A Look at Waterlow Park from 1895**. We sold both titles and created a new pull-up banner to publicise the guide.

Vivien Priestley

Friends of Waterlow Park/fm/10.06.2025