

Friends of Kelsey Park

Annual General Meeting - Minutes
6th November 2008

Present

Chris Hermon (Chair), Liz Anderson (Volunteers), Tina Newman (Membership), Nick Baelz (Treasurer), Bonnie Foster (Secretary), William Bottaci (Newsletter and Website), Wendy Hardy, Andy Thorn (English Landscapes), Stephen Tickner (Friends Officer) plus 70 members who signed the attendance register.

Apologies for Absence

Rosemary Shrimpton, Pauline Graham, Barry Wallis, Joyce Gibbs, David Crowe, Jacqui Lait MP, Denise Reddin (Mayor), Peter Anderson, Nicola Musto, Gordon Hughes, John Nightingale. The Chairman welcomed Councillor Dean, Councillor Gilbert and Patrick Phillips, (Assistant Director, Parks and Greenspace Division, Environmental Services, London Borough of Bromley).

Minutes of the AGM (6th November 2007)

The Minutes were agreed and signed.

Membership Secretary's Report

Tina Newman reported that membership numbers are still very healthy and growing. From the 1st October 2007 until 30 September, there are a total of 560 members, 421 of which have newsletters delivered and 139 who receive them through the post.

English Landscapes Report (Park Maintenance Contractor)

Andy Thorn said that plans for the immediate future include improving the irrigation to the Manor Way lawn and in the longer term to make an ericaceous rockery on Cedars Lawn. 200 shrubs will soon be delivered to fill in gaps. He said that working with Mike Cassidy and Stephen Tickner had been very useful and he has enjoyed joint projects with John and Ray from Holwood. He hopes to appoint someone to help Nic Martin at weekends.

Council Report

On behalf of the council, Patrick Phillips said that he felt 'upstaged' by English Landscapes and thanked Alan Barlow, Mike Cassidy and John and Ray for their invaluable help during a difficult time of transition. He felt that English Landscapes are doing a very good job and good foundations have been laid with English Landscapes, the Council and Friends Groups working as a partnership. There are now 38 friends groups in Bromley (41 by 31st March) and, with the council, they have raised £190,000 in fund raising activities. Patrick reported that it is hoped that the café will be ready by Easter next year. An order to remove the tree in the lake and improve the irrigation to the Manor Way lawn has been placed. It is also hoped that there will be an increased staff commitment for weekend cover rather than two weekends a month only. Using his resources effectively is an important aspect of Patrick's role and he will be looking into park security as the contract is due for renewal in March 2010. He ended by saying that he regards Kelsey Park as 'special' and hopes it will be served even better in 2009. Jeanette Boothby said that there does not seem to be any liaison between the council and the gardeners and that valuable expertise was therefore being lost. Patrick responded saying that Alan Barlow is very keen to bring everyone together and involve them in the planting plans and maintenance of the park and is always receptive to requests from Friends. The Chairman welcomed the good news about the opening of the café.

Treasurer's Report

This report is for the full financial year ending 30th September 2008. The Treasurer reported that this has been another robust year, with income levels rising and expenditure in line with expectations. Our income exceeded our expenditure by £3,734.60. This is slightly inflated due to the rescheduling of one of the newsletters and thus charging it to next year's accounts.

1. Subs are slightly up at £2658 versus £2390 for 2007.
2. Donations are substantially down at £362.17 principally due the £400 we received from Glaxo last year.
3. Information Centre sales remain a major source of income, this year £2228 Up 7% on last year. Congratulations are due to all those involved at the Information Centre for achieving such good figures.

4. Advertising revenue is up on last year due to the increased number of advertisers despite some non payers whom we will continue to chase.
5. Despite the credit crunch there has been no significant increase in any area of expenditure.
6. The balance sheet shows net assets of £10,696.72. Taking into account monies reserved for specific purposes, (Plant Fund £725.25, Bromley Art £52.90 for tree labelling, and Glaxo's donation of £400 for leaflet printing), we have reserves of £9,518.57.

Accounts have been audited by our Honorary Auditor, Richard Oliver and thanks to him for his time and effort given without charge. He has kindly agreed to continue in that role and was voted in en bloc.

Volunteer's Report (accompanied by a Powerpoint presentation)

Liz Anderson thanked all the volunteers for their help. In particular Judy Samman who is the main key holder for the Information Centre and maintains the rota, and Lynn Barton who manages the Centre and maintains the display & notice-boards. There are many items for sale, including DVDs, notelets (there are five new notelets available).

Records of bird counts are now held for the last 6 years and this year six male and eight female mandarin ducks were seen, together with a little egret which stayed for seven days. Wildlife Lodge is a local organisation which cares for small injured birds and animals and they are on call for us in emergencies. London Wildcare will also respond to requests for help. Liz described various events in the park during the past year, including Heron Watch, Fungal Foray, Leaf and Berry Hunt, Easter activities (including face painting and egg hunting). The heron watch on 5 April (6 April watch was cancelled due to the snow) recorded 35 nests, 65 youngsters, two nests which were used twice because of the long breeding season. The banks of Heron Island have been reinforced this year. There have also been two bat walks, two tree walks and one dawn chorus walk. Conservation work has been carried out by volunteers, including maintaining the planters, pruning the native hedge by the tennis courts, work in the woodlands and rebuilding fences.

John Chart gave a talk, one afternoon, on the magnificent herbaceous border that he and Ray maintain for us throughout the year. Plant sales afterwards increased our funds, especially with the help of Margaret Mitchell who propagates many of the plants for sale. Liz then requested help from more volunteers who would be prepared to man the Information Centre or help lead the Children's Nature Trail initiative.

Finally, she thanked the contractors and the council for working so well with the Friends group. The Chairman thanked Liz for all her work, describing her as the powerhouse of the Friends.

Newsletter and Website Report

The Chairman reported that he had many positive comments about the newsletters. The editor, William Bottaci thanked Jim Normington and Nick Baelz for the photographs they have contributed and thanks to Liz Anderson for helping to co-ordinate contributions. He asked that more members contribute photographs, articles or suggestions for future features.

The website has on average 80 to 90 visits on weekdays and 200 at weekends. Most are local but many come from as far away as Europe, the USA and Australia. William also welcomed any contributions to the website. The Chairman thanked William for his hard work in developing this great website which began modestly as a school project.

Appointment of Officers

Chris Hermon introduced the committee members. He announced that Brian Hermon will be leaving the committee after many years but will still be looking after the distribution of the newsletter and thanked Brian for all his valuable support. Tina Newman will be stepping down as Membership Secretary and John Cutting has been nominated as her successor. Chris thanked Tina for her hard work and John Cutting was voted in as her replacement. All committee members were voted in by the membership for the following year. New members would be very much welcomed on to the committee, especially if they can offer special skills which would benefit the park.

Chairman's Report

The Chairman began by thanking all the members of the committee for their hard work in this his 10th year on the committee (the longest serving committee member) and recalling a photograph of himself at three years old feeding the ducks. Happy memories have encouraged him to stay involved in the park. This year has seen the evolving of major projects such as the Rockery and Waterfall project, the Information Centre and the Herbaceous Border. All three have thrived. It is now time to think of future projects. We intend to embark on the Nature Trail in memory of Gerry Sandford and have an extensive Wish List of projects. Chris mentioned Christine Cranfield who spent much time lovingly designing the rockeries and the planting, despite being seriously ill and who, sadly, passed away a few months ago. The Waterfall and Rockeries will be a thriving memorial to her and, in due course, there will be a memorial plaque for her. Chris expressed his grave disappointment in the failure of progress with the café rebuild. He regretted that promises made concerning the rebuild have not been met, nor have the people who carried out the arson attack on the original café been prosecuted. There are some small signs of progress in that the area is now fenced off and the temporary facilities have been moved. Chris reported that English Landscapes have now been working in the park for nearly a year and he especially congratulated the efforts of Andy Thorn who has been a tower of strength and a great supporter of the park. Andy and his team have created new beds by the Court Downs Road entrance and planted rhododendrons. John and Ray from Holwood have retained their depot in the park and continue to tend the herbaceous border, among other projects, for us.

Vandalism has continued to be a problem with several incidents when damage was done to the playground area and flower beds damaged. Ward Security caught some culprits and there have been no further incidents. Chris has also been involved in the Safer Neighbourhoods group.

This year the newsletter has gone from strength to strength and now carries many colour photographs and Jim Normington has produced a DVD of the most wonderful photographs which is available to buy. Once again, Kelsey Park has been awarded a flag in the People for Parks award. Finally, Chris thanked all the committee members for their hard work throughout the year. He said that he has been in post as Chairman for three years and is prepared to remain for another year but then he feels it will be the turn of another willing volunteer to take over and welcomed volunteers. He told members that ideas for projects and would be most welcome as there are some funds available.

Any Other Business

Margaret Purkis asked about access to the Information Centre for the disabled and Chris explained that original ramp was removed because of an incorrect gradient which did not comply with regulations. A bell has been provided so that disabled visitors to the Information Centre can ring for help from a volunteer. A future project could well be raising funds for a new Information Centre with full access. Liz Kemp asked if there could be another notice board by the café which would be accessible to dog owners. Chris told her that this was already underway and funds have been allocated. Lois Kirby expressed her concern that the Stone Park Avenue bridge gates are left open and there are often dog walkers on the dog free side. Patrick Phillips replied that there would soon be a fixed penalty notice scheme coming into force about flouting dog laws and dog fouling. Stephen Tickner reported that new signage concerning dog regulations would soon be in place and he would look into why the gates were not always shut. Wendy and Roger Hardy asked that people stop feeding white bread to the birds. They should be fed with the correct seed and pellet food which Wendy and Roger undertake to do regularly. Andy Thorn added that English Landscapes are also providing the correct bird feed. Wendy also asked if cyclists in the park are liable to be fined and Patrick Phillips acknowledged this is an ongoing problem and would give it consideration. Jean Skone James commented on the signage on the Wickham Road entrance. The Chairman thanked English Landscapes for the provision of the bird feed and a raffle prize.

There being no further formal business, the meeting was brought to a close. After refreshments were taken, the new DVD of photographs compiled by Jim Normington was shown. The informal part of the evening was then brought to a close at 9.40.

Date of the next AGM in 2009

To be arranged.