



Friends of Wimbledon Park

Annual Report 2014 (covering the period April 2013 to March 2014)

This last year has been one of settling down and consolidating our work. A lot of time was spent on opposing the planning application for the car park extension at Revelstoke Road car park. After three sittings it was finally voted down in committee on the 10th October 2013. We thank those Councillors who supported us. The area is being returned to grass.

Strategy

A key object of ours is the implementation of a Conservation Management Plan (CMP). In caring for, or managing change in, historic parks, there are often many features, historic layers and diverse interests like biodiversity to consider as well as the business and economic viability of the park. Conservation management plans have been developed as tools to help pull together an understanding of what matters and why, and how to conserve and manage it. From this informed basis, plans are then used to guide programmes of restoration or to draw up proposals for improvement.

One way of describing the CMP is to consider three types of activities. These are sport, study and wellbeing. Each contributes towards an effective CMP. Sport is about participating and competing and helps physical and mental coordination. Study provides learning through observation, investigation, research and reporting. This enables application of the results into improving the park fabric and infrastructure. Wellbeing is enhanced by play, flowers, birds, views appreciation and walking.

With these activities in mind we produced our Project Plan. So without losing sight of the overall vision and guiding principles this allows work to be done on priority programmes, and ideas to be developed that fit this vision,.

We consider the best approach is to use the Lake as a starting point. The Glasspoole Thomson report in March 1998 concluded that the lake was in a hypereutrophic state. Detailed water and sediment analysis confirmed high levels of phosphorous and other nutrient levels. It recommended that a comprehensive management plan is drawn up aimed at reverting the water to a mesotrophic state. A report was commissioned by LB Merton in the autumn to see whether the silt depths had increased since 1998. The result at the time of writing is still awaited. We can only move forward on this programme with the agreement of the 3 owners.

Meanwhile our priority programmes cover:

- a. **Wimbledon Club and the Stadium**
- b. **Revelstoke Road**
- c. **Trees**

We will continue to circulate the occasional updates on these programmes (as well as new ones such as the re-siting of the water activities building) when progress warrants it.

Feedback

Our raison d'être is to facilitate communications between ourselves, members and associates. We're keen to get feedback on the park from children and with this in mind a survey is being undertaken at St Cecilia's school. The introduction describes its purpose:



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'An important object of the Friends of Wimbledon Park (FOWP) is the implementation of a Conservation Management Plan (CMP) for the 60 ha Grade II Heritage Park. Whilst many thousands visit the park each year their knowledge of the park is limited. This survey seeks to remedy in part this knowledge gap and obtain your opinion about various aspects of the park, what you do, have done and would like to do as well as what you think can be done to improve the facilities and ambience for park users, flora and fauna.'*

The result should be available in the beginning of April.

Capability Brown 300

English Heritage is a partner in the Capability Brown 300 nationwide celebration and festival of the life and work of Lancelot 'Capability' Brown planned for 2016, the 300th anniversary of his birth. From the English Heritage website Celebrating Mr Brown:

- *'Capability' Brown (1716-1783) is best remembered for landscape on an immense scale, constructing not only gardens and parkland, but planting woods and building farms linked by carriage drives, or 'ridings', many miles from the main house. Brown has been associated with more than 260 landscapes, many of which still retain aspects of his design.*
- *The project aims to celebrate Brown as a landscape designer, encourage people to visit, learn about and enjoy his landscapes as well as gain a greater appreciation of designed landscapes.*
- *From 2014 to the end of 2015 the project will be working with thousands of volunteers and the owners of Brown landscapes to make preparations for encouraging visitors to their sites and producing information about the history and significance of these important landscapes ready for a launch in early 2016.'*

The park is not involved in this at the moment but we'll contact the three owners to see whether this of interest.

Funding

Funding for the public park is provided by a combination of:

- Council tax by Merton residents
- Subscriptions from clubs such as the bowling club.
- Charges for use of facilities such as tennis courts.
- Income from commercial activities such as car parking in Wimbledon Fortnight and Fireworks display in November.

The golf course is funded by subscription from its members plus income from Wimbledon Fortnight.

The Wimbledon Club is funded by subscription from its members plus income from Wimbledon Fortnight.

There are more cuts to come after the elections in May regardless of the result. This means that the status quo isn't an option and alternatives such as community trusts, co-operatives, and precept (special local tax) on residents need to be considered. Currently it's estimated that the majority of users are from Wandsworth about 55% to 45%.

We have a Grade II* Heritage Park with a lake so one off funding to regenerate the whole park should be doable. Other parks have got grants, such as:

- a) Burgess Park in Southwark about £8 million
- b) Bishops Park in Hammersmith & Fulham about £8 million



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c) Wandle Park in Croydon about £3.5 million.

FOWP Committee

The Executive Committee has covered a lot of ground in the past year and there are some changes. Jackie Reiss, DeNica Fairman and Tina Thompson aren't standing for reappointment at our AGM.

- Jackie had a huge input in setting up and maintaining our website. This includes Facebook and Twitter. Thank you Jackie.
- DeNica was instrumental in working with the park officers to plant the meadow flowers in 2012. This initiative had a huge and beneficial impact on park users. Thank you DeNica.
- Tina Thompson was one of the founders of FOWP and helped get it established. Her energy and knowledge was a real asset. Thank you Tina.

We welcome Nigel Martin, Paul Bishop, Tom Pollak and Mary Buckley.

There are four wards surrounding the park. To provide further free flow of information 9 of the 12 councillors are Ex Officio members of the FOWP Committee. We hope the other 3 will join in due course. Cllr Richard Tracey GLA member for Merton and Wandsworth remains an Ex Officio member.

Dave Dawson (environment and ecology adviser) and Brian Lehane & Dean Humphries (angling advisers) are also Ex Officio members of the FOWP Committee.

We're pleased that Rt Hon Justine Greening (MP Putney) and Stephen Hammond (MP Merton) have again agreed to be an Honorary Friend.

We continue to liaise with park officers both formally and informally. From the start Doug Napier has been a regular attendee at our quarterly meetings and this is appreciated.

We communicate directly with our members and through the corporate member or website to associates. Our website <http://www.friendsowimbledonpark.org.uk> provides the opportunity to join as members or associates.

The proposal for the stadium from the Wimbledon Club should engender a lot of debate and could provide the stimulus for other badly needed programmes. Funding will be the other hot potato!

The regeneration of Wimbledon Park is a daunting challenge but if we all work together we should end up with a magnificent place that our grandchildren will cherish.

Nick Steiner
Chairman FOWP