

FRIENDS OF LORDSHIP REC

ANNUAL REPORT 2020

When we held our last AGM in on 2nd Feb 2020, little did we know that this would be a year like no other in our 20 year history. However, despite the rollercoaster of restrictions and cancelled plans, we have adapted to new ways of working and had a very busy and productive year. More than any other year, we have seen how the Rec has been central to maintaining the strength and health of our community and we are proud to have been so involved in its development and current management.

The first lockdown In the first few weeks of lockdown, with the Hub closed and the Friends normal meetings and activities suspended, the focus was on securing the future of the Hub. The Chair and Secretary of the Friends are also on the Board of the Hub so the immediate priority was to deal with financial and staffing issues there. Hundreds of park users donated a total of around £20,000 to help it stay open. Although the Friends and Hub have separate organisational structures we work closely together in a mutually supportive relationship. As a morale booster, Joan of the Friends started a regular blog, the Hub Huddle, each with a different theme reporting on past and current activities in the Rec - an invaluable archive.

One morning at the start of the first Covid lockdown a mysterious massive HOPE sign 200 metres across appeared mown into the main Field. Some must know who was responsible but they're not saying...



New Ways of Working By April, it became obvious that lockdown was going to be lengthy, and that the Friends who regularly attended the monthly open meetings and were involved in planning and running activities would need to start meeting by Zoom. This 'core group' has met monthly online since. One of the first tasks was to get familiar with the regulations on outdoor volunteering and to develop Covid-secure working guidelines and rewrite our risk assessment. As more people started using the Rec, more people were joining the Friends Facebook so this also needed new focus - around another 100 people have joined and it is now thriving, with photos, news and debates.

Practical Outdoor Volunteering The Friends actively manage several of the more diverse habitat areas of the Rec – the Lordship Wood, the open Orchard field, meadows and the Spinney. Despite all the restrictions, in the past year our volunteers have contributed many hundreds of hours of practical conservation work, chopping, pruning, pulling, clearing, coppicing, watering - so much watering - scything and wood-chipping their way around these areas for the benefit of park users and wildlife. Plans were agreed for meadow cutting and creeping thistle management which would try different methods on different areas to see what would help a range of wildflowers to thrive.

The constant changing restrictions made it harder to promote a regular programme of volunteering opportunities. However, because more people were using the Rec, and saw the Friends volunteers working, we are really pleased to have welcomed many new volunteers who have become regulars in our practical work. Perhaps our new hi-vis jackets helped.

We are always looking to involve new volunteers, and to support existing and potentially new user groups eg a new playground parents group is being mooted.

Litterpicking The huge increase in usage of the Rec has meant more litter. To complement the efforts of Park staff we started litter-picking informally, and then in October we started Lordship Litterpickers, which has been very popular. The group met fortnightly until the Christmas lockdown but will start again in March. We have strict priorities which are intended to complement litter-picking by Haringey staff, concentrating on the off-the-beaten-track areas, areas where children may go for wild play and hot spots of historic build-up in hedges.

Green Flag and The Conservation Volunteers Because of the hard work of the Friends and our volunteers, we were again awarded a Green Flag for our management of the the Lordship Wood. The Friends also contributed to the awarding of a Green Flag to the Rec as a whole. Having a Green Flag means that the Rec benefitted from 4 days of additional work in the Lordship Wood and the Spinney in 2020 by the Haringey TCV team.

The Friends also organised for TCV volunteers to contribute to the clearing out of the River in February and used some historic funds earmarked for the Lake to work with TCV to carry out essential repairs to the Lake ramp and bank in January 2021.

One-off Events Although large scale events were not possible last year, a small window of opportunity allowed us to run a very successful combined Mini Flower and Produce Show and Apple Day in October, with exhibits of what people had produced in lockdown and families planted new apple trees. Our normal Wassail was definitely not possible in January 2021, but families individually decorated trees and we moved the Wassail quiz online. However, last summer we were very pleased to be able to support a Kids Walk Against Racism organised by local parents – 2,000 local people walked from The Hub to Downhills Park, and it was featured on BBC News.

Co-ordination with park staff, contractors and other groups in and around the Rec The monthly community/Council Practical Co-ordination meetings, after an initial break, have continued running through Zoom and face to face when possible. These meetings, attended by members of the Friends, and open to all other groups operating in the Rec, enable us to liaise with Haringey staff and Rec user groups, to address maintenance issues (which we keep a beady eye on!), share information and plan further improvements together. We have established good working relationships with new park staff who changed over the summer and as always we spent time with new staff on walkabouts.

Separate meetings of all the Cycling groups in the Rec, resulted in a member of the Friends designing a new leaflet providing information on all those groups and their activities.

This year has been the first year of a 3 year maintenance contract put in place by Haringey for the flow, silt and vegetation in the Moselle within the Rec. Members of the Friends have been pushing for this for years, and met with the contractors for walkabouts and on maintenance days to ensure this long awaited work runs smoothly and that we share what is being learnt about how to maintain the River.

The Friends of Harmony Gardens, running the community garden between the park and Broadwater Farm Community Centre, received funding via the Friends until 2019. Now fully independent, and thriving, we continue to give development support to the Harmony Gardens.

The Haringey Regeneration Team are drawing up plans for improvements to Broadwater Farm estate. Members of the Friends have been attending consultation meetings and liaising with the Regeneration Team as there is potential for improving the interface between the Estate and the Rec. We have set out a range of potential positive options for consideration.

Networking across Haringey We were very pleased that the Rec was chosen as one of the two pilots parks for Parks and Ageing Well in Haringey a project which is a collaboration between NHS North Central London Clinical Commissioning Group and Haringey Council. The project aims to increase use of the parks by the over 50s, to benefit health. At these initial stages we are advertising a questionnaire we helped develop, aimed at those 50 and over.

We regularly attend and contribute to the work of the Haringey Rivers Forum, and of course the Haringey Friends of Parks Forum. We helped promote a 2,500-strong petition to the Council calling for more funding for the parks service, and have participated in a series of community/Council discussions towards the development of a new 15-year Open Spaces Strategy.

National Co-management project and Parks Community UK Funded through NESTA, since September 2108, the Friends have been delivering this project of national significance promoting community empowerment, supporting 10 other Friends groups to be co-managers of their parks, and setting up a legacy 'one-stop shop' website for the whole of the UK – www.parkscommunity.org.uk . The project was due to finish in Sept 2020, but because of Covid it has been extended and will finish in March 2021. In Feb and Dec 2020 we delivered 2 very successful conferences at the Hub for the participating groups.

Our Chair continues to chair the London Friends of Green Spaces Network and the National Federation of Parks and Green Spaces. Our treasurer and Secretary have also contributed time and skills.

Finance Because of the pandemic fundraising for projects has stopped, but then so too have the projects. Our funding source from Tree for Cities was also stopped. TforC would normally be paying us to help plan for large numbers of corporate volunteers to have workdays in the Rec..There has also been confusion about the dedicated Lordship Rec Small Grants scheme, leftover from Lottery funding for the Rec's restoration, which we are trying to sort out. However, we were able to use some of the restricted reserves earmarked for specific purposes to fund the Mini Flower and Produce Show and the Lake repairs.

Looking ahead Life isn't returning to normal yet, but the work continues as well as day to day practical volunteering, maintenance and co-ordination. Our plans for the year ahead include producing a History of Lordship Rec booklet, improving the Rec's bio-diversity status, and when it is possible providing more practical training for volunteers - and we look forward to celebrating our 20th anniversary celebrations in June (check out some historic videos on our website!).

Thank You A big thank you to all the members and volunteers of the Friends and other Rec user groups who despite difficult times have continued to make Lordship Rec the loved and thriving space that it is.

Caroline and Dave, for the Friends – for the AGM in March 2021