



Friends of Pinner Village Gardens

NEWS

AGM
24 July
2023

ANNUAL REPORT 2022 / 2023

Why we matter

The Friends of Pinner Village Gardens park was established because the park was neglected, with increasing rubbish, declining visitors and increasing antisocial behaviour.

Today the park looks beautiful. The Friends aim to maintain a balance between the open areas for recreation by people of all ages and dogs, cultivated areas providing colourful plants and interest all year, wild parts for natural biodiversity, and by supporting activities such as junior parkrun and other events.

Invisible benefits

However, some benefits of the Friends' work may be invisible.

The park is a place people want to come to escape the pressures of everyday life and take pleasure from being in that place – the formal flower beds, the glittering iridescent dragon and damsel flies, the flowers, the trees, the views, the background buzz and to chat to another human being.

It is not unusual for people on their walk around the park to stop to say 'thank you' to the volunteers and/or Community Payback participants. It is that little bit of chat that gives them the social interaction that may be otherwise missing or relieves some stress in their lives.

- A full time carer for her still much loved husband with severe dementia who no longer recognises her, had 3 hours respite. After a little bit of personal shopping the lady chose to spend the rest of the time in Pinner Village Gardens.
- A mum who said that junior parkrun was an activity her whole family was able to enjoy and participate in together, which was unusual.



More help needed

That said – we need more help! Membership subscriptions mean that we know we have your support, we in turn can try to keep you informed, represent your views and fund the annual maintenance that the park needs.

More volunteers mean that we can achieve gardening, other improvements and repairs in the park more quickly - in other words more hands make lighter work.

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This Annual Report covers Financial Year April 2022 / March 2023

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New Format

This is a new format for the Annual Report of the Friends of Pinner Village Gardens.

We hope it makes it easy to read and highlights what you wish to know.

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#### Question

What was the coldest temperature experienced in the park in the Winter of 22/23?

#### Answer

See page 8

# FOCUS ON FRIENDS

## RESIGNATIONS & THANK YOU

**Three of the Friends committee members have resigned and are not seeking re-election.**

**Here are the simplest of résumés of the work they have done for Pinner Village Gardens. We are all very grateful to them.**

### CACHING OUT

**Brian Chapman has been secretary nearly five years, a role that includes meeting minuting and managing the membership database and website.**

However, Brian's other interest is geocaching - a type of treasure hunt with clues and digital map reading – it is both the cause of him joining FoPVG and his reason for giving up his secretary role.

In Autumn 2018 Brian organised volunteer geocachers to assist the park and from that his involvement grew so that he became committee secretary.

A key event he was involved in organising was an Easter Egg Hunt in 2019, where 500 children took part.

While at a geocaching event he suggested something similar in London – chairing the first big Geocaching event '*London Calling 2021*' opposite Westminster Abbey in August that year. The success of that event and another in April this year, resulted in one of the biggest geocaching events ever held in the UK.

Now Brian is involved in an even bigger event in 2025 - possibly one of the biggest ever held in Europe - requiring two years planning and that is going to take up quite a lot of Brian's time.

Brian plans to still help FoPVG when he can - especially we hope he will bring back his wader-wearing geocache volunteering team to help with the pond again.

### Founder member of the Friends retires

**Helen Ryan is one of the founders of the Friends of Pinner Village Gardens.**

Helen is well known in the park accompanied by several cheeky 4-legged friends.

In 2015 Helen Ryan raised her concerns about PVG at a surgery with the Pinner South councillors at Pinner Library and with their encouragement set up the preliminary meeting for the Friends of PVG. At that time Harrow Council was in the process of setting up the Parks Forum to encourage Park User Groups to form as an interface between the Council and the public.

The Friends first meeting was in October 2015 and by 2016 Helen was formally chair, a post she held for several years. Latterly she was a community representative. With the other founders her vision has helped to make the park what it is today.

To recognise Helen's exemplary service the committee proposes to make Helen an *Honorary Life Member* of the Friends of Pinner Village Gardens by a vote at the AGM.





## FOCUS ON FRIENDS continued

**Natalia Kuznetzova, landscape adviser, has resigned from the committee to complete further studies and follow new business ambitions.** Natalia is now studying for a Master of Arts degree in Cultural Astronomy, to add to her other qualifications including a Diploma in Garden Design from Capel Manor College.

Natalia joined the volunteers in May 2020. Natalia spent many hours at the Rose Circle correcting the uneven shape of the beds and digging in soil improver. She then designed and enhanced its planting.

Natalia's designs also include the raised box bed at Compton Rise and the Stone Circle (see photo page 1) at the Rayners Lane entrance with the roses and lavender now in their second summer of flowering. With her designs much admired Natalia is setting up in business as a garden designer.



We wish Natalia every success and are pleased that she plans to continue supporting the park when she has time. (Photo above: Natalia at the raised bed at Compton Rise entrance).

### CONGRATULATIONS HARROW HERO

In September 2022, committee member Simon Braidman was presented with a Hero Award by Harrow council for contributing to making Harrow better place for residents and nature. Simon is also warden at Stanmore Marsh. Photo : Simon in purple waistcoat.





## VALUED VOLUNTEERS

*“We are very grateful to our two teams of volunteers: the Hard landscaping squad and the Waterers, Weeders & Planters (WWP). Some have helped on both aspects, and some have turned out in the dark very cold weather to try to solve a problem.”*



Photo right : Its good to have company when turning out on a cold night.

### Pipes, Paths, Benches & Bins

The 'Hard' team, led by Ray Langford, (who also built the wooden raised bed at Compton Rise), have undertaken repairs to our store's concrete path vital to stopping equipment



toppling over; building the Stone circle and repairs to similar structures, drinking fountain waterpipe repairs, overflow exploration, refurbishing and installing benches, graffiti removal and repainting waste bins.

*“Our particular thanks to Ray Langford, Jonathan Simons, Philip Shama and Leigh Gibb.”*

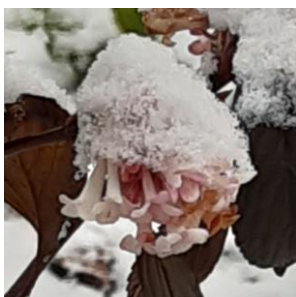
### Waterers, Weeders, Planters & Pruners

Weeding is an ongoing task. Planting comes in bursts and certainly needed 'all hands on deck' when over 500 plants and thousands of bulbs, delivered in late 2022, needing planting quickly. Then there was the record breaking heat and drought of summer of 2022 where long established trees and plants started to wilt. Without the daily efforts of our waterers many plants and trees would have died.



Photo: *Liriodendron tulipifera*, tulip tree, saved by a watering volunteer.

*“Our thanks also to, Sue Jull, Brett Logan, Dilruba Lees, Jane McKowan, John Baxter, Jonathan Simons, Simon Trott, Stephen Trott, Eli Suri and committee members: Jonathan Freedman, Natalia Kuznetsova, Brian Chapman and Glyn Watkins.*



Saved from drought & survived the snow, *Viburnum x bodnantense* 'Dawn'

*“And of course the other members of the committee in their various roles: Stephen Spiro OBE, Sarah Brook, Jackie Lindop and Simon Braidman,”* said chairperson Dodie Melville-Riddell

While not volunteers, we would also like to thank L. B. Harrow's Green Team managed by Mark Richardson for heavier pruning work in February equivalent to 27 single-person-days.

# EXTERNAL HELP

## MORE THAN KNEE DEEP WADING GEOCACHERS



We are grateful to the volunteer geocachers (above) who helped us manage the pond in late Autumn & Winter 2022/23. Although at the time the thinning out looked significant much grew back by early Summer 2023. We shall be calling upon their assistance again for later in 2023.

### COMMUNITY PAYBACK's first year with FoPVG

FoPVG's partnership with Ministry of Justice Community Payback scheme began in March 2022. Each session is led by a member of staff from the Ministry of Justice' Probation Service, directed by a representative from the Friends who works alongside the group.

We had Payback groups every Wednesday unless cancelled by an extreme weather forecast or unavailability of the Justice supervisor.

In the year to end of March 2023, PVG has benefitted from over 1,000 person hours of work not counting essential induction, lunch & breaks, with an average of five offenders attending a session.

This has given FoPVG volunteers valuable time to concentrate on more skilled gardening tasks.

#### Achievements & tasks carried out include:

- Watering trees and plants during the hot summer and keeping 7 water butts filled (for subsequent use by our valiant FoPVG volunteers) ensuring the survival of the new/young trees and plants at various sites around the park.
- Sweeping up fallen leaves off paths and tennis courts, preventing slippery surfaces.
- Exposing the tops of rainwater drains and clearing the tennis court drain.
- Cutting back grass around benches, bed edges, and bins
- Filling wheel barrows with wood chip and then spreading elsewhere in the park to suppress weeds and reduce water loss.
- Moving many bags of leaf mould from behind the lock-up to Compton Copse
- Moving excavated soil, and
- Weeding and cutting back shrubs.



# PROJECTS & PARTNERSHIPS

## JUNIOR PARKRUN CELEBRATES ITS FIRST BIRTHDAY

FoPVG played a major part in raising funds for the establishment of a junior parkrun within our park.

Having reached its 1st anniversary on 5 February 2023, junior parkrun continues to be extremely popular with families from Pinner and the surrounding areas.

Events were only cancelled owing to dangerous ice on the paths in the winter.

- There have been 47 events during the 12 months to Sunday 26 March 2023.
- Averaged 70 children per event (and over 30 adults); The record is 121 children
- Overall 725 different local children have taken part
- 163 different volunteers have supported the event to ensure children's safety.



## PROJECT DEVELOPMENTS

Two projects delivered in Spring and late Autumn 2022 were: 150 square metres of new beds at Hereford Gardens and the replanting the island bed at Whittington Way.



In Spring 2022 the Hereford beds received 12 cubic metres of soil improver and was partly planted with winter flowering shrubs funded through FoPVG membership and donations. Meanwhile the Whittington Way bed received soil improver and new plants including the metallic blue *Eryngium x zabelii* 'Jos Eijking' (see photo left) that also provides winter interest.

A successful bid to the Harrow Green Grid scheme resulted in delivery in November 2022 of shrubs, perennials and bulbs. These included *Weigelia*, *Hebe*, *Heuchera*, day lilies, ferns, bluebells, snowdrops, tulips and alliums.



In Autumn 2022 FoPVG also successfully applied for spring bulbs from the London Parks group. These were planted in the Whittington Way island bed and in the children's playground.

Some plants were hard hit by the cold winter but new growth appearing on the Cordylines in early June was a happy surprise.

(Photo left: Cordyline in the snow. Above right: Whittington Way island bed)

# MAINTENANCE

## Grass Mowing Plan

A mowing regime was submitted to L. B. Harrow aiming to achieve a balance of long grass for wildlife and short for amenity, safety, maintaining views, ensuring brambles did not encroach on paths to hinder or endanger any park use. During the 'Covid' period grass cutting had stopped and subsequently resulted in complaints to the Friends. When grass is not cut in Spring and early Summer, the time of fastest growth, it can result in many unseen hazards including:

- uneven ground risking injury;
- fox poo contaminating children, dogs and adults;
- dog poo being harder for responsible owners to pick-up;
- seeds in eyes and ears of children and dogs, resulting in medical treatment or vets' bills
- increase in anti-social discarding of drink cans, glass bottles and glasses that may break on landing, or when chewed up by mowing machines increasing the risk of injury to people of all ages and animals.

## Bramble Management Plan

A five-year-pruning regime developed by the Friends was submitted to L. B. Harrow. Its aim is to enable a mix of new growth, flowers, fruit and mature stems, that provide food and homes for birds and insects. Without management the brambles out compete other plants in the park and so reduce diversity.

## Waste Management & Bins

The Friends recognised that the single bin at Hereford gate was consistently overflowing by the weekend. Having identified a less full double bin, they arranged with L. B. Harrow to swap them around. At the Arc benches by the pond the Friends have provided a 'home-made' bin and empty it placing the full rubbish sacks ready for the weekly collection by Harrow's Green Team. This with management of the area has reduced the amount of litter (mostly drinks cans and glass bottles) thrown in to the shrubbery. Additional bins are not available from Harrow.

## PAY-TO-PLAY TENNIS COURTS

The London Borough of Harrow announced a consultation August - September 2022 regarding pay-to-play on the tennis courts across the borough. This was in response to a grant from the Lawn Tennis Association offering to bring all the courts up to a good standard. A condition of the grant is that the Council will then maintain the courts.

The Friends were concerned that pay-to-play would be unaffordable by those living closest to the courts, that the sinking fund would not be ring-fenced for tennis court maintenance, and that the online booking and gate access system would work properly. People to whom the Friends spoke seemed divided. Those with children were concerned regarding affordability. Adults playing on weekdays were not concerned about and valued being able to book.

Harrow decided that their consultation showed that the majority were in favour of pay-to-play. FoPVG pointed out that the tennis nets needed repair and that there were some small patches of surface damage. (In June 2023 PVG's tatty nets were replaced as pay-to-play was implemented.)

All matters regarding the tennis courts should be directed to PremierTennis or L.B. Harrow.

# WEATHER

## VERY HOT, DRY & COLD

This was a year of extreme temperatures. In the Summer of 2022, particularly August, temperatures reached 34C (93F) in Pinner and were consistently over 29C (84F) for 10 days. There was very little or no rain for many days. (see Watering Volunteers).

Winter from December 2022 through January and February 2023 produced extraordinarily low temperatures. While most plants in the park can cope with temperatures touching -5C, the duration and depth of freezing was too much for some plants as nights reached -6C, -7C and -8C and stayed at -4C for some hours for consecutive nights.

(Photo right: Ice crystals on Pinner Village Gardens bench.)



The stresses produced by these temperatures have resulted in some plant deaths and significant deadwood pruning being required. **Answer** to question on page 1: - **8C**.

# FINANCE

## FINANCIAL STATEMENT

We are grateful for income from memberships and donations as these are essential to meet the costs of maintaining the park.

Cannon Barn Montessori Nursery, Hereford Gardens, kindly donated their Christmas 2022 collection to FoPVG, which we immediately spent on new tools. We also acknowledge the hidden donations where volunteers provide items that we need without seeking reimbursement. We aim to get best value when purchasing items such as tools, mulches, plants, bulbs, plant feeds, printed materials and protective gloves.

| <b>As at the end of FoPVG's financial year 2022/2023</b> |              |          |                                |                                               |
|----------------------------------------------------------|--------------|----------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| <b>Income breakdown</b>                                  |              | <b>£</b> | <b>£ Expenditure breakdown</b> |                                               |
| Annual Membership renewals                               | 326          |          | 2,253                          | General Goods                                 |
| Life Membership income                                   | 1,225        |          | 1,723                          | Hereford Gardens and Whittington Way projects |
| Donations                                                | 1,629        |          | 162                            | Memorial Trees                                |
| Memorial Trees                                           | 200          |          | <b>4,138</b>                   | <b>TOTAL</b>                                  |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                                             | <b>3,380</b> |          |                                | <b>LOSS £ 758</b>                             |

**At the 2022/23 financial year end 3 April 2023 FoPVG had a Bank balance of £3,335**

We would love to hear from you on topics in the Annual Report or our newsletter.

Email us via the **Contact** page at [www.pinnervillagegardens.org.uk](http://www.pinnervillagegardens.org.uk) or email [friendsofpinnervillagegardens@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofpinnervillagegardens@gmail.com)  
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We aim to get it right. Please forgive us if we get it wrong.

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