

FRIENDS OF BLAKERS PARK

Minutes of the 18th Annual General Meeting held on Thursday 13th October 2011 in Stanford Avenue Methodist Church, Brighton.

Present: Max Glaskin, Chair, Dominique Giudicelli, Vice Chair, Gerry Faulks, Treasurer, Philip Smith, Honorary Life President, Marjorie Cozens, Sally Cranfield, Graham Preston, Jane Skea, Marsali Stuart, **30** members and Guest Speakers Vanessa Tourle, local beekeeper and Mike Unwin, travel writer and RSPB photographer.

Noelle O’Riordan-Booth was unable to attend the AGM and give an update on the Road Safety Campaign, due to family illness. The campaign had been a great success, with 1900 signatures and that a full Council debate was due to take place on Thursday 20th October.

1. Appointment of Minutes taker Jane Skea
2. Apologies for Absence Sam Hart, Marion Clark, Noelle O’Riordan-Booth, Emma Keane, Alan Griffiths, Councillors Kennedy and Littman and Caroline Lucas MP
3. Items for Any other Business
Local Biodiversity Plan – John Patmore
GreenSTAT - Susan Wilson
4. Approval of Minutes of 2010 AGM Approved
5. Matters Arising John Patmore asked if the English bluebells planted last Autumn were native bluebells and not hybrids. This can be determined when they emerge.
6. Financial Statement

| | |
|-----------------|-----------|
| Deposit Account | £2,355.35 |
| Current Account | £753.19 |

As requested at last year’s AGM, a breakdown of the past year’s expenditure was provided, including a comparison with the previous year’s figures.

7. Chairman’s Annual Report

Max began his report with a bulletin on Margaret Bell’s health. She is in Queen Elizabeth hospital, Hayward’s Heath and is making slow but steady progress. The committee hope she will soon be back enjoying the park. In her absence, Graham Preston has offered to stand in as Membership Secretary.

The Chairman’s Annual Report is Appendix 1 of these minutes.

The chairman’s report ended with thanks to Marjorie Cozens for providing tea and biscuits, to Harold Cozens for technical help and to the Methodist Church for hosting the meeting.

8. Election of Officers and Committee 2011 –2012

Max Glaskin Chair, Dominique Giudicelli Vice Chair, Gerry Faulks Treasurer, Graham Preston Membership Secretary, committee members -Marion Clark, Marjorie Cozens, Sally Cranfield, Sam Hart, Jane Skea, Marsali Stuart, Caroline Bottrell, Keith McMurray and Dario Saracino. Proposed by Philip Smith, seconded by Gerry Faulks and approved. Max thanked Lee Griggs and Margaret Bell for the time and energy they have contributed to Friends of Blakers Park over the years. Max has carried out the role of Secretary as well as Chair for the last year and asked for members to consider coming forward to act as Secretary.

9. Any Other Business

It was proposed that two new membership categories be introduced- £30 for groups and £5 for households. Proposed by Pete Gilman, seconded by Ed Strauss and approved.

John Patmore from Eco 21st said that the council was responsible for a local biodiversity plan and that it needed to represent our interests. GreenSTAT is a public survey being carried out by the Council and members can find out about it on the council website. Information will be fed back to the Friends and will go into the Management Plan.

Connie French proposed a vote of thanks to the committee and Chair for their energy and commitment and congratulations on a successful year.

10. Guest Speakers

Vanessa Tourle gave a slideshow and interesting talk about bees and said we already had planting in the park for encouraging them. An enclosed area in Queens Park has been designated as 'bee friendly' and members might like to visit this.

Mike Unwin then gave an engaging talk about the birds of Blakers Park, illustrated by beautifully shot photographs.

The meeting ended at 9.45 with tea and biscuits.

Approved at the 2012 AGM 18/10/12

And signed by Max Glaskin, Chair at the meeting

Appendix 1

Annual Report of the Chair of the Friends of Blakers Park, Max Glaskin, at the 18th Annual General Meeting 13th October 2011

First, you may be wondering why Margaret Bell, our long-serving membership secretary, isn't here this evening. Unfortunately she has not been at all well and is currently in Queen Elizabeth Hospital, in Haywards Heath, where she is making slow, steady progress. I'm sure we all wish her a good recovery and hope to see her in the park soon.

In Margaret's absence, Graham Preston has kindly offered to act as membership secretary and he will be pleased to accept your subscriptions and renewals tonight.

The Friends committee has had a busy year. Our volunteer gardeners, Marion Clarke and Ed Strauss, have planted and maintained three flower beds. Council staff cleared the overgrowth on two other beds, by the Clock Tower and the toilets, but left so many roots in the ground that a working party of Friends had to dig it all over. The Council has promised to dig in compost, any day now, and we desperately need gardeners to come forward to help plan, plant and care for these two new beds, which should become a great addition to the park. Did you know that Blakers is one of the few parks in the City without a dedicated Council gardener? That's why we need volunteers from among us all.

The woods at the corner of Cleveland Rd and Preston Drove were planted with 1,000 English bluebells by other volunteers on the coldest day of 2010. They will help make the area more attractive and colourful in the Spring.

The entire park was transformed during one of the most prolonged periods of snow it's experienced. The local toyshops sold out of toboggans.

Local resident Mel Levy once again organised the Spring Clean and 80 residents came along to tidy the park, shifting 113 kg of rubbish, 120 kg of leaf mould, a broken drain cover and a Christmas tree. Thank you Mel.

The Community Payback team was also on hand, tidying painting the railings. They will be coming again to finish the job.

Our third annual open air art show, in May, was less popular than in previous years, despite having two professional artists, Lucy Parker and Michael Gale, on hand ready and willing to give free lessons. A dozen local artists displayed their work but with such a low level of interest the event's future is in doubt. We may try one more time, in June so it doesn't clash with the Open Houses. Please let me know if you have any thoughts or ideas about this.

On the same afternoon, we were fortunate that local arboriculturalist Alistair Peters led a guided tour of the trees. Up to 40 people hung on his every word and were happy to examine a dead dutch elm beetle. It was a splendid talk

and we hope he will repeat it in the Spring. The trees are such an important part of Blakers Park and the more we know about them, the better chance we have of preserving them. Two committee members, Sam Hart and Jane Skea, are encouraging children to take an interest in our trees, with their Terrific Trees half-term events. There's one coming up at the end of this month, on Friday 28th October so please do bring your children and grandchildren. We have been harrying the Council to replace the six young trees which died this summer and are still disappointed that it isn't using sufficient resources to properly care for young trees in particular. We now have a working party of volunteers who are going to do what they can to help young trees thrive. It's vital work so do please have a word with Sally Cranfield to help her.

Sam Hart masterminded the Community Picnic, our major event in association with this church, with Nic Straiton organising the live music and Graham Preston managing the stall bookings. The weather misbehaved and although the stalls and games were busy, we had to cancel the live music at short notice because torrential downpours were forecast. Instead we just had gale force winds. Thank you to the local businesses which supported us by donating raffle prizes – they are listed on our website so check them out and continue to give them your support. We were pleased that food charity FareShare accepted our invitation to have a stall and collected donations of tins and packets for redistribution to people in poverty in Brighton. It was also the first visit of the year to Blakers by Groundwork Community Games. They came twice more during the summer, bringing spacehoppers, tug of war, hula hoops and a host of other activities for children and adults. We hope they'll come back next year.

We were pleased that other organisations held public events in the park this year. However, they did monopolise the dog-free area and we have since asked the Council's events office to make sure there will always be room in this area for children and families to play and picnic.

At the end of the month Sally Griffiths at the café will again be running her children's Halloween event. We are aware that the regular visits by ice cream vans, sometimes four times a day, have eaten into the café's trade and Sally has said she may now not be able to afford to stay open throughout the winter. An open café is important to the park so we'd ask people to buy from the café, not the vans, in the future.

I'm grateful to Simon Bottrell for redesigning the masthead of our newsletter, of which we produced some five issues since the last AGM. Willem generously designed the Community Picnic poster. Jack Latimer of Community Sites, assisted by Sam Scaife, has turned our website from a blundering mess into something of pure beauty. Please visit the virtual Blakers Park, which is open 24 hours a day and where it never rains. You can sign up for news and contribute your comments, photos and suggestions. It's our park and our website.

Behind the scenes, Dominique Giudicelli and Graham Preston have put an enormous amount of work into the Management Plan. After more than two

years of asking, we now have action. There have been four meetings with Alan Griffiths, CityParks operations manager, so we can have a written, published plan about how the park will be managed in the short, medium and long term. The draft plan will be published in the Spring and we have pressed for a period of public consultation so that the whole community can contribute. This, I feel, will be a significant achievement of the Friends. We're not there yet but we're closer than we've ever been.

Normally we'd go into hibernation after the AGM until the Spring Clean but that's not to be. There's Terrific Trees on half-term Friday, Halloween on the last day of October, community hedge planting on Saturday 12th November and our first ever mummers play and carols on Friday 16th December. An informal parade of winter woollies will take place, as usual, on Boxing Day.

I'd like to thank Stanford Avenue Methodist Church for providing the venue, once again, for our annual general meeting and Marjorie & Harold Cozens, in particular, for organising everything, including the teas and coffees, more than ably assisted by Marsali Stuart. I'm sorry to disappoint those of you who have brought your own biscuits, but you can save them for another day because there are plenty here to be dunked and scoffed.

Our aims for the year ahead? Complete the Management Plan with community involvement, plan and plant the two new flower beds, care for our trees and work. We will only be able to do this with support from the community. What this means in practice is for people to actively help us. Last year we started a list of volunteers, which now has more than 30 names on it. Unfortunately, every time we have asked for help, not one person has come forward from that list. Please do add your details to the volunteer form that is circulating and, even better, please do come forward whenever you can, whenever the park needs help. Only then will Blakers Park thrive.

Thank you for your support.

End of Appendix 1