



## Annual Report 2015

### Committee

At the 2014 AGM the Committee was elected as follows: Andy Anderson, Alan Collett (treasurer), Liz Davies (Eaton Park Community Association and Community Centre), Pat Garner (secretary and membership secretary), Judith Lubbock (vice chair), Geoff Mickleburgh, Helen Mitchell (Chair) and Christine Wilson. Ann Balls continued as press officer.

Membership at the time of the AGM, November 2015 stood at 62, two up from last year and eight up from the previous year.

### Fundraising

The Friends have raised over £400 through bring and buy sales on band days and a Children in Need Day organised by the model railway. Income from individual donations made at the time of joining or renewing membership is £100. A grant of £500 was received this financial year from Active Norfolk. This was towards development of the new website.

### Volunteering

The Friends contribute many of hours of voluntary work to the park and its wellbeing – in 2014 we did 1,227 hours work. This includes:

- gardening and planting
- holding bring-and-buy sales
- website, notice boards and social media for the park
- liaison with Norwich City Council and other partners
- working with the public and local schools on art and environmental activities

### Ground Force

We have grown in confidence and in numbers of people who take part in our monthly hands-on work mornings. Every first Tuesday we meet in the Friends Room in the Rotunda at 10am and decide what to do that day. Tasks this year have included:

- watering and care of our small orchard (now ten trees)
- collecting seeds and dividing plants, sewing, and planting in our 1.5 acre meadow
- supporting Norwich City Council in the creation of new perennial meadows near the model railway
- cleaning notice boards and main entrance signs
- weeding and planting in the raised bed of grasses beside the boat pond
- planting bulbs beside the lower car park and in the bandstand flower beds
- clearing and tidying the bandstand flowerbed
- pruning the rose beds in the rose garden

We have already extended the year to include autumn and winter sessions. Next year we are considering doing bi-monthly sessions during the summer months. We work – quite hard! – for about two hours and don't stop talking. It's great fun and immensely satisfying!

## Environment

This year we have installed eight **woodcrete bird boxes** in the two small new areas of woodland either side of the cycle speedway, and two woodcrete **bat boxes** in pine trees beside the North Park Avenue entrance between the play area and the meadow. They have been paid for by an East of England Coop grant.

We successfully bid for **two hundred whips**, of various species of trees to strengthen and extend hedging along the South Park Avenue side of the pitch and putt. This improvement was a recommendation from Nick Cooper, Tree Officer at the city council, who spoke at our AGM last year. In time the new trees will provide shelter and food for wild birds and animals. We are going to work alongside TCV volunteers to plant the whips in December and are making a donation to TCV to thank them for their help. We also planted four extra trees in our orchard.

In June the Friends signed off a **Biodiversity Plan** for the area of woodland and meadowland off North Park Avenue which we have been given permission to develop. The plan ensures that everyone involved, the Friends, Norwich City Council and Norwich Norse Environmental works to the same plan. It is a working document that will evolve over time. It was developed with expert input Paul Holley (Norwich City Council's Natural Areas Officer), and ecologist Aaron Brown from the Friends.

## Communications

At the time of writing the Friends have 1580 likes on **Twitter** and 1892 **Facebook** Friends. Many people use social media to share pictures and we use it to tell people about news and developments in the park, and to offer a two channel of communication. Events such as the cafe closure have generated considerable discussion on Facebook and recently two Tweets formed the basis of an entire Evening news article.

In July we launched our **new website**. Funding from Active Norfolk and Norfolk Community Foundation paid for Norwich design agency Starfish to put in place the basic structure and visuals for an extensive website powered by Wordpress. Helen Mitchell planned and wrote the new website, using images collected over several years, many of them obtained through contacts on social media. Christine Wilson's earlier website provided important groundwork for sections on park history and user groups.

The new website is quick and easy to update, mobile-friendly, image rich and contemporary in style. There is a page of FAQs and the site is well-organised and information rich, providing links to many other organisations and clubs. Every month about ten enquiries come through the website and these are mostly answered very quickly.

The new website also provides a full online presence for **Eaton Park Community Centre**, and Liz Davies has been instrumental in working with groups to ensure information is comprehensive up to date.

## Sports and health

**Footgolf** opened in Eaton Park this August. Friends of Eaton Park took part in a consultation over its introduction and helped promote the new programme through social media and the website. The new facility has already proved an immense success. In the first six weeks it attracted 1351 users. The pitch and putt average over the previous two years was 346. During the winter months it is now running alongside the pitch and putt on Saturdays from 10am until dusk.

Every Friday morning at 10am the Friends run a **Walking together** session. One of our longest-running activities the 45-minute long walk is open to anyone and offers companionship and gentle exercise in a beautiful environment.

There have been delays over the **new running routes** (one mile and one kilometre way-marked routes). This should now be installed in December, in time for January's new year's resolutions – the peak time for people to take up running. The routes will feature on Run England's website as part of their 3-2-1 running development programme. The Friends will work on local promotion with Active Norfolk and Norwich City Council. The running route has received funding from Sports Relief Community Cash, which is managed locally by Norfolk Community Foundation.

### **Events**

The Friends took part in **Heritage Open Days** attracting 15 people for two separate sessions. Next year we hope to combine forces with NDSME (model railway) and Norwich Model Boat Club, and to explore the possibility of taking people onto the rotunda roof, which has great views of the park.

Pat Garner has established a really positive relationship with **Bluebell Road School**. This year, children worked with an artist to create beautiful artworks inspired by the park. These were displayed as a backdrop to our bring-and-buy stalls. Children have also come to two special sessions in the park, when they have helped out with planting activities and litter picking.

For several years now we have had a stand outside our room on band days, the idea being to raise funds, add to the general animation, and to tell people about what we do. This year we made a move away from tombolas to **bring-and-buy sales**, including plant sales and home-made produce. The change has seen increased involvement from the membership and we are excited about the possibility of increasing plant sales, including plants that have been divided up from the park itself. Sales of second-hand books, DVDs and jigsaw puzzles continue to be a good earner.

In July, twenty six people took part in drop-in **arts walks** with two artists from the midlands, Jo Dacombe and Carol Miles. With help from local people of all ages the two created a series of enchanting site-specific artworks using ribbons, ping-pong balls, Perspex and photosensitive paper. [Here](#) is their blog, packed with pictures of this lovely event.

We had a very successful **members evening** attended by over twenty people. Rob and Sue Trown of the Crazy Golf provided an excellent evening of crazy golf and barbeque and next year we plan to hold more get-togethers, thanks, in part to a kind offer from our newest members Ceceile and David Strand, who have offered up their large house on Unthank Road.

### **Benches**

From the beginning, in 2007, the Friends have identified benches as an area of need in the park. In the spring this year three new benches were installed beside the boat pond and March next year will see the installation of three specially commissioned railway sleeper benches, two near the model railway and one in the meadow. The benches have been paid for by general donations from members of the Friends and from our own fundraising, including a grant from East of England Coop.

We now have good systems in place between the Friends and Norwich City council. These have led to a number of individuals coming forward to pay for benches.

## The Future

We are excited about the possibility of a new cafe for the park. We've provided a wish list of things we would like to see from the new set up and are going to be involved in the recruitment process. This is a very exciting new development and the level of interest suggests there is a chance of getting a really good new contractor in place.

The Friends will continue to support Norwich City Council in maintaining Eaton Park's Green Flag status. We are keen to build our membership and get more people of all ages and backgrounds actively involved in our work 'helping Eaton Park thrive'.

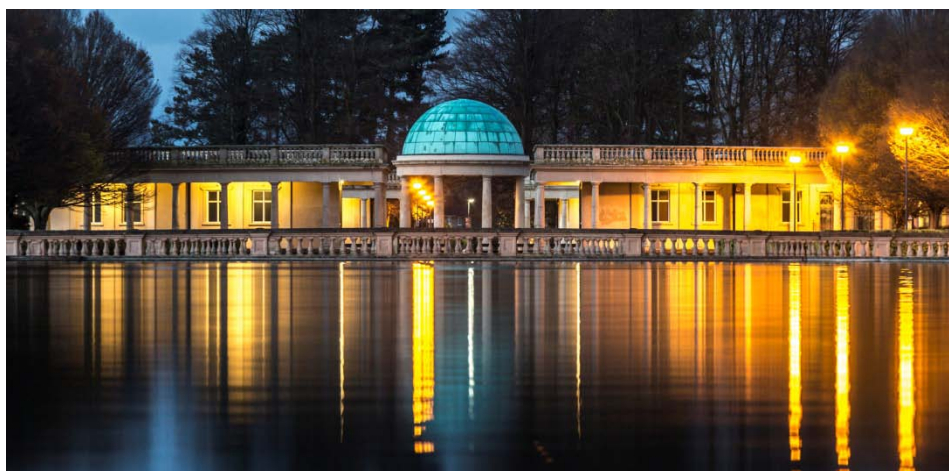
## Thank you to our partners...

Active Norfolk, East of England Coop, Norfolk Community Foundation, Norfolk Wildlife Trust, Norwich in Bloom, Norwich City Council, Norwich Norse Environmental, TCV (Trust for Conservation Volunteers).

## ...and to the following individuals:

Adrian Akers, Terry Bane, Stuart Beard, Derek Butler, Nick Cooper, Ian Couzens (our auditor) Brian Dermott (Band Coordinator), Maggie Finck, Glen Grange, Max Griffiths, Andy Harmer, Becky Harris (PCSO), Dan Harris, Matt Hewes, Richard Hoey, Paul Holley, Martin Adcock, Andy Lambert, Simon Meek, Debbie Murray, Mark Rhodes (NDSME), Rob and Ruth Trown (Eaton Park Crazy Golf), Michael and Norwich Norse Environmental's grounds men.

Helen Mitchell, Chair, Friends of Eaton Park, 26 November 2015



Clockwise from the top, children from Bluebell Road school planting bulbs in Eaton Park; walking back to the Friends Room from Ground Force; a photo taken by a member of the public – shared with the Friends through our website, and by us with the public through social media.