

## Annual Report 2014

### **Committee**

At the 2013 AGM the Committee was elected as follows: Glenys Banks, Alan Collett (treasurer), Liz Davies (Eaton Park Community Association and Community Centre), Janet Duckett, Pat Garner (secretary and membership secretary), Cynthia Gooda, Judith Lubbock (vice chair), Helen Mitchell (Chair), and Christine Wilson (website). Other members who have specific roles are Ann Balls (press) and John King (website).

### **Fundraising**

The Friends have raised funds through stalls and a tombola on five band days, and received generous donations from several Friends. This year Alan and Helen have made successful applications for grant aid to East of England Coop, Norfolk Community Foundation and Active Norfolk. These will pay for benches, fruit trees, gardening equipment, bird and bat boxes, a new website and a way-marked running track.

### **Gardening and environment**

We worked alongside members of the Norfolk Branch of Butterfly Conservation to support Norwich City Council in its complete re-planting of the rose garden rockeries. Plants were chosen that would encourage bees, butterflies and other insects.

In February celandines and violets were planted at the edge of the small wood beside the cycle speedway. The Friends have been given the go ahead by Norwich City Council to develop this small woodland and the 1.5 acres stretch of grassland beside it as areas for wildlife. Until just three years ago, the latter was just another grassy open space in the park. Now the Friends, Norwich City Council and Norwich Norse (Environmental) are gradually developing it as a meadow.

Our newest member, Aaron Brown is providing us with expert guidance and help. One evening this summer he and a friend scattered the meadow with cuttings from an established meadow in his parent's Sprowston orchard. In November a group of Friends prepared the meadow to scattered wild flower seeds, and plant 130 tiny oxeye daisies, knapweed and harebells. A new mowing regime also helps. Narrow pathways are cut to allow people to walk through the meadow, but the meadow itself only has one cut in the autumn, and cuttings are cleared away to stop them from enriching the soil, as wildflowers thrive on poor soil.

With many farmers ploughing up their meadows, stretches of meadow such as this one in Eaton Park are becoming increasingly important for wildlife. As an indicator of progress already made, a skipper butterfly was spotted this summer and the sound of grasshoppers rang out on sunny days. This won't be a quick hit meadow, like those in the Olympic Park, but a slow and sure one, in which wild flowers from the local area will be gently encouraged to grow and spread, creating an attractive home for insects and other wildlife.

Glenys Banks continues to maintain the bandstand flower beds and, with help from others, looks after planters at the railway station and outside the community centre. In a new development, Christine Ragan has set up an Eaton Park 'Ground Force'. This takes place every first Tuesday of the month at 10am from April to September. The idea is to offer regular sessions that it will be easier to promote and coordinate than one off activities. This year we have cleaned benches and doorways in the rotunda, litter-picked, deadheaded roses and watered newly planted trees.

We were delighted to be approached by staff and pupils from the nearby Clare School, who have joined us on several occasions to help out. They love the park and are delighted to find a way to get involved in it. As a gesture of support and appreciation for this new relationship, Friends of Eaton Park donated the proceeds from one of its fundraising days to the Clare School's own campaign to raise funds for a Hydro Pool.

## **Benches**

Since last November, when the Friends organised their first bench cleaning session, the bench situation in the park has improved greatly. Norwich City Council organised intensive cleaning for benches that needed it, benches have been mended and many that had become unusable were transformed and returned to use. Christine Ragan has worked closely with the City to make it easier for people who want to remember a relative through a bench to do so, and has helped coordinate the installation of two memorial benches.

With Norwich City Council's help we installed our first bench paid for with funds raised last year. It sits on the tree-lined avenue that runs from the rotunda to the lower car park. This year we have raised sufficient funds to buy three more benches. These are going to go next to the boating lake, backing on to the low wall and grasses. The three inscriptions will celebrate Captain Sandys-Winsch, the local men who built the park and the park's new Green Flag status.

## **Events and activities**

May	Moth Hunt with Peter Walton Tree Walk with Richard Hobbs
June	Eaton Park Bike Day, with Dr Bike, Norwich Pedalways, and others
August	Wild about Eaton Park, with Norfolk Family Learning and our popular Tree Walk Butterfly Conservation Day
September	Friends Crazy Golf and barbecue evening

In addition to the above activities, Glenys Banks and Cynthia Gooda, with the help of a pool of volunteers from the Friends organised our popular fundraising stalls and tombolas. The Friends use these occasions to talk to people about the work they are doing as well as to raise funds and generally add to people's day out.

## **Keeping people in touch**

Friends of Eaton Park provides a vital channel of communication for park users. Anne Balls obtains a steady stream of press coverage, and the chair is regularly asked to comment on park developments. The Friends maintain the park's notice boards and respond to regular enquiries and requests for help through the website and social media.

Our website had 14,000 hits this year. It offers a vital source of community information and helps people get the most out of the park. We will be working on our new website over the winter. We have 1,320 Facebook fans (more than double last year's number) and 1,244 Twitter followers.

## **Membership**

Friends of Eaton Park has 60 members, up from 54 last year. There are some outstanding renewals and reminder letters will be sent in January.

## **Other Park News**

2014 will be remembered as the year that Eaton Park gained the coveted Green Flag status. As part of the bid the City Council had to prepare a detailed management plan and the park had to be looking at its absolute best. Several members of the Friends gave feedback on the management plan, many others helped with litter picking and other tasks. Additionally the Friends provided vital advice, as they do year-round, on areas of the park that needed extra attention. On the day, Helen Mitchell joined the walk round with the judge and was able to provide useful extra information. Eaton Park is the first city centre park in Norwich to achieve Green Flag status.

Rob Trown's creation, the wonderful Eaton Park Crazy Golf has been a resounding success and in its first year, achieved visitor numbers that any new attraction would be proud of. During the summer he also created a putting green alongside the crazy golf. This replaces the old South Park Avenue green.

The Friends work very closely with Rob and his wife Sue, and help promote the new facility through social media. By way of thanks the Trowns have given us a free advert on the back page of their score card and hosted a very successful Friends evening in September.

Sadly, over a period of some weeks, all the fish in the lily pond died. Investigations suggested a virus was responsible. However, 65 fish have today been returned to the lily pond. They are just some of the shoals of fish that had appeared in the boating lake. The latter is currently being cleaned and the fish removed to go to new homes, with the largest and most beautiful fish destined for the lily pond.

### **The Future**

Next year will see the installation of our three new benches and way-marked route. We aim to have the new website up for Easter and to start an e-bulletin too. In the first six months of 2014 the Friends did 789 hours of voluntary work. Next summer the Green Flag judges will call again and once again, the Friends will be working hard to support Norwich City Council to ensuring the park retains this prestigious prize.

### **Thanks to the Friends**

Judith Lubbock our vice chair, a loyal and long-standing supporter of the park and this year's Lord Mayor of Norwich. Pat Garner who has been both secretary and membership secretary, and Alan Collett our Treasurer and mastermind of a brilliant Coop application. Glenys Banks and Cynthia Gooda for running our popular fundraising tombolas and stalls. Liz and Janet who look after us so well at the Community Centre, and Christine Wilson for managing the website.

Anne Balls (press and listings), Christine Ragan (benches, Ground Force and a brilliant tree trail), Harry Herring (book marks and photography) John King (photography and website), Brian Gooda, Liz Davies, Bryant Mickleburgh, Derek Smith, Susan Yallop (band days, gardening and more). Welcome and thanks also to Ada Abbott, Aaron Brown and Geoff Mickleborough as recent and already very active new members.

### **Thanks to our partners**

At Norwich City Council: a very big thank you to: Maggie Finck and Simon Meek. Grateful thanks also to Nick Cooper, Louise Curtis, Max Griffiths, Dan Harris, Paul Holley, Matt Hewes, Richard Hoey and Lydia Martin. At Norwich Norse (Environmental) thank you to Martin Adcock, Andy Harmer, Andy Lambert and their teams of gardeners and grounds staff. Thank you to our brilliant PCSOs, and especially Julie Sayer who has been a supporter since the beginning, Brian Dermott for our wonderful band programme, and Ian Couzens for auditing our accounts free of charge. Thanks also to Sophie Stainthorpe who has given us some fantastic coverage this year in 'Just Eaton and Cringleford'.

Helen Mitchell, Chair, Friends of Eaton Park, 27 November 2014



**The lily pond, Eaton Park**  
**Photograph by Facebook friend, Raymond Hall**