



## Annual Report 2021

### Bluebell School

*Schools group:* Linda Chapman, Maggie Knox, Lynn Preston and Susan Yallop. Organised by Pat Garner, and from November, Stuart Beard. *EPIC group:* Stuart Beard and Helen Mitchell.

- We worked with Bluebell School to devise a programme for teacher Duncan Reekie's class of 30 year three pupils aged 7-8 years. Spring sessions were cancelled due to Covid but sessions took place in May, June and July – litter picking, bench cleaning, art in the park and end of term school picnic and games.
- In the autumn, two sessions were held with a new class; the first, litter picking,



doubled as a handover session from organiser, Pat Garner to Stuart Beard. The last session in November saw crocus bulbs planted in the pitch and putt.

- Working with EPIC Norfolk (Exercising People in Communities) we trialled new after-school sessions targeting children who live near the park but are thought not to use it very much. Sessions took place mid-afternoon in April, May and June, and combined walking, litter picking, weeding at the community centre, petanque and train rides. The children walked from the school to the park and back.

### Benches

*Bench group:* Helen Mitchell, Ruth Pearson, Jane Saunders.

- We completed a survey of the park's benches and their condition. It will be used to plan our bench cleaning sessions. It also brought increased focus and efficiency to the council's maintenance work and triggered a comprehensive refurbishment programme in early 2022.
- We devised bench cleaning guidelines for company team away days, bought the extra equipment needed to run these activities and successfully ran two sessions with Norwich firms Marsh and Aviva, the latter organised through national charity 'Volunteering Matters'.
- We installed Ellen's bench and worked with Harriet Gordon and Elisabeth Groves to coordinate their benches.



- We devised an Information Sheet for people wishing to sponsor a bench in the park. This has been adopted by the council and underpins our joint working.
- We experimented with the idea of a 'Happy to Chat' bench. Results were inconclusive. However, during lockdowns benches provided a welcome safe-space for people to meet with friends and family and use of them increased massively.

### **Eaton Park Community Cycling Club**

*Club organiser:* Stuart Beard

- This relatively new group really began to get into the swing of things, with the chosen routes proving popular with riders and Mailchimp being used for friendly reminders of monthly cycle rides. One or two sessions had to be cancelled due to Covid or bad weather. There were several 'Dr Bike' sessions on the bandstand.
- Paid for with funding from FOEP (part of a cycling UK grant) and Eaton Park Community Centre, five 'Sheffield' bike stands were installed at the community centre.
- The club took receipt of and had re-furbished a tandem and tandem trike for use by visually impaired people cycling with sighted 'pilots'.

### **Gardeners**

*Gardeners' group:* Linda Chapman, Julian Flatt, Sue Foran, Joe, Katrina Kirkwood, Gay Linde, Rory Mayne, Helen Mitchell, Louise Riches, Ruth Pearson, Carrie Phoenix, Karen Stickle, Linda Tansley. Organised by Sarah Scott and Julia Corney.

- We maintained nine flower beds around the bandstand, boating lake and lily pond, and in the café garden. Sessions in February and March were cancelled due to Covid and flooding curtailed the May session. Nevertheless, by the summer though, the beds looked absolutely wonderful.
- Through the Growing Communities project we received compost and Cosmos, Gazania and Tithonia seeds to propagate, and Armeria, Aubretia and Ceratostigma plants. In September we received notice that Growing Communities is shutting up shop. We are contributing to efforts by city council community enabling officers to devise a replacement.
- The group also planted out Persicaria, perennial wallflower Bowles Mauve and Leucanthemum supplied by members of the group from their own gardens.
- The gardening group, in its yellow hi-vis jackets is a highly visible FOEP activity, and a plaque reminds people that we care for these flower beds at the heart of the park.

## **Eaton Park Community Centre**

*Chair:* Stuart Beard (FOEP vice-chair)

- The centre re-opened in April with multiple users old and new including: Mini-Monkey Gym, Zijong, children's Irish dancing, Kung Fu, City of Norwich Athletics Cub, and Wensum Arts.
- A multiple occupancy swift box was installed at the apex of the north-facing end wall. It includes a speaker to play swift calls morning and evening in order to attract new arrivals.
- A large cupboard/small room, accessed from the paved area outside the centre has been turned into a store for Community Cycle Group bikes and equipment.

## **Nature**

### ***Meadows***

*Meadow group:* Aaron Brown, Julia Corney, Julian Flatt, Natasha Grist, Katrina Kirkwood, Sarah Scott, Karen Stickle, Linda Tansley and Christine Wilson. Organised by Helen Mitchell.



- North Park Meadow is coming in to its own. Exciting new finds this year include the very rare sulphur clover and wasp spiders. The photo shows meadow saxifrage in May 2021.
- We set up a new meadow group using Whatsapp to coordinate activity. The group met three times to do wildflower identification, seed gathering, and mattocking, sowing and planting, including of primroses on the edge of North Park Wood.

### ***Woodlanders***

*Woodland Group:* Julia Corney, Caspar Evans, Julian Flatt, Helen Mitchell, Ruth Pearson, Sarah and Peter Scott. Organised by Helen Mitchell.

- Working with Norwich Fringe we devised and trialled a solution to the problem of pathway degradation in Bluebell Wood. The city council's tree team provided a large pile of wood chip and volunteers from FOEP laid this down in two sessions, one of them working alongside volunteers from TCV (The Conservation Volunteers). The trial went well – woodchip is pleasant under foot and with several previously problematic areas are now much better.
- Woodland activities naturally happen in the colder months making this one of the areas of our work that was most affected by Covid.

## Events and activities

*Organisers:* Stuart Beard, Pat Garner, Helen Mitchell and Sarah Scott.

- We produced a family trail to help families get more from their park visit.
- Each school holiday Norfolk County Council produced free family activity magazines for families. We promoted them on Facebook and in our notice boards, and facilitated the distribution of hundreds of them through the café. This was a government-funded Covid initiative.



- We promoted two nature rambles to FOEP members. Fifty people attended the two sessions, which were led by naturalist Chris Durdin. We enjoyed birds and flowers in the park's woodlands, hedgerows, walls and meadows. The sessions allowed us to test out the feasibility of holding nature rambles early evening on summer Mondays.
- Summer socials – a June croquet event was cancelled due to a clash with the World Cup final and a July petanque session had just a couple of takers. These sessions are unlikely to be repeated.
- In August local artists' group 'The Art Practitioner' and Norwich Castle put on two Crome-themed event: a drawing workshop 'The Mighty Trees of Eaton Park' and a visit to the park by 'The Crome Mural'. FOEP provided advice and support.
- September's Heritage Open Days event included a train ride and a visit to the upper story of the boat pavilion courtesy of NDSME and Norwich Model Boat Club.
- Also in September we hosted an evening for the city council's Outdoor Projects Network. Some fifty people attended the tour of the park and enjoyed refreshments afterwards outside the community centre. The focus was nature in the park and FOEP's work encouraging biodiversity.
- The December Carol Concert was cancelled as cases of Omicron saw local schools close and events around the country start to be cancelled.

## Day to day in the park

- *Crazy Golf* – Rob and Ruth Trown, the creators and first concession holders of the crazy golf retired. We supported them in the transition and recruitment of a replacement concession holder and marked the Trown's contribution to the park with a specially produced photo book and press release. New concession holder is Simon Thompson. He lives in Norwich and had been a keen user before applying to take on the facility; it continues to thrive.



- *E-cargo bikes* – the creation of Norwich City Services Ltd bought a review of vehicle use in the park and purchase of a new fleet. We suggested e-cargo bikes be used as part of the fleet and provided information and examples of the use of electric cargo bikes in similar locations; to no avail. We will continue to champion the idea.
- *Fly-tipping and graffiti* – we reported five incidents of graffiti and one of fly-tipping. All were dealt with swiftly, most within 24 hours
- *Litter picking* – wombling is in FOEP's DNA. During lockdown members held litter-



picking 'meetings', children from Bluebell School saw litter picking as a quest and many of us routinely pick up litter as we take daily walks in the park. Despite the increased use in lockdown and school holidays, litter remains at a very low level.

- *Parking* – we discussed and provided a written response to a consultation over parking charges. Though not averse to the idea we suggested that research and public engagement would be needed to ensure public buy in to any scheme.

## Finance

*Treasurer:* Calum MacRae.

- Income was up by 42.5% on last year to £3,006. Membership subs went up by 9.5% to £805 as the Friends' numbers exceeded 100 for the first time. Donations from members also went up.
- We received a £1,000 donation from Waitrose. During Covid the Eaton-based supermarket had not been able to do its customer token scheme but decided to make some local donations instead. FOEP had twice been the beneficiary of the token scheme and we keep in touch with our contact. The grant has been used to start a new designated fund for mending the rose garden fountain.
- Expenditure increased by 24.4% to £2,405. Major items in the year included FOEP benches, new bike racks for the community centre and the refurbishment of the tandem bike, which was covered by the Cycling UK grant.
- At year end the cash balance stood at just over £4,400. This balance includes designated funds set aside for specific projects (cycling and the fountain). These account for over half of the Friends' cash in hand.

## Membership

*Membership secretary:* Pat Garner.

- By the end of 2021 we had 103 members. This comprised sixteen new members, eighty one renewals and six life/discretionary memberships.

- The committee comprised Helen Mitchell, (chair), Stuart Beard (vice chair), Sarah Scott (honorary secretary), Pat Garner (membership secretary), Calum McRae (Treasurer from May2021), Julia Corney, Ruth Pearson, Lynn Preston and Jane Saunders.
- The committee met six times and an AGM covering the cancelled AGM of 2019 as well as 2020 was held remotely in April.
- At the end of the year Pat Garner and Ruth Pearson stepped down from the committee. They have been great Friends to the park, and we're glad that they're both going to continue their involvement, just taking a bit more of a back seat.

Pat joined as membership secretary in summer 2014 and also led on schools and heritage. She has fantastic organisational skills, put together a wonderful programme of schools events – in particular the art sessions and end of year picnics – and has been a regular presence on Sunday afternoon events.

Ruth joined the committee in 2017. She has co-run the gardening group, liaised with Thorns DIY to build our tool collection, taken roof top tours and been an enthusiastic member of the Woodlanders group.

## Communications

*Communications team:* Helen Mitchell and Stuart Beard.

- We obtained coverage in the Evening News for the Community Centre and the Crazy Golf. Just Eaton and Cringleford provided coverage of schools work, community cycling club, running and Ellen's bench. At least two items made the front cover.
- There were four FOEP newsletters in March, June, August and December.
- At the end of the year we had close to 6000 likes on Facebook, which continues to be an excellent 'Friends-lite' – an effective means to share information from many people and diverse communities, and to get a feel for what interests people.
- We had 2250 followers on Twitter and started an Instagram page.
- We maintained a comprehensive website that serves as the parks' main online presence, and two park notice boards.

## Conclusion

*Chair:* Helen Mitchell.

It was the second year of Covid but by now we had learnt a lot and found many ways to continue working clocking up a total of 1058 hours volunteering.

We completely emptied and cleaned the Friends Room, a task that felt safe, with the doors open. Working at home, alone or in pairs, archives and photos were sorted, new spreadsheets created and sessions planned.

We have an advantage in that drawing workshops, bike rides, bench cleaning, meadow, school, woodland and gardening sessions all take place outdoors.

The committee met on Zoom in January, March, May, July and September. We finished the year in November meeting for the first time at our new meetings' venue, the upstairs room at The Beehive pub on Leopold Road.

In May we recruited a new Treasurer. Work with park benches and, connected with this, volunteering opportunities for companies, moved on in leaps and bounds. Work on the meadow and wildflowers flourished.

Foundations were laid for improved and simplified administration – of finances, and ultimately of membership; and for new and exciting ways to improve and to engage more people in the park's biodiversity.

It was a good year.

### **Warm thanks to our Friends and partners**

Edward Bolton, Louise Curtis, Richard Green, Max Griffiths, Simon Meek and Suzanne Parkinson, Cllr Matthew Packer, Cllr Kevin McGuire (Norwich City Council), Michael Ottaway and team (Norwich City Services Ltd), Richard Andrews (Cycling UK), Ian Couzens (our auditor), Alan Dawson and Andy Brazil (Butterfly Conservation), Stuart Beard (Eaton Park Community Centre), Chris Evans (Norwich Park's Tennis), Matt Davies (Norwich Fringe), Pam Frost (Growing Communities), Steve Hitcham (EPIC Norwich), Kevin Howard (Norfolk County Council), Rob Howe, Alex Kerridge (The Beehive), David Potter and team (Eaton Park Café), Alasdair McGregor (Just Eaton and Cringleford), Duncan Reekie (Bluebell School), Chris Eve and Mark Rhodes (NDSME), Martin Skipper (East of England Apples and Orchards Project), Gemma Walker (Norfolk Wildlife Trust), Mark Webster (The Conservation Volunteers), Dudley Garner and Lawrence Wade (Up the Tempo community running group).

