



## Friends of Eaton Park - Timeline Highlights

### 2007

*Constitution* – inaugural meeting organised by Norwich City Council community team officers as an evolution of an existing SNAP (Safer Neighbourhood Action Panel). First committee recruited at this meeting.

*Friday Health Walks* – the start of regular health walks.

### 2008

*80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Eaton Park* – thousands of people attend a celebratory open day involving all of the park's key user groups.

*Website* – set up of the first FOEP website.

*Moth Hunt* – 50 people attend, including families with children.

*BBC Breathing Spaces* – a grant obtained by Norwich City Council's community team pays for a biodiversity audit and report from Norfolk Wildlife Trust. This is written by David North.

### 2009

*Park User Survey* – FOEP devises and undertakes the survey. It highlights a need for improved information on what goes on in the park and how to get involved, influencing the direction taken by FOEP in its work.

*Bulb planting* – work begins on planting up the grassy bank that runs along the West Car Park.

*Litter picking* – first session takes place.

*Notice boards* – second notice board installed. FOEP takes on managing both notice boards.

*Bandstand flower beds* – FOEP takes on their care.

## **2010**

*Social media* – Facebook and Twitter accounts set up.

*Andy Anderson talk* – 50 people attend a talk on park history.

*Heritage Open Days (HODs)*– Eaton Park takes part in the national scheme for the first time.

## **2011**

*Norfolk Biodiversity Partnership's Biodiversity Awards* – FOEP wins the community award.

*Planters* – green recycling tubs that are no longer in use are planted up and installed at the railway and Community Centre.

## **2012**

*Darren Leader Studio* – logo, brand identity and leaflet designed by the Norwich design agency as in-kind sponsorship.

*Book sales and raffles* – these are run to coincide with the council's summer band days.

## **2013**

*Friends Room* – Norwich City Council offers the Friends a room as a base in the rotunda.

*Benches* – audit and cleaning of park benches plus FOEP installs its new bench on the tree-lined avenue from the rotunda to the West Car Park.

*Outdoor ping pong tables* – installed behind the café. FOEP researched options and raised funds.

*John Lewis anniversary celebrations* - six fruit trees are donated and planted by John Lewis and FOEP volunteers in the area on the north side of the park that used to house the large slide.

## **2014**

*Green Flag Award* – Eaton Park becomes the first Norwich park to receive the award.

*Grants received* – East of England Coop, Norfolk Community Foundation and Active Norfolk.

*North Park Meadow* – FOEP hands over a 1.5 acre site to be developed as a meadow.

*Benches* – three paid and installed beside the boat pond.

## **2015**

*Website* – FOEP's second website launched.

*Bluebell Primary School* – links established and first visits take place.

*Bird boxes (8) and bat boxes (2)* installed on trees near North Park Meadow.

*Biodiversity Plan for North Park Meadow* – written by FOEP with local meadow expert and Norwich City Council officers.

*Hedge improvement* – 200 young trees planted to reinforce the hedge along the South Park Avenue edge of the pitch and putt. The scheme was suggested by Norwich City Council's tree team.

## **2016**

*Spring plant sales* – these prove popular.

*Flower beds* – Bandstand beds re-planted with plants bought by Norwich City Council. Empty beds near the boat pond planted up with lavender.

*Way-marked running track* – planned and installed in collaboration with Active Norfolk and Norwich City Council sports officer.

*Eaton Park Café* – opens under new management. Norwich City Council and FOEP collaborated on the brief and recruitment.

*Railway benches* – three new benches using railway sleepers in their construction, designed and installed beside the model railway.

*Christmas Carol Concert* – Norwich Community Choir features in this first FOEP Xmas event.

## **2017**

*Schools* – Clare School joins Bluebell School in an annual programme of arts and nature activities.

*Rooftop Tours* – over 100 people go on the new rooftop tours.

*Events* – include a Tree Walk, Butterfly Day, our first Fungus Day and two tours as part of HODs.

*Walnut tree avenue* – FOEP is consulted on a new avenue of walnut trees and provides communications support when they are planted.

## **2018**

*Eaton Park's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday* – the celebration includes a specially commissioned cake cut by park historian Andy Anderson and Courtney, one of the park's youngest users.

*Good Gym* – the start of regular visits by the running and volunteering group.

*Royal Horticultural Society* – grant obtained for a project with Clare School to create two large new herb beds for the café garden. Children from the school work with FOEP volunteers to build and plant up the new raised beds.

*Fungus Day* – 150 people of all ages attend the drop event.

*Bandstand 'landing zone'* – introduced so children can jump down from the bandstand without damaging plants in the surrounding flower beds. A new plaque details FOEP's care of these beds.

*Norwich Fringe and TCV* – collaboration on writing a ten year management plan for Bluebell Wood.

*Benches* – two are installed. A successful application to a fund commemorating the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of World War 1 paid for a bench overlooking the pitch and putt to record its use as a practice ground for trench warfare.

*Pétanque terrain* – plus associated benches, bike stands and notice board are installed in a celebration attended by the Mayor. Funds come from a significant donation from a FOEP member and from Sport England.

## **2019**

*A full events programme* – comprises rooftop tours, heritage walks, Apple, Butterfly and Fungus Days, a 'Great Get-Together' and Christmas Concert.

*Growing Communities* seed raising scheme founded. Volunteers from outdoor groups across Norwich grow plants from seed and, in return, attend a plant exchange to choose plants for their own space. FOEP replenishes beds and planted new areas of bulbs through the scheme.

*Bluebell Wood* – first bramble clearing session held to make space for wildflowers.

*'Pleine-air' drawing session* – inspired by the Impressionists the session is the highlight of the year for Bluebell School pupils.

*TCV Practical Tasks Leadership Course* – four FOEP members attend and gain certificates.

*Andy Anderson* – FOEP honorary life member and author of *The Captain and the Norwich Parks* dies. FOEP installs a bench inscribed: "For Andy Anderson who told the tale of Norwich's great Parks".

*East Car Park and Depot improvements* – FOEP's suggestion to stop parking under the trees here is implemented. Norwich City Council installs logs to prevent car access and arranges for the compacted ground to be aerated. The area quickly greens over after many years of misuse.

## **2020 First year of COVID**

*Events and activities cancelled* – but Eaton Park becomes a lifeline for many, providing fresh air and space for people to exercise, meet and see others.

*As individuals and in pairs* – FOEP members pick up litter, post on Facebook and report graffiti.

*Facebook* – FOEP posts regularly reach over 7000 households. Photos and positive messages reassure people and cherish the park as a focus for community and individual wellbeing.

*Gardening in between lockdowns* – the sessions that took place were supported by plants from Growing Communities ensuring flower beds looked their best, especially in the summer.

*Cycling UK* – grant of £1500 obtained to invest in cycle development. A 'glow-ride' took place just before lock down and the first community bike rides were held.

*Eaton Park Community Centre* – prompted by covid, the committee resigned en masse. FOEP and Norwich City Council worked together to ensure centre's future. FOEP's Vice Chair becomes Chair of the new committee.

## **2021** *Second year of COVID*

*Second bench survey* – this time incorporating detailed documentation and identification of repairs needed. Bench repairs commissioned and undertaken by Norwich City Council.

*Company away days* – first two held with Marsh Insurance and Aviva.

*Eaton Park Community Cycle Club* – formally established. The group acquires a tandem and tandem trike for use by visually impaired people cycling with sighted pilots.

*Eaton Park Community Centre* – re-opens in April with multiple users, old and new.

*Bluebell Wood* – first woodchip laid on pathways to keep them passable and protect wildflowers.

*Meadows* – new group meets for identification, sowing and planting sessions.

*Events* – HODs goes ahead in September but surge in cases of Omicron causes Christmas Concert to be cancelled.

## **2022**

*Events return to the park*: three bands, three nature walks, Heritage Open Day and Christmas Singalong.

*Parking charges* – Norwich City Council begins consultation on introduction of parking charges. FOEP provides detailed feedback and support for the idea.

*Bike Day* - Eaton Park Community Cycling Club holds its first celebration of cycling including the chance to try out many different types of bike.

*Benches (2) and bird boxes (6)* – installed.

*Planting* – snow drops, lily of the valley, bluebells and aconites planted under trees around the park perimeter, extending areas designated for 'conservation cut'.

*Spring and autumn family Nature Detective Trails*, launched, along with promotional and support materials for social media and notice boards.

*Eaton Park Community Cycle Club* – more rides take place and sighted pilots take riders with visual impairments out on the tandems.

## **2023**

*Green Flag Heritage Award* – Eaton Park receives the award for the first time.

*Park Plan 2023-28* – co-written by FOEP Chair together with park and other city council officers.

*Trees* – meetings held with tree officers to identify locations for new tree planting.

*Eaton Park Postcards* – design and print of four different postcards. They're used for correspondence and for new 'Postcards from the Park' family activity.

*Compost bins* – three installed in the café garden for kitchen waste and cuttings and other waste from the gardening group's work.

*Scything day* – first of these events organised with Norfolk Wildlife Trust and scything guru Richard Brown. 30% of North Park Meadow is scythed and good numbers of rare wasp spiders rescued.

*Little Meadow* – FOEP takes on a new smaller meadow area beside the community centre.

*Miniature Railway* – first fundraiser for FOEP sees one Sunday's takings from rides go to the Friends.

*St Martin's Fest* – Norwich homeless charity hosts first free family festival on the bandstand.

*Drought-resistant plants* bought by Norwich City Council for park and other outdoor groups.

*Eaton Park Café* trials evening menu. Poor weather meant numbers were low but the model was a great success.

*Parking charges* – these are introduced to some consternation but are quickly accepted.

*parkrun* – celebration of Eaton Park's 600<sup>th</sup> run.

## **2024**

*Homage to Thomas Browne* – city centre sculpture is moved to in Eaton Park. FOEP advises and helps with communications and a celebratory event.

*Facebook* – followers reach 8,200

*Events* – successful bands, nature walks, HODs and Christmas singalong

*Elm trees and John Innes Centre* – FOEP volunteers pot up and care for 45 young elms prior to planting in the park in January 2025. The activity is part of a project to find disease resistant elms.

*Korfball* – FOEP supports a successful trial of evening sessions in the park for this popular mixed sport.

*Norwich Gardens Trust* – all four category winners in the inaugural NGT park photography competition were photographs of Eaton Park. FOEP received £500 as subject of the overall winning photograph.

Helen Mitchell 29 April 2025