

Friends of Lowndes Park

Newsletter IV—October 2007

Introduction



Welcome to our fourth newsletter, which still shows no sign of running out of things to say, which was the original concern when we started writing.

Hopefully you will see that we are growing as a group, slowly getting more organised and at the same time, more members are stepping forward to help.

Enjoying music in the park summer concert

Friends drop the “New”

When first formed, the committee was conscious that a previous Friends group had existed and was anxious not to give offence. So we decided to call ourselves the New Friends of Lowndes Park.

However at a recent committee meeting it was noticed that most people had

already dropped the ‘New’ from the title and perhaps now it was time for us to do the same. Also FOLP has a ring to it that NFOLP could never aspire to. So the committee agreed to drop New from the title.

Supported by

- *the Bucks Examiner*
- *Lucia’s Delicatessen*
- *Chesham Environmental Group*

Volunteers

My call for volunteers in the last newsletter has resulted in several stalwarts stepping forward. So we would like to welcome Heather Morgan as our fundraiser and marketing guru (Don't worry Heather, we can work on the title.)

Elsewhere in this newsletter you will find details of our autumn walk, kindly organised by Andrew Clark and some interesting historical snippets provided by Sharon McEwan.

In a bid to help us save funds, Jean Queripel has volunteered to hand deliver the newsletters to those who do not have email and Peter Hawkes is going to design us a logo and help with the information for the interpretation boards -so all in all a great response.

I am still looking out for someone to organise volunteer days (I promise it won't be onerous) and it is a great way to meet other people who support the park.

A special mention should go to Janet Rogers who gamely volunteered to pick litter

during the Medieval Mayhem. Somewhat lacking in experience of litter picking I stupidly assumed that people would come along and do what they could on the day. However Janet is of the old school, and never put down her litter picker for a minute. So thanks to all who gave up their time to help and next time I will organise a rota. Promise!

I am still intending to organise some work party sessions in the park and will send out the dates and times as soon as I can.

We will try to keep them fun and not take up too much time so please watch this space.



Geese

A member of the Friends raised the issue of the geese, which appear to be getting more aggressive. During the Medieval Mayhem the Friends undertook some market research on behalf of the town council and we were surprised at how many people thought that the geese were becoming a problem. Mothers who don't let the children go near the pond because of the aggressive geese or the amount of "goose poo." Workers from the town who sit away from the pond rather than be surrounded and pestered by geese.

It cannot be right that park users have to change their use of the park because of a flock of domestic fowl that have been dumped in the park. We are hoping that the park will develop a policy soon so that the issue can be dealt with not just now but also in the future.

Management Plan

As you may recall the Green Flag judges felt that the management plan submitted in January was in need of rewriting. The Friends have offered to carry this out and I can report that the text is 80% complete. Peter Hawkes has volunteered to help with photos etc. Just to be absolutely clear, this does not mean that the Friends are deciding how the park will be or should be managed. Rather it's taking the information available and putting it into a management plan format. We are also identifying any gaps and asking how these might be filled. Clearly if we are asked for an opinion we will offer it and we will continue to support the Town Council in their efforts to improve the park for everyone. I write this to clarify our position, as one or two people seem to be misinformed and believe that we are aiming to take over the park. If only we had the time!!

101

Almost there

You may remember that when we started in January we set ourselves a target of 101 members so that we could legitimately tell the Heritage Lottery Fund that the park had a thriving Friend's group of over 100 members. Well, our Membership Secretary reliably informs me that we have almost reached that target and can boast a grand total of 97 members.

Can we make it 101 by the ordinary general meeting on the Wednesday 31 October? Do you know someone who has been talking about joining and not just got around to it?

Some notes on the history of the park

We are indebted to Sharon McEwan for providing a potted history of the park and indeed Chesham itself and I thought that some others of you may enjoy reading it. We are going to use just a little of what she found out in this newsletter and we will reveal more in future editions.

Above the avenue of trees, to the left near the church, is the site of Bury Hill, the former Elizabethan mansion of the Skottowe family, who owned the ornamental pond which now bears their name, and which was excavated in the early 1700s. The Skottowe arch rivals, the Lowndes of the Bury acquired the Skottowe estate and demolished Bury Hill House in 1804.

The Lowndes family's connection to Chesham began with William, secretary to the Treasury in the reign of Queen Anne, and William's successors extended the Bury Mansion, in Bury Lane, which is a short cul-de-sac off Church Street that leads to a terrace of former Lowndes' estate - workers cottages known as 'sixpenny houses' backing onto the park. The Lowndes family had already built the Bury, and bought the park in 1798.

In 1650 Chesham possessed a fine windmill, which was situated in the grounds of the mansion known as Bury Hill. The windmill was on a piece of land known locally as the 'Rolling Pin' at the top ridge above the Bowling Green. For many years the windmill worked in conjunction with the five water mills on the River Chess but in the early 1800's the windmill became disused and decay set in.

In 1821 the windmill was sold to the village of Lacey Green and was re-erected and put into working order to grind corn until 1950. Sometime during the 1970's the Chiltern Perseveration Society took over the mill and set about restoration. After several years work mainly by volunteers the mill was again restored to working order.



Bid Update

The steering group charged with preparing the application to the Heritage Lottery Fund continue to meet once a month and as we draw nearer to the March deadline the amount of work involved grows. However, the majority of the major decisions have now been resolved although we are still looking at the possibility of a small building in the park opposite the toilets and also considering what should be done about the skateboard area. Can we screen it in such a way that any noise is deadened or is it possible to re site it? The aim should be to lift any current restrictions on the use but how to achieve this is still under discussion.

You will recall the debate over the replanting of the Avenue, and thank you to everyone who contacted me to express an opinion. The final decision based on the feedback that we received was overwhelmingly in favour of retaining the views and not to replant the Avenue.

Friends Committee

Michael Rowan (Chair)
Javad Malik (Secretary)
Phil Folly
(Treasurer and Membership
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Ordinary General Meeting

We did say in our constitution that we would hold four Ordinary General Meetings. With hindsight this may have been a little ambitious and we may reduce this next year to two or three. However we are holding the first one on Wednesday 31 October at 7.30pm in the Town Hall. The subject will be the content of the application to the Heritage Lottery bid so if you want to know what is proposed for the park this is the place to be. As ever I will do my best to keep the meeting to an hour although we might go over slightly depending on the question and answer session. There is still more work to do to finalise the bid and then it has to go before the town council before it can be sub-

mitted, and they of course have the right to make changes, but you should still get a flavour of what is planned.

As ever I appeal to your better nature and hope that you will turn out on the night. Even though we now have four great committee members it is not fair on them to be made to suffer alone, listening to me drone on about the park.

I hope to see some of you on the night.

If you have any comments, questions or you wish to volunteer please contact Michael Rowan.



Friends Events—Walk at 2pm on Sunday 11 November

The first event of the year was the Friend's Picnic and everyone who went along seemed to have a good time just chatting and getting to know one another. They were lucky too with the weather, and it was good to look out over Chesham bathed in the late summer sunshine and simply enjoy the view.

It was generally agreed that there should be another Friend's event and the thinking is that this time it



should be an autumn walk starting and finishing in the park, followed by (if we have the energy) a coffee in the town.

The walk has been designed by Andrew Clark

Sunday Afternoon Walk – 2pm on 11th November

So, come and join us for a fairly easy stroll from the Park towards Hundridge Manor, Pednor House and back. The distance is around four miles and should take us about two hours. There are a couple of climbs and we will probably encounter some mud. No stiles though.

We will meet at the iron gates (in the park) to St Mary's Church

ready to leave at 2pm. Please ensure you have good footwear, suitable warm clothing, waterproofs if wet and something to drink.

After the walk we intend to indulge in tea and cake in the town centre to replace those burned calories.

If you have any queries then please contact Michael Rowan on the usual number

Please let Michael know if you are coming along and give him a contact number just in case the walk has to be postponed.