

The Friends of Croydon Road Recreation Ground
Newsletter No. 1 - November 2004

Hello, and a very warm welcome to our new members!

In the late summer of 2003, the council put posters on the park gates. They asked for anyone interested in forming a friends group to get in touch. This led to a meeting where four 'locals' met with Council Officers and we agreed to work together. In February 2004, a public meeting was held at Balgowan School hall. By the end of the meeting the four had become eight and we had elected an acting committee.

Since then, we've worked hard, had a lot of fun and have made a difference. New members joined throughout the year and we've met some great people. We formed the group to help maintain, and improve, the standards in the park. We also want to see the park being used by the local community. We want to help to preserve and to develop this great facility as a resource for local people.

We want to help this resource (which has been a feature in the heart of the town for over one hundred years) to thrive. We want people of all ages to use it. We expect people to respect the park and everyone else who uses it. We want the park to be there for future generations.

We went into the inaugural meeting with fifteen members and we now have a membership of twenty seven very enthusiastic people. Clearly our new members are just as passionate about the park as the original four]

On behalf of the committee, may I extend a very warm welcome to all of our new 'Friends.' We want your views. Please contact us and let us know what you want your friends group to be about.

David Bays, Chair.

Inaugural meeting:

We were delighted by the number of people who came along to our inaugural meeting on the 10th November. Thank you to Brian and Jo for arranging venue, leaflets etc. and to everyone for coming along to support us and to find out about the 'Friends.' Notes from the meeting are attached.

We are very grateful for the continued support from officers from the London Borough of Bromley. Patrick Philips, the Head of Parks and Recreation gave an update on the friends groups and on issues affecting our park. Louise Simpson prepared a table full of brochures and information about the park and provided refreshments. Thank you to both.

Web Site:

One of our new members, Terry Guntrip, has very kindly offered to set up a web site for us. Terry came up to talk to me at the end of the inaugural meeting. Not only was his offer very welcome, but he had even produced a mock up of how our site might look!

Terry does this sort of thing as a hobby. It struck me that it's an example of how members can bring existing skills to help, and of how some of us might even learn a few new skills through it!

David B

Your Committee:

The inaugural meeting elected its first formal committee.

Chair - David Bays

Hon. Secretary - Jo Steele

Hon. Treasurer- Brian Hermon

Hon. Membership Sec. - Val Bays
Cllr Chris Phillips
David Wilde
'Bill Gietzen

Your committee is made up of people who, right from the start, have worked very hard to get the friends group up and running. Thank you to those that volunteered and those that voted us in.

Committee Meetings: We are arranging the dates for our four formal meetings throughout 2005. **The next meeting will be held on 12th January 2005**, Future meetings are likely to be in April 2005, July 2005 and October 2005. (AGM in October/November 2005.)

The venue for our meetings is kindly arranged by Brian Hermon. We are limited in the number of people we can get into the venue, so we can't fit everyone in. That said, members are very welcome to ask the committee to consider any particular issue. Please give at least 48 hours prior to any meetings that you wish to attend. Please contact Jo to discuss.

Notes from each meeting will be sent out to all members, so you can see what we are discussing, and the date for the next meeting.

Skills and Interests:

If, like Terry, you have a particular skill you could use to benefit the Friends, please do let us know. If you would like to learn a new skill, then there may be opportunities to learn one.

That might be planning, or digging in the Friends garden, or shadowing/supporting one of the committee members.

(I bought a little book about trees this year and now roam the park trying to 'spot the difference'. It also helps when we talk to Jon the tree expert, at the council!)

You might have a specific interest in the park and you might want to meet up with other like-minded members. (Anyone interested in continuing the development of the Friends Garden?)

You might even want to write a newsletter! Please let us know.

David B

What have we been up to in 2004?:

The Friends group was started early in 2004 by six local people working with Council Officers.

The group arranged an Easter Egg Hunt to coincide with the raising of the park's first 'green flag' award flag and the planting of some small trees. These activities were part of our launch, and we managed to get an article and a photograph into the 'News Shopper.' The article helped to generate interest on the day and attracted four new members to the group.

We wrote to the council to comment on the planning application to use a section of the park as a decant village for the hospital site development.

We held a very enjoyable BBQ in the park in June. This was very well attended and attracted some more new members. The event was aimed at fostering relationships with other clubs and groups, such as the tennis club and the football club, that use the park.

Val attended the Green Flag judging and represented the Friends Group. Judges place a lot of stead in the presence of Friends Group. (The park was later informed that the Green Flag had been awarded for the second year running.)

Val and David B ran a stand at the Family Fun Weekend in September. Over the two days, we had a steady trickle of interested people who came to say hello and to talk about their thoughts on the park.

With Brian, they also represented the friends group at a gathering of all 14 friends groups in the borough. This was a good opportunity to network and share good ideas.

Decant Village:

In order that the Beckenham Hospital site can be developed, a decant village will be built in the park, probably starting around Christmas time. We expect it will be there for well over a year.

Bromley Primary Care Trust will be paying a sum of money to the council for the use of the land. We are insisting that this money is invested into the park and are lobbying for it to be spent appropriately.

Together with Councillors and Officers, we are also demanding that the park land be fully re-instated at the end of the project and that all trees close by are fully protected.

We wrote to the planning committee in the summer. We believe that most of our concerns have been addressed in the conditions attached to the planning approval.

Park Operational Issues:

During 2004, we had lots of things to cheer about and to celebrate in the park.

Unfortunately, we had a list of things we were not happy about. We have been working with the council officers and with Holwoods (the contractor who maintains the park) to try and resolve them.

Our list included personal security for park staff and visitors, especially at the end of the day. We did have an initial discussion with local Police and we know that Louise has met them on a more formal footing.

We also want the anti-climb/axle grease substance removed from the railings around the park. It looks awful!

We get frustrated when the dog mess bins are not emptied often enough and small mountains of plastic bags start to mount up.

Graffiti seems to gradually get cleared by the council, but we like to see it go straight away.

We had a number of times when there was confusion around park closing times, and we know of a number of occasions when people were locked in.

Council officers need our input, especially as many of us use the park on a daily basis. We don't just want to be a help desk, but we do feel that these problems can be resolved and we will continue to look for solutions with the council.

If you have a particular concern about operational matters, please contact Louise Simpson at the Parks Department. You might also want to let your committee know, especially if the problem persists.

Have your say:

Please do tell us what you think about the park, good and bad.

Social Events:

We like the idea of a friend's picnic in the park next summer. Come and put some names to faces, share your thoughts and enjoy the park. (A sort of bring your own sandwiches and umbrella/sun cream type of event!) Any volunteers to arrange it? Any other suggestions are very welcome.

Safety at the Fun Fair:

At the AGM, members raised concerns over the safety of some of the rides. We recently received an update from Toby Smith of the Parks Ranger Service. Part of Toby's email reads:

"The funfair and all its equipment is inspected by the Councils Fairground health and safety inspector, every item of equipment that is used has to have a relevant and up to date safety certificate. He will also look for any other possible hazards and risks which must then be rectified.

The Councils Environmental Inspector also visits the site and checks all food and drink stalls and noise levels."

Contact Us:

You can contact David B or Val by telephoning us on 020 8289 6989. You can also email us at: friends@becrec.net

Contact the Council:

Louise Simpson is our main contact at Bromley Council. You can call her on her direct number: 020 8461 7864 or email her at: louise.simpson@bromley.gov.uk

And Finally...

May we be amongst the first to wish you all a very merry and peaceful Christmas!