

CRANFORD PARK FRIENDS

ANNUAL REPORT 2014-15

This third year of our group has seen regular volunteering from a keen band of supporters, based around our monthly Sunday morning opening of the Secret Garden (jointly with Macmillan Cancer Support). Some volunteers are also tending the garden between these dates, and as a result there has been a beautiful display of wild flowers and an attractive vegetable plot. Wild bees have been an added attraction. When we get enough volunteers we have continued the task of trimming ivy and undergrowth from around the Ha-Ha.

Membership of Cranford Park Friends has grown to 90, the majority of whom live within a few miles of the park in Hillingdon and Hounslow boroughs.

Additional volunteering activity has included river clearance sessions and a park litter pick (jointly with Thames 21). Our members have assisted the London Borough of Hillingdon (LBH) Countryside & Conservation Officer running a weekend of vegetation clearance with teenagers on the National Citizen Service 'Challenge'. There have also been several groups of corporate volunteers and some short volunteer sessions by students from Cranford Community College.

Our volunteers are continuing regular invertebrate and phosphate sampling in the river, at our (one of 11) monitoring site on the Crane. Started in 2014 and known as the Citizen Crane Project it is led by fellow partners of the Crane Valley Partnership. The first year Interim Report for the project was published in August and is engaging various academic institutions.

We continued working with LBH towards our objective of applying for a Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) grant for the park and its historic buildings. We were represented by Justine Bayley and the Secretary at a Project Inception Meeting with the project consultants LDA Design in November 2014 at St Dunstan's. The Steering Group met three times, including at the Civic Centre in February, this also attended by the Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Business Services, and agreed a proposed 'masterplan' for the park. A three-week public consultation on these proposals began with their display over an April weekend in the stable courtyard, with members assisting council officials. This was well attended by the public. The display was also put in several local libraries and St. Dunstan's. There were 150 responses to the consultation, a figure that LBH officers were very pleased with. The Feasibility Study (for submission to HLF as a bid pre-application) is quite complex and is still being prepared.

The remains of the historic marble statue of the Venus and Cupid, damaged in the Information Centre fire of September 2014, were collected and catalogued by the restorers, Cliveden Ltd. We are assured by LBH that repair of the Information Centre will be starting soon. Our History & Conservation sub-group has continued

to undertake valuable research, and a separate report follows from Christopher Luetchford.

We have made representations regarding 'Smart Motorway' proposals for the M4 by the Highways England (i.e. use of the hard shoulders as running lanes). The Secretary addressed a site inspection in the park led by the Examining Authority for the scheme and he and Robin Brown spoke at open-floor hearings in November to underline our concerns.

The Cranford Park Friends website was updated regularly by webmaster Ian May, and membership of the Friends' Facebook page has gone up from 129 to 184.

The Secretary attended two meetings of the Crane Valley Partnership. We have spread the word about the park and events via the local media. The Secretary has given a talk about the park and its heritage to four local groups and clubs in Ealing, Hounslow and Hillingdon boroughs.

The third annual summer event (Cranford Park Family Day, aka CP Remembers) on July 25 and held jointly with LBH Green Spaces was, by all accounts, even better than last year with very good turnout of more than 300 from the local community and an increased range of attractions. In October we held our first Apple Day jointly with Green Spaces, combined with a Macmillan Coffee Morning in the Secret Garden. This was also well attended and £260 was raised for Macmillan Cancer Support. We held a harvest and 'wassailed' in the park orchard and demonstrated our new fruit press, making some delicious Cranford apple juice.

Thanks go to all who have assisted our work and supported our events in Cranford Park during the year. We now look forward building on these, seeing restored facilities in the park and engaging with the Heritage Lottery Fund in what promises to be an exciting year ahead.

Bob Barton - Secretary

November 2015