

# Friends of Wanstead Parklands

## **Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held 24 February 2016 at Wanstead Cricket Club, Overton Drive, Wanstead, London, E11 2LW.**

The meeting opened at 7:15pm.

### **1. Apologies for absence**

Apologies had been received from Greg Harper, Stuart Munro, and Graham Holman

### **2. Minutes of the last AGM**

The minutes of the previous Annual General Meeting were approved as a true record.

### **3. Matters arising from the minutes**

There were no matters arising

### **4. Chairman's report.**

Mr Wood thanked those who had served on the committee during the previous year, commenting briefly on their individual contributions. Amy Clarkson and Greer Nicholson had sadly stepped down, and Richard Arnopp was retiring after nine years on the committees of the Friends and its predecessor group, the Wanstead Parklands Community Project.

Mr Wood reported that the previous last twelve months had been a period of intense activity for the Friends, as plans for the future of Wanstead Park had gradually begun to crystallise.

Since 2010 the City of London, which administers most of the park as part of Epping Forest, together with the other landowners and stakeholders, including the Friends of Wanstead Parklands, had been working together to build sustainable plans for the park's future. A comprehensive Conservation Statement had been followed by a series of expert reports on heritage, hydrology and other matters.

Since late 2014 the stakeholders had been working with LDA Design, the high-profile landscape consultancy which designed the Olympic Park, to formulate plans for the park's future which will effectively address the issues which led English Heritage (now Historic England) to place it on their register of historic landscapes "At Risk" in 2009. A first draft of the plan was unveiled early last year, and it was currently being revised in line with feedback from the public and project partners.

The "Parkland Plan" was intended to enhance the value of Wanstead Park as an amenity, and make its historic character more easy for visitors to understand, while maintaining its semi-natural character and significance as an informal wildlife sanctuary.

The Parkland Plan was expected to go before the City of London's Epping Forest and Commons Committee at its May meeting. As well as deciding whether to support the Parkland Plan in principle, the Committee would need to resolve issues over funding and the time-scale for implementation.

This was a critical moment in the park's history.

The various stakeholders had worked together over the previous few years with a remarkable degree of harmony, with few serious disagreements about what was wrong with the park at present, and what - in an ideal world - should be done with it. As ever, the main stumbling block was how improvements should be funded.

The Friends of Wanstead Parklands favoured a lottery-funded bid under the "Parks for People" programme, which could bring a grant of up to £5m. As well as most effectively leveraging the City of London's contribution, to their

benefit and that of the park, it would ensure that some of the most urgent works could be carried out relatively quickly.

The alternative approach would be for the City to carry out a more incremental programme of works over a longer period of time. This would, of course, give the City greater control over the project and its costs. However, in the Friends' view, it would be a wasted opportunity and create the possibility of plans being derailed by changing priorities.

The Friends regard the Parkland Plan as an exciting and imaginative response both to Wanstead Park's problems and to its unrealised potential. They hoped that the Epping Forest and Commons Committee would make the right decision in May. In the meantime, they were grateful for the support we have received from an all-party group of local MPs, led by John Cryer; as well as Dr Syed Kamall MEP, Conservative leader in the European Parliament, and a number of local councillors.

In the meantime, some welcome changes were already taking place around the park. Clearance work around the Perch Pond and Ornamental Water had opened up long-lost views. Preparations were being made to tackle the Perch Pond's infestation by floating pennywort. Also, interim repairs were being made to the Heronry Pond pending longer-term decisions on its future.

A development strongly welcomed by the Friends was the successful application by the London Borough of Redbridge for funding of its "Riding the Roding" project. This is not only for the direct benefits to the Roding Valley, but because it would complement plans for the regeneration of the adjacent Wanstead Park. Redbridge and the Wanstead Park stakeholders had been working closely on both projects. In particular, the new riverside cycle path would improve local connectivity. Separate funding is being sought from within Redbridge's own budget for restoration of the much-missed Coronation Bridge. The Friends attached high importance to this, as the historic landscape of Wanstead Park was not currently as accessible as it should be to many Ilford residents.

During the course of the year the Friends had been approached by campaigners concerned at the lack of children's play facilities in the Aldersbrook area, and had lent their support to the provision of a natural play area in Wanstead Park. It was hoped this will be incorporated as an objective in the final version of the Parkland Plan.

Another initiative from outside the group to which the Friends had lent their support was the installation of a weather station in Wanstead Park. This will be part of the Meteorological Office's national network and would provide specific rainfall data which could be fed into future hydrological work for the park.

Turning to internal matters, the committee had welcomed several new members over the course of the year. He was also grateful for the contribution of those who had retired or were about to do so.

The year had seen a long-term objective come close to fruition, namely the Friends' decision to seek charitable status. Following the Special General Meeting in October, trustees were appointed and a formal application made to the Charities Commission. Charitable status would open up new funding opportunities for the Friends, and he was particularly grateful to committee member Simon Skelding for his help and advice on this matter.

The largest fundraising event this year was the very successful Agatha Christie themed dinner in October at Wanstead Cricket Club, which raised some £1,200.

In May a group of Friends members and supporters "road-tested" Olivia Bellas' Memento Sound Walk of Wanstead Park. Lasting about an hour, the walk was followed by a de-brief at Wanstead Park's Temple, over tea and cake. The Sound Walk was compiled from a series of interviews with park users. The Friends had recommended it as an original and worthwhile addition to online resources for Wanstead Park.

Two successful litter picks had been held in April and October, and it was hoped to find ways of holding them more frequently.

The Friends had been represented at Music in Wanstead Park, the Wanstead Festival and other local events to raise their visibility and sell merchandise. The group had continued to build its presence on social media, and currently

had 282 members in its Facebook group, and 1,160 followers on Twitter. They had also been circulating a regular newsletter to members, which was ably edited by Diane Gardner.

Five organised walks were held in the park over the year, along with three additional special events for particular groups or occasions. This year the largest group was 35 people.

In the summer the Friends curated an exhibition at The Temple on the theme "Images of Nature". This was well-received, and we are grateful to the talented local photographers who made their work available.

For the second time, Historic England recognised the Friends' work in the Heritage Angels Awards with a special certificate of recognition.

The Friends' finances were currently reasonably healthy, with total funds currently in excess of £9,000.

Mr Wood appealed for more volunteers, asking for anyone who thought they might be interested in helping out to approach a member of the committee, or to come along to one of the Friends' monthly meetings without obligation.

He thanked all of those present for their support in the past, expressed the hope that the Friends would continue to build on their success in the future under his successor.

## **5. Hon. Treasurer's report**

No formal report was given, as the Treasurer was not present.

## **6. Election of committee, and invitations for co-option**

Mr Arnopp said that the following persons had been nominated in advance for membership of the committee: John Meehan, Dwight Wood, Jo Fensome, Diane Gardner, Simon Skelding, Ralph Potter, Jo Billingham and Gill James.

Proposer: Richard Arnopp

Secunder: Tricia Moxey

In the absence of any further nominations from the floor, Mr Arnopp invited the meeting to elect those nominated *en bloc*. This was agreed without dissent by show of hands.

Mr Arnopp said that the following persons had offered themselves for co-option by the new committee: Tricia Moxey, Peter Brimson and Greg Harper. He invited other candidates to come forward, and John Sharp and Monica Woods did so.

## **7. Any other business**

No other formal business had been notified.

There followed a number of short presentations by supporters of the Friends.

### **Steve O'Hara: Bushwood and Area Residents Association**

Mr O'Hara said that his group represented over 500 households in the Bushwood area of Leytonstone, and strongly supported the objectives of the Friends of Wanstead Parklands. He suggested that, if they had not already done so, the Friends approach other local residents groups such as the Ferndale Area Residents Association and the Wanstead Society.

### **Bob Ward: Wanstead Golf Club**

Mr Ward said that Wanstead golf course was an integral part of Wanstead Park, and the golf club was fully committed to its regeneration. He said that the golf club supported the work of the Friends and was very happy to host events such as the present one, and make rooms available for meetings.

### **Cllr Jas Athwal: Leader of Redbridge Council**

Cllr Athwal said there had been much talk of “the Big Society” in recent years, but this was not new. There was a long tradition of volunteering, and he very much welcomed the community joining together to look after a treasure like Wanstead Park. He said that the London Borough of Redbridge would do all it could to help the Friends achieve their objectives. In particular, he supported the provision of a natural play area in Wanstead Park and, if this was provided, Redbridge would cover the cost of maintenance.

**Tim Harris: Wren Wildlife and Conservation Group**

Mr Harris said that the Wren Group was broadly happy with the Parkland Plan, and had worked with the Friends of Wanstead Parklands on its development. The Park was a rich area for flora and fauna, and the Wren Group had been surveying this regularly for many years. He invited anyone who is interested in the natural aspect of the area to come to the Wren Group’s AGM on 16 March.

**David Boote: Leyton and Leytonstone Historical Society**

Mr Boote thanked Dwight Wood for inviting him. There were close links between Waltham Forest and Wanstead, and the owners of Wanstead Park had been Lords of the Manor of Ruckholt, in Leyton. Much valuable research had been done by members of Friends of Wanstead Parklands into the history of the park and wider area.

**Pam Williams: Ilford historical Society**

Mrs Williams gave a short talk on a mysterious object purchased by her husband, Bob, a few months before - a bronze medal or token. In excellent condition, it bore on one side a crisply struck coat of arms, in high relief. On the other side was mechanically engraved the words “BASON CANALS &c”. Research had shown it to date from the time of the second Earl Tylney (1750-84) and probably used as a pass for workers on the estate.

**Geraldine Roberts: author “The Angel and the Cad”**

Mrs Roberts said that her book had its origins in 10 years of research. She had used the story of Catherine Tylney-Long as the subject of her Masters’ dissertation at Queen Mary’s College, and had then expanded it into “The Angel and the Cad”. As well as being a dramatic story, the marriage of William and Catherine Long-Wellesley had been of wider significance. They had been Britain’s first “celebrity couple”, and Catherine’s struggle for her children had resulted in a posthumous victory for women’s rights.

**Phil Mason: Transition Leytonstone**

The “Transition” movement had about 1100 branches around the world, with Leytonstone being the most local. It was about “thinking global, acting local”, with an emphasis on members growing their own food and sourcing food locally. On the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month “green drinks” were held at the Walnut Tree.

**Jo Blackman: Aldersbrook Playground Campaign**

Jo Blackman said she had been involved in the friends of Wanstead Parklands for a year, and had found the group very welcoming. There was a great need for children’s play facilities in the Aldersbrook area, and she was grateful for the support the campaign had received from the Friends and the wider community. As well as the provision of a playground, the campaign was interested in other ways of getting children involved in the Park.

**John Cryer MP**

Mr Cryer said he had worked with the Friends for several years and had lobbied the City of London on a number of occasions on their behalf. He had set up a group of local MPs who supported the regeneration of the Park. A meeting with officials of the City of London was due to take place shortly, and which he would be briefed about progress. The Park was an important local amenity and one of the most important heritage assets in East London. The campaign would continue “until we get what we want”.

The meeting closed with a presentation of gifts to Dwight Wood, the outgoing chairman, his wife Tessie, and Richard Arnopp, who was retiring from the committee.

The meeting was followed by a firework display, sponsored by Mr Wood's company.

Richard Arnopp  
Honorary Secretary