

Friends of Headington Hill Park AGM

16 April 2024 at 6pm Headington Hill Hall, Music Room

Attendees: Marion Ackrill, Judith Argles, Philip Baker, Rosemary Clayton, Patrick and Jane Denby, Manuela Escarameia, Ian Gourlay, Helen Hewlett, Sophie Huxley, Cathy Pickin, Amaryllis and Simon Roper, Andrea Siret, Philip Baker, Rosemary Pocock, David Saunder, Pat Whitehouse, John Colehan

Apologies for Absence: Rudi Broekens, David and Chris Colbeck, Patrick and Jane Coulter, Mike Gardener, Julie and Peter Harrod, Goldie and Sonia Kailay, Kirby Stephen, John Marjot, Emerita Pilgrim, Marie Power

- Chairman Ian Gourlay offered everyone a warm welcome
- Minutes from previous AGM on 25 April 2023 approved unanimously and signed by the Chair
- Election and re-election of committee approved unanimously
 - Chair – Ian Gourlay
 - Treasurer – Helen Hewlett
 - Secretary – no nomination received – Patrick Denby offered to take on this role in the interim
 - Membership & online media – Patrick Denby
 - Committee Member, Publicity – John Marjot
 - New committee Member recruited – Sophie Huxley
- Chairman's Annual Report circulated to members prior to the meeting and is below.
- Treasurers Annual Report – below
 - At April 2024 year end, the Friends have a closing balance of £4,300.41
 - Members voted to approve the accounts and Independent Examiners findings that "I can confirm that having reviewed the information that all the transactions for 2023/24 are accounted for and fully reconciled." A Balance Sheet presentational issue was identified and would be discussed further with the IE, but the "Balance Sheet still balances".
- Volunteer Rangers' Report from Marion Ackrill – below. Reported on considerable voluntary works in the park, and P3 Project Members found this "fascinating and illuminating", understanding the importance of appropriate plant choices.

Discussion

- Ian Gourlay drew members attention to a painting by Turner depicting a road travelling down a hill, which he suspected was along Headington Hill.
- Raised bench at least 19" height was requested, possibly by the Handkerchief Tree. The Committee will look into this.
- The path towards St Clements gets very muddy, and not accessible to wheelchair users. There was a discussion about sand and gravel and edging being outside FoHHP remit and budget.
- Notices in the Noticeboard on London Road fade - any remedy possible? Suggestions were made for special plastic, and regular renewal of the posters.
- The entrance to the park between The Old Dairy and the pedestrian bridge is very dense, and potentially intimidating and unsafe. Is there any way of allowing views of the park to pierce through the greenery without losing the character of that entrance?
- The boarded-up entrance opposite St Clements Church was in disrepair and becoming a concern. Patrick Denby reported that this was no longer an entrance, but that a railing was proposed to replace the broken wooden panel. The Committee were working on solutions. Ian Gourlay gave the historical context of this opening, as the path along which the Morrell family travelled from Headington Hill Hall, through the park, and on to the Church by horse and trap.
- It was noticed that the bottom gates were padlocked was this for a right of way issue. It was concluded that it was for safety.
- The Friends of Headington Hill Park has a Facebook page. Members are invited to Like and Follow. Park related photographs are welcome.

Meeting closed by Chair, Ian Gourlay, who then welcomed our Speaker Dr Carolyn Jenkins, Superintendent of the University Parks, whose talk was titled "The University Parks: how do we protect this well-loved space?". Carolyn's excellent presentation included visuals of the history and development of the park, current works and of plans for the future including wildflower meadow restoration and research. It was very well received by FoHHP members.

Further information at <https://www.parks.ox.ac.uk/>

Chairman's Report, Friends of Headington Hill Park AGM Tuesday 16th April 2024

I would like to welcome everyone to this AGM and thank you all for supporting the Friends of HHP.

Particular thanks to those that have come out in all weathers for our work parties, Park walks and plantings.

For the continuing hard work and amazing improvements to the Park, organised and directed by Marion. The latter is also of course a shared undertaking with the many schools and other volunteer groups that Marion has engaged with.

I must also give special thanks to all the committee members; Helen for keeping us on the financial straight and narrow, after detailed briefing with our previous treasurer, David. John for the wonderful posters, the FOHHP Notice Board and many other areas of research. Patrick for keeping tabs on membership, keeping everyone informed and so much more behind the scenes.

Two members are sadly stepping down, Marion as Secretary (although will still be a presence as a park ranger) and Goldie, who had been taking minutes (the latter is hoping to return to Oxford later in the year and may rejoin then).

We would therefore encourage any of our members to step forward and fill these positions (Those being: Secretary, Minutes recorder, Events/social member, general member)

If no one steps forward today, Patrick will assume secretary tasks on an interim basis.

After the main AGM set agenda items, we would like to invite members to comment on what is proposed in the future, what they may wish to suggest and question your committee on?

Our two main projects remain new railings to replace the awful broken fencing opposite St Clements Church. We now have a section of old railings procured and a local firm willing to adapt and place them in the opening. Unfortunately, the main contactor involved in pushing this forward is having some health problems at the moment. We have recently been informed that the railings will not require planning permission – previously envisaged as a headache!

The second project is to place another information board closer to the top Cuckoo Lane corner of the Park, where the main tarmac track turns to the right and then along below the hall. This will have the latest list of trees recently labelled (the so called 'Blue trees' on the web page tree walk) and show how at this point the original carriage way went straight up and around the side of the Hall, finally arriving at the grand frontage of the Hall.

We also hope to add something on the Civil War earthworks discovered to be within the park in 2022 using a lidar survey. On this one, we are very excited that we may have some additional survey work completed in May to improve our confidence.

These projects will require some funding on top of what the council might offer and your thoughts would be welcome!

At this point I will describe verbally about the most recent planting of a Chinese privet.

We will then be delighted to hear a talk by the Uni. Parks curator, Dr. Carolyn Jenkins.

Finally, a big thankyou to Brookes for allowing us to hold this meeting in such a splendid setting, overlooking our wonderful Park.

Ian Gourlay, Chairman Friends of Headington Hill Park

Friends of Headington Hill Park (FoHHP)

Treasurer's Report for the AGM 16.04.2024

1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024

Overview

Friends of Headington Hill Park is an Unincorporated Association. A Membership organisation, where the annual membership fee is £5pa.

Summary of Financial activity during this financial year

Income and expenditure

Membership - fees and donations are received throughout the year.

Events - There were two social events during the year. The AGM and social in April 2023 and a tree planting with mulled wine and mince pie refreshments in December 2023, with associated expenses and donations.

Park and FoHHP maintenance/development - Tree labels, web site expenses, a token for the independent examiner

P3 Project - The P3 (People, Plants and Pollinators) project is an ongoing project which attracted a grant from [Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment](#) (TOE) and donations from local businesses in 22-23. Half of the award from TOE was paid in to the FoHHP account (3,282.50). The other half of the award was managed by TOE itself, making payments directly to plant suppliers. The transactions are managed by TOE do not feature in the FoHHP accounts. No further income has been received for this project during this financial year. Purchases of plants and supporting items (like compost) have been made by Marion Ackrill, volunteer Park Ranger and committee member. Expenditure has then reimbursed to her by cheque.

Independent Examination of Accounts

FoHHP accounts and financial records were examined by Gareth Kenworthy, CPFA (Chartered Institute of Public Finance Accountancy). He has provided an email confirming that "I can confirm that having reviewed the information, that all the transactions for 2023/24 are accounted for and fully reconciled." He does have a recommendation regarding the accounting of the P3 income year on year – showing unspent P3 income as deferred income. These presentational changes would affect the P&L account and Balance Sheet. However, the Balance Sheet still balances and the Assets and Reserves figures will remain as they are. I will discuss this further with him.

I suggest that the FoHHP draft accounts are accepted by this AGM and any presentational changes are made after further consultation with the Independent Examiner.

All supporting receipts and documents are available for members to review.

Treasurer Helen Hewlett, 16.04.2024

Headington Hill Park

Volunteer Ranger Report April 2024

My role was created by a member of the council's parks department two and a half years ago, aware that this special park needed urgent remedial work across its 20 acres. I was asked to start by removing several dead amelanchier trees, planted in error a few years before by the parks department. Sadly, council over-planting and inappropriate siting has continued across the city, and within the park: 2022, the 'Tai-Haku' cherry scandal; 2023, the Arbutus unedo affair; 2024...?

Having passed that audition, I've continued to improve some areas of the park, working over 2000 hours on the ground so far, though many areas still need thorough renovation.

Removing hundreds of seedlings and saplings including sycamore, elder, cherry, ash; digging out bramble thickets from open ground and from the domains of specimen trees; lifting various tree canopies; sawing off dead or crossing branches: these all aim to create a more exciting play of light and shadow, longer views through, under and beyond, and chances for a greater variety of flowering plants to thrive.

Making the parkland more enticing for people strolling off the main paths, without losing the tranquil feel of a hidden gem, is a matter for continual consideration.

Mindful of personal security, especially of solo walkers, I shaped occasional gaps through the dense evergreens near the top Headington Road entrance. More to be done (anyone for topiary?).

Collecting wood to add to the woodpiles now established in the hinterlands, continued, allowing tractors to mow the grass freely. This prevented new thickets from arising around strewn wood – of which there's generally a lot, for obvious reasons – trees, winds, dogs!

I devised and ran 'P3 – People, Plants, Pollinators!', throughout 2023, continuing this year. Friends may already know plenty about this, as so many have helped in differing ways. The list of thanks to Friends, and to all the additional participating volunteers, is about 200 names long! But for now, two thank-yous in particular: thank you Helen Hewlett for hundreds of hours helping me get the project up and running, filing and collating the monies, fielding my queries and concerns, and remaining on the case at times I might have given up. Running a nursery of hundreds of growing plants for the park, in my back garden, was nearly a job too far.

Secondly, thank you John Marjot for a superb outcome to a thoughtful collaboration. The derelict street board on Headington Road, close to the park's St Clements entrance, was kindly adopted in 2023 by Councillor Barbara Coyne, for the Friends' use. My desire to see this board returned to use, was stimulated by the need to acknowledge funders of P3 (all those plants mentioned earlier). John renovated, painted, and made a wooden logo heading for it, and has kept his informative posters changing and varied for passing public to enjoy.

Now, the P3 plant choices. Out of thousands that might have selected, those chosen had to meet about 14 (self-imposed) criteria, most of which were interdependent. Though used to doing this for private clients, there were different and additional considerations for a public space. The criteria are listed on a separate document, the plant lists likewise; let me know if you'd like to see them any time.

I organised three Gardening Sundays in 2023, to which Friends were invited for however long or short, with whatever tool they felt like using. These were really lovely days - and transformative.

Generally, pulling out seedlings of the trees mentioned, and any others clearly unintended, will be incredibly helpful, before they become saplings taking many hours to remove. Feel free!

Finally, the public are sooo delighted by the park, so let me pass on, to all the Friends, the incredible compliments, encouragement and enthusiasm I get to receive on your behalf.

Marion Ackrill