

Friends of Spencer Park and Recreation Ground: AGM, 19 June 2016

Chair's Report, 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017

Paul Smith 19 June 2017

Building upon the previous year, the year to 31 March 2017 saw the Friends make a real difference to the appearance and facilities in the enclosed section of Spencer Park.

The committee is an effective body which meets monthly. Carol Bayliss, Liz Bayton, Jane Donovan, and Anthony Godber joined at the AGM, improving our catering provision and the design of our advertising. Helen Spence joined during the year and has focused on a history of the park.

We held a range of events (some of which are now fixtures in the local annual calendar). These included a stall at the Earlsdon Festival, tennis and bowls open days, the Big Lunch, sale of refreshments at Bands in the Park, Worldsong, Fun Day, and a Christmas celebration to mark the first anniversary of the opening of the play area (with the Lord Mayor). The Easter Egg hunt just fell outside this reporting year (as has the 2017 event) but both were outstanding successes.

The Community Tennis Club, our major innovation, proved a great success, with 57 households joining. The income has been ring fenced for the restoration of the courts. We would need approximately £8000 to renovate the existing surfaces or £50,000 to install new surfaces and a fence.

Membership of the Albany Crown Bowls Club continued to grow, reaching 50 (35 full members, 15 social) (it had been 11 in 2011). Playing most afternoons and evenings, this has provided a 'presence' in the park and made a significant contribution to inhibiting anti-social behaviour.

As regards the flat green the Council cut the grass every two weeks with a rotary mower, and applied weed killer. After some difficulty, in April 2016 we found a contractor to begin restoring the green. This work was just enough to allow members of the Coventry branch of Parkinson's UK to play every two weeks from July (the Lord Mayor attended an event). In autumn we hired a new, more cost-effective contractor to maintain the green (moss killer, scarification, cutting and ventilation) to the minimum standard for it to remain as a fine lawn.

We continued to maintain the gardens in the south-west and north-east borders of the enclosed park. More volunteers are needed. We planted more crocuses in the recreation ground; they and the snowdrops provide a much anticipated annual display.

We have been successful in raising funds. Two new benches were installed, paid for by donations. We are very grateful to Kevin Bowes at Rennison Publications for his support. Thanks also to NENA for a generous donation.

Vandalism and anti-social behaviour have been low throughout the year. Due to financial pressures grass cutting has been reduced in both the enclosed park and the recreation ground. This makes them less attractive for play, increasing 'pressure' on the flat green.

Plans for the renovation of the pavilion are under discussion. We have to balance a sensitivity to the building's elegant profile, ensure its security, and provide a multi-function space with durable fittings.

The Friends have worked in liaison with Coventry Council which has repaired the clock and is responsible for the basic maintenance of the park and its trees. The major project was the resurfacing of the old tennis courts which fell outside this year.