



Summer Newsletter 2025



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Our thanks to all those who have contributed to this issue.

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# Welcome

by Richard Hudson, Chairman

As the recently appointed new Chair of the Friends of Christchurch park, this first newsletter welcome and introduction feels quite daunting. I am following in the footsteps of many very able Chairmen and Chairwomen who, along with numerous volunteers and committee members, have made such a positive difference to this park we all cherish.

In refreshing the FOCP notice board by the Reg Driver Centre recently I was reminded of some these recent projects including just to mention a few: the Cabman's Shelter, the Petanque court, the Table Tennis tables, the Round Pond Fountain, the Butterfly Garden and Armillary Sphere, swathes of new trees and a memorial bench or two to admire all of this from.

For anyone able to attend the VE Day 80th anniversary commemorations and service in the park on the 8th May, you will know that the park, including all the FOCP assisted areas, has rarely looked finer. The Ipswich Borough Council parks team, plus helpers from other IBC teams, had done a fantastic job in preparing for this momentous occasion.



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Probably the last major anniversary with veterans of the original day in attendance.

This newsletter includes a longer item on the VE day commemoration and a bit more on my background, from my first walk across the park as an 11 year old school boy to catch the bus home in 1974 ! There are also the customary nature updates from Philip Murphy and Richard Stewart as well as a contribution from our "regular" – Reg Snook. It is encouraging in this era of seemingly ever diminishing flora and fauna worldwide that some areas, including our own park in the middle of the town, is a haven for so much. Amongst other articles there is also one, I suspect probably a first, written from the perspective of a canine park user !

I am passionate about this park and want it to be not just a haven for wildlife and plants but also for all of us users. Whether young

or old, athletic or slightly less so, nature lover, music lover, sports lover or indeed all three. Somewhere to escape from our computer screens and the myriad tasks and commitments of modern living. Even if it is only for ten minutes crossing the park on the way to one of those commitments.

Whilst firstly I am keen to help preserve the legacy of the park as it stands today, I am also keen to try and bring in new members and ideas to help us take on new projects too. If you have received or picked up this newsletter and are not currently a member, please do seriously consider doing so (details at the back of this newsletter). You would be very welcome indeed. It only costs £10 per year per household (or £125 for life membership) to become members. Just for starters, this entitles you to three newsletters per year. Also free attendance at the ever popular annual Brass on the Grass concert series plus regular, highly informative, bird and bat walks held in the park (further details on both in the newsletter).

Thank you to all those who help make Christchurch Park such a special place and thanks in advance to those who hopefully are about to join in too !

**Richard Hudson**

Chairman, Friends of Christchurch Park





# Introducing Our New Chairman Richard Hudson

When Richard Hudson volunteered to help with the work of the Friends of Christchurch Park and joined the Committee in early 2024 I had a sense that his experience in business, coupled with his enthusiasm for all aspects of the Park, were elements that could qualify him for the eventual role as Chair of the Friends.



Recently retired, Richard's helpfulness with the Committee over the succeeding months underlined his suitability for the role and when invited to take on the Chairmanship, after careful

deliberation he accepted. It seemed sensible for Members to know a little about him and Richard agreed to me asking him about himself for the newsletter; a summary of our chat over coffee is distilled here!

Richard is married to Corrina and they have three boys, 25-31, two of whom currently live abroad.

As regards work, he qualified as a Chartered Accountant working for a firm in London and later worked for different businesses as head of finance. For some years up till his recent retirement he was involved with a local IT consultancy firm, Inawisdom Ltd, mainly based at Adastral Park.

Asked how long he has lived near the Park and what has been his involvement with it, Richard replied that he and his family moved close to it in 2001; however his parents first

moved near to the town in 1968 and he became a pupil at Ipswich School in 1974, regularly crossing the Park to and from his bus. Later in life he became a tree warden, and as the 3 boys were growing up the family were always out there enjoying all manner of park games. Richard himself runs regularly and plays tennis on the 5 courts.

How does he want the Park to progress and how does he see his role as Chairman of the Friends? He is keen that the support and catering for all the broad types of users be continued and developed. As to his role as Chairman of the Friends he wants to maintain and build on the firm legacy of 26 years of the group's effective working with the IBC, grow the support by bringing in new members to enable new ideas and schemes to be realised.

On a personal note - what might his favourite film be? Richard unhesitatingly, as a child of the space age, named Apollo 13; the challenges and uses of the technology then available to these astronauts to resolve their unique life or death crisis remains impressive. Book – "Ravenous" by Henry Dimbleby, the theme being how to feed ourselves sustainably and responsibly as citizens of Planet Earth.

I asked him how he sees himself as a person; he responded that he feels himself to be someone privileged to live in a stable country, content with what he has, and keen in life to give something back. With his accountancy disciplines he is inevitably an analytical individual, but also definitely a team player.

Welcome to the Chairmanship of the  
Friends of Christchurch Park Richard!

**by John Woodcock, Vice Chairman FoCP**





# PROJECTS AND PLANS

By John Woodcock

As a group we at the FoCP are always on the alert for undertakings where we can play a meaningful part in enhancing the amenities, general well-being and enjoyment available to users of the Park. We are in regular contact with the IBC Parks Team in this regard. Plans achieved and forthcoming are set out here.

**For VE Celebrations in May** The Friends paid for the decking out of the Reg Driver Visitor Centre with hanging baskets to help mark this unique occasion.

## Memorial Bench in the Upper Arboretum

Using our own funds and gifts from some good friends we were able to install and dedicate a bench to honour the memory of long term Member David Routh. A report on this is included here in the newsletter.

**The Butterfly Garden** At the risk of repetition this special section of re-landscaping just below the tennis courts designed to attract butterflies where the Friends paid the costs of the plants, as well as the bench there, has wonderfully blossomed to our delight and that of the Park staff. It was obviously the best choice

for showcasing in this issue's front cover photograph and elsewhere.

**Picnic Tables** We are currently discussing with the IBC Parks Team the possible provision of sturdy oak picnic tables with benches in suitable locations. More news we hope presently.





**Bird Walks** Following two well supported and enjoyed Bird Walks led by wildlife enthusiast Philip Murphy in March and May (see reports in these pages) Philip is leading two further Walks, planned for July and October.

**Bat Walks** Always popular with all age groups, Suffolk Bat Group have again agreed to stage two events, in September, the 6th and 19th at 7.30 pm and 7 pm respectively.

**Brass on The Grass Concerts** Unmissable music events for all ages, on Sunday afternoons from late July through to early September; please note further details in the next page.

**The William Pepper Painting of the Kiosk** Members will recall in the Autumn



2023 newsletter that a group of the Friends helped acquire this evocative painting depicting the Kiosk (aka the Ice Cream Kiosk) in its present location in 1898; this painting is now being displayed in the Hall of the Mansion. Do visit and view.







The Upper Arboretum just would not be the same in July and August without the stirring tones of a brass band and a delighted audience seated on chairs or blankets engaging with the distinctive live music being played.

Following the successful staging of six brass band events in the summer of 2024 by our dedicated and efficient organiser Roger Herbert the Friends are delighted to report that Roger has been able to arrange for seven bands to perform through July to early September this year. The dates and bands scheduled to perform are as set out below. We are as always deeply grateful to companies and individuals who have pledged their sponsorship, without which the performances would not be possible.

As reported in our Winter 2025 issue, The Cambridge Citadel Band of Salvation Army were proposing a “one off” performance on

the 29th June. Unfortunately, it has not proved possible to stage this event.

All these band performances are free to attend. Do come along. 2.30 – 4.30 p.m Sunday afternoons as follows:-

**20th July** Martlesham Brass – sponsored by Woodcock & Son, Estate Agents.

**27th July** Colchester Band..... – sponsored by The Greyhound Inn, Henley Road.

**3rd August** Ipswich Hospital Band – sponsored by Scrutton Bland, Chartered Accountants.

**10th August** Castleton Brass – their own sponsorship.

**17th August** Suffolk Phoenix Band – sponsored by Coes of Norwich Road, Ipswich.

**31st August** Saints Community Band – sponsored by The Ipswich Society.

**7th September** Woodbridge Excelsior Band – sponsored by Woodbridge Antiques.

**by John Woodcock, Vice Chairman FoCP**

# David Charles Routh, Memorial Bench Dedication



Mayor of Ipswich Councillor Elango K. Elavalakan attended a bench dedication for a long-standing member of the Friends of Christchurch Park, David Charles Routh, in the Upper Arboretum this morning. David was well known in Ipswich as he

participated in many groups within the local community, along with events, meetings, and ceremonies for the Friends group.

He was well known for compering Brass on the Grass concerts in the park. The bench made by Genesis Orwell Mencap honours David's long service to Christchurch Park and it was partly funded by the Friends group and some of David's long-standing friends.



## THE FEED DUCKS INITIATIVE

Ducks and other aquatic birds have long been held in great affection by us Park lovers; the Round Pond and the Wilderness Pond host an endearing number of these enchanting creatures: what better way to give expression to our delight and our affection for them than to treat them to delicious handfuls of bakers' bread?

Actually – NO. That's the **worst** thing we can do: bread makes ducks ill, it contains the wrong sort of nutrition or calories they need to grow and keep warm. Additionally, as a person tends to bring too much from home the volume of food causes huge damage to the eco system, polluting water and increasing growth of algae, quite apart from attracting vermin such as rats.

Answer – The Feed Ducks Initiative, a local government initiative installing solar



powered contactless duck food dispensers in the Park.

Dispensing a managed quantity of duck-appropriate food for a contactless cost of £1 per

60 gram these dispensers are installed free to the community, the proceeds of the food sales are paid directly into the Friends of Christchurch Park account thus helping towards the development of the Park's facilities.

And the ducks, Canada Geese, Cormorants, moorhens etc get to eat nutritiously!

The Duck Feeder is to be found located just below the Reg Driver Visitor Centre, close to the Round Pond. Try it today!

**by John Woodcock, Vice Chairman FoCP**





# MARKING THE OCCASION



At the close of March this year I retired from my work at the firm where my father had handed me the baton as his father had before him; I had fulfilled 55 years as a property negotiator at Woodcock & Son in Ipswich and left having ensured that the firm was now in very safe hands to continue the ethos of dedication to client care into the future.

This event coincided with my handing over the Friends "acting Chairman" responsibilities to our new Chairman Richard Hudson. This "double retirement" was an event not lost on our long-time friend and Member Reg Snook with his ever sensitive "ears to the ground"! I received a call from Reg asking me to drop by and see him as he had something for me. The

"something" turned out to be no less than a specially painted bird namesake of mine, a woodcock, to mark the occasion! I am deeply touched by Reg's kindness and thoughtfulness, typical of this unique soul; the painting represents for me a treasured memento and I thought it fitting to share it with Members here.

Incidentally, during the Dawn Chorus Bird Walk I mentioned this to Philip Murphy; ever the man with a story at his fingertips he related to all of us how, not long ago, he had witnessed in the Park a woodcock emerging from the trees followed in hot pursuit by a buzzard. Due to his nimble evasive flight tactics the woodcock eluded capture!

**John Woodcock, Vice Chairman**

# March Bird Walk and May Dawn Chorus

Led by Philip Murphy

## MARCH

This first bird walk of the year was led by Philip Murphy and it attracted a group of fifteen.

The morning was sunny but with a noticeable wind. While Philip introduced the walk a Carrion Crow and Woodpigeon were calling, the latter, in pairs, seen at several places feeding on newly open tree buds. A Magpie was on nearby grass and Stock Doves were in a nearby tree, probably prospecting for a nest site. A single Goldfinch was the next species seen then a Great Tit and Robin plus the song of a Blackcap from the woodland edge.

Two calling Canada Geese flew in to the Round Pond with three Mallard landing there shortly afterwards. A Lesser Black-backed Gull then flew over, Philip commenting that they often nested on the roof of Christchurch Mansion. Jackdaws and Collared Doves were added as we reached the Wilderness Pond. Next came the short call of a Great Spotted Woodpecker and at the Wilderness Pond Mandarin Ducks, Little Grebe and Moorhen were seen. Philip pointed out that seemingly sedentary Moorhens did migrate with a ringed record from as far away as Scandinavia. The Little Grebes were preoccupied with fending off a potentially predatory gull while two terrapins were out on the partially submerged log.

At the far end of the former Croquet Lawn a Jay was seen in flight and nearby we heard the onomatopoeic call of a Chiffchaff. A



Carrion Crow



Robin came very close and then a Wren was singing and a Song Thrush flew across the Wet Meadow. Here both white and purple Fritillaries, Primroses, Celandines and Kingcups were in flower and Philip remembered, last year, seeing a Muntjac at the end of the meadow, pursued by a large dog. Two Pied Wagtails were the next species and at the top of Snow Hill one of our group made 'the spot of the walk', identifying a Buzzard high up in clouds. A Herring Gull was the final species

Philip was then thanked for his expertise and a multitude of stories that enriched the walk. However more was to come as one of the group members produced special glasses so we could witness the partial eclipse of the sun.

The total of species seen or heard was twenty four but I added Green Woodpecker on my home journey.

## DAWN CHORUS 10th MAY

A party of twelve met the leader, Philip Murphy, at 4.30am at the top of the Bridleway and even before we started there were calls from Blackbirds, Robin and Wren. A distant Carrion Crow was the next to be heard followed by a Blackcap. Philip pointed out that the smaller the bird is the more high pitched will be its song. He added that this species is now a winter regular



Blackcap





in this country, with about five thousand cutting out the previously usual migration in autumn. Wood pigeons came next, then Lesser Black-backed Gull, Philip stressing that there is no such species as a 'seagull'.

The Chiffchaff's onomatopoeic call was next then the high pitched call of a Goldcrest, that some of us, more advanced in years, couldn't hear. Calling Jackdaws flew overhead then a Stock Dove, which nests in tree holes, was seen high up a nearby tree. Philip estimated these often unnoticed birds have between ten and fifteen pairs in the park. The first of many Magpies was next and gulls were seen foraging at the top of Snow Hill, with the recent grass cutting bringing up more insects to the surface. A Jay flew over, then a Herring Gull followed it.

By now the orange glow from the sunrise was partially visible behind distant trees. Horse Chestnut 'candles' and bright yellow Broom added to the beauty of what is the best part of the day and later sunlight had reached budding trees at the back of the Cenotaph. Philip commented on the incredible variety of trees in the park as a group of three Mandarin ducks flew over, followed shortly by a Cormorant. Philip mentioned that three of this species had spent the night roosting in the park but the

noises from the November fireworks display sent them away and they have not returned. A Great Tit was next then the first calls of Canada Geese from the Wilderness Pond.

Another bright yellow, that of Buttercups, was on both sides of the path leading past the Wet Meadow and on the Wilderness pond it was good to see some surviving Canada Geese young. One adult was also partially seen on a nest. Little Grebe were calling loudly, then a Moorhen was heard and seen. There were good close views of one Feral Pigeon and two Stock Doves. Though Mandarins would soon be moulting Philip mentioned a record total of forty three last November. Despite a letter to the local paper and a failed attempt by a boat the two Pekin Ducks were still on the pond, being seen to aggravate a pair of Mallard that had just flown in. Another Blackcap was singing in nearby Wilderness Wood and Philip pointed out two Lesser Black-backed Gulls on the Mansion's chimneys, probably prospecting for a nesting site. Dunnock, Pied Wagtail, Starling and Blue Tit were added in quick succession but a visit to the 'Mabel Oak' was unsuccessful, though there had been a sighting on the two previous days. Then two Jays arrived, calling loudly, which led us to believe than an owl was possibly present, further down the hole.

Philip was thanked for imparting his vast knowledge of the park to our group and, with the Feral Pigeon included but not the Pekin ducks, the total of bird species was twenty six.



**Reports by Richard Stewart**



# Bird Report

MARCH TO MAY 2025

By Philip Murphy

## March

Typically, March witnessed the arrival of the first passerine summer migrants back in the park with Chiffchaff and Blackcap initially noted singing on 10th and 21st respectively. Conversely, just as these two species of warbler were arriving in the park, so the totals of Redwings, which breed in northern and eastern Europe, declined with a maximum of 25 on 9th - one was heard singing on 25th. Also heading northwards were ten Fieldfares over the park on 25th.

On Wilderness Pond, Mandarin Duck totals peaked at 15 on 2nd but declined rapidly as they moved elsewhere to breed - only five were present at the month's end. A pair of Little Grebes had built an impressive nesting platform by mid-month; a Lesser Black-backed Gull which got too close to the nest on 29th was vigorously chased away by the furious grebes. Five pairs of Canada Geese were on the pond at the month's end. It is very disappointing to report that of a brood of 13 Mallard ducklings first noted on 13th, none was present by 23rd - victims of the gulls?



Birds of prey featured well with a Red Kite on 15th and single Peregrine Falcons on 12th and 27th. Common Buzzards were a frequent sight and a superb displaying Sparrowhawk was noted high over the park on several occasions.

## April

The breeding season was evidently well underway this month. Totals of singing birds included three Song Thrushes, up to nine Chiffchaffs and six Blackcaps. Observations of birds in areas of suitable breeding habitat indicated that the park had two pairs of Mistle Thrushes, five pairs of Jackdaws, 10-15 pairs of Stock Doves and at least two pairs of Great Spotted Woodpeckers. There was possibly a pair of Green Woodpeckers.

On Wilderness Pond, five Canada Geese were incubating on nests at the month's end. Three elusive pairs of Little Grebes were present but by the month's end there had been no evidence of successful breeding. The maximum total of Mandarin Ducks this month was only seven. Up to 13 Lesser Black-backed Gulls frequented the pond and the final spring sighting of Black-headed Gulls involved two on 6th.



Mandarin Duck



Mistle Thrush



Jackdaw

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There were four sightings of Grey Wagtail at Round Pond during the month including a pair on 10th.

Birds seen flying over the park included a pair of Sparrowhawks on two occasions, two Greylag Geese on 24th, three sightings of a single Grey Heron and an immature Cormorant on 29th.

A particularly interesting sighting on 14th was that of a Tawny Owl put to flight from trees adjacent to the crossroads of paths north of the play area - it flew off in the direction of Westerfield Road.

Despite much searching on particularly fine days, there were no reports of any Swifts being seen this month.

## May 2025

The month started well with the first recorded Swifts(4) of the year high over the park on 1st.

Most of the month's ornithological activity was centred on the two main ponds. On Wilderness, four of the site's five pairs of Canada Geese had hatched out seven goslings by 14th; by 21st, these had reduced to four(probably courtesy of the gulls). These four goslings remained, with attendant adults, on the pond to the month's end; they were joined on 30th by the last gosling to hatch.

Over on Round Pond, the highlight was a female Mandarin Duck with 13 ducklings(the largest brood ever recorded in Christchurch Park) on 16th; these ducklings had reduced to five by 24th but all five were present into June.

On Wilderness Pond, no Mandarin Ducks were present on 6th, but on 10th three males were located, increasing to five on 14th, six on 18th, ten on 27th and 13 on 30th - these males had arrived on Wilderness Pond, from unknown breeding localities, in order to moult. By the month's end, several of these usually-resplendent ducks were looking very dishevelled!

Also on Wilderness Pond, a pair of Little Grebes was accompanied by two tiny chicks 25th which were both still present at the month's end by which time a second pair of Little Grebes was present at a nest.

No Cormorants had been seen on either of the two main ponds since last November's fireworks display, but this month there were three sightings of single birds on the ponds.

A pair of Grey Wagtails was noted actively food-collecting on at least three occasions at Round Pond during the month - they must have been breeding within the immediate vicinity of the park.

The Tawny Owls again bred successfully in the area of "Mabel's" tree with two owlets being first noted on 9th - they were still present, but getting increasingly mobile, at the month's end.

The only diurnal birds of prey to be reported were single Sparrowhawks on three dates and both Red Kite and Common Buzzard on 1st.

As ever, many thanks to Brian Macdonald and Mark Dowling for their contributions to this article.



Swift



Little Grebe



Sparrowhawk

# Toby's Travels – Friday 15 August 2003

by Toby Routh (companion to David 2002-2012)



It is nearly 8am and we are still in the kitchen; what is going on; the Park has been open since 7.30. At last we are ready, what has kept him; I have been ready since dawn! Through the front door, those dratted seagulls

from the museum roof are pranging us as usual. Past the Arboretum Pub, no barking from the yard so that pair must have already gone. Across Fonnereau Road and past the Greyhound Pub, that name inspires me.

At last, the gates of the Arboretum, now I can start leaving my messages for all my mates. Cherry Tree Row, scatter a few pigeons on the left and some squirrels on the right. Then do my important job near the Bin, must let him think that he has trained me to do this task in exactly the right place near the special bins; who is he kidding, I am just desperate to go by then.

We meet Steve and my friend Daisy, how is her skin problem. We spend time discussing our ailments. Next, those lovely girls, Florence and Beatrice with their carer Carolyn. I really fancy them with their lovely long hair. We cross the Bridleway and at last the great green expanse of Heaven. It was a wonderful idea numbering all those trees in the Park as it gives me a daily target to achieve. Where are my good spaniel friends, the mighty Oswald and Jet?

We greet some very kind ladies, they pat me, "what a lovely boy"! Why is Dad's

friend Don hiding behind that large tree? Could it be that he is not looking forward to that long-winded chat about the financial fortunes of Ipswich Town Football Club.

We have reached the crossroads, up in the distance near the Park Road Gates I can just make out Bonnie and Clyde. Now to the Burton Fountain and over towards Snow Hill there is Kate and her two Yorkies. Is that Tom the gardener\* blowing odd bits by the children's play area; another chat about the powers-that- be, what a bore.

Top of the hill – whoops; that crazy cyclist nearly took half my tail off. Past the Martyrs' column and who is that approaching from the Bolton Lane entrance; my friends George and Sam. I force a few ducks and moorhens back to their rightful place on the Round Pond and meet another pal Jack a long-haired Jack Russell, and we have a wonderful tussle. Then the Wilderness Pond and past the Cenotaph to our left.

Reluctantly, we are now on Fonnereau Road, I might see my one-eyed pal Barney looking out of the window of one of the flats. 9am and the top of High Street; looking forward to breakfast and then on my custom-built ramp watching folk visiting the Museum. I am not allowed in unless long gone and stuffed, still at 14 months my mind is on other things.

Footnote by Rowell: A dear friend remembers Ken Lightfoot and David Routh some 20 years ago "walking their dogs in the Park with plenty of stories to tell". Does the Parkmobile have wings? It does now! And I remember Tom Wright\*, a dedicated Park gardener who tended the grounds for 31 years before his death in 2011. We planted a tree in Tom's memory

**Rowell Bell**





# IPSWICH VE DAY 80TH ANNIVERSARY COMMEMORATION

By Richard Hudson, Chairman of the Friends of Christchurch Park



On 8th May 2025 Ipswich started its commemoration of the 80th anniversary of VE day and the end of World War II hostilities in Europe with a remembrance service at the Cenotaph in Christchurch Park. The service was led by the Royal British Legion and the Reverend Tom Mumford, Vicar of Ipswich Minster with involvement of veterans from all the services and local civic leaders including the Mayor of Ipswich, Elango Elavalakan.

The moving service in the bright sunshine of a perfect spring morning in the park was a reminder of the optimism of that day after nearly six years of war but also of the losses and hardships suffered. This was aptly summed up in a reading by the Deputy Lieutenant of Suffolk, of an extract from prime minister Winston Churchill's VE day speech to the nation.

*"Yesterday morning at 2.41am General Jodl, the representative of the German High Command, and Grand Admiral Doenitz, the designated head of the German State, signed the act of unconditional surrender of all German land,*

*sea and air forces in Europe to the Allied Expeditionary Force and simultaneously to the Soviet High Command.....*

*The German war is therefore at an end. After years of intense preparation Germany hurled herself on Poland at the beginning of September 1939 and in pursuance of our guarantee to Poland and in common with the French Republic, Great Britain, the British Empire and the Commonwealth of Nations declared war upon this foul aggression. After gallant France had been struck down we, from this island and from our united Empire, maintained the struggle single handed for a whole year until we were joined by the military might of Soviet Russia, and later by the overwhelming power and resources of the United States of America...*

*We may allow ourselves a brief period of rejoicing, but let us not forget for a moment the toils and efforts that lie ahead. Japan with all her treachery and greed remains unsubdued....*

*We must now devote all our strength and resources to the completion of our task, both at home and abroad. Advance*



*Britannia. Long live the cause of freedom.  
God save the King. "*

As part of the commemoration, FOCP funded the external costs of the new hanging baskets outside the Reg Driver Visitor Centre, suitably resplendent in red, white and blue for the occasion.

By way of note, the reassessment of the Park's Green Flag status was also taking

place on the 8th May. The Park, thanks to the intensive efforts of almost the entire IBC parks and cemeteries team, but not insignificantly FOCP too, was looking magnificent. Green Flag are not expected to announce their findings for all parks under consideration until this July, but verbal feedback has been encouraging so hopefully it will be good news !

Photos supplied by EADT, Youtube & FoCP

## A Sunny Summer Afternoon In The Park

By Reg Snook



Every summer the Friends of Christchurch Park promote a series of band concerts held on Sunday afternoons in the Arboretum. If the weather is fine, warm and sunny, then the public either bring their own chairs with them to listen to the

performances or relax to the music while sitting on the grassy slopes. Usually, about 300 or more attend these musical delights provided by local brass bands, the bands performing in and around the band stand.

On one such sunny Sunday afternoon the Woodbridge Excelsior band had assembled in the bandstand. There was an exceptionally large crowd and the performance began with a rousing rendition of Eric Coates' Dambusters' March – a chance for all of the instrumentalist to show their virtuosity. It was a splendid start to the afternoon's performance.

The lady and her husband next to me on the grassy slopes were obviously enjoying the music - she wearing a large sun hat, her feet

tapping to the music whilst her husband had his hat pulled low over his forehead. He too was tapping out to the rhythm with his feet. The lady turned her head and said, 'Wasn't that lovely, Joe?' 'Yeah', was the reply. 'Mavis, just look at the queue for the ice creams.' The ice cream kiosk at these band concerts is always a very popular attraction, the band concert and the ice cream store being a perfect mix on a sunny summer afternoon.

The conductor of the band turned to the admiring audience. 'Our next number, ladies and gentlemen, is a selection from My Fair Lady.' 'Oh, Joe,' said Mavis. 'I love this – I'm getting married in the morning, da da de da de da da da. 'I can't remember the words, can you, Joe?' 'No!' Joe replied, but I could murder an ice cream.' There was a very generous applause when the band completed this very popular selection. Again, the conductor turned to face the audience 'and now, ladies and gentlemen, we are going to play a few numbers from the Phantom of the Opera.' 'Oh lovely,' said Mavis. 'Joe, do you remember when we went to London and saw Frank Spencer playing the Phantom? He wasn't skinny then like he was in



Some Mothers do 'ave 'em, was he?' 'No,' Joe replied. 'Mavis, do you think that I should stand in the queue for an ice cream?'

As the music by Andrew Lloyd Webber drifted over the very relaxed watching public, three birds were gracefully circling over the nearby Holm oaks, a female sparrowhawk and two juveniles, the product from a nest close to the Wilderness pond. The three birds were quite low but obviously trying to gain height. There was no flapping of wings, just three birds allowing the warm, rising air to take them up. A peaceful scene indeed but then two black crows appeared intent on making the 'spars' ascent difficult. These two were quickly joined by three more crows, probably the young of the first two. Before long there were a dozen or so crows noisily mobbing the hawks but as the birds of prey gained more height in ever widening circles, so the crows lost interest and glided back to the Holm oaks.

'And now, ladies and gentlemen, a complete change in our repertoire, a popular piece of rock 'n' roll made famous by the one and only Rolling Stones.' 'Really?' said Joe. 'Oh Joe,' said Mavis. 'Joe, do you remember when we saw the Stones at the Baths Hall in Ipswich, a long time ago before we were married.' Many years ago, famous groups played at St Matthews' Baths Hall, the pool being covered by special wood flooring. 'It was great, wasn't it, Joe and Joe, do you remember how crowded it was all crammed together and that sprung floor Joe, how we were all bouncing up and down. Do you remember?' 'Yes' said Joe, 'but it wasn't the Stones? It was that lot from Birmingham. Horrible they were.' 'Oh yes, Joe, I remember' said Mavis. 'That lead bloke, Ossie someone or other, ghastly Black Sabbath, Joel!' 'That's right, Mavis, them! Long hair, tight jeans and big boots. Loud they were, Mavis. Black Sabbath, and that floor, Mavis. It went up and down. Remember, Mavis, you were sick.' 'Yes, I remember, Joe, but I seem to recall that it was Deep Purple who were serenading us. Joe pondered for a moment. 'Yes, perhaps you're right, Mavis.'

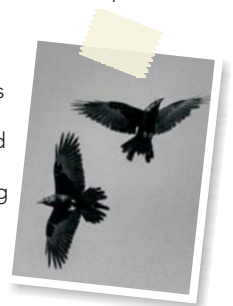
Once more the conductor turned to face his doting public. 'Ladies and gentlemen, my favourite musical, and I hope yours also. West Side Story.' The band began to play a gentle introduction and, when all was at peace with

the music once more, floating over the grassy slopes, a buzzard decided to glide leisurely over the Upper Arboretum. The crows that had been annoyed with the sparrowhawks again took umbridge but this time it was a combined attack. In formation loosely based on the Red Arrows, this black gang of crows went for the bird of prey. The buzzard was taken by surprise but at the last moment it folded wings and struck out with its talons and with a considerable amount of luck one talon struck a crow. In a cloud of black feathers the crow fell to the roof of the bandstand. There was a lot of noise from the "murder" of crows but by the time they had got themselves organised again the buzzard was circling high above them.

Not many people were aware of the drama that had taken place above them. Perhaps some band members had noted a few black feathers gently floating down from above. How quickly time flies when one is relaxing on a warm, sunny afternoon listening to a fine band of musicians playing toe-tapping music with some of us recalling our mis-spent younger days when we were bouncing up and down on that bendy floor of St Matthew's baths hall. Was it Deep Purple or Black Sabbath?

'And now, ladies and gentlemen, our final number – Beethoven's Ninth! Sorry, that was a joke. We are going to play a selection of Gilbert and Sullivan music starting with the Pirates of Penzance. At that point, Joe jumped up. 'That's it, Mavis, we're off.' The ice cream man has run out of ice cream and now they're playing Gilbert and what's his name? Lovely afternoon though wasn't it?' 'Oh, Joe,' said Mavis. 'It was a lovely two hours.'

The Woodbridge Excelsior band had produced magic for a large happy crowd in our park, a repertoire from popular musicals, a piece of heavy metal from someone or other, one or two marches and a lot of chitchat. The ice cream vendor had sold out. Joe and Mavis had recalled their wild courting days and the crow, minus several feathers, eventually made its way back to the rest of its clan.





# Friends of Christchurch Park - AGM

7pm - Wednesday March 26th 2025 at the Reg Driver Centre

## 1. WELCOME & INTRODUCTION by ACTING CHAIRMAN

John Woodcock welcomed the committee, FOCP members, and guests, including Peter Gray, previous chair of FOCP, and Erica Burrows, guest speaker for the evening.

## 2. APOLOGIES for ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from FOCP committee member, Annabel Fields. Apologies had been received from Christine Lightfoot, Ann and Reg Snook, Pat Gondris, and Anthony Cobbold.

## 3. APPROVAL of MINUTES 2024

The minutes were approved, Proposer: John Woodcock

Seconded: Rowell Bell/Jean Hill

## 4. MATTERS ARISING

The three points under Any Other Business at the 2024 meeting were carried forward:

Jean Hill: drain covers blocked with soil.

Clare Hammond: bandstand (Arts & Craft Shelter) looking shabby.

CLlr Oliver Holmes: subject of 'desire lines' across grassed areas.

These have now been referred to the new park manager Billy Cole.

## 5. CHAIRMAN'S REVIEW of 2024-2025

Acting Chairman, John Woodcock, reviewed the year for FOCP, emphasising that Christchurch Park was the jewel in the crown of Ipswich, and the good relationship with parks team had made acting chairmanship a pleasure. Membership was stable with 291 household, 16 corporate and 51 life members.

Social media activity was successful with 7.2k Facebook followers, and the website 'click through' rate being 2.36%, which was good for an information website, and having 191k search appearances.

The regular FOCP events of bird and bat walks continued to be popular, with maximum attendance for bat events. Thanks were expressed to Philip Murphy for leading the informative bird events.

Brass on the Grass held during the summer had been a resounding success, with the

average attendance of the concerts being over 300 per event.

Other projects during the year had been the replanting of the Butterfly Garden and supply of an information board, due to be installed during the week. Thanks were given to Richard Stewart for his advice on the butterfly species and to Brian MacDonald who had arranged the planting.

Following the death of longtime FOCP member and Brass on the Grass organiser, David Routh, a memorial bench has been bought with a 50/50 split of FOCP /individual donations. This will be installed in the Upper Arboretum close to the Arts & Crafts Shelter. Any further donations would be welcomed. A dedication is to be arranged.

Additionally a donation of around £200 was to be made to fund hanging baskets at the RDVC to commemorate VE Day 80th Anniversary.

JW also extended thanks to the IBC team - Lisa Stannard/ Jo Nolan/ Nick Wilcox and Billy Cole.

Concluding the address, JW likened the committee to that of an orchestra where group participation made all the difference to the symphony, and announced the position of Chair would be taken up by Richard Hudson.

Additional thanks were made to committee members who had made valuable contributions,, Robert Fairchild, Paul Horne, Annabel Fields, Jessica Webster, (who had gifted the cost of a prior newsletter,) Peter Mann (web-master), Roger Herbert, Sylvia Patsalides (minutes secretary,) and Richard Hudson. A special mention was made to Rowell Bell who had provided valuable assistance to the committee. A gift was handed to Mandy Herbert in appreciation for all her help in assisting Roger, during a challenging time of ill health, with the organisation of Brass on the Grass.

The contributors to the newsletter were thanked as well.

## 6. TREASURERS REPORT

Cash at the Bank at Feb 2025 was £3,212, Independent Examiner Rowell Bell, made mention of significant expenses which this year included cost of the Butterfly Garden and the



donations to the David Routh bench. Expenses were kept at a minimum with the negotiation of the PL premium by John Woodcock.

Approval of accounts were finalised as follows:-  
Proposed: Jean Hill Seconded: Jessica Webster

### **7. BRASS on the GRASS**

Roger Herbert, organiser in 2024, reported on the successful unprecedented series of six concerts Thanks was extended to Ruth and John Woodcock, IBC and Cheryl's Ices. For 2025, five of the bands would be returning. This year there would be six concerts featuring Martlesham Brass, Colchester Band, Ipswich Hospital Band, Castleton Brass, Ipswich Community Band, Woodbridge Excelsior Band. All sponsors were in place. Additionally on 29th June the Cambridge Salvation Army Band, together with the Ipswich Branch Band would stage a stand alone concert.

A poster listing the dates and bands was in the process of being prepared and would be inserted into the noticeboards.

### **8. NOMINATIONS & ELECTION OF THE COMMITTEE**

In accordance with the constitution the committee resigned en-bloc.

All the existing committee had agreed to continue, with the exception of Dennis Miller. These were: Paul Horne, Peter Mann, Roger Herbert, Jessica Webster, Annabel Fields (Treasurer,) Robert Fairchild (Membership Secretary.)

Proposed: Rowell Bell Seconded: Jean Hill/  
Peter Gray

New appointment was Richard Hudson as Chair  
Proposed: John Woodcock Seconded: Roger Herbert. John Woodcock confirmed he would continue as Vice Chair

Proposed: Rowell Bell Seconded: JoAnne Bell

Richard Hudson, expressed thanks to the committee and members for endorsing his appointment and gave a welcome speech. The proposal to increase life membership to £125 was voted on favourably by the members. There were no plans to uplift the fee to existing life members, although it was mooted that additional donations would be put to good use. A show of hands confirmed all the above.

### **9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Jean Hill: The Friends Noticeboard was in need of refurbishment and populated with relevant information and notices. Richard Hudson assumed responsibility for this task. Billy Cole would arrange for keys to be made available.

Billy Cole: Details of Feed the Ducks Initiative to be introduced was explained. This will entail an aesthetically pleasing solar powered feeder being installed. This a self funding enterprise. The cost was £1 for 60 grams of food, with 10% being donated to FOCP.

Following the formal part of the meeting, concluded at 19.45, there was a break for drinks and nibbles and then the evening continued with an informative presentation about Ipswich Museum and Christchurch Mansion by Erica Burrows, Vice President and Tour Guide of Friends of Ipswich Museum.

The meeting closed at 20.30

## **MEMBERSHIP MATTERS**

We are pleased to inform Members that currently the Membership numbers stand as follows:

**Household Members - 242    Lifetime Members - 50**

**Corporate Members - 14**

If you are reading this newsletter and are not already a Member do consider joining as for a modest sum of £10 per annum for individuals or households, £125 for a Lifetime Membership or as a firm £25 p.a. you will receive regular newsletters and keep up to date with developments and events within our cherished Park. Joining form on opposite page.

# Membership Form

Membership costs £10 per household per year, or £125 for lifetime membership.  
Subscriptions by cheque, cash or Standing Order are due each year on 1st March.

- If you already pay by continuous Standing Order, no further action is required.
- If you would like to pay by Standing Order, please send the completed Standing Order Authority (below) to Robert Fairchild. For questions about Standing Orders please call Robert on 01473 254255, or email [robert.fairchild@ntlworld.com](mailto:robert.fairchild@ntlworld.com)
- We also accept payment by cash or cheque. In this case, please send the completed form and payment to **Robert Fairchild, 17 Henley Avenue, Ipswich IP1 6RN**
- We now also have the option of Lifetime Membership for a one off payment of £125.

## How to Pay

Please tick method of payment and complete the details below:

☐ Standing Order    ☐ Cheque    ☐ Cash    ☐ Direct Bank Transfer  
(please use your name as the reference)

## Personal Details

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_. Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_ Tel \_\_\_\_\_

## Standing Order Mandate

Account to be credited: Friends of Christchurch Park                      Amount: £10.00

Bank: Lloyds Bank, Cornhill, Ipswich      Account No: 02952840      Sort Code: 30-94-55

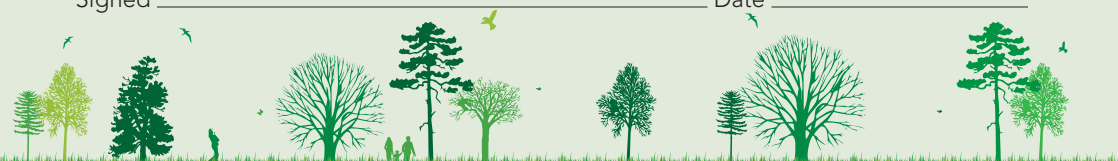
Account name to be debited \_\_\_\_\_

Bank and Branch \_\_\_\_\_

Account number \_\_\_\_\_ Sort code \_\_\_\_\_

Please pay Friends of Christchurch Park immediately and then on 1st March each year.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_



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