

## **Chair's report**

### **Friends of Preston Park**

**12 months ending 13 September 2011**

#### **The past year – events and achievements**

- Bluebell planting events (6 October 2011) in The Rock garden. Approximately 60 people, including children and young people, planted several thousand native British bluebells. The event was supported by a number of local businesses, including the Co-op, and this allowed us to provide hot soup and other refreshments on the day. The Rock Garden looked fantastic in late April of 2011, when the bluebells were in flower.
- Easter-egg hunt (Easter Sunday 2011). This very successful event, themed around a quiz that required people to explore the park, was attended by approximately 200 children and young people, accompanied by their parents. Flo Poncia and Leo Wheeler won the drawing competition – their impressive drawings were displayed for a while on the Friends notice boards.
- 'Groundwork' provided an afternoon of games for children in early May (Spots v Stripes) – this was well popular and attracted about 50 children and young people.
- Three evening 'Walks in the Park' were held in May, led by knowledgeable staff from City Parks. Approximately 35 people attended the walks which were very well received.
- A 'Dawn chorus walk' was also held in May – a small number of people attended and enjoyed the relative peace and quiet, and of course the birdsong.
- Prest-fest was held for the first time on 27 August 2011. The rain held off – just – and well over 500 people had a fantastic time. This was primarily a celebration of local talents, businesses, culture (the Manor House that day was visited for free by over 300 people!) and above all else, people had fun.
- Bat-walks in late August, in conjunction with the RSPB, were attended by approximately 20 people.

In addition to the above:

- We were also influential in securing the new Petanque terrain. This was as a result of the survey of park users that we carried out last year. Boules can be borrowed from the bowls/tennis attendants, for a deposit of £20. No charge to play.
- Two notice boards were installed in the park, primarily for use by the Friends group. These are situated adjacent to the two cafes.
- We did our best to influence Pride in the Park 2011, and hopefully influenced some of the security arrangements on the day.
- The creation of a truly impressive website.

Thanks are due to all members of the committee, businesses and local organisations that have so kindly sponsored us, and to the many volunteers that helped with Prest-fest. We have also enjoyed working so productively with the council (especially with Garry, Alan and Andy) and greatly appreciate the help and encouragement that they have provided us with in our first very successful year.

### **Looking ahead**

The committee's next task, once re-elected - is to develop a work plan for the next 12 months. This is likely to include, subject to outline approval tonight:

- Exploring the idea of a pop-up cinema as part of the May festival.
- Exploring the idea of the small bowls pavilion becoming a community resource. This could potentially be progressed as a partnership between the Friends and City Parks, with the detail to be developed through a process of consultation, leading to an outline business plan.
- Exploring with the council the idea of creating a wildlife corridor and wildflower meadow.

### **In conclusion**

By any measure, the first year has been very successful, with a diverse range of successful events delivered and a growing number of Friends registered for our email updates and occasional newsletters. We have enjoyed excellent support, very positive feedback, and have fulfilled our mandate of protecting and improving the park and involving the local community. Thank you.

**Tony Benton**  
**Chair**

**13 September 2011.**