

**Friends of Marple Memorial Park Meeting (AGM)
Monday 17th March 2008
Marple Library**

Present: Dave Burrows (Acting Chair), Robert Wilson, Micaela Wood, Jay Havoleana, Peter Bardsley, Sue Emery, Mark Whittaker.

1.0 Apologies: Bill Ardern, Adrian Ellis, Rebecca Nedeljkovic, Chris Armitt.

2.0 Minutes of the Last Meeting: Agreed.

3.0 Annual General Meeting

3.1 Chairman's Report

Dave issued a report summarising the Friends' activities since the last AGM in March 2007:

- The original rockery stones have been reinstalled in the War Memorial Flowerbeds.
- The group has held a task day every month except for December.
- Free parking for volunteers has been arranged.
- Newsletter number 4 was distributed to 1,000 homes surrounding the park.
- A sculpture was created from the remains of the Beech Tree near to the bowling green. Marple Area Committee, Marple Regeneration Partnership and a Voluntary Art Grant from the council provided the funds for this project. It received a great response from local school children and has proved a very popular addition to the park.
- The Teen Rotator was installed in the Skate Park area.
- The Lock 17 Display has been permanently reconstructed in Oldknow Gardens as a joint project with Marple Locks Heritage Society.
- A new notice board was installed near to the library and the one near to the entrance was refurbished.
- A Woodland Trust Tree Planting event was held, planting 121 new trees in the park.
- The group manned a tombola stall at the Carnival, the Locks Festival, the Food Festival, the Marple Christmas Cracker and the Marple Bridge Winter Wonderland.
- A BBC Breathing Places Grant was awarded by the Big Lottery Fund to create an outdoor reading area behind the library.
- The local Beaver Scouts planted free hedgerow packs from the Woodland Trust in the Breathing Places area.

- The park has won its 4th Green Flag Award.
- Planning permission has been granted for a fence around the basketball court.
- Chain nets were fitted to the basketball hoops.
- New equipment has been installed in the Infants Play Area.
- A brass plaque has been fitted to the stocks.
- Tee shirts with the Friends' logo have been purchased.
- A replica Memorial Stone was erected on the Bowling Green Shelter. This was unveiled during a special ceremony on Remembrance Day.
- A wreath was also laid on Remembrance Day on behalf of the group.
- A second Merchant Navy Day ceremony was held in the park, raising the flag purchased by the group.
- Plans for a Boules Court are in development.
- A fundraising event at Marple Cinema has been organised.

3.2 Treasurer's Report

Mark confirmed that the McInnes Partnership, Chartered Accounts and Registered Auditors, have examined the Friends' accounts for 1st January to 31st December 2007, and a certified income and expenditure sheet has been produced. Copies were distributed with the agenda.

This is the 4th year the McInnes Partnership have provided this service free of charge and it was agreed to include an advert in the next newsletter, like we did last year, to say thank you.

Our annual income grew from £60 in 2006 to £14,175 in 2007 – an excellent achievement that will be a challenge to emulate this year. The highlights are:

- £6,460 Breathing Places Grant.
- £3,000 for the Tree Sculpture from Marple Area Committee, the District Partnership and the Voluntary Arts Grant.
- £1,500 from the Marple Website for the Play Area and Memorial Stone.
- £1,221 raised by the tombola stall at local events.

In the year we spent £3,714. The biggest outgoings were £3,000 on the Tree Sculpture and £447 on the Memorial Stone and at the end of the year we had a bank balance of £11,036.

Since 1st January 2008 we have increased our income by £843, most of that being £743 from Brabyns Preparatory School for the infants play area.

We have spent a further £3,568 already this year, the largest payments being £3,362 towards the Infants Play Area and £119 for the hire of The Railway Children film. This leaves us with a current balance of £8,310 in the bank.

We have £7,416 committed funds, most of which is for the Breathing Places Project, giving us a current working balance of £894.

Current bank balance:	£8,310	
Committed Funds:	£7,416	
Breathing Places		£6,945
Tree Sculpture		£358
Sundial & Shuttle panels		£53
Ushers at cinema		£60
Working balance:	£894	

3.3 Election of Officials

3.3.1 Chairman

There were no volunteers for the role of Chairman. Dave Burrows agreed to continue chairing the meetings in an acting role until this vacancy could be filled. This was agreed by all present. Adrian will continue to stand in for Dave when necessary.

3.3.2 Treasurer

Mark advised that he was happy to continue as treasurer. There were no other candidates and this was agreed by all present.

3.3.3 Secretary

Jay advised that she was happy to continue as Secretary. There were no other candidates and this was agreed by all present. Mark will continue as minutes secretary.

3.3.4 Social Secretary

Micaela advised that she was happy to continue as Social Secretary. There were no other candidates and this was agreed by all present.

3.3.5 Committee

In accordance with requirements of the constitution, the following members were confirmed as committee members:

Peter Bardsley
Jay Havoleana
Mark Whittaker
Bob Wilson
Micaela Wood

With the election of officials completed the AGM was declared closed and the meeting continued with normal business.

4.0 Matters Arising.

4.1 BBC Breathing Places Reading Area

Landscape Work and Planting

The planting work is now reported to be complete. Mark has expressed concern that sections of the reading circle border are bare and only 40 of the 80 plants expected can be counted. Rebecca has responded that there are herbaceous plants beneath the bark mulch that are not yet visible. Dave advised that these ought to appear by late April. If the plants don't grow the contractor will be responsible for replacing them.

Mark has an email update from Rebecca advising that the costs have increased due to the stump grinding and a change in spec of the crushed stone used. An invoice is expected in the near future.

(Post meeting note: The total cost is now £2,775.30, which is still under the original budget but £205 more than expected. As it has been agreed with the BLF to move the anticipated surplus of £790 to the sculpture budget this shortfall will have to be made up from the treework surplus).

Jay asked if a sign could be put up requesting people not to trample on the plants and bulbs in the woodland area as she had seen several using the area as a short cut. Dave asked Bob to arrange for this.

Sculpture

Andrew Frost has provided an initial design for the sculpture and Jay has come up with some suggestions and a sketch that has been passed back to Andrew. Copies of the designs were circulated with the agenda.

Andrew has advised that Dave Myers, who is supplying the raw material for the sculpture, is currently on holiday. When he is back Andrew will be able to resolve outstanding details and finalise the design and costs.

Andrew has given assurances that he can finish the work and have it installed before the end of May 2008.

Under-storey Planting & Wildflowers

Prices and quantities from Rebecca for the under-storey planting list she provided last month are still awaited. It is not possible to finalise proposals for spending the surplus money without these costs.

Mark has asked Rebecca to take into account the wildlife area alongside the canal as well as the space behind the library.

Dave warned that it was now too late in the season for bare-rooted plants. Mark will ask Rebecca to take this into account too.

Dave has obtained 100 Cornus (Dogwood), 80 Hawthorn, 90 Hazel and 100 Willow bare-rooted whips via Allan Wilson at the council's nursery for a cost of £130.

The Hawthorn and Hazel whips were planted in the Breathing Places area during the February task day but the Cornus and Willow were not. Dave asked Bob to check where these were and to ensure that they are heeled in to prevent them being lost.

Allan has also supplied 10 trays of assorted wildflowers at a cost of £50. *(There is one tray each of Ragged Robin, Red Campion, Brookweed, Yellow Pimpernel, Agrimony, Betony, Fleabane, Marsh Marigold, Purple Loosestrife and Field Mint, with 20 plugs per tray.)*

It was agreed to plant the Cornus and Willow whips and the wildflowers during the next task day on 29th March. This will give us a better idea of how many more wildflowers could be ordered for the park.

Bob's apprentice will plant any whips or wildflowers the group do not manage to do, as they will not keep until the April task day.

Bird & Bat Boxes

The 12 bat boxes were installed in the areas behind the library and alongside the canal during the February task day. An invoice for £40 from the David Lewis Centre has been received and paid.

Terry took away the old bat boxes that were unsuitable and had suggested converting them to bird boxes. Jay and Mark have both witnessed Great Tits trying to work out how to get into the new bat boxes behind the library so it was felt that this was a good idea. If Terry has time the boxes could be refitted during the 29th March task day.

Hedgehog Boxes

Terry has advised a price of £30 for the David Lewis Centre to make two more hedgehog boxes, which is 50% of the cost of the one purchased as a template. If Terry is able to make them in time they can be installed during the March task day, or at a later date if he cannot.

Wildlife Habitats

Mark advised that he is still looking at wildlife habitats but we need to know how much money will be spent on planting before deciding what we can afford to purchase. However, an interesting new possibility is insect study centres. These cost around £45 - £50 and have built-in solar lights to attract insects and doors and panels so that they can be observed.

Mark suggested that these could be attached to some of the nature posts already in the park. There was concern about vandalism but it was agreed to purchase one so that the idea could be tried out.

Proposals for spending surplus funds

In view of how long it has been taking to finalise these proposals Mark has requested an extension to the project completion date from the Big Lottery Fund. The Project Officer has approved a new date of September 2008 but although this gives us more time to resolve the outstanding issues we must be wary of consuming this extra time too easily.

Mark has tried several times to contact the person organising the bat detector training at Reddish Vale without success and last Wednesday was told that she does not have time to return calls. It was therefore agreed to shelve this idea.

Dave suggested the production of an information sheet or card advising about the birds and wildlife in the park that could be used by children visiting the library.

Breathing Places Plaque

Jay has received the Big Lottery Fund plaque with the built-in bird box and bought it to the meeting. It is made of oak and is larger than expected. It should look quite impressive in the woodland and we will try to agree a position for it during the next task day.

Bird Survey

Jay advised that she had undertaken an initial bird survey in the Breathing Places area and found that small birds are mainly active in the gardens on the perimeter rather than in the woodland itself. Few birds were spotted in the trees but those that were included magpies, collared doves, blue tits and sparrows. It is hoped that the improvements we are making will encourage more birds into the area as it matures.

Interpretation

Although we now have more time to complete the project it was felt that it would be worth starting to think about what should be included on the interpretation board. It would include logos of the Friends group, the Breathing Places and Lottery and also the Beavers who planted the hedgerows in celebration of 100 years of scouting. Jay will get things started by putting together some ideas for discussion.

Bird Feeders

Bird feeders were discussed and it was agreed that expensive refillable feeders were probably not practical as they would be likely to be vandalised or stolen. Dave suggested that it would be better to make fat feeders and maybe children and the library could be involved in doing this. Wayne Bardsley could probably give advice on making these.

4.2 Basketball Court Fence

After the last meeting Mark asked Rebecca to redevelop the scheme for 3m high fencing on both sides, to include a chicane opening and steps down to the lower level, to seek an amendment to the planning permission and to obtain a new price. However, Rebecca's email update received today says that she is "out of the loop" on this and thought that Patrick was doing it.

Dave confirmed that he was expecting Rebecca to take the lead on this when her workload permitted. Mark will therefore reiterate the request and confirm that Rebecca should liaise directly with Patrick, only if she wishes to take advantage of his offer to help.

It was noted that there are only two Landscape Officers serving the whole Stockport area and trying to support around 50 "Friends of" groups. To some degree the "Friends" scheme has become a victim of its own success. We will therefore have to be patient and wait until Rebecca or her colleagues have time to deal with the changes required to the basketball fence scheme but hope that it can be addressed early in the new financial year.

4.3 Beech Tree Sculpture

It is not known if Adrian has spoken to Andrew Frost about the replacement apple sculpture yet so Dave will ask Adrian to advise.

Dave will also chase up the installation of the ground sculptures with Adrian, who last month anticipated it could be done during the first two weeks of March.

It was also agreed that Bob would follow up with Adrian, and Andrew Frost if necessary, the best approach to cleaning up the sculpture before re-oiling it. It was agreed that the cleaning and re-oiling could be done on a future task day if the best method could be established.

4.4 Infants Play Area

An invoice for £3,362.36 has been received from the council for the group's contribution towards the cost of the play area equipment and this has been paid.

The work still outstanding includes the replacement benches and relocation of the old ones to the skate park, the play table, replacement of the graphics and the blue outline to the former boating pond perimeter. Rebecca has advised that this will be done when Groundwork Landscapes get a free week but no indication of when that might be.

Cllr. Shan Alexander has responded to the last minutes to advise that there was not an official re-opening ceremony of the play area held last month but merely a photo opportunity in the park whilst she and David

Brayshay were in Marple for another meeting. The group accepted that there was a misunderstanding of this during the last meeting.

It was discussed whether photographs should be taken in the play area during the next task day. Dave advised that he and his staff could not be involved if local councillors were because of the impending local elections. In view of this and the fact that all the work has not yet been completed it was not felt to be appropriate. The group may take some photos at a future task day for use in the next newsletter.

4.5 Boules Court.

Mark has fed back to the Senior Citizens representative the decision to keep the location of the Boules Court near to the bowling green, as originally proposed. The representative has confirmed that the "seniors" will hopefully still support this and Mark has asked if they could organise a petition to help demonstrate their support. Dave asked for a copy of this when available, as it would demonstrate the community's desire for the boules court to his line management.

Funding remains an issue with £2,240 needed. Mark will look further at the O2 Community Scheme as a possible source for up to £1,000 of this.

Sue added that Morrisons and the Co-Op also have schemes that may be suitable for this kind of project.

4.6 Task Days

Last Day – 23 February

A good turnout with bat boxes fitted in the woodland areas; Hazel and Hawthorn whips planted in the area behind the library and several more shrub beds mulched.

Next Task Day – 29 March

Proposed tasks include planting of more whips and the wildflowers, fitting of the bird boxes, if Terry is able to convert the old bat boxes, and deciding a location for the Breathing Places plaque and possibly fitting.

Mark will submit the list of registrations for free parking.

War Memorial Flowerbeds

Dave confirmed that Adrian would be drawing up the planting scheme for the memorial beds as soon as possible.

4.7 Fundraising Activities

Arrangements for the special showing of the Railway Children at the Regent Cinema on Sunday 27th April are underway.

Posters have been created and distributed around Marple including the Dale, Rose Hill, All Saints', Brabyns Prep and Peacefield schools.

A display has been prepared that will be placed on stage during the Gang Show performance intervals between 15th and 22nd March.

£38 has been spent on some great raffle prizes, which include three framed prints signed by Jenny Agutter, a special centenary edition copy of the Illustrated Railway Children book, a Ladybird version of the book, a copy of the film on DVD and a Thomas the Tank Engine & Friends activity pack. In addition, the Dragon Railway at Wyevale Garden Centre has donated 3 sets of 10 free ride tickets.

Tickets for the show have been printed and sales have begun slowly, which is to be expected, as there is quite a long time before the event. Hopefully sales will pick up throughout April. Tickets will be also sold in the library during the next task day.

It was suggested that the details should be put out on local radio and also in the local press. Mark will get in touch with Gemma Rathbone at the Stockport Express and try to find contacts for the radio stations.

4.8 Park Cottage

Sue Emery from the Charles Ingham Bandroom Fund (CIBF) attended the meeting to outline proposals for using the Park Cottage as a rehearsal room for Marple's Brass Bands.

The CIBF already owns a plot of land with planning permission to build a band room adjacent to Memorial Park but the costs of building from scratch are increasingly prohibitive. Plans for the cottage are dependant on finding a way to use the existing plot to fund the work and on obtaining the necessary planning permissions to support this. It will also be necessary to find a acceptable solution to ownership of the cottage.

A visit by members of the CIBF to the cottage today has confirmed their belief that it would be suitable for a rehearsal room if it were possible to replace the current flat-roofed part of the building with a new soundproofed single room extension and the cottage itself be restored.

There would be many benefits if these proposals could be brought to fruition. The brass bands of Marple would at last have a permanent home and a building that has been boarded up and in decay would be returned to beneficial community use. In addition, as most band activity would be in the evening, other community groups could take advantage of the facilities provided during the daytime.

The Friends consider these proposals to be the best put to them for bringing the cottage back into sustained use and whole-heartedly support the CIBF in their efforts to realise these aims.

Now that the CIBF members have visited the cottage the next stage is for them to develop a more detailed scheme. Dave Burrows

recommended that this be issued for consideration to Paul Hartley, the council's Conservation Officer, and David Brayshay, Head of Parks and Recreation, with copies to himself and the Friends group for information.

4.9 Pets' Memorial

Dave will chase up the information on the pet's memorial from Gatley Carrs Park with Adrian. *(Post meeting note: an email has now been received from GCP Conservation Group and a photograph of the memorial post has subsequently been requested.)*

4.10 Status of Funds

See item 3.2, Treasurers report for details.

4.11 Lock 17

Adrian and Mark have met with Malcolm Allcard of Marple Locks Heritage Society to discuss the height of the stonework on Lock 17. It has been agreed that it would improve the appearance of the display if a second tier of natural stone kerbs were installed on top of the existing ones.

Malcolm has asked Cllr. Craig Wright if he can source a suitable supply of stone from the Eco Centre and Craig has made an initial enquiry.

Mark asked Dave if the Parks Team were able to install the extra kerbs once they were obtained, hopefully before the planting of summer bedding, or if a contractor would have to be found.

Dave advised that his team could not do it before summer bedding due to their heavy workload at this time of year but they may be able to do it in September. Dave did not object to a contractor doing the work so long as a proper risk assessment was submitted for his approval and the work was coordinated with the planting of summer bedding such that the beds were not empty for very long.

Dave also asked that if they kerbs were fitted in time for summer bedding if a task day could be held for volunteers to help with the extra soiling up and planting. Mark felt that the Friends group and the Locks Society would probably be happy to do this.

4.12 Outdoor Fitness Equipment

The application to the Health Innovations Fund for the money to provide outdoor fitness equipment in the park was not successful and a rejection letter was received on 4th March.

This was a good idea and worth pursuing again in the future if a suitable source of funding can be identified.

4.13 Security Cameras

Without Patrick at the meeting there was no more news to report, however, Dave was concerned that cameras aimed towards the

children's play areas was not permissible. He will seek advice and report back his findings.

5.0 Monthly Park Report

Bob advised that the main work this month had been defining and trimming the shrub beds and there was now only one left, which the group may help to finish during the next task day.

Bob currently has an "apprentice" working with him free of charge. This is a person from the Job Centre keen to gain experience in gardening related activities who is prepared to help out without pay. Bob is pleased with his efforts and plans to give a good reference that will hopefully help him find a suitable vacancy in the future.

Connections – a community group has also been helping out for a few hours.

Unfortunately Bob's wife Christine has recently lost her job due to ill health. Bob passed on Christine's thanks and added his own for the flowers that the group had presented on learning of this.

5.0 Any Other Business

5.1 Tripping Hazard near Park Entrance

Jay pointed out the tripping hazard presented by the missing kerb and dropped tarmac where a tree was removed from the pathway near the main entrance to the park. She witnessed a lady stumble on this recently and warned of the risk of causing injury and the possibility of being sued.

5.2 Park Leaflet update

Micaela raised the issue of updating the park leaflet again as it is now out of date due to the number of additions and improvements that have been made in the park.

Dave felt that it was unlikely that this would be possible in the near future as the leaflet was only recently produced and they were done on a cycle. Dave agreed to find out how many were currently left, what the costs were and when it could be expected to be updated as part of the normal cycle.

6.0 Date of next Meeting

Monday 14 April 2008 at 6pm in Marple Library.

List of reminders:

Write to Wyevale Garden Centre regarding sponsorship
Spring task – jest wash and oil the log bench
Spring planting and plaque for Lock 17 Flowerbed