



**Annual Report to Members for 2009  
- presented in January 2010**

Your committee is pleased to present this report as required by our Constitution.

**Meetings, Constitution and Memorandum of Understanding**

The Friends formally came into being at the first Annual General Meeting on 27th January 2009 when the Constitution and Memorandum of Understanding between the Friends and the London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham (the Council) were adopted. The Memorandum was subsequently signed by the two parties and both documents are available to view on the Friends web site.

The officers and committee members elected at this AGM were:

Anthony Williams - Chairman  
David Lamping - Vice-Chairman  
Alexandra Schniewind - Secretary  
Priscilla Ladha - Treasurer  
Kyra van den Bosch  
Teo Catino  
James Cooke  
Andy Jones  
Julie Lane  
Paul Wild

Those present at the meeting also welcomed the interest in serving on the committee shown by Beth Patrick, Gloria Guy and Andrea Street and they were subsequently formally co-opted on to the committee.

The Constitution requires the committee to meet not less than four times in addition to the AGM. We have met eight times; in 2009 in March (twice), April, September, October, November (twice) and in January 2010.

The Constitution also calls for no less than two open general meetings each year in addition to the AGM and these were held on 11th May 2009, when members approved our submission to the Master Plan consultation, and on 30th November 2009, when the problems surrounding the Master Plan were reported to members.

**Significant events during the year**

The most important event of the year was, after six years of requests and campaigning by local residents, the appointment of consultants to prepare a master plan for the restoration

and regeneration of the park. The subsequent process has not been as smooth as was hoped and is therefore reported separately.

Alongside the Council we campaigned vigorously to gather support and votes in the Mayor of London's grant competition for parks. Unfortunately we came third in our sector of London.

Much more successfully, we strongly backed the long gestating plans by Thomas's School to completely renovate the floodlit hard court games area in the south west corner of the park. We understand that negotiations between the school and the Council have at last been successfully concluded and a formal agreement will be signed very shortly. The improved facility will continue to be available and of great benefit to all park users.

During the year there have been frequent e-mail and telephone communications and several meetings with council officers and councillors, about the master plan and current maintenance and management issues. The meetings have included park walkabouts with the new Head of Residents Services, Lyn Carpenter, and the head of Parks and Recreation, Marianne Locke. There have also been numerous walkabouts with council staff.

The Council has done an excellent job in repairing the gates and their terracotta pillars and the Peterborough Road brick wall, on which restoration continues. Following strong complaints the worst pot holes in the paths have been filled in and the changing rooms deep cleaned. Horticultural ground maintenance has continued to improve and the appointment of Quadron for this role has been a very positive change.

The renewed tennis courts have been much praised and very popular but the current sports booking system has meant that much of the available revenue has not been collected. Local schools increasingly used the park on a regular basis for games, and would do so even more if the facilities were improved. Football and cricket also continue to be popular activities and a successful young person's football tournament organised by Il Pagliaccio Restaurant with the help of the Sands End Safer Neighbourhood Team took place in June. Schools sports days were held in the park for the first time as the polo event in Hurlingham Park meant that venue was unavailable at the required times. The childrens' play area is a critically important and heavily used element of the park for families with young children, and is also popular with local children who attend the Lycee primary school.

Most categories of park user are represented on the committee, including dog owners and people who just enjoy the open space the park provides. We consider that the park's popularity is such that it is enjoyed by most if not all sectors of the local community.

### **The Master Plan**

At the November open meeting we very pleased to be able to thank the council for doing more for South Park in the last 3½ years than previous administrations had done in the previous 25 years.

This, as noted, includes making funds available for the creation of a master plan, and Churchman Landscape Architects were appointed to do this in January. Their brief required them to organise a public consultation but the dates first selected were totally impractical due

to school holidays. Following strong representations by the Friends the consultation was rescheduled and took place in May and June.

The consultation resulted in the production of three design options but when full details of the consultation outcome were presented to the master plan key stakeholder steering group, on which we are strongly represented, it became apparent that none of the designs properly reflected what people had asked for. We therefore requested a further design which would better match people's requirements. When this plan (known as Design Option 4) was produced, the sale of the north west corner including Clancarty Lodge was presented as essential part of the plan in order to fund the work needed. The original brief to the consultants required them to advise on funding but there was no suggestion that this should involve any disposal.

The Friends Committee considered Design Option 4 in great detail and concluded that such a sale was contrary to the design brief which was to conserve the park's rich heritage; that it did not reflect people's wishes for the park, violated the spirit of Charlotte Sullivan's intentions when she made the land available for use by the community (legally enshrined in the land conveyance), and would not be in the long term interests of the park. The Council's written response was that "Without realising the capital receipt from the disposal of the lodge there will be no possibility of delivering the master plan in the medium or long term." No information was provided to demonstrate why alternative funding sources were not feasible, not least from any of the various funding avenues that had been suggested to the council over the previous 2 years.

After much deliberation, the committee remained stalwart in our view that any sale of park land should be opposed and that we should put Design Option 4 and our reasons for rejecting the sale before the full membership. An open meeting was therefore called for 30th November. The meeting was attended by Councillors Nick Botterill (Deputy Leader), Paul Bristow and Steve Hamilton as well as Marianne Locke. During the considerable discussion that took place Cllr. Botterill made it clear that even if there was a sale of the land the proceeds could not be ring fenced for the benefit of South Park. At the end of the meeting members unanimously mandated the committee to continue to oppose any sale and to work with the council on securing the necessary sources of funding for the restoration of the park.

We currently look forward to working harmoniously with the council to achieve this objective, and to arriving at a master plan with which we can all be happy. A plan is needed partly to ensure that all work in the park, whenever it takes place, is co-ordinated and partly because major funding sources invariably require such a plan to be in place. There is much we support in Design Option 4 but the elements we oppose are critical ones.

To help resolve these critical elements the committee are establishing two working parties to specifically examine how the multi-age childrens' play facilities can be achieved and how best to develop the north west corner to provide the much requested cafe and toilets and the best re-use of Clancarty Lodge. We have also encouraged members to ask the council to allocate a percentage of the sale proceeds of the Castle Club, which was another Sullivan family gift for the benefit of the local community, to help pay for the improvements needed in South Park.

25th January, 2010