

THE FRIENDS OF DUNORLAN PARK

Charity No. 1063715/0

Report of Trustees - 2010

The Trustees present their report for the period 1st January to 31st December 2010. The Charity's objects are the restoration and preservation for the public benefit of an open space known as Dunorlan Park, Tunbridge Wells in the County of Kent.

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A year of change for The Friends – not only with the sad demise of Vice Chairman Richard Gosling in March (as advised in last year's Report) but also with the decision of our Chairman to stand down at the 2010 AGM.

Ruth Baker's 10 years at the helm have covered a momentous time for Dunorlan Park, with the success of the bid for Heritage Lottery funding, the sometimes traumatic but always exciting period of the consequent Restoration of the Park and a royal visit to unveil the Victoria Cross memorial – countered perhaps by the seemingly continuous battles to fend off inappropriate developments bordering the Park which threatened to undo so much of the good that had come from the restoration; all though made worthwhile because of the clear recognition that Dunorlan Park is indeed a jewel in Tunbridge Wells' crown – not only through the local and national awards which continue to be received but in the significant rise in use of and interest in the Park from locals and visitors alike. We must all be grateful for Ruth's enthusiasm and drive in leadership of the Committee over this period – and indeed that she will continue to give of her experience on the Committee.

Diana Lamb takes on the mantle, bringing with her all the experience of many years of Hon. Secretaryship – as well as her professional knowledge in the field of landscape design.

Change also in the management of the Park, with restructuring within TWBC; the retirement of the long-time Head of Leisure Department, Nigel Bolton – and of his "right hand" Marian Williams; the arrival of new supremo, Mel Henley, supported by Peter Every and the Parks team, and, more recently, announcement of a change in TWBC's Parks contractors to Sodexo following the seven years English Landscapes have held the contract.

Nigel Bolton had, of course, led his Leisure team through the long-drawn-out and ultimately successful process of the Lottery Bids and the Restoration of the Park. For those efforts together with his ready willingness to engage with and to involve The Friends on all matters related to the Park and its future maintenance, development and use, we believe the offer of Honorary Membership, which he was pleased to accept at the AGM, to be fully merited.

2010 was another year of extreme changes in weather, which does make maintenance problems so much greater, and we are fortunate indeed in our Head Gardener, Tony Ewins, who with his teams, employed and voluntary, seems to be able to surmount such difficulties and keep the Park such an inviting place for the whole range (whether by age or activities) of visitors all the year round. We can but reiterate here his oft made plea for ever more volunteers to help him in various aspects of that process.

The usual programme of themed walks and activities led by individuals or by members of the Kent High Weald Partnership, again attracted good response and a guided visit to Bedgebury Pinetum was both enjoyable and educational.

We continue to remain vigilant about possible development on the borders of the Park and, both as a Committee and by encouragement of our membership, have engaged fully in recent consultations by TWBC regarding possible reclassification of Green Belt or Conservation Areas which might affect the Park.

The year ended on a definitely high note however with the appearance of Rachel Luckhurst's quite stunning 2011 Calendar, made up of photographs she had taken in Dunorlan Park through the year. A labour of love for her, but one which will benefit both ourselves and the Multiple Sclerosis Society, between whom she is dividing all sales proceeds. Our thanks therefore to her and all other donors to our funds as well as to all others who provide support, including, as always, TWBC for their printing of our Newsletters

5th May 2011