

Summer 2020

# Friends of Cuerden Valley Park Newsletter



## Issue 3

*It is with great sadness that we have to tell you that our Chair and Secretary Jean Stainton passed away on 24 July. The articles in this newsletter were mostly written before Jean passed so on the next page we have added a piece telling you a bit more about Jean on page 2.*

## Thoughts from the Vice Chair, Jack Spickett

As we slowly creep out of lockdown, and come to terms with the new "norm", I would like to reflect on how the Park has helped me and many others to get through the last few months and the challenges we are now facing.

Living close to the Park I was taking my permitted exercise around and through the valley. It was Spring, the most thrilling time of the year, and nature was rushing to find its niche, encouraged by some glorious weather and accompanied by a symphony of bird song. It was heart warming to see so many others, especially those with families, enjoying this special place. One that shouldn't be taken for granted.

I would like to take this opportunity on our behalf to offer a big vote of thanks and appreciation to all the staff, especially the



Rangers of Cuerden Valley Park. Keeping the Park open and safe for everyone throughout lockdown required hard work and imagination.

We as a country responded brilliantly to the threat of COVID-19. Now we must come together and act to resolve the resulting crisis we now face at the Park. With the café having been closed during lockdown we have experienced a drastic impact on our funding streams, to the extent that where we were hoping to have our first year of breaking even, we, like most Charities now have a new shortfall to find.

I'm a firm believer that we become Friends of the Park for altruistic reasons and because we realise how fortunate we are to have this fantastic green space that is available to us and the whole community. So, like many Charities at the moment I'm asking you to show your continued support for our Park. You can contribute in many ways; by donation, volunteering or most importantly encouraging your friends and family to become Friends of the Park.

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## Jean Stainton — how do we best remember her?

Jean has been an integral part of the park for many years. She worked tirelessly to raise funds and before the new Visitors Centre opened ran a café in the Barn. Jean served on the Committee for the last ten years acting as Secretary, Membership secretary and most recently also Chair. She ensured the aims of the Friends were kept in focus over this time always ready to take a stand for those things that she believed were for the best of the park. She demonstrated a continuity of purpose for new and long serving members to follow

Once the Visitor Centre was opened she worked to build a close working relationship between the Friends and the park management team to keep the impetus going. The success of the recent merger with the Trust was in no small part due to her efforts and has ensured that we are in a good place to move forward.

Individuals will have their own memories of Jean but certain themes are repeated – many have mentioned her kindness and being a supportive friend who had time for anyone going through a tough time. She made sure that all new people were made to feel welcome and her enthusiasm inspired others to care for the park as she did.

Jean had been poorly for some time and in true Jean style she made sure that her legacy was continued. Jack Spickett took on the vice chair role at the last AGM and will now step up as Chair until the next election and she handed over the administrative tasks to Sheila Tuffrey who will act as Secretary until the next AGM.



### *Food and Craft Market restart*

*We held our first monthly Food & Craft Market in July since February and the feedback from stall holders and visitors was very positive. It was lovely to be back and being able to buy our favourite goods again.*

*Please take a look and support our next two Markets on 23 August and 27 September.*



The Rangers were working hard during lockdown despite the restrictions to keep the park safe for the increased number of visitors.

*The Friends were able to help by purchasing a new mower for them!!*



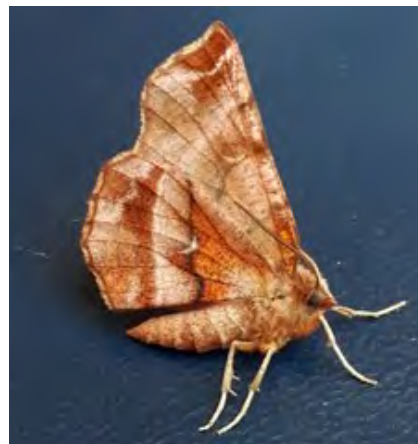
## Update from our Wildlife Officer, David Beattie

We have had a gorgeous spring which has helped all the wildlife on the Park. Damselflies were noted from the middle of May I had reports of large red and azures. Later in June many of the Friends reported our dragonflies, Thank you . There were Emperor, Broad Bodied Chaser, Four Spotted Chaser and of course the Banded Demoiselles by the river. I was able to get out with my bat detector near Hawksclough and recorded Common Pipistrelle. This is an area I don't usually visit for this animal so it was very good to note them.

Later in May I was able to get to put the moth trap out on the dry nights. Here are some of the ones I managed to catch.



*Brimstone moth above and Early Thorn below*



*Blood Vein moth*

As I empty the trap, I have heard some of the nesting birds proclaiming their territories. I have heard Chiffchaff, Blackcap, Song Thrush, and Tawny Owl. I have regularly seen great spotted woodpecker flying over as well.



We keep getting hedgehog sightings from all over the Park so do follow the tips I keep posting on the Facebook page.

### *What have our volunteers been doing?*

Thanks to some dedicated volunteers we have been working to reduce the impact of the invasive Himalayan Balsam in some areas of the park. You will have seen us clambering around in the undergrowth. This year we are concentrating on selected areas returning to them after a few weeks to clear out any new growth. A few of them are captured in these photos.



*Balsam Bashing! Volunteers*



## Update from Simon Thorpe, General Manager of the Park

. During lockdown thousands of people rediscovered their local park and Covid 19 reminded all of us how important green spaces are for our wellbeing and sanity, as well as the tremendous benefits for nature, and for combating climate change.

Bigger crowds can bring bigger problems and park managers have united across the UK to voice their concerns and share their experiences. We've all seen media coverage of the mountains of litter, the risk of wildfires from disposable bbq's, and the growth in anti-social behaviour perhaps exacerbated by boredom and tension. Many of us have been left flabbergasted by the state that parks and countryside have been left in by visitors during Covid 19. It calls for a national programme of awareness and education. Who can remember the Keep Britain Tidy slogan from the 1980s "bag it and bin it, together we'll win it."

Parks have seldom had so much media coverage or political interest. There are signs that the Government is responding including the announcement of £23m support for a new 6.5 acre city centre park in Manchester. The Trust of course manages 650 acres at Cuerden Valley on a budget of just £0.3m.

There are challenging times ahead for the sector and with even the National Trust reporting a £200m loss and redundancies of 1,200 staff, the situation for charities such as ours is serious. The cancellation of all our fundraising events this year has caused a big hole in our budget to look after the Park. This is one of the reasons why car park charges will be increasing this autumn, but permit prices will be frozen.

So what does the end of lockdown mean for Cuerden Valley Park?

The Trust survived lockdown and although we struggled to cope at times with the huge surge in visitors, we are proud of having kept the Park open throughout while other sites closed their doors. Now we've entered a new phase and it's hard for all of us to adapt and work out what we can and can't do safely.

One thing is clear, it is not business as usual.

Not all of our facilities are easy to adapt to Covid 19 rules. Our Visitor Centre is a compact space which means that we have to control the number of people entering the building to make it a safe Covid-secure space. This means unfortunately we can not open our toilets to the public and we appreciate how inconvenient this is. Our Office is also closed to the public with enquiries being dealt with by telephone, email, or post.

We have applied to the National Lottery Heritage Emergency Fund which has been set up for organisations who are facing Covid 19 financial difficulties, for support including temporary toilets, a new shed for volunteers to store tools and safely take tea breaks, and extra PPE for staff and volunteers. Fingers crossed we will have positive news soon.

### Tell us what you think?

If you have any ideas, comments or suggestions about the newsletter, fundraising events or volunteering please email [newsletter@cuerdenvalleypark.org](mailto:newsletter@cuerdenvalleypark.org)  
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