

Autumn 2020

Friends of Cuerden Valley Park Newsletter



Issue 4

Introduction from the editor

I'm excited to be able to let you know that the Friends Committee is currently working on a totally new fundraising initiative for us. At this time when we are constrained by the current situation and are unable to organise any traditional fundraising events, we are planning to take our fundraising on-line specifically this time for a new ride on mower.

As the park is widely accepted to be a friendly venue for dogs and their walking buddies we are planning an online fun dog show. It will be accessed via a new face book page which we will advertise shortly. The aim is to run this during the month of December. Once the show is ready to go I will email all Friends and we will widely advertise on various local Facebook pages. We do hope that you will support this either by entering or getting your friends and family who are dog owners to take part.

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Thoughts from the Chair of the Friends: Jack Spickett

As we enter our second period of lockdown, with all the restrictions that entails, we don't know as yet, what Covid restrictions may be imposed in the future. As you will see from the Park Manager's report in this issue, Cuerden Valley Park (CVP) faces an uncertain future, especially around our ability to stage our normal fundraising events involving large numbers of the public.

However, the Friends Committee has not been totally dormant. Thanks to Zoom we are able to hold regular meetings to develop ideas to meet the inevitable financial shortfalls that our Park is going to face in the future. The first to be launched is the online Dog Show that Sheila has outlined in her Editors note, which if successful could be followed by other online events.

We also identified the ongoing misconception, held by many of the Park users, that we are funded by the local council/s but as you all know we are a charity. When we use the word 'park' people immediately assume some kind of municipal funding must be forthcoming, which then leads to 'I already pay my Council Tax so why should I pay for the park'. We want to work towards changing this misconception as well as fund raise and enlist support.

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Thoughts from the Chair of the Friends: Jack Spickett contd.

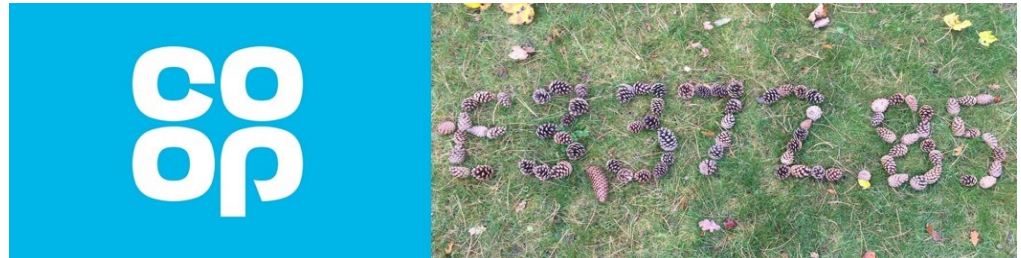
We want to give greater prominence to CVP being a place for conservation and educational activities and we have commissioned some new posters and an updated application process to join the Friends. I will give you more detail about our various campaigns in the next edition.

We feel it is important to emphasise our charitable status and the possible jeopardy the Park faces, telling everyone that we need their support, either financially by becoming a Friend, or by volunteering to work alongside the Rangers or the Education Officer.

My hope for the future is that all the Friends of Cuerden Valley Park stay safe and well and that in the not too distant future we will all be able to enjoy everything that our Park has to offer as we have in the past.

Some good news.

CoOp Funding



The Park has just reached the end of a year of being a Local Cause in the CoOp's Community Fund. In this scheme we received 1% of CoOp Members' spend on CoOp brands, if they nominated us as their Local Cause. We are delighted to let you know that we have been awarded a total of £ 3,372.85! Thank you to everyone who supported us in this way. The money will be used to do some path repairs. (Across the UK, CoOp and their communities are celebrating this year's Community Fund pay-out of £71.63 million to over 4,000 Local Causes).

Food & Craft Market:

Thank you to everyone who supports our Food & Craft Market, which since reopening (in July) has gone from strength to strength. We have had a great selection of stalls, comprising of our long-standing favourites and a few new ones. As the stalls have to be spaced out (because of COVID-19 measures) we have kept the number of stalls to 28, as space is a premium. Also, in recent months we've had an unprecedented 44 enquiries for a stall, so word is getting around about how good the market is. Donations to the Friends at the gate have increased and have averaged £217!

As with all our events, the market can only go ahead because we have a merry band of volunteers. They put up and take down the gazebo's and meet & greet customers at the main entrance. If you'd like to join the team you'd be most welcome, so please contact me at the office. Best wishes, Les Cryer. (marketing@curdenvalleypark.org.uk).



STOP PRESS : The 22 November market is going ahead with a reduced number of stalls selling only the items that are approved within the current government lockdown restrictions. We will be asking everyone to follow the Covid-safe guidelines including wearing a face covering.

Update from our Wildlife Officer, David Beattie

As many of you know, I spent several weeks in hospital following major surgery in August. May I thank all those who have continued to submit sightings both then and since my return home.

Though many of us have been limited in being able to get out on the Park, thankfully our wildlife has not. We have been visited by our usual migrants, blackcaps, chiffchaffs, willow warblers, sand martins and swallows. There have also been sightings of some residents like kingfishers, grey heron, dipper and buzzard. Two uncommon summer visitors were a common tern over the lake and a hobby. At Kem Mill lodge we



Emerald damselfly

had a welcome return of a pair of little grebes.

The hobby is a bird of prey that feeds often on dragonflies.

Numbers of dragonfly sightings have increased in all the water bodies of the Park. We have had 6 species of damselfly and 9 species of dragonfly.

Thanks to Zak for the image of the emerald damselfly and

Southern hawkker



Kevin Bandage for the photo of a southern hawkker.

As we progress through winter keep your eyes open for roe deer early mornings and flocks of jackdaws going to roost at dusk.

Young volunteers : Education Update from Clare Thompson Education Officer

Every Thursday Year 9 pupils from St Michael's high school visit Cuerden as part of their Duke of Edinburgh award. The visits are helping them to meet the volunteering element of the award. The children, accompanied by very enthusiastic staff work on the regular tasks such as litter picking, balsam bashing and gardening but also when there is a specific task that can help the parks ranger or event team they work on these. This year saw them harvesting the apples from the orchard which were then juiced and sold on the farmers market. This was a great activity which saw Mr Cree enthusiastically shaking the apple trees to create a shower of apples. As you can see from the picture they certainly harvested quite a few apples! This activity whilst great fun also provided learning opportunities about what would love to eat the rotting apples that we left on the ground.



From the education team's side it is fantastic to build this relationship with St Michael's, the children are learning a valuable lesson about volunteering and how much effort it takes to run the park and the very varied tasks that it involves. When asked to say a few words about their visits to Cuerden, Mr Cree said "The pupils arrive unsure about what to expect and then they love it! They are fully engaged with the volunteering programme and get so much out of the experience. For the staff that bring them - we look forward to Thursday afternoons every week!"

Update from Simon Thorpe, General Manager of the Park

Firstly can I offer congratulations to the newly elected Committee members and my staff and I look forward to working closely with them over the next 12 months to improve the Park and engage with our supporters.

In August we had some really great news that our application for a National Lottery Heritage Emergency Fund grant of £27,600 had been successful. This funding was to help us survive and recover from the impact of Covid 19. The first measure introduced has been the installation and cleaning of temporary portaloos outside the Visitor Centre for general public to use. The grant will cover the cost of the extra PPE and sanitizing materials we need, as well as a new volunteer's shed providing a Covid-secure space to restart our regular park conservation volunteering days (as soon as Government restrictions allow).

However, as I write this we are about to enter a new national lockdown. We've all been here before of course but the impact on charities and businesses continues to bite. Many of the support packages and grants made available during the summer were to ensure that charities such as ours survived until March 2021, particularly because of cancellation of fundraising events.

Winter is the time that we start planning events and activities for next year but there is now growing uncertainty about whether the impact of Covid 19 will continue in 2021 causing another fundraising wash-out. If that is the case then it is likely that charities, including us, will need a further injection of support packages to avoid a large black hole in the budget.

The recent announcement that Cuerden Hall has been sold is welcome news, as the prospect of an empty and deteriorating Listed building on our doorstep was not an attractive one. We understand the new owner wishes to restore it as a private home and we have had an initial introductory meeting. The temporary fencing around the site is necessary for insurance purposes to protect the Hall and its grounds from damage and it could take 12 months before restoration starts. Details of the new owners plans are on a new website

www.cuerdenhall.com

Everybody's Christmas plans are in disarray but we hope that lockdown will be eased in time for the Christmas Food & Craft Fair on 20th December and the Café to reopen with some seasonal Christmas specials.

Looking ahead to next year, I will be working closely with the Chairman and Board of Trustees to set a park budget. Inevitably we will have to look hard for savings, and increase our fundraising activities. We'll be keen to encourage more people to join the Friends and launch some sponsorship schemes in the Spring.

Thank you for your support as a Friend, and we hope to see you in the Park throughout lockdown and beyond.

Tell us what you think?

If you have any ideas, comments or suggestions about the newsletter, fundraising events or volunteering please email newsletter@cuerdenvalleypark