

# Friends of Victoria Park - Review of 2011

## Another amazing year!

### Tea Room:

This year saw the opening of our weekend tea room in the Community Building which has gone from strength to strength. We are open every Saturday and Sunday between 10am until 4pm throughout the year except Christmas, New Year, and Easter. We do not have set prices but rely on donations to cover the costs and make any profit - this ensures that our tea room is as inclusive and accessible to the whole community as possible. The tea room is manned entirely by a pool of approx 65 volunteers from the local community who give up their time as they believe in what we are trying to achieve. The tea room has toys that can be used by anyone which allows parents to have a quiet cuppa while the kids play, we have highchairs to use and children's cups if required. We also have bookcases full of second hand books that you can buy, lend or read whilst in the tea room. Wherever possible we use fairtrade products and we also reuse, recycle and reduce as part of our ethos. Having the tea room open allows us to open the toilets up for public use, lend out bowls, boules or tennis equipment to park users and gives a reassuring presence in the park whilst also discouraging anti-social behaviour.

### Events:

We have held a fabulously diverse calendar of events this year with 57 events in total. This is slightly less than 2010 but we have been trying to focus our efforts on honing our events to match the communities requirements. We will be focussing more on this in 2012. Our main events at Easter, Halloween and Xmas were as popular as ever but some of our smaller events were not so popular and as such we will not be doing them again this year. For the first time in our history we had to cancel one of our events - our Summer Sports Spectacular - this was due to appalling weather and we thought it would be unsafe to go ahead with this event.

### Funding:

The Friends group were successful in gaining 4 funding bids totalling £11,206.80 during 2011. £1,000.00 was awarded by Comic Relief for us to purchase some bookcases, children's tables and chairs, curtains and curtain tracking for the Community Building. £410.00 was awarded to us from Greater Manchester Police Authority to purchase some litter picking equipment.

£550 was awarded to us from North Trafford Sports fund for tennis coaching sessions during the summer.

£9246.80 was awarded to us from Awards for All which has allowed us to buy 2 commercial grade gazebo's, a laptop, projector screen and projector and will allow us to install a new kitchen in the Community Building.

We have a 50% success rate for our funding applications during this year.

Our tea room has given us a good profit this year - and we hope that this will continue into the future as the popularity of this amenity grows.

Our events and other fundraising activities continue to provide us with an income that we are able to invest in the park, the group or the event programme.

### Projects:

Our pond was improved this year and further works are planned for 2012 to this and the wildlife garden.

Our sundial project was further researched during this year and works are hoping to be done in 2012.

Planting of spring bulbs was undertaken at a community planting day in September and this always ensures a good show throughout the spring months.

Our 'climbing zone' has been started by the installation of our first climbing boulder - we have plans to develop this area and we will search for funding in 2012.

Preparation works for the new stretch of fencing along School Road was undertaken in readiness for completion in 2012, and the refurbishment of our tennis courts.

There has been some path works carried out this year which has made a big difference to our users as it is now much safer and more even when walking around the park.

#### School and Community Works:

We worked with Victoria Park Junior School on 2 occasions during the year. The first being a bird inspired day in February led by the Friends group, assisted by the RSPB and attended by 60 children. This was a great day and everyone seemed to enjoy it. The second day was a summer day with the children planting summer bulbs in the park and helping with the pond works. They had a picnic lunch and also made and carried out treasure hunts within the park. Again a fun day was had by all.

We have worked with a number of community groups throughout the year and will continue to do this in 2012.

#### Volunteering Sessions:

We have had a number of volunteering sessions within the park. Manchester University came down to the park and carried out wood preserving and some gardening. The Actuary department from the Co-op came down and did wood preserving, soil work and grass seeding. Manchester College sent a group of hair and beauty students to come and do bench painting. Some scouts have come and done their volunteering badges with us. We have also had a number of enquiries for opportunities for volunteering in 2012.

#### Community Building:

We are continuing to press the council into giving us a lease for this building so that we have security and can move forward with improvements. This building is currently being used midweek by a few other groups under our cover for children's drop in sessions which are going well. We also hope to be able to offer the building to other groups in the future.

#### The Group:

This year has seen the loss of our Park Development Officer, Bob Walton as he was made redundant.

We have also lost one of our most dedicated friends - Pauline Law, who retired from the group in the summer - she is sorely missed.