

Manor House Gardens Users' Group

Chair's Report 2009-10

"Ten years on" was the theme of last month's Party in the Park – held on 12 June to celebrate the tenth anniversary since the re-opening of Manor House Gardens.

We seem to have gone from strength to strength since 2000, when we marked the park's rejuvenation, achieved thanks to the Heritage Lottery grant which the group's founders – led by Carolyn Bosworth-Davies – organised to refurbish Gardens.

Once again, the success of the party was down to the hard work of many – most notably Carolyn, Angela Joy, Glendale's Gemma Marston, Aysin Djemil and Baz Golin – and it looks as if it is now firmly in everyone's diary as an annual event.

Eight Green Flags is some measure of our achievement, but the real success lies in the value thousands of local people get from such a good community resource.

Further proof was reflected in the award of £500 from the Historic Gardens Foundation in recognition of our promotion leaflet, and its creator Jeremy Carden, reprinted with the support of the Lee Green Locality Fund.

Pistachios cafe continues to provide a hub for many of the community's activities, and we owe much to Aysin for his sustained commitment to the park.

It hasn't all been easy. An outbreak of botulism killed many of our wildfowl and, while it was caused by a nearby outbreak, the failure by the Council and Glendale's to deal with it quickly undoubtedly made it worse. The breakdown of the fountain's pump and aerator contributed, and we have since had to be vigilant about the pump, and have only recently succeeded in regaining use of the aerator. Lessons have been learned and we have to hope the new procedure will prevent any similar threats. The big challenge of the coming year may well be reaching agreement with Northbrook school about the use of the play areas. The sub-group, led by Rowan Bosworth-Davies and myself, is trying to get a protocol that would bind the school to guidelines about times and supervision of usage. Without it, it may not be possible to get a solution – which would be a pity as mutual exchanges with local schools benefit the community.

Another issue is funding. Recent spending on such items as the aerator and park bench had reduced our resources. Membership drives at the monthly Farmers' Markets – another of the magnets that help attract visitors – have improved matters, but we do need to keep fund-raising up and, with Council resources likely to be strapped, we may need to look again at other sources.

Glendale's deserve thanks for their support, as does the local Safer Neighbourhood Team, although in both cases we've had press for regular attendance at our meetings.

Last, but by no means least, my thanks to the other officers – Angela and Rosalyn – who have made my job easier.

I will be standing down as chair at the AGM, having done four years. They have been hectic and challenging, yet thoroughly engrossing. Although I've taken on other commitments which would have made it impossible for me to give sufficient time and energy to the task, I will continue to support the Gardens and the Users' Group in whatever way I can.

Jim Mallory,

Chair, Manor House Gardens Users' Group