

## **FOWCP Chair's Report for 2017**

I have very mixed feelings standing here giving my last Chairman's report. It is 13 years since I first became involved in the Park and the Friends Committee. It has been an incredible and wonderful experience. I have learnt so much, found strengths, abilities and weaknesses I never knew I had. I am quite convinced this is the right thing to do. There is so many other things I want to have time to do, but that does not mean it is easy. There was never going to be a good or easy time to leave, but if you are going to go, go on a high and last year was certainly that.

2017 was a particularly busy year and unbelievably we held 11 events!!

After last year's **January Jaunt** It started with

The **Weed and Clean** last February, where a group of volunteers spent a day clearing bags of rubbish from the park and weeding, all fuelled by tubs of cakes.

In March we had our annual and very popular, fully sold out, **Quiz Night**. This is our biggest fund raiser and we are grateful to Michelle for her Quizmaster skills, which always makes this event such a success.

On a bright and sunny April morning 16 budding ornithologists set out from the Pavilion to do a bit of **bird spotting**. With the guidance of Mark we returned an hour or so later having seen or heard 19 different species of bird or water fowl.

The first of the two **3K races** also took place one evening in April and attracted 64 runners. These races 'run' so smoothly (no pun intended) due to the excellent organisation of Peter and Pitsea Running Club.

A late and new edition to the events calendar was the **Bat Walk** in May. Carefully planned to start at dusk when bats are at their most active Ella from the Essex Bat group

provided the 16 participants with Bat detectors and the hunt was on! Yes, we do have bats at the Wick Country Park.

Next came our biggest event **Paws in the Park**, which for many years has taken place on the second Sunday in June. 600 visitors and probably nearly as many dogs attended. In addition to the Dog show, there were charity stalls, a display by the Essex Flyball team, and food outlet vans. In addition, for the children, there was a quiz and several craft activities in the pavilion. In fact there was something for everyone.

July is always **Nature Quest** and last year we did not disappoint the many children and parents who look forward to the day. Nine nature related challenges, some new to the event, were undertaken. Certificates were collected and it was smiles all round.

The second **3K race** in July was as popular as the first that year. We are very grateful to Pitsea Running club who make a very generous donation after each race which is one reason why we are able to run our events free of entry charges.

The summer was passing, but the committee and volunteers were not finished yet as September brings the annual **Kite Festival and Classic Car display**. Some wonderful volunteers helped 170 children make Kites. The Essex Kite people put together and donated the kits. The classic cars gave another dimension to the day and the mud faces organised by the Tree House Nursery was the icing on the cake.

Our final event of the year was a second **Bat Walk** attended by increased numbers and with plenty of bat detectors and Ella's enthusiasm another successful evening was enjoyed.

Having informed the committee in September of my intention to resign in January and then to hear of Dorothy and Alaric's intention to step back at the same time, something akin to panic set in! The whole future of the FOWCP was in the balance.

In November a **General Meeting** was held. Although the subject 'the future of the Friends' was a serious one. A very friendly, sociable evening was held, with refreshments, slide show and meeting the committee. It must have been a winning formula as words of support and volunteers came forward. The voting which is about to take place will confirm how successful we have been in recruiting new committee members.

In between running the 11 events Mark, Alaric and I have been very busy, obtaining funding, designing and planning two information boards to grace the park. The first life size draft is available for you all to see. Numerous amendments to that draft have been requested but it will give you a good idea about the final product.

Just want to squeeze in a quick thank you to everyone who has helped maintain the Pavilion garden over the past year. With particular reference to Barbara and Richard for their help and horticultural expertise. I am delighted Marie has agreed to take over from me organising these fortnightly sessions.

Well thirteen years have flown by in a whirl wind of hard work, excitement, frustration and satisfaction and I wish my successors and all the committee every success.

Nikki Gibson

(Retiring) Chair, Friends of The Wick Country Park

21<sup>st</sup> January 2018