

Friends of Sandall Park
Trustees' Annual Report

January 2010 – December 2010

Every day in Sandall Park is a new challenge, and every year brings even more challenges. The *Friends* of Sandall Park will meet these opportunities head on and tackle them with the verve and enthusiasm that has been shown in the last 5 years.

This is a resumé of the obstacles we have faced, our activities, and our achievements in 2010:

1. Crime in the Park

All crimes were reported to the crime desk as they occurred, and copied to police and Safer Neighbourhood Team (SNT). Though crimes this year have been minimal, there was one serious crime committed.

- a. A gang of youths were processed for riding motor bikes in the park and tearing up the grass. This was a successful intervention by the SNT.
- b. Litter seems to be under control to a certain degree and is improving year on year. There are the exceptions and the corner of the lake nearest the football pitch remains the gathering ground for all the litter dropped, which ultimately ends up in the lake. This is a problem that still needs to be dealt with and is outlined in the Business Plan. Included in litter is dog fouling. This continues to be problematical though again, to a lesser degree. The issuing of 'dog poo kits' has gone a long way to combating this.
- c. Due to our persistence in pursuing offenders criminal damage and graffiti remains minimal.
- d. Unsavoury activities are still in evidence in and around the toilets on occasions. Several men have been spoken to by the SNT and this curbs the activity for a while, it does need constant attention though.
- e. Numerous ducks and geese have been killed, including 2 swans and two young cygnets. A large part of the problem seems to be dogs allowed to run loose to chase the wildlife, often with fatal results. One dog was witnessed to kill a swan by grabbing it around its neck.
- f. A member of FoSP was assaulted and was subjected to threats to kill, whilst dealing with anti social behaviour. One of the youths responsible was traced and received a caution, the others were not traced.
- g. Several members of FOSP continue to visit the park on a daily basis and speak with the visitors. The public have well and truly joined in the crusade to rid the park of the anti social element causing all the problems. Several members of the public came forward to assist when the previously mentioned assault took place. There are also people contacting the RSPCA direct when they see an injured duck, instead of group members.
- h. Our relationship with the police and the higher echelons of DMBC has not always been a fruitful one this year:
 - (i) We sourced and volunteered to pay for a CCTV system in the park to prevent crime and anti social behaviour. We had numerous meetings with CCTV specialists within DMBC and funders and the project was set to go ahead. Neither the police

- nor DMBC would agree to act as data controllers for any information likely to be used as evidence. The Project failed.
- (ii) We wanted to impose a fishing ban (when the Corner Pin Angling Club withdrew) to prevent irresponsible fishing in the park. We were led to believe that there was a byelaw covering this issue but there is not and it would require a new local byelaw to be implemented. Numerous enquiries ensued. The Council did not support an application for such a Byelaw. On the positive side, this project 'flushed out' a group of legitimate fishermen who went on to form the Anglers of Sandall Park.
 - (iii) We wanted to implement a dog control order around the lake where the ducks congregated to prevent dogs being allowed off the lead in that area. DMBC claimed this was not possible – we disagree. The Project failed.
 - (iv) Damage to perimeter fencing by vehicles involved in road accidents: We asked DMBC for owners to be traced and accountable for their actions through the insurance companies and pay for the damage. Both police and council say owners weren't traced, which isn't correct – at least two of the accidents were witnessed/attended by police and/or PCSO officers. This is a major cost recuperation opportunity thrown away. This negotiation took almost a year to reach a negative conclusion. The fences remain unrepaired. No costs have been recouped.
 - (v) The 7 day rule (an offender can't be processed if they aren't traced within 7 days of the offence) was challenged after a failed 'prosecution' of dog fouling, and after several months of enquiries was found not to be the case at all. This was brought about by dog fouling offenders being 'let off' if not traced to be issued with a FPN within 7 days. A case of misinformation being passed down the ranks.
 - (vi) Planning department forbidding us from putting banners on the fence to advertise events in the park, and periodically sending us messages via SNT when we have events. We have been threatened with a fine of £75. This matter has been dealt with by Councillor Thompson and Mayor Davies and we *are* allowed to put up banners 4 weeks before an event.

These wasted efforts have been frustrating and extremely time consuming. Having said all that, we have had tremendous support from the 3 ward councillors, the mayor Peter Davies; Councillor Mark Thompson and the local Neighbourhood Team led by Neil Marshall.

- i. As a crime prevention measure, the beech hedge in the main car park was reduced to a height of 2' to enable passers by to see into the car park. This reduced litter and anti social behaviour considerably.
- k. On the same lines – the new beech hedging recently planted in the café car park has been removed. This hedge would have created the same problem as the main car park. The plants have been re-sited in the OAP complex to provide them with some privacy.
- k. The toilets were deliberately blocked by toilet rolls on several occasions, resulting in costly repairs.
- l. The metal container unit housing the tools for the ILM project was damaged with an oxyacetylene cutter, though nothing was stolen.

2. Events

- a. The second Fake Festival took place on 22nd May and was a tremendous success. The weather was perfect and people turned out in their hundreds to picnic in the park. The doors were closed to entries due to it being a sell-out but people weren't put off – they picnicked outside the marquee and still had a great family day out. A tremendous way to attract new people into the park and showcase it.
- b. The Aurora 'Care to Run' charity run/walk of two laps around the park was staged again. FOSP members played a major role in organising the actual run, arrangements on the day and marshalling duties. Our thanks to SNT staff who provided equipment and staff on their weekend off, and to all our marshalls who did an excellent job (we received comments from the public to that effect). Medals were presented by Carolyne Hodgson who plays a marvellous role in encouraging the fundraisers. FoSP sponsored two trophies, one each for first male and female. Trophies were donated by Mick Wainwright of SNT.
- c. Quiz nights were held at Club 39 and raised capital in addition to providing a good night's entertainment for the group and it's supporters.
- d. Another Race Night was organised and raised over £1000. This one was shared with staff from House of Fraser Outlet Store who were raising money for Guide Dogs for the Blind.
- e. A FOSP tombola stall was put on for two days at Tuby's fair during the Bank Holiday and raised much needed funds for the park.
- f. Rosie Winterton MP visited the golf course project to see first hand the transformation of what was once a problem area of the park.
- g. The main Music in the Park event had to be cancelled due to torrential rain. It was a hard decision to make but turned out to be the right one. One good point to come out of it was that we had to spend the remaining funds from the Big Lottery Fund Community Spaces grant, so we purchased two additional gazebos with the residue of the capital.
- h. A smaller version of the concert was performed later in the year by Doncaster Concert Band. This was a great success with many people braving the cold weather to support it, and the Friends of Sandall Park raised substantial funds for the concert band in the process. It was also billed under the Doncaster Live banner, the culmination of the St Leger Festival which was great for the park and for the Festival.
- j. Litter picks were undertaken on a regular basis by volunteers from the group and one was completed by Macdonald's Takeaway staff.
- j. Health Walks organised by Active Doncaster (DMBC) and the SNT saw many people enjoying outdoor exercise, many of whom were visiting the park for the first time. Our members attended and assisted.
- k. A Santa Dash was organised to support Aurora in their quest for funds. Over 350 Santa's and junior 'reindeers' were expected to do two laps of the lake. Unfortunately we had to cancel with a few days to go due to the icy conditions on the paths in the park. Arrangements had been in hand to attempt a clear up operation but it was deemed an impossible task. The event was quickly re-arranged for the following weekend, following an almost instant thaw! Around 100 santa's and reindeers turned out on a freezing cold day – which was a positive result for Aurora and their fundraising. Thanks again to SNT for turning out on their weekend off to provide equipment and help,

and to all the marshalls. Thanks too to Nick and Jason of Ready Steady Store for turning out to help, bringing their gazebo and all the Santa suits, donating drinks, *and* doing the run.

- l. Three FOSP members attended the Doncaster Free Press and Doncaster Council Presentation Evening at the Keepmoat Stadium in October. They were pleased to receive a Pride in the Community Environment - Winners Award, sponsored by St. Leger Homes.
- m. Another presentation evening at the Keepmoat saw the group receive a Doncaster in Bloom Silver Gilt Award in recognition of the hard work put into Sandall Park during the year.
- n. FoSP entered two teams in the Sport Relief football tournament held at the Dome and hosted by DMBC. Although we didn't win, the teams played well, we donated to a worthy cause and raised our profile into the bargain. It was also a good way to involve youngsters in the FoSP.

3. Projects

- a. Maintaining provision of the toilet facilities remains a constant objective and one that takes up an inordinate amount of time and effort.
- b. Bulb and plant planting around the park was completed by FOSP volunteers on numerous days. The ILM team also planted several sacks of bulbs on our behalf.
- c. The Bog Pond saw a full day of activity, clearing rubbish out and thinning out the bulrushes. Numerous extra water lilies were also planted.
- d. A pond dipping survey was conducted and the results submitted to a national database – putting Sandall Park on another web site's map – OPAL (Open Air Laboratories). The results were amazing and showed the plethora of inhabitants and how healthy our ponds are for the wildlife and insects.
- e. Our first class photographers continue to provide stunning photo's of the wildlife in the park – a group of more than 30 Redwings calling in; two mute swans - who were quickly driven off by the black swans; the mandarin ducks, Shelduck, Nuthatch, Woodpeckers and many more.
- f. The Golf Course Project, funded by the Big Lottery Fund through Groundwork UK and Community Spaces, was completed in its entirety and has been hugely successful – more than we could have hoped for. A complete new copse of trees was also planted to replace the ones blown down. This was a vast project with major results for the park – crime and anti-social behaviour has been all but stamped out on the golf course area and a family facility has been created. There is still room for more work and there are plans to develop it even further. This could not have been achieved without the assistance we received from Neil Marshall and Lisa Nokes of DMBC.
- g. Several months of negotiations took place to fund, and have installed CCTV to cover the car parks, café and parts of the lake. Unfortunately, after a lot of hard work by two members of the group, the project failed to attract the support of the police or the local authority and the project was shelved.
- h. The Playbuilder Project, funded by a Government grant and implemented by DMBC was completed early in the year and has proved to be an incredible success. There are always children on it with families sitting around enjoying the park. The popularity has far outweighed our expectations, and there are plans to further develop this play theme.

- i. It was a major coup for the Neighbourhood Manager Rachael Blake to acquire the employment of The Intermediate Labour market (ILM) project, administered by Employment Training Links (ETL). A Government funded initiative to get people off the unemployed list and into employment, albeit temporary. The ILM are a team of *incredible* workers, led by their tutor on the same scheme. These men have worked tirelessly in the short space of time they have been allocated:
- They have their break and return to work 'on the dot';
 - Work in all weathers – and importantly –
 - Do it with a willingness and a smile!
 - They've worked wonders in the park and have completed a lot of tasks that would have taken us years to achieve. A tremendous asset to the park indeed, and we are grateful for their input.
- They have:
- Cleared all copses of undergrowth, in all areas of the park, thereby creating a safer environment for walkers
 - Secured the north bank by planting hawthorn, blocking gaps in hedges, erecting fences and creating wildlife habitats
 - Dug out and resurfaced the boat house area
 - Planted bulbs
 - Lifted the undergrowth from the conifers at the Wheatley Hotel end of the golf course, creating a safer environment for walkers
 - Cleared snow from footpaths
 - Put in a slope to golf course through the hawthorn hedge
- j. Another 250 shopping bags, bearing the FOSP logo and a slogan '*The park is fantastic, so take home your plastic*' were purchased after the success of the initial project, and a further batch after that. People love to have a free gift and it enables the volunteers to engage the public in conversation about the park as well as educating them about the problems with litter etc.
- k. A project to tackle dog fouling: Dog poo kits (bone shaped holders which clip to a dogs collar or lead and contain a supply of plastic bags for 'picking up') were purchased. Funny scenario – we priced them on the internet and applied for a grant from the police authority which we got. We then discovered that we could get them from the pound shop at a fraction of the price. So – we couldn't spend the money! We had to systematically go round all the pound shops clearing them out of dog poo kits on a regular basis. Then we discovered - we could get them for 59p! We eventually ended up with about 5 times the amount we'd expected. This is another way of engaging the public – give them a free gift and talk to them about the dog fouling problem.
- l. A rounders pitch was marked out and was used extensively during the summer by families and organised groups.
- m. We joined BTCV to access their network and expertise, which proved fruitful as we were able to acquire cheaper insurance cover.
- n. It was proposed to install an obstacle course in the park – for people and dog exercise. Negotiations are still ongoing with regards to this.
- o. We entered the BTCV Green Heroes award but weren't shortlisted.
- p. We have been entered for a Queens Voluntary Service Award, the results of which will not be known for some time. Members of the

group were interviewed by a representative from the Lord Lieutenants Office, and the decision now goes to a higher panel.

- q. Mansell Challenge – Mansell Construction offered their services, labour and materials for a Weekend Challenge in March 2011. We submitted an application to have the ‘pongy’ corner of the lake to be sorted out but were not successful in this application.
- r. 3 volunteers have spent a great deal of time tending the rockery and planting new plants to develop its appearance as a rockery and not a playground.

4. Funds

- a. The Weather Lottery continues to provide us with a monthly income of around £26. If we could increase our membership, we could benefit greatly from the income generated.

Full report from Treasurer.

5. Grants applied for – unsuccessful

- a. The request for a local firm to assist with rebuilding the lake edging was progressing well but is now unlikely to go ahead. This is disappointing after all the hard work that went into the months of negotiations and meetings by FoSP members.

6. Grants/donations received

- a. Lloyds TSB Foundation - match funding for the Race Night.
- b. Several donations have been made by a FOSP member Mrs Downing in support of the group.
- c. Several donations from Roger Tuby and his staff.
- d. Ready Steady Store donated a large amount of capital; storage space at their facility for all our equipment; donated of their time and help at events; bottled water for the charity events and prizes.
- e. Red Tomato Pizza outlet donated 3 new fence banners.
- f. A donation was received from the Friends of Askern Lake in lieu of our donation to them of the portable staging. It was not fit for our purpose but ideally suited to their requirements so we donated it to them in return for the capital spent on bringing it up to standard.
- g. FoSP purchased a lifesaving rope which is held in the café for emergencies such as the rescue of the man and his dog in December last year, and is publicised in the notice boards. The money was donated by the rescued man.

7 Publicity

- a. The web site continues to be updated on a daily basis and is our major ‘window to the world’. The average visits now are around 5,000 a month by 2,000 visitors.
- b. Linked to the web site for informing our supporters and visitors of developments are the park notice boards. These are very popular and a good source of information for park users.
- c. Newsletters produced (copies displayed in park notice board) and handed out during Aurora Runs, Health Walk and FoSP events.
- d. Power Point promotional CD of Aurora Event, copies sent to Aurora and SNT.
- e. Good Old Days posters produced showing development of park (these were stolen during a vandalism spree of the notice board but subsequently replaced.)
- f. Shopping bags imprinted with our logo.

- g. New banners sponsored by Red Tomato and Ready Steady Store
- h. Banners and flags displaying our logo used at displays.
- i. Two banners (purchased through golf course grant) which affix to the gazebo walls and showing our web site address.
- j. Our Nature Trail project forms part of the publicity material for Veolia's marketing of their community involvement
- k. FOSP are registered on Community Spaces Forum; Donny-online Forum; Twitter, U Tube and Facebook and all receive lots of 'hits'. Information is inputted on a regular basis.
- l. An article in the SAGA magazine is to be aired in spring. Interviews have been conducted for this, and a photographer attended the park.
- m. Video advertising on screen at Aurora events, and in their event programmes.

8. Press releases

Included items such as:

- a. Fake Festival
- b. Aurora Care to Run
- c. Music(s) in the park
- d. Aurora Santa Dash
- e. Danger of going on the ice on the lakes

In several publications on numerous occasions:

- a. Doncaster Free Press
- b. Doncaster Advertiser
- c. Doncaster Star
- d. Hatfield Flyer
- e. Wheatley local newsletters and publications
- f. DMBC publications and web site.
- g. Outlying village 'Arrow's
- h. Posters in park; café and locales.
- i. BBC Radio Sheffield, Sine FM and Trax FM – several live interviews

9. Meetings

- a. With Mayor of Doncaster Peter Davies and Cabinet members
- b. Numerous with SNT (about all projects and plans).
- c. Jez Lee of Fake Festivals, Community Parks and SNT staff regarding RockFest.
- d. Police and PCSO's (Police Community Support Officers) re incidents in the park
- e. Friends of Askern Lake – sharing of ideas
- f. Friends of Hyde Park Cemetery – sharing of ideas
- g. Friends of Martin Wells Wood – sharing of ideas
- h. BTO – sharing of ideas
- i. Numerous with representatives of Community Spaces and Groundwork UK re golf course project.
- j. Numerous with staff from Employment Training Links (ETL) regarding the involvement of staff from the Intermediate Labour Market (ILM) project.
- k. Several with Intake Opportunity Centre re winter wonderland event.
- l. Red Tomato re sponsorship
- m. The Olive Tree re sponsorship
- n. SAGA representatives for the magazine article.
- o. Ready Steady Store re sponsorship and events.
- p. Aurora Staff relating to charity runs/walks

- q. Penny Jewitt re Queens Award for Voluntary Service
- r. Numerous with Sandall Park café proprietors re events.

10. Angling Club

- a. A new angling club was formed to replace the Corner Pin which relinquished its lease. The Anglers of Sandall Park commenced business on 1st September 2010 and set about rectifying the problems in the lake. Their officials and bailiffs have worked hard to ensure the success of the group.
- b. Competitions organised for and funded by the club.
- c. Assistance rendered at volunteer events, particularly where a boat was required or 'waders', but also for bulb planting and litter picks.
- d. Regular representations at meetings.
- e. Lake and its edges cleared of rubbish on a regular basis.
- f. 'Illegal' anglers challenged and regular patrols made of the lake, including during the evenings and nights.

This has been a successful venture so far and the group have formed a good relationship within FoSP. There have been less calls to RSPCA regarding geese trapped in fishing line.

11. Park Future

- a. The Business Plan continues to evolve and as objectives are achieved, new ones are inserted. This forms the basis of monthly meetings and continues to develop. New ideas and projects ensure the Business Plan remains a living document, and the park is continually developed along those lines.
- b. The permanent opening of the toilet facilities is key to the success and future development of the park. Without them, the park itself will be used as a public toilet which is not a healthy option. We know this from previous experience when they were closed for long periods of time.
- c. We have lost a few members attending meetings through illness, but have gained as many with new volunteers. Our members who cannot attend the meetings anymore continue to be updated on our progress, and continue to help where they can – so thank you to them.

12. The Charity's Policy on Reserves

The annual running costs for the charity are as shown and this amount should remain ring-fenced for the charity to be able to continue its current activities throughout the year. This equates to:

Web Site maintenance	-	£ 80
Printing cartridges	-	£146
Photo paper for notice boards	-	£ 90
Insurance	-	£ 191
Postage	-	£ 5
Gaming Licence renewal	-	£ 20
Phone cards for mobile phone	-	£ 20
BTCV membership	-	£ 35
Total:	-	£587

13. In Conclusion

2010 has reaped dividends for the park both in terms of monetary investment and the physical investment of volunteers and paid workers. It never ceases to amaze me how much can be achieved in a short space of time with the determination, energy and a willingness to change an environment for the better. 2010 has been no exception. It's testament to our professionalism and effectiveness in the Third Sector.

Without our volunteers and supporters, and those volunteers who turn up ad-hoc to help with projects – the park wouldn't be the wonderful place that it is today. For a voluntary group to turn out 30 people to do marshalling duties at a charity event is a very credible achievement and I say a huge thank you to all the group members and all those people who help us throughout the year.

Although Sandall Park *still* lacks in the area of enforcement – particularly of dog fouling, litter dropping and unsavoury behaviour by men around the toilets, we continue to strive for a permanent, regular, uniformed presence.

Each year we look back at what we've created and can rightly feel proud of those successes, though we are not the sort of group to rest on our laurels. There is *always* more work to be done.

2011 will see a lot more challenges, hard work, and ultimately successes. We have the attitude and aptitude to bring the park into the 21st century – and we will.

The trustees declare that they have approved the trustee's report above.

Sandra Crabtree
Chairman 2009 - 2010

19.01.11

Glossary of terms:

FoSP Friends of Sandall Park
ILM Intermediate Labour Market
ETL Employment Training Links
SNT Safer Neighbourhood Team
DMBC Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council
CCTV Close Circuit Television
BTCV British Trust for Conservation Volunteers
PCSO Police Community Support Officer
OPAL Open Air Laboratories