



## **CLISSOLD PARK USER GROUP CHAIR'S ANNUAL REPORT**

**March 2014 - February 2015**

**The Clissold Park User Group has existed for over twenty years and is open to everyone who uses or cares about the park. We hold six meetings a year to which everyone is welcome. We work closely with Hackney Council to improve the park.**

### **1. 125 glorious years**

In 2014 we celebrated 125 since the park was first opened to the public of Stoke Newington. We held a raucous quiz in May which helped to fund a great family event in June with activities for all ages, live music, food stalls run by local businesses, story-telling, bike fixing and lots more. We also fundraised for the restoration of the memorial fountain dedicated to Messrs Runtz and Beck who saved the land for the people and we held a rather eccentric “unveiling” celebration on the exact date of the park opening, 24 July which was attended by three generations of the Beck family. On the same evening we restaged the famous 1889 photograph of local people in front of the house and another photo of children playing around the fountain from about 1910. We rounded off the year with a spectacular (and spectacularly wet) fireworks celebration. Pictures of all these events can be found on the website.

### **2. The role of the User Group**

The focus of the User Group continues to be on ensuring that everyone feels welcome and that we help to ensure considerate sharing of this wonderful public space. This is not always easy with so many different people using the park in so many different ways. Parks such as our have something unique and very special to offer to everyone and our priority is to make sure that people continue to use the park in ways which allow everyone to continue to enjoy it. The best way we can do this is by encouraging people to listen to each other's point of view and find workable compromises where there is a risk of conflict.

We have, as always, worked closely with the Council both through the temporary park manager Bruce Irving and, at a more strategic level, with senior managers and councillors through the regular attendance of councillors at our meetings and through the Clissold Park Development Board on which we are represented.

We held six public meetings in 2014, each one attended by between 25 and 40 people. We know that many people are not able, or do not want, to come to our meetings and we have therefore focused more this year on developing our profile in other ways including Facebook and Twitter as well as holding a number of social and community events. We now have 756 members of the Facebook page (up from 310 last year), 868 Twitter followers (up from 250 last year) and 500 people on our email mailing list. Thanks to a revamp of our website 27% of the 21,000 visits to our website were made on mobile devices leading us to start to consider the possibility of developing a “trail” app for the park.

We have a great team of volunteers who have contributed their time to the group by representing particular groups of users such as dog walkers and older people as well as through many, many hours spent this year on our events. Thanks to all of them!

### **3. Key issues and successes**

As always, we have dealt with a huge range of issues this year. The key ones are listed below:

- Woodland track – in response to concerns from people using the track, volunteers were brought in to help maintain it by putting down woodchip. A survey is being run to seek the views of runners generally about the park.
- We were consulted as part of improvements to pavements and the cycleway at the top end of Queen Elizabeth’s walk
- We worked with the Council to ensure that the skatepark was repaired after an arson attack
- We investigated the possibility of extending the opening hours of the park (sadly in the end the Council was unable to provide the resources needed to do this)
- We worked with the Council to help develop a new strategy for events in the park to ensure the minimum of disruption to the park’s neighbours and to keep the number of events in the summer to a reasonable level
- We worked with the Council to help inform people about the Environment Agency’s programme to eradicate the extremely damaging invasive fish species, topmouth gudgeon, from the ponds and the New River and are now looking and whether and how the ponds might be restocked in the future
- We dealt with a number of concerns about dog-on-dog attacks in the park and the Council has agreed to provide better information about what to do if this happens
- In response to requests from park users we are working with the Council to explore the possibility of installing some fixed gym equipment near the multi-use games area
- In response to concerns about anti-social behaviour in the park after closing, we have worked with the local police and neighbourhood wardens to increase their presence in the park
- We have continued to press the café for better service and better value for money resulting in a number of changes to the menu introducing cheaper items

- The tennis club house was completed and the lighting on the courts was turned on making six out of eight of the courts available for use after dark
- The park once again won a prestigious Green Flag award and came sixth in the national People's Park competition
- After three years of campaigning, we succeeded in persuading the Council to install a bin at the Queen Elizabeth's Walk Gate
- The butterfly dome opened more frequently this year thanks to a team of volunteers
- The volunteering programme is well established with hundreds of hours of corporate volunteering in the park, the education programme provided by volunteers and monthly sessions open to anyone who wants to turn up
- Plans are in place for two new picnic benches to be installed on the "Mothers' Field"
- Our only real disappointment was the decision by Hackney Council to withdraw their plans to put an ice rink in the park at Christmas 2014 but we will keep working on it!

#### 4. Thanks

Thanks, as always, are due to all the park staff including the park keepers and gardeners. Thanks too to Bruce Irving, the interim park manager and Lucy Gijsen, who runs the schools and volunteering programme. We'd also like to thank Emma Finch and her team from GLL for their hard work in running the venue and the other staff working with them.

Finally thanks must go to all the User Group officers who have contributed in different ways over the last year: Ken Worpole our Honorary President, John Hudson our Vice Chair and Secretary; Anna Gualtieri our Treasurer; Delilah Jeary, our minutes secretary and to Isabelle Gore who designs and runs our website. We have a number of special interest reps who have also played an important role in the Group and to whom thanks are also due: Yvonne Hill and Hilde Oord who set up and ran the hugely successful fundraising quiz; Mark Forsyth our dog walkers' representative; Anthony Larvin our disability rep; Liz Fewings our biodiversity rep; Wendy Forrest our runners rep; John Dye the skatepark rep and Sylvia Anderson our older people's rep. I would also like to thank Roderick Ryan and Cath Willgress and Theresa Boden for their help with the 125 events, Betty Manning for printing the minutes and all the other volunteers who have helped out at different times.

Below: our 125<sup>th</sup> birthday cake. Thanks to Leahy Brand Design for the logos and Ruth Kleimberg for the cake.

