

The Friends of Debdale Park

ANNUAL

REPORT

2020 - 2021



Registered Charity 1154238

**Debdale Park, 1075 Hyde Road, Gorton
Manchester M18 7LJ**

www.friendsofdebdalepark.co.uk



Debdale Park and Gorton Lower Reservoir 2020 (Photo by Ann Todd)

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1. A Challenging Year

Over the past year, due to the coronavirus pandemic, the Friends have not been able to meet or function as normal.

Our last meeting was in March after which all meetings and projects had to be cancelled due to the national lockdown. Since then communications has been mainly by email.

After the preparation of detailed Risk Assessments that conform to MCC park regulations for our new situation some activity has been possible in some projects



Debdale Diggers getting to grips with things

Of particular note has been the dedication of the volunteer gardeners, also known as the **Debdale Diggers**.

Their work has enabled us to continue to fulfil **the aim of the Friends** which is:
- *to provide a welcoming, healthy, accessible, safe and high quality park which meets a diverse range of needs and aspirations on a sustainable basis.*

2.Activity Update

The focus of activity of the Friends has been to keep the park in good order that will be attractive to visitors.

One of the features of the lockdown has been the renewed appreciation of natural open spaces like the park and an increase in its usage.



The main herbaceous border summer 2020



Volunteers at work.

1. Volunteer Gardening Project – 'Debdale Diggers'

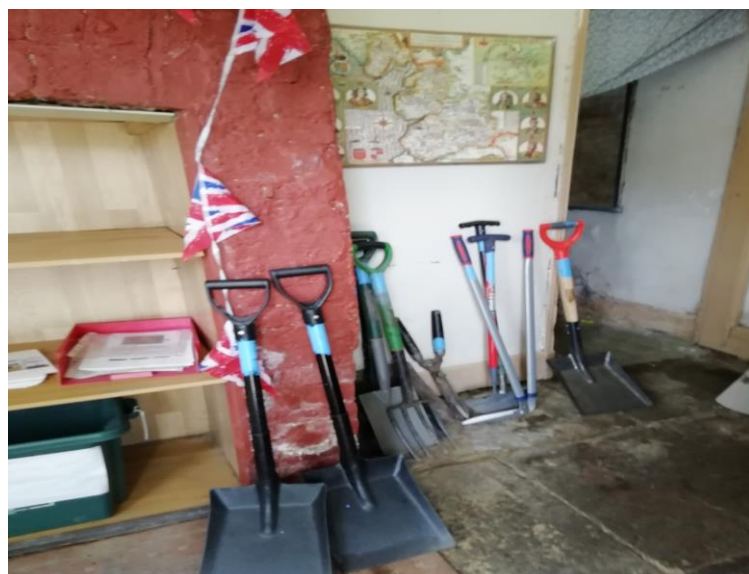


Diggers at work in the Rose Garden - Summer 2020

The volunteers were able to continue to work in a limited form under the conditions of the Risk Assessment. These conditions included the sanitization of tools and social distancing under the supervision of the Project Manager, Olwyn Taylor.

One of the priorities for the volunteers was maintaining the Rose Garden. Individual beds have been allocated to individuals or couples for maintenance.

During the year a number of new tools were purchased so as to be sufficient for the number of volunteers, which now numbers at over a dozen.



New tools marked and sanitized.



One of the 19 restored rose beds.



Young volunteers at work

For more information email – olwyn-109@outlook.com

2. Volunteer Work Days

During the lockdown intermissions we were able to arrange four Volunteer Work Days with the **Co-op Bank** and **Autotraders**. This was made possible through the assistance of **Benefacto** the charity support agency that has helped to coordinate this activity.



AutoTraders working on the main rose bed



Groups of up to six volunteers worked on the rose beds in September and October and made a great difference. Further Activity Days had been arranged but had to be cancelled due to the changed circumstances of the pandemic.

A Tree Planting event was arranged on 18 December in conjunction with City of Trees as part of the Great Northern Forest Project to plant 50 million trees over the next 25 years. Some 200 saplings were planted.



Planting saplings to extend the wooded area.

3. Debdale Bowling and Social Club

The Bowling pavilion has remained closed during the pandemic but access to the greens was allowed for individuals or couples for private bowling exercise in conformity with park guidelines. No organized events took place.

Work has continue in maintaining the grounds. During the summer two new shelters were installed alongside the greens and in November the concrete foundation was laid for a container next to the pavilion to provide extra storage space. The work was carried out by Groundwork and further work is planned to refurbish the interior of the pavilion during the coming year.



In October the lower green was completely renewed and re-seeded by the contractor Bancroft.



Volunteers tidying up the Bowling Greens



Planting a new laurel hedge at the Bowling Club

4. Debdale Ramblers

This new group was started just before lockdown. It meets on Thursday mornings for an hour's walk led by Olwyn and has been attracting over a dozen walkers.

5. Tai Chi



Directed classes take place on Wednesday mornings in the Community Garden area behind the old barn.

6. Green Fingers gardening project



Andy in festive mode on the allotment area.

Though this project has not been able to function during the year Andrew Parsons, the project manager, has been able to maintain the allotment and growing areas with the help of some volunteers who have visited on a regular basis.

Though some of the allotment area was lost to the extended fencing round Gorton House the fruit bushes have all been moved and replanted in the former bio-rhythmic garden area that had become overgrown.

The project now includes the area vacated by the Eco-Centre. Andy has significant plans to improve facilities in the coming year.

7. Debdale Nature Centre



Debdale Nature Centre and Community garden.

This is a project that the Friends have been trying to start for some time as a way of developing interest in the amazing wild life resource we have in the area of the park and reservoir area as well as the conservation area of Gore Brook which is part of the Gorton Heritage Trail.

The Centre is located in one of the cabins that has been made available with the departure of the Eco Centre and which is now being prepared as the hub for the Nature Centre. The cabin is being refurbished and equipped to host activity groups.

A variety of activities have already been instigated and there are plans to redevelop the Community garden area as a wild life haven

8. Gorton House



Gorton House, rear view

A further collapse to the rear of the house this year has now rendered the whole structure extremely precarious. Wooden boarding and a new extended perimeter safety fence was installed to secure the site.

Meetings that had been planned to discuss the future of the house have had to be postponed. However plans are in hand to reconvene the Gorton House Action Group and engage the University Landscape Architecture faculty that has expressed interest in the house.

The agenda of the Action Group is to re-engage with the community over this project and launch a new funding bid.



9. Tennis Court and recreational facilities.



Proposals are now in hand for the further refurbishment of the tennis court.

A proposed action plan has been agreed after meetings of the Friends, ManchesterActive, local councillors and the Park Management to resurface and remark the playing area and introduce further nets to make three courts. There will also be space for a basketball court.

10. The Manchester Bee and Nursery in the Park



The Manchester Bee was finally installed in October in the nursery grounds. The nursery has remained open and is operating in accordance with the pandemic requirements.

11. Wheels for All

Previous plans for the reintroduction of this project to the park have been changed due to lack of funding but new possibilities are currently being explored by Doreen Grafton and a feasibility group.

12. Heroes Wood

No services were able to take place this year though the memorial area has had regular visitors and has been maintained. There are plans to plant further trees and bulbs in the area.



13. Projects suspended due to lockdown restrictions



Men's Shed

Cycling for Health

Health Walks

Run in the Park

Gorton Visual Arts

Holiday Playschemes

Gorton Pagan Moot

Gorton Carnival and Gorton Pagan Pride

3.Park Staff

In August after four years working in the park as Neighbourhood Delivery Officer Andy McCleary moved on to another post. During this time he had been very supportive of the Friends and all the many projects that they were engaged in. As a small gesture of appreciation for all his hard work the Friends organized a small leaving party which had to be held outdoors. Fortunately it was a lovely sunny day. The event was attended by the Patron of The Friends, Afzal Khan MP, and also by local councilors who all expressed their appreciation of his commitment in what proved to be a very enjoyable event.



Andy's Leaving party in August

On the 17 August Rob Gorvett took over Andy's role under the new title of Park Ranger. Unfortunately for Rob he has never been able to be properly introduced to the Friends in a formal meeting and it has been difficult for him to pick up on the many projects. Added to this is an enormous extra amount of administrative work attached to the pandemic regulations. Hopefully next year will be better.



Park Ranger Rob (on the right) is assisted in the park by Paul Baxter, Estate Assistant (left).



All tidy!

4. Governance

The Friends of Debdale Park CIO Trustees

1. Allan Grafton, MBE JP - Chair
2. Peter Rees – Vice Chair
3. Chris Kennedy – Treasurer
4. Paul Kirkham – Secretary
5. Olwyn Taylor – Bowling Club
6. Vicki Heap – Gorton Pagan Moot
7. Kim Stevenson – Foundation Years Nursery
8. Andrew Parsons – Green Fingers

Patron

Hon. Afzal Khan, MP

Chair

Mr Allan Grafton, MBE JP.

Vice Chair: Peter Rees; **Secretary:** Paul Kirkham

Treasurer: Chris Kennedy

Committee

Peter Rees (Cycling for Health)
Olwyn Taylor (Bowling Club & Volunteer Gardening)
Irene Hargreaves (Bowling Club)
Ian McKay (Gorton Visual Arts)
Kim Stevenson (Nursery in the Park)
Andrew Parsons (Learning Disability Partnership)
Doreen Grafton (Wheels for All)
Vicki Heap (Gorton Pagan Moot)

Advisors

William Eastwood (Park & Neighbourhood Manager MCC)
Rob Gorvett (Park Ranger)



Friends of Debdale Park Accounts 2020 - 2021

Bank:

Registered Charity: 1154238

	Date	Item	Amount	Balance
Brought forward:				
	08/04/2020			£6,694.27
Income:				Running total
				£0.00
	09/04/2020	Bank account switch incentive	£1,250.00	£1,250.00
	20/04/2020	One Manchester Soup money for GYC	£1,000.00	£2,250.00
	17/08/2020	Bolton at Home donation	£500.00	£2,750.00
		Total Income:		£2,750.00
Expenditure:				
				£0.00
	08/07/2020	(03) Laptop and petty cash (Men's Shed)	£194.57	£194.57
	09/07/2020	(05) Internet hosting and Domain	£88.77	£283.34
	15/07/2020	(04) Insurance (Men's Shed)	£381.43	£664.77
	17/08/2020	(07) Items for Andy Mc's Presentation	£109.20	£773.97
	18/08/2020	(08) Gardening Supplies (Debdale Diggers)	£7.00	£780.97
	18/08/2020	(06) Gardening Supplies (Debdale Diggers)	£16.00	£796.97
	18/08/2020	(02) Keys (Olwyn)	£27.00	£823.97
	18/08/2020	(09) Gardening Supplies (Debdale Diggers)	£51.96	£875.93
	16/10/2020	(10) Volunteer Gardening	£134.79	£1,010.72
	10/11/2020	(11) Bandsaw Blades (Men's Shed)	£22.51	£1,033.23
	11/11/2020	(12) Tree Station (Woodchip)	£28.80	£1,062.03
	20/01/2021	(14) Men's Shed reimbursement (C.Kennedy)	£100.00	£1,162.03
	26/01/2021	(13) Christmas Gifts (Debdale Diggers)	£42.90	£1,204.93
		Total Expenditure:		£1,204.93
			Total:	£8,239.34



Gorton House Driveway and Rose Garden 2020 (Photo by Ann Todd)