



The Friends of Debdale Park

Annual Report 2022-2023



**The Queen's Award
for Voluntary Service**

Registered Charity Number 1154238

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

friendsofdebdalepark.co.uk

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Report compiled and produced by Paul Kirkham & Vicki Kennedy

1. Overview

Over the past year the Friends have sought to fulfil their Charitable Aim of providing *a welcoming, healthy, accessible, safe and high quality park which meets a diverse range of needs and aspirations on a sustainable basis.*

The main purpose of this report is to give an overview of what has been achieved over the last year.

The listing of projects and activities in the report is arbitrary and does not seek to prioritize any particular ones as all form a coordinated synergy of effort of all the Friends.



Volunteers from Auto Traders working on the refurbishment of the Heritage Garden

2. Projects

Cycling for Health

The cycling provision has continued on a weekly basis attracting a regular and increasing level of interest. The Monday morning cycle ride provides a welcome outing for about two dozen people. Bicycles are provided and rides are related to capability. The activity is free though donations of £1 are requested where possible to provide for the maintenance of the bikes.



1.

Volunteer Gardening Project - Debdale Diggers

The Diggers help to keep the park flower beds looking tidy. The activity is flexible in that individuals or groups can work as is convenient though the main session is on Wednesday mornings.

The meeting point is the park lodge Visitor Centre and tools are provided. Individual beds have been allocated to different volunteers to create a sense of ongoing upkeep.



Debdale Bowling and Social Club

The Bowling Pavilion is now host to a wide range of social activities including line dancing, Spanish lesson, computing and curling, all of which draw significant number of participants.

The club has also taken on responsibility for the maintenance of the lower bowling green and acquired a lawn mower to facilitate this. Members have also done significant work over the year maintaining and improving the appearance of the grounds.

The club is actively promoting membership across the community seeking new members with a greater diversity.



Debdale Nature Centre

The Nature Centre has been a great focus of interest from a wide range of people and with over 1,500 followers on Facebook and Instagram.

As well as a providing a wide range of activities and workshops for adults and children related to conservation, education and biodiversity there is now a live streaming camera feed on You Tube that is attracting attention from as far away as Canada and Australia.



Men's Shed - Debdale

After several years of struggling to get going, the Men's Shed is set to close its doors in Spring 2023.

The workshop will be turned over to use by The Friends of Debdale volunteers for projects in and around the park and wider community.



Green Fingers Debdale

This gardening provision for adults with additional needs has continued with the help of volunteers on the allotment beds.



Hammer & Nails

As with the Green Fingers project this project also for adult additional needs has continued meeting each Wednesday and Thursday for work recycling furniture and woodwork.

Gorton Pagan Moot

The Moot is a safe space for Pagans of all denominations to meet together, socialise, share knowledge and relax. They meet eight times a year, around the Sabbats and are family friendly, with activities for adults and children alike.

They enjoy a fairly large following on Social Media and some of the members have been undergoing chaplaincy training as part of *Greater Manchester Pagan and Witches Chaplaincy*. This training will allow them to conduct Pagan funerals and other services.



Debdale Ramblers

The Ramblers meet regularly on Thursday mornings for a walk in the park and surrounding area. Visits further afield have also been ongoing to places of interest.



Run Social Debdale Park

This free, timed weekly run, every Sunday morning was suspended for much of the past year but has now recommenced, providing 2km and 5km circuits. It is marshalled by volunteers and is inclusive to all members of the community.

Gorton House

During the year a new Action Group was formed to promote the restoration of the house but sadly has not been able to make much progress as yet.

Coffee in the Park

After a very successful twelve months, the kiosk trial came to an end in autumn 2022. The project provided some really useful information for Manchester City Council to be able to put an offer out to tender for a commercially viable business.

The Wellbeing Hub

This multipurpose space is based in and around the Growing Gorton polytunnels, and is designed with health and wellbeing at its heart. Facilities now include an outdoor kitchen, a garden overlooking the reservoir and a paved polytunnel which creates a perfect space for meetings, activities and workshops.

Though the Hub is still under development, there are already Yoga and Home Education sessions now taking place. Other sessions have included Crystal Healing, a memorial for a bereaved family and several meetings.

The second polytunnel is used for growing plants to be used in the Heritage Dye Garden and the wider park.



3. New Developments

Wheels for All

This project has now been restarted after a lapse of several years. The bikes have been taken for reconditioning and a new cycling circuit has been created.

Green Gym Equipment

A selection of new green gym equipment has been installed in the park to add to the existing pieces that the Friends purchased a number of years ago.



4. Activities

Volunteer Work Groups

Over the year a number of work groups have continued to visit the park from private companies. Notably Auto Traders, the Co-op Bank and Kellogg's

These groups have worked on the various flower, rose and shrub beds and have been of great help in maintaining the appearance of the park.



Heritage Dye Garden

The restoration of this garden area at the centre of the park is now well underway, with interest from corporate groups and the brand new Co-op Belle Vue Academy. This project has the potential to become quite substantial.



Gorton Heritage Trail

The trail covers the length of Gore Brook leading to the park and has its own dedicated committee responsible for its maintenance. This is now being run in conjunction with the Nature Centre. The replanting, enhancement and maintenance of this garden is on-going together with the rest of the trail.



Heroes Wood



This distinctive area of the park continues to be maintained and developed by volunteers. A flag pole has been purchased and is due to be installed soon.



Gorton Youth Forum

Gorton Youth Forum is run by Alex Kennedy, who was the Member of Youth Parliament for Manchester Central from 2020-2022. She is now too old for that role but is continuing her work with young people, particularly from Gorton and surrounding areas.

The Youth Forum runs regular events and activities in the park. Particular of note was a large event for International Youth Day in August 2022. Hundreds of families attended the event, which was completely free.

Gorton Youth Forum is primarily aimed at giving young people a space to have their voices heard about the issues that affect them.



Gorton Carnival and Car Show



Planning is already underway for this year's Carnival, which will be held on Sunday 9th July.

Last years event saw approximately 7000 people visit the park for the extravaganza which included fun fair rides, market stalls, a classic car show and tone of free family activities with live music on the stage and dancing all afternoon. It was a huge success.

The Carnival is organized by Gorton Events Committee in conjunction with the Friends.



5. Park Staff

The Friends continue to work closely with Manchester City Council, local Councillors and park staff to improve the park facilities.

Over the last year there have been a number of changes to park staff and we were sorry to lose the services of Estate Maintenance worker Karl Beckett. Also we lost Park Ranger Monika Sayed, who worked with enthusiasm to make Debdale a better park.



MANCHESTER
CITY COUNCIL

6. 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 - Debdale Bowling and Social Club
6. Vicki Kennedy - Debdale Nature Centre
7. Kim Stevenson - The Nursery in the Park
8. Andrew Parsons - Green Fingers Debdale
9. Doreen Grafton - Wheels for All
10. Marion Ballard - Gorton Heritage Trail



Patron

Hon. Afzal Khan MP

Executive Committee

Chair - Allan Grafton MBE, JP

Vice Chair - Peter Rees

Secretary - Paul Kirkham

Treasurer - Chris Kennedy

Committee

Olwyn Taylor (*Debdale Bowling & Social Club, Debdale Diggers, Debdale Ramblers*)

Kim Stevenson (*The Nursery in the Park*)

Andrew Parsons (*Green Fingers Debdale*)

Doreen Grafton (*Wheels for All*)

Vicki Kennedy (*Debdale Nature Centre, Gorton Pagan Moot, Gorton Heritage Trail, Men's Shed - Debdale, Growing Gorton*)

Marion Ballard (*Gorton Heritage Trail*)

7. Awards

Volunteers and projects in the park have enjoyed considerable recognition for their hard work over the last twelve months.

Debdale Nature Centre - Britain in Bloom -
It's Your Neighbourhood Award - Level 5 Outstanding

Green Fingers Debdale - Britain in Bloom -
It's Your Neighbourhood Award - Level 5 Outstanding

Heroes Wood - Britain in Bloom -
It's Your Neighbourhood - Level 5 Outstanding

The Butterfly Garden - Britain in Bloom -
It's Your Neighbourhood - Level 5 Outstanding

Olwyn Taylor - Pride of Gorton Awards -
Nominee - Community Pride Award

Gorton Pagan Moot - Pride of Gorton Awards -
Nominee - Making a Difference Award

Erin Kennedy - Pride of Gorton Awards -
Nominee - Young Achievement Award

Chris & Vicki Kennedy - BBC Radio Manchester Make a Difference Awards
Nominees - The Environmental Award

Chris & Vicki Kennedy and Andrew Parsons -
Bolton at Home
Nominees - Stars of the Community

Alex Kennedy - Manchester Youth Buzz Awards
Nominee - Outstanding Achievement



7. Contact Us



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8. Accounts

