



FROG NEWS



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‘Bedding In’ Day - 4th July 2015

The Community Research Report

78 years since an eager community watched the opening ceremony, locals came together once again to help relaunch Rockliffe Gardens. First through the gates in 1937, it was fantastic to have Norman Kirby help formally reopen the gardens.

At the ‘Bedding In’ Event on the 4th of July FROG did some creative research. We had a Cake Exchange where we asked people to share a memory of, or a wish for, Rockliffe Gardens and write it on a label to hang from a tree in exchange for a cup cake. We asked about memories and wishes because we need to understand Rockliffe’s past and what it has meant to people over the years in order to understand how to look after it for everyone in the future. We were really pleased that so many people shared their memories and wishes.

We also asked people what kind of involvement they would like with the friends group. This ranged from helping with fundraising, hands on activities like a work group doing tidying up and ecology improvements once a month. Some people were interested in an arts group.

What Do People Want To Do?

People who signed up on the contacts sheet were interested in the following.

Arts / Heritage	8
Gardening/hands on help	18
Fundraising	4
Being kept informed only	11



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What Do People Want for the Gardens?

Lots of people of all generations joined in the Cake Exchange. People shared memories of the Gardens when they were children and memories of coming back to the gardens with their own children later in life. It was lovely to have Norman present. He was the first person to enter Rockliffe Gardens when it first opened in 1937. It was really apt that he was the first person to arrive at the Bedding In Event all these years later.



Lots of people remembered the gardens when they had a more formal style at the Camdale Road entrance. Some people expressed a wish to have these more formal elements restored to their former glory with water features, more formal planting, including the rose pagoda area with stone pillars, and the pond which has now been filled and used as flower beds.



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I remember when the flower beds were goldfish ponds.

A pagoda made of bricks and lots of roses.

Keep the gardens secret and safe and lovely.

*I used to bring my son here in his buggy' Lovely Sunday afternoon walks. He
will be 40 this year.*

*My memory is of the waterfall, the sounds of it and the smell of the roses. Water
and Rose, Hours spent looking for Teddy Bears with my children. They really
thought there was a Teddy Bears picnic here.*

Restore it to its former glory.

It was not surprising that lots of people would like the water features restored,
especially the pond and magnificent water falls. One person suggested a solar
powered pump as an imaginative solution to the current problems.

As a child I came here often. I am 40 now. I used to play on the stepping stones.

I remember climbing the rocks with my friends when we were little

I loved the waterfall. It was magical. I would love it to see it restored.

I long for the pond.



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People also wanted to make sure that there were facilities in the garden that meant they were accessible to all including older people, disabled people and families. These included more benches and handrails. Play equipment, a slide, a tree walk and a woodland playground were also suggested for children (and playful adults). People had lots of new imaginative ideas for the Gardens. These included a suggestion of a tea hut and even compost toilets.

For a safe enjoyable green space for all to enjoy!

A lovely clean safe space to play

A tree walk

A hut with facilities

Schools corner

Play corner

A slide

Woodland playground



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Lots of people were keen to make sure the gardens provided a welcoming place for wildlife. Suggestions here included bug hotels, hedgehog houses, attracting frogs and newts back, planting foraging plants and fruit trees

Finally, people activities suggested ways of raising awareness of the park, bringing more people into the garden and involve local communities: These included e.g. open air cinema, concerts, family planting, community picnics, and theatre productions (including a production of Midsummer Nights Dream).

It was lovely to read so many messages of support and appreciation.

I used to bring my children here from the early 60's, living near. I have a few photos of Rockliffe. So pleased it is coming back to life. Something we have wished for.

WHAT NEXT?

One thing that came through in all of your comments, wishes and memories was the sense of how magical and special the gardens are and continue to be. Anything we do together needs to maintain the special and possibly quite eccentric little London garden place we have come to love.

Rockliffe Gardens was a lovely oasis in the 70's with all the little endearing areas that we all enjoyed.

I wish the waterfall and lake could be restored and the gardens could be better used - But not by too many people, of course , or they will loose their magic.

In September we will be organising a meeting where we can get together to discuss next steps.

To date a small group of us have been working with the Parks team and local Councillors Sarah Merrill and Chris Kirby. In order to start to realise our wishes we really need to form into a few small core working groups. We hope these will come together in September.

Fundraising: But we do need to do some fundraising for some of the small improvements and our bigger ambitions. We have done some preliminary research into funding opportunities and there are sources of money out there. We can start with smaller grants and work up to bigger applications. The Parks team and Councillors will help us to work on applications for bigger work like the pond.

Wildlife and Ecology: Lots of these things suggested can be achieved through hands-on work using the skills, knowledge and muscles we all have to varying



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degrees– for example getting a wildlife area goings, tidying up, putting up bird and bat boxes.

Hadlow College have offered us free training and have already carried out a survey of the site and we will be sharing it with you soon. It would be great to have a core 'ecology group' to get some of the nature friendly improvements going. The last training was on 20th and 21st July. The timing wasn't brilliant as it was a weekday and the first two days of the school holiday. This was reflected in the low turn out. We will have a few more sessions in the September with Neil Bone from Hadlow. These will be scheduled for the weekend.

With kind regards the FROG Committee

Alison Rooke, **Chair**
Stephen O Connor, **Secretary**
Alison Miller, **Treasurer**

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