

Meanwhile Gardens

Annual Report 2004



“Meanwhile Gardens Community Association aims to enhance the lives of residents in North Kensington and North Westminster by providing safe and inclusive open air leisure, play, and training and education opportunities in our four-acre community park.”

Introduction

Over the last twenty-eight years Meanwhile Gardens has been transformed from four acres of derelict wasteland into a lush green haven in a densely populated part of North Kensington. Much of this transformation has been carried out with the generous support and commitment of many, many volunteers working alongside a dedicated staff team.

Today, the Gardens offer a unique open space designed to welcome people with a wide range of interests. Nature lovers can enjoy mixed borders and wooded areas; many school children visit our large pond with its ornamental and native plants, and are excited by the wealth of pond-life. A scented garden offers a calm tranquil space for contemplation, while at the other extreme, large crowds enjoy a number of festivals held in the Gardens each summer. The skatebowl offers

hundreds of skateboarding enthusiasts the opportunity to perfect their skills and manoeuvres.

The under 5s Playhut continues to provide a free drop-in centre for children and their carers. The Playhut is open weekdays from 10.30am to 5.30pm and on Saturdays from 12.00 to 5.30pm. A team of playworkers welcome users and provide a safe, stable environment where children's emotional, physical and cognitive needs can be developed through play.

Located within the Gardens is the Kensington & Chelsea MIND Wildlife Garden Project, which offers horticultural training and employment to people who have experienced mental health problems. This wild area includes a small pond, bog garden and a variety of wildflowers, and is a lovely place to enjoy a picnic.

In an area where green space is very precious, Meanwhile Gardens aims to continue thriving as a distinctive and much loved community park.



Chair's Report

2004 has proved to be a very productive year for Meanwhile Gardens, while at the same time bringing several big changes. In particular, we have undergone a major staff restructure. While this has not been an easy transition, we are grateful to everyone for their ability to adapt to new ways of working.

In the autumn Dave Pitt finished his contract with us as interim Manager; during this same period we welcomed the arrival of our new Co-ordinator, Lisa Cargill. Lisa's enthusiasm for the Gardens is already making a great impact and things are moving ahead smoothly under her guidance. Another recent arrival is Rosalind Grimes, who has joined us on secondment from the Venture Centre as interim Children Services Manager at the Playhut. We are also very pleased that Chandrika Dalpat returned from maternity leave in May and is now in a new post as Community Worker.

Sadly we have said goodbye to several staff members, including two pillars of the Playhut, Rose Peel and David Bellamy. There are many carers who will remember how faithfully they were able to put

the needs of their small children first. During their many years with us, Rose and Dave welcomed several generations of children, as well as facing many challenges - including the transition to the new Playhut.

We have been well supported by our funders this year and we are grateful to have received so many different kinds of assistance. In partnership with the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea we are currently exploring a number of options for the future of the factory building. We have also had considerable help from several groups of volunteers, including a group from Barclays Bank who have formally chosen to give ongoing support to Meanwhile Gardens.

Maintaining the Gardens requires constant effort and we continue to receive praise for the pleasure they give both summer and winter. Our volunteers believe as we do that in our built-up urban setting, this green oasis is priceless. In the coming year we aim to concentrate on making closer links with the community. We want very much to ensure that we are able to provide a service for everyone.

Mary Gardiner



The Gardens

Work during the year

In the autumn of 2003 Mark Vickers joined us as our first full-time Gardener for 15 years and Cristiano Bonavolonta was formally appointed part-time Assistant Gardener.

Their contribution has made a huge difference to the appearance of the Gardens - especially in terms of the regular (and unglamorous) maintenance tasks but also in our ability to supervise more volunteers.

Our regular work carries on through the gardening year - mowing and strimming, tree pruning and removal, plant pruning, pond clearing and litter picking. We have also carried out considerable planting, as well as spreading bark mulch on all the plant beds.

Volunteers

This year we have had a productive, successful programme of volunteers: corporate groups, trainees and individuals.

We assisted 3 trainees from Capel Manor on their NVQ course in horticulture, as well as 2 trainees from Groundwork West London. Working with Kensington & Chelsea and Hammersmith &

Fulham Youth Offending Teams, 5 youth offenders on reparation orders carried out community work in the Gardens.

Large groups of corporate volunteers came from the Cabinet Office, the Home Office and American Express. Together we cleared the pond, spread bark mulch on the plant beds and got on with the endless task of painting the the perimeter fence.

On two occasions volunteer groups from Barclays Bank helped with weeding, mulching, planting and painting. The culmination of this year's work with volunteers was a 3-day planting event carried out by 50 enthusiastic employees from Barclays Bank as part of the National Volunteering Initiative 'Make a Difference Day'.

A new garden for the under 5s

After consultation with many Playhut users, we drew up a plan to improve the Playhut Garden. This plan involves re-landscaping, relocating the paddling pool, constructing a hard surface outside the Playhut building, installing a new sandpit and re-turfing the grass areas.

The New Life for Paddington SRB and Kensington & Chelsea Neighbourhood Renewal Community Chest have already awarded partial funding toward this project. Work is expected to begin early in 2005.



The Playhut

Activities and developments

This year the children have enjoyed a variety of activities, including several arts and crafts projects and special events. Healthy eating has been encouraged, using story time as an introduction and making delicious treats such as, fruit salad, mashed potato and milkshakes.

A grant from Golborne Sure Start has been partially spent on indoor play equipment and the remainder will be used to support our new Playhut Garden. During the warmer months we organised lots of outdoor activities including running races, obstacle courses and parachute games, as well as

planting bulbs in the Garden. In the winter, as part of the staff restructure, the service was closed to the public for a week of in-house training and exploration of new ways of working.

Supporting parents and carers

Through the support of Golborne Sure Start, an adviser comes once a week to discuss any problems with benefits, finance and housing. Twice a month a Speech & Language Therapist is available to support children and parents in developing communication skills.

As two parents have expressed an interest in working with children, we have helped them find suitable training. We hope they will be able to carry out the practical element of their course at the Playhut. We are also delighted to note that more fathers are using the Playhut on a regular basis.

Festivals

Over the last few years a number of partnerships have enabled Meanwhile Gardens to run several local festivals.

With continued support from the Paddington Development Trust, the fifth annual Westbourne Green Family Fun Day was held in June. At this community event local people show off their talents, with young and old performing on stage. As well as children's entertainment, stalls are set up in the park and the day ends with a huge, splendid tug-o-war.

In August the Portobello Film Festival brought 3 days of outdoor films to the Gardens. The final day was a partnership event with Third Planet International (a local PR company) hosting the fifth skateboarding festival in the Gardens. This free event has now become firmly marked on the skateboarding calendar.



The 40th Notting Hill Carnival was celebrated this year. Situated neatly alongside the Carnival route, Meanwhile Gardens has over the past couple of decades provided a safe space for families to enjoy a programme of entertainment and take a break from the often overwhelming crowds.

In September we joined Golborne Sure Start in running the third annual Under 5s Festival at the Playhut. Activities included a jester, a puppet show, arts and crafts workshop, face-painting and bouncy castle. A hugely popular mobile animal farm provided the children with a wonderful opportunity to interact with a range of small animals.

Duffs UK (a skate shoe company) approached Meanwhile Gardens as having one of the first skatebowls in the country. In September Duffs held a day of skateboarding competitions and stunts at our skatebowl. This popular event marked the end of another summer of successful festivals.



Meanwhile Gardens Community Association

Statement of Financial Activities for the year ended 31 March 2004

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Total 2004 £	Total 2003 £
Incoming resources				
Donations and core grants	78,830	—	78,830	93,049
Grant income received in furtherance of charitable activities	10,500	121,707	132,207	150,051
Investment income	885	—	885	773
Other incoming resources	24,554	—	24,554	14,329
Total incoming resources	114,769	121,707	236,476	258,202
Resources expended				
Charitable expenditure	108,580	211,593	320,173	318,414
Management and administration	1,898	—	1,898	3,027
Total resources expended	110,478	211,593	322,071	321,441
Net income/(outgoing) resources before transfers	4,291	(89,886)	(85,595)	(63,239)
Transfers between funds	(1,126)	1,126	—	—
Net income/(expenditure) for the year/ Net movement in funds	3,165	(88,760)	(85,595)	(63,239)
Fund balances at 1 April 2003	68,490	811,659	880,149	943,388
Fund balances at 31 March 2004	71,655	722,899	794,554	880,149

The statement of financial activities complies with the requirements for an income and expenditure account under the Companies Act 1985.



Balance Sheet at 31 March 2004

	2004		2003	
	£	£	£	£
Fixed assets				
Tangible assets		712,315		801,959
Current assets				
Debtors	16,709		31,656	
Cash at bank and in hand	91,634		58,024	
	108,343		89,680	
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	(26,104)	(11,490)		
Net current assets		82,239		78,190
Total assets less current liabilities		794,554		880,149
Income funds				
Restricted funds		722,899		811,659
Unrestricted funds		71,655		68,490
		794,554		880,149

Our Funders

The Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea
New Life for Paddington SRB
Campden Charities
Westminster City Council
Golborne Sure Start
Esmee Fairbairn Charitable Trust
Bridge House Trust
City of Westminster Arts Council

Advice and Support

K&C Volunteer Bureau
Westminster Volunteer Centre
Karen Warne for book-keeping services
GMAK Services Ltd (Auditors)
Elise Sinon for her delicious cooking
Mary Amayo and Sensai Stewart for their help with the Westbourne Green Festival

Thanks

Meanwhile Gardens would like to thank all those who have supported the Association so generously with their time, efforts, contributions, grants and donations during the year.



Management Committee Members

Mary Gardiner (*Chair*)
Alison Sage (*Vice Chair*)
Susie Gretz (*Secretary*)
Patrizia Loreface (*Hon Treasurer from 28 June 2004*)
Gareth Moors (*Hon Treasurer until 23 June 04*)
Eddie Adams
June Adams
Felicity Ashbee
Kaija Hinkley
Nic Holliman
Rose Kenny
Eversley Mills,
Steve Shaw (*resigned January 2004*)
Mike Taylor
Bebie Waller

Staff

Office
Lisa Cargill, Dave Pitt, Rachel McCormack
Events & Outreach
Chandrika Dalpat
Gardens
Alan Whittaker, Cristiano Bonavolonta
Mark Vickers, Michael Orrah
Under 5s Playhut
Rosalind Grimes, Kathy Jean
Milena Bacchi, Alix Howard
Samantha Graham, Zuki Mayley
Elise Sinon, Ruthven Roberts

Volunteers

Joe Ambrosino, Talya Davies, Eric Haynes, Donald Hoo-Yung, David McDonald, Mengistu Tekle
Corporate Groups: American Express, Barclays Bank, The Cabinet Office, The Home Office

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Credits

Photos: Cristiano Bonavolonta, Rohan Knox (Groundwork West London), Trisha Maguire (Kensington & Chelsea Volunteer Bureau), Meanwhile Gardens Playworkers, Alison Sage.
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