

# Meanwhile Gardens Annual Report 2007



"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

32 years ago, as crumbling canal-side terraces were being cleared, a local sculptor named Jamie McCullough wondered if this derelict wasteland could become a community garden. He asked the local authority (Westminster at the time) for permission to turn the rubble into a park. Westminster gave temporary permission - hence the name, *Meanwhile*. The name stuck and the Gardens prospered.



Today, thanks to the hard work and support of many volunteers and a dedicated staff team, *Meanwhile Gardens* serves people of many different interests. Nature lovers enjoy the many exotic and native plants, lovely mixed borders and wooded areas; school children often visit our large pond with its wealth of pond-life. At one end of the Gardens, a scented courtyard offers space for quiet contemplation; toward the other end, our free state-of-the-art skatebowl draws hundreds of skateboarding enthusiasts all year round. We also provide opportunities for training and educational schemes.

Set within the Gardens, our Playhut offers a safe, stimulating play and learning environment, helping to fulfil young children's emotional, physical and cognitive needs. This service helps to break down the isolation often experienced by carers of young children, providing an opportunity for them to build friendships and share common concerns.

The Wildlife Garden Project, run by Kensington & Chelsea Mind, offers horticultural training and employment to local residents who have experienced mental health issues. With a great variety of wildflowers and rich wildlife, it is also a lovely place to enjoy a picnic!

Today we are proud to offer many opportunities for local residents to enjoy safe open-air leisure, play, training and education in our unique community garden.

## Chair's Report

Meanwhile Gardens is located in a busy inner city area, where there is a recognised lack of green space and many people live without a garden of their own. For this reason it has always been much more than a park, offering people of all ages the chance to volunteer and learn new skills as well as relax and enjoy their leisure time.

Managing our 4-acre garden relies on a fantastic team of staff and volunteers who work throughout the year, come rain or shine, in the Gardens in our office and at the Playhut. We are very grateful to all who give their time and efforts, including our voluntary board of trustees.

This year we were very sad to say goodbye to Mark Vickers, our *Community Gardener*, who understandably left us for a job closer to home after over a year of commuting from Brighton. Sadly, Playworker Samantha Graham also left us. Sam was very popular with children and adults at the Playhut and continues to be missed by all.

We were devastated at the unexpected death in June of our volunteer, Josh Newton, who was instrumental in creating the new Moroccan Garden. Josh demonstrated great commitment and became a well recognised face in the Gardens; many local people enjoyed chatting with him and sharing their own stories of the Gardens' history.

In the spring, we were delighted to welcome Phillip Paulo as *Senior Community Gardener*. His work has already brought in a growing team of volunteers, well as - thanks to Phil's initiative - an amazing £80,000 from the People's Millions Lottery Fund.

After over a year of volunteering as our *Office Administrator*, Vicky Cooper left us to accept a place with Eastman's Dental Hospital as a trainee dental nurse. We wish Vicky every success in her new venture.

It is increasingly difficult for small voluntary organisations to survive without sufficient financial support, especially in the current economic climate. We have had a busy year securing grants from a range of funders; this money has enabled us to pay our staff and ever increasing overheads.

In line with our long term aim of expanding volunteering and training initiatives, we have continued working with the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea to develop a new community centre on the site of the old factory building. Currently this building is our central base for all our activities and is also a vital rehearsal space for the *Metronomes Steel Orchestra*. We hope that a new building will provide many more opportunities for the local community, whilst giving *Meanwhile Gardens* a secure home.

Alison Sage



## The Gardens

This year has seen many developments in the Gardens: under the direction of our new Senior Community Gardener, we have introduced new planting features and many improvements to existing planting areas. We have removed some of the old fencing, up-graded our composting facilities and are currently installing new benches. We hope that these changes will make Meanwhile Gardens more welcoming to all our visitors.

### Big Lottery - People's Millions Award

This was a major highlight of 2007. On 28 November staff, volunteers, trainees and trustees all worked together to ensure sufficient public support in a regional televised competition for £80,000. Our team spent the day and evening publicising the need for people to vote for Meanwhile Gardens: we visited local schools, leafleted housing estates, distributed free balloons and seeds - and even walked the streets dressed as a squirrel and a fox! The next day, the cameras returned to the Gardens to tell us, live on TV, that through massive public support we had WON!

This Lottery award will enable us to develop our project 'Building Biodiversity' launched earlier in the year. We will now be able to make major improvements, especially to our large leaking pond and its threatened wildlife. This is an exciting project for our volunteers, who will be carrying out all the works involved. We will also run training courses open to local people, covering subjects such as composting, growing your own fruit and vegetables and creating a pond.

### New Features

#### Moroccan Garden

Over a year ago, in partnership with Al-Hasaniya, the local Moroccan Women's Centre, an area of the Gardens at the junction of Kensal and Golborne Roads was transformed into a lush North African oasis. In June Al-Hasaniya held an official opening of the Moroccan Garden, which is now a popular feature of Meanwhile Gardens.

### A Drinking Fountain

Responding to demands for drinking water from our skatebowl users, we secured funds for a sculptural drinking fountain, which was then designed by London based sculptor Steve Bunn. Inspired by the tricks and manoeuvres of the skaters, Steve named his work 'Soft Landing 2007'. The fountain is now in place and is very well used by our many visitors.

### Partnerships,Volunteers & Corporate Support

Working in partnership with BTCV (the country's leading conservation charity) we now provide, two days a week, an accredited horticultural training course for local adults. This scheme has already proven to be very successful and we hope to expand it in the future.

We also run regular volunteer sessions around the year, which are open to all and run on a drop-in basis. Beside helping to maintain the Gardens, these sessions provide a great opportunity to work outdoors, learn new skills and meet new people.

Through our contacts with local volunteer centres, we have developed a program of corporate team building activities, in which businesses can support their local community as well as gain a rewarding team building experience. This year we welcomed groups from Barclays Bank, Marks and Spencer, Spencer Stuart and Visa. They carried out many activities, including planting within our wildlife pond area, installing new raised beds for growing vegetables and fruit and constructing new composting facilities. As these groups are usually quite large, they can make noticeable improvements in the Gardens in just a day, providing invaluable help to our small gardening team.



### Work and Training Initiatives

This year a group of 6th form students from local Quintin Kynaston School gained work experience in the Gardens, carrying out planting and pruning operations at our Playhut.

Later in the year we piloted a horticultural training session for Kensington & Chelsea Sixty Plus Garden Guardian volunteers, which was a great success. We hope to offer similar training opportunities in the future.

## The Playhut

Children up to their 6th birthday are welcome to visit the free drop-in facility as long as they are accompanied by an adult. Our staff offer a range of stimulating indoor and outdoor play activities, which clearly benefit the children's physical, social and learning development. They also encourage parents and carers to be involved in creating a safe environment for all to enjoy.

Our Playhut service has been running continuously since 1982, welcoming families from both Kensington & Chelsea and Westminster. In 2001 our new purpose built eco-friendly Playhut was opened; in 2006 the surrounding garden underwent major improvement works. Its unique paddling pool and large sandpit are always popular with the children and there are often a few tears when it's home time!

This year the children have enjoyed a variety of activities including arts and crafts, singing and storytelling sessions. We also celebrated a number of annual festivals that reflect the many different religious and cultural backgrounds of our families.

In July, supported by the Golborne Children's Centre, we held a Children's Fun Day with over 200 children attending. A mobile animal farm was set up in the Gardens and children were able to feed, hold and stroke a range of farm animals. A bouncy castle, a children's performer, some fun art activities, refreshments and music all contributed towards a fantastic event.



Several 'Toddler Talk' sessions with a speech and language therapist and a health visitor from the Golborne Children's Centre were held at our Playhut. Each hourly session incorporated games and activities and gave parents and carers an opportunity to talk with the professionals about their children's development.

In January 2008 we launched the Tiny Green Fingers Grow and Eat Club. This project provided educational opportunities for healthy eating,

growing your own food and exploring the natural world. The sessions ran twice a week and were very popular with both children and adults, especially the planting sessions. Although the grant is now finished, we plan to continue the project on a smaller scale, so that the children can reap the benefits of their hard work. We hope to secure additional funding to continue this wonderful project in the long term.



## Carnival in the Gardens

Ever since the Gardens were first established back in 1976, it's been recognised that we have the ideal space for outdoor festivals and events.

Each year Europe's largest street festival, the Notting Hill Carnival, descends on our area. We embrace the occasion by providing our own family friendly Carnival. We aim to ensure a safe and welcoming atmosphere during the two day event for audiences of all ages and from a wide range of cultures, abilities and socio-economic backgrounds.

This year visitors were entertained with performances by DJ Smart Monkey, Got-2-Remember (African drummers) and solo artist Miracle. Once again, Mr Mojo was a huge hit with his musical activities and parachute games. He has a fantastic ability to include people of all ages, as well as engage people who think they are safe just observing him!

We also introduced a new green element, the eco-friendly PA system Electric Pedals, who invited our audience to generate the power to run the system - by pedalling. Young and old pedalled away on bicycles of all sizes in order to keep the music flowing!

This year staff from Kensington & Chelsea Play Services and the Met Police used our Playhut as one of two official locations for lost and found children, to ensure that children were quickly reunited with their carers.

With a huge bouncy castle, face-painters and a variety of food stalls creating a festive atmosphere, we were delighted that so many families enjoyed another Notting Hill Carnival in Meanwhile Gardens

## Meanwhile Gardens Community Association

### Statement of Financial Activities for the year ended 31 March 2007

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Total 2007 £	Total 2006 £
<b>Incoming resources from generated funds</b>				
Donations and grants	79,231	—	79,231	101,040
Investment income	1,239	—	1,239	844
	<u>80,470</u>	<u>—</u>	<u>80,470</u>	<u>101,844</u>
Grant income received in furtherance of charitable activities	30,000	55,984	85,984	175,832
Other incoming resources	16,609	—	16,609	9,637
<b>Total incoming resources</b>	<u>127,079</u>	<u>55,984</u>	<u>183,063</u>	<u>287,353</u>
<b>Resources expended</b>				
<b>Charitable activities</b>				
Charitable expenditure	110,513	147,225	257,738	346,928
Governance costs	3,325	—	3,325	6,431
<b>Total resources expended</b>	<u>113,838</u>	<u>147,225</u>	<u>261,063</u>	<u>353,359</u>
<b>Net income/(expenditure) for the year/</b>				
<b>Net movement in funds</b>	13,241	(91,241)	(78,000)	(66,006)
Fund balances at 1 April 2006	43,840	559,736	603,576	669,582
<b>Fund balances at 31 March 2007</b>	<u>57,081</u>	<u>468,495</u>	<u>525,576</u>	<u>603,576</u>



### Balance Sheet at 31 March 2007

	2007		2006	
	£	£	£	£
<b>Fixed assets</b>				
Tangible assets		446,345		534,508
<b>Current assets</b>				
Debtors	27,166		50,113	
Cash at bank and in hand	75,320		37,626	
	<u>102,486</u>		<u>87,739</u>	
<b>Creditors:</b>				
Amounts falling due within one year	(23,255)		(18,671)	
<b>Net current assets</b>		<u>79,231</u>		<u>69,068</u>
<b>Total assets less current liabilities</b>		<u>525,576</u>		<u>603,576</u>
<b>Income funds:</b>				
Restricted funds		468,495		559,736
Unrestricted funds		57,081		43,840
		<u>525,576</u>		<u>603,576</u>



The above is a summary of information relating to the Statement of Financial Activities and the Balance Sheet. The full accounts from which this is derived were approved by the trustees on 21 January 2008. Copies of the full accounts and trustees' report, together with the report of the auditors, are available from the company's registered office, 156-158 Kensal Road, London W10 5BN.

## Our Funders

Campden Charities  
City of Westminster  
City of Westminster Arts Council  
Garfield Weston Foundation  
Kensington & Chelsea Environmental Ltd  
Kensington Housing Trust

Sure Start North Kensington  
Sure Start Westminster  
The Local Network Fund for Children & Young People  
The Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea  
Western Riverside Environmental Fund  
Westminster Community Network

## 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

Alison Sage (*Chair*)  
Rose Kenny (*Vice-Chair*)  
Susie Gretz (*Secretary*)  
Eddie Adams  
June Adams  
Judith Arthur-Wade  
Felicity Ashbee  
Alex Bowling (*co-opted October 2007*)  
Kaija Hinkley  
Stuart Husband  
Marie Kamara  
Jude Lawrence  
Louisiana Lush (*resigned June 2007*)  
Eversley Mills  
Ellen Mullin  
Rose Peel  
Simon Ryder  
Mike Taylor (*resigned June 2007*)  
Bebie Waller (*resigned June 2007*)



## Staff

### Office:

Chandrika Dalpat (*Acting Project Co-ordinator*)  
Karen Warne (*Consultant Book-keeper*)

### Gardens:

Phillip Paulo (*Senior Community Gardener, appointed May 2007*)  
Joe Ambrosino (*Assistant Gardener*)  
Michael Orrah (*Litter-picker*)  
Mark Vickers (*Community Gardener, resigned May 2007*)

### Playhut:

Milena Bacchi (*Playworker*)  
Shimi Biswas (*Sessional Worker*)  
Talya Davies (*IT Support*)  
Samantha Graham (*Playworker, resigned April 2007*)  
Kathy Jean (*Playworker*)  
Elise Sinon (*Sessional Worker*)



## Volunteers

John Aylott, Sally Burke, Vicky Cooper, Caine Douglas, Lee Emery, Catherine Grinyer, Lily Hall, Maria Harvey, Eric Haynes, Andy Hudson, Matthew Kurland, John Lambert, Lisa McBride, Josh Newton, Sam Pover, Catherine Reid, Miriam Mesa-Villalba, Lucy Whitford, Richard Williams



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