

# FoSJP Newsletter

Issue 2

August 2006

## Award Winning Park!

St. James Park has won the 'Southampton Open Spaces Award 2006' from the 'City of Southampton Society' and 'Southampton Commons & Parks Protection Society'.

The 'Southern Daily Echo' invited nominations from the public, parks were short listed, visited by the judging panel, and ours was chosen as "the best community park in the city".

The Mayor of Southampton will unveil a plaque commemorating this award on Thursday, 7<sup>th</sup> September at 11.00 am – All Welcome!

## Reminiscence's of The Park

On the 27<sup>th</sup> May, The FoSJP supported by Southampton Archive, invited members of the community to share their memories and historical knowledge of St. James' Park.

A steady flow of people provided a wealth of information, and the diversity of the accounts "brought the history of the park to life", said Johnny Carrington, co-ordinator of the event.

The park began life in the mid 1800's as a nursery and then became a gravel pit. In 1882 there were plans to build a railway station on the site but they never came to anything. In 1911 the city council opened 'Shirley Recreation Ground'. Tennis courts followed and during the second world war, the 'Rec' (as it became known), was home to barrage balloons and a bomb proof structure which was built to house the local ARP wardens, this building later became the park wardens' canteen and public toilets. It's now been partly converted into a kiosk!

Particular thanks must go to local historian **Bob Grice**, who has generously donated his long researched and well documented account of the 'Local History of Shirley'. Bob's extensive work will help us with future projects and is a great example of preserving our heritage for future generations to learn about us and our past.

All the material collected will be made available in the future, but we are still after your memories and pictures, in particular it's known that a postcard of the original opening of the 'Rec' exists.

If you have any memories or pictures of the park, or perhaps you want to join our history team, please call Johnny Carrington on 80510959.

## Kiosk and Toilets Now Open

You may remember in the last newsletter under the heading of 'The Next Steps' that one of our goals was to open a small scale café with toilet access by the summer holidays.

On Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> August that vision became a reality. A great deal of hard work has been put in by members, other volunteers, Southampton City Council, and even some passers by. The old toilet block has been transformed (partly) into a kiosk selling drinks, snacks, and ice creams. Fair-traded goods are being sold wherever possible and prices are being kept at an affordable level. All profit is going straight back into the development of the kiosk and the park.

Seventeen volunteers are helping to run the kiosk, initially between 1.30 pm and 4.00 pm on Wednesdays, Saturdays, and Sundays with the aim of opening longer hours and on more days as soon as possible.

With the opening of the kiosk, the council have opened a toilet everyday from 8.00 am to 4pm and on Sundays when the kiosk is open. The FoSJP have a responsibility for cleaning on Sundays, the council contract a cleaner for the rest of the week. No more crossed legs and dashing home!



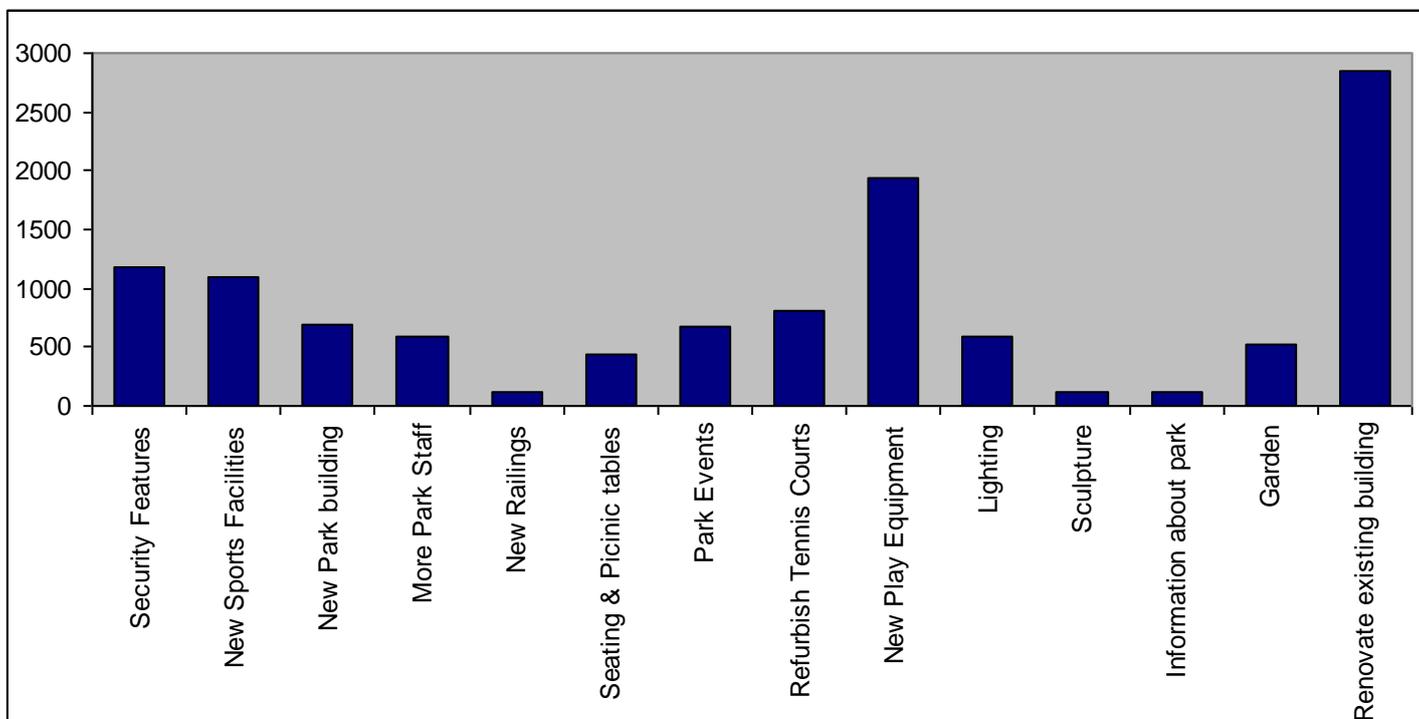
The kiosk is being managed on a volunteer basis by Sophie Carrington and Victoria Horne (above), who have relinquished their duties as committee members to concentrate on the job in hand. If you have any questions or would like to help with the running of the kiosk (or toilet cleaning!), please give them a call on 80510959 or 80788230 respectively.

A big thank you to everyone involved in this venture. Do come along soon and buy a drink and snack, or just come and have a chat. And if you would like to see the transformation and investment made by the council just ask one of the kiosk volunteers, if they're not too busy. See you there!

## Survey Results

Thank you to everyone who responded to our questionnaire back at the FoSJP launch in May. From a sample of 394 responses, we have been given a broad overview of your priorities for St. James Park (all the results have been collated and interpreted for us by the council – thank you).

You may remember that the questionnaire asked; if you were given 30 tokens, how would you spend them to improve St. James' Park? The graph below represents your 'token spending' and by far the most popular priority was to renovate the existing building followed by new play equipment.



### Help us.....in a Sub Committee?

Do you have any skills or experience that you are willing to help us with so that we can achieve our overall aim of improving St. James' Park for the people of Shirley? Achieving our goals now requires more help and we are looking to focus on the following areas;

- **Grants.** We are continually looking for funding from local and nationally available grants.
- **Status.** Does The FoSJP need to become a charity or perhaps a social enterprise (or neither)? We need to investigate what is best for us to achieve our aims.
- **Employment.** We will need to employ a kiosk or café manager at some point and would appreciate any expertise with employing people (e.g. HR skills).
- **Events.** It would be great to use the park for fun, educational, sports or just social events. And if we can raise funds at the same time, all the better.

We are asking for a commitment of a few hours a month and each sub-committee would include a member of The FoSJP main committee. It's a great way of meeting people and making a real difference in our community. We need your help; the nine of us on the committee can't do it on our own. Please call Nichola on 80776761 if you are interested in a sub committee.

### Park Sponsorship

Have you noticed roundabouts sponsored by local businesses? Why not sponsor our Park?

Donations could fund on-going costs or a particular project. Do you know of any business that might be interested in helping their local community?

For more details, please call Mike on 80779862.

### Breathing Places

Following on from the BBC programme 'Spring Watch', organisations such as ours are being invited to apply for a 'Breathing Places' grant, which would fund the transformation of a patch of land for the benefit of wildlife.

As an example; one or more of the banks around the park could become a habitat more suited for wildlife.

Is this a good idea to pursue? Do you have an interest in nature and could help with pursuing the 'Breathing Places' grant? Please call Nichola on 80776761 for more information.