

Meanwhile Gardens

Annual Report 2006



“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

This year Meanwhile Gardens proudly celebrated its 30th anniversary! Over the years through the support of many, many volunteers and a dedicated staff team, the Gardens have continued to thrive. What was once four acres of derelict wasteland is now a lush oasis in a densely populated part of North Kensington, where there is a recognised lack of green space.

The Gardens are designed to welcome people with a wide range of interests. Nature lovers enjoy the exotic and native plants, lovely mixed borders and wooded areas; school children often visit our large pond with its wealth of wildlife. At one end of the Gardens, a scented courtyard offers space for quiet contemplation; at the other end, our free state-of-the-art skatebowl draws hundreds of skateboarding enthusiasts all year round.

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 Gardens themselves provide opportunities for volunteering and educational schemes. Under our gardeners' supervision we also support youth offenders carrying out their reparation orders.

The Wildlife Garden Project, run by Kensington & Chelsea Mind, works with adults who have experienced mental health difficulties, and uses horticultural training and social enterprise to help with recovery and social integration. With its small pond, great variety of wildflowers and rich wildlife, it is also a lovely place for a picnic!

Thirty years on, we are delighted to continue offering opportunities for local residents to enjoy safe open-air leisure, play, training and education in a unique community garden.



Chair's Report

Set among the high-rise flats and busy streets of North Kensington, Meanwhile Gardens is a welcome expanse of green space, run by and for local people. Keeping the Gardens running depends on the work of a dedicated team of staff and volunteers, including a board of trustees. We are very grateful to these volunteers, who have all made a tremendous contribution to every aspect of our work.

2006 has been a particularly challenging year in which three major funding awards finished. With no replacement funds secured, our staff were under extra pressure. For this reason we would like to thank them all for their ongoing commitment. Unfortunately, this report does not have the space to thank each staff member individually, but we would like to congratulate our Assistant Gardener Joe Ambrosino on completing his City & Guilds Level 2 qualification at Capel Manor Horticultural College. We also say farewell to Rachel McCormack, who worked as Administrator/Finance Worker for almost five years; and to Lawrence Martin, who held the post during Rachel's maternity leave.

In our efforts to improve community involvement

and volunteering opportunities, we welcomed Nicky Hodgkinson as a temporary community worker for the summer. This appointment proved the Gardens' potential for expanding our activities and events in line with our educational and environmental aims. Securing funding for a permanent community worker post will form a significant element in our new 3-Year Business Plan.

It is difficult for small voluntary organisations to survive without sufficient financial support. We are grateful to our funders, who enable us to pay our staff and overheads in order to provide all our services, projects and activities.

In line with a long-term aim to develop our volunteering and training programme, we hope to regenerate the old factory building. Currently this building is our central base for all gardening activities, volunteers and administration. It is also a vital rehearsal space for the Metronomes Steel Band Orchestra. Working with the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea, we hope that this community resource will offer new opportunities for local residents and provide Meanwhile Gardens with a sustainable and settled future.

Alison Sage

The Gardens

Regular gardening work throughout the year includes mowing and strimming, weeding and mulching the beds and borders, tree pruning and pond clearing - as well as new planting and regular watering. In addition, running our well-used Gardens always involves the unglamorous but essential task of litter clearance. We were delighted that all our efforts were rewarded when we were presented with a certificate of excellence at the annual London in Bloom event!



Volunteers

Throughout the year, come rain or shine, our volunteers demonstrated their commitment to the Gardens, carrying out regular maintenance as well as more exciting development projects. We also supported two groups of corporate volunteers: a team from PricewaterhouseCoopers worked on maintenance in and around our large pond; another team from British Land constructed and fenced a new border. Throughout the year, our gardening team also supervised and supported youth offenders carrying out their reparation orders.

New Projects

Playhut Garden

We worked over several years to consult with our Playhut users and to raise the money to improve the Playhut garden. This year the enclosed area around the Playhut has been transformed into a much larger play space complete with a new paddling pool, sandpit, buggy park, lawn and patio area, as well as new planting. We are delighted that so many children and carers love this new garden.

Polytunnel

In our efforts to reduce gardening overheads and become more self-sufficient, we secured funding to purchase and install a polytunnel, which now enables us to propagate seeds and establish plants from cuttings. It will also help in gardening projects with local schools and other community groups. In

October the polytunnel was officially opened and we were delighted that the Mayor of Kensington & Chelsea, Cllr Tim Ahern, was present to cut the ribbon. The tunnel is now stocked with over 900 mixed shrubs and perennials to be planted out during the autumn and winter of 2007/08.

Community Planting Project

We raised enough funds to enable us to introduce some colourful new planting in bare areas within the Gardens. This project aimed to develop volunteers' skills in planning and carrying out a planting scheme. However, after some initial work, we felt it wise to support the hosepipe ban and continue the project in the next planting season.

Moroccan Garden

After several years of planning a partnership project with Al-Hasaniya, the local Moroccan Women's Centre, work began in early summer on a new Moroccan garden. Over the months, this area was transformed to bring colour, water and lush planting with a North African flavour to the Golborne Ward. Al-Hasaniya worked hard to raise funds for the new garden, which everyone can enjoy.



Projects in the Pipeline

In response to requests for drinking water by skatebowl users, we secured funds for a new drinking fountain. Inspired by the tricks and manoeuvres of the skaters, artist Steve Bunn has designed a sculptural drinking fountain, which will be installed in the spring.

In further attempts to reduce our costs, we plan to introduce an irrigation system which will allow areas of the Gardens to be more easily watered. This will then free up our small staff team to use their limited time on other gardening tasks. We also plan to install a number of new benches to enable our visitors to enjoy the Gardens more comfortably.

In addition, we have raised some funds for repairs to our popular skatebowl; we will be able to carry out this work in the near future.

The Playhut

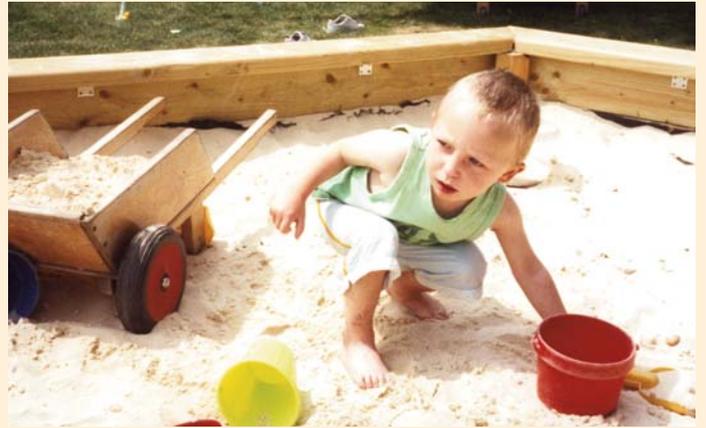
The Playhut is a free drop-in centre for children up to their sixth birthday, accompanied by an adult. As the Gardens are situated on the border of Kensington & Chelsea and Westminster, our playworkers welcome families from both boroughs.

Our purpose-built facility provides a safe indoor play space surrounded by an enclosed garden with a paddling pool and large sandpit, as well as a range of outdoor play equipment.

Throughout the year, children enjoyed a variety of activities including arts and crafts, cooking, singing, storytelling sessions and planting sessions, and festive celebrations such as Halloween, Ramadan and Christmas.

Parents and carers also benefited from special events, including a number of initiatives organised by Golborne Sure Start: 'weaning parties' and 'toddler talk' sessions, as well as regular weekly visits by a mobile toy and book library. In the autumn, children and carers took part in an afternoon of creative learning led by Westminster Adult Education Service and Bookstart.

In order to promote healthy eating, the Kensington & Chelsea Primary Care Trust ran some 'Cook and Taste' sessions with our Playhut users. We also worked during the year to establish good links with the North Westminster Sure Start Programme, as well as with other Westminster services.



During the summer we conducted a survey with our users in the form of a questionnaire. In evaluating the results, we found that:

- the Playhut fostered a definite feeling of community among its users;
- our users placed a prime value on our safe, enclosed Playhut garden;
- our users expressed a clear need for longer opening hours, as well as for additional activities and services.

During the summer Playhut users and volunteers helped out at several fundraising events, including jumble and cake sales, as well as food sharing sessions. The highlight of these events was the Garden Party in July to celebrate the newly completed improvements to the Playhut garden.



Community Activities

Led by our Community Worker, we were able to involve the community in a variety of events and activities in the Gardens. These included several fundraising events as well as the Playhut Garden Party, an Environmental Vision Day and our annual programme of entertainment for children and families as part of the Notting Hill Carnival.

A new initiative, the Golden Years Growing Club, was a pilot project aimed at the older section of our community. The Club members, mostly aged 60 and above, included some wheel-chair users,



others with special needs and some referred through the Primary Care Trust and local mental health teams. They all worked hard in our scented courtyard, a tranquil area within the Gardens. Their activities included maintaining borders, mowing, weeding, pruning overhanging shrubs and planting new bulbs and plants.

The Club offered us a real insight into working with older people, for whom the activities clearly had considerable therapeutic value. One member enjoyed it so much that he became a regular Gardens volunteer. The project was a great success; with sufficient resources we aim to develop another similar initiative.

Meanwhile Gardens Community Association

Statement of Financial Activities for the year ended 31 March 2006

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Total 2006 £	Total 2005 £
Incoming resources				
Incoming resources from generated funds				
Donations and grants	101,040		101,040	90,450
Investment income	844		844	960
Grant income in furtherance of charitable activities	16,000	159,832	175,832	142,697
Other incoming resources	9,637		9,637	3,781
Total incoming resources	127,521	159,832	287,353	237,888
Resources expended				
Charitable activities	110,316	236,612	346,928	356,658
Governance costs	6,431		6,431	6,202
Total resources expended	116,747	236,612	353,359	362,860
Net incoming/(outgoing) resources	10,774	-76,780	-66,006	-124,972
Transfers between funds	-3,070	3,070		
Fund balances b/fwd at 1 April 2005	36,136	633,446	669,582	794,554
Fund balances c/fwd at 31 March 2006	43,840	559,736	603,576	669,582



Balance Sheet at 31 March 2006

	2006 £	2005 £
Fixed assets		
Tangible assets	534,508	622,671
Current assets		
Debtors	50,113	60,517
Cash at bank and in hand	37,626	25,298
	<u>87,739</u>	<u>85,815</u>
Creditors:		
Amounts falling due within one year	-18,671	-38,904
	<u></u>	<u></u>
Net current assets		
	<u>69,068</u>	<u>46,911</u>
Net assets		
	<u>603,576</u>	<u>669,582</u>
Represented by:		
Restricted funds	559,736	633,446
Unrestricted funds	43,840	36,136
	<u>603,576</u>	<u>669,582</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 22 January 2007. Copies of the full accounts and Trustees' report, together with the report of the auditors, are available from the company's registered office.

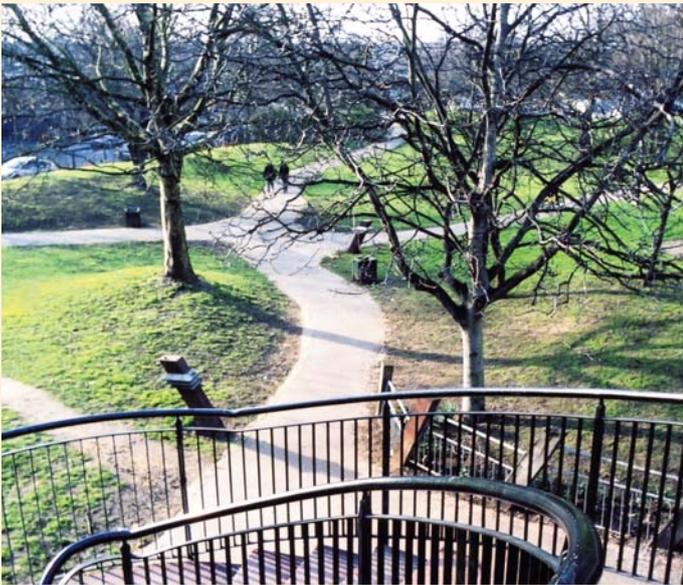
Our Funders

Campden Charities
The City Bridge Trust
City of Westminster Arts Council
Esmee Fairbairn Charitable Trust
Garfield Weston Foundation
Golborne Sure Start
Kensington & Chelsea Community Chest

Kensington & Chelsea Environmental Ltd
Kensington Housing Trust
New Life for Paddington SRB
The Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea
The Safer Westminster Partnership
Western Riverside Environmental Fund
Westminster City Council
Westminster Community Chest

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*)
June Adams
Felicity Ashbee
Mary Gardiner (*resigned April 2006*)
Kaija Hinkley
Nic Holliman (*resigned April 2006*)
Marie Kamara
Jude Lawrence (*co-opted September 2006*)
Louisiana Lush
Eversley Mills

Mike Taylor
Bebie Waller

Staff

Office: Chandrika Dalpat, Rachel McCormack (to March 2006), Lawrence Martin (*maternity cover to March 2006*)

Events & Outreach: Nicky Hodgkinson (April-October 2006)

Gardens: Joe Ambrosino, Michael Orrah, Mark Vickers

The Playhut: Milena Bacchi, Shimi Biswas, Talya Davies, Samantha Graham, Kathy Jean, Elise Sinon

Volunteers

Sally Burke, Vicky Cooper, Talya Davies, Debbie Dacres, Eric Haynes, Matthew Kurland, John Lambert, David Mikhailovich, Josh Newton, Cathy O'Neil

Meanwhile Gardens Community Association, 156-158 Kensal Road, London W10 5BN
Office tel/fax 020 8960 4600 The Playhut 020 8960 7894 Gardeners: 020 8960 6414
E-mail: team@meanwhilegardens.com website: www.meanwhilegardens.com

Registered Charity No. 296921 Registered Company No. 2134343

Design: Wayzgoose. Printed by Portobello Press

