

Friends of Mount Edgumbe Country Park Update Report November 2015



Mount
Edgumbe
Britain's historic park by the sea

In 1985 a small group of enthusiasts came together to form the Friends of Mount Edgumbe Country Park. A Constitution was drawn up which stated that the aim of the Friends would be to support the Park Management in their endeavours to preserve and maintain the House and Park for the benefit of all; with minor amendments that Constitution remains extant today. From very humble beginnings the membership has steadily grown and now numbers 536 of whom 35 are Life Members. The benefits of membership are recorded on our web site www.friends-of-mount-edgumbe.org.uk and we have a reciprocal arrangement with the Friends of Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery. One benefit of membership is three free editions of The Journal each year; currently we distribute 350 copies each issue.

Support

Financial

In compliance with the Constitution the Friends support the Park Management both financially and physically. Regarding financial support we have, over the years, donated in excess of £240,000 to the park in support of various projects. Recently we have pledged £10,000 in support of the Park's bid to the HLF for a grant to refurbish the French Conservatory and in addition we have agreed to fund the purchase of 100 folding chairs. We have also agreed to commission a garden to commemorate the 500th anniversary of the granting of a licence by King Henry VIII to Sir Piers Edgumbe to empark part of the Rame Peninsula to form a deer park; work to create this garden is close to completion. Among other significant projects that we have funded recently are the children's play area at Cremyll gate, the production of the booklet entitled 'Five walks around Mt. Edgumbe and the Rame Peninsula', the Metta Catharina Exhibition, the Marquee, the Jubilee and Relic gardens, the tractor and the two buggies. We also commissioned a survey of the statuary in the Park.

Practical

Volunteers continue to play a prominent role in the day to day activities around the House and Park fulfilling many roles including acting as House stewards, assistant gardeners and rangers and driving the buggies. During the 2015 season in excess of 40 volunteers offered their services on a regular basis and the majority of these were members of the Friends. The buggy drivers collected over £3,000 in donations whilst driving visitors around the park. In addition volunteers play a significant

role in supporting various events staged in the Park such as Military Vehicles weekend, Green Man event, Smugglers' Market, Fairy Fest, Dog Show, Parking for the Fireworks Championships and the Christmas Fayre.

Social Events

Each year the Friends aim to have a full and varied Social Programme with at least 2 events specifically for children both of which always prove to be extremely popular; the Easter Egg Hunt in 2014 attracted over 500 participants whilst the Halloween event attracted over 300. Social events recently staged include a concert by the Plymouth Military Wives Choir, a children's Halloween event and a Curry Lunch.

The main event of our Social Calendar is the Classic Car Show and Fayre traditionally held in the Park on the first Sunday in August. This year was the 20th year that the event has been staged and whilst all the figures have yet to be finalised we are optimistic that it will prove to be the most successful show that we have held. We were blessed with excellent weather and conservative estimates put the numbers of the public attending to be in the order of 10,000. There were in excess of 670 show vehicles on display in Chapel Lands and over 100 stalls situated in the Avenue and at Barn Pool. Profits from these shows are shared equally between The Friends of Mt. Edgcumbe Country Park and Cornwall Hospice Care (originally Mt. Edgcumbe Hospice). Profit from the 20 events now exceeds £200,000.

Staging an event of this magnitude is however, not without its problems. On the day in excess of 60 volunteers are needed to set up the fields, control gates, direct and marshal the show cars, organise the parking of visitors' cars, collect money and to clear up the fields once everyone has gone. This year we used the Saltash Air Cadets to carry out a survey of visitors' opinion of the event and it is gratifying to report that the responses were overwhelmingly positive and appreciative.

For an event of this size access to Mount Edgcumbe however, remains problematical. On the plus side the survey revealed that 20% of those attending came via the Cremyll ferry. This shows that the event is very popular with Plymouth residents and that the ferry provides a valuable service in relieving the local road network.

On the negative side ultimately vehicular traffic has to pass through local villages; either through Crafhole (from the A38) or Antony (from Torpoint) and then either Millbrook or Kingsand/Cawsand and none of these routes are particularly vehicle friendly. The Friends' aim is for these villages to enjoy and embrace the event and to compensate for the one day a year disruption local organisations are offered a reduced rate for stall pitches at which they can raise funds. For many years, the organising sub-committee has produced a Traffic Management Plan in association with the Police and Cornwall Council to mitigate the impact of traffic. However, in 2014, Shevioc Parish Council registered a complaint with Cornwall Council and as a result; this year traffic from the A38 was directed away from Crafhole and diverted through Antony. The fact that the advisory route signs were displaced suggests that the residents of Antony were less than impressed with this diversion. The imposition of the diversion necessitated the provision of a complex set of traffic lights at Antony.

To relieve congestion at Millbrook signs were placed at Tregantle and Fourlanesend advising vehicles to use Military Road (along Whitsand Bay) however, the road had earlier in the year suffered a partial collapse which the Council had coned off but not repaired. Instead of letting motorists sort out priorities in accordance with the signage we were instructed to install a further set of traffic lights. The provision of the required signage and traffic lights deprived the two Registered Charities of more than £1,800.

World War I Project

Earlier this year the Friends' were successful in their bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund for a grant of £10,000 to facilitate research into the fate of the staff at Mount Edgcumbe before, during and after WWI. A small team of dedicated volunteers has been hard at work for a number of months delving through archives held in Plymouth and Truro and the archives of a range of local organisations. The project is to be divided into three sections namely pre-war, WWI and post war. The team has now completed the pre-war section and are currently working on the WWI section. The aim is to have all three sections completed by the end of the year. Each section will include an introduction, photographs, documents and additional information. A digital designer, who worked on the Metta Catharina project, has been commissioned to design the digital archive and the website which it is hoped will be available for viewing during summer 2016 to be followed, at a later date, by an exhibition. It is intended that members of the Friends will be given an insight into the project following the AGM in February next year.