

## **Tilgate Community Forum**

**AGM Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> November 2021** Tilgate Community Centre 7.45 pm

Welcome from the Chair, Richard Handy. Apologies were received before the meeting or during the evening from: Cllrs. Duncan Crow and Maureen Mwagale, Henry Smith M.P., Jennie Withall, Sabrina Gant, John Dale, Betty Atkins and Jean Parsons.

Annual Report: The Chair's report this year has to cover two years since the last AGM in September 2019. In November 2019 our meeting had two guest speakers: Stuart Smith the head of Thomas Bennett and Dianne Dodsworth WSCC adviser on waste prevention. In February 2020 we had a fish and chips quiz evening. All meetings were then cancelled due to Covid-19.

During the break we kept in touch with members by emailing information updates from the Secretary to members, delivering by hand or post to members without email, and posting on our webpage. Various news items were also posted on the Forum Facebook page.

This September we had our welcome back meeting and gathered from you topics and themes you would like us to cover in the future. Armed with the results of that survey we planned the following meetings, subject to finding appropriate speakers:

25<sup>th</sup> November (this meeting) our overdue AGM and a talk from Nick Hagon on the View from Tilgate Park after 50 years with Crawley.

3<sup>rd</sup> February 2022 we are planning a meeting on health issues and diet.

31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 wild life and woodlands.

26<sup>th</sup> May 2022 local crime issues.

21<sup>st</sup> July 2022 local authorities and amenities.

Transport was the most popular group of topics with some thorny issues such as the evergreen problem of parking on grass verges. A few years ago we submitted a report to WSCC on parking problems in Tilgate. It looks as if that report might now be combined with others for consideration by the Council. So we await that development. Overall transport is a large topic and we are still considering possible speakers to approach.

Forum Committee: The Chair listed the current committee members and their roles. All committee members have worked as a team delivering flyers, providing equipment, discussing issues and planning ahead.

Alan Drummond: Has been a valuable committee member for a number of years now. He provides considerable experience and technical knowledge at our committee meetings.

Betty Atkins: Is our most recent member to join our committee and has provided us with a fresh look at how we run things.

Don Garner: Has decided to stand down from the committee. We would like to thank Don for organising our Fish & Chip Quiz evenings, running the raffles, planting wild flowers in Tilgate, etc.

Jean Elmer: Brings with her experience of helping to run other organisations such as the U3A. Jean contacts and books speakers for our meetings.

Jim Leggett: Is a founding member of the committee. He provides and oversees the audio system for our meetings, books the hall for our meetings, organises deliveries of flyers in Tilgate.

Liam Richmond: Has decided to step down from the committee now that he has two young children and has moved out of Tilgate. We would like to thank him for being our Treasurer looking after the bank account and organising our insurance. Just before the shutdown we received a community grant from CBC for £1,500 to add to the £340 we already had in the bank. Since the last AGM we have spent £421 so far on printing, the website, hall hire and insurance. We are in the process of buying a projector which will cost £344.

Richard Handy: Is a founder member and chairs the meetings. He looks after the Forum website and membership register.

Sylvia Handy: Is a founder member of the committee and is our Secretary. She communicates with members, organises meetings and maintains the Forum Facebook page. During our shutdown period Sylvia produced and emailed or delivered 33 different information Updates, to keep our members up to date with Covid issues and local concerns.

Helpers - Finally I would like to thank our helpers, especially: Jean Parsons who beavers away in the kitchen and provides our refreshments; Laurence Taylor who helps Jim with the audio equipment and records each meeting. Also, thank you our members for your support of the Tilgate Community Forum.

#### Nominations for the next Steering Committee:

<u>Name:</u>	<u>Proposed:</u>	<u>Seconded:</u>
Alan Drummond	Betty Atkins	Jane White
Betty Atkins	Sylvia Handy	Jean Elmer
Jean Elmer	Jim Leggett	Ron Spraget
Richard Handy	Jean Elmer	Nicky Ascenson
Jim Leggett	Alan Drummond	Steve Welch
Sylvia Handy	Richard Handy	Tim Barnes

Steve Welch	Sylvia Handy	Alan Drummond
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All the above nominees were elected to form the next Committee.

The View from Tilgate Park after 50 years with the Council: Nick Hagon reflected on his time working for Crawley parks and gardens, and how he started. When he left school, he was interested in football and gardening. Football didn't lead to a job, but he started working in a nursery, growing carnations and other flowers, and then, in 1971, began an apprenticeship with the then Crawley Urban District Council, working in the nursery and around the town. At that time, the town's nursery was in Goffs Park. The planting in the town centre was changed four times a year – 100,000 bedding plants per year! Tilgate Park was included in the apprenticeship, and many heathers, trees and shrubs were grown here for the rest of the town.

Nick learned how to make stripes on the bowling green (this was a nightmare!), how to mix compost, how to aerate by endless forking (hollow-tining) and how to use a besom broom. He attended many courses at agricultural colleges, learning horticultural skills and acquiring an extensive knowledge of trees, shrubs and flowers – and learning many Latin names! When he wanted another course, he was told he knew enough!

He saw the effects of the 1987 storm, which brought down many trees, and the later use of material salvaged from the storm being used in the Walled Garden buildings and Maze tower. In the aftermath of flooding in 2000, he saw the raising of the dam on Tilgate lake, designed to prevent flooding further downstream. But this led to Tilgate lake itself flooding, more than once, despite assurances that flooding would be a very rare event. Benches, bins, fishing platforms and footpaths were under water.

Nick has been involved in many awards, winning Best Float award in the carnival, the Green Flag award for many years in Tilgate Park, and judging the Crawley in Bloom scheme. He has been at Tilgate Park from 2006, and has been Park Manager from 2014. Over his 50 years there have been disappointments, but overall it has been an amazing journey and learning experience. Now he sees the Park under threat, lacking staff and lacking finance, but believes strongly in the importance of parks and gardens for the future.



After Nick's talk, the Forum presented Nick with a certificate of thanks and appreciation, and a promise of a dedicated tree of Nick's choice to be planted in the Park.

#### Councillor's Update:

Our newest Councillor, Michelle Morris, was present, and took questions on the Parade noticeboard, the old boat outside the former Men's Shed, and the old Parade toilets. The noticeboard has been updated, but is still in need of a clean. Michelle said she would follow-up. The old boat may belong to the Men's Shed, now located in Hut 4 in Tilgate Park Recreation centre. The Tilgate Superloo has been taken down, and the old toilets, barred and shut for years, now have a Covid health notice on them; does this mean they are being re-opened? Michelle will ask.

#### Updates from Tilgate Park:

1) An email from the new Tilgate Park and Business Development Manager, Sabrina Gant, was read out:

We will be lighting up the big Christmas Tree soon and the following park partners were kind enough to contribute some sponsorship towards it: Smith and Western, Walled Garden Café, Lakeside Café and Tilgate Park Watersports.

We will also have a free of charge Robin Trail around the park for children to enjoy with a prize of a free family ticket to the Nature Centre up for grabs.

Please remember that we have a great winter discount offer. Just download the vouchers from: <https://crawley.gov.uk/culture/parks-and-open-spaces/gardens-and-parks/tilgate-park/activities-and-attractions>

2) Nick Hagon told members that contractors were beginning work soon to restore Ancient Woodland in the Park, by removing invasive non-native species. Areas involved include the Silt Lake and some land across the M23 footbridge. (*See more in Notice attached.*)

The Raffle was drawn, and three festive prizes were won. The meeting was closed.

[Note from Editor: The South Patch team says they have wild flowers in their plans. The Durham Close wild flower bed is to be included, and resident involvement is welcome.]

**Next Forum meeting:** Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2022

*With best wishes for good health*

***Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all!***

Sylvia

Secretary, Tilgate Forum

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## **Restoration of Ancient Woodland at Tilgate Park**

Ancient woodland at Tilgate Park is set to be restored by removing the large presence of invasive non-native species, which threatens the future of our woodlands.

Funding has been obtained to carry out clearance of these species supported by the Woodland Trust and the Government's Green Recovery Challenge Fund. The restoration work will begin week commencing 29 November 2021 and is expected to take several months.

The woodland at Tilgate Park was surveyed in September 2020 and the presence of invasive non-native species was identified as a significant threat to the ancient woodland – the main species of concern being Rhododendron (*Rhododendron ponticum*) and cherry laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*) with western hemlock (*Tsuga heterophylla*) also present.

These species pose a threat to the ancient woodland areas by spreading rapidly, growing vigorously and casting a very heavy shade, under which the native woodland plants and tree seedlings cannot survive. Invasive species provide poorer habitat for birds and other animals and therefore woodland biodiversity is further reduced.

Restoration work will result in the development of better high-quality ancient trees and woods that can provide refuges for dependent and immobile species, but also significant and efficient carbon storage. They will become more resilient in the face of climate change, compared to younger-growth forests.

The woodland at Tilgate Park sits on the northern edge of a significantly larger forested area belonging to Forest England, approximately 30 hectares of which is designated as ancient woodland.

The restoration work will comprise six phases, with each section being completed prior to moving to the next one. The aim will be to tackle areas with the wettest ground earlier in the winter before they become too waterlogged. For safety reasons it will be necessary to close the paths within the section being worked to the public whilst works are in progress. This will be done using barrier tape and appropriate signage.

Councillor Chris Mullins, Cabinet Member for Wellbeing, said: "This vital restoration work will help Tilgate Park's irreplaceable native tree species grow and thrive to ensure they are preserved for the benefit of future generations. These precious trees are not only extremely important for storing carbon, but they are also home to a wealth of wildlife."

For more information about Tilgate Park, visit [crawley.gov.uk/tilgatepark](https://www.crawley.gov.uk/tilgatepark)