



## Peter Fletcher Retires

After more than 20 years, Peter Fletcher has retired from his post as manager of Graves Park Animal Farm. He has done a wonderful job in raising the profile of the animal farm, introducing, organising and promoting the Highland Fling and encouraging the support of highland cattle. We wish him well in his well-earned retirement. All the best Peter!

Peter's replacement, Simon Knight, is already well known to the Animal Farm as he has worked there before. The Friends are looking forward to continuing to work successfully with the animal farm in the future.

## Improvements to the Rose Garden

The Friends of Graves Park have paid for the refurbishment of the rose beds and

the planting of new rose bushes in the rose garden. These have been planted in improved compost and the bedding has been renovated. Hopefully, visitors to the garden will see a colourful display of new roses this summer.



## AGM Summer 2016

Our annual AGM will be on Wednesday 22nd June 2016 at 7.15 in the Rose Garden Cafe. This could be a significant AGM for our group, so the more who can attend, the better.

We will continue to keep members and supporters up to date with developments via our website and social media.

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# Friends of Graves Park

Newsletter

Spring 2016

## Introduction from the Chairman

The focus of our efforts for the past six months has been trying to prevent the sale of parkland, specifically Cobnar Cottage and its land. We failed and we are gutted.

At the start of January, we started an online petition, later adding written signatures from the local area, which has currently over 13,000 supporters. We also started a crowdfunding campaign and leafleted the local area, raising over £4,500 to help with our legal fees. We are now following the advice of our legal team. Our complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman was unsuccessful, as was our submission of our



Is this the next building to be sold off?

petition to the Council and to the Charity Commission.

## Sale of Parkland Latest!

It is with regret that we must report that the sale of Cobnar Cottage went through at auction at the end of January 2016, despite our best efforts to prevent this.

The Friends have now engaged a solicitor and barrister, as it now appears fundamental that we obtain a Declaration of the meaning of the 2009 Scheme, so that we can prevent further areas of the park from being sold off.

The fact remains that both in open correspondence and via a newspaper article that appeared in the Star on 8<sup>th</sup> April 2016, the Council purport that "Cobnar Cottage is outside the park". They also tried to justify their decision by maintaining that it was not required for the public enjoyment of Graves Park due to its deterioration.

These justifications are not borne out. Legal documentation shows that Cobnar Cottage was part of the 2009 Scheme and that there is no reasonable excuse for it to be sold. Without seeking a Declaration of the Scheme and considering whether it is appropriate to have Trustees who are independent of the Council's cabinet, this could happen again in the future. The Friends believe that the "success", by Sheffield City Council, to sell Cobnar Cottage, could soon be followed by further attempts to sell off part of the park. In an article in The Sheffield Telegraph the Council states "...the Council has not ruled out converting further 'liabilities', similar to the cottage, into investments which can be used specifically for park maintenance".

We have contacted the Council and the Charity Commission and have sought clarification with regard to the Council's initial response, as they refuse to acknowledge any of our concerns or their wrongdoing with regard to the Scheme. As soon as this clarification has been sought we will be launching our campaign to protect the park as we consider this is the only way forward.

## Protect Graves Park Campaign

The Friends have launched another fundraising page on "JustGiving". We will be using this website to run fundraising to improve and protect Graves Park.

Although it is better for our members to make any donations directly to our treasurer, this website will allow donations via the internet and also via mobile phone, which will allow park visitors to make small donations when visiting the park.

Once our "Protect Graves Park" campaign is launched, we are hopeful that the people of Sheffield will help to support us in our cause.

## Meeting with Louise Hague MP

Louise Hague MP with FOGP members



The Friends of Graves Park committee met with our MP back in November 2015, to raise our concerns about threats to Graves Park and to show her around the arboretum. As many of our members know, the arboretum is the second section of the Friends' phased restoration to parkland of the Norton Nurseries site. The Friends explained to Louise how the site was originally threatened with being sold off for private housing, then later with

being leased as a site for a hospice, how the friends had fought to keep this parkland, despite the claims of the Council that it was not part of Graves Park and "surplus to requirements".

We described the first phase of the restoration, which is now Chantreyland Meadow, then showed her around the arboretum. We also discussed our future plans, to extend the arboretum into what is currently being run as a depot and rubbish dump.



SCC delivering more waste to the Nurseries Site

Louise was very impressed with the results of the hard work in the arboretum and expressed support for our work to try and protect the park. However, she was unable to help with the situation regarding Cobnar Cottage, as she said the decision had already been made by Sheffield City Council.

## Opening the Arboretum

The grand opening of the arboretum is on Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> May 2016 at 12 noon. The

event will begin in front of the Rose Garden Café and will take the form of an historical walk, led by Professor Ian Rotherham, across the park, past the ponds, through the Chantreyland Wildlife Area, with the opening ceremony at the entrance to the arboretum. The group will then return to and finish at the café, where participants may want to buy refreshments.



View of the Arboretum

Please come and join us in celebrating the opening of the second section of what was the Norton Nurseries. This has taken the Friends' restoration team 7 years to restore and convert into an arboretum, over many hours of dedicated hard work every fine Sunday and many weekdays. The results compare well with the best private gardens open to the public.

