Highfield Residents' Association

Spring 2022

www.highfieldresidents.org.uk highfieldracomms@gmail.com

Introduction

Hopefully we are nearing the end of two difficult Covid years when many of us have had our lives and hobbies seriously curtailed. This edition of the Newsletter is a collection; reflections from HRA members and people connected to the Highfield community around the theme of Moving Through the Pandemic. People who managed to stay active during that time tell their stories. I hope these will encourage many people to keep doing what they love or follow the leads in the Newsletter and try something new this spring for health and wellbeing or simply because you can!

— HonSec

Moving through the pandemic

I have been teaching Pilates and Aerobic classes at the Portswood Residents Gardens for a number of years, then the pandemic struck.

When lockdown rules were announced I was shocked and worried about the future. With the help of family members, I bought a webcam, head mic, large screen, and all the necessary equipment to run the classes online from home. Emails went out to all my clients with instructions on how to log on etc and the classes started online, the following Monday. That was in March 2020.

As we all learned to navigate our new way of exercise via skype initially, and later via zoom, there were plenty of comical moments with technical hitches and clients hitting lampshades and side stepping into sofas. There were husbands, children and grandchildren joining in on laptops in gardens, lounges and kitchens. Even a window cleaner joined in for all to see.

People living alone and worried about Covid now had daily contact and looked forward to seeing and chatting to each other. It became very social.

Pilates is so good for people of all ages; my youngest student is 17 and my oldest is 90! Pilates has been proven to be so beneficial for boosting the immune system, improving mental health and strengthening bones and joints to offset osteoporosis. Core strength, flexibility and balance are so important especially in senior years, "*If you don't use it, you lose it*".

We are now back in the pavilion on Mondays and Thursdays for Pilates classes; however many have decided that they prefer the convenience of the online classes. I feel that there is now a place for both.

— Hilary Maddock

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* We represent your interests and campaign on local issues
* We check local planning and licensing applications
* Membership is open to all (see back page)

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Anyone for Tennis?

Portswood Lawn Tennis Club

If you live in Highfield, you may not be aware of the tennis club tucked away as part of the Residents Gardens off Abbotts Way. For some reason it is called Portswood, but it is firmly fixed in the heart of the Highfield community. The three hard and three grass courts are in a beautiful setting and the grass courts are among the finest in the county. With its community feeling, the club welcomes players of all standards and ages.

During lockdown, the closing of tennis courts was a hard blow as many felt that tennis was a safe way to distance oneself from people yet reap the benefits of exercise and fresh air. My regular partner and I, both Hampshire Team members, discovered an empty car park and managed to 'hit' over a suspended rope for an hour three times a week. This sustained us for much of 2020 and even a police van waved at us from the road! As restrictions were lifted, we were able to move back onto court although the confined spaces of the clubhouse remained closed. The local league matches are back in full swing with only our weather causing cancellations. Portswood Lawn Tennis Club (LTC) is back competing and offering its members the full enjoyment and health benefits of its courts.

Throughout the pandemic I longed for the return of playing on the Tournament Circuit, especially in Europe, on clay, in warm weather and combining that with a holiday. Tennis has been proven to be beneficial to health to a late age. As I am now 74, I can vouch for that - the photo showing me at my best in Majorca in 2019. I hope we can all take comfort in seeing better times ahead!

— Joe O'Flaherty

www.portswoodtennisclub.co.uk

Membership is available to all - resident or not; all ages and standards, coaching and league matches. Membership Secretary Liz Boswell **portswoodltc@gmail.com,** Portswood Residents' Gardens, Abbotts Way, Southampton, SO17 1QT.

parkrun

At around 8.15 every Saturday morning a small group can be seen pushing a handcart onto the flats on the Common and putting up a long fence. Around 8.45 people appear from every corner on the Common and by 9am there may be 800 people assembled. What is going on? It is the start of the weekly parkrun. By 10.15 everyone will have gone and the cart returned to its home for another week.

parkrun was started in 2004 by Paul Sinton-Hewitt who gathered 13 friends in Bushy Park London – they ran 5km and returned to do it again the next week and were slowly joined by more friends. The idea grew and became parkrun and today over 3 million people participate worldwide. It is a very simple concept, the run is free, always 5k and always on a Saturday at 9am. Runners register for a barcode and as they cross the finish line, timekeepers record their finishing times and a scanner marries the personal barcode up with the finishing time to produce the results.

People often say that they can't run but this doesn't matter! What started out as friendly rivalry has morphed into a run open to everyone, whatever size, age and ability: there are babies in buggies , dogs on lead and guide runners for blind runners. Indeed, it isn't actually a race at all, it is a run and you don't even have to run it! Walkers are welcomed and this is a great way to start if you are a first timer. Whilst there will be a speedy first finisher, there is never a last placed person as there is always a 'tail walker' volunteer who accompanies the slowest participant to encourage and help them round. Each week everyone is running against themselves, striving to beat their own best time or just to enjoy being out in the fresh air!

There is another side to parkrun. Volunteers are encouraged to help (marshal, set up, timing etc). It also means non-runners can feel part of the event and many say they find it more rewarding than running. Spectators are always welcome too!

So why do people parkrun? They enjoy the challenge, a chance to get a bit fitter but mostly they enjoy the chance to meet a range of people in a safe and friendly setting. parkrun happens all over the world and each one guarantees a warm friendly welcome. Do join us!

More information: **www.parkrun.org.uk/southampton**; Junior parkrun now takes place on Sunday mornings at 9am for 4–14-year-olds over 2 km **www.parkrun.org.uk/southampton-juniors**

—Jill White Run Director and runner

Keep on Running

An eminent professor of Physiology at the University of Birmingham told his first year Physical Education students that their bodies were designed for exercise and that being sedentary was not a good idea. It felt like a vindication for all the hours I had

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spent exercising – I was meant to! I consider myself fortunate in that I have always enjoyed being active and running has provided me with lots of enjoyment and benefits throughout my life. When I was a child, growing up in Swinton, near Manchester, I struggled with a number of physical pursuits but always found that I could outrun all my friends. This made up a little for fumbling and dropping the ball, wobbling off my bike or my complete inability to master roller skates when we played in the street or local park. At secondary school age, and by now a proud member of an athletic club, the sport provided me with a good social life. There were club sessions three times a week and lots of competitions to go to and my parents enjoyed chatting with other mums and dads.

I soon realised that I was never going to set the world alight as a sprinter. There were always other girls with superior speed but at an evening track league in Bolton, I attempted my first half mile and won it in a respectable time for my age group. I started to train for the event and thanks to my father's willingness to hold a stopwatch and my uncle's carefully researched training schedules I won the English Schools Junior Championships the following year. Success on the track and over cross-country seemed to spill over into schoolwork too. I worked hard at school and finished my homework quickly so that I had plenty of time to train and race. I think people underestimate the personal discipline that sport gives you.

The University of Birmingham valued prowess in sport so that's where I headed after school. There was always someone to go for a run with as well as support with other aspects of training such as weights and conditioning. As my results improved, I started to represent England in cross-country races and Great Britain on the track. My first taste of travel abroad was through a junior international match in Sweden and trips to events in Italy, France and Morocco soon followed. Younger readers may not appreciate that foreign travel was a luxury afforded to relatively few wealthy people at the time.

My performance improved after leaving university as I worked part time and was able to spend a lot of time on my training. My husband, Martin, had taken up running whilst at university and was a superb training partner. I had a National Coach, Denis Watts, who had coached Ann Packer. I won a silver medal in the 1500m in the Commonwealth Games in 1978, broke the UK record in two events in 1979 and set my sights on the Olympics. Whilst at the Games, a NIKE sportswear representative approached a group of us and gave us contracts to wear the NIKE brand as they were trying to break into the UK market. However, as well as the high points, sport also involves injuries and disappointments. My Olympic dream envisaged when I was eleven years old, materialised eighteen years later in 1984, when I came 5th in the 1500m final. Drug taking was also a major issue then and I think I would have had more success if it had been a level playing field, but it never was.

My athletics career took a back seat to starting a family, although thanks to kind friends, I kept up limited training and managed to compete in the 1986 Commonwealths and the World Championships in 1987 before retiring. I soon discovered that just fitting in a short run really helped to maintain a balance in my busy life with children and jobs - that period when you start but never quite finish your sentences! The sense of tranquillity achieved following a solitary run in the sunshine around the Common was priceless. Similarly, a work problem could often be solved on a run, when feeling relaxed. Several years later, now in the retired-from-work phase of life, running helps with all sorts of things such as sleep, aiding relaxation, maintaining fitness, and mental well-being. As each birthday comes and goes, I feel so amazed and grateful that I can still run just like I did when I was eleven and running the mile and a half uphill to the library to save my bus fare! Why not give running a try?

— Chris Benning

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Southampton National Park City

Greener, Wilder, Healthier

The National Park City movement was founded in 2019 when London became the world's first National Park City, sparking an international movement of cities now working towards the status, of which we are one!

"National Park City" status is an award received from the National Park City Foundation in recognition of having demonstrated widespread engagement with key sectors within a city and envisioning and implementing the priorities identified in line with the vision.

Our vision is to make Southampton a city where people and places, rich in nature, are better connected; where all citizens can benefit from exploring, playing and learning outdoors. In our first year we held foraging and seed bomb making events, planted plants in Carlton Place and distributed free saplings throughout the winter. This year in conjunction with community groups we'll begin working on bigger projects such as a wheelchair accessible allotment in St Denys and greening University residences.

SNCP project is a volunteer-

led endeavour, working in partnership with the council, Universities, and many existing local organisations. The project is funded by donations and grants. We have spent the last year mapping the city's current initiatives in line with our vision and asking people to sign our charter.

The next phase is a consultation which you can fill this out via this link **www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/PS3RDHB**

We will use the results to form the basis of locality-based discussions on where there is potential for individuals, community groups and businesses to contribute to the creation of more natural habitats in the area, and ways of increasing residents' connection with local green spaces.

We are keen to hear from anyone who would be keen to become a National Park City champion for Highfield. This would involve taking the results of our consultation (due to end in May) to the next level – engaging local groups, councillors and residents to consider what can be implemented. We have already begun this work in other areas of the city, so we can work closely with the champion(s) building on what we've learnt.

Or perhaps you'd simply like to learn more about Southampton's existing opportunities to connect with nature or join one of our current projects as a volunteer. Details of this are on our website where you can also sign up to our charter and mailing list, donate or follow us on social media.

— Christelle Blunden
Southampton National Park City Project Team

HRA looking forward to spring 2022

The main theme of this Newsletter is physical exercise across Highfield and Portswood. The lifting of the Covid restrictions enabled us to hold a very well attended AGM in November and to resume regular face-to-face Committee meetings which any member is very welcome to attend. These meetings are usually held on the second Tuesday of the month. I should now like to announce our next social event at Portswood Residents Gardens on Sunday 17th July. Please make a note for your diary and watch out for further information nearer the time.

— Roger Brown (Professor)
Chair, HRA

NSCF Appeal

North Southampton Community Forum, which is the overarching residents' association for this whole area of Southampton, is actively seeking a Secretary and Treasurer. These are not onerous positions, meetings are bi-monthly. If interested please contact HRA.HonSec@gmail.com You would make valuable contributions as volunteers.

Newsletter contributions, articles and comments are welcome.
Contact: **highfieldresidents.org.uk**
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