

THE King George Recreation Ground in Bushey has been at the heart of the community for more than 100 years. We spoke to some of the volunteers who help to make this park somewhere for all the family to enjoy.



Friends of the park with members of Hertsmere Borough Council and Hertsmere Leisure

When Hertsmere Borough Council overhauled the King George Recreation Ground in the late 90s, the Friends group was set up to create a link with users.

The group was instrumental in helping to get the 22-acre park's first [Green Flag Award](#) in 1999 – and the first in the county. The award, which it has secured every year since then, recognises excellence in park management.

Mike Shrives became a member of the Friends after moving to a house near the park nine years ago, and is now chairman of the committee.

Mike has helped to steer the committee through a difficult patch after several members left and last year its then-chairman stepped down.

The success of the 2012 centenary celebrations – which saw more than 400 people attend – the Easter Egg trail and installation of new playground equipment, has shown the committee is back on course.

The Friends also organise the Teddy Bears' picnic, run as part of the [Bushey Festival](#), and a Hallowe'en fancy dress parade.

Currently there are 110 Friends and seven people on the committee, but more help is needed, especially anyone able to offer a hand during events.

Mike, who juggles his Friends' responsibilities with other voluntary work for Neighbourhood Watch and Macmillan Cancer Care, as well as a part-time job in the construction industry, said: "Our day-to-day role is to assist with monitoring and promoting the park for the good of the local community.

"It is a lovely park. We are very lucky we have got it. The big problem we have got is people not clearing up after their dogs.

"The park is used for a variety of purposes by lots of different people – dog-walkers, families with young children, walking groups and teenagers. It is important that everyone is considerate of each other."

As a teenager, Anne Eames would travel with friends on the bus from her family home in Stanmore to use the swimming pool and the putting green at the recreation ground.

Though both facilities closed in the late 80s after falling into disrepair, Anne, now retired and living in Bushey, has maintained her links with the park.

She attended the inaugural meeting of the Friends group in 1997, and helped raise funds for the park's millennium seat.

The iron-work circular seat created by local blacksmith Steve Rook, has since been joined by the centenary seat, installed to mark the park's 100th anniversary. Both were paid for from money raised by the Friends, with help from the borough council.

Anne, who is now treasurer of the committee and one of the longest-serving committee members, said: "We had a penny collection for the millennium seat. I remember taking £16 to the bank in one penny and two penny pieces.

"People who become involved with the Friends group, very much appreciate what a beautiful park we have got and want to preserve it and enhance it."



Friends Anne Eames and Mike Shrides, centre, with Cllr Jean Heywood and Maggie Enright

Christina Bradley has used the park throughout her life.

As a child, she would cross the recreation ground to get to school, and outside of class, Christina and her friends would regularly visit the swimming pool.

Later on, Christina spent a lot of time in the playground with her own children. Now, though both her children are older, Christina is still a regular sight in the park with her Labrador, Jack.

As secretary on the Friends committee, Christina has responsibility for the membership list and organising the Easter Egg trail and Hallowe'en events.



Teddy Bears' picnic at King George Rec

It was Christina's idea to arrange the Easter Egg trail around the park, which has proved a great way of introducing new visitors to the park's charms.

She said: "I have had so much enjoyment out of the park, I just wanted to put something back."

Cllr Jean Heywood, portfolio-holder for the environment said: "We are so lucky in Hertsmere to have some outstanding parks which cater for a wide range of people, with all different interests.

"Maintaining them to such a high standard takes a lot of work, however, and it simply would not be possible without the help and commitment of our Friends groups.

"The Friends of King George Recreation Ground are a great example of what can be achieved if we all work together."

Anyone who would like to find out more about joining the Friends group should call Hertsmere Borough Council on 0800 731 1810 or email parcs@hertsmere.gov.uk