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# Annual Chairman's Report 2017-2018

*Maxell Europe directors enjoying the  
Sakura Festival*

Wow! What a finale to the last 12 months at the Friends.

We kicked off 2017 with Spring into the Park which as usual was well attended and we did our normal promoting and selling plants. Your Chairman attended 3 sessions at the job centre (not for me, I am retired I think!) but to give some talks to some of their longer term unemployed. The idea was to see if some of them would like to add another skill to their CV's by doing some gardening in the Park. It must have worked because we still have 3 of them doing just that. In March we completed our new Bug Hotel and Stumpery courtesy of a grant from the Post Code Lottery fund.

Then we had some new sculptures from our friends at the British Ironwork Centre in the form of 2 brightly coloured giraffes.

7 May saw the Kite Festival in the Park however we decided not to have a stall at this event. The idea of a Sakura Festival was born after viewing the BBC Springwatch's team visit Japan for the cherry blossom. More on that later. In June we had a visit from the Green Flag judges. All must have gone well as later on in July the Town Park was awarded this prestigious flag for another year.

All year as usual the Friends have been tending to the Chelsea Gardens and even a bit in the Maxell Cherry Garden. We had a bit of a blow in June to arrive in the Friends Sensory garden to find the



*The new Stumpery and Bug hotel*



*The new musical fountain*



*Giraffes from the British Ironwork Centre*



*Japanesque at the Sakura Festival*



*Tree planting with the MD of Maxell Europe Ltd*



*Two little maids at Sakura !*

beautiful fish sculptures, which so many disabled visitors loved, smashed to pieces and irreparable. Undaunted we set about finding a more substantial replacement, which we did in the form of a solid rock sculpture from our friends at the British Ironwork Centre near Oswestry. Never been? You must visit this unique and fantastic attraction on the A5 before Oswestry. In the Chelsea Garden work continued to enhance and improve the planting for the visitor experience including of course the replacement of the musical fountain by the Park, courtesy of a large grant from Suez, the waste disposal and recycling giant. Lots of teething problems but hopefully this year (2018) all will be well. This grant also enabled the waterfall to be reinstated and a new small water feature installed in the Gazebo Garden. July saw the Giants Carnival again, at which we had a stall promoting the Park and selling plants to help us continue the garden improvement work.

September saw us at the 'Telford Festival' where we launched the Sakura Festival and we also helped out by acting as volunteer stewards for the 2 day festival. In September we had a stand at the Senior Citizens Forum, something we had not done for a while.

In October we had a small group of volunteers from PBB Services (part of the Royal Bank of Scotland) visit and do some valuable hedge laying with us in the Park.

During the year the Friends had been trying to reinstate the three gardens within the Chelsea Gardens and were delighted to hear that Telford & Wrekin Council had found enough spare cash to have 4 signs made. 3 for the Chelsea Gardens and one for the Maxwell Garden. They were installed in April 2018 and now give visitors a good insight into the history of the gardens.

Then in November we achieved the Fields in Trust Award 2017 for the Best Get Active UK Park. Your Chairman attended the presentation at Lords Cricket Ground (becoming a habit this!) on the 29 November along with Jackie from the Visitor Centre and Ben Harper from Energize. The trophy cabinet is getting full, I think we may need a bigger one soon!

On 3 December we held our 11<sup>th</sup> Charity Fun Run, again in aid of the Midlands Air Ambulance Charity. Despite losing our £1,000 sponsorship, we achieved the magnificent sum of just over £4,000 with a record number of runners, walkers and joggers.

We arranged a meeting with Telford & Wrekin Council during January to investigate the possibilities of putting the whole of the Town Park under the Fields in Trust protection. It was agreed to look at it in detail and return later in the year for another meeting with Fields in Trust present. Watch this space!

Then came the spectacular Sakura (Cherry blossom) Festival on 21 April. 12 months in the planning, it ran very smoothly, with we estimate a total of over 1,500 enjoying Japanese street food, singing from the Telford and District Light Operatic Players in the bandstand, martial arts from the Inyoshin Martial arts School, information about Japanese Gardens from the Japanese Garden Society, the RSPB and magnificent ice cream from the Shropshire Ice Cream Company and even 2 brand new Japanese cars from W.R.Davies to try on for size! Later, from 5pm until 9pm, 500 people enjoyed live Japanese Music from Japanesque, Origami and silhouette cutting from Steve and Megumi Biddle along with face painting from Julie Barass and the stupendous drums of the Taiko West Drummers with James Barrow. As if all this was not enough, we also launched our Memory Leaf scheme whereby the public can purchase a stainless steel leaf, get it engraved in memory of a loved one or someone special and have it hung on the singing ringing tree in the Friends Sensory Garden. Profits will go to a named charity of their choice.

All in all another spectacular year for the Friends, achieved by a super team effort of all concerned. Here's to 2018-2019 and best wishes to all our Friends and sponsors.

**Mr Chris Pettman, Chairman  
April 2018**