FRIENDS OF GREENWICH PARK
NEWSLETTER

Summer 2012 Registered Charity No: 1029933 Number 61

The Olympics - just days to go now

It is doubtful that many of us will need reminding that the Olympic Equestrian and Modern Pentathlon events in the Park run from 28 July to 12 August and the Paralympic events from 30 August to 4 September.

By the time this Newsletter reaches you the Park will have shut down completely for the four week period from 7 July up to 4 August, apart from the southern part of the Flower Garden and the Children's Playground which will remain open throughout the Games other than 30 July, the cross country day.

The build and ongoing programme

The 20,000 seater arena and the training and stabling areas now dominate the view at the lower end of the Park. Their construction has not been without setbacks. The unusually heavy rainfall in April and May affected building the main arena and required additional work to provide a firm base for the southern spectator stand. The consequent delay meant that LOCOG had to reschedule the work, with longer working hours than originally proposed and an increase in the number of daily deliveries within the Park. A knock on effect of the additional traffic volume was the earlier closure of the Avenue to vehicles for safety reasons. It will reopen to cyclists from 8 September (for a few hours less each day than normal) but will not reopen to drivers until 1 October.

Photograph: Locog

LOCOG kept to their undertaking to start the perimeter fencing as late as possible. Mesh panels supported by heavyweight base blocks began to appear in mid May, spreading around and within the Park during June, though areas where they were likely to be particularly intrusive, such as the Flower Garden, were left until near the July closure deadline.

LOCOG will begin to remove the perimeter fencing and open up sections of the Park in early August before the Paralympic events begin, but the areas at the north end of the Park facing the Queen's House and the Sammy Ofer wing will remain closed off until late autumn while the arena and other temporary structures are being dismantled. At this point The Royal Parks will take back the site to prepare for reinstatement.

Reinstatement

Much of the grassland reinstatement after the Games will be carried out by The Royal Parks' own contractors. Speed of recovery will obviously be heavily dependent on the weather. Some areas, such as the cross country route and overlay facilities, will be handed back to the park management for remedial work immediately after that event. This will mainly consist of sowing grass seed. As the autumn is still the grass growing season, it is expected that these areas will quickly recover. LOCOG's contractors (STRI) will deal with grass restoration within the track. At the same time they will begin enhancement work on the acid grasslands not only to make good any damage from the games but, more importantly, to reverse larger areas of degradation of this important habitat that have occurred over many years. For the Park, this will result in a net improvement in its ecology.

By the time that the main venue site is vacated in November the grass growing season will be over. Some heavily used areas will therefore be returfed, while others will be prepared for reseeding the following March. The Royal Parks expect that all these areas will recover by late spring 2013.

The schedule summary

- **August**

From 4 August large areas of the Park reopen to the public, as will the Royal Observatory. Some reinstatement work starts.

- **September**

From 8 September most main pedestrian and cycle paths reopen, with vehicle access into Blackheath Avenue only. Fencing and overlay removal continues.

- **October**

The Avenue reopens from 1 October for morning and evening through traffic.

- **November and onwards**

The arena and related structures removed and the site handed over to the Royal Parks. Grassland reinstatement work under way in the northern end of the Park.

The Friends will be keeping a close eye on the dismantling and reinstatement process, and checking that LOCOG and their

Continued on page 2

The Olympics continued

contractors abide by their commitments, such as the timetable for reopening the Park.

Communication

We have seen an encouraging improvement in LOCOG's communications efforts over the past few months. Monthly updates of their forthcoming work have been posted on their boards around the Park, supplemented with individual posters and signage about imminent area closures and alternative available routes for park users. Leaflets advising local people of key access dates and park traffic measures have also been distributed within Greenwich. The amenity societies have been kept fully in the picture on all new or changed signage going up.

Check for news on the Friends website and also on www.london2012.com, using the Quicklink 'For local residents'.

Transport

Greenwich Council's Planning Board finally approved LOCOG's Transport Plan on 24 May, just days after a much delayed consultation with the local societies and other bodies on the detail of the arrangements. Residents in the two local boroughs will have received details of extended or changed parking controls and permit requirements for the Games period, while information about bus and rail travel can be found at www.getaheadofthegames.com.

Travel by car or public transport is best avoided during the Games and at all costs on cross country day, when some 50,000 spectators are scheduled to arrive mainly from Greenwich or Blackheath stations.

As we enter the final stage before the Games start in the Park we hope, after the years of planning and months of preparation, that all goes well and according to plan. Whatever views people may have about the use of the Park for the Olympic and Paralympic events, they will provide an unparalleled opportunity to showcase the whole of the Maritime Greenwich World Heritage Site - its landscape and historic features and buildings - to millions of viewers across the globe.

Wildlife Notes *by Sue Yates*

The Wildlife Open Day was very wet

In summary, the Wildlife Open Day at the end of April was wet, very wet.

Our visitor numbers were down; the Park was nearly deserted. However, those brave souls who ventured forth were appropriately clothed and glad to come in and sample all our offerings.

The Field Studies Council worked with volunteers to offer dipping in the now thriving Nature Trail pond, whilst Harry Whitehead exhibited the exceedingly hairy caterpillars of the garden tiger moth.

Esme Partridge had designed butterfly feeders for the children to make and take home along with any vegetables they had planted with the assistance of Elaine Warrell. The tadpoles were popular as were the guided tours of the Nature Trail, which, following the clearing of the ground-covering ivy by volunteers, was looking wonderful under a carpet of bluebells. Toni Assirati provided guided tree walks to visitors, under umbrellas,

Froglife helps the ponds move on

By the time that you read this, Alex Draper, conservation officer for the wildlife charity Froglife will have held a teaching and planting session in the new wildlife pond in the Deer Park. This took place on Wednesday 4 July. Alex was planting up the pond with a variety of attractive pond plants such as marsh marigold and water forget me not. Alex invited the Friends' group members (and anyone who read the offer on the Friends' website) to drop in to see the pond planting take place and to help put in a few plants themselves around the edge of the pond if they felt able. Alex was delighted to have the opportunity to say hello and answer any questions about the plants and the new wildlife pond as well as the pond work that has been carried out recently to improve the Flower Garden Lake. All of this pond work has been funded by Biffaward for which the Friends provided the initial third party funding contribution, which was necessary for it to proceed.

This new pond, if you have not spotted it already, lies between the two fences at the edge of the deer enclosure by the first of the viewing places.

It receives rainwater from the roof of the Wildlife Centre and may even be allowed to dry out in summer, as a natural pond might do. It has got off to a good start with our wet 'summer' and as the planting matures it should be popular with birds which will be visible to visitors from the viewing point.

More Wildlife news on page 4

Sun-blessed

The sun shone – virtually the first time since April. The Observatory Garden looked its finest. The Phoenix Dixieland Jazz Band was on top form. The picnics tasted even better than usual. The bar and ice cream stands did a roaring trade. The dancers danced on the grass. Everyone else tapped their feet and clapped their hands.

Yes – on Sunday 17 June, the Friends' annual Midsummer Jazz Concert was back in town. A real family event – babes in arms, children, teenagers, parents and grandparents all having a great time. A record 500 Friends, and the friends of Friends, filling the garden. Passers-by, including foreign visitors, lining up to pay to enjoy the fun.

A fitting last event in the Park before the shutdown down for the Olympics.

Can there be a better £5-worth in South East London? And, what is more, the profits of Friends' events, such as this, are all used to help the Park manager pay for equipment and improvements for which he is not funded by the Royal Parks.

Watch this space for next year.

Buckingham Palace Visit - Update

Members' enthusiastic response to the Garden Tour proposed for this spring was moderated when the Palace, in view of the Royal Jubilee festivities, removed the April-June Garden Tour option, offering instead Garden Highlights combined with The State Rooms in August-September 2012.

Nevertheless, of the 200 expressions of interest received, 100 members and guests have been booked on four separate dates in groups of 25; each with a Friends committee member as Leader. The organiser of this event, John Mitchell, has recently sent out full joining instructions, map etc. Admission requires airport-type security checks, so members should aim to be there in good time, allowing for the constraints on public transport and movement in the area during the Olympic Games.

Maybe the Garden Tour will be revived for Spring 2013.

THE VIEW from the Park

Graham Dear, Park manager

It would be wrong not to mention the Olympic and Paralympic events in this column although the Friends chairman updates on progress. The equestrian and modern pentathlon events are just some of the 11 taking place in six Royal Parks this summer. They include cycle road race, beach volleyball, cycling time trial, triathlon, race walk, marathon, marathon swim and paralympic marathon spread across St. James's, Green, Hyde, Richmond, Greenwich and Bushy Parks.

As my colleague Derrick Spurr says, the stage is The Royal Parks but the play is LOCOG's (The London Organising Committee for the Olympic and Paralympic Games). Our job is to assist the actors in putting on a great performance and return the stage as it was before. We are working hard to do just that.

Amongst all the performing, Park life goes on. The new reed-beds in the Flower Garden Lake (part funded by the Friends) have established well and are much appreciated by the coots which are nesting on them. The Field Studies Council, now delivering school visits in the Wildlife Centre in partnership with The Royal Parks, are putting the wildlife pond in the Nature Trail to good use. Created just two years ago it teems with life, including newts, dragonfly larvae and water-boatmen. It's a marvel how it all arrives in the new water body without any assistance.

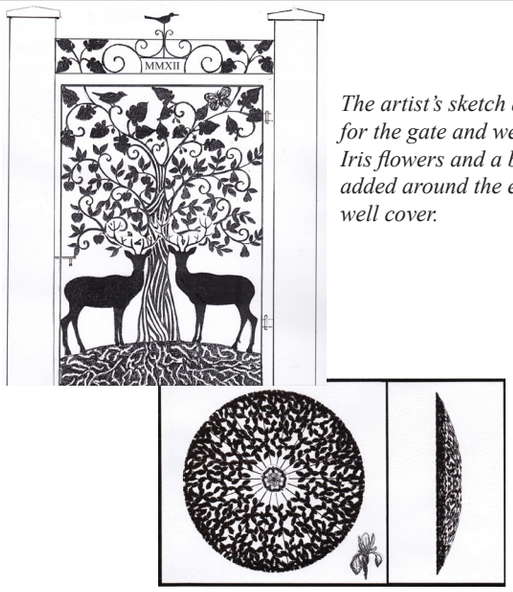
Several volunteers have worked with our technical assistant, Grace Romaniew, on planting up The Orchard. Landscaping works here are nearing completion. The final piece of the puzzle is the installation of the new pedestrian gate access into the garden and a well cover (see below). Deptford sculptor, Heather Burrell, is making these following workshops with pupils from Millennium Primary School, The John Roan and the Friends Wildlife Group. The designs will continue the tradition of quality art in the Park.

Friends visit Heather Burrell's workshop in Deptford

On the morning of 18 May a number of Friends made their way over the footbridge crossing Deptford Creek and turned left at the Creekside Ecology Park. They had a planned meeting at the studio of Heather Burrell, the artist who has designed the new gate into The Orchard. Her studio, part of APT (Art in Perpetuity Trust), backs onto the creek and there she showed them her ideas for the design.

Heather has always worked in heavy metal from her days at art school. She draws many of her designs on computer and has the shapes laser cut before bringing them to life by making them three dimensional in her studio.

The Friends all loved the design for the gate, inspired by the school children in various workshops, but felt that the one for the well head cover was not as exciting. Various ideas were discussed and then Heather suggested a mesh of leaves spiralling upwards which felt much more fluid and compatible with the gate design.

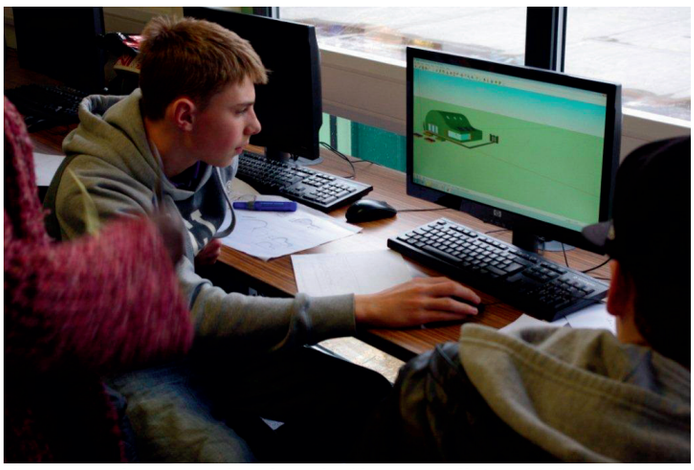


The artist's sketch designs for the gate and well cover. Iris flowers and a bird can be added around the edges of the well cover.

Innovative ideas for The Orchard centre

Two years on from the first 'public consultation' over the Shooters Hill Sixth Form College project to design an educational and environmental centre in The Orchard in Greenwich Park (*Newsletter* 55 Summer 2010), representatives of the Friends, The Royal Parks and the University of Greenwich met again to take a critical look at the students' end of project proposals.

Presentations for the centre by the six teams of three and four 17 year olds were of an impressively high standard. Most focused on the constraints of the site: it is overlooked by private housing, lack of running water will be a problem, disabled access is essential, there is a need to store tools for the horticultural education programmes and so on. Solutions included an innovative curved 'green' roof, water capture, solar panels, 'living walls' for calming greenery and to help with insulation, and bringing the outside into the building using sliding doors.



Caption to photo: A student from the Shooters Hill Post 16 Campus works on a computer generated model for his team's proposal for a Horticultural Learning Centre for The Orchard, Greenwich Park.

Funding for a centre for The Orchard is some way in the future but these student projects came up with so many good, practical ideas that will be invaluable to a professional team when the time comes.

The Olympic Torch relay

The Olympic flame comes to the Royal Borough of Greenwich on Saturday 21 July. The torch relay will start on the Meridian Line in the Park at 7.20am. The Park itself will be closed to the public, but early birds can see it a short while later as it makes its way through Greenwich town centre and then heads off along Romney Road and Trafalgar Road on its journey round the Borough, ending up at General Gordon Square in Woolwich just before 10.00am.

Visit to Northward Hill and RSPB Cliffe Pools

Thursday 11 October meeting at Northward Hill at 10am

We are planning a Friends' outing to a part of north Kent that has not only brilliant bird life but also much history. We propose to meet up at Northward Hill because this is the easiest place to find. When that part of the visit is completed we shall move off in convoy to Cooling and Cliffe. The outing will be guided by Harry Whitehead who knows this area extremely well.

You will receive full instructions to get to Northward Hill. If you don't have transport we hope to pair you up with others with spaces in their cars. *The visit to Cliffe includes quite a lot of walking (3 miles of flat country footpaths) and requires sensible footwear.* There are toilet facilities at Northward Hill and Cooling but not at Cliffe. Please bring your own picnic. Binoculars are very helpful.

The trip costs £5 and the booking slip is enclosed.

Northward Hill overlooks the Thames and is the site of an old farm, the land being drained in the 19/20th centuries. The RSPB is currently reversing this and in the winter large areas are flooded, attracting big flocks of wintering water birds. The woods on the site have over 100 breeding pairs of grey herons together with the country's biggest breeding colony of little egrets. There is a rookery of over 3000 birds, which is an incredible sight and sound in the evening when they are coming in to roost. In the scrub around the farm there are a number of smaller birds and at this time of year the chance of a rare migrant or two. Up to ten different birds of prey species are found here including harriers and buzzards. On the reservoirs there will be the first of the wintering ducks and migrant waders with sunny butterflies and late dragonflies along the paths. The wonderful views of the surrounding countryside amaze people who never realised the place existed. Watch out for the black rabbits as you drive into the reserve; they live along the lane where you come in.

The site overlooks Egypt Bay where the prison hulks were moored, together with the ruins of a smuggler's inn, The Shades, and a Second World War communications centre.

Cooling

You will drive pass the 13th century St James's Church which is said to be the graveyard where Dickens placed Pip's meeting with the convict in *Great Expectations* as it has the graves of 13 children who died of malaria. Just after this on your right is a castle built in 1381 by John de Cobham, which is now home to Jools Holland.

Cliffe Pools

One of the country's most important wildlife sites and famous for its birds and rare insects, this was originally old brickfields and chalk pits which flooded. There are no toilets or hides here. Just big skies and vast pools holding a mixture of brackish and saline water in which you may be surprised to see shoals of jelly fish and seaweed.

The reserve provides a refuge for thousands of wading birds and ducks and is well known for rarities passing through on migration. We should see dunlin, lapwing, redshank, godwits, avocets, shelduck, teal together with raptors such as harriers. October is the time that redwings and fieldfares start to arrive from the continent and this is a popular stopping-off spot before dispersing across the country.

Watch out in the ditches for marsh frogs. There is also a good water vole population here.

Cliffe has a reputation for producing the rare and unusual and you never know what you may spot.

- Exceptionally, there will be no Drop-ins in July and August. They resume on Saturday 29 September (1-3pm).
- Friends' volunteers planted a hawthorn hedge against the fencing in the Flower Garden where the leylandii had been removed. The very wet weather has helped the hedge thrive. This is all part of the move to improve biodiversity in the Park.
- We are anxious to offer Friends another opportunity to see the progress which has been achieved in The Orchard. The complexity of this exceptional summer means that this will have to wait until the autumn.
- Have you ever wondered why the Wildlife Centre is so difficult to find? Well, it was originally built as a bulb store at one end and a shelter for the deer at the other. It lies along the boundary between the Flower Garden and the Deer Park and is completely camouflaged. So, when we are open we put out an A frame pointing in the right direction and then our jolly green frog to guide you to the door.

COLOUR FOR THE NEWSLETTER

This edition of the Newsletter comes with colour illustrations. We hope that readers will welcome the brighter 'look'.

Dates for Your Diary summary

'Drop In' at the Wildlife Centre*
Sat 29 September 1pm - 3pm

Outing to Northward Hill and Cliffe Pools
BOOKING NOW
Thurs 11 October 10am at Northward Hill
Tickets from Friends of Greenwich Park, 34 Hyde Vale, SE10 8QH
Tel 020 8692 1760. Cheques payable to Friends of Greenwich Park.

'Drop In' at the Wildlife Centre*
Sat 27 October 1pm - 3pm

'Run to the Beat' London's Music Half Marathon
Sun 28 October
Greenwich Park hosts part of the route.

'Drop In' at the Wildlife Centre*
Sat 24 November 1pm - 3pm

* **The Wildlife Centre** is near the south end of the lake in the Flower Garden. The 'Drop Ins' are organised by the Friends Wildlife Group on behalf of The Royal Parks and provide the chance for children and young people to find out about wildlife in Greenwich Park. Visit and watch any wildlife that is passing by. Included are wildlife-related craft activities and guided tours of the Nature Trail and Deer Hide.

Friends of Greenwich Park

Chairman: Liz Coyle, 3 Orchard Drive, SE3 0QP Tel: 020 8852 8831
Wildlife Group: Sue Yates, 34 Hyde Vale, London SE10 8QH Tel: 020 8692 1760
Newsletter: Lesley Hodsdon lesleyhodsdon@gmail.com
Membership Secretary: Fran Tyler, 51 Lock Chase, London SE3 9HB Tel: 020 8852 9540 tylerfrantom@aol.com
Annual subscription: UK £5; overseas £10. Cheques made out to Friends of Greenwich Park with sae please, and sent to the Membership Secretary.

Greenwich Park (Tel: 020 8858 2608) is one of London's eight Royal Parks. The others are Bushy Park, The Green Park, Hyde Park, Kensington Gardens, Regent's Park and Primrose Hill, Richmond Park and St James's Park. All have links with former royal palaces or hunting grounds. Between them they cover 2083 ha. (5000 acres) of historic parkland. The Royal Parks also manages Brompton Cemetery.
In Greenwich Park, there are police phone boxes at St Mary's Gate and at Blackheath Gate. In an emergency dial 999; for other calls Tel: 0300 123 1212

Printed by Greycot Press, Unit 4, Kencot Close, Erith, Kent DA18 4AB Friends website: www.friendsofgreenwichpark.org.uk