FRIENDS OF GREENWICH PARK
NEWSLETTER

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Post Olympics Update

After years of planning, consultation and preparation – and much local controversy – the Olympic and Paralympic Games have come and gone.

London's hosting of the Games was judged a resounding success and amongst some remarkable venues Greenwich Park was arguably the best. Television screens across the world showed stunning vistas over the whole World Heritage Site, with Christopher Wren's majestic buildings tying the Park to the river and linking to a landscape featuring Inigo Jones's Queen's House, then soaring up to the Royal Observatory.

Of course, for those who live in the area – which includes the majority of Friends – there was disruption and restriction of access to the Park for a significant time. That was inevitable once the decision was taken that the equestrian events should take place here.

For LOCOG it was a great organisational and presentational achievement. The cross-country course, the cause of much local controversy, proved to be a triumph for the designer. The riders praised it and its imaginative jumps - over the Meridian Line and through the Boating Pond and the dramatic 'Moon Jump' that launched them into the skyline of Canary Wharf. In the making, no trees were cut down; nor was there any damage to archaeological sites. Thanks to the comprehensive surveys carried out on behalf of LOCOG, we now know much more about the Park and its flora and fauna than we would have known otherwise.

The arena was the centrepiece that staged dressage and show-jumping and parts of the cross-country and modern pentathlon events. It also attracted the biggest audience ever for the Paralympics that followed.

The Olympic volunteers cheerfully and courteously steered everyone around the site and ensured that spectator management was discreet. Members of the army, brought in at the last moment to cover the G4S shortfall, did just the same.

But now the Games are over and what one BBC commentator described as 'the pixie dust of the Olympics' is settling.

Re-opening and reinstatement of the Park

Opening up the Park was slower than expected, with some sections still fenced off later than scheduled for public safety reasons. By early October, however, everywhere other than the northern end was accessible and The Avenue was open for normal early morning and evening through-traffic.

Despite some fifty thousand spectators moving around the Park on cross-country day, wear and tear was surprisingly light, which puts paid to the scare stories about what was going to happen to the grass or the tree roots under so many trampling feet. When events were still going on in the arena, The Royal Parks team were already re-seeding areas affected by the course overlay and within weeks, thanks to good weather conditions, these had greened up well. On a recent tour, organised by LOCOG and the Park management to update the amenity societies and councillors on reinstatement progress, we noted that all of this grassland has now fully recovered.

The north west corner of the Park occupied by the stables was cleared ahead of schedule and the grass there will be back to normal this autumn, provided that the new seed gets a proper chance to become established. So far, the signs are good.

By the time this Newsletter reaches you, LOCOG should have

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The Olympics continued

removed all the remaining temporary structures and will be close to handing back the sites used for the arena and training areas to The Royal Parks for reinstatement. It is intended to re-turf the grassland south of the Queen's House this year but much depends on the weather. As the grass growing season is now over, The Royal Parks will use the next few months to prepare the ground of other heavily used areas for re-seeding next March. They expect that by late spring the northern end will be restored and in a much improved condition. All renovation, including continuing legacy work to improve the quality and spread of areas of acid grassland, will be funded by LOCOG.

The Royal Parks and Friends' input

The Royal Parks, and in particular Derrick Spurr and Graham Dear, deserve great credit for the major part they have played in safeguarding the Park. They have been fully involved in the design, construction and dismantling of the build and in implementing all the necessary protective measures. It is reassuring to know that they will continue to oversee and control the remaining remedial landscaping work into 2013 and onwards.

Protection of the Park's ecology and archaeology has also been at the top of the Friends' agenda. To this end we have liaised closely with The Royal Parks throughout the planning and construction processes. We believe that our input, together with that of the other local societies, during our regular meetings with LOCOG and Greenwich Council planning officers over the past few years, has helped ensure that risk to the Park's fabric was minimised, that public access was restricted as little as possible and that full reinstatement is being carried out as promised.

We shall continue to keep a close eye on what goes on during the final stages.

A visit to The Orchard

As you will know from earlier newsletters, work has been gradually progressing in the area between the inner and outer park walls, near the Creed Gate on Park Vista. The project is not complete as yet, but sufficient has changed to make it worth an interim visit.

There are raised vegetable and flower beds, fruit trees, a formal pond and a wildlife pond. To achieve this volunteers have been working away quietly on Wednesday afternoons oblivious to the Olympic comings and goings on the other side of the wall.

Grace Romaniw in The Orchard

The Friends have helped the Park by funding the well head cover and the new gate to The Orchard

Grace Romaniw, who has joined the park team this year to coordinate the work, will be in The Orchard with the volunteers between **1 and 3 pm on Wednesday 12 December** to show you round. Please drop in, using the new gate of course.

Royal Parks to charge for toilets

The Royal Parks have invited tenders for running the toilet facilities in all their parks. The successful contractor will be responsible for an essential refurbishment programme and also for installing turnstiles in order to implement a new 20p charge from next April.

The Royal Parks have explained that cleaning costs have risen by 30% over the past three years to more than a million pounds a year and the government grant continues to be reduced, so creating a significant funding gap.

The new charge, however, will not apply to toilets in children's playgrounds nor to facilities for the disabled.

20p, we are told, is a lower charge than that made in most other public areas and it is expected not only to support the present provision but also improve maintenance standards throughout the parks. The alternative would be large scale closure.

We have expressed regret that even a modest charge should be required for using the toilets. However, we recognise the need to raise revenue to offset the progressive reduction in government funding and consider this less detrimental than, for example, increasing the number of large events in the Park.

Wildlife Notes *by Sue Yates*

We were not able to open the Wildlife Centre in either July or August because of the Olympics, but visitors were back in force for the September opening.

In October we made bat masks and demonstrated the use of feeders to help support the wild bird population as the weather deteriorates.

The red deer stag had a fine set of antlers this year and had been heard bellowing during the rut, so we brought out our stags skull, complete with both antlers, for inspection.

October Outing to Northward Hill

We had an interesting outing with some history, architecture and bird watching. The weather was not good but the threatened rain never fully arrived. However, neither did the birds. There were good sightings of egrets and great crested grebes and one fleeting glimpse of a kingfisher, but we were perhaps a little early for the waves of migrant birds which will no doubt sweep through this autumn.

The area was a surprise to many; so close to London and yet so wild and desolate.

Keeping the Friends active

Over the last couple of years a group of volunteers has helped with removing unwanted invasive species in the Nature Trail and planting appropriate native specimens. This is a continuing project.

They also helped planting the replacement hedge after the Leylandii along the fence in the Flower Garden had been removed. The hedge is doing well, with the hawthorn and blackthorn thriving, although the dog roses did not make it and will need to be replaced. More of the Leylandii are being removed over winter and more hedging will need to go in.

Fridays 14 December 2012 and 11 January, 15 February and 15 March 2013 at 9.30am have been chosen to get on with this work.

If you have not been involved before, do come along. Equipment is provided as well as refreshments. We normally work until about 12.30pm, but you can arrive later or peel off early if need be. We meet up at the Wildlife Centre

For more details, please contact Sue Yates *(see back page).*

Visit to Buckingham Palace – August and September

The visit to Buckingham Palace gardens proposed for spring 2012 attracted enormous interest amongst Friends. However, by deferring it to summer in order to accommodate Her Majesty's Diamond Jubilee Celebrations, and combining it with the State Rooms, its appeal to members reduced by about 25%. Nevertheless we still had over 100 members and friends seeking places which were arranged into four groups of 25 in August and September.

Travel concerns linked to the concurrent Olympics proved unwarranted, the Jubilee Diamonds exhibition was an added highlight, the audio-tour of the State Rooms was greatly appreciated and feedback was universally enthusiastic. The logistics entailed in putting together such an event are quite daunting – special thanks to John Mitchell for all his effort.

THE VIEW from the Park

Graham Dear, Park manager

As 2012 draws to a close it is a good time to assess where the Park is, following the excitement of the Olympics and Paralympics.

The de-rig of the Olympic overlay is progressing on schedule and should be completely removed by the end of November. This is a complex process involving many contractors, each with their own infrastructure to remove. The stands for instance could not be dismantled until all the arena surfacing is taken away, the seats are removed onto the arena deck, the deck is removed and finally the stands.

Regular Park visitors will have noticed that reinstatement of the grass lawns, used for the cross country course, have been reseeded and even had their first cut. Down by Circus Gate the stables have been removed and a large area has been seeded too. We will shortly be starting on the arena.

Continuing the Olympic theme, visitors may have noticed the addition of seven life-size carved wooden sheep and a wooden tractor to the playground. The sheep were carved from oak by Cornish artist Reece Ingram for LOCOG and featured in one of the Olympic jumps. They

are to remain in the Park and are already proving very popular with young visitors.

For the Park's gardeners, October is the best or worst month of the year, depending on whether you enjoy collecting up millions of leaves and planting the 15,000 bulbs that go to make up the much loved spring bedding displays in the Flower Garden. The bedding is mainly daffodils again this year. Tulips offer a greater colour range but the beds here are infested with Tulip Fire. This is a fungal disease which persists in the soil, but a three year rest from tulips should see it cleared. We may try to major on tulips again in a few years time.

Looking beyond 2012, phase II of the Blackheath Gate replacement begins in January 2013 for six weeks. This inevitably means some disruption, but the end result will be a fitting southern entrance to the Park and the World Heritage Site.

Works on the The Orchard continue and I will update on exciting developments, including the artist designed new pedestrian gate and well cover in the next Newsletter.

Flower Garden Lakeside Replanting

Designs have been produced to re-landscape the lakeside after concluding that much of the current planting is well past maturity and severely obstructing views to the lake. We believe this is an opportunity to create a unique and cohesive design for the lakeside, which may be implemented in phases bringing minimal disruption to wildlife. This development follows the recent introduction of reed beds to the lake to soften the edges and increase biodiversity.

The new scheme will

- create and enhance views to and across the lake
- complement the surrounding scene whilst offering a unique landscape
- offer seasonal interest with emphasis in autumn
- protect existing wildlife and increase biodiversity where possible.

For more information, there will be a display board on show at the Friends 'Drop-ins' on 24 November and 29 December at the Wildlife Centre.

Christmas Tree sales

'Pines and Needles' will again be selling a range of Christmas trees, decorations and festive greenery in Greenwich Park, starting during the weekends of 17/18 and 24/25 November and then on a daily basis from 1 to 24 December. They will be operating beside the entrance to the Flower Garden near the Blackheath Gate from 9.00am to 5.30pm.

'Pines and Needles' have generously offered Friends members free holly and mistletoe if purchasing a Christmas tree. They are also offering £5 discount off decorations to this value or above, if bought together with a tree. You will need to show your membership card when you make your purchase.

For further information about the full range of products they sell, please go to their website: *www.pinesandneedles.com*.

Penalty Notices for Disorder

We were pleased to learn that the legislation allowing the police to issue penalty notices for specific offences in The Royal Parks was approved this summer. A maximum £50 penalty may be given for illegal cycling, dog fouling and littering. This is something, particularly in relation to off-track cycling, for which all the Friends' groups and The Royal Parks have been lobbying for many years.

Enforcement of the new power was introduced in Greenwich Park in October after swing boards had been placed at the entrances of non-cycling paths giving warning of the change. It has already proved an effective deterrent in other Royal Parks and hopefully, when word gets around, will significantly reduce the number of cyclists regularly using illegal routes through the Park.

Fancy a walk – and help the Friends?

Most of our newsletters are distributed by hand, by over 60 volunteer Friends. This saves us a lot of money in postage. We are always looking to add to our list of volunteer distributors, to ensure we have cover when people are on holiday or otherwise indisposed. If you are able to help – and particularly if you live in the Charlton, West Greenwich, Granville Park, Kidbrooke, Belmont Hill or Lee Park areas – please email Clive Corlett at *mccorlett@btinternet.com*, with your email and postal address and phone number, or phone him on 0208 305 1261.

'The Donkey Man'

Donkey rides have been a charming and memorable feature outside the Park's Blackheath Gate for many years, and our Spring 2008 Newsletter celebrated 60 years of Len Thorne as the "Donkey Man". Sadly he died this July aged 74, but the Olympic Games delayed his funeral which began appropriately on the donkey-ride pitch this October. His family hope their public appeal will allow them to commemorate his life and continue with the donkey rides on the historic run.

ANNUAL LECTURE 2013
Cosmos and Culture

From the earliest times the cyclical motions of the heavens have played a central role in human cultures, acting as a clock and calendar and scrutinized for signs and portents of the future. In the 21st Century astronomy still saturates our world. From blockbuster movies to adverts, toys and t-shirts, its concepts and imagery are everywhere and the iconic pictures from telescopes like Hubble have come to symbolise our ability to understand the Universe and to question our place within it.

Public Astronomer, Marek Kukula, based in the Royal Observatory in Greenwich Park, explores the cultural influence of this very visual science, where a picture can topple the Earth from the centre of the universe, reveal the presence of invisible matter or show us light from the dawn of time.

Dr. Kukula completed his PhD in Radio Astronomy at the University of Manchester's Jodrell Bank Observatory, then carried out research into black holes and distant galaxies at a variety of astronomy centres including the University of Edinburgh and the Space Telescope Science Institute in Baltimore, home of the Hubble Space Telescope. As Public Astronomer at the Royal Observatory he helps to run the Observatory's exhibitions, planetarium shows and events and is on hand to explain new astronomical discoveries to the public and media.

The Lecture is on Sunday 3 February 2013 at 11am at the University of Greenwich. For full details see right hand column. A booking form is enclosed.

Outing to the Darwin Centre at the Natural History Museum
Friday 25 January 2013
Meeting at the side entrance in Exhibition Road at 1.30pm

As you know, the NHM is a world renowned scientific resource. We plan to visit the beautiful new Darwin Centre, known as the Cocoon, which was opened to the public in 2009. It is architecturally stunning and contains state-of-the-art interactive displays. You can pick up a free Nature Plus card and upload items of particular interest to explore later online.

We will also attend a showing of 'Who do you think you really are?' in the David Attenborough Lecture theatre. This is a fabulous award winning interactive show which traces humans back to the origins of the Tree of Life. You will be amazed. There are also opportunities to view two further short high definition films.

This date was chosen because both the NHM and the V&A next door are open late that evening. At the NHM you could book to view the Wildlife Photographer of the Year whilst the café at the V&A is particularly civilised, with live musicians, and their galleries are very peaceful in the evening.

Numbers are limited and will be on a first come first served basis

Friends of Greenwich Park

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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

Dates for Your Diary summary

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

The 10k MoRun
Sun 25 November 10am

Santa Run
Sun 9 December

'Drop In' at the Wildlife Centre*
Sat 29 December

Outing to the Natural History Museum
Fri 25 January 1.30pm at the Museum
BOOKING NOW
Tickets £5 from Friends of Greenwich Park, 34 Hyde Vale, SE10 8QH.
Tel 020 8692 1760
Cheques payable to Friends of Greenwich Park, with sae.

'Drop In' at the Wildlife Centre*
Sat 26 January 1pm - 3pm

The Friends Annual Lecture 2013
Sun 3 February 11am
BOOKING NOW
King William Lecture Theatre
University of Greenwich
"Cosmos and Culture"
Talk by Dr. Marek Kukula, Public Astronomer at the Royal Observatory.
Tickets £10, to include a glass of wine, from Friends of Greenwich Park,
3 Orchard Drive, SE3 0QP.
Tel 020 8852 8831
Cheques payable to Friends of Greenwich Park, with sae.

'Drop In' at the Wildlife Centre*
Sat 23 February 1pm - 3pm

'Drop In' at the Wildlife Centre*
Sat 30 March 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.

New Corporate Friend

We are very pleased to welcome as new Corporate Friends Davy's Wineshop and Bar on Greenwich High Road. They offer discount to members of 10% off any purchase from the Wineshop, bottles and cases*. Order any main course and receive a glass of Prosecco on the house at Davy's Wine Vaults*.

They can be contacted on 020 8858 9147 (Wineshop) or 020 8858 7204 (Wine Vaults).
Website: *www.davy.co.uk*

** Both these offers exclude any other offers which are valid until 31 January 2013.*

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