FRIENDS OF GREENWICH PARK

NEWSLETTER

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Post Olympics Recovery

This time last year we were anticipating, some of us with apprehension, the arrival of the Games.The Park had shut down completely for four weeks, apart from the Children's Playground and part of the Flower Garden; the Blackheath Gate had been dismantled; and the 23,000 seater arena, dominating the view in front of the Queen's House, was ready for the action to begin at the end of the month.

We do not need reminding how successful the Olympic events were here and how we saw ourselves enjoying with others across the world one of the most splendid visual feasts the Games had to offer. We also need no reminder about the controversy which the use of the Park provoked, the misinformation circulated about tree treatment and other doom-laden forecasts of long term damage to the Park which the Games would bring.

Looking now at the Park, you would hardly know that the Games had taken place. On a recent tour of the grounds with Graham Dear, local societies and councillors were shown how well the grasslands had recovered along the cross country route and, in particular, in front of the Queen's House where the turf is now of a far better quality than before. The adjoining section close to St Mary's Gate, which housed the stabling and training areas, may look a little raggy at present but that is because its normal haircut has been delayed to allow it all to settle down after reseeding or returfing.

The major refurbishment of the main road and paths, funded by LOCOG and The Royal Parks and finally completed by the end of May, was an added bonus. It was about fourteen years since they were last reinforced and a survey conducted before the Games had shown that they were in need of repair. The new red road surface, the gullies and car parking bays are hugely improved, as is the Blackheath Gate - redesigned to give a more elegant and safer entrance for vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians - and the new landscaping along Bower Avenue.

Great credit for the current state of the Park must be given to the Royal Parks and in particular to Graham Dear and his team and to Derrick Spurr who retired at the end of June (see page 3). Their full involvement during the planning, construction and dismantling phases made sure that all sensitive elements were protected and that LOCOG kept to all their undertakings. They have applied the same dedicated care and attention to all the remediation.- And we should not underestimate the work put in by the Park's own contractors, Turfsoil, whose sterling efforts have ensured that the grass is looking so good.

What is clear is that LOCOG have not only kept to their commitment that they would leave the Park in the same condition as they found it, they have actually gone further and have given help in other ways. The acid grasslands are being enhanced; the playground has been upgraded and now has a scattered herd of charming sculpted wooden sheep; and, thanks to LOCOG's extensive studies, we now know a great deal more about the Park's archaeology and ecology than before.

The past few years have perhaps been some of the most eventful in the Park's long history. Now that 'normal service' has been resumed, we look forward to a more peaceful period.

Wildlife Notes *by Sue Yates*

Report on the Wildlife Open Day

The event in early April was very well attended, not least because the public were keen to see the owls. We were due to open at 11am but by 10 o'clock visitors were already arriving and Chris and Fiona Scorer of Sussex Owls were thrown in at the deep end and were talking or providing display flights throughout the day. They had brought two barn owls, a Bengal eagle owl and a Harris hawk and visitors were able to see them at very close quarters.

Elsewhere, there were guided tours of the Nature Trail, bookmarks to make and planting of vegetable and flower seeds to take away.

The Friends funded all the activities.

May outing to Elmley Marshes, Isle of Sheppey

A group of 28 Friends of Greenwich Park met at the car park at Kingshill Farm at the approach to the marshes. Amazingly the weather was wonderful and the sightings began even before we had reached the car park.

Many of the visitors were well able to name the birds themselves, but Harry Whitehead and Patricia Brown both helped with naming and confirmation. Since we had travelled independently, people left at different times but most stayed between three and four hours, eating their picnics at some conveniently placed benches or in the various hides.

In the spring sunshine the sight of a swan on a huge nest and the newly hatched coot chicks, looking like little black feather dusters, was a joy. It was a little too early for the moorhen chicks; the mothers were still on the nests. There were also some glorious sightings of reed and sedge warblers - very close and singing their hearts out.

In all, we saw over 30 varieties of birds which are now listed on the Friends website.

Police Community Day

Sunday 21 July: between 10am and 4pm, in and around the bandstand area. We hope that you will join the Wildlife Volunteers at this interesting event.

Pete Fitchie of the Park's Police has organised a number of activities and displays. These include a collection of historic police vehicles and the Mounted Police from Lewisham. The Dogs' Trust will be there with a van and a number of animals, as will the Dog Society. The Lowland Search and Rescue Dogs will be represented to give displays of the dogs' detection abilities.

The Police and Army cadets will be making appearances and the singing duo, The Ringtones, as well as the Blackheath Rock Choir, will serenade the gathering from the bandstand. Along with the RSPB, the Friends' Wildlife Group will take part in this event rather than running the 'Drop-In' at the Wildlife Centre at the end of the month.

It promises to be a great day out for the family.

Fungus Foray

We are pleased to say that Anne Andrews will be leading a Fungus Foray again this year. Meet at the Blackheath Gate outside the Park Office at 10am on Wednesday 16 October. The event is free and there is no need to book.

Red carpet treatment for the Meridian line

New Orleans returns in style to Greenwich Park

A capacity audience of almost 500, ranging in age from 92 to toddlers, enjoyed another excellent Friends' Mid-Summer Jazz Concert in the Observatory Garden on Sunday 16 June. The ever-popular Phoenix Dixieland Jazz Band again provided the music, this time adding some skiffle and other novelty numbers to their traditional New Orleans repertoire.

A highlight of the afternoon was the large number of people – again of all ages – who were up and dancing on the grass. And when the band played their final number – "When the Saints go marching in" – and strolled among the picnickers, they were followed by a sashaying column of children and accompanying adults.

Davy's of Greenwich provided the bar, and local caterer, Mary Hunter, provided an ice cream service.

Friends' Chairman, Liz Coyle, commented: " The band were, if anything, better than ever, and it was wonderful seeing so many of our members and their families enjoying themselves in this lovely setting."

THE VIEW from the Park

Graham Dear, Park manager

The lateness of spring has been well documented in the press and has been in evidence here in the Park as regular visitors will have noticed. Exceptionally the horse chestnuts on Blackheath Avenue were still in bud at the start of the London Marathon on 21 April. The spring bedding continued to flower well into May and has resulted in delaying the planting out of the summer bedding until the second week of June. Most of the circular beds in the Flower Garden are traditionally designed by the Assistant Park Manager, Michael Loughnane, but this year our skilled gardeners have stepped up to the mark with some designs of their own, including the apprentice gardener, Dan. It will be interesting to see how the new designs perform.

Along Bower Avenue the tarmac beneath the tree canopy was removed this winter and laid to turf to the great benefit of the trees and landscape. Between the Avenue and the Flower Garden railings the mowing regime has been altered to allow the grass sward to grow and flower. Now there are large patches of Lesser Stitchwort and Heath Bedstraw in bloom, two wild flowers of dry grassland which are absent from the more celebrated acid grassland swards in the Park. These flowers must have persisted in the sward for many years but never flowered because they were always mown off. In a similar vein, the newly created ponds in the Wildlife Area and the deer viewing area have both been full of frogspawn this year.

The Friends' volunteers, who do so much to help manage the Wildlife Area, have also risen to the challenge of growing vegetables in The Queen's Orchard. Following the official opening of this newest addition to Greenwich Park, on 15 April, the garden (above) has been open to visitors every Sunday and Bank Holiday from 1pm – 4pm. It is proving extremely popular with visitors and looked a splendid sight with the ranks of purple and white alliums set in beds of lavender along the walls of trained fruit trees.

An exciting development for 2013 is the redesign of the herbaceous border. This important horticultural feature had become infested with bindweed. As all the plant material needed to be removed in order to control this pernicious weed, the opportunity was taken to commission a new border from one of the country's top garden designers. Chelsea 2013 Gold medallist and 'People's Choice Show Garden' designer, Chris Beardshaw, will produce the new design which will be planted up this autumn. For the summer a stunning display of annual flowers will provide some temporary colour.

This year has seen some of Greenwich Park's longest serving members of staff move on and retire. Derrick Spurr, my predecessor as Park Manager, who stayed on the see the Park through the Olympic period, has now retired. Also, the Grounds Maintenance Supervisor, Mick Cheney, who regulars may have known by his nickname, Tip, has retired after 21 years of service to the Park. Whilst Tip looked after the parts of the Park that grow, Alan Lyall, Works Contract Manager, was responsible for the buildings and hard surfaces that don't. Alan has moved on to our sister Royal Parks, St. James's and Green Park. We will miss them all and thank them for the years of service to the Park and its visitors.

Yuri Gagarin greets the Park

The Royal Observatory has become the permanent home of a statue of Yuri Gagarin, the first man in space, presented to the British Council in 2011 by the Russian Space Agency Roscosmos to mark the 50th anniversary of his famous flight. Previously in the Mall, it now stands in the area outside the Astronomy Cafe, to be known as Gagarin Terrace, where it was unveiled by his daughter Elena in March.

As you walk up the Avenue below the Observatory, look up to the terrace where you will see him standing on the globe and overlooking the Park, his arms outstretched in greeting.

Farewell to Derrick Spurr

Last month we said our final goodbyes to Derrick whose job as Project Manager for the Royal Parks for the Olympic and Paralympic Games has now come to end. With more than a decade as Park Manager here, he was ideally placed for working alongside LOCOG and other organisations to coordinate and facilitate the events planned for Greenwich Park. As we have said on page 1, he deserves great credit and our thanks for the major part he has played in safeguarding the Park over these past four years.

Derrick's significant role has also been recognised by Greenwich Royal Borough. At the inaugural ceremony this March he was one of 16 people to receive the first Royal Borough Civic Awards for an outstanding contribution to the local area. Derrick's award was given "for his work on the conversion of the Park into an Olympic venue for the games; and dedication in making the Royal Park a welcoming place for local residents throughout his career as Greenwich Park Manager". Derrick has always been a good supporter of the Friends, a mine of information and a valuable source of advice.

Congratulations Derrick; and our good wishes for a well earned retirement.

Fan Museum Open Day

The Fan Museum is holding an open day on **Saturday 27 July** with the aim of encouraging members of the local community, particularly families, children and members of minority groups, who have not visited the museum before, to do so. The Open Day will offer free entry to the museum to residents in the boroughs of Lewisham and Greenwich on the production of proof of their address. All members of the Friends are welcome on production of their membership card. The museum staff have planned lots of activities, such as fan making demonstrations, sessions for children to handle and learn about fans (to be booked in advance) and mini tours throughout the day. A free taster of Afternoon Tea will be available in the Orangery.

The Fan Museum is at 12 Crooms Hill SE10 8ER, opposite Greenwich Theatre.

For further information contact Curator Jacob Moss
Tel: **020 8305 1441** or by email: **j.moss@thefanmuseum.org.uk**

Visit to Brogdale farm Monday 23 September at 11am

As The Queen's Orchard has now come into the public domain on Sunday afternoons, it seemed that a visit to Brogdale farm would be of interest.

Brogdale maintains the National Fruit Collection and supplied many of the fruit trees that have been planted in The Queen's Orchard. The list of trees planted can now be seen on **www.friendsofgreenwichpark.org.uk** and the guided tour that has been booked will include looking at specimens of some of these trees and sampling the fruit. There will be plenty of sampling opportunities.

Brogdale is very near Faversham. There is a restaurant, microbrewery and places to have a picnic (they have said they can find a covered area for us if the weather is poor).

The cost of the trip is £10, including the tour. We are happy to organise a car sharing scheme, as with other outings.

Apple varieties from the Brogdale National Fruit Collection.

© Brogdale.

Proposed visit to the Crystal Thursday 24 October at 11am

The Crystal is the world's first centre dedicated to improving our knowledge of urban sustainability and its futuristic design puts into practice many of the ideas displayed within the exhibition. With over half the world's population currently living in cities and predictions that this figure will have risen to over 70 per cent by 2050, cities need to be re-designed. As their website **www.thecrystal.org** says "cities consume 75 per cent of all the world's energy and emit 80 per cent of all greenhouse gases." The building is very exciting and the exhibition thought provoking.

I have arranged for us to have a guided tour, but there will be the opportunity to spend more time with the many interactive exhibits. The building is about a five minutes walk from the Royal Victoria DLR station with a lovely view down the dock. There is an excellent café and places outside for picnics.

You could also return home via the Emirates cable car, which is adjacent to the building (£4.30 adults/£3.20 with a Freedom pass).

The outing costs £10 including the guided tour.

If I can get a better price for larger numbers, there will be a refund. *Sue Yates*

Bandstand Concerts

If you missed the first of the Sunday afternoon bandstand concerts sponsored by the Friends earlier this month, don't worry. There are two more yet to come. Do come along to the Park, and bring your family and friends, to enjoy the music of the South London Jazz Orchestra on 28 July and the Greenwich Concert Band on 25 August. Bandstand concerts are free and take place between around 2pm and 4.30pm.

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.

Dates for Your Diary summary

Police Community Day
Sun 21 July *10am – 4pm*
For full details see page 2

Orange Appeal Run
supporting The National Osteoporosis Society
Sat 27 July
In Greenwich Park starting at 9.30am.

Bandstand concert
Sun 28 July *2.15pm*
South London Jazz Orchestra

Bandstand concert
Sun 25 August *2pm*
Greenwich Concert Band

'Drop in' at the Wildlife Centre*
Sat 31 August *1pm – 4pm*

'Run to the Beat' London's Music Half Marathon
Sun 8 September
Greenwich Park hosts part of the route.

Outing to Brogdale Farm
Booking now
Mon 23 September
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 28 September *1pm – 4pm*

Fungus Foray
Weds 16 October *10am*
Meet at the Blackheath Gate.

Outing to 'The Crystal'
Booking now
Thurs 24 October *11am*
Tickets from Friends of Greenwich Park, as above.

'Drop in' at the Wildlife Centre*
Sat 26 October *1pm – 4pm*

* **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.

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

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