FRIENDS OF GREENWICH PARK
NEWSLETTER

Spring 2014 Registered Charity No: 1029933 Number 66

Queen Elizabeth's Oak it is

The Friends' Annual Lecture seems to go from strength to strength and this year it attracted nearly 200 people, some of them from well outside our local area. They came to hear what Dr Jane Sidell, the English Heritage Inspector of Ancient Monuments for London, had to report on the recent scientific studies of Queen Elizabeth's Oak, the fallen giant now lying in the Park where, after remaining vertical for a hundred years after its death, it finally collapsed in 1991.

For centuries, legend had it that Henry VIII had danced beneath its shade with Anne Boleyn in 1519 (despite the fact, as Dr Sidell pointed out, Anne Boleyn did not appear at Court until 1522). Queen Elizabeth I, it was said, had played in its hollow trunk as a child.

For sure, it was old. -Big, too, at 8.6m (28ft) high and 6.5m (21ft) in girth. But just how old? And was it really an oak?

Oaks typically do not live for more than about 400 years. This, and its exceptional size, may have led to the belief that it was a sweet chestnut. Indeed the first edition of the Ordnance Survey in 1843 refers to it as a chestnut while the second (1891) identifies it as Queen Elizabeth's Oak; and, as Dr Sidell teasingly remarked, no less an authority than the Friends' first published leaflet declared that it was a sweet chestnut.

And so we were led into an absorbing account of the studies conducted by Dr Sidell and her colleagues. Despite the detail and complexity of the techniques that were used, she never once lost her audience but held our attention with an easy humour, plain language and an expository skill that David Attenborough would not have been ashamed of.

First, was it an oak? Samples of sweet chestnut and of the Queen's Oak itself were passed around the audience. They were clearly different, even to our untutored eyes; and the critical difference was that medullary rays (those wavy horizontal lines you often see across the grain of a piece of oak furniture) were present on the latter. Sweet chestnut does not have medullary rays.

Dendrochronologist, Dr. Andy Moore, taking a core sample from the Oak

To establish the age of the tree, cores were taken through both the heartwood and sapwood, yielding a 233-year measured sequence covering 1569 – 1801. It was certainly Queen Elizabeth's Oak and the girth measurements suggest that it would have been pretty venerable in 1569. Further work was done on loose samples inside the trunk and some crucial sapwood pieces that had been collected and preserved by our Park Manager, Graham Dear. Cores were also taken from a nearby old oak to assist growth estimation.

The upshot? Germination of the tree was dated to the year 1300 with an accuracy of plus or minus 10 years. It had graced the landscape for half a millennium before it died (probably in 1830-40) and had already been around for at least 100 years when Duke Humphrey enclosed the Park. A magnificent, storied, tree whose remarkable CV Dr Sidell amplified brilliantly.

Wildlife Notes *by Sue Yates*

Activities in the Wildlife Centre and Nature Trail

Blessed with surprisingly good weather on our recent openings, the team of volunteers have been pleasantly surprised by the large number of visitors who have called in to see our exhibits and the Nature Trail.

In January, and for a number of months to come, 14 year old Felix McCoy has joined the team as part of the programme leading to his bronze Duke of Edinburgh Award. On 25 January he helped by offering members of the public the RSPB leaflet on the Big Garden Bird Watch and encouraging them to participate during that assigned weekend. In February, when the sunshine meant we were run off our feet, he was showing visitors around and encouraging them to handle our antler collection and telling them more about our red and fallow deer herds. We have enjoyed having a younger volunteer and hope that he has coped with us and the sometimes very cold temperatures in "the hut".

Pond Life: Smooth Newt

Many trees have been thinned in the Trail and the extra light is wonderful. The bluebells should be out for the next Drop-in on 29 March and the pond is already full of frogspawn.

By the time this Newsletter hits your doormat the invisibility of our Wildlife hut will be no more. The lleylandii which run the length of our building will have been felled and the Dig-in team will have planted the new hawthorn hedge. This is both to increase the biodiversity in the Park but also to enable a gutter to be fitted to that side of the building so that rain from the roof can be used to feed water to the newest of our ponds near the deer viewing point.

The Phoenix Dixieland Jazz Band is back for our Midsummer Jazz Concert

The Friends' renowned Midsummer Jazz Concert is on **Sunday 22 June**, in the Observatory Garden, with the ever-popular Phoenix Dixieland Jazz Band.

This is an event for the whole family. Tickets are only £5, with under-16s free. (Tickets on the gate, if still available, will be £7)

The Garden will open at noon, and the band will play from 1pm to 3.30pm. There will be a bar, run by Davy's of Greenwich, and an ice cream stall.

A booking form is enclosed with this newsletter.

Review of John Burton's Memoire

John Burton, a long standing Friend of Greenwich Park, has very generously given a copy of his latest book, *Grey Daggers and Minotaurs in Greenwich Park - Memories of a London Schoolboy Naturalist in the 1940s,* to the Wildlife Group. His interest in birds and insects began when he was 9 and when he was 12 his parents moved to Greenwich where he attended the Roan School for Boys in Vanbrugh Hill. With no money for a bicycle and frequent bombing raids, he pursued his interest close to home in the Park and on the Heath, beginning his lifelong habit of keeping a diary. The resulting book is also a fascinating social history of the period and shows how much the area has changed. Grey Dagger moths can still be found in the Park but the Minotaur dung beetle has disappeared, together with the skylarks from the Heath. However the quality of the water in the Thames has improved significantly.

A more detailed review of the book will appear on the Friends' website shortly and a copy will be available to view at the Wildlife Centre during our Drop-ins.

Park daffodils welcome the spring sunshine

The Queen's Orchard re-opens

On the afternoon of Sunday 6 April, from 1-4pm, the public will be able to visit the Queen's Orchard as the garden will re-open its doors after a winter break. Located in the north-eastern corner of the Park, near the Maze Hill entrance, it first opened to visitors in 2013.

The aim was to create a garden with educational value, to show people how to grow a wide range of vegetables and also to grow older varieties of fruit trees to reflect the historic nature of the site. There are ornamental and wildlife ponds, a long lavender bed and a mound in the centre with an old mulberry tree.

Soon four beehives will be added at the far end of the orchard. Apiculturist, Camilla Goddard of Capital Bee, will be looking after them. The bee-friendly nature of the garden is being enhanced with plants such as lavender, thyme, sunflower, poppy, heliotrope, borage and fennel, all of which attract bees. There are also plans for bee-keeping demonstrations for the Friends.

The Field Studies Council will be working with local schools on the vegetable plots whilst anyone who would like to volunteer to work on the plots can just come along at 1.30pm on the Wednesdays listed on the website.

Since its opening, the Queen's Orchard has been very popular with the public, so please pop in on any Sunday afternoon from April onwards, have a look round or just read your newspaper on a sunny bench by the pond.

THE VIEW from the Park *Graham Dear, Park manager*

You might think that January to March would be a quiet time in the Park before the summer visitors arrive, but for the park team it is always very busy. This is the time of year we try to get landscape works completed and 2014 is no exception.

Regulars to the Flower Garden will have noticed the phased replanting of the lake. Over the years the planting has become overgrown and invaded with bramble and self-set trees. One section has been cleared and is being replanted with herbaceous groundcover. Three Nyssa sylvatica or Tupelo trees will be planted where their stunning autumn colour will reflect in the lake. Opening up views of the lake and cascade from Bower Avenue is a real improvement we think.

Staying in the Flower Garden, the woodland walk leading to the deer viewing area is closed whilst we resurface the footpath. Redundant wooden fencing here has also been removed. This has entailed removing hung up trees limbs that came down in the high winds and thinning out some of the Robinia and Holly to allow more light to the woodland floor. Following the successful work undertaken in the wildlife area by Friends volunteers the habitat work is proving a boon for wildlife. Ponds installed over the last few years are full of frogspawn again this spring. I have even had two frogs in my office and a toad under the fridge!

In most winters our cedar trees suffer from snow damage and shed a few limbs. Despite the lack of snow, high winds have more than made up for the damage, accounting of the loss of one large Deodar and severely spoiling the shape of another. The felled tree trunk has been left in situ waiting to be converted into timber, which will be used to make informal benches for the Park.

Last year the width of tarmac along Bower Avenue was reduced, putting this great avenue of trees back in the lawn, which not only looks better, but should make the trees more resistant to drought stress. The extension on Bower Avenue beyond Great Cross Avenue is being similarly treated this year.

Assistant Park Manager, Michael Loughnane, and the volunteers have been busy in the Queen's Orchard preparing the vegetable beds and pruning fruit trees. In April the Orchard will open again on Sundays for visitors and spring will be well on its way

The fallen Deodar cedar

Herbaceous Border

One of the horticultural highlights of Greenwich Park has to be the herbaceous border. Friends will be aware that Chelsea Flower Show Gold medallist and broadcaster Chris Beardshaw has been commissioned to redesign the feature. By using shaped yew, Chris's design cleverly breaks the long border into sections that reflect the proportions of the historic buildings behind. Each section is planted for colour, season and symmetry. The 3,000 herbaceous plants which will make up this colourful tapestry are being planted out this spring. Gardeners' Question Time listeners can follow the border's progress as Chris discusses his design in a future programme

Community Archaeology in Greenwich Park

Friends of Greenwich Park and The Royal Parks Foundation are funding a three year programme of community archaeology in the Park starting this July. Professional archaeologist, Graham Keevill, will be leading a week's dig with volunteers and a week's schools programme. Sue Yates of the Friends will be co-ordinating the volunteers and the Royal Parks education provider at Greenwich Park, The Field Studies Council, co-ordinating the schools.

In consultation with English Heritage, the site of investigation will be the Old Keeper's Cottage. Demolished in 1853, the cottage complex dated from the mid-seventeenth century and was the residence of the park manager until replaced by Blackheath Lodge.

The project will be a fascinating opportunity for volunteers to get hands on experience with expert archaeologists and help us learn more about the history of the park we all love.

An application form for volunteers is enclosed.

Bandstand concerts in July and August

Following the success of the four concerts that the Friends organized and paid for at the Park Bandstand last summer, we are holding six Sunday afternoon concerts this July and August. The concerts - which are, of course, free – will showcase local and London-based bands and orchestras, including many talented younger musicians.

The programme is as follows:

Sunday 13 July:	Greenwich Steel Orchestra and Samba Band
Sunday 20 July:	The National Youth Jazz Orchestra
Sunday 27 July:	The South London Jazz Orchestra (also featuring the South London Lindy Hoppers)
Sunday 3 August:	Lewisham Concert Band
Sunday 10 August:	Greenwich Concert Band
Sunday 17 August:	Southwark Concert Band

We will also be supporting the Greenwich Park Police Community Day, which this year will be on Saturday 19 July, again in the area around the Bandstand. This will be a fun day for the whole family, and we have arranged for the Bandstand music to be provided by the London Gay Symphonic Winds, making their first appearance in Greenwich.

The Pavilion Tea House update

Members are no doubt wondering why the Tea House has not yet re-opened as mentioned in the last Newsletter. The Royal Parks undertook a full condition survey of the building which identified more extensive repairs were required than anticipated. The new caterers, Creative Taste, are undertaking the repairs at the same time as they refurbish the café interior. This has set back the re-opening date unexpectedly. This is now aimed for Easter. In the meantime, the kiosk at the Wolfe Statue is open daily and the St Mary's Lodge café at weekends. Hopefully, by the time you receive your next Newsletter the fully refurbished Tea House will have been up and running for a while and doing brisk business.

Sign up for our new Email News Bulletins

The easy way for members to stay in touch with The Friends and Greenwich Park

- ★ Details and reminders for Friends' Events
- ★ Updates from the Wildlife Group
- ★ Links to information on the other events in the Park

Now we can keep in touch with you in between our Newsletter copy dates

Go to *www.friendsofgreenwichpark.org.uk* and sign up on the home page

In due course you will also be able to receive your Newsletters on line. We shall let you know when this facility is availlable.

Friends AGM is on Thursday, 19 June 2014, 7.30 for 8pm

The 21st AGM takes place on 19 June at 7.30 for 8pm in the Theatre, Blackheath High School, 27 Vanbrugh Park, SE3 7AG (Mycenae Road entrance). Copies of the Chairman's Report and the Financial Report are enclosed with this Newsletter.
Officers and committee members proposed and seconded for the coming year are:
Chairman:
Richard Jones, 65 Hervey Road, London, SE3 8BX
Vice-Chairman:
Liz Coyle, 3 Orchard Drive, SE3 0QP
Committee Members:
Tina Challacombe stands for election to the Committee. Tony Butler, Brendan Hicks and Sue Yates stand for re-election. Clive Corlett and Lesley Hodsdon continue to serve. The committee confirms the appointments of Christine Bevan as Secretary, Julie Punter as Treasurer and Fran Tyler as Membership Secretary.

Visit to the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park on 27 June

The Executive Director of Park Operations and Venues has generously offered Friends a tour of the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park in June. The majority of the landscaping and construction will have finished by April when the whole area will finally be open to the public. In the North Park, the river park area, there is extensive landscaping with large areas of conservation planting and wetlands. In the South Park we shall see the James Corner (of the Highline in New York) designed Outdoor Rooms and also explore the 2012 Gardens with their fascinating collections of plants from five continents. We may also be able to sneak a look in some of the venues.

The outing costs £5. Places are limited and will be on a first come first served basis. If the event is oversubscribed, we may be able to arrange a further visit later.

Discounts and offers for Friends

Café Rouge Greenwich (Ibis Hotel branch) are now offering 20% discount on food and drink on Monday to Friday all day and Saturday and Sunday lunchtime only.

Davy's Wineshop - Purchase any six bottles and receive a free bottle of Prosecco. This exclude any other offer and is valid until September 2014.

Other offers from our Corporate Friends can be found on our website. These include:

Catering outlets in the Park - 15% discount on purchases of food and drink

Waterstones (Greenwich branch only) - 10% discount on all merchandise except goods already discounted

Blackheath Eyecare (Old Dover Road) – discount of 25% on second pair of complete spectacles purchased

You will need to show your current membership card when making your purchase.

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: Liz Coyle lizcoyle@waitrose.com
Membership Secretary: Fran Tyler, 51 Lock Chase, London SE3 9HB Tel: 020 8852 9540 tylerfrantom@btinternet.com
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

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

London Marathon
Sun 13 April

'Drop in' at the Wildlife Centre*
Sat 26 April 1pm – 4pm
Sat 31 May 1pm - 4pm

Annual General Meeting
Thurs 19 June
(Members only)
The Theatre, Blackheath High School.
For further details see left hand column.
The AGM will begin at 8pm and finish at around 9.30pm. Wine and soft drinks will be served from 7.30pm.

Jazz in the Park Booking now
Sun 22 June
Tickets from Friends of Greenwich Park, 52 Greenwich Park Street, SE10 9LT. Tel 020 8853 2150. Cheques payable to Friends of Greenwich Park.

Visit to Queen Elizabeth Park
Friday 27 June
See left hand column for details

'Drop In' at the Wildlife Centre*
Sat 28 June 1pm - 4pm

Bandstand concert
Sun 13 July
See page 3 for all the individual concert bands with their performance dates

Police Community Day
Sat 19 July
See page 3

Bandstand concert
Sun 20 Jul

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

Bandstand concerts
Sun 27 July
Sun 3 August
Sun 10 August
Sun 17 August

*** 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: 0300 061 2380) 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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