FRIENDS OF GREENWICH PARK

NEWSLETTER

Summer 2014 Registered Charity No: 1029933 Number 67

The newly planted herbaceous border is enjoying its first season in bloom. Park Manager, Graham Dear, tells us more about it overleaf.

The Friends have a new Chairman

Richard Jones, our previous Vice Chairman, took over the chairmanship of the Friends from Liz Coyle, who has completed her three-year term, at the AGM on 19 June. Richard, who joined the committee in 2006, has extensive experience and knowledge of all the issues and challenges that come the committee's way, especially having been fully involved with the part played by the Friends in helping to protect the Park during the run up to and after the 2012 Olympic events.

"This is a great privilege", says Richard, "if somewhat daunting. Fortunately I have a first class committee to rely on, plus the indomitable Liz as my Vice Chairman. I think the big challenge over the next few years will be to help The Royal Parks management preserve all that is special about Greenwich Park, in the face of severe spending cuts."

General Wolfe's view is changing

Many of the Friends will have seen the article in the Sunday Times on 6 April 2014, which reported the findings of New London Architecture (NLA) that some 236 skyscrapers on the London skyline have been given, or are in the pipeline for, planning permission. Three photographs were included of the future views of the cluster of buildings, one of them the Isle of Dogs seen from Greenwich Park. General Wolfe would be wide-eyed. He is already waiting for the towers at Convoys Wharf in Deptford, recently approved by the Mayor of London.

The report caused considerable concern, and on 10 June the LAMAS Historic Buildings and Conservation Committee and London Forum held a well attended meeting to consider the need for stronger planning control of tall buildings and better assessment in the light of the character of the area and impact on local communities, heritage and infrastructure. The GLA's Planning Committee has also considered the same topic.

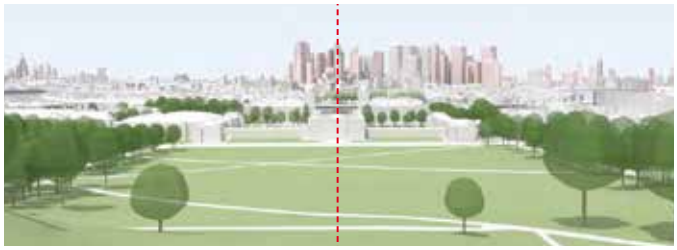
Half of the 236 have planning permission, so cannot be stopped. However, one building on the Isle of Dogs - Quay House - has yet to be approved. It has 68 storeys, about the height of Canary Wharf, and it sits exactly on the "Grand Axis" from Blackheath All Saints Church to St Anne's Limehouse - see photographs showing the Axis line from the Wolfe statue. At the time of the building of Canary Wharf, much was made of protecting this "Axis" and the tower was set to the east of the line. Although St Anne's can no longer be seen, there is now the prospect that the line will be lost altogether.

Your committee has written to Tower Hamlets seeking to get the height reduced and saying:

"…the Axis has been maintained, and from Blackheath Avenue, the Wolfe Statue has a background of sky – an imposing silhouette. At present there is a building under construction close to the Quay House site and just to the west of the line. When it is completed it will leave (just) a pleasing gap on the line between the cluster of high towers to the east, and it and others approved or planned to the west of the Axis. The construction of Quay House would fill in that gap. But, as a building, Quay House has no extra merit to that of others around it. If it were to be much, much higher – say Shard height – and utterly dominate the clusters, then an argument could perhaps be made that it adds significantly to the Axis. Even in that case it would detract from the views from Wolfe and the Queen's House and be to the detriment of the northern view from other points in Greenwich Park. With its current design and height Quay House cannot support that argument.

The Friends of Greenwich Park therefore request that planning permission be refused for a building of 68 storeys. One a third that height (or less) would provide the looked-for separation in the building clusters."

View from Greenwich Park with existing surrounds



View from Greenwich Park with proposed future surrounds

Summer Music in the Park

We couldn't have asked for a better day for our Family Midsummer Jazz Concert in June. The sun shone all afternoon, the Observatory Garden was a delight, and a capacity audience of nearly 500, with ages ranging from toddlers upwards, enjoyed the ever-popular music of the Phoenix Dixieland Jazz Band. Davy's Wine Shop and the Park's Pavilion Café (under new management) did good business from their attractive stalls selling drinks, ice cream and snacks.

The profit from that event is being used to help us meet the cost of the seven concerts which the Friends are organizing and paying for at the Bandstand in July and August. By the time this Newsletter reaches you, some of those concerts will already have taken place, but they run until Sunday 17 August – and are, of course, free. Further details are on page 4 of this Newsletter and on our website.

See also, on the opposite page, the news about the Pavilion Café's jazz and barbecue evenings.

Wildlife during the month of June

We receive regular reports of wildlife activity from Joe Beale, a member of the Friends Wildlife Group. These include the following:

- A brood of four moorhen chicks on the lake in the flower garden.
- A brood of three young coot chicks which are close to fledging, also on the lake.
- Two mallard broods with young chicks.
- Two Great Spotted Woodpecker nests with young. These have now fledged and can be seen feeding throughout the Park on old trees.

The red deer have produced two young which can be seen running with the herd within the deer enclosure. We expect to see young from the Fallow deer in the early part of July.

The expansion of areas where we are allowing the grass to grow longer has seen an increase in insect life which hopefully leads to an increase in bird life, especially those that feed on insects. We also envisage the appearance of additional plant life in these long grasses with more species becoming obvious to the naked eye.

Insect numbers around the Flower Garden pond have also multiplied with the planting of nectar-rich herbaceous plants around the edge.

Michael Loughnane
Assistant Park Manager

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

June and July are traditionally the best time to view herbaceous borders (unless they have been specifically designed as a spring or autumn border that is) so now is a good time to take stock of progress on the Park's herbaceous border. Working to a design by TV gardener and Chelsea Gold medallist, Chris Beardshaw, our gardeners planted up the beds in March. Already you can see the structure and rhythm of the design split into compartments with yew hedges. The yew will all be clipped to the same height and shape, but first we need to make up a metal framed template of the curved design. Our craft welder, Gordon, who made the lovely arches in the Queen's Orchard, is working on it. There is also some gapping up of the planting to do where some of the specified plants have had to be specially propagated. It's a work in progress but we are very pleased with the border so far. In a couple of years, when the planting has filled out, I think we will have achieved the objective of having the finest herbaceous border in London.

Chris Beardshaw starts off the border planting with Graham Dear and gardeners Michala and Zoe

Greenwich Park has so much history and not a few hidden gems. One is the Standard Reservoir conduit house at the base of Crooms Hill. Built in 1710 the Grade II* building contains a water tank which stored water from the underground conduits serving Greenwich Hospital. The brickwork on the building is particularly fine around the domed arched doorway. For the last four weeks, specialist conservation building contractor, Daedalus, have been carrying out some brickwork repairs to the building. Badly worn bricks which needed replacing have been carefully matched and stained to replicate the weathering on the old brickwork. Following discussion with English Heritage and the Borough Conservation Officer, we have decided to remove the rusting railings from around the building and not replace them. The railings were not historic; being modern pressed steel they detracted from the building. It certainly looks a lot better without them, sitting in the landscape as it was originally built.

The conduit house

Talking of old buildings, 7 July saw the start of the two week archaeology dig funded by the Friends of Greenwich Park and the Royal Parks Foundation. Volunteers have been working with English Heritage and Keevill Archaeology on the foundations of the seventeenth century Keepers Cottage, which sat near the Queen Elizabeth Oak and was demolished in 1853, being replaced by the lodge at Blackheath Gate. Schools, assisted by our education partner The Field Studies Council, will take part in the dig the following week.

If you walk around the Park today you can't fail to spot the amazing book benches. Part of the National Literacy Trust's 'Books about Town' event, they form part of the Greenwich trail which you can find on the Books about Town website. There are five benches in the Park where they will stay until September after which all benches will be auctioned for charity. I am not going to tell you which books are illustrated - you'll have to find them and guess.

You can see the planting plans for the herbaceous border on the Friends website.

Book bench by the Flower Garden lake

Pavilion Café jazz and barbecue evenings

The refurbished Pavilion Café has been fully operational for a while and is now attracting plenty of customers into its much improved and airy surroundings.

In a new venture, the café is holding jazz and barbecue events on Friday evenings through to the end of August.

Each week a jazz duo from Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music perform in the attractive rear garden from 6.15-8.30pm where, weather permitting, there is also a barbecue. Families with children are well catered for, as there are games to keep them occupied and plenty of space for them to play. If the weather doesn't behave, the jazz is held indoors.

This is a really enjoyable way to spend a relaxing evening at the start of the weekend, so do give it a try. And don't forget, Friends can claim 15% discount on food and drink from all the Park's catering outlets, so make sure you have your membership card with you when you go.

Do we have your email address yet?

So far, few of you have signed up for our email alerts and bulletins - the easy way for members to stay in touch with the Friends and Greenwich Park between our Newsletter copy dates

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

Please help us keep you informed. Go to *www.friendsofgreenwichpark.org.uk* and sign up on the home page.

Visit to the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park

On the last Friday in June some 50 Friends gathered at Stratford station eagerly anticipating a visit to the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park. We were not disappointed, thanks to our expert and extremely knowledgeable guides. They were Derrick Spurr, our former Park Manager, now Consultant Park Manager there; and Project Sponsor, Phil Askew, who has worked there for the park since the project was launched in 2008 and has seen it through its subsequent development.

Heading off in two groups, we were taken round the principal features, facilities and planting areas. These included: the 2012 gardens representing different regions of the world; the outdoor 'rooms'; the Great British Garden; the riverside wetlands; and the Tumbling Bay playground, a real magnet for children of all ages. Mature trees have been planted in abundance, as has an impressive range of plant and shrub species.

Most importantly, we were given a rare insight into the transformation of a polluted industrial wasteland into a sustainable parkland, with its energy centre providing power for the whole area; and its water treatment plant converting black water into non-potable water for irrigation and toilet flushing. It was encouraging, too, to learn that the main focus of the planting is on biodiversity and the provision of wildlife-friendly habitats.

The Olympic Park, as we were reminded, is not just a venue for the thousands of visitors who go there to see its attractions or attend events, but also a vital green space for recreation and relaxation for its local communities. We all agreed that it is a truly successful enterprise – a positive legacy from the 2012 Games. As one member wrote "We enjoyed this visit enormously and were very impressed by what has been achieved there". Do go and see it for yourself.

Autumn wild flowers course – Saturday 4 October

This practical day will help you identify some of the wild flowers found in Greenwich Park. A brief introduction to ways of identifying plants, most of the day will be spent outside. The blend of urban park and wild life haven will surprise in its diversity.

By the end of this course participants will be able to:

- recognise around 20 of the commonest wild plants in London
- recognise several of the plant families to which they belong.

John Swindells, who will conduct the course, is chairman of the The Wild Flower Society and Vice President of London Natural History Society, with a particular interest in urban wild plants. The Field Studies Council are running this event. For further information on the course or to book a place, use their website or contact their office on 0203 1300469. Tickets cost £35 each.

Can you help with delivering the newsletter in Charlton?

We depend on a fine band of some 50 volunteers to deliver the Newsletter to our members.

We need some additional help in the Bramshot Avenue/ Eastcombe Avenue/ Sherington Road area of Charlton. If you live around there, and are able to give up a couple of hours or so, three times a year, to take the Newsletter round, please contact Clive Corlett at mccorlett:@btinternet.com or on 0208 305 1261.

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

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

Bandstand concerts
Concerts start at about 2pm and end around 4.30pm.

Sun 27 July
South London Jazz Orchestra (also featuring the London Lindy Hoppers)

Sun 3 August
Lewisham Concert Band

Sun 10 August
Greenwich Concert Band

British Heart Foundation 10K run
Sat 16 August
In Greenwich Park at 10.30am

Bandstand concert
Sun 17 August
Southwark Concert Band

'Drop in' at the Wildlife Centre*
Sat 30 August *1pm – 4pm*

Tall Ships Festival Crew Parade
Sat 6 September
Starting in the Park at Great Cross Avenue, then moving down to Greenwich town centre.

'Drop in' at the Wildlife Centre*
Sat 27 September *1pm – 4pm*

Autumn wild flowers course
Sat 4 October
See left hand column for details

'Drop in' at the Wildlife Centre*
Sat 25 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: 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: 020 7161 9740

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