FRIENDS OF GREENWICH PARK
NEWSLETTER

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Autumn in the Park

Community archaeology dig yields results

Professional archaeologist, Graham Keevill, writes:

The first part of a three-year project to research and excavate the former site of the Old Keeper's Cottage in Greenwich Park took place in July, with enthusiastic help from volunteers during the first week and local schools in the second. The Keeper's Cottage was built in the seventeenth century – it is shown on maps from the 1680s – but demolished, with all its outbuildings, in 1853. Its general location near Queen Elizabeth's Oak is well known from the old maps, but none of the buildings survive above ground. The Royal Parks and the Friends of Greenwich Park wanted to know more – hence our work!

The first stage was to carry out a geophysical survey. This took place in May, but the very dry ground meant that the technique wasn't as useful as we'd hoped – though some features were identified, and we looked at some of these in July. The excavations were all small, but quite successful, finding traces of buildings, ditches and other remnants of the complex. We are still checking the results against the old maps and other documents, again with the help of our fantastic volunteers who have been unearthing all sorts of additional information for us. The photographs give you a flavour of

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2014's work – and the sort of thing we hope to be doing again in 2015. Watch this space!

The three year dig is being led by the archaeological consultancy, Keevill Heritage Ltd, with funding from the Friends and the Royal Parks Foundation and support from English Heritage and the Field Studies Council.

Happy diggers in the sun

A fine piece of decorated stoneware with George and Dragon motif, probably 18th/19th Century

The New Woodlands

You may think that you know and have visited every part of Greenwich Park. But when you get to the areas that border the Wilderness (the deer park) the boundaries can be very deceptive. Just as the Queen's Orchard exists in the world between the two walls, so there are woods between the azalea section of the Flower Garden and the deer park that have been fenced off from both the visitors and the deer.

The eastern section (to your right as you walk down to the deer viewing point nearest to the Vanbrugh Gate) now has no fencing and is already open to the public. It has been thinned of non-native trees and has dappled shade. The gardening volunteers have been planting woodland bulbs in this section in the last few days, so the area should be looking lovely by spring.

The western wood will remain enclosed, but with a wire rather than a wooden fence, making it visible from the Flower Garden. Again, this area needs to be thinned out so that more light can get in. When this has been done, it will be accessible to the public on the last Saturday of the month via the Wildlife Centre. The wildlife volunteers will guide visitors into and, most importantly, out of the area during the Drop-ins and will ensure that nobody gets left behind and locked in there over weekend (it's not Foyles, after all)!

To give the Friends an opportunity to be the first to inspect this new woodland, there will be an opening exclusively for Friends at **11 am on Saturday 21 February 2015**. If you would like to take a look, just turn up at the Wildlife Centre and the volunteers will be pleased to show you round. Do wear sensible footwear as the ground will be somewhat uneven.

Wildlife Notes *by Sue Yates*

The Wildlife Centre and Nature Trail

The gardening volunteers meet each month and work in and around the Nature Trail. There is an ongoing battle with brambles and bracken, but I think they are winning. The hedges that were planted in stages over the last two years are all thriving and the hawthorn, blackthorn and dog rose should, in the fullness of time, make good nesting sites for the birds. There are now hedges all the way from the lodge to the Wildlife Centre. The team have also planted some native snowdrops in the new woodland.

Not only do the birds benefit from the new hedging but the revealing of the wildlife building, now that the lleylandii have been felled, has hugely increased our visitor numbers at the Drop-ins. The display boards are changed regularly to give seasonal interest. In October we had over 150 visitors and the deer were well positioned for sightings, with some quite frisky behaviour and bellowing, it being the middle of the rutting season. We discuss the life cycle of the deer and encourage visitors to handle our display antlers. As it was just before Halloween, we had a decorated pumpkin supplied by the team from the Queen's Orchard.

Volunteers hard at work in the Nature Trail

Part of the visit usually includes a tour through the Nature Trail. The pond is now so bedded in that one can't believe that it is only four years old. In spring it is solid with frogspawn and newts appeared soon after it was created, probably moving in from the pond outside the gates of the Park. Sadly duckweed has arrived now and, as a non-native invasive species with no local predators, we are unlikely to get rid of it, so we won't be able to see the newts so easily in future. Whilst we are keen to show visitors the various examples of decaying wood within the trail, it is sad to report that our cedar sculpture, the Gentle Giant by Pat Rae, is gradually suffering and the bark is being torn off by the squirrels and birds.

The Queen's Orchard has been looking so wonderful this year that the Friends' Committee sent their congratulations to those who volunteer there. The orchard is closed to the public now over the winter, but Sunday openings will resume next April. If you want to join the team who help there, please contact me (see back page). The plans will soon be afoot for next year's crops.

Park toilet charges

We reported previously that in order to help offset the progressive reduction in government funding The Royal Parks was faced with either closing toilet buildings or introducing a charge for their use. It currently costs around £1.5 million a year to operate toilet facilities across The Royal Parks, which is about one tenth of the entire government grant.

After a competitive tendering process a new contractor, Vinci Facilities, has been appointed to manage existing services across all the parks from this month, with a charge of 20 pence to be introduced next year for using the toilets. The Royal Parks consider this a modest amount, which compares well with other toilet facilities in London. Toilets in children's playgrounds and facilities for the disabled will still be free, as will toilets in park cafes. Charging is likely to begin in Greenwich Park in February or March 2015, with notices posted well ahead to alert park users.

This is a regrettable change but we recognise that it is necessary to do all that is possible to help make good the funding shortfall.

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

I can't believe that it is five years since I was appointed Manager of Greenwich Park. It's been great fun and not least because of the help and support I have had from the Friends. I'm not looking back though; I'm looking forward to some exciting projects over the next few months.

Barry, Turfsoil supervisor, planting spring bedding

The refurbishment of the tennis courts, which starts on 3 November, will see a substantial improvement in the playing surface, with better drainage, better spacing of the courts and better grip. It may not help me beat the Office Manager Phil at singles though. Funding for the project is from the London Marathon Trust, The Royal Parks and our tennis concession Will to Win.

At the northern corner of the Park, the fine Grade II* listed St. Mary's Lodge will also benefit from a major facelift. Our new catering concession, Creative Taste, is refurbishing the interior this winter and the landscaping around the outside of the building will also be improved. Landscape Architects, LDA design, have assisted with the design along with input from the Friends, English Heritage and the Greenwich Society. Dating from c1820 the lodge marked the original entrance to the Park before the St. Mary's Gate entrance was opened. Next time you walk down the hill look out for the bend in the road which marks the re-alignment of The Avenue.

Phillip Drew of the Park office serves his last on the tennis courts before their refurbishment

St Mary's Lodge, due for new landscaping

Continuing a theme, the next phase of the playground master-plan will be undertaken after Christmas. At a half-term consultation the proposals were well received. It will be a significant investment to this most popular part of Greenwich Park.

Although I have now had five years in the Park, this doesn't hold a candle to John Webb, one of our gardeners who retired in October after a magnificent 48 years' service. For many years John looked after the cricket pitch so it seemed appropriate to invite John to be guest of honour at a cricket match between The Royal Parks and our grounds contractor Turfsoil. TRP ran out easy winners. It would appear that the gardeners are better at preparing wickets than playing on them.

Christmas trees: 10 per cent discount offer for Friends

'Pines and Needles' will again be selling trees, decorations and greenery near the Blackheath Gate on the weekends of 15-16 and 22-23 November and every day from 29 November to 21 December. Open from 8am to 5.45pm. Make sure you bring your membership card with you to get discount on your tree.

To see their full sales range go to *www.pinesandneedles.com*

Future policing of The Royal Parks

Policing of the Royal Parks is funded by an annual direct grant from the Home Office to the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS), an arrangement that dates back to 2004 and is due to end soon. Since 2010 the grant has been reduced by 20% in real terms and is currently worth £6.8million. Actual costs are higher than this and the shortfall is funded by the MPS, whose own budget is soon to be cut by 20%.

The Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) is now the body responsible for securing funds for policing The Royal Parks. The outcome of this, to be decided this December, will determine the basis for the parks' future policing level and operating model.

We are very concerned that further budget cuts and possible operational changes would adversely affect the ability of the police to maintain the safety of the parks; and we argue that a ready made solution should not be delivered without prior consultation of relevant stakeholder groups. We are also against any settlement that might lead to the outer parks being relatively disadvantaged. This point has been made forcibly by our Safer Parks Panel, on which the Friends are represented, to The Royal Parks Chief Executive, Linda Lennon, and MOPAC.

The chairmen of The Royal Parks Friends' groups, the Friends Forum, met at the end of last month with Linda Lennon, to discuss this issue. Forum members were agreed that the Home Office should be lobbied urgently to secure delivery of the requested budget, for full policing costs, in its entirety.

We will keep you informed of developments through the website and email bulletins.

Bandstand concerts on all Sundays in July and August

The six Sunday afternoon concerts that we organised and paid for at the Park Bandstand last summer were judged a great success, with many Friends and other members of the public thanking us for reinstating these much-loved events (which The Royal Parks were no longer able to finance) and welcoming this use of our funds. Each concert attracted an audience of several hundred, and the Park café added to the occasion by running a food and drink stall close to the Bandstand.

In the light of that response, we have decided to extend the programme next summer, with concerts on **all nine Sundays in July and August**. The concerts - which are, of course, free – will again show-case local and London-based bands and orchestras, including many talented younger musicians. This time, again in response to comments received, the concerts will begin a little later, at 3pm, allowing park-goers a bit longer to finish their Sunday lunches.

Full details of the bands and orchestras appearing will be in our April newsletter.

Lewisham concert band

Annual Lecture 2015

Many mansions

Neil Rhind, the well-known authority on the social and architectural history of Blackheath and Greenwich, will be delivering the 2015 Friends of Greenwich Park Annual Lecture. He will be looking at some of the splendid houses, some of which survive, which were built to take advantage of the view into the open parkland of Greenwich Park: Crombie House, on Park Vista, Maze Hill House, Vanbrugh Castle and Vanbrugh House, Montague House, and many others.

Neil Rhind MBE FSA is a Vice-President of the Blackheath Society, past President of the Greenwich Historical Society, a Fellow of Goldsmith's College, University of London, and a member of the Society of Antiquaries of London. He was awarded the MBE in 1998 for services to local conservation and restoration arising partly from his work over 30 years with the Blackheath Preservation Trust. He is the author of a number of authoritative histories of Blackheath and its environs – an ongoing process.

The lecture is on Sunday morning 22 February 2015 at the University of Greenwich. For full details see right hand column. A booking form is enclosed.

Dr. Crombie's House, with extension - where Park Vista is today.
By kind permission of the Trustees of the Martin Collection, Royal Greenwich Heritage Centre

New Corporate Friend

We are very pleased to welcome 'Greenwich Baby' as a new Corporate Friend. They offer discount to members of 10% off any purchase from their shop in Greenwich Church Street, close to the Cutty Sark. They can be contacted on 020 8858 6690. You will need to show your current membership card when making any purchase.

You will find other offers from our Corporate members on the Friends website.

The Phoenix Dixieland Jazz Band will be back for our 2015 Midsummer Jazz Concert

The Friends' renowned Midsummer Jazz Concert next year will be on **Sunday 21 June**, in the Observatory Garden, with the ever-popular Phoenix Dixieland Jazz Band.

Booking arrangements will be announced in our April newsletter.

Friends of Greenwich Park

Chairman: Richard Jones, 65 Hervey Road, SE3 8BX Tel: 020 8319 3467
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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 29 November 1pm – 3pm

The 10k MoRun
Sat 29 November 10am

'Drop in' at the Wildlife Centre*
Sat 20 December 1pm – 3pm

Run through Greenwich Park
Sun 21 December 9.30am

'Drop in' at the Wildlife Centre*
Sat 31 January 1pm – 3pm

New Woodland opening (members only)
Saturday 21 February 11am

The Friends Annual Lecture 2015
Booking now
Sun 22 February 11am
King William Building
University of Greenwich
'Many Mansions'
Talk by Neil Rhind, Blackheath and Greenwich historian
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 28 February 1pm – 3pm

'Drop in' at the Wildlife Centre*
Sat 28 March 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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