FRIENDS OF GREENWICH PARK

NEWSLETTER

Summer 2015 Registered Charity No: 1029933 Number 70

Music in the Park

On a glorious sunny Midsummer Day, our annual Jazz Concert in the charming Observatory Garden was an outstanding success. The Phoenix Dixieland Jazz Band, with some new, talented younger players, was on top form for a full house. Once again, our corporate sponsors, the Pavilion Café and Davys Wine Shop, provided stalls, adding to the occasion.

The proceeds of that concert go towards helping with projects and other events in the Park, including the bandstand concerts, which we organize and fund. At the time of going to press, the programme of Sunday afternoon concerts is well under way, and continues until the end of August. Details of the bands and orchestras playing each week are on the back page.

In addition, the Pavilion Café are again hosting live music, from talented musicians from Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, in their rear garden every Friday evening, 6pm - 8pm, until the end of August. This year the music includes classical guitar, folk and even drums, as well as the ever-popular jazz. To find out who is playing visit Twitter @GreenwichPkCafe.

Eyes Right, General Wolfe

Blue Greenwich Peninsula 2015 Masterplan Green Greenwich Peninsula Masterplan 2004 Red Peninsula Quay 2014 Consent

The illustration is from the Developer's plans, with acknowledgement to the Greenwich Society Newsletter editors.

Our Summer 2014 Newsletter told you that General Wolfe's view of the buildings on the Isle of Dogs was forecast to change. At the time we objected to a proposed development called Quay House that would lie on the Grand Axis from All Saints Church, Blackheath, to St Anne's Limehouse. That application was refused by Tower Hamlets, but another development at South Quay is now well under way. It was heralded in the Evening Standard on 8 July with a double page spread and a comment that it includes "one of Britain's tallest towers, a 68 storey glass-clad skyscraper…built at a 45 degree rotation to ensure that the flats (which start at £490,000) are dual aspect". General Wolfe is likely to get some 'light in his eye' from the sun's reflection in the glass. Yes his view ahead has certainly changed.

Now General Wolfe needs to turn his eyes right, and to the south side of the river. He will already have seen the new blocks at Enderby Wharf, but they rise to only 10 storeys. Now under application 15/0973/F, Enderby Wharf LLP have asked for planning permission for three much taller tower blocks containing 477 residential units to be built alongside the cruise liner terminal. These will dominate the skyline.

But if General Wolfe could take a stroll along to One Tree Hill and look at the Peninsula as a whole and had with him the additional development proposal from Knight Dragon (15/0716/O) he could then imagine the number of 40 storey tower blocks that will house around 19,000 more dwellings. The view of the Dome will be almost totally lost, and a Hong Kong panorama will have appeared, as above.

Again, your Committee has objected to this development, not only from aesthetic considerations of the immense change to the skyline, but also from the likely pressure some 40,000 new residents in the area might put on the Park. The amount of green space to be left on the Peninsula is minimal, so particularly at weekends, Greenwich Park may become the recreational destination of choice.

Wildlife Notes by Sue Yates

Harvest Festival and the new beehive

On Sunday 13 September between 11am and 4pm, the Queen's Orchard, in the north east corner of the Park, close to the Children's Playground, will be having a Harvest Festival and displaying the vegetables that have been grown there. You can obviously look round at the other areas too, including the heritage fruit trees planted in the wildflower meadow.

At the far end of the meadow there is now a new attraction. A beehive has arrived, which should further enhance the productivity of the 'potage'. Ever since the Orchard was remodelled Graham Dear and Michael Loughnane have felt that a hive was the obvious next step. Now it is great to see that Christine Sheffield, whom you probably know from the front reception desk of the Blackheath Gate Office, has taken on the job of Beekeeper. This is not something to be undertaken lightly and she has attended a ten week training course to prepare her for the task.

Amazingly, the bees, chosen for their placid nature, arrived through the post in a small portable hive called a 'nucleus' or 'nuc 'for short. They were then transferred to their new home in the hive. They had to be fed a sugar syrup solution to begin with to have a head start in expanding the colony whilst finding new sources of nectar and pollen. The queen arrived already mated and laying in the 'nuc'. The cycle from egg laying to death of a worker bee takes approximately 6 weeks in summer but up to 6 months in winter. At its peak in summer a hive may have 66,000 bees, but it is unlikely that a new hive will reach that number in the first year. If you would like to hear more about Christine's experiences with the new bees, she will be in the Orchard to talk about it and answer your questions at 11.30am and 2.30pm as part of the Harvest Festival.

Friends visit Deptford Creek

They say that there is no such thing as bad weather, just inappropriate clothing. Well, the same can be said of mud and I can tell you that the high waders were wonderful. Add to them the stout walking staff and the 25 Friends were ready to wade.

We first looked at all the wonderful wild life around the Creekside Centre ranging from wild angelica, introduced by the Romans, red valerian and a pond full of tadpoles and frogs.

As we walked the creek, our guide Nick Bertrand explained what a valuable role the timber sides play in providing shelter for small fish, crabs and wild flowers. He also told us more of the history of the area and talked of current developments. He pointed out the nest, bearing eight eggs, of the resident swan, Queenie (on a floating platform, safely anchored for her by local houseboat residents) and told how her brood last year was swept away to their deaths by a surge of water from a sudden storm upstream.

At the end we dipped nets into the seemingly empty water and were astonished to find it teaming with life including baby flounders, two centimeters across and nearly transparent. They migrate across the North Sea from Scandinavia after hatching and spend the summer in the creek until they are large enough to make a dash for the ocean in the autumn. Yet again, the creek providing a protective environment.

We concluded by looking at the amazing artefacts that have been pulled from the stream - a truly wonderful collection.

A longer report can be found on the website

Willow weaving in the Children's Playground

At the end of June, a group of volunteers were introduced to the art of willow weaving. The new area of the playground has small hedges and winding tunnels made of living willow. This was planted in April as part of the redevelopment of this area of the playground so the shoots were by then long enough to allow them to be bent sideways and woven between the supporting posts. If they are too short or you bend them too quickly they snap off and it takes a little while to get the feel for it. It is definitely something that requires a knack but the new area is such an improvement that it is worth the effort.

Assistant Park Manager, Michael Loughnane, weaving willow fencing

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

Everyone is enjoying the warm spell at the start of July but it is not without its problems in the Park. It's not so much the heat as the lack of rain that is the concern. Our gardeners have been out with the water bowser for weeks now, struggling to keep up with the demand for watering. On the free draining sand and gravel soils we have here in the Park establishing trees and shrubs is a quite a task. On more moisture retentive soils we might expect to water newly planted trees for three to four years but at Greenwich Park even trees planted seven to eight years ago can succumb to drought in a dry spell. Our efforts are concentrated on the trees and newly planted shrubs. Fortunately our herbaceous plantings and bedding generally have their own irrigation system.

This year the quality of the summer bedding plants produced by the City of London Nursery in West Ham Park is exceptional. This has meant that there is a surplus of material once the beds are planted out and we were able to hold the popular sale of excess plants to the public. This was advertised on the park notice boards, the Greenwich Park Facebook page and on the Friends' website.

The newly refurbished and landscaped playground has been a big hit with children. This is phase three of the playground project with one more phase to complete. Subject to funding, the hope is to complete this within the next two years. The objective was to replace the old play equipment with that which had more play value and soft landscaping such as the willow tunnels that break up the large areas of tarmac. The equipment is of a timber construction and the safety surface is a new product called 'Tigermulch'. Like the old red wet-pour safety surface, 'Tigermulch' is made from recycled rubber but it is coloured and textured to look like bark, helping the new playground to sit much more sympathetically within the historic park landscape.

Policing update

We reported in the last newsletter that The Royal Parks policing budget has been cut, with further reductions expected in future because of significant savings that the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) is expected to make over the next few years

This will, as predicted, result in a fall in park police numbers. Following extensive discussions between the MPS and The Royal Parks, a preferred 'operating model' for policing the parks has emerged. It was, to say the least, disappointing that the formal stakeholder consultation promised by the MPS was not carried out. However, the chairmen of the Friends' groups and of the Safer Parks Panels were invited to a meeting last month for a presentation and discussion session on what is now proposed.

The good news is that the police have listened to representations from stakeholders and The Royal Parks and it has been decided to retain the command unit (OCU) for the parks rather than devolving responsibility for policing to the boroughs. This means that local knowledge of the parks will be maintained, along with a proper understanding of the need for Park Regulations enforcement.

The reduced OCU will run out at just over 80 police officers, with some additional support from MPS Special Officers, to cover all eight parks. The exact number for each park is being finalised, as is where they will be based. The full picture will be clarified shortly, with the changes scheduled to take place around October. Whatever the outcome for our own park, we hope that they will continue to be able to provide adequate cover with more limited resources, particularly on busy occasions such as Bank Holidays and summer weekends.

We will keep you up to date through the website and email bulletins.

Change of Chief Executive

Linda Lennon left The Royal Parks earlier this month to take up the new post of Chief Executive Officer of Stadium 185, managing the Stadium in the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park. We greatly appreciate the staunch support she has given all the parks during her term of office in the face of diminishing government funding and we wish her well in her new and challenging role.

Her successor is Andrew Scattergood. Andrew has worked across various Whitehall departments, including the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS). He has a long association with The Royal Parks, and worked closely with them as the Government representative during the preparations for the Olympic and Paralympic Games. We offer him a warm welcome and look forward to working with him.

More 'Many Mansions'

On 10 May Neil Rhind returned to his podium in Greenwich University's King William lecture theatre to repeat the sell-out lecture he first delivered in February. Some 130 people attended and were treated to the same lively and engaging account of the grand houses that once surrounded the Park and where some their survivors can still be seen.

Our Annual Lectures have proved a great success and this one broke all previous records for audience numbers. Neil deserves high praise for this and thanks for his help to the Friends.

Outing to the Peninsula Ecology Park

There will be a visit to the Peninsula Ecology Park on **Saturday 10 October at 10.30 am**. The four acre site with its two fresh water lakes fed from chalk aquiphers, its reed beds and wildflower meadows and many bird hides, is now very well established, having opened in 2002. There is always something different to see as the seasons change and our visit is timed to be before the meadow is cut back. It will be guided by the award-winning head warden Joanne Smith and will last approximately one and a half hours. If you have been before you will be pleased to see it again, but if this is your first visit you will be astonished that this green paradise could have emerged from the previous industrial wasteland.

Fungus Foray

We are fortunate this year to have Anne Andrews lead one of her wonderful Fungus Foray walks on Tuesday 13 October at 11.00am, meeting at the Blackheath Gate. Anne will inspect the Park earlier that morning before she guides the group round to show them what she has found. It is hard to know what sort of 'season' it will be this year, much depending on the level of rain-fall between now and then, but it is always a wonderful experience and much enjoyed by those who come along.

Robert Gomme

It is with regret that we have to record that Robert Gomme died on 21 June. He was a founder member of the Friends of Greenwich Park when it was set up in 1992 and Treasurer for the first four years. We extend our sympathy to his family.

History Group

The inaugural meeting in May of the Friends of Greenwich Park History Group was attended by 14 people. The outline aims and objectives of the group which were agreed there can be viewed on the Friends website.

We aim to throw new light on aspects of the Park's history, gathering information from original documents, censuses, etc. Although much has been researched already, bringing it together for future reference is a valuable process. We are still looking for new members and our meetings are open to everyone. You are most welcome to attend to hear what work has been done, or maybe just for the chocolate digestive biscuits - it is a well known fact that historians work better when a chocolate digestive is nearby.

The next meeting of the group will be at 11am on Monday 7 September in the Wildlife Centre. If you would like to come along please contact Brian Starkey on *grenparkpast@gmail.com* . You can get a parking permit at the park office at the Blackheath Gate.

Dates for Your Diary summary

'Drop in' at the Wildlife Centre*
Sat 25 July *1pm – 4pm*

Bandstand concerts
Sun 26 July
Lewisham Concert Band

Sun 2 August
South London Jazz Orchestra (with the South London Lindy Hoppers)

Sun 9 August
Greenwich Concert Band

British Heart Foundation 10K run
Sat 15 August
In Greenwich Park at 9.30am

Bandstand concerts
Sun 16 August
London Gay Symphonic Winds

Sun 23 August
Silver Ghosts (with swing time dancers)

Sun 30 August
Southwark Concert Band

'Drop in' at the Wildlife Centre*
Sat 29 August *1pm – 4pm*

Harvest Festival
Sat 13 September *11am – 4pm*
In the Queen's Orchard (see page 2)

'Drop in' at the Wildlife Centre*
Sat 27 September 1pm – 4pm
Sat 25 October 1pm – 4pm

Bandstand concerts
start at 3pm and end around 5.00pm.

* 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.

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: 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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