FRIENDS OF GREENWICH PARK

NEWSLETTER

Spring 2016 Registered Charity No: 1029933 Number 72

Acknowledgments to Metropolitan Museum of Art

Painters and the Park

On Sunday 21 February Pieter van der Merwe gave this year's Annual Lecture in the King William Building of Greenwich University and it proved to be a sell-out.

Pieter is the longstanding General Editor of the National Maritime Museum and his 40-year career there has been marked by many academic achievements and public recognition with an MBE, an Honorary Doctorate from the University of Greenwich and his appointment as Deputy Lieutenant for Greenwich.

He started his lecture by pointing out that most of the Royal Parks are not well-represented in paintings, for they are mostly fairly flat and lack viewpoints. With St James's Park, for example, 'even Canaletto struggled'.

Greenwich Park was fortunate, however, because One Tree Hill offered a vantage point overlooking the Thames and the city of London. For centuries, this northern high point attracted artists whose paintings recorded developments inside the Park and to the east and west along the river.

Pieter's lecture tracked these artists, early examples of whom happened to be Dutch, from the 1500s onwards. The earlier ones depicted Royalty, 'polite society', deer and sheep in a pastoral setting; but by the time the great Wren buildings, the Observatory and the Queen's House had appeared, and Charles II had commissioned Le Notre to re-landscape the Park, Greenwich had become a fashionable residential resort.

The Park, however, was still largely the preserve of respectable keyholders as the general public were not admitted on a daily basis until the 1830s. By then, the industrial revolution had brought about the rapid expansion of London and those changes were humorously captured by Turner in his 1825 caricature of London from Greenwich Park (see illustration). The man with the yellow gloves hails the present, the one with the telescope watches steam overhauling sail, while an elderly antiquarian on crutches squints at a map of the smaller, simpler London of 1526.

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Greenwich Pensioners, who were admitted to the Park from about 1705 onwards, frequently featured in the older images, but their fellow commoners are now seen increasingly, and not always to their advantage. Thomas Rowlandson's 'Holiday Gambols' showed the pastime of 'tumbling' down the Park slopes, in which the ladies involved (willingly or being pushed) often revealed more than just their undergarments.

'Sling the monkey' was a less saucy sport, in which men with wooden legs were roped to a tree and swung round in a circle until they could put a chalk mark on one of the crowd 'hazing' them to become the next 'monkey': those without a peg-leg presumably had to borrow one.

These were just two of the lighter notes in a lecture that was a kaleidoscope of art, manners and historical developments in the Park, delivered with an easy wit and a very sharp eye for detail. At the end, Pieter said 'I haven't given a lecture, I've just talked to you'. -Too modest an assessment of an excellent lecture from a remarkable 'talker'.

Behind the scenes at Hyde Park Wed 11 May 10.45am

Have you ever considered just how much planning and work goes into producing the wonderful bedding displays in the Flower Garden? Well, the plans are drawn up months in advance, with the park apprentices, gardeners and park management all involved as a team effort. Once the designs, plant varieties and numbers are agreed, the lists are sent to Hyde Park Nurseries, who grow the plants to order. There are 29 circular beds and for summer planting, depending on the design, each bed can take 1000 plants. With winter

planting, maybe 600 plants and 500 bulbs per bed, with planting taking place over a three week period. Prior to planting the old bedding is removed and composted, apart from specimen 'dot' perennial plants which are overwintered. The beds are then dug over, more compost added, levelled and raked ready for the planting frenzy.

To see what all this involves, a trip is planned to visit behind the scenes in Hyde Park, being guided round the glass houses by Mike Jones the nursery manager.

We will spend some time looking at the beautiful fountains of the Italian Gardens, which were restored in 2011. They were originally a romantic gift from Prince Albert to Queen Victoria in 1860, when that area was still part of the gardens of Kensington Palace. From here we shall walk down the southern side of The Long Water, past the delightful 1912 bronze statue of Peter Pan and glimpsing Henry Moore's sculpture, The Arch, across the water. The bird life here is often good, so binoculars may be helpful. We will then visit the Princess Diana Memorial Fountain, a beautiful circle of tumbling water. There should be time for a coffee at the Lido Cafe before we cross the Serpentine Bridge to arrive at the glass houses by 12 noon.

After the visit you may choose to stop at one of the many cafes for lunch or to visit the Serpentine Gallery currently exhibiting work of the Swedish artist Hilma Af Klint.

There are only 20 places available. The cost is £5. A booking form is enclosed.

Wildlife Notes by Sue Yates

In the Nature Trail the trees are bare, the leaves long fallen and collected from the paths and the first shoots of the bluebells are pushing through. But against this peaceful background there has been quite a lot of construction work over recent months. Things began to go wrong with the pond in the middle of last summer. The water level was horribly low. At first this was put down to the dry weather but it was eventually realised that the lining of the pond had been punctured and there was no alternative but to replace it. The opportunity was taken to redesign the profile of the pond, removing what was considered a dangerously high platform and instead creating a 'beach area' which would allow more children to get closer to the water's edge. The profile is now wider and the centre deeper and it has been completed in time for the spawning season this spring. The rainwater from the roof of the hide is fed into this pond, the collection system having been repaired and the leaks which were damaging the wood of the hide fixed.

Those of you who have visited the Trail will recall the 'Gentle Giant', a wonderful carving made from a fallen cedar limb back in 2006 by Patricia Rae. His distinctive face and hands have been much admired and are still strong and firm, but where the bark was left on, to look like clothing and hair, rain has caused the gradual decaying of the wood. Rather like some of the hollow trees that we have in the Trail, he is returning to the earth whence he came.

The drop-ins continue to be very busy. We try to jot down the visitor numbers but this can be difficult, so we know the data are always an underestimate. Bearing that in mind, we believe we had close to 1000 adults and children visiting in 2015. If you would like to join the team, we are always looking for new blood and welcome all newcomers.

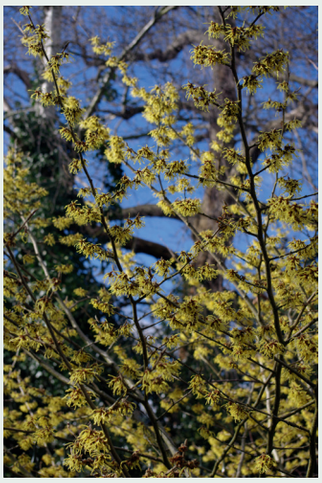
Community archaeological project 4 – 15 July

This year will see the third and final season of excavation at the Old Keeper's Cottage site in Greenwich Park. Friends will remember that last year's digging was a considerable success, with several pits revealing important archaeological remains from the Cottage complex. This has allowed us to both narrow down and expand our efforts in 2016. That's not quite as daft as it sounds! We can 'narrow down' by homing in more closely on the areas where we have had the best evidence for buildings and other remains – but also 'expand' by digging larger trenches.

The current plan is to excavate two areas of around 10m x 4m each. Tree roots are likely to cause us some difficulties, but otherwise we hope for excellent results. The excavations will run over two weeks this year: 4-8 July and 11-15 July. Both weeks will be available to adult volunteers this time (no volunteer activity on Friday 15). There will also be an open event on the afternoon of Wednesday 13 July, from around 3-6pm, when all will be welcome to come and view our findings. This will include a small display of the artefacts we have found since 2014 – including last year's Roman brooch. We look forward to seeing old and new faces alike in July! A booking form is enclosed.

Graham Keevil, professional archaeologist

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



Hamamelis mollis 'Pallida' in the Observatory Garden

It's official. According to the MET Office the winter of 2015/16 has been the mildest on record in England since 1910 and the second wettest after 2013/14. As I write (4 March) the MET Office is issuing a severe weather warning for sleet or snow. Well, the Park's snow and ice procedures are in place for Friday night and Saturday morning if required, but I have a suspicion that this winter will be our third in a row when the only 'Winter Wonderland' is an event at Hyde Park.

The weather is having an impact on the Park though. The grass has just not stopped growing and we have had to bring forward the planned mowing regime. Our first parkland cut was at the end of February, a whole two weeks earlier than usual.

This winter has been a busy time but much of the work has been behind the scenes. In the Nursery Yard two large barns have had their asbestos cement board cladding replaced with steel. The borehole water supply has been connected to flush the Blackheath Gate toilets, which will not only save the Park money, but is a more sustainable use of resources. Previously, potable water was used to flush these public toilets, which has more 'embedded energy' than the untreated borehole supply. The Royal Parks are committed to managing the parks sustainably and have also invested in solar panels on the roof of the Park's office block.

One project that will make a big visual impact on the Park, is the removal of the close-boarded timber fence from the Flower Garden/Deer Park boundary. The fence is very suburban in appearance and detracts from the setting of the historic park. Once removed, visitors will have a much improved view of the herd of red and fallow deer in their grounds with stock proof wire fencing that will contain them. Further visual improvements to the Deer Park are being implemented beside the Nursery Yard which is to be screened from the viewing area by the planting of a native plant hedgerow. First of all a deer-proof enclosure needs to be made. Stock fencing is going in this March and the Park's wildlife volunteers will plant up the hedge in autumn.

The sky outside my office window is now bright blue and almost cloudless. I think the gritters will be stood down tonight.

Visit to Westcombe Woodlands

Saturday 16 April at 11.00 am

We have wanted to take a group to the woods for some time and now that there is much improved access we plan a spring visit around bluebell time.

The wood is located between Maze Hill and Vanbrugh Hill, very close to the Park. It is steep in places and densely wooded and the Greenwich escarpment runs through it. There were gravel workings until the 18th century while the flatter upper parts have been variously market gardens, orchards, allotments and a pig farm. Of course, when these activities ceased the area became overgrown.

To protect against developers, in 1982 it was taken under the wing of the Blackheath Preservation Society, now part of the Blackheath Society. In 2011 'Trees for Cities' ran a pilot project to help improve the area and nearly 100 volunteers turned up. The Friends group was formed and became a registered charity in 2012. Their work over the past few years has been transformational. There is a sunny glade, now planted with an assortment of fruit trees, paths have been cleared and there is a circular route round the site.

Our visit will be guided with refreshments provided. From the Seren Park car park gate a well constructed path and steps wind up the escarpment. Sensible boots are advisable, but the route should be accessible to most people. Who can resist a secret wood?

The outing is priced at £10 which includes a donation for the Woodlands Friends.

Royal Parks status change approved

The government has agreed plans for the Royal Parks Agency to merge with its charity, the Royal Parks Foundation, to create a new public corporation to manage and fundraise for all the Royal Parks. The process of applying for charitable status from the Charity Commission is now under way. Andrew Scattergood, the Chief Executive, explains that "while the new organisation will manage the parks on behalf of the DCMS we will have more freedom around how we raise and spend money. These include being able to plan and invest for the longer term rather than on a year-by-year basis and operate more efficiently". You can read more about this on The Royal Parks website.

A new 14-member board of trustees will be appointed; the chair is currently being recruited.

Andrew Scattergood will cover this change and how the new body will operate at our forthcoming AGM.

Friends' Festival of Music in the Park

We have another terrific programme of Sunday concerts lined up for this summer.

The Phoenix Dixieland Jazz Band is back for our Mid-summer Jazz Concert

Our renowned Midsummer Jazz Concert on Sunday 19 June has this ever-popular band bringing their brilliant New Orleans bounce to the charming and enclosed Observatory Garden.This is an event for the whole family. Tickets are £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. Come and enjoy a picnic. Davy's of Greenwich will run a bar, and the Park's Pavilion Cafe will again have a stall providing food, ice cream and soft drinks.

A booking form is enclosed with this newsletter.

Ten Bandstand concerts this summer

Our hugely popular concerts at the Bandstand will this year take place on every Sunday from 26 June to 28 August. Concerts, which are free, normally start at 3pm and end at 5pm.

Friends AGM is on Tuesday, 12 April 2016, 7.30 for 8pm

The 23rd AGM takes place 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, SE3 8BX

Vice-Chairman:
Liz Coyle, 3 Orchard Drive, SE3 0QP

Committee Members:
Clive Corlett stands for re-election.

Tony Butler, Jonathan Chandler, Tina Challacombe and Sue Yates continue to serve.
The committee confirms the appointments of Christine Bevan as Secretary, Julie Punter as Treasurer and Fran Tyler as Membership Secretary.

After the AGM Andrew Scattergood, the new Chief Executive of the Royal Parks Agency, will give a presentation about the planned change of status of the current organisation and Graham Dear, Park Manager, will outline proposals for future projects in the Park.

The Gardener's Dilemma

Want an allotment? But not got the time or the waiting list is too long.
Why not a vegetable patch in your garden? But not enough space or you're not always there.
The answer to your dilemma is simple. Join the team who help in the Queen's Orchard. They meet fortnightly on Wednesdays between 1.30 and 4.30 pm. Come when you can, stay as long as it works for you and share in the produce as it is harvested. The equipment is provided.
Come along soon and be involved in planning for next year's crops. The dates are on the notice board by the park office. If you are interested email Michael Loughnane on *MLoughnane@royalparks.gsi.gov.uk* or call in at the office.

Bird walk – Sunday 29 May

Joseph Beale will be leading a bird walk for the Friends and the London Natural History Society. Meet at the Blackheath Gate at **9am**. No booking required. Binoculars are helpful.

Joseph has recently secured a place on the coveted 'Identification trainers for the Future' programme at the Natural History Museum against hot competition. We congratulate him and wish him well for what promises to be an exciting year.

Greenwich Park Bandstand Concerts 2016

26 June	Greenwich Steel Band and Royal Greenwich Big Band
3 July	Belvedere Concert Band
10 July	London Gay Symphonic Winds
17 July	Crystal Palace Band
24 July	Lewisham Concert Band
31 July	Silver Ghosts
7 August	Lambeth Wind Orchestra
14 August	South London Jazz Orchestra and Lindy Hoppers
21 August	Hooray Tabasco
28 August	Greenwich Concert Band

Dates for Your Diary summary

Annual General Meeting
Tues 12 April
(Members only)
The Theatre, Blackheath High School. 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.

Visit to Westcombe Woodlands
Sat 16 April 11am

London Marathon
Sun 24 April

'Drop In' at the Wildlife Centre*
Sat 30 April

Visit to the Hyde Park nurseries
Wed 11 May 10.45am

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

Jazz in the Park
Sun 19 June Booking now
Tickets from Friends of Greenwich Park, 52 Greenwich Park Street, SE10 9LT. Tel 020 8853 2150. Cheques payable to Friends of Greenwich Park.

'Drop In' at the Wildlife Centre*
Sat 25 June 1pm - 4pm

Archaeological dig open event
Wed 13 July
Near the Queen Elizabeth's Oak. See page 2

'Drop in' at the Wildlife Centre*
Sat 30 July 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.

Friends of Greenwich Park

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Newsletter: Liz Coyle lizcoyle@waitrose.com Tel: 020 8852 8831
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.

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

Printed by Greycot Press, Unit 4, Kencot Close, Erith, Kent DA18 4AB Friends website: www.friendsofgreenwichpark.org.uk