FRIENDS OF GREENWICH PARK

NEWSLETTER

Summer 2016 Registered Charity No: 1029933 Number 73

Belvedere Concert Band *Photo: Roger Stevens*

Even more music in the Park

The Friends' Festival of Music in the Park this summer is bigger than ever.

Our Midsummer Jazz concert in the Observatory Garden on Sunday 19 June was blessed with virtually the only good day's weather during that miserable month, and a full house of 500 of all ages - from toddlers to grandparents - enjoyed another terrific afternoon of foot-tapping music from the Phoenix Dixieland Jazz Band.

The Park Café provided a food stall and ice cream, and Davy's Wineshop ran the bar. Davy's donated a large case of wine for a raffle, which raised over £300. That, together with the proceeds from the sale of tickets, helps towards the cost of staging all our musical events over the summer.

This year we are organising and funding eleven Bandstand concerts, providing an even wider range of musical styles. By the time this newsletter reaches you, those concerts will be well under way. The series, which runs until the end of August, kicked off with a delightful and inspirational concert featuring the Greenwich Steel Band and the Royal Greenwich Big Band (see back page), both of which consist of a large number of talented youngsters from local primary and secondary schools.

We are delighted this year to welcome another community-based concert , which (unlike all the other concerts, that are on Sundays) takes place on Saturday 23 July, when Blackheath Halls Community Opera bring together a large cast of professional singers and amateur locals to perform arias and choruses from its tenth anniversary production, Bizet's *Carmen*, possibly the most popular opera ever written. This should be something special.

Wildlife Notes by Sue Yates
News from the Nature Trail

The renewed pond is now full of water, partly from the bore hole but also helped by the recent weather. There have been tadpoles but it will take a season for it to look as natural as the previous pond before the lining was punctured.

The dig-ins will resume on 23 September. There is a plan for the area around the deer hide, which is at present full of brambles and bracken. We hope to clear this and plant a number of rowan, birch and other trees.

A Guardian for the Orchard

If you have been down to the Queen's Orchard recently, you will have seen that it is rather more open to visitors than in the past. Dorothy Love has joined the park team for the summer with the brief to take the Orchard under her wing in a flexible role of caretaker during public opening times, part-time gardener, and helping to organise and support the volunteers.

As a result, the Orchard is now open on Wednesdays from 11.15am-4.45pm and on Saturdays and Sundays from 9.15am-4.45pm (closed for lunch between 12.30 and 1.30pm). Visitor numbers have gone up enormously with this improved access.

Dorothy is a landscape architect who loves to be outdoors and surrounded by plants. She is currently studying for a Masters degree in Conservation of Historic Gardens which fits in with her role in the Orchard. Like many first time visitors, she found the spirit of the place very special: that magical space between the two walls, where most people don't think anything exists. She will be helping there until the culmination of activities in the Harvest Festival on Sunday 2 October, 11am-3pm. Last year this was a very well attended event, with many activities. Please watch our website for more details and put the date in your diary.

After this date the Orchard will be closed to the public at weekends for the winter, though still open for the fortnightly volunteer sessions on Wednesday afternoons.

The Orchard Pond

Do you like hedgerows?
This is your chance to plant one

Four years ago a group of volunteers planted a hedge between the Blackheath Lodge and the Wildlife Centre and later along the length of the Centre itself. This replaced a long line of Lleylandii, which were dark and dull, in order to provide more native species, to provide food for insects and bugs and thus indirectly for birds.

We plan another hedge planting session this autumn, this time to make an attractive but also useful camouflage for the work's yard. You may have noticed that from the deer viewing point nearest to the Vanbrugh Gate you currently get rather too clear a view of the yard and all the vehicles and buildings within it. The new hedge will span that side of the Wilderness and in time will shield the view. Running a length equivalent to that from the War memorial at the corner of the Park to the Vanbrugh gate, it will be quite a task, but many hands etc. As before, it will be a good mixed hedge of hawthorn, blackthorn, dog rose and other native species and will be planted in the space between the double fences edging the deer enclosure. You will not be mingling with the deer!

This will take place on Friday 25 November. We will provide further information on where and when to meet nearer the time on the website and in the next newsletter.

Community archaeological dig

As we went to press, the archaeologists had just begun this year's excavations at the Old Keeper's Cottage site. Early results were really encouraging, with brick walls having been found – at last! A full update will be provided in the next newsletter.

Who lived in the Old Keeper's Cottage?

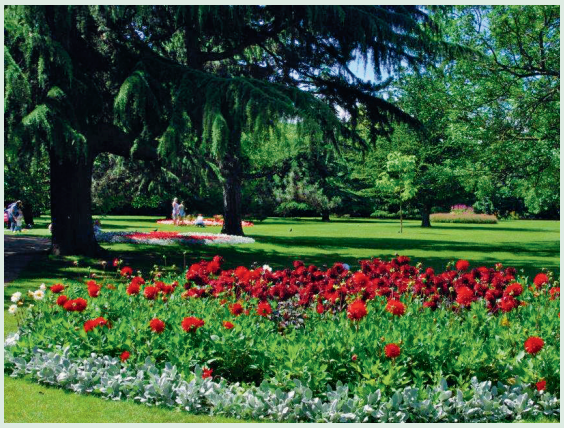
Brian Starkey from the History Group writes

Our reseach has revealed that not only the Keepers of the Park and their families lived there in the past. According to the 1841 census, the occupants were Robert Eaglestone, the Keeper, and his wife Sarah and four adult sons, together with his brother-in-law William Smith and a family servant. Also in residence was a solicitor, George Richard Corner with his wife Sarah and their three children. George Corner was just one of several who shared the house with the Keeper at various times. He was a renowned antiquarian, publishing many articles on the antiquities of Southwark after he became a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries in 1833. Although he may not have recorded any comments on his immediate surroundings while was living here (which would have been of interest to the current archaeological diggers) he might have investigated the earlier Keeper's Houses that had been on the same site. However, by the time of the 1851 census he and his family were living in South End, Eltham and in 1861 in Southwark.

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

One of the pleasures of summer in Greenwich Park is the magnificent floral displays in the Flower Garden. These are changed every spring and summer. In May we received 25,000 bedding plants from the City of London's nursery at West Ham Park. It's quite a feat of cultivation for our gardeners to get them all planted within three weeks. This is the last year that the City of London will supply the plants for Greenwich Park as their nursery is closing. Rest assured, we will still have the top quality plants for our display as The Royal Parks is upgrading facilities at its own nursery in Hyde Park which will now be able to supply us here at Greenwich Park too.

The designs for the bedding are drawn up a year in advance by Assistant Park Manager, Michael Loughnane, and Gardens Supervisor Michala Haines, with a few beds contributed by gardeners, apprentices and one by yours truly, just to keep my hand in (and it's fun). Although we have a standard calculation for the numbers of plants needed for each bed, there are always some left over as plants can come in different sizes year to year. The spare plants are sold off at our popular plant sales which are advertised at the Flower Garden entrance and on-line. Here is your chance to get hold of quality bedding plants which you won't find in the local garden centre. This year's summer bedding sale is over, but look out for unusual bulbs at the spring bedding sale in November.



It's an exciting time to be working at The Royal Parks as we prepare to become a charitable trust. It's also an exciting time to be working at Greenwich Park as we scope the proposals for a Heritage Lottery Fund grant application for the Park. It's in its early days and there will of course be a full programme of consultation to ensure that the proposals meet the needs of the Park's users. The intention is to develop a project that improves facilities for visitors and undertakes landscape and biodiversity improvements. The team here at the Park look forward to working closely with the Friends of Greenwich Park in framing the project.

Oak processionary moth reaches the Park

Following on from Baterial Canker of horse chestnut, which is having a serious impact on the landscape of Greenwich Park, the latest pest and disease to arrive is Oak Processionary Moth. Native to southern Europe and accidently introduced to the UK, OPM is a hazard to the health of trees and people if untreated.

The moths are covered in tiny hairs which cause irritation and skin rashes in contact with people and animals. The original infestations appeared in West London and Surrey several years ago. The Royal Parks in partnership with the Forestry Commission and Kew have led the charge with controlling the spread of the pest in West London, Richmond Park and Bushy Park but at best the spread has been controlled and not eradicated. OPM is continuing its march across Western Europe, London and the South East.

OPM gets its name from the head-to-tail procession of the caterpillars to and from the nest and from one feeding station to another. The moth affects oak trees and can completely defoliate a tree making it susceptible to other infections. Last year one colonial nest of OPM was found in Greenwich Park and a few more identified this spring. There is now an annual programme of control in place. Pheromone traps are used to monitor the level of infection and control is by targeted spraying with a bacterial agent (not toxic to humans, only caterpillars) and physical removal of the nests.

The Royal Parks are leaders in the control of OPM. It is unlikely that the pest can be completely eradicated from the Park. We are of course surrounded by oak trees across the Borough, but the aim is to control the level of infection to manageable levels.

New Chairman of the Royal Parks

In our last Newsletter we reported that the government had approved plans by The Royal Parks Agency and the Royal Parks Foundation (the charity for the Royal Parks) to create a new public corporation and that the process of applying for charitable status from the Charity Commission was now under way.

The Department for Culture Media and Sport has now appointed Loyd Grossman CBE as the Chairman of the new charity.

Andrew Scattergood, Chief Executive, says "I hope you will join me in welcoming Loyd, who will bring diverse experience to the role. He is currently a patron of the Association for Heritage Interpretation and Heritage Open Days, is the President of the National Association of Decorative and Fine Arts Societies and since 2009 has been the Chairman of the Heritage Alliance - the UK membership organisation that represents more than 100 leading non-governmental organisations across the heritage sector.

He has served on the Boards of a number of cultural institutions including English Heritage, the Museums and Galleries Commission and the Public Monuments and Sculpture Association. He has also been a former Commissioner for the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England and has just completed nine years as Chairman of the Churches Conservation Trust. In 2015 he was awarded his CBE in recognition of his services to the heritage sector.

Loyd will be the first Chair to lead our new charity which will manage and fundraise for the parks."

Many of you will be familiar with him from his frequent appearances on TV. He was the first presenter of MasterChef and a well known restaurant critic before his broader cultural interests led to wider public recognition.

Over the next few weeks he will work with the DCMS and the Greater London Authority to begin appointing his board of trustees. It is hoped that the new organisation will be established before the end of this financial year.

Friends visit the glasshouses in Hyde Park

As we moved off from the meeting point the heavens opened; clearly a foretaste of the summer to come. But the Friends are staunch hearted and things ran to schedule. The Diana Fountain was calm and thought provoking. We retired for a coffee at the Lido cafe, then off to see where all the bedding plants come from.

We were met by the Nursery Manager, Mike Jones (and his two puppies), who escorted us all round the complex. He showed us the way that the plants have to be managed to keep them disease free and ready at the right time. Computers monitor the humidity and temperature every 30 seconds and the system responds accordingly.

The flower beds outside Buckingham Palace are particularly important and we saw all the plants due to be planted out shortly. The geraniums have to be grown to very different heights to create the full effect. I must go and see the end result.

Just when he had thoroughly impressed us with their system, he calmly announced that within a month, when this year's plants had gone off to their final destination, the whole complex would be flattened and a brand new major nursery would rise very quickly from the ashes. This is being partly funded with Heritage Lottery Funding and I think that we should definitely make another visit when the new structure is up and running.

What was his main tip? When you buy your bedding plants, be brave and chop off all the blooms. You will be rewarded ten-fold. *Sue Yates*

Patricia Brown

As you may know, sadly we have said farewell to Patricia Brown who has moved from the area to be near her family. Patricia has made an enormous contribution to the Friends since the early nineties with her regular bird walks and her work recording the incidence and behaviour of birds in the Park culminating in the booklet *The Birds of Greenwich Park* produced with Joe Beale in 2012. We are extremely grateful for all she has done and we wish her well for the future.

Royal Greenwich Big Band

Friends of Greenwich Park

Chairman: Richard Jones, 65 Hervey Road, SE3 8BX Tel: 020 8319 3467
Wildlife Group: Sue Yates, 34 Hyde Vale, London SE10 8QH Tel: 020 8692 1760
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.

Dates for Your Diary summary

Bandstand concerts
Sat 23 July
Blackheath Halls Community Opera

Sun 24 July
Lewisham Concert Band

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

Bandstand concerts
Sun 31 July
Silver Ghosts

Sun 7 August
Lambeth Wind Orchestra

Sun 14 August
South London Jazz Orchestra and Lindy Hoppers

Sun 21 August
Hooray Tabasco

Sun 28 August
Greenwich Concert Band

'Drop in' at the Wildlife Centre*
Sat 27 August 1pm – 4pm
Sat 24 September 1pm – 4pm

Harvest Festival
Sun 2 October 11am – 3pm
In the Queen's Orchard (see page 2)

Bird Walk
Sat 15 October 9am
Joe Beale will lead a walk for the Friends and the London Natural History Society. Meet at the Blackheath Gate.

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

Bandstand concerts start at 3pm and end around 5pm.

* **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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