FRIENDS OF GREENWICH PARK
NEWSLETTER

Winter 2016 Registered Charity No: 1029933 Number 74

The Old Keeper's Cottage excavation findings

Archaeologist Graham Keevill reports:

This was the last of our three seasons of work on the Keeper's Cottage site and, in the best tradition of such things, we saved the best until last! We probably all felt that we were getting tantalisingly close to the heart of the site in 2015, but we just weren't able to pin down any of the buildings. When we put all the evidence from 2014-5 together with the historic maps, though, we felt that we knew where to dig next. It helped that we could use a small machine instead of doing everything by hand – and we felt the benefits immediately, finding walls in the first trench we dug. What a relief!

As we carried on digging, it became apparent that we had found three buildings – each one in the position expected from Henry Sayer's plan of 1840. The largest trench (above) revealed an L-shaped arrangement of walls, though these hadn't all been built at the same time. The main walls, defining a long rectangular structure, were of 17th/18th-century date based on the character of their brickwork. The later section completed the L shape, and had been added around 1800, this date being based on the slight frogs (indentations) in the bricks. We think that this was probably the Cottage itself. Sadly only a tiny part of a brick floor survived, and otherwise we had no evidence for how any part of the building had been used.

Another trench, a short distance to the west, located a second building. One end of this was in quite good condition, with one small square room and part of a second on its north side. The rest had been systematically demolished so that only the 'ghosts' of its foundations survived. Once more no floors were left, but there were

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Wildlife Notes by Sue Yates

The Harvest Festival in the Queen's Orchard

The second Harvest Festival was held in the Queen's Orchard at the beginning of October. It was well publicised but WOW! There were well over 900 visitors (not counting the contents of all the pushchairs) with plenty of activities for them to enjoy.

Christine Sheffield our resident beekeeper and her mentor, Camilla Goddard of Capital Bees, explained the management of beehives, while the children were shown how to make beeswax candles. There was tasting of local honey and visitors could look at frames full of honey from the Orchard.

The Field Studies Council, the Royal Park's educational providers, organised pond dipping and children were able to take part in the big dig of the potato crop. The RSPB had a marquee and there was a stand where children could plant bulbs. Ginger Cat, a craft company, provided activities, making and decorating fabric butterfly wings, alphabet bunting and a wool version of corn dollies. They worked flat out for five hours and made a lot of children very happy. The Orchard stand had fruit and vegetables from the garden. Our 100ft lavender beds provided the lavender for the bags made by the volunteers. All this was offered for donations and £212 was raised which will go towards getting equipment and seeds for next year.

Mick Francis and Geoff Hyde, active members of The Royal Parks' Guild were on hand to offer advice. Geoff is also the chair of the London Allotments Society and London in Bloom. They were a good resource of gardening knowledge for all our visitors. This event was organised by the Royal Parks team and Toni Assirati, Head of Education and Community Outreach for the Parks.

The Queen's Orchard now has a blog

And it is lovely! Since April this year, Clyo Parecchini, a wonderfully supportive volunteer in the Orchard, has been gathering her thoughts about it and constructing her blog or diary. It has now gone live and you will find it at *www.queensorchard.blogspot.co.uk.* Just pop this into your search engine. There are photographs, recipes, and related information and I think that Clyo's love of this special place really comes through. Please take a look, and you will surely be tempted to visit. There is also a link from the Friends of Greenwich Park website.

The Orchard enters winter mode

Dorothy Love, who has been looking after the Orchard all summer, left at the beginning of this month. It will now be closed to the public at weekends until 1 April, when she has been invited to resume her role for 2017. Dorothy's presence has facilitated a much more open door policy, raising awareness of the area to many more people. It will seem very quiet without her.

Volunteer days on Wednesdays, between 1.30 and 4pm, will continue on a fortnightly basis, when visitors can come in and look around. The next sessions will be on 16 November and 7 December. Dates for 2017 have not yet been fixed.

See the back page for a guided winter visit

The Gentle Giant gets a wash and brush up

In 2007 a lightning strike blew a branch off a cedar tree and thus into the hands of Patricia Rae, the Artist in Residence in Greenwich Park that year. From its three massive logs she created the Gentle Giant carving which resides in the Nature Trail behind the Wildlife Centre.

Now, we all know that the cedar will gradually decay and that is part of the appeal - the return to the earth. But in places this has been happening rather too quickly. The bark had deliberately been left on the horizontal arms to represent the sleeves and on the top of the head to look like hair. This was very attractive, but the water was retained in the ridges of the bark and so these parts were significantly more decayed than the rest of the sculpture.

Patricia had called at the Wildlife Centre during a session and offered to return and undertake some appropriately 'gentle' cleaning and protection. Using a wire brush she carefully removed dirt and bird droppings and then brushed Teak Oil on to the wood. She said that she was happy for the volunteers to keep an eye on him and keep him looking smart in the future.

Last time when she was working on carving the Gentle Giant's arms behind the scenes in the works' yard, she was accidentally locked in and had to ring for help, so she was pleasantly surprised to make an easy exit via the front door of the Wildlife Centre on this occasion.

The big hedge planting: change of date

As mentioned in the last Newsletter, we want you to consider volunteering to help plant a long hedge of mixed native species to mask the works' yard from the deer viewing point. This will double the length of native hedging in the Park and be wonderful for wildlife.

The date has been pushed back so we can be sure that the 'whips', as these young plants are called, have arrived. Whips are cheap but root very well and will outgrow larger plants within a few years. They are easy to plant and don't need staking. The suppliers lift them at different times dependent on the weather and they can't be precise about the delivery times, so we have erred on the side of caution. The new date is **Friday 9 December at 9.30am.** Meet at the entrance to the works' yard inside the Park, close to the Vanbrugh Gate. All equipment will be provided. If you come along you will always feel this is *your* hedge. We hope to see you then.

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

It's a perfect autumn day today and the Friends wildlife volunteers are at the first dig-in of the autumn. But it doesn't feel like the end of summer and we are in fact at the start of something very exciting.

'Greenwich Park Revealed' is the working title of a project to submit a Heritage Lottery Fund/Big Lottery Fund grant application under the 'Parks for People' grant programme. Grants of up to £5,000,000 are available for projects that will make a difference to; the heritage, people and communities that use their local parks.

Over 4.7 million visitors a year come to Greenwich Park, which is no surprise to me. It is one of London's great Royal Parks, but we know there are some aspects of it that could benefit from investment. The much loved boating lake, for instance, which was built in the 1930's, is leaking and is in need of repair. Wolfe Statue presides over the finest view in London, but the quality of the landscaping around the statue and the erosion on the Giant Steps does not reflect this prestige location. We aim to tell the story of Greenwich Park's past, improve it in the present and conserve it for the future.

The Friends of Greenwich Park do so much to support The Royal Parks, not just with volunteers but organising the bandstand concerts and fund raising. Your support will be essential if the HLF project is to succeed and there will be opportunities for anyone who wishes to engage and assist with the project. There will of course be regular updates through the Friends' newsletter but you can sign up to the project mailbox at; *greenwichparkrevealed@royalparks.gsi.gov.uk*. There is an open public meeting planned for 22 November, at the West Greenwich Library from 7.00 - 9.00pm.

Some of you may have seen the temporary refreshments kiosk in the Flower Garden. The feedback from users was that this was very well received and it traded well so we may well repeat this offer in future years.

Our gardeners are hard at work planting the spring bedding. Following on from last year's successful spring bedding sale, we are having one again on Saturday 19 November, 9.00am-12.00pm in the Nursery Yard. Access is via the sliding gate in Maze Hill. As well as the surplus primula and wall flowers there will be unusual daffodils and tulip bulbs for sale. It's your chance to take a bit of the Park home and buy plants that aren't available in the garden centre. See you there.

The Old Keeper's Cottage
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plenty of finds (with lots of bricks!). This range of buildings seems to be of early 19th century date – so it can only have been in place for a generation or two before it was torn down. It is hard to know what function it served, but it is tempting to see it as the outside toilets known to have existed in the 1830s.

Our third trench was sited next to the 2015 pit where we thought we might have found a cellar. It was therefore gratifying to reveal a short stretch of wall here – or to be more accurate, two walls built right next to each other. The earlier one was interesting because it included re-used Tudor bricks (the wall itself being of 17th/18th-century date). As in 2015, a tangle of tree roots frustrated attempts to find out more about this building, but again it corresponds to a square one shown by Sayer. It might be the shed-like single-storey building illustrated by Webster in his 1902 book about the Park.

We are now hard at work writing the report on our excavations. This will be available soon. There will also be a small exhibition of finds from the trenches, in the Park. Thus the fruits of our brilliant volunteers' labours will be there for all to see!

The digs have been led by Keevill Heritage Ltd with funding from the Friends and the Royal Parks Foundation and support from English Heritage and the Field Studies Council.

A plan of the trenches and more photographs can be found on the Friends website.

Royal Parks organisation update

In our last newsletter we reported that Loyd Grossman CBE had been appointed to chair the new Royal Parks board which will oversee the management of the new organisation – a merger of the government agency with the Royal Parks Foundation into a public corporation with charitable status.

The change is intended to ensure the long-term protection and financial stability of the parks through more effective use of their assets and resources and the greater ability to fundraise and to be able plan for the longer term, rather than on a year by year basis. The ownership of the parks is not changing and the Secretary of State will still be accountable to Parliament for the estate's management. We have been assured that there are no plans for government funding (at present 30 per cent of total running costs) to cease.

The Contracting Out order, which allows the creation of the new organisation, has just been given approval by the Commons and the Lords and the decision of the Secretary of State on appointments to the new board of trustees is expected as we go to press. The Mayor of London's nominations, which will include local authority leaders, are due at about the same time. It is expected that the new arrangements will be in place by the beginning of March 2017.

We are delighted that Loyd has agreed to give our Annual Lecture in February when you will have the opportunity to hear more about future plans from him in person *(see back page)*.

The Friends' Festival of Music in the Park

The Sunday afternoon bandstand concerts over the summer, which we organise and fund, were again a great success and are attracting even larger audiences. This year we extended our programme, holding eleven concerts in all. We were remarkably lucky with the weather, with all the Sundays turning out fine, even when surrounded by days of rain, especially in June and July.

We are planning another terrific programme of concerts for next summer. We start with our traditional Midsummer Jazz in the Observatory Garden on Sunday 18 June, featuring the ever-popular Phoenix Dixieland Jazz Band. From then until the end of August, there will be concerts at the Bandstand every Sunday. And this year we are reviving an old tradition, by adding a further concert on Bank Holiday Monday, 28 August.

More details of all these concerts, including how to book tickets for the Midsummer Jazz, will be in our spring newsletter.

A Quieter visit to the Queen's Orchard

If you missed the Harvest Festival or would just like to look round in a more peaceful environment, please come along at **3pm on Wednesday 7 December**. The volunteers have offered to show visitors round the plot and afterwards there will be a small tea. Facilities are limited. It is not quite the Ritz but very jolly.

Numbers are limited to 20 but it is interesting to see the area as it dies back for winter. We hope to have a similar opportunity next year when the Orchard is in full production, but all seasons have their charms.

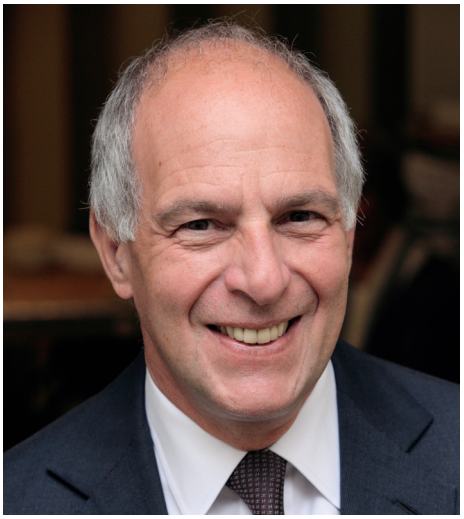
Contact Sue Yates on *sueyates@ntlworld.com* Phone 020 8692 1760. First come, first served, Free.

Christmas trees: 10 per cent discount offer for Friends

'Pines and Needles' will again be selling trees, decorations and greenery close to the Blackheath Gate on the weekends of 12-13 and 19-20 November and every day from 25 November to 18 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*

Annual Lecture 2017

'The Royal Parks: looking ahead'



Readers will now be well aware of the change in the Royal Parks' structure and management which takes place next year, with Loyd Grossman as its new board chairman.

His lifelong interest in history, the arts and heritage has involved him in many organisations. He has served on the boards of English Heritage and the Museums and Galleries Commission and is also the chairman of the Heritage Alliance. These, and his other commitments to public life, have been recognised with Honorary Doctorates from three universities and in 2015 he was appointed CBE for his services to Heritage. Loyd is, of course, very well known as a journalist and TV presenter.

His talk will introduce us to the new Royal Parks organisation, with his vision for the future.

The talk is on Thursday evening 9 February 2017 at the University of Greenwich. For full details see right hand column. A booking form is enclosed. Do book early.

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

'Drop in' at the Wildlife Centre*
Sat 26 November 1pm – 3pm

The 10k MoRun
Sun 27 November 10am

History Group meeting at the Wildlife Centre*
Mon 5 December 11am
Everyone welcome

Friends visit to the Queen's Orchard
Wed 7 December 3pm

Greenwich Park 10K run
Sat 10 December 9.30am

'Drop in' at the Wildlife Centre*
Sat 17 December 1pm – 3pm

Run through Greenwich Park
Sun 18 December 10am

'Drop in' at the Wildlife Centre*
Sat 28 January 1pm – 3pm

The Friends Annual Lecture 2017
Booking now
Thurs 9 February
7.30pm for 8pm
King William Building
University of Greenwich
Talk by Loyd Grossman CBE
Tickets £10 to include a glass of wine from Friends of Greenwich Park, 52 Greenwich Park Street, SE10 9LT. Tel 020 8853 2150. Cheques payable to Friends of Greenwich Park, with sae.

'Drop in' at the Wildlife Centre*
Sat 25 February 1pm – 3pm

* **The Wildlife Centre** is near the south end of the Flower Garden Lake. 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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