FRIENDS OF GREENWICH PARK
NEWSLETTER

Winter 2019 Registered Charity No: 1029933 Number 83

Local children enjoying the launch of the new natural playground.
Graham Dear, Park Manager, tells us more about it on Page 3.

The Queen's Orchard Open Day

On Sunday 2 September the Queen's Orchard opened its lovely iron gate for an open day. After a busy spring and summer, Alex from The Royal Parks and the orchard's many volunteers were keen to show off the fruits (and vegetables) of their labour, and visitors were equally keen to take home a bit of Greenwich Park.

The idea was to ask for donations for produce grown in the orchard, with all the money raised going towards equipment for next year's season. It was all hands on deck in the days leading up to the event as the volunteer team filled lavender pouches, harvested the best of the crop, and picked a suitable specimen for the guess-the-weight-of-the-pumpkin competition (heavy enough to make guessing a challenge; not so heavy that the winner wouldn't be able to carry it home).

Posters advertised the open day and the public clearly took notice because people began arriving well before the official noon start time. While the volunteers put the last minute touches to the trestle tables, queues gathered.

Over the next few hours, over 500 people came through the gate. Guessing the weight of the pumpkin proved very popular with many using their child's weight as a benchmark. The lavender pouches flew off the tables. And the tomatoes, onions, courgettes, beetroots and other fruit and vegetables were snapped up. Regular visitors chatted happily about how much they love the orchard. First-timers said they were thrilled to have discovered this beautiful corner of the Park – and to be able to enjoy the produce. Everyone had a good time and the sunshine added to an already great day.

Continued overleaf

Continued from front page

The Queen's Orchard Open Day

Overall the efforts of Alex and the volunteers reaped large rewards with over £600 being donated, a wonderful amount that will be used wisely to continue to improve the Queen's Orchard. And the pumpkin? It weighed a not-insubstantial 8.4 kilos.

The Queen's Orchard is closed to the public during the winter months except when the volunteers are working there which is 1.30 – 4pm on 28 November and 12 December. The dates for 2020 have yet to be announced.

Environmental awareness in the Park

The time was when a visit to the Park with a picnic involved grease-proof paper or perhaps a well used Tupperware box. The litter was minimal and was taken home. Times have changed! For example, Deliveroo will now deliver a pizza in a large cardboard box anywhere in Greenwich Park. The amount of litter has increased significantly and between April and September this year the Park collected 93.7 tonnes of rubbish*.

To meet this challenge, park management has had to reconsider their approach. They have set up larger recycling bin stations in the Park. The smaller dustcart can get to them without damaging overhanging branches and the public is responding well. In the final stage of the testing they were getting up to 30 per cent recycling and hope, with improved signage, to get to a zero rating for landfill. It must be emphasised that this is a working trial against a quickly developing background and is regularly reviewed.

In September the Quakers organised a meeting about climate change at their Meeting Hall in Blackheath. This is, of course, something that is affecting all of us and future generations. Two members of the Friends' Committee attended and at our next committee meeting we discussed what we might do to help raise awareness. We decided that at our monthly Drop-ins in the Wildlife Centre, we would, in addition to our usual topics, include a related theme: re-wilding your garden; knowing more about and increasing recycling; making compost; and perhaps making small bug hotels to take away. The most important thing is to make people feel there is something that they can do and to stimulate them to get on with it with their friends, neighbours, and families. Small changes made by many people add up to a lot of change. Come along to a Drop-in and put your own ideas into our suggestion box. The initiative starts in January and more will appear on the website and on the notice boards before then.

** More information about this can be found on the Friends' website.*

Wildlife Notes by Sue Yates

We are used to seeing the foxes strolling through the Nature Trail and indeed there is a den in front of the Hide, but recently there have been many sightings of a rather tame adult fox out in the Flower Garden. It seems to enjoy having visitors take its photograph and possibly peanuts have been welcomed. A healthy-looking specimen – keep a look out for this smart new arrival.

The new team of Cherry Simpkin and Cindy Sheeham have changed the display boards on to Autumn. It is always nice to see the russet colours and fungus displays to cheer us up on dismal autumn days. We were also lucky enough to be given a lovely yellowy pumpkin by the team from the Orchard – thank you. Winter appropriate displays will be up for our 21 December session.

To add to our large wasp nest, hornet nest and Queen wasp nest we now also have on display a splendid nest from the Park, built ingeniously around the branches of a hawthorn tree. In November we will have our bird feeders out, giving visitors the opportunity to see the various types available. Younger visitors will be able to make bird feeders from apples and sunflower seeds.

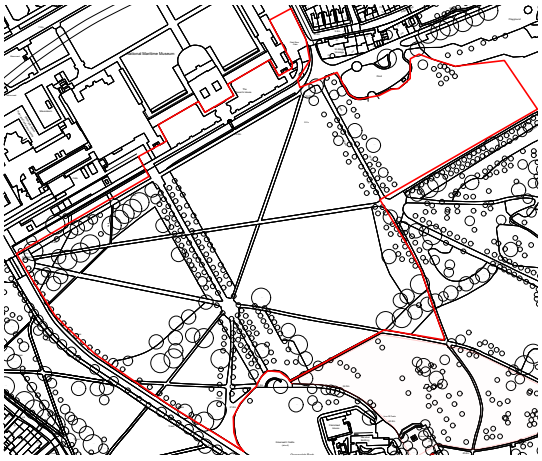
You will see from Dates for your Diary that Julia Holland has kindly planned ahead five Sunday Morning Bird Walks so that Friends don't have to rely on the notice boards to know when they are happening. Last year the late December walk was very popular – an opportunity to get out of the house and breathe some fresh air. Julia will also guide a walk on 26 January to link in with the RSPB Big Garden Bird Watch. We always participate in what is the longest running bird survey in the world in the Wildlife Centre, but having the guided walk on that weekend is a real bonus.

Watching European Football in Greenwich Park: EURO 2020 Fan Zone

Our summer newsletter contained the press release from The Royal Parks which announced, without any consultation, that The Royal Parks Board "can confirm that we will be hosting the screening [of EURO 2020 football matches] in Greenwich Park, in the Queen's Field".

Consultation sessions held at the Greenwich Forum by the Greater London Authority (GLA) in July showed that this would involve erecting fencing around almost the whole of the northern part of the Park (see plan below).

Building work would start in late May ready for the start of EURO 2020 on 12 June. The final match is on Sunday 12 July. It is expected that it will take two or more weeks for the structures to be dismantled and the Park to return to normal. During EURO 2020 there will be a minimum of 6 and a maximum of 12 matches (including the semi-final and final) shown to an audience of up to 30,000 people for each match. With the permission of Royal Museums Greenwich, two giant screens will be erected on either side of the Queen's House, with two more on either side of the Queen's Field half way from the herbaceous border to the foot of the slope below the Observatory.



So for a maximum of 12 days of football, the state and full enjoyment of the Park will be disrupted for two months. As the plan shows, access to the Observatory will have to be up the Avenue and back along Blackheath Avenue. On non-match days, the Queen's Field will be accessible by only one entrance from the east and one from the west through the fencing. The path beside the herbaceous border will remain open along its entire length.

On between 6 and 8 non-match days, it is intended to hold 'Community Events' within the fenced off area. Options being explored by the organisers include structuring these event days' activities around themes such as: sports; health and well-being; arts and crafts; and heritage.

The Friends' Committee is extremely concerned about this loss of peacefulness and freedom of movement within the Park for so long; and about the impact of such a major event where the potential number of attendees is significantly greater for this relayed event than those for the live events of the 2012 Olympics. We sent a letter on

Continued on Page 4

THE VIEW from the Park

Graham Dear, Park Manager

It would be fair to say that the Park Manager's life has been dominated by the Greenwich Park Revealed project for most of this year. That does not mean that it hasn't been very rewarding. The Park we all love needs some capital investment and the Heritage Lottery Fund (now National Lottery Heritage Fund) is the best route for major investment. The Royal Parks to their credit are underwriting the match funding required for the project.

In August we submitted the round 2 application for a £4.8m grant as part of an overall project cost of £10.5m. The application goes to the NLHF committee on 16 December and we should hear the result soon after.

Many of you will have visited the consultation days in the Park but for those who were not able to, details of the project proposals are on The Royal Parks website.

We are now working on the planning application for the project which will be lodged with the Borough this month.

Meanwhile, the day to day work of the Park continues. One notable project for the summer was the completion of the playground masterplan, thanks to a £350k grant from The London Marathon Trust. Our landscape team at headquarters, Jane Pelly and Avra Archer, worked with consultant landscape architect Matthew Wigan and Greenwich Parents' Voice, a support group for parents of children with disabilities, to produce a design that was fully inclusive for all children with the emphasis on natural play. It has proved a big hit with local children. In the first month of opening, visitor numbers to the playground increased by 38 per cent.

April and Technical Assistant Adam Stoter

Our team of 20 plus gardeners do a great job of tending the Park. It is hard to pick out individuals for praise but notable successes for me have included the herbaceous border in front of the Queen's House which is looked after by skilled gardener April and her volunteer. It has looked extremely good this year. New recruit, Alex, took up residence in the Queen's Orchard in March. Helped by an incredible army of volunteer gardeners, she has done a terrific job all year. The Queen's Orchard just gets better and better.

I am hoping for a white Christmas this year as it is my turn to be working over the festive season. I don't mind as a walk around the Park is a great way to spend some time over the holiday.

Park People

Christine Sheffield – Admin Officer in the Park Office

Christine with her beekeeping equipment

At her desk, immediately inside the Park Office, Christine Sheffield is very much the welcoming and helpful 'front of house' face of the Park.

So what does her work involve? "I cover a wide range of administrative functions. I field the majority of emails and telephone calls to the Park, either dealing with them myself or passing them on to colleagues. I welcome visitors to the Office, usually people on official business or bringing deliveries, but also members of the public with queries about the Park. My job also involves the purchasing and invoicing of goods and services. I'm responsible for dealing with requests to use the Park's facilities, such as hiring the cricket pitch, booking the cricket pavilion, and applications to stage events such as charity runs and walks and to hold large picnics."

Christine, who lives in Bexleyheath and has two adult children, joined the Park in 2005. Her previous career was in the Civil Service, mainly in the former Department of Social Services and Benefits Agency. In both careers she has enjoyed "working with people on a one-to-one basis."

She has also particularly enjoyed the initiative which she took four years ago, as part of her personal development programme, to train as a beekeeper. Many Friends will have seen the hives she established in the Queen's Orchard. Although she moved the hives, six months ago, to a more suitable site in the nursery next to the Deer Park, the bees continue to thrive, and have produced more honey for sale since their move.

Christine suggests that anyone interested in beekeeping as a hobby should first contact their local branch of the British Beekeepers Association, details of which can be found on the BBKA website. "You will be able to handle a hive of bees in the warmer weather under supervision, and can then see if beekeeping is for you."

Finally, which is her favourite part of the Park? "Oh, it has to be the Queen's Orchard."

From Helen Wallis; Partnerships & Community Engagement Officer

I started working for the Greenwich Park Revealed (GPR) project last October and can't believe how time has flown!

Since then, we have held six public consultations in the Park, delivered numerous talks to local organisations, been out and about meeting over 30 community groups and consulted with a wide range of landscape and tree experts to shape the project. We have also established partnerships to pilot and assess activities ranging from outdoor theatre performances, to horticultural training placements and new volunteering opportunities. So, what have we learnt?

Generally, there has been huge support for the project, particularly for the new public space and opportunities that the Learning Centre will bring. The most common concerns related to traffic and cycling – these are outside the scope of GPR but are being addressed through the Royal Parks Movement Strategy (available on the Royal Parks website).

The pilot activities have worked well, and we will roll out improved, extended versions over the next four years if we secure the lottery funding. The community archaeology volunteer project was particularly successful, attracting 28 new volunteers and unearthing a well-preserved WW2 air raid shelter and artefacts including a lead toy soldier, Roman and Medieval pottery and Neolithic flint tools. The story of the excavation was covered by local and national press. Another success was the mobility buggy trial, with disability rights charity, REAL, giving the scheme a thumbs up and our new volunteer driver, Gerry providing a sterling service. Eventually we aim to make the buggies 100 per cent volunteer led, as this model has worked well in Hyde Park. Meanwhile, Jill, our new Herbaceous Border volunteer has been out rain or shine, helping April every Tuesday; and Future Gardener trainees, Gemini and Lindon have completed work placements with Gavin Jones landscape staff, all helping to keep the Park looking its best.

Christmas trees – 15% discount

Capital Christmas Trees will again be providing trees for sale in the outer Royal Parks. The Greenwich store will have a large range of trees to choose from including Nordman, Noble and Fraser firs. It will be situated as usual close to the Blackheath Gate and will be open on 23 and 24 November and then daily from 29 November to 22 December from 8am to 5.45pm. A selection of potted trees, stands, lights, decorations and wreaths will also be on sale.

Just present your membership card when making your payment to get a discount on your purchase.

EURO 2020 Fan Zone *Continued from Page 2*

13 September to Loyd Grossman CBE, Chairman of The Royal Parks Board, expressing our concerns and objections, writing that "Greenwich Park was never intended to accommodate 30,000 people for a prolonged period" and asking for an assurance that "the board will never again support such a project in Greenwich Park". He replied setting out the background to the Board's decision, and how it will all be arranged to minimise the loss of this amenity so that it "was not detrimental" to local people and tourists alike. There would be no loss of funding and any damage would be made good after the event. Both letters have been posted on the Friends' website and we alerted members on our email list to this. Nearly all those who responded were firmly against the idea.

We, along with members of the four other local amenity societies, have attended meetings with representatives of the GLA and Loudsound, the company contracted to undertake the management of the arrangements, to learn more about what is planned and to make our concerns clear. This has been useful but much more clarification is needed.

Before the screenings and events can take place, the Royal Borough of Greenwich (RBG) must approve a planning application which has just been made public. It will cover issues beyond the remit of the Friends such as transport arrangements, the levels of noise allowed and the management of people in and around the centre of Greenwich. An application for a licence to sell alcohol on the premises has also been submitted.

We are watching developments carefully and will comment on both applications. We shall be pressing for very stringent conditions to be applied to any decision to go ahead. We will keep you updated on the Friends' website and via email for those who have given us an address.

As we go to press we have just been notified of a letter from the GLA to local residents, giving more details about the event and inviting them to a further consultation session on 18 November. We have let members on our email list know about this and also posted the letter on our website.

Outing to Severndroog Castle

In early September 40 Friends met at the castle. Numbers are limited by the size and structure of the building, but luckily as it was a fine sunny day it was possible for half the party to be given the castle tour while the others could take the option of the self guided walk through Castle Wood – which forms part of the London Green Chain Walk – to the Secret and Victorian Walled Gardens and back.

In the castle we climbed the narrow spiral staircase up to the upper two floors where Ian Small, Community Liaison Officer, and another very knowledgeable volunteer, Iris Dove, took us in separate groups through the background to the construction of the castle by Lady Anne James in memory of her husband Sir William James; about his role as director of the East India Company in capturing the fortress of Suvarnadurg in 1755 – the reason for the castle's existence; and its subsequent history and development up to its present day restoration in the hands of the Castle Preservation Trust. Those prepared to take on more stairs were then treated to the spectacular panorama from the castle roof platform of central London and beyond. After all this physical effort, the tearoom on the ground floor proved an added attraction. This was a truly fascinating visit which we would encourage members to experience for themselves. The castle is open during the winter months on Sundays from 10.30am to 3.30pm.

Friends' concert season again planned for next summer

Our 2019 concert season of Bandstand concerts, which concluded on August Bank Holiday, was blessed with fine weather throughout, and no concert had to be cancelled or even interrupted. Once again all the concerts, which the Friends pay for and organise, attracted large and enthusiastic audiences.

We propose to stage a similar programme next summer, with details in our Spring Newsletter.

Friends of Greenwich Park

Chairman: Liz Coyle, 3 Orchard Drive, SE3 0QP Tel: 020 8852 8831
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

Bird Walk: Meet at the Blackheath Gate **
Sunday 24 November *8.30 am*

The London 10 and 5K Mo Run
Saturday 30 November *9.30am*

'Drop in' at the Wildlife Centre*
Saturday 30 November *1-3pm*

History Research Group meeting in the Wildlife Centre*
Saturday 7 December *11.00am*
Parking permits available to be requested in advance on *grenparkpast@gmail.com*

Run through Greenwich Park
Saturday 21 December *10am*

'Drop in' at the Wildlife Centre*
Saturday 21 December *1-3pm*

Bird Walk: Meet at the Blackheath Gate**
Sunday 29 December *8.30am*

'Drop in' at the Wildlife Centre*
Saturday 25 January *1-3pm*

Bird Walk: Meet at the Blackheath Gate **
Sunday 26 January *8.30am*
Linked to the RSPB Big Garden Bird Watch

Bird Walk: Meet at the Blackheath Gate**
Sunday 23 February *8.30am*

'Drop in' at the Wildlife Centre*
Saturday 29 February *1-3pm*

'Drop in' at the Wildlife Centre*
Saturday 28 March *1-3pm*

Bird Walk: Meet at the Blackheath Gate **
Sunday 29 March *8.30am*

** All the Bird Walks will led by Julia Holland. Binoculars are very helpful.

*** 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

Printed by Greycot Press Limited, Unit N5, Europa Trading Estate, Fraser Road, Erith, Kent DA8 1QL

Friends website: www.friendsofgreenwichpark.org.uk