FRIENDS OF GREENWICH PARK
# NEWSLETTER

Spring 2020 Registered Charity No: 1029933 Number 84

## Greenwich Park Revealed – funding application succeeds

The great news for the New Year was that The Royal Parks' round 2 application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund for a major 'transformational' grant had been successful. We congratulate Graham Dear, Park Manager, Jane Pelly, The Royal Parks Head of Landscaping, and all others who have contributed to this outcome and are delighted that their hard work has been rewarded.

**Graham Dear writes:**

We did it. After four years and a lot of hard work by a lot of people, the National Lottery Heritage Fund/BIG Lottery Community Fund, 'Parks for People' grant programme awarded the Greenwich Park Revealed project £4.5 million. The total project budget of £10.5m will be made up with an external funding target of £2m and the rest from The Royal Parks' own reserves.

It's a testament to this great park which we all love that the board of the Heritage Fund has recognised its importance and the challenges we face, including a rising population in London and new pests and diseases of trees, and how to give back more to its users with careful investment.

The decision was embargoed until January when we held a celebration breakfast to thank all our supporters. We combined this with the first stage of our tree avenue restoration, gapping up missing lime trees on The Avenue. It's a big improvement already.

Taking the project forward is going to take a little time. We need to recruit new staff, including a building project manager, landscape project manager, a part-time archaeologist and administrative support. Then there is the matter of planning consent. The application was submitted in December but has only just been validated and now goes out for consultation. We do however have listed building consent for repairs to the Bandstand and the Conduit Head below One Tree Hill. Both are very exciting projects. We will have an electricity supply to the Bandstand, hopefully by September, which means the wonderful programme of concerts run by the Friends will no longer need a generator in future. The Conduit Head needs some repairs to the brickwork but we shall also unbrick the doorway, survey and map the underground tunnels and then brick it back up. We may use a drone and digital lasers to map the tunnels; we really do not know what we will find.

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## Wildlife Notes by Sue Yates

At the end of January 2020 The Royal Parks declared a climate emergency. Our team at the Wildlife Centre Drop-in sessions plan to use the opportunity to raise awareness of some of the issues and suggest ways in which we can support this initiative.

We can already see that the pattern of weather in Greenwich is changing. We keep records of visitor numbers and weather conditions at all our openings. There were 933 visitors last year, but instead of the usual pattern, with maximum numbers in the summer and lower footfall in early spring and late autumn, the best months for attendance were February and March, when the weather was warm or very warm, while June and July, when the weather was either very wet or very hot, attracted fewer people.

**Pop-up planting:** In the past we have offered vegetable planting at some sessions. Now we hope to do this at every session and include wild flowers that have accessible nectar for insects as well as vegetables. We will be providing displays to explain the role of insect pollinators in food production. The planting tables will be coming out of the Wildlife Centre and into the flower garden, and in better weather even over to the Bandstand. Visitors will leave with their biodegradable pot in a paper carrier to grow on at home.

We will also be planting under the hedge outside the Centre, and following on with bulbs that provide early nectar in the autumn.

**Travel to the Park:** We will be updating our system for recording the number of visitors to the Centre, including asking them how they arrived. The Heritage Lottery grant will fund more parking spaces for cyclists, and we aim to produce a walking map to encourage locals to pop on their walking boots and explore all parts of the Park. We are also reviewing the current advice on the website about arriving by bus, to make it more user-friendly.

**Reducing plastic usage:** Everyone now knows about the damage caused by single-use plastic. That is why the Friends are encouraging people coming to our concerts – see elsewhere in this Newsletter – to bring their picnics in reusable containers.

In our Drop-in sessions we will direct visitors to websites that offer a plastic audit, and we also hope to have craft demonstrations involving recycled material and maybe a talk on improving your compost. If you have further ideas for ways in which we can support this climate change initiative we would love to hear from you. There will be a comments and suggestions book at the Centre which can be used for this purpose.

*Please note that the March and April Drop-ins will not take place - see Dates for your Diary.*

## Dawn Chorus Bird Walk

**Sunday 3 May at 4am**

The walk last year was such an amazing experience and went so smoothly (apart from the shock of the early start) that there will be another one this year. Julia Holland and Julia Maynard have very kindly agreed to lead the walk and help us identify the birds as they join in the chorus. If you would like to participate, it is essential that you fill in the enclosed form and send it back to arrive at least a week before the event. We are entering the Park out of hours and, for security reasons, you will not be able to join the walk if you aren't on the list. It will be worth it.

*You will see from Dates for your Diary that there are two further birds walks planned with Julia Holland and Joe Beale respectively.*

## New Greenwich Park bird booklet

*Joe Beale writes*

The Birds of Greenwich Park booklet is entering the design phase. This booklet, sponsored by the Friends, is a record of all the bird species found in or flying over Greenwich Park, with detailed accounts given for those species seen from 1996-2019. There will be a piece about how the Park's birds change with the seasons, what to look for and when, along with a taste of what happens during migration times, as well as information on how the Park's birds have changed in recent years. There is something for everyone – whether beginner birdwatcher, someone who visits the Park and is interested in the wildlife here, seasoned naturalist or an ecologist planning habitat improvements. The booklet will be illustrated with photographs taken in the Park. The aim is to have it printed by the end of April. It will be available in the park office in due course and this will be announced on the website. We will also email those on the Friends' circulation list. We hope you will enjoy it!

*Redwing - Joe Beale*

## Park People

*Beverly Meekings — Head Gardener*

One of the most popular and admired features of our Park is the wonderful display of plants and flowers – in the Flower Garden, the Herbaceous Border, the Rose Garden, the Orchard, the Observatory Garden, the Playground, the Café and Herb Garden at St Mary's Gate and the hanging baskets at the Blackheath Gate.

All these are under the supervision of Beverly Meekings, the Head Gardener (official title Horticultural Manager), with her team of six qualified gardeners and three apprentices. She is employed by Gavin Jones, the Park contractors, and reports to Alan Young, the contracts manager and, through him, to Michael Loughnane the Park's Assistant Manager.

Beverly's work involves planning and organising the seasonal planting of plants, shrubs and bulbs, the maintenance of the beds through watering, weeding and pruning and then their cutting down and replacement at the end of the season. So what do her days consist of? "I spend a lot of my time out and about in the Park, talking to, instructing and advising the gardening team, but I also spend considerable time working on the garden beds myself – a hands-on task which I very much enjoy. Once a week, Michael and I meet to inspect the beds throughout the Park, assessing progress and planning the work to be done for the week ahead."

Beverly, a mother of three, lives locally, near the river. She originally studied English Literature, gaining a degree from the Open University. This took her into the education sector, where, amongst other things, she taught English as a Foreign Language at Greenwich University and Lewisham College. However, her real love was for horticulture, and she undertook further studies at Greenwich Community College, where she gained the Royal Horticultural Society Level 2 qualification in Horticulture and completed a City & Guilds course in Garden Design. During this time she worked as a gardener in a number of places, including Hall Place Gardens in Bexley, Glasshouses at Ruxley Manor and in Greenwich Park. She was appointed Head Gardener here in April 2019.

What is the biggest challenge in the job? "It is in May, when we have a short window in which to take out all the winter bedding plants and replace them as quickly as possible with the new season's plants. The aim is to complete this within six weeks, and I'm pleased to say that last year we managed it in four weeks!"

How many plants and shrubs are we talking about? "Well, take the Flower Garden. There are 30 beds there and each bed consists of around 1,000 plants, making around 30,000 altogether. And then there are about the same number of bulbs. And that's of course replicated in the other garden beds around the Park."

What changes and improvements across the Park might we see over the rest of this year? "In the Flower Garden, we will be re-designing part of the long northern – 'jungle' – border as an Edwardian border and replacing the irises along the western border. I hope we will also be able to make a start on re-shaping the Rose Garden by replacing four beds. And we will be planting more new limes along The Avenue. In the longer term, following the lottery grant, there will be lots of planting opportunities around the new Learning Centre."

Finally, what is Beverly's favourite part of the Park and time of the year? "The Flower Garden, with its water, wildlife and woodland, and especially in the autumn, with the light dipping and temperatures moderating." And what about the job, after 10 months? "It's the best job I've ever had. I'm using all my skills and achieving my full potential. I couldn't ask for anything more."

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## *Graham Dear, Park Manager writes*

Spring in Greenwich Park is my favourite time of the year. One change Friends will see is in the way we are managing the grassland. Our plan is to 'bring back the butterflies' by increasing substantially the areas of grassland treated as a meadow. About 30 per cent more grassland will be dealt with in this way, left to grow until September and then cut and collected rather than being cut every two weeks as it is at present. There will still be large areas of the Park cut for informal recreation but in the meadow areas we should see an increase in grassland butterflies such as small copper and small heath, and also in grasshoppers and moths which will provide a food supply for birds such as chiffchaff and whitethroat.

*Restoration planting in The Avenue*

2020 will be a busy year for the Park. As I write we have just hosted a successful BIG Half Marathon Festival and look forward to another successful London Marathon, now deferred until the autumn. Then there is the GLA Euro 2020 live-site in June and July in support of the tournament taking place across Europe. I understand the concerns some Friends may have, as it will at times limit access to the Queen's Field. As park manager I am confident that the event can be hosted without any lasting damage to the Park and I shall continue to work with the GLA, event organisers, stakeholders and the Friends' Committee to ensure that any disruption to the park visitors is kept to a minimum.

These are exciting times for the Park and there is a lot to look forward to. I hope to meet many of you too, over the next 12 months.

## The Queen's Orchard

Though closed to the public during winter, the Queen's Orchard was cared for throughout the season by its dedicated volunteers. The fortnightly get-togethers saw the seeding of 2020's crops, the clearing of old and planting of new lavender, and a spring clean in anticipation of a new shed.

Two bigger jobs were also on the timetable. First was the removal of several of the large wooden raised beds and their replacement by new ones. Hats off to the Gavin Jones team who carried out this difficult job, the benefits of which will be seen later in the year as the new beds produce their mix of vegetables and fruits. Second was a new, larger insect house, positioned at the western end of the orchard and constructed from old pallets. Painted and filled in with insect-friendly materials, it's hoped that this bug hotel will have plenty of pollinating guests checking in.

The Queen's Orchard reopened in March, which also saw the welcome return of the Royal Parks' Alex Andrews, whose enthusiasm and planning skills made 2019 such an excellent year in the orchard. Alex and the volunteers will be working throughout the spring and summer, and another open day is planned for Sunday 13 September when the public will be able to take home some of the fruit and vegetables in return for donations.

As we go to press a number of major and smaller sports and other events and activities are being cancelled or postponed in response to the coronavirus spread. We will keep you updated on significant Park or Friends' developments via our website and emails.

## From Helen Wallis; Partnerships & Community Engagement Officer

First, I just want to say a big thanks to all the Friends who contributed to the success of the lottery bid. From providing input into focus groups, public engagement, researching the Park's hidden history and surveying visitors, your expertise, experience and hard work was vital to The Royal Parks achieving this great result.

The funding means that my role as PACE Officer will continue over the full four years of the project. In addition to funding new staff, including a Community Archaeologist who will work until 2023 on excavations, archiving and an oral history project, the project will support upward progression for our apprentices and eight pre-apprentice roles to provide experienced entrants for The Royal Parks Apprenticeship scheme. Our first pre-apprentice will be starting his paid placement with the Park's contractors, Gavin Jones, in mid-April.

We are currently in the process of inviting arts organisations to tender for the cultural events and activities that we will deliver through the project. These include outdoor theatre and cinema, world music bandstand concerts and family sing-alongs this summer. We will also be extending our education offer to include more introductory natural history courses for adults, subsidised school sessions and free family activity days. In terms of community engagement, we've had enthusiastic students from The John Roan School helping with bulb planting in the Flower Garden and hellebore planting in the Observatory Garden.

Finally, another big thank you to the volunteers who helped me with the Playground visitor surveys this month and the volunteers in the Queen's Orchard, Wildlife Centre and History Research Group as well as the Volunteer Community Rangers. We will be recruiting more volunteers during the project, so keep an eye on The Royal Parks' website and Facebook page if you'd like to get involved.

## Watching European football in the Park

In our last newsletter we alerted you to the broad proposals for the use of the Queen's Field and adjacent areas as a UEFA EURO2020Fanzone for the screening of up to 12 home matches and running six to eight Community Days in June and July.*

We, along with the other local amenity societies, raised strong objections to the Planning and Licensing applications submitted to Greenwich Council by Loudsound, the company contracted by the GLA to organise the event, proposing a number of mitigating conditions to offset the impact on the Park and the surrounding residential areas should it go ahead. In particular we asked for the proposed attendance on match days to be reduced from 30,000 to 20,000 – more in line with the attendance level of the live events of the 2012 Olympics. Many members wrote to us endorsing our views. Both our submissions can be seen on the Friends' website.

The Planning Board meeting in particular was well attended with objections and concerns heard from the amenity societies and local residents. In the event the board decided to approve the application by an overwhelming majority (nine – one) on the grounds that this would benefit the borough and its residents as a whole. The Licensing Committee followed suit, agreeing to a condition clarifying an earlier deadline for the sale of alcohol on late match days than specified in the licensing schedule.

So in brief: the build will start in late May, with the events running from 12 June to 12 July, followed by the structures being dismantled and the Park access returned to normal towards the end of July. We will keep those of you on our email list updated on developments, especially plans for the Community Days where the details are still unclear.

**Postponement until next year now seems very likely.*

# Friends' Festival of Music in the Park

We have another terrific programme of concerts lined up for this summer, all of which are organised and paid for by the Friends.

**The Phoenix Dixieland Jazz Band is back for our Midsummer Jazz Concert**

Our renowned Midsummer Jazz Concert takes place on **Sunday 21 June**. The Phoenix Dixieland Jazz Band will again be bringing their brilliant New Orleans foot-tapping style to the charming and enclosed Observatory Garden.

The Garden will open at noon, with the concert beginning at 12.30 and ending at 3pm. Come and enjoy the party. There will be a bar, ice cream and refreshments. Just a reminder that seating is not available in the Garden, so do bring a rug or chair if you don't want to sit directly on the grass. Please note that dogs (apart from guide dogs) are not permitted in the Garden.

This is an event for the whole family. Tickets booked in advance are £5, with under-16s free. Tickets on the gate, if any are still available for this popular event, will be £7. A booking form is enclosed with this newsletter. Tickets are also available online at *www.friendsofgreenwichpark.org.uk*

We are very grateful to our supporters – Davy's Wineshop of Greenwich, The Clarendon Hotel and Greenwich Picturehouse – who are donating prizes for a raffle to be held during the concert.

**Twelve Bandstand concerts this summer**

We are once again staging our hugely popular programme of free concerts at the Bandstand, which will take place on every Sunday from 28 June to 30 August. In addition, to start us off, there will be a Saturday concert on 27 June featuring local young musicians and, to bring the series to a close, a Bank Holiday concert on Monday 31 August. Concerts normally start at 3pm and end at 5pm. As usual, our bands cover a wide range of musical styles. See the full programme in the flyer enclosed with this Newsletter.

**Reducing rubbish collection in the Park**

Collecting, sorting and disposing of rubbish left in the Park has been increasing steadily in recent years. Each year the Park now collects some 120 tons of rubbish, which costs around £150,000 annually. The Park management is seeking ways of reducing the amount of their budget which is taken by this activity and which could be better spent in other ways.

The Friends wish to support the Park in this initiative. We will therefore be asking our members and visitors attending our concerts to help by taking their packaging and other rubbish home with them and disposing of it there. And to help the environment by reducing the use of plastic, we will encourage them to bring their picnics in reusable containers.

## Friends AGM is on 4 May

The 28th AGM takes place on Monday, 4 May at 7.30 for 8pm in the Howe Lecture Theatre, University of Greenwich, Old Royal Naval College.
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:*

Sophie Spencer is standing down due to ill health at this AGM.

Tony Butler, Tina Challacombe, Brian Starkey and Sue Yates stand for re-election.

Jonathan Chandler, Clive Corlett and Lesley Jones 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 Michael Loughnane, Assistant Park Manager, and Helen Wallis, PACE Officer, will take questions about work being done in the Park and the Greenwich Park Revealed project following the success of the Heritage Lottery Fund bid.

## Dates for Your Diary

**'Drop Ins' at the Wildlife Centre***
*These have been cancelled for March and April in the light of the current coronavirus situation.*

**Bird Walk: Meet at the Blackheath Gate****
Led by Julia Holland
*Sun 29 March* *8.30am*

**International Dawn Chorus Day Bird Walk: meet outside the Blackheath Gate****
*Sun 3 May* *4am*

**Annual General Meeting**
*Mon 4 May*
(Members only)
Queen Anne Building, University of Greenwich. 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.

**Bird Walk: Meet at the Blackheath Gate****
Led by Joe Beale on behalf of the London Natural History Society and the Friends
*Sat 16 May* *9am*

**'Drop In' at the Wildlife Centre***
*Sat 30 May* *1pm - 4pm*

**Meeting of the History Research Group in the Park Office**
*Sat 6 June* *10.30am*
Everyone welcome.

**Jazz in the Park** Booking now
*Sun 21 June*
Tickets from Friends of Greenwich Park, 52 Greenwich Park Street, SE10 9LT. Tel 020 8853 2150. For online booking see left hand column.

**'Drop In' at the Wildlife Centre***
*Sat 27 June* *1pm - 4pm*
** binoculars are 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.

## Local Stop press:

Café Rouge in Greenwich has increased the discount rate for Friends to 25%. Check the Friends' website for when you can claim this as well as discounts offered by other businesses.

## 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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