FRIENDS OF GREENWICH PARK
NEWSLETTER

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Archaeological Dig at the Anglo-Saxon Burial Ground Site

Volunteer Team Hard at Work at the Barrows, October 2021 *Photo: Andrew Mayfield*

Andrew Mayfield, the new Community Archaeologist describes his first project. He writes as follows:

Greetings to all Friends of Greenwich Park! As I write, we are close to completing our first archaeology project, on the site of the Anglo-Saxon barrow cemetery. This project is a super example of blending biodiversity improvements and archaeological investigations at the Park. Working with Alice-Rose Hoile, Senior Landscape Architect for Greenwich Park Revealed, we have managed the removal of the old tarmac path that bisected the barrows site. We are removing the path so that we can restore the setting of the barrows and increase the extent of acid grassland, which is a key habitat for pollinators.

I have really enjoyed working with the Friends' History Research Group and other key local contacts to draw up a chronology for this nationally important site. We know that there are around 40 mounds, dated to between the 6th and 8th centuries AD. The dating evidence comes from the antiquarian exploits of the Reverend James Douglas, a former soldier, cleric and chaplain to the Prince of Wales. In January 1784 he opened over twenty of the mounds, finding weapons, beads, cloth, and wool in a series of timber lined graves. Many of his finds were donated to the Ashmolean Museum and we are in the process of seeing what, if anything, they have from Greenwich. His backfilled excavation holes are distinctive and can be seen in many of the mounds to this day. He also noted that a 'keeper' called Thomas Hearne had dug on the site 70 years before him. We thought at first that he meant a park keeper, but there is no record of a Greenwich Park employee called Hearne. Thanks to the Friends, we now think that this individual may have been a 'keeper' of the Bodleian Library - the main research library of the University of Oxford, and one of the oldest libraries in Europe. He remains an enigmatic figure…

Continued on P2

Continued from P1

In October 2021 we started work on the site. The first task was to enclose the project area in chestnut pale fencing that will be up till next summer. Working closely with Historic England, the location of five trenches was agreed. Two were sited west of the mounds, to look for evidence of flattened archaeology. In the 1840s the Admiralty decided that the site was the perfect spot for a new reservoir. A public outcry (and a very early public archaeology campaign) halted the work, but not before some damage to the mounds was wrought. It is unclear quite how extensive this damage was, but we hope to learn more from future geophysical survey work. Two trenches were sited on the central mound cluster and the fifth to the east, beyond the mounds.

What have we learnt? The archaeological work has answered several questions about the site but posed a wealth of new ones! We think we understand the way in which the ground was prepared, and the mounds were constructed. Layers in the mounds suggest they were built up over time and may hint at maintenance work to them, as you might pay for a grave to be tended. We have not recovered any Saxon finds to help refine the dating of the site. We are recording our trenches before we backfill the site, hopefully in a slightly more effective fashion than Douglas and his workmen! Over the winter months we will be processing finds from the excavations. If you would like to get involved or have any questions, do email me at *amayfield@royalparks.org.uk and see https://www.royalparks.org.uk/parks/greenwich-park/things-to-see-and-do/ancient-greenwich/anglo-saxon-barrow-cemetery* for further information on the project.

Park People: Helen Wallis, Partnership & Community Engagement Officer

Helen Wallis in Greenwich Park

Helen Wallis joined the Park in 2018 as part of the team set up to bid for, and subsequently successfully secure, the multi-million National Lottery grant for the Greenwich Park Revealed project. She played an important part in putting the bid together, writing its activity plan and helping with the extensive consultation events and outreach programme with the local community (which of course included the Friends) that were essential if the bid were to succeed.

Once the bid was successful, Helen's contract was extended so that she became a member of the team responsible, under Graham Dear's leadership, for implementing the project. Her role as Partnership & Community Engagement Officer involves a variety of tasks required as a condition of receiving the lottery grant, including the recruitment and management of volunteers involved in the project, assisting with the tendering process, chairing meetings with stakeholders (again including the Friends), organising walks and visits, and, as before, running an extensive outreach programme within the local community. Some of these functions involve working in the evenings and weekends, so Helen needs to work flexible hours, which she is happy to do. For the purpose of satisfying the grant conditions, the local community is regarded as those living within three kilometres of the Park, which in practice comprises mainly West and East Greenwich, Deptford and the Isle of Dogs. The Isle of Dogs - really? "Yes," says Helen "you would be surprised how many visitors we get from across the river, a lot of whom - despite having green spaces over there – regard us as their local park, including parents who bring their children specifically because of our playground."

Helen was born in Lambeth but spent most of her childhood in the countryside near Portsmouth. She returned to London in 1986, working initially in Woolwich market and serving at the Tramshed bar. She then returned to education at Middlesex University, obtaining a degree in English and Combined Studies, together with a teaching qualification. That led to a period teaching English, mainly to refugees, then 11 years at the London Wildlife Trust, eventually managing a small nature reserve in west London, before joining us at Greenwich. She now lives in Islington, travelling to and from work by bike.

What have been the highlights of her time here? "I really enjoyed the butterfly surveys carried out with volunteers, and it's great meeting all the local community groups." What gives her most job satisfaction? "Lovely colleagues, working with wildlife and exploring the Park's social and colonial history." And her favourite parts of the Park? "The lookout at the top of Crooms Hill, Queen Caroline's Bath, the Ignatius Sancho plaque and the historic graffiti on Conduit House by the Reservoir."

Finally, does she have time for any outside interests? "I'm a cat lover, with three of them, and I'm hoping to go to Romania to help with some neutering and re-homing there. I'm interested in anything to do with the natural world, especially plants and insects. I'm addicted to political and microbiology podcasts. And I like going out to gay discos!"

History Research Group – Can You Help?

The group has been busy over the last few months pulling together the research carried out by members to go onto the new history website which we plan to launch early in 2022. It will be the place for both visitors and locals to find out about the history of the Park, telling the stories of its buildings, gardens, landscape, the people connected to it and much more. With Greenwich Park enjoying such a long and rich history, there's a lot of work still to be done.

We would love to hear from you if you're interested in helping with our work, whether you want to do original, in-depth research on a subject or summarise existing information for the website. If you'd like to join us or want to find out more, please contact **info@friendsofgreenwichpark.org.uk**. We are currently meeting online once a month, so hope you can join us for our next meeting.

The Greenwich Park Revealed (GPR) project is bringing new opportunities for the group to work with Andrew Mayfield, the Community Archaeologist, getting involved in discovering new information about different sites in the Park. Work on the Anglo-Saxon Burial Site and possible new finds might tell us more about these early settlers. As the GPR project progresses, new aerial and ground surveys will help to identify further potential sites for excavation and interpretation. So let us have any information – memories and research. For example did you know the barrows were once known as Plum Pudding Hill?

Queen's Orchard update

After a pandemic pause in 2020, the Queen's Orchard held its annual harvest day on 5th September this year. Warm, sunny weather and the friendly orchard volunteers welcomed more than 300 eager visitors through the gate, there to make donations that help buy seeds, plants and equipment for the year to come. Herb posies, lavender bags and homemade cakes were on offer, alongside orchard produce including onions, blackberries, apples and rhubarb. Beautiful cards featuring photos of the orchard taken by volunteers were popular, as was the "guess the weight of the pumpkin" competition, especially with younger visitors (this year's specimen came in at a very respectable 7 kilos). At the end of the day the hard work of the volunteers and Alex Andrews from Gavin Jones had been rewarded by the kind words and generous donations of the visitors, many of them first-timers who were as delighted with the Queen's Orchard as the gardening team and regular visitors are.The orchard is now closed for winter, reopening in spring 2022, with the volunteers keeping an eye on things during the colder months.

Volunteers preparing for the Open Day *Photo: Alex Andrews*

Regular Sunday Morning Bird Walks in Greenwich Park

Our bird walks are now on a more regular basis which helps you plan your diary. Julia Holland has agreed to lead a group on the last Sunday of the month (19th December being the exception) from now until 27th March 2022. The meeting place is inside the park near the Blackheath Gate at 8.30 am. You don't have to be an expert, everybody is welcome and you are sure to learn much. It is free and you don't need to book but you would find binoculars very helpful. The reports on our past Bird Walks can be found on the website. Look under Wildlife and scroll down to Birds where you will find the reports as well as some useful tips to help you get going from Tony Duckett, conservation officer at the Royal Parks (just click on the link). His article includes a link to a nice Bird Spotter sheet specifically for Greenwich Park.

Having said all this, our last bird walk on 31st October was completely rained off, a great pity since by 11am it was a lovely day. The weekend of 29th-30th January 2022 is the annual RSPB Big Garden Bird Watch. This started in 1979 as an activity for junior members but was taken up by Blue Peter, resulting in 34,000 submissions, quite a 'flying' start. This survey, spanning over 40 years, is the longest-running citizen science project in the world and the Friends are proud to have supported it for many years. Our bird walk on 30th January will have the Big Garden Bird Watch in mind. By contributing to the survey over the years participants have provided valuable data which has enabled long term trends in bird populations to be monitored, which is so important in these times of climate change.

The new Tree Walks in Greenwich Park

Those of you who receive email alerts from the Friends will know that there were two tree walks led by Monika Dunkel on Sunday 10th October. The number of spaces was limited to 18 per walk both for Covid spacing and to ensure that visitors could see what was being pointed out. They booked up within the hour and were a great success.

So it has been decided to make Tree Walks a regular feature and we are pleased to say that Monika has agreed to lead two walks in January 2022 – at 12.30 p.m. on Saturday 15th and Saturday 22nd. Again we are offering it free exclusively to our members and we know that many more people will want to attend than there are places for. We know that newsletters can arrive at different times and so to be as fair as possible we plan to open bookings **on the website at 10.00am on 8th December**. There will be 18 spaces and a short waiting list for each of the two walks. Once these have been filled the list will be removed. The successful applicants will receive an email with the details. It will be on a first-come first-served basis. Could those who were able to go on the first walks please refrain from booking on this occasion.

The Drop-ins in and around the Wildlife Centre.

Those of you who have visited our wildlife sessions will know what a long thin building we are based in. It would get very crowded and was clearly totally unsuitable with the virus around. All activities in the park came to a halt in March 2020 and even when outdoor activities recommenced it was obvious that our building would not have been safe. However, we were able to restart the drop-ins out on the grass in the Flower Garden using two large gazebos as shelter. This has worked very well and in fact most volunteers enjoyed being outside in the fresh air and closer to the path. We would like to thank all the volunteers who made this possible but particularly Cindy Sheehan who pulled it all together over the summer and has been so creative. There has been seed planting (later bulb planting), butterfly themes, information on the deer and recycling and climate change awareness activities.

However, with the autumn chill setting in and the possibility of sodden gazebos, our outdoor activities have come to a halt. Covid is ever present, so sadly we have decided that we must close until next spring.

Discounts

jdm Estate Agents We are delighted to announce that jdm Estate Agents in Blackheath have joined the local companies which support the Friends by offering discounts to our members. For anyone selling or letting a property through them the discounts would be very attractive. They have said that their agency fee for selling would be 0.9% (a discount of 10%) plus VAT and there would be a reduction of £100 to FOGP members on the fee for arranging a letting of their property. Please present jdm with your valid membership card when you first get in touch with them. We think this is a very generous discount which will be appreciated by our members.
Other companies continue to support our members with discounts:

Blackheath Eyecare Opticians 16 Old Dover Road, Blackheath, tel: 02083051060. www.blackheatheyecare.co.uk
25% discount on second pair of spectacles (same prescription, not in conjunction with any other offer).

Davy's Wine Shop 171 Greenwich High Road, tel: 020 7716 3322. 10% discount off wine and beer (does not include spirits and cigars and not in conjunction with other offers). Also available: buy any wine in the Wine Shop and take it to Davy's Bar and Restaurant next door for free corkage all day Tuesday & Wednesday and lunchtime (12-4pm) Thursday & Friday. (Not available with set menus or any other discounted food offers.)

Benugo Catering outlets in the Park 10% discount on purchases of food and drink

Waterstones Greenwich Branch 10% discount on all merchandise except those items already discounted

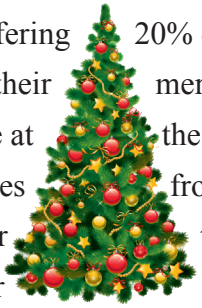
Café Rouge Greenwich 25% discount on food 12 noon to close Sunday to Thursday

Boating lake Closed now but discounts expected next year.

Please remember to show your membership card to obtain any of the above discounts.

Christmas Trees for Sale:
20% discount for Friends.

Pines and Needles are offering 20% discount on their merchandise on sale at the Blackheath Gates from 20th November to 24th December 2021



Friends' Concerts 2022 – Advance Notice

Following the success of this year's bandstand concerts we are looking to stage a full concert season next summer.
We very much hope to reinstate our annual Midsummer Jazz concert in the Observatory Garden on Sunday, 26th June 2022 from 12.30pm to 3pm. Save the date in your diary.
We also hope to hold bandstand concerts on all Sundays in July and August and on August Bank Holiday Monday from 3-5pm. Watch for more details on our website and in our Spring newsletter.

Panorama of a Summer Concert 2021 Photo: Roger Stephens

Dates for your Diary

Bird Walks led by Julia Holland:
Meet at the Blackheath Gate.
Binoculars would be very helpful.
The Bird Walks are open to everyone and are free.

Sunday, 28th November 2021, 8.30am
Sunday, 19th December 2021, 8.30am
Sunday, 30th January 2022, 8.30am
(Linked to the RSPB Big Garden Bird Watch)
Sunday, 27th February 2022, 8.30am
Sunday, 27th March 2022, 8.30am

Midsummer Jazz – Sunday, 26th June 2022

Friends of Greenwich Park
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Annual subscription: UK £5; overseas £10. Cheques to Friends of Greenwich Park with sae please, and sent to the Membership Secretary, or pay online via PayPal at the Friends' website: www.friendsofgreenwichpark.org.uk
All enquiries to: info@friendsofgreenwichpark.org.uk

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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