FRIENDS OF GREENWICH PARK

NEWSLETTER

Spring 2023 Registered Charity No: 1029933 Number 93

GOODBYE TO OUR PARK MANAGER AFTER MORE THAN THIRTEEN YEARS

On 28th February the Friends Committee held a reception at the West Greenwich Library to say thank you to the Friends Volunteers who have helped the Society in so many ways, but particularly in delivering the Newsletter, working with the Wildlife Group, the History Group, developing the Queen's Orchard and generally making us what we are. Tony Butler, the Chair of the Friends, spoke saying the extra work is much appreciated by the Committee.

This was also the occasion to say thank you and farewell from the Friends to Graham Dear as he leaves the Park. Tony said that, though we wished him well in his retirement, we would miss him enormously and were very grateful for all he had done for the Park over the past 13 years (see his last letter to us on page 3). There had been great changes, the Olympics, the restoration of the Queen's Orchard to the Park, and most of all Greenwich Park Revealed. Graham will leave as this vast project comes to fruition following his years of hard work to get everything underway. And of course there were always the day to day elements that make up the regular work of tending such a large park. We owe him a tremendous debt.

Michael Maisey had been commissioned to turn a piece of wood from the Park and made the lovely vase you see in the picture from a piece of a fallen plane tree. As he presented this gift the Chair said he hoped it would remind Graham of the Friends in the years to come.

Tony also took the opportunity to say thank you to Sue Yates and presented her with a pink rose for her garden to remind her of our gratitude for all the work she has done with the Wildlife Group and the Volunteers in the past.

STOP PRESS: MEET THE NEW PARK MANAGER AND PACE OFFICER

We are delighted to welcome Clare Lanes (left) as the new Park Manager and Daniella Briscoe-Peaple (right) as the new PACE (Partnership and Community Engagement) officer who have just been announced. We look forward to meeting them and working with them.

LOST IN THE WILDERNESS: HUNTING FOR A RIFLE RANGE

Andrew Mayfield writes:

One of the George VI pennies used as target practice.

Over the winter of 2022-2023 a small team of Park archaeology volunteers looked for the remains of a lost rifle range in The Wilderness at the south east area of the Park. We know from historic maps and aerial photographs that a small rifle range existed from at least the 1940s, disappearing by the late 1980s. At first the site was very confusing but David Ivison, an ex-Royal Parks employee and member of the Friends History Research Group, wrote to us about his experiences of being a member of The Royal Parks' Rifle Club and his memories of the ranges he shot at. "There was a brick wall with wings on the ends. In front of that would be a small wall with sand placed behind and sloped up the rear wall. On top of the small wall would be a wooden frame which held the targets, probably four or six in a line. These were backed on a hardwood sheet. Every so often the sand would be sifted to retrieve the metal bullets In front of all that, 25 yards away would be a wooden shed with an open front. Firing would be done in the prone position. Depending on the number of targets four to six people would be on the floor. The .22 rifles (owned by The Royal Parks, but some people did have their own rifles) and ammunition were probably stored in a secure cabinet in the Park Keepers' office. Ammunition would be bought on each occasion from the club organiser who would administer the buying and storage. The central parks and the other outer parks would take it in turns to host the inter-parks competition, held every year from 1941 to 1981. Hampton Court were the best team overall and won the Portal Bowl 19 times, including the last 10 times. You may like to know that Greenwich Park won on four occasions: 1952, 1967, 1970 and 1971. The Portal Bowl is now residing at the office in Hampton Court." David's memories helped make sense of what we had found. Three metal posts must have held the targets (on wooden boards), with the sand behind stopping the bullets from travelling any further. Behind the sand we found the footings of a brick wall that would have enclosed the whole structure. Finds from the site included a mass of .22 bullets and even a .22 blank from a pistol. We also recovered several 'shot' 20th century pennies featuring the head of King George VI, which the rifle range users would have stuck on the targets to create a bullseye. Finally, we also identified a range of World War Two shrapnel. We know there was an Anti-Aircraft battery on Blackheath and our shrapnel came from exploded anti-aircraft shells, raining back down having exploded in the sky. Although nothing of the rifle range will be left on show, when anyone visits our new Learning Space they will be standing at the 'targets end' of the old range, where the Portal Bowl prize was once hotly contested.

Park People - Alice-Rose Hoile, Landscape Project Manager - interviewed by Clive Corlett

Ever wondered who is running the various projects that make up the multi-million pound Greenwich Park Revealed (GPR) programme that is now being implemented throughout the Park? Well, in the case of the landscape projects it is Alice-Rose Hoile, a Chartered Landscape Architect, who was appointed Landscape Project Manager in June 2021 and is contracted here until the GPR is completed, which is now expected to be by March 2025.

Alice-Rose grew up abroad with her family before returning to the UK where she studied at Kingston University, obtaining a degree and post-graduate diploma in landscape architecture. She then worked in private practice in London and Kent, and gained on-site experience, notably as a Landscape Supervisor during the legacy transformation of the Olympic Park. But what brought her to Greenwich Park? "I was ready for a new challenge, and I saw the post advertised. It sounded like such an exciting project to be involved with, so I applied for it."

Her job is to project-manage and deliver all the landscape elements within the GPR programme including the transformation of One Tree Hill (which is part-funded by the Friends), the Flower Garden lake, the area near the Vanbrugh Gate, the Wolfe Statue viewing area, the Grand Ascent and the restoration of the parterre banks on what is now Queen's Field – quite a task! Alice-Rose and four colleagues are based at a new Landscape Studio, housed in the main Park Office at Blackheath Gate. From there she is responsible for contract management, monitoring progress and ensuring that the projects are sustainable long-term. So, what does a typical day involve? "It's about 50/50 between working in the Studio dealing with matters such as design, handling contracts and communications and being out and about in the Park guiding and monitoring the work of the contractors." Her biggest challenge, "Managing the landscape works so as to limit disruption for the public. This involves careful planning, liaison with the Park management and ground maintenance staff, working with contractors and keeping Park users informed, for example by consulting the Friends and placing clear and timely signage within the Park." Finally, Alice-Rose must now know the Park very well. What is her favourite spot? "That's easy" she says. "One Tree Hill. It has a wonderful 360-degree view, including northwards over London, westwards across the Park to the Royal Observatory and eastwards to Vanbrugh Castle."

GRAHAM DEAR WRITES HIS FINAL LETTER TO THE FRIENDS

After 13.5 years this is my last report as Manager of Greenwich Park. It has been an honour to serve this wonderful park and its community of visitors, and I shall certainly miss both as I start my retirement in May. Inevitably at such a time you can't help looking back at what has been achieved but it is a good time to look forward too.
Starting in 2009 my early years were dominated by the London 2012 Olympics and the Equestrian events hosted by the Park. The events were not universally welcomed by park visitors and that is understandable. As Park Manager my role was to ensure that the events took place without any lasting damage to the Park and I feel that this was achieved. By 2013 the car park and The Avenue had been resurfaced, the Blackheath gates widened, and Henry Moore's Knife Edge sculpture had been returned, none of which would have occurred without the events of 2012.
The production of a masterplan for the playground and its implementation over several years has been most satisfying and the generous transfer of land from the Royal Borough of Greenwich that became the Queen's Orchard is another highlight which has added great value to the Park and opportunities for a dedicated band of volunteers.
The last six years of my time here have been dominated by the Greenwich Park Revealed project. It has been a concerted effort by many people that resulted in the largest Heritage Lottery Fund grant ever received by The Royal Parks, £4.5m to fund landscape restoration, visitor facilities and community engagement activity. As I write the Flower Garden Lake is being restored and should provide a much improved habitat for wildlife. The next time the boating lake is filled it will be by borehole and not tap water. The Vanbrugh Lodge is being converted into a café with new toilet facilities and the foundations are laid for a new classroom and community space. In the Autumn London's finest viewpoint at the Wolfe statute will also have a setting to be proud of.
I have had the privilege to meet and work with so many people in my time here, too many to name them all. It's a reflection of the love people have for this park that has made it a joy to work here.
In April I shall have a handover with the new Park Manager, Clare Lanes, a landscape manager who comes highly recommended from both the National Trust and Medway Authority. I know that Clare will benefit from the encouragement and support of the Friends as she steers the Park into its future.

TRANSPORT OF DELIGHT

Two volunteer drivers, Richard Banks and Peter Hire, share their thoughts on the buggy, introduced in 2022 and very much used and appreciated. Here is what they say about it:

When Flanders and Swann sang their song all those years ago, they were praising the delights of a 'ninety-seven horsepower omnibus'. Here, in Greenwich Park, a far more modest form of transport has been delighting visitors by gently ferrying passengers between St Mary's Gate and the Pavilion Cafe and back down the hill again - the Mobility Buggy – a free service that aims to improve visitor access across the Park.

Ready to Go: Two Chelsea Pensioners on the buggy with Sylvia Dean, buggy driver and official trainer to the left.

Run by an ever-growing group of trained Royal Parks volunteers, the service was piloted during the summer and autumn of 2022, and supported 4,300 passengers, carrying five passengers at a time with one space available for wheelchair users. Travelling at a leisurely five miles an hour, visitors are transported along the footpaths from St. Mary's Gate up the hill to the Pavilion Cafe and back. Each journey takes about 20 minutes. This provides ample time for chatting, which is the key to the joy of the whole experience for visitors and drivers. We often hear about our passengers' lives and their visits to London. We do our best to answer questions about the Park and encourage awareness of those places less frequently visited.
We are not offering a guided tour but an opportunity to sit back and relax and enjoy glimpses of the site as yet undiscovered. This is very much in keeping with the aims of the Greenwich Park Revealed project, providing new visitor facilities and developing learning, leisure and volunteering opportunities for a growing and diverse local community. And all being well the Mobility Buggy service will return to the Park at Easter.

ANYONE FOR CRICKET?

Greenwich Park has a cricket pitch which can be hired. Matches can be played from early May through to the end of the season in September, though not on Mondays or Fridays which are left unused so that the pitch can recover. The most popular days are at the weekends. Days upon which events can still be booked, or upon which matches have already been planned, can be found by contacting Christine Sheffield on greenwich@royalparks.org.uk

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Friends' 30th AGM will take place at the West Greenwich Library on Tuesday, 13 June at 6.30 pm. 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: Tina Challacombe, 101 Mycenae Road, SE3 7RX

Vice-Chairman: Tony Butler, 19 Maidenstone Hill, SE10 8SY

Committee Members: Jonathan Chandler and Sue Yates stand down at this AGM. Katherine Bohanna was co-opted during 2022 and now stands for election. Norman Adams, Clive Corlett, Richard Jones, Esme Partridge and Susan Taylor continue to serve.

The committee confirms the appointments of Christine Bevan as Secretary, Julie Punter as Treasurer and Rob Toogood as Membership Secretary.

After the meeting we hope that the new Manager, Clare Lanes, and the Police will be there to answer questions from the floor.

Dates for your Diary

16 April at 11 am and 1 pm: TREE WALKS led by Monika Dunkel. *These are for MEMBERS ONLY and booking is essential as spaces are limited. Booking opens on the website on 3 April at 10 am.*

30 April 8.30 am: BIRD WALK led by Julia Holland: Meet inside the Blackheath Gates, no need to book.

13 June 6.30pm: FRIENDS AGM at the West Greenwich Library

18 June 12.30 – 3.00pm: Midsummer Jazz in the Observatory Garden (see enclosed flyer for details)

25 June 8.30 am: BIRD WALK led by Julia Holland. Meet inside the Blackheath Gates, no need to book

2 July 3 pm. First Sunday Bandstand Concert – and every Sunday until 27 August, then Bank Holiday Monday, 28 August

30 July 8.30 am: BIRD WALK led by Julia Holland: Meet inside the Blackheath Gates, no need to book.

WILDLIFE DROP-INS: These are still in abeyance until the work on the Learning Centre is completed.

NOTE: There is no bird walk on 28 May. If you would like to read Julia's excellent reports of earlier bird walks they can be found on the website.

AND FINALLY…

DISCOUNTS: Don't forget to use your Friends' Discounts – check the website for details and keep your membership card with you.

Midsummer Jazz on 18 June and Sunday Concerts throughout July and August

Our renowned Midsummer Jazz concert will be on Sunday, 18 June. This takes place in the Observatory Garden from 12.30pm to 3pm, and will feature the fabulous South London Jazz Orchestra, who return after their stand-out performance at last year's concert. This is a ticketed event – tickets are just £5 – and booking details can be found on the flyer included with this Newsletter. Numbers in the Garden are limited, so book early because last year sold out well in advance. And do bring a lunch picnic with you, though there will be a bar and refreshment stalls. And there will be a raffle so cash would be useful.

During July and August, we will again be staging our popular Bandstand concerts. These will run on all Sundays from 2 July until 27 August, finishing on Bank Holiday Monday, 28 August. All concerts, which are free, start at 3pm and end at 5pm. See the enclosed flyer for the full bandstand programme.

Friends of Greenwich Park

Chairman: Tony Butler, 19 Maidenstone Hill, SE10 8SY Tel: 020 8692 7845
Secretary and Newsletter: Christine Bevan, 52 Greenwich Park Street, SE10 9LT Tel: 020 8853 2150
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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.
Friends Website: : www.friendsofgreenwichpark.org.uk
History of Greenwich Park website: www.greenwichparkhistory.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 (5,000 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 Blackheath Gate. In an emergency dial 999; for other calls Tel: 020 7161 9740.

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