FRIENDS OF GREENWICH PARK

NEWSLETTER

Winter 2023 Registered Charity No: 1029933 Number 95

FRIENDS PLANT MULBERRY AND OAK IN HONOUR OF ELIZABETH AND CHARLES

Down to earth: Matt Burrow planting the new Mulberry tree

IT was a perfect day for tree planting, blustery and autumnal, but the sun shone and the rain held off.

Friends gathered to plant a Mulberry (Morus nigra) to mark the reign of Queen Elizabeth II and an Oak (Quercus robur) to honour King Charles III. Matt Burrow, Deputy Lieutenant Greenwich, wielded the spade with the help of Friends Chair Tina Challacombe. The mulberry has been planted by the cricket pitch and the Oak adjacent to the ancient Queen Elizabeth Oak. Mr Burrow said of the Oak: "You can still see the remains of the tree which it is said was planted in the 12th century, and that under it Queen Elizabeth played in her childhood. There is also an oak planted by the Duke of Edinburgh to mark 40 years of the reign of Queen Elizabeth II. It is most appropriate that the tree recording the start of a new reign should be planted near that associated with King Charles's mother and father."

Friends' chair Tina Challacombe and Matt Burrow with the newly planted Oak

The Friends want to thank Head Gardener Tom Brown and Assistant Park Manager Michael Loughnane for their help in organising the event.

All will soon be revealed… what's going on in the Park now

THE remaining phases of Greenwich Park Revealed are now taking place – until the end of May or June there will be work at the Blackheath Gate, the Wolfe Statue area and the Grand Ascent and Parterre in front of The Queen's House.

It is going to be sad to see trees felled, but as a lot of you know, there have been consultations for years about how to deal with the dying and diseased trees in the Park. Many need to be replaced by disease-resistant varieties to make sure the Park can be enjoyed by generations to come.

There will be closures at the Wolfe Statue and the Grand Ascent until next spring/summer. Several temporary closures will be in force throughout December on the paths crossing the Queen's Field and at the bottom of Observatory Hill while tree works are completed. It is not clear when Blackheath Gate closures will be in place. Park Manager Clare Lanes writes: "We are now well under way with the next phase of Greenwich Park Revealed, beginning vital improvement and restoration works around the General Wolfe statue and on the Grand Ascent.

November has seen the removal of declining and damaged trees by the Wolfe statue, the clearing of the platform space to make way for a larger, more accessible one, and the start of the landscape to reinstate the giant steps on the Grand Ascent.

"In December we continue work to redefine the parterre banks and remove the declining and damaged trees on the Western Tree Avenue. This will make way for more resilient trees in spring. We will also plant new trees and landscape the area around Blackheath Gate. The timing of this has yet to be confirmed but it will be completed by the spring/summer. We thank you all so much for your patience and support and can't wait to welcome you to these spaces next year!"

Meet Micaela, the Italian taking care of your cappuccino

EVER wondered who's in charge of the catering outlets in the Park?

Well, the contract in all the Royal Parks is held by the Benugo chain, and their General Manager here is Micaela Bianchi d'Espinosa, responsible for the Pavilion Café and the kiosks near the Wolfe Statue and in the playground.

Micaela is from Naples, graduating in law there and spending the next couple of years working in a law firm. How did that go, asked the Friends' Clive Corlett: "I wanted something more challenging and in 2017 decided to change my life by moving to London," said Micaela. She joined the British Museum Benugo branch and swiftly became Barbican Centre Manager. Then, "I was ambitious to widen my experience", she said, and came to Greenwich.

Here Micaela faces significant challenges. Early in 2024 the Pavilion Café will close for around two months for major renovation, during which she will have to operate from a couple of refreshment trucks nearby. Later in the spring, the new Sancho Café at the Vanbrugh Lodge and kiosk at the Wolfe Statue will be opening. "I'm looking forward to it, with great anticipation," she said. "The most important challenge will be to retain my wonderful team."

Micaela is also full of praise for the faith Benugo Operations Manager Gulshon Dadral has shown in her, "crucially supporting me all the way".

What other satisfaction does she get from her job? "The customers. I love meeting and talking to them. Many, mostly of course locals, are almost family to us." Away from work, what is her favourite place in the Park? "The view from General Wolfe, which must be one of the best in London." And time to herself? "I love cooking at home in Barking, and reading."

Let's hope she continues to have time for both.

Warm welcome: Micaela Bianchi d'Espinosa

Benugo's contract has been renewed and it will run all the catering outlets in Greenwich Park, with discounts on sales in Park cafés increased to a generous 25% for Friends. This applies not only to Greenwich Park, but also to Regents Park, Hyde Park and St James' Park. The Pavilion Café will close early in the New Year for renovations and the new Sancho Café at Vanbrugh Gate will open in the spring.

For other Friends' discounts, see our website.

Towering passion: Severndroog,a fascinating tale of heartbreak

A Gothic day out to Severndroog

FRIENDS learned the fascinating history of Severndroog on two outings to the Gothic memorial in September.

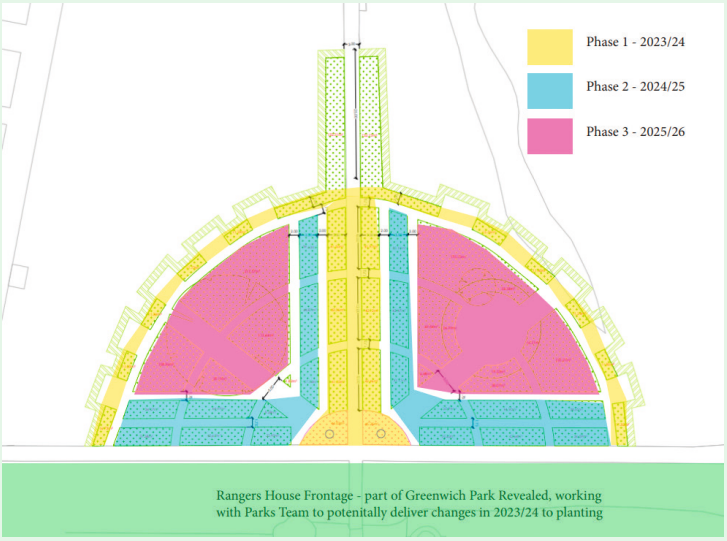
The visitors heard the Rags to Riches story of Sir William James, whose heartbroken widow Anne arranged for the tower to be built in 1874 in memory of her husband - and were also told about the rescue of the building after 25 years of neglect.

The local community launched a campaign in 2004 with the formation of the Severndroog Castle Building Preservation Trust.

In July 2014 the 63ft high, Grade II listed castle reopened. It has a tea room and a shop and hosts weddings and other events. Friends enjoyed not only the guides' wonderful stories but also a cream tea organised by Ollie Golding, Visitor Services Manager.

However, Susan Taylor, who organised the outings, said the real treat was the '360 degree panorama from the viewing platform'.

A THORNY ISSUE… BUT THE ROSE GARDEN WILL BLOOM BACK BETTER



AS some of you have already commented, the Rose Garden is not at its best. Last replanted in 1995, the roses are past their prime and the current design is not sustainable - creating a monoculture of roses encourages pests and diseases which would immediately have an impact on any new rose planting.

Park Manager Clare Lanes writes: "An exciting project for the Park's Team is the start of a three-year phased project to reinvigorate the Rose Garden. Our Head Gardener has worked with the internal Royal Parks Landscape Team to put together a design that will see roses at the heart of the garden, but with a mix of herbaceous perennials to complement the roses and act as companion planting to attract beneficial insects. This will provide extended flowering seasons from spring through to the winter, with seed heads and rosehips providing a display beyond to the flowering season." During the first year a species rose hedge will be planted inside the perimeter yew hedge and will frame the seating areas. David Austin has recommended roses for this area and for around the urns. More than 160 roses are scheduled to be planted. The fate of the diseased beech tree is yet to be determined. Large shrubs in front of the Rangers House have been removed to give a better view of the historic building.

ANNUAL LECTURE - A SELL-OUT

THE Friends' Annual Lecture 2023 was given by Andrew Mayfield, the hugely popular Community Archaeologist working on the Greenwich Park Revealed project. From his lecture, covering all work since the start of the project, it is obvious that the Park has a lot to uncover - from the Saxon burial ground to Second World War air raid shelters, from Roman remains to allotments. Andrew (pictured) has been key in involving and enthusing local communities, schools and individuals in the digs. Our new venue at Mycenae House worked well and we hope to return for future events.

Increase in membership fees

FOR a few years now your committee has known that the annual membership did not cover our basic expenses but we did not want to increase costs to members. Finally we have decided that we must. Many members have told us that the £5 fee is ludicrously low and we have considered all options very carefully. We have therefore decided to increase the membership fee for a household to £20. For those on universal credit it will go up to £10. When you consider that the £5 fee was introduced when we began in 1992, you will see that we have not taken this decision lightly. The new fees will come into effect on January 1st 2024. For details on how to update payments please see the insert in this Newsletter.

Biodiversity in the Dell

THE Dell is to be transformed into a Stumpery/ Loggery utilising dead wood which will enrich the biodiversity of the Park. The project will take place over two years and will provide habitats for fungi, stag beetles and other soil dwellers.

Always Winter, Never Christmas

SADLY, there will be no Christmas trees for sale in Greenwich Park this year.

The Royal Parks issued the following statement: "Please be advised that there will be no Christmas tree sales in Richmond Park, Bushy Park, or Greenwich Park this year. We are currently reviewing retail opportunities for future years."

We know there will be a lot of disappointed Friends for whom a visit to the Park to choose a tree has become a precious Christmas ritual.

Take it from the top…

THE Friends' crowd-pleasing Midsummer Jazz Concert in the Royal Observatory Gardens will take place on Sunday, June 16, 2024.
Details and the booking form will be in the next Newsletter.
Last year's barnstorming set by the South London Jazz Orchestra sold out quickly! The Friends' Bandstand Concerts will take place on Sundays in July and August and on August Bank Holiday.

Watercolour drawn at a concert, by artist Ray Art

History Research Group
SEVERAL Friends have been on a two-day course run by Greenwich Park Revealed to learn how to record oral histories of the Park. We now have the means to gather information about people who have a story to tell. If you have interesting stories or remember events please contact the group via info@friendsofgreenwichpark.org.uk so we can begin to understand what the Park has meant to people over the years.

Photography Group
THE group has been relaunched under the guidance of Ian Welsby, and if you would like to join contact him via info@friendsofgreenwichpark.org.uk, citing Photography Group. Ian's pictures are currently in a show at West Greenwich Library entitled "Greenwich and the River Thames". The exhibition, by the Greenwich London Independent Photography Group, runs until December 16.

Get the latest information by email

WE recently started a monthly bulletin to our members which has proved very popular.
If we don't have your email address and you would like to receive the bulletin please visit our website to register. Click on Home, then Members Mailing List and complete the form. You will need your membership number which is on your card.
We would appreciate if Friends would register regardless -we need to update membership information, and you can unsubscribe if you don't want the bulletin.

Dates for your Diary

Tree walks: January 28, 2024 at 11am and 1pm with Monika Dunkel. These are free exclusively to members. Places are limited so those who have not been before will be given priority. Booking opens on the website on January 12.

Bird Walks: December 17, January 28 (to coincide with the RSPB big garden birdwatch), February 25, March 31. Meet at the Blackheath Gates at 8.30 am.
There will be no bird walk in April.

Midsummer Jazz in the Park:
June 16, 12.30 to 3.00 pm.
Annual General Meeting: May 7, 6.30 for 7pm. More details in the next Newsletter.

Friends of Greenwich Park

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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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