FRIENDS OF GREENWICH PARK

NEWSLETTER

Winter 2020 Registered Charity No: 1029933 Number 86

The Second Lockdown Edition

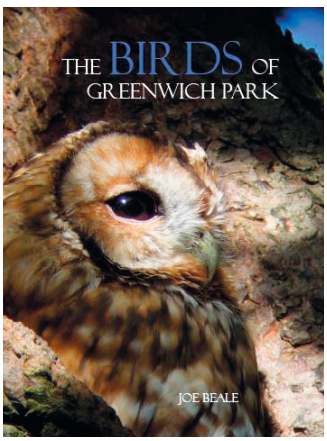
The Avenue in tranquil mood *Photo by Jonathan Chandler*

Park Traffic-free for Trial Period

As part of their Movement Strategy, The Royal Parks reviewed traffic usage in all their parks and decided that for a trial period of 6 months the Avenue in Greenwich Park would be closed to through traffic at all times.

The Friends committee supports this closure. The almost complete absence of motor traffic has led to a markedly quieter and safer environment within the Park. It has also contributed to improved air quality and to an enhanced enjoyment of the Park's tranquillity. We believe these are important benefits to all users of the Park, not only in relation to the many stresses caused by the Covid-19 emergency but also for the longer-term future of the area as well.

The Birds of Greenwich Park – our new publication



The Birds of Greenwich Park is a unique photographic and narrative description of the Park's birds by author Joe Beale, a local wildlife enthusiast. Covering from the mid-19th century to the present day, the book contains wonderful images and expert content on topics such as migration, population sizes and what to look for in the Park during the different seasons – 125 species have been recorded over the last 25 years.

Appealing to everyone from beginner birdwatchers to experienced observers, it makes a perfect gift and is now available from the Friends of Greenwich Park in a pack to include our Walking Through History booklet - see the enclosed order form.

Joe is a Fellow of the British Naturalists' Association and was part of the Natural History Museum's Identification Trainers for the Future scheme in 2016-17 and later the ecologist helping to run their wildlife garden.

Planting and the New Cottage Border

Busy bedding time is upon us once again. There were tough decisions to be made during the removal of our sensational summer bedding this year as everything was still looking so good, but needs must and as we have such a short window in which to remove and plant the new season's bedding we had to be quite ruthless.

You'll notice this year that we have used more perennials and grasses including **Helleborus 'Black Swan'** and **Daphne odora 'aureomarginata'**. These will add more prolonged seasonal interest as traditional bedding plants only really come into their own in spring, when the soil starts to warm and the light is stronger. And of course, in addition, there are the 40-50,000 bulbs to look forward to, including the majestic **Fritillaria imperialis**.

When the spring bedding is removed in May, these perennials will be planted on into other areas of the park, such as the Orchard entrance and our new Lakeside area project, the latter to include **300 Sesleria autumnalis**.

Another new addition is the new Cottage Border (formerly the Jungle Border) which will now be a more permanent feature. The taller perennials that are already present will remain, with new plants arriving in May alongside the summer bedding. The tender and annual plants have been removed and the gaps filled with winter/spring bedding plants and, again, plenty of bulbs. The variation in height will be rectified as the perennials are pruned back in the winter, leaving a carpet of colour until everything once again springs to life in the New Year.

We look forward to seeing the results in 2021.

Beverly Meekings

The Queen's Orchard

As with everyone else, this year has been an odd time for the team volunteering in the Queen's Orchard. Normal duties were suspended from March's lockdown until July, and even when shifts resumed it was limited to just two volunteers working alongside park staff member Alex Andrews and following social distancing and other guidelines rigorously. Unfortunately public access was not possible at all.

Despite those restrictions and disappointments, there was still joy to be found in the Queen's Orchard. Alex benefited most from the bumper strawberry crop (and deserved it, given her efforts to keep things going while flying solo) but the apples, plums, potatoes and carrots (often comically misshapen) also did well and went to a good home in many a volunteer's crumble or stew. The dahlias and cosmos in the bed closest to the gate were the flowers that just kept giving, a colourful welcome on entering the orchard. The ornamental central pond overflowed with water lilies, while the wilder pond had a thorough clear-out with the removal of its rushes.

Heading into winter the plan is to have volunteers keeping things ticking over with twice weekly visits in pairs. Given the time of year, there won't be much to do, but the pleasure of working in such a special place and helping prepare it for next year's (fingers crossed) re-opening to visitors inspires everyone who helps out.

Cliff Wilkinson

Become a Volunteer Community Ranger

Last summer The Royal Parks successfully trialled the Royal Parks Volunteer Community Ranger service at Greenwich. Twelve rangers engaged over 400 visitors with the Park's heritage, landscape, and wildlife.

"I had a great time as a Volunteer Ranger - a really great experience that I will keep very fond memories of. Our parks are just so important to people and wildlife. Lockdown made us all really understand the importance of these public spaces that make London such a great city". - Dalila Lima, Greenwich Volunteer Community Ranger.

Sadly there had to be a delay to the restart of the scheme owing to Covid, but it is hoped to recruit additional rangers next spring. If you are interested please contact Jo at jhaywood@royalparks.org.uk for more information.

Volunteer Community Ranger Dalila Lima with a potential upcycling project - dishwasher basket to bird feeder.

The Rose Garden

The Rose Garden is much loved but the design was very traditional, being exclusively roses, many of which were past their best, Unfortunately you can't plant a new rose into soil that previously held an old one so the Park redesigned the area this year to mix roses with other flowers.

Part of this redesign saw the two long beds at the cherry avenue entrance to the Rose Garden replanted with a mix of flowers to see what visitors felt about the potential 'new look'. In addition, in some of the beds where the roses were worn out, lovely wildflower seeds were sown. These beds have been very well received and there have been requests to know more about the seeds. The two mixes were Classic and Aqua and came from www.pictorialmeadows.co.uk/product-category/annual-meadow-seeds/

The gardeners hope to label the beds next year and to ask visitors to declare their favourite mix.

Park Manager's update – *Graham Dear writes:*

What does the second lockdown mean for Greenwich Park? While not as intrusive as in March, the government guidelines did mean closing the tennis courts, allowing only take-away service in the café and having a reduced staff presence in the park office. Our neighbours at the Royal Observatory are closed. There's a deeper impact too. Like many businesses and charities our income was severely affected by Covid-19. Income streams from major events, filming, catering and car parking dried up. Sound financial management has meant we are better prepared than some others, but it is affecting our spending. For Greenwich Park Revealed we have extended the programme by a year, in agreement with National Lottery Heritage Fund, and cannot start the project formally. Planning is continuing however in the background.

I expect that, once again, Greenwich Park will prove invaluable to the local community during lockdown. There has been a lot in the press about the benefits of parks and gardening for mental health – I was encouraged to try it for myself, spending a delightful morning with gardeners Kerry and Beverley planting bulbs in the Flower Garden beds (I planted 135 Hyacinth Hollyhock (a double pink) and 30 Narcissus Tamara). A small contribution but I admit to feeling proud of my efforts.

One of my memories of 2020 will be the increase in visitors to the park. Community Engagement Officer, Helen, assisted by wonderful volunteers, undertook a survey in August which reinforced what we had observed: when compared to the 2017 Ipsos MORI survey, there were more local visitors, more people arriving by bicycle, visitors were younger on average and more ethnically diverse.

As this most extraordinary year draws to a close, I must give thanks and celebrate all the park staff, contractors, concessionaires, police officers and volunteers who have kept Greenwich Park open. Best wishes to everyone for a safe and healthy New Year.

Park people: Ibrahim Rouzzak, Café Manager

Ever wondered who serves up your food and drink in the Park? The contract is currently held by Benugo Ltd, and their manager here is Ibrahim Rouzzak. Originally from Morocco, Ibrahim trained as a teacher, moved to Spain, joined the hospitality industry and worked for ten years in Barcelona and on the Costa Brava. It was there that he met an English woman (now his wife) who persuaded him that their future lay in this country. Ibrahim's UK career has included spells at Regent's Park, managing the Athletes' Village at the London Olympics and at Royal Museums Greenwich, where he ran the Royal Observatory cafe. Why did he stay in Greenwich Park?

"I have always been interested in astronomy and knew all about the Royal Observatory and the Meridian Line as a boy. When the manager vacancy here arose in 2012, I jumped at the chance. It was the job I had always wanted."

Greenwich has lived up to his expectations. He has immersed himself in the history of the Park, so much so his in-laws claim he knows far more about the area than they do! Ibrahim very much enjoys his job, working with his team and visitors of all nationalities. He is an enthusiastic supporter of the Friends and delighted that Benugo provides the generous discount scheme for our members. We have also benefited from his support in providing a catering stall at our concerts.

The last few months have seen unique challenges. Originally locked down with the rest of the hospitality industry, Ibrahim was able to open the Pavilion Cafe at the end of May for takeaways, and fully open in July with appropriate spacing safeguards in place. The current second lock-down has provided similar problems. Looking forward, he hopes to be able to make further improvements to the customer experience at his café and kiosks.

Finally, what are Ibrahim's favourite parts of the Park? *"I love the flower garden for its peace and beauty, the Elizabeth Oak for its historical significance and the Royal Observatory for its superb presentation of astronomy."*

Talk by Joe Beale on the Birds of Greenwich Park

Joe Beale will give a talk on his new book (see page 1) via Zoom on the evening of Wednesday 2 December 2020. The talk will last for about 30 minutes with time afterwards for questions.

For more details please consult the Friends website – www.friendsofgreenwichpark.org.uk or contact Joe at j.beale.wildlife@gmail.com.

A redwing, a common winter visitor *Photo by Joe Beale*

Marathon 2020

Though the Marathon didn't take place as usual this year for the thousands of non-professional participants, many individuals were able to run their own personal marathons in October – including our own volunteer, Cindy Sheehan,

seen here. Cindy ran her marathon ending with the last three miles within Greenwich Park – many congratulations to her on this achievement. The 2021 London Marathon is now scheduled for Sunday 3 October.

Parking charges increased

The cost of parking in the Park increased from 22 October as follows:

- 50p per quarter of an hour or £2.00 an hour on Saturdays and Sundays
- 35p per quarter of an hour or £1.40 an hour Monday to Friday inclusive

This is a most unwelcome change but we are not singled out – The Royal Parks have made increases across all their parks.

Christmas trees for sale: 15% discount for Friends

Christmas trees will be on sale at the Blackheath Gate from **Thursday 26 November to Wednesday 23 December**. Friends receive a 15% discount upon showing their membership card. You will also be able to use the code **TRPFRIEND** for their Home Delivery/Click and Collect service www.oncloudpine.com

Friends of Greenwich Park
Chairman: Liz Coyle, 3 Orchard Drive, SE3 0QP
Wildlife Group: Sue Yates, 34 Hyde Vale, London, SE10 8QH Tel: 020 8692 1760
Secretary: Christine Bevan, 52 Greenwich Park Street, SE10 9LT Tel: 020 8853 2150
Membership Secretary: Fran Tyler 51 Lock Chase, London, SE3 9HB Tel: 020 8852 9540 tylerfrantom@btinternet.com
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
Contact email: 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.

Printed by Greycot Press Limited, Unit N5, Europa Trading Estate, Fraser Road, Erith, Kent DA8 1QL
Friends website: www.friendsofgreenwichpark.org.uk