

NEWSLETTER 80

Summer: July 1st - September 30th 2016



Events. All events are free and open to members and non-members alike. Donations welcome.

Saturday July 16th TO CHINBROOK MEADOWS

Meet on the mansion steps at 10.00pm. This a long walk out of the park. It is as rural as possible, but some road walking is unavoidable. Transport at the end from Grove Park station and several buses routes. For those who want a really long walk, we come back to the park via a different route.

Wednesday August 10th SILENT WALK

Meet on the mansion steps at 1.30pm. Walk in complete silence to enable listening. Afterwards at the mansion we sit and chat about the sounds we heard. Its a fun walk and amazing how much more you hear when not chattering away.

Sunday September 4th GEOLOGY WALK

Meet on the mansion steps 2.00pm. A walk around the park with our geology guru, Paul Rainey The Green Chain Walk has recently launched 'Geotrail' which Paul has been working on (more information inside).

SENSORY GARDEN WORKDAYS (sessions last about 2 hours)

Dates: 2nd Saturday of the month, July 9th, August 13th, Sept.10th

Meet 10.00am either at the mansion or go straight to the Sensory Garden. There will be work to suit everyone. In the summer months there is more to do so there are often two sessions a month. Call/email for date of any second session, contacts below.

About The Friends Events. Most last about 1-2 hours, but you can join in for as long or as little as you like. It is advisable to wear stout walking shoes, as the paths do get very muddy. Walkers are individually responsible for their own safety during our events. Minors are welcome, but must be accompanied by a parent or guardian. Walk leaders always carry water and mobile phone.

CONTACTS. If anyone has any comments, ideas, articles etc. get in touch through any of the contact venues or in person at the Visitor Centre in the mansion.

Opening times:- Sundays 1.30pm-3.30pm.

THE FRIENDS OF BECKENHAM PLACE PARK, THE SECRETARY,
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Recent Events Report

Sunday April 24th Bluebell Walk

Again a good number of people, approx 40, followed Nick Bertrand of Creekside Education Trust and long time conservationist and botanist, on a magical mystery tour of bluebells and many other plants of the ancient woodland. Nick's wealth of knowledge is always informative and interesting. Many thanks to him and all that came for this walk.

Sunday May 15th Beating the Bounds

A few of us did this annual circumvention of the park to celebrate the ancient rite. This was pleasant walk to keep old traditions going.

Sunday 12th June Friends AGM

This was a busy day for the mansion. There was a Bhuddist group meeting in the centre room, the council officers talking about their plans for the park in another and our AGM in the other big room. Twenty people attended which is a record, thanks to those that came along. The AGM was over quickly with two new people joining the committee. Elaine Storey agreed to be joint Chair with Mal Mitchell, she will organize putting the Friends on social media and along with John Desmond will bring some fresh perspectives to enliven the committee.

Alison Taylor was invited in to talk to the group about the Council plans for the park and try to answer questions.

Sensory Garden

Our workdays are currently the 2nd and 4th Saturdays in the month. 10am to 12noon, meet in the garden. Maintenance work includes removing or dead heading, replanting, weeding, etc. We get a lot of complementary comments from park users. We have a regular team of 10 or so volunteers and new volunteers are always welcome whether you can come regularly or just now and again.

The Squirrel Statue. The statue is undergoing some work, the previously abortive attempts left it in an unimproved state. Now some work experience students have been cleaning off peeling coating, sealing and painting it. It will be painted grey (just like the real thing) but if that proves unpopular, maybe we'll get it back to white. The squirrel was originally the work of a Goldsmith's graduate student. Time and weather have eroded some detail. - I know the feeling!

Lottery Bid and Flood Control Scheme Progress Reports

The flood scheme plods on having got past an early stage of approval with the EA, a tender is going out for initial plans to be prepared and public consultation is forecast for near the end of the year. Reaction to the scheme is mixed and the financial implications are significant with estimates of £13million or so for the whole scheme.

The Lottery bid also gets mixed press, with the closure of golf being the most unpopular. The following was received from Lewisham about the scheme so far, you may agree or disagree.....still very little opportunity for those not on email etc..

As you will be aware, consultations on the regeneration plans for Beckenham Place Park took place between January and April. These included twelve events held in the south of the borough and Beckenham. [Read a summary of the consultation results.](#)

Since these consultations, work has continued on developing the plans.

We received many high quality entries to the recent Beckenham Place Park photo competition. The winning photographs are on display at The Green Man, 355 Bromley Road SE6 until 24 June, Monday–Friday 9am–5pm. The images will also be used in the park's promotion over the next three years. [See photographs from the winner and runners-up.](#)

Our work with Access Sport to get the BMX track underway is progressing well. The planning application should be submitted by July and the track is due to be completed in October 2016.

There was a lot of interest in developing a community garden and we are looking into how this might work. If you're interested in getting involved, please get in touch.

We are currently working up detailed designs for the landscape and checking the viability of these against the budget.

Plans for the play areas and formal gardens are looking really exciting! We are holding a workshop with professional landscape artists and gardeners who will lend their knowledge and expertise to developing ideas.

We are working with the Environment Agency to ensure the designs,

plans and timetables fit together, as well as exploring the best ways of delivering the works to ensure maximum economies of scale are realised.

The latest plans for the park were displayed at the recent Phoenix Festival and were well received.

We are working with our planning and conservation teams, as well as other organisations who are statutory consultees, on the planning application for the park. This is due to be submitted towards the end of July.

The final phase of the consultation prior to re-submitting the detailed designs to the Heritage Lottery Fund in August 2016 is now underway.

What's next?

The designs to date and feedback from the consultations will be on display at the following times. Members of the project team will be on hand to answer any questions you may have.

Downham Library: until Saturday 11 June, during the Library's opening hours

Beckenham Place Park, The Mansion: Sunday 12 June, 2–4pm

Beckenham High Street, outside Sainsbury's: Friday 17 June, 9.30am–12 noon (cancelled, see new date)

People's Day, Mountsfield Park: Saturday 9 July, 12 noon–8pm (please note: the stall may close earlier than the event).

Contact us at <mailto:bpp@lewisham.gov.uk?subject=Beckenham%20Place%20Park%20update%20-%20June%202016>

From the Project Manager/LBL

This is to let you know we will be showing proposals for Beckenham Place Park and consulting the public about them this coming Wednesday, 6th July, outside Sainsburys on Beckenham High Street. We'll be there from 9.30 to 11.30am.

We will also have a stall at People's Day on 9th July, Mountsfield Park.

BPP Working Party

The attitude of LBLewisham seems to be to ignore or disband the working party. However, no willingness to address the issue by the Council leaves us unimpressed by their feelings toward local people.

One of our members, David Love, has produced this material about the mansion plasterwork. A fuller article can be found on our website or in the mansion as well as a leaflet guide.

‘CULTIVATED LEISURE’:

The Subjects of Beckenham Place’s Adam-style Images - I

When an ambassador dropped dead in mid-negotiation the French statesman Talleyrand (1754-1838) is supposed to have asked wryly “*I wonder what he meant by that?*” The thirteen fine neo-classical plaster images decorating the house’s three reception rooms are arguably its most distinctive and important surviving feature. But their purpose and meaning has received little attention, perhaps because their ‘classicism’ visual language is no longer widely understood.

Beckenham’s Adam-style images seem to have been selected to convey ideas about their location and patron, through classical metaphor applied to contemporary purposes. They embody thoughts about how to live well, through ‘cultivated leisure’ with literary friends in the countryside. Conceived by the elite of ancient Rome, mass-produced in images for display by the better-off across eighteenth-century Europe “*in the form and style of those of the ancients*” (Robert Adam), their vision is now accessible to everyone thanks to the LCC’s far-sighted purchase of house and park “for public recreation”.

A summary of subjects follows, which Friends are invited to correct. There will be a fuller leaflet for visitors, with supporting argument, references and images online.

The **South Room** is usually flooded with sunlight and is therefore, perhaps, the most lightly decorated, with only two small ceiling roundels, both based on ancient coin-designs. One (at the east (E) end) represents **victory**, the other (W) **justice**. Here they could indicate typical divisions (*history* and *law*) of the library probably housed in the room’s four main alcoves. The owner, John Cator, a businessman and MP denigrated by political opponents as “*this adventurer*” and “*this d—d carpenter*”, may also have been seeking to show that he lived the life and values “*proper for a man of rank and education*”. Thus he had himself portrayed by Sir Joshua Reynolds in 1777 (possibly for the now empty roundel above the fire-place?) with, unusually for Reynolds, several books at his elbow.

The **East Room** is the most elaborate, its combination of Greco-Roman divinities suggesting convivial, artistic pleasures enjoyed with propriety, a typically eighteenth-century ideal of balance and domestic ‘good taste’. **Juno** (SW roundel), the queen of the gods, enthroned with her sceptre, peacock, and winged messenger, Iris, represents ‘*family values*’. **Venus** (NE), with her dove, confiscates Cupid’s bow ie. ‘*licence is restrained by virtue*’. The long-haired lyre-player (NW), the sun-god **Apollo** with his arrow-quiver, box-lyre, and guardian griffin (a mythical eagle-lion hybrid), represents celestial harmony and the divine inspiration of oracles, poets and musicians ie. ‘*music as the language of heaven*’. Lastly a subdued **Bacchus**

(SE), the unruly god of wine, festivity, and the darker, irrational side of the psyche, sits quietly on the ground holding a jug, his almost domesticated leopard or tigress looking up amiably, his fir-cone tipped staff (*thyrsus*) signifying divine inspiration. He and Apollo were taken from engravings of ancient oil-lamps first published in 1691, when this image was described as “*free of all care, wine liberating the mind from troubling thoughts*”.

An oblong tablet (S) symbolises the creative arts, represented by five **Muses**, their goddesses: one, seated on a goat-skin (perhaps a reminder of the satyr Marsyas, flayed for challenging Apollo’s musical supremacy), listens to a second declaiming, a third, playing the bowl-lyre used for domestic music-making, possibly Erātō (*lyric poetry*), accompanies the singing of Euterpē (*flute-playing*), recorded by Calliopē (*epic poetry*), all inspired by **Apollo** enthroned.

Another tablet (N) copies an ancient sculpture as published in 1693, representing the divine powers and regeneration/rebirth. The sky-god **Jupiter**, seated on a magnificent throne, grasps a thunderbolt and points to himself, presumably asserting primacy over his brothers, **Neptune** (*the sea*, holding a trident), foot planted firmly on a rock as ‘*Stabilitor*’ (saviour from earthquakes), watching a nymph dropping her cloak, possibly his lover **Amphitrītē**, and **Pluto** (*death and the underworld*, hence the empty cornucopia), his consort, **Proserpina**, the goddess of Spring, probably removing her heavy cloak after her half-year in Stygian cold and gloom.

The ceiling of the **North Room** has four oval images, their shape recalling ancient gem designs and wall-decorations. Ecstatic, bare-breasted nymphs, in the spirit of paintings of Bacchantes (female acolytes of Bacchus) excavated from Herculaneum and published in 1757, seem, at one level, to represent **music** (SW) and **dance** (NW). A third spreads sanctifying **incense** (NE), and another brings a fruit-basket representing **fruitful abundance**, an image much used in the Renaissance, possibly the Roman goddess Pomōna (SE).

The large wall-panel shows four figures (the man with covered head acting as priest) burning floral incense at an altar to **Aesculapius**, Apollo’s son, god of *health and healing*, his snake curling round the incense-bowl. The ceiling figures could also be read as participating in this ceremony. Aesculapius was honoured as a giver of oracles and healing dreams, and protector of the family, “*making the human race immortal through marriage and healthy children*” (Cator’s only child, a daughter, died in 1766 aged three, followed within a few months by his sister, aged seventeen). The design comes from a pseudo-classical engraved gem published in 1709, the snake added later.

The underlying theme is probably that cultivating the highest arts in this ideal rural retreat (Milton’s “*where the clear fountains of the Muses spring*”) inspires physical and spiritual well-being: “*where he can be at leisure with the muses and the spirit of the place, where at last he may commune with the gods themselves*”.

David Love

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Local People. This is an extract of a charming letter from a lady who has lived around and visited the park since before WW2. She moved to Beckenham three years ago, so hasn't deserted BPP even now.

'Re feedback on the Prisoner of War camp on Crab Hill. As a child of five years at the outbreak of war I lived in Old Bromley Road, backing onto the sports ground. My memory was that it was Italian POWs—with no mention of German. My family did not evacuate, so we were there all through the war.

As children we often played in the park - occasionally falling in the river! - and had 'our camp' near the entrance which was in Old Bromley Road next to the sports ground entrance, near to the 'Studio Club' building. In 1957 I was married and living in Brangbourne Road (which borders the park). So did not wander far!!'

If any has any memories of the area and park that they might like to share we would be pleased to hear from you

National Parks Forum and Lewisham Parks Forum (LPF)

The future of public parks continues to be of concern and the Friends Forums are active but more people need to get directly involved in Friends groups. **15-24th July is Love Parks week.**

Reimagine London's future as a National Park City

Wednesday 21st September 2016 - 6:30pm

Southbank Centre

London SE1 8XX [By the Thames, near Waterloo]

Book now and fill the 2,000-seater Southbank Centre

<http://www.southbankcentre.co.uk/whatson/the-making-of-a-national-park-98434?dt=2016-09-21>

Green Chain Walk Geotrail

There is a very detailed leaflet to download on the internet about this new trail as well as the original walk. The Green Chain is always adding to and refining the walks so it's worth checking regularly.

For free maps and audio tracks to listen to or download at:

www.greenchain.com/timetrails

or phone the GC Information Line: 020 8921 5028

Lewisham Local History Society.

Programme of talks for this quarter. Meetings are held on **Fridays** at Methodist Church Hall, Albion Way, SE13. Starting at **7.45pm.** Visitors welcome. Full access for people with disabilities.

July 29th **The Greenwich Peninsular Ecology Park**
Joanne Smith, site warden

August **No meeting**

Sept 30th **The Downham Estate** **Jane Hearn**

More information: www.lewishamhistory.org.uk

Bromley Borough Local History Society.

Meetings start at **7.45pm** in the small hall at **Trinity United Reform Church** at the junction of Freelands Road and Upper Park Road, Bromley BR1 3QA. There are occasional meetings at other venues and visits to local places of interest.

The Hall has a small car park and free off-street parking. Buses 162, 269 and 314 pass nearby; nearest bus stops are Freelands Road and St Joseph's Church. Nearest stations Bromley North and Bromley South. **There are facilities for the disabled.**

Tea and coffee are usually available. Non-members are welcome.

Meetings are **1st Tuesday of the month** unless otherwise stated.

July 5th **History of the High Level Railway at Crystal Palace** **Bernard Winchester**

August **No meeting**

September 6th **Members Evening**

Members get the chance to promote a bit of history that has caught their imagination in a 10-15 minute presentation. First stop, call Mike – mike.marriot1@ntlworld.com or 01689 820 794 or 07917 101 520 – and he will give you all the help and information you may need.

More information: www.blhs.org.uk