

# FRIENDS OF BECKENHAM PLACE PARK



SUMMER NEWSLETTER 2018 No.85

The Friends of Beckenham Place Park Annual General Meeting to which you are invited will be held on Sunday 15th July at 5.30 at the Mansion.

We'd like to thank Tim at the Mansion for letting us have the venue free of charge.

There will be a short update of developments in the park and time for questions.

We hope plenty of Friends will be able to attend. And if anyone has some free time, there are a number of volunteering roles to be filled!

## EVENTS

JUNE Thursday 21st 1pm Listening Walk Led by Beryl Gibbs, Meet on the Mansion steps

JULY Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> at 5.30pm Friends AGM in the Mansion

JULY Saturday 28th 8.45pm at the Crab Hill entrance opposite Ravensbourne Station. A combined Moths (Bill Welch) and Bats (Ishpi Blatchley) Walk plus a touch of Astronomy (Mal Mitchell). Bat detectors will be provided but please bring torches and warm clothes.

OCTOBER Sunday 14th 1.30pm Fungi with Dr Mark Spencer

NOVEMBER Saturday 10th 9.30am Bird Walk led by David de Silva

Contact details for members:

Email: [bpp.friends@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:bpp.friends@hotmail.co.uk)  
[www.beckenhamplaceparkfriends.org.uk](http://www.beckenhamplaceparkfriends.org.uk)

## VISITOR CENTRE NEWS

The visitors centre has had a good turnout each Sunday of between 70 and over 100 visitors.

We have opened on different days this year by request and were pleased to welcome, amongst others, children from St Mary's School, participants in the Rushey Green Time bank and visitors to the retro fairs. In June we are expecting an evening visit from 24 'young Woodcraft' folk.

Our visitors are usually very appreciative of our efforts and are complimentary about the room and it's wide range of contents.

Come and see us soon ! We are open Sundays from 12.00 to 3.30

## EVENT REPORTS

**Bird Walk** Thursday 22 March 2018

Led by Liz Anderson

The weather was sun and cloud with a cool wind for the twelve of us on this walk. We were pleased to welcome Peter Smart (Bromley RSPB Recorder) and several members of Friends of Kelsey Park. With no leaves on the trees and many territorial and amorous calls from above and around us we spotted 23 species within two hours. Vegetation was also springing up and we have to hope that recent intense cycling activity has not irrevocably impacted on this.

Michael Elmer showed us a Butchers Broom, with bright red berries and shiny evergreen foliage, by the River Ravensbourne. The strong leaves made it ideal for brushing down butchers' blocks in olden days.

We were shocked to see just how much tree, shrub and ground cover has been removed by Lewisham Council in quite a few areas not even connected to their water scheme and we keep our fingers crossed for the many birds such as wrens, robins, dunnocks and thrushes who might be having more difficulty to find nesting sites in this and future years.

Species spotted:

Blackbird Carrion Crow Chiffchaff Feral Pigeon Goldfinch Jackdaw  
Great Tit Magpie Nuthatch Robin Stock Dove Wren Blue Tit  
Chaffinch Dunnock Goldcrest Great Spotted Woodpecker Ring-necked  
Parakeet Long-tailed Tit Mistle Thrush Song Thrush Wood Pigeon  
Green Woodpecker - Many thanks to Liz Anderson

## History Walk Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> May 2018

Well the walk was better attended than I thought it would be and I hope everyone got something from it. About 15 people attended, some just discovering the walk was taking place on the day. We briefly covered the origins of the park, how it came to be a public park and why, and some of the recent changes, good and bad.

The history of the park can be summed up very briefly but the detail can be very complex and things aren't as previously described in most accounts.

Various people, some connected with the Friends of the park have produced accounts which gave us clues to seeking more detail. And several almost accidental discoveries have revealed more about the story.

It really depends on how much you want to know about local history but as described by Eric Inman in the 1990's, John Cator was active in Beckenham long before the 1773 dating of the park, and present at Stumps Hill by 1760 if not a tad earlier. Stories about who Cator knew and some who he is reputed to have known but didn't.

Anyway, the Friends website has our version of the history which we invite people to add to or question. Soon we will be publishing a history in electronic form, a pdf file with illustrations and links to our sources. With acknowledgement to Eric Inman, Pat Manning, Margaret Mitchell, and a string of other historians mentioned in the history. – Mal Mitchell



## Bluebell Walk Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> April

Over forty people with several enthusiastic children braved the cold weather to accompany our leader Nick Bertrand on the annual Bluebell Walk. In a couple of hours search across parkland and through the woods we discovered two dozen species of wild flowers as well as many trees and shrubs in bloom. On the way we learnt about their preferred habitats and observed how some, cow parsley and holly to name two, come to undermine the growth of others around them.

The highlight of the magnificent spread of bluebells led us back in time into the depths of our ancient woodland. This year we were abruptly brought back to the here and now by the scars left by cyclists and walkers cutting through the historic landscape. Opinions were exchanged and questions raised about conservation. Shattered fencing submerged in the undergrowth indicated the short sightedness of investment to attract more visitors without protecting the unique sought after carpet of bluebells which heightens the scenic value of the park.

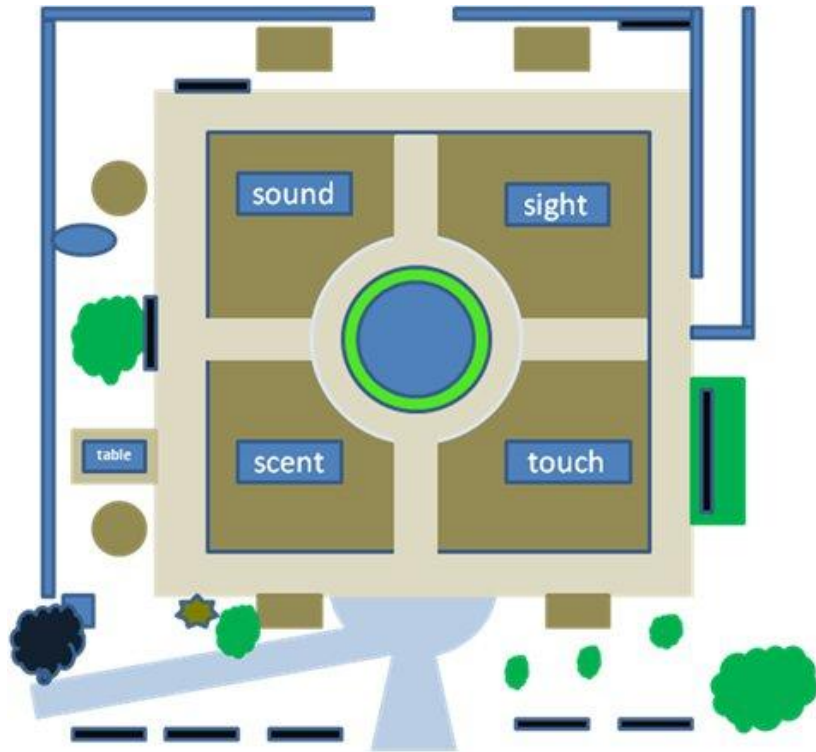
Other novelties encountered were a sample of hemlock clinging to the edge of an old bunker, the zigzag sweet chestnut tree, two sturdy trunks rising up from a lime tree blown over in the 87's storms and colonies of white garlic mustard flowers adorning the alder and ash trees left behind after clearance for the proposed wetland area. From the humble wood millet to the magnificent oaks we learnt much about the wonders of nature thanks again to our entertaining and knowledgeable guide Nick.



Novelties encountered on April's Bluebell Walk

## Sensory Garden

Our volunteers continue to do sterling work in the garden and the beds are a mass of bloom and foliage. We aim to have something coming into bloom as other things 'go over'. The spring is a time for bulbs to give way to forget me nots and now they are nearly finished other things are taking their place. Some cowslips we put in have seeded and regenerated, columbine is probably flowering now and various herbs are flourishing. A few things are favoured by dogs or foxes or both as they get rolled on or worse. Look out for hollyhocks and foxgloves soon and the rhubarb has been allowed to flower because it makes a spectacular show along with some of the larger plants. Random symmetry is the intended design as a contrast to the more formal upper gardens managed by park garden staff. If you want to come along and help then the 2nd and 4th Saturdays of the month are our usual dates and from 10am to midday meeting in the garden.



## The Lake by Numbers

Length 200 metres

Width 50 metres

Area 10,000m<sup>2</sup>

Volume 17,000m<sup>3</sup>

Maximum Depth 3.5m

Amount of water needed to fill it approximately 17 million litres

Far from being a restoration, the lake will be a high specification construction project. The kit for the lake (as per the specification) includes:-

Borehole pump and associated equipment

Drainage pump and associated equipment

Air pumps x 3 and associated equipment

Drain runs

Hoses

Ducting

Pipes, valves and fittings

Cables (submersible and dry) and armoured cables

Switchgear control panels

Isolators

Current Transformers

Relays and Timers

Wiring

Lake liner and liner geomembrane

Coir pallets and brushwood faggots

Locks, labels, signs

Plant kiosk

Timber jetty

That's a lot of specialist kit to maintain but the specification included for maintenance only for the first year.





**Proposed lake area**



**Proposed wetland area**



**Nick Bertrand of Creekside Education Trust leading the Bluebell Walk with the help of an enthusiastic young volunteer.**

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**We would love to hear what you think of the lovely park and woodland**

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**Have you any memories you would care to share with us of growing up in the area and visiting the park? We would love to hear from you!**

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**There's a lot going on in the Mansion, please look them up:**

**[mansion@beckenhamplace.org](mailto:mansion@beckenhamplace.org)**