

**FRIENDS OF BECKENHAM PLACE
PARK WINTER 2022/23 – NEWSLETTER
No. 96**



Events

Please see our website for forthcoming events.

Fungus Foray Walk

On Sunday 23 October Dr Mark Spencer led over thirty of us around the park. We were blessed with the only window of sunshine in a very wet and stormy day! His enthusiasm and knowledge on his subject was contagious and we were all soon spreading out with triumphant cries when discovering fungi.

Mark is an expert in his field and regaled us with many facts about these fascinating plants and their relationship with woodland trees and plants. It is easy to become depressed when thinking of pollution and the intricate web of the natural environment in which we all live. We are all breathing in excessive nitrogen and this is also adversely affecting these delicate organisms.

“Plant a Tree” seems an inspiring slogan but Mark explained that the new trees instigated by Lewisham are the ‘wrong’ trees on the ‘wrong’ grassland. As the trees grow they will have nothing to offer native insects and will take sunlight from the open grassland. Thus the grass will produce more carbon dioxide as it struggles to survive.

There are many knowledgeable conservationists such as Mark but the powers that be refuse to listen.....Very many thanks to Mark for giving us such an interesting afternoon.



Some photos taken during Mark’s walk also some photos taken at other times of various fungi in the park.



Coral spot



Psathyrella corrugis.



Orange Peel fungus



Dead Molls fingers



Laccaria striatula.



Common Funnel
(*Clitocybe gibba*)



There is no scientific difference between a mushroom and a toadstool; an edible fungus is usually referred to as a mushroom, whereas an inedible one is usually referred to as a toadstool. As with so many aspects of the study of these amazing organisms, however, even this is not always the case.”

Note: there is no simple way to determine which are poisonous and which are edible; knowledge and training are required.

Park news



Bird ID board.

With thanks to
Glensy.

The lakeside bird ID board has finally been installed in it's allotted place after a fairly long and costly process. It looks very good and seems robust. Congratulations to all those involved..

A new 'lead' ranger has been appointed by Lewisham council to replace Lucy Mitchell-Walker.

His name is James Allen and his email is James.Allen@lewisham.gov.uk

We wish him well in his new post.

Sensory Wildlife Garden

We still have regular volunteers maintaining the garden and anyone is welcome to join us for workdays that usually take place about twice a month on Saturday mornings.

We are undertaking a bit of remodelling in a couple of areas and as we don't use any herbicides or insecticides we carry out weeding manually which is easier than it sounds.

Lewisham Council recently circulated a poll or petition regarding the use of glyphosphate herbicide in parks and streets and the amount of herbicide used boroughwide is phenomenal .

Glyphosphate has been linked to some cancers and harmful to wildlife. You can't kill one thing without killing something else as well or doing it some damage.

This year we found that Box Moth which had damaged some box plants previously was not as bad probably because the bushes are next to lavender. Often 'companion planting' disguises plants from pests. For example planting onions next to carrots.

Anyway we feel more comfortable preferring that nothing harmful has been added to the garden.
(with thanks to Mal)

Just email us if you want to know when the next workdays are planned.



(photograph of the Sensory garden after the frost arrived but before the snow)

History of the Park

We still update the Park history and also the Beckenham history we have on the website in pdf form. We are currently reformatting it into web pages. The Beckenham History will be in pages divided into 'Introduction' and time periods 1086-1400 1400-1600 1600-1800 and 1800-present.

The pages are accessible via a link on the website homepage (History under development) and then via the Contents list on the Introduction page. Any future updates will be on these pages

I'm happy to answer any queries on accessing the pages or on the content as I know we differ/correct/add a lot of detail in other histories. We also like to find out new info such as recently being sent some recollections from the life of Alfred Ridley, father of a local historian Pat Manning. We will be adding some of this to our history in due course.

This photo has recently been posted on the facebook page of Catford and Lewisham Old Photographs and purports to show the river in Beckenham Place Park. The stated date of the photo would be before the area was public park which happened in 1927/29 and the riverside meadows were then mostly part of Foxgrove Farm which was leased from the Cators. This would explain the horses in the photo.

Some locals said the riverside marches were called the Thousand Islands by some. What we now call the Common by the river is made-up ground with landfill either from building of Downham estate or wartime bomb rubble, perhaps both. I'm told that disused ponds in places like Langley Park were also filled with bomb rubble.

Anyone who hasn't noticed, there is an interesting aerial photo on the information board on Crab Hill showing the Prisoner of War Camp. Nearby close to the entrance to the park on Crab Hill we have the prehistoric 'Conglomerate' which is exposed parts of the geological Blackheath Beds ie shingle cemented together with sand and shells. You may be interested in two British Geological Survey websites and apps; BGS Geology viewer and BGS Geindex Onshore which show various geology information overlaid on maps. They take a bit of getting used to but are very informative. The Blackheath Beds were reclassified as being part of the Harwich Formation and geology around and about BPP can be complex.

Anyone entering the park from the gatehouse at the junction of Foxgrove Road and Southend Road along the private road may have noticed a house on the left with a big drop in the back garden. This was a quarry for gravel or chalk and had a lane called Limekiln Lane alongside it before it became part of Cator's parkland. It seem recently that some work was carried out there possibly underpinning a house or rebuilding?

(With thanks to Mal).



Above old photograph of children playing by the Ravensbourne as it used to run through Beckenham Place Park.

Window Tax

A Friend has asked whether Window tax had a bearing on the design and building of the Mansion in the park. In truth this is impossible to answer categorically as we do not have the original building plans but it is certainly possible.

The window tax was first introduced in 1696 and lasted until 1851 when it was repealed. It started as a flat rate of 2 shillings per house plus a variable tax based on the number of windows in the property above 10(10 to 20 were 4 shillings each and 20 plus were 8 shillings !). The tax rate was amended several times.

In 1747 it was 6d per window for 10 to 14 windows,9d for 15 to 19 windows and 1 whole shilling for 20 plus.

In 1766 the tax was changed again such that all windows over 7 incurred a charge.

The date for the building of the mansion is probably around 1760-but possibly planned up to 3 years earlier .Hence we can surmise that the window tax at the time used the 1747 figures .



The portico to the front of the mansion(which was added some time after – possibly about 1806) certainly looks as if some windows have been blocked up. Especially the windows on the first floor above the insets for the two statues. Another anomaly(pointed out by Mal) is that the windows at rear of the building reception rooms are glazed but are bricked or plastered over internally.This is a curious feature possibly because later alterations involved fashionable plasterwork?Did that mean they were charged or exempt from the tax ?

Some more definitions from the Uxbridge dictionary.

Cardiology	Study of knitwear.
Coconut	Crazy about hot chocolate.
Wince	A setting on Jonathon Ross's washing machine.
Perversion	The cat's side of the story.
Pillock	Lock on medicine cupboard.
Rambling	Jewellery worn by sheep.

An update on The Fourth Reserve (who are trying to purchase Gome Wood, part of the ancient woodland, from a developer).They have now raised £65,000 of the £100,000 they need and are hoping for a further £10,000 from a charity in the New Year.

Finally Seasons greetings to you all.

If you have any interesting stories about the Park please send them in.

Our email address is bpp.friends@hotmail.co.uk

Our address for correspondence, relating to newsletters, is :

Friends of BPP

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Websites of Interest

Friends of Beckenham Place Park

www.beckenhamplaceparkfriends.org.uk

Lewisham Local History Society www.lewishamhistory.org.uk

Bromley Local History www.bblhs.org.uk

Ravensbourne Valley Preservation Soc. www.rvpsbromley.org.uk

Deptford Creek www.creeksidecentre.org.uk

Kent Archeology www.kentarcheology.org.uk (8)