

# FRIENDS OF BECKENHAM PLACE PARK SPRING 2023 – NEWSLETTER No. 97



## Events

Please see our website for forthcoming events.

### Bird walk 18th February.

There were a dozen of us and we perhaps didn't see as much as we hoped but still interesting to see things and talk about them with like minded people.

We were lucky the weather was dry and the light quite good. There wasn't as much bird song as two days earlier when it was sunny with no wind.

There were large numbers of Ring-necked Parakeets as they compete noisily for nest holes.

Interesting to see the two pairs in adjacent holes, it will be worth watching that tree.

Good to see and hear two pairs of Little Grebes and several Great spotted woodpeckers and Stock doves in the woodlands.

Disappointing we only heard one Nuthatch at the start of the walk, and only a couple of people saw a Goldcrest there too.

We popped into the sensory garden where everyone was hard at work.

A couple of our group were ladies who do the community gardening and one was very defensive about the tree removal along the river, which is part of Lewisham's Grand Plans for the east side of the park(Park maintenance or devastation for wildlife - take your pick).

Listed below all the birds seen or heard on the walk :

Beckenham Place Park 18th Feb 2023

Little Grebe, Blackbird, Long tailed tits, Black-headed Gull ,Magpie, Blue Tit, Mallards ,Canada Goose

Moorhen, Carrion Crow, Nuthatch, Coot, Ring necked Parakeet, Egyptian Goose, Robin, Goldcrest

Starling, Goldfinch, Stock Dove, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Tufted Duck, Great Tit, Wood Pigeon

Jackdaw and Wren.

Update from Bird list 30th March 2023

Another walk this morning with 35 species recorded, (for our 3 monthly survey.)

We actually saw two Kingfishers along the Ravensbourne and had several sightings of the female.

After all the recent tree felling and habitat disturbance we weren't very optimistic at the start of our walk.

Lots of Chiffchaffs(9) calling everywhere, a few Blackcaps(3), Stock doves (10) and at least 5 Little Grebes on the main lake.

With thanks to Liz Anderson



Little Grebe



Goldcrest



Nuthatch(above) and Great spotted woodpecker



## Bluebell Walk

Our traditional Bluebell walk (in collaboration with Creekside Education Trust) took place on Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> April.

We met at the Mansion steps and Nick Barnard led almost forty of us into the woods.

He is very knowledgeable and good at imparting facts about the trees and landscape which we so often take for granted.

He also explained how human intervention such as deciding to plant trees on grassland where there previously hadn't been any can have devastating effects on that piece of landscape.

Nature is a very intricate web and even with the best of intentions people, by not comprehending the full picture, give it problems.

It was a very interesting and informative walk that went on till 5.30 p.m.

Our thanks to Nick & Creekside.



Photograph of park bluebells with thanks to Glenys

Nick providing information about the Whitebeam.



## History

For the most part, the park's history is covered in previous newsletters and on our website but we welcome any questions about the history.

The works being carried out on the east side of the park, on the part we generally call The Common, near the Old Bromley Road entrance prompted some archaeological investigation. We attended an on-site discussion about the findings with the site archaeologists. Not much was found apart from land-fill but it did clarify some outstanding questions.

It's always been thought that the land fill here was WWII bomb site rubble but that was discounted as some evidence was pre-war and aerial photos from 1946 show already well established football pitches on the area. So the landfill is probably slum clearance by the London County Council who were rebuilding areas of South East London and also constructing Bellingham and Downham estates nearby. Downham had a cinema and at least one old mill

4very near the park plus other old buildings which were swept away in redevelopment.

The Common was in times past a marshy riverside and on the Foxgrove Manor map of 1720-1766 is shown as an area where twenty great beasts of Foxgrove were grazed, these were oxen used for pulling ploughs etc.

Another finding by archaeologists was a field boundary ditch of which there are a few indicated by the Foxgrove map.

One area not investigated was the site shown on 1946 aerial photos as an anti aircraft battery in the middle of Summerhouse Field (adjacent to the Ravensbourne Avenue entrance). The archaeologists said there was a small risk of finding old ammunition. But since the site has been playing field for many years I guess its unlikely, Anyway don't stamp on the ground too hard!

One thing that struck me was the extreme clearance of riverside vegetation at a time when small mammals, newts, frogs etc might be hibernating in the area or unable to escape heavy machinery but hey, what do I know?

### Sensory garden

Work continues by our team of dedicated volunteers with removal of couch grass, tidying up paths, planting up, removal of failed water feature/small pond which always dried out too quickly, but the Ancient pond and reconstructed lake provide water for wildlife.

There's always something to do to maintain the garden in a condition attractive to visitors and wildlife.

Volunteers are still welcome on our 'every other Saturday' dates.

(with thanks to Mal)

(A recent picture of the sensory garden)



The cinema on the site of the BP garage, mill building opposite, Downham looking toward Bromley

### Park News

#### Archaeological Survey in Eastern side of Park on Friday 10th March

A group of about twenty met two of the archaeologists, who described how the trenches were dug and what was found in them.

This sort of work has to be done to enable plans for the park layout to go ahead. The area surveyed is mainly 'made ground', ie ground fill during the inter war years consisting of bricks, detritus, etc. (See History article).



He proudly showed us a discovered whole liquor bottle and also a handsome earthenware pot - unusual to find in one piece.

Sadly that was about all that was found – nothing as exciting as the **rare** Roman sestertius coin from the time of Marcus Aurelius 161-180ad who co-ruled, initially with Lucius Verus, which was recently discovered at the allotments by Kelsey park (fairly close to the old Roman road).

### **Tree works on the banks of the Ravensbourne obliterating the trees and habitat.**

One Friend has contacted us about concerns for the work being carried out for Lewisham council.

We all understand the need to maintain the quality of trees. However it is difficult to see how the current tree removal reflects these aspirations

1. How is Lewisham monitoring its contractors?
2. How have the decisions been made and will the rest of the banks trees be obliterated.
3. Are there TPOs in place on these trees and who have Lewisham involved for supervision of construction and for the effects on the wildlife on and around the river.

### **Gorne Wood Update**

Since the Gorne Wood fundraising target was reached The Fourth Reserve(organisers of the campaign) have met with the council to discuss the next steps(re. Lewisham council's funding commitment and compulsory purchase option). They have since written to the land owner outlining their position and commitment to supporting the acquisition of Gorne Wood.

The length of this acquisition process very much depends on how the land owner responds and how slowly the cogs turn in what is a complex process. But they are now very much 'on the ladder' thanks to the support they have received. We will keep you updated as matters develop.

(pictures overleaf of a history walk group and volunteers at Gorne wood.)



### **Some more definitions from the Uxbridge dictionary.**

Polychrome	Internet browser for parrots.
Pillock	Medicine cabinet fastener.
Mumbling	Mother's jewellery.
Intelligent	Man on T.V.
Knickers	Kleptomaniacs.
Knowing	Unable to fly.
Perspex	How opticians get paid.
Flemish	Catarrh like.
Shamrock	Fake jewellery.

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

Our email address is [bpp.friends@hotmail.co.uk](mailto: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](http://www.beckenhamplaceparkfriends.org.uk)**

Lewisham Local History Society [www.lewishamhistory.org.uk](http://www.lewishamhistory.org.uk)

Bromley Local History [www.bblhs.org.uk](http://www.bblhs.org.uk)

Ravensbourne Valley Preservation Soc. [www.rvpbromley.org.uk](http://www.rvpbromley.org.uk)

Deptford Creek [www.creeksidecentre.org.uk](http://www.creeksidecentre.org.uk)

Kent Archeology [www.kentarcheology.org.uk](http://www.kentarcheology.org.uk)