

NEWSLETTER 51

Spring: April 1st - June 30th 2009



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

Saturday 18th April Bluebell Walk

Meet 2.00pm on the portico steps of the mansion. A treat this year, Nick Bertrand, an old friend of BPP as far back as the Public enquiry in the 1990s, is leading this walk. Hope the bluebells are out on time!

Sunday 17th May Beating the Bounds Walk

Meet 1.30pm on the portico steps of the mansion. Please join Nick (another one) on this circular walk around the boundary of the park. Beating the bounds is an old tradition which we like to carry on in the park

Saturday 20th June Old Boundary Post and Trees Walk

Meet 2.00pm on the Mansion steps. On this walk we will be roughly following the old boundary posts that cross the park (some are on the golf course and may be a bit inaccessible) and also looking at the lovely old trees.

HERON WATCH at KELSEY PARK, BECKENHAM

Saturday 4th April and Sunday 5th April 11.00am— 4.00pm

Volunteers will be on hand to help with telescopes and binoculars from two viewing platforms. Displays, information and leaflets.

Face painting (wildlife designs) for a small charge.

Kelsey Park Friends information centre open 11.00am-4.00pm.

About The Friends Events

All our events are free, but any donations to funds are much appreciated.

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.

Children are welcome, but a parent or guardian should accompany under-12's.

Dogs are welcome, if kept under control. 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.

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Recent Events Report

Saturday 17th January. Winter Bird Walk Time: 9.30am- 1.30pm.

Weather Conditions. windy ,bright, sunny with clear blue skies and few light clouds, fairly cold. There had been an hour or so of heavy rain at about 6.00am.

This was a really good start to 2009s events. Dave was on hand to tell us just who was twittering away and point out anything unusual. In the Willow Carr, the area of a seasonal pond, we saw a small group of **Siskins** and at least one **Redpol** in a small stand of alder.

Seen and/or heard.

Wood Pigeon	Blue Tit	Common Gull	Siskin
Chaffinch	Nuthatch	Starling	Redpol
Blackbird	Goldfinch	Song Thrush	Wren
Long-Tailed Tit	Kingfisher	Stock Dove	Coal Tit
Green Woodpecker	Cormorant	Carrion Crow	Robin
Mistle Thrush	Herring Gull	Great Tit	Mallard
Sparrowhawk	Goldcrest	Kestrel	Magpie
Black Headed Gull	Greenfinch	Feral Pigeon	
Great Spotted Woodpecker		Ring Necked Parakeet	

Sunday 15th February. Short Winter Walk .

As the Visitor Centre was shut it was good for all the VC volunteers to go on this Sunday afternoon stroll. The weather was a bit warmer than the snowy blast of early February, but winter hasn't gone yet. We walked to the woods and down to the river, several of the group hadn't been to the river before and it is always nice to introduce people to different areas of the park. Thank you to everyone who came along to make it a very pleasant afternoon.

CONSERVATION WORKDAYS in JAN, FEB & MAR.

The weather has been kind and good progress has been made clearing overhanging and fallen branches by the pathways in Stumpshill Wood. Two sessions on the gorse have cleared a lot of low bramble growth and the gorse is flowering beautifully. In our last session in March, we worked for an hour in the woodland clearing overhanging holly along some paths. Then moved on to take some more bramble out of the gorse area. Despite low numbers of volunteers some really good work has been achieved. Well done and thank you to everyone who came along.

Saturday 14th March. Three Parks Walk

Watch out for future events we seem to be getting good weather on all our walks. so far. This was a real marathon, but the eleven hardy souls who gave up their Saturday morning really enjoyed it and must have gone home a lot fitter. The walk started at the mansion in BPP and progressed up through the woodland to the Westgate Road exit from here along the 'rural' unmade up road and on past the really old cottages in Chancery Lane, some dating to the 1770s. Then down Court Downs Road to Kelsey Park. We followed the lake side path past the heronry and further on pointing out the top of the ice house which is roughly opposite the kingfisher artwork on the edge of the lake. Even the animals were very obligingly on view, as here we also saw the male and female Mandarin ducks sitting together by the edge of the water.

After leaving Kelsey Park by the Stone Park Avenue exit came the more boring bit as there is no choice but to trot along the road for a while. Still by now everyone was chatting away to each other and there are some nice houses to look at for some of the way. After navigating our way around the roundabout at Elmers End it was just a short distance over the railway bridge and into South Norwood Country Park. This entrance opens straight onto the large lake which has viewing platforms. There are visits to this body of water by quite a variety of water birds making it worth a look at any time of the year. There were shelduck, tufted duck, moorhens, mallards and a selection of gulls. On the summer evenings Daubenton's bats can be seen skimming across the surface of the water in search of insects. Moving on from the lake it becomes apparent that this is very different from BPP and Kelsey Park with its open expanse of rough grassland dotted with clumps of trees and bushes. There is a small pitch and putt course but it is shut at the moment for refurbishing. Following the wide pathway with Beckenham Crematorium on our right we eventually arrived at the Visitor Centre and children's playground, but the best thing was the picnic tables to collapse on to and break out the biscuits!

It was a really enjoyable day and with all the chatting it hadn't seem such a long walk. After a restful break decisions were made on getting back. There is the train from Elmers End to Beckenham, Sydenham and Catford. The 54 bus which stops outside BPP and the tram which goes to many places. Some of us walked back via three other parks, but that's another story!

Working Party Meeting Current Issues:

Future management of Golf, it seems Glendale or LBL are unable to run it themselves and will be looking for a management bid/tender for the golf course. 'Golf has to be sustainable' I suggested having artisan members to do some work but 'the unions would be up in arms'. If the golf closed down there wouldn't be the jobs anyway! Catch 22 or Alice in Wonderland?

The Compost Site, We don't want the eyesore or conservation risks, but LBL and Glendale want a cheap solution to a waste problem. We're in contact with Environment Agency, Natural England and London Wildlife Trust about the issue, Please complain to Martin.Hyde@lewisham.gov.uk .

Cycle paths, an unnecessary man made feature we believe but a planning application will appear sometime to install one along the riverside walk. Sustrans have longer term plans to have a circular route in the woodland and we believe this is all unsuitable in BPP 'countryside' setting. Please complain again to Martin Hyde.

Park Signage.

At last it seems that Lewisham Council are actually going to tell the world where Beckenham Place Park is. For years the lack of informative signs at most park gates, has been brought up at Working Party meetings and 'there's no money' is the cry, but signage is now in the planning stage and some members of the committee are being consulted too. It won't happen overnight, but it does look extremely promising.

Ancient Pond and others Water Areas.

A couple of FBPP committee members have been meeting with a group called Froglife (with Lewisham Council's blessing). This is an organisation that promotes the provision of habitats for amphibians and reptiles to flourish alongside wider biodiversity. They felt the ancient pond would benefit from some dredging (something else FBPP have urged the Council to do for many years). They identified a couple of areas on the golf course where some small areas of water could be put in without upsetting anyone. The seasonal water of the Willow Carr has been less and less wet in the winter for many years and they thought some of this could be restored without disturbing it. The small group of alder wouldn't be affected.

They seemed hopeful of getting funding from various sources and Lewisham Council are now keen for this project to come to fruition.

Historical Events in the Cator Family's Occupation of BPP

The Cator family were living in the mansion roughly between 1770s and the 1820s after that they decamped to their recently acquired estate at Woodbastwick in Norfolk. The family retained the mansion and estate land to let it out to a series of tenants.

Some interesting events of the time.

1785 Edmund Cartwright invented the power loom, a steam-powered machine mechanising weaving. The loom needed improvement but by 1820 was in common usage. Prior to mechanisation men were weavers, but this move to mechanical production of textiles brought women into the factories to run the looms replacing men in the industry.

1787 Lieutenant William Bligh set forth on H M S Bounty to obtain bread fruit plantings for Sir Joseph Banks. The idea was to transplant them to the Caribbean to provide a food crop for the slaves. There was a great deal of ill feeling on this long voyage and after collecting the cargo in Tahiti, in the Pacific Ocean, the ship sailed for the Caribbean. On 28th April 1789 Masters Mate Fletcher Christian and twelve of the crew mutinied and set Bligh and eighteen others adrift in a launch only 26ft long near Tofua. Miraculously they all survived and landed in Timor forty-seven days later after a journey of 3,618 nautical miles. The mutineers continued on in the Bounty to the Pitcairn Islands where they founded a colony, which wasn't discovered until 1808.

1795 The British Royal Navy orders that lime juice rations are to be carried on all voyages of more than five weeks. In 1794 testing of James Lind citrus juice remedy for scurvy had been proved successful. This would have been a breakthrough discovery at the time as so much long distance exploration was taking place.

1800 The world's population reaches an estimated 880 million with Britain reckoned to have 10 million of them. London was the largest European city with 864,000 people. These

Green Chain Walk Walking Festival

This will be Saturday 12th September-Sunday 20th September.

We hope to contribute a walk, but the whole event is still in the planning stages. More information in the next newsletter.

Lewisham Peoples Day. Saturday 11th July.

In Mountsfield Park, Catford

This is a fun day and is extremely well policed. We will probably not be having a stall this year, but there are many other attractions!

Bernard Bligh.

Bernie sadly died at the end of January this year. He was a man full of knowledge on any aspect of nature and will be missed.

Many of you may remember him from as far back as the 1970s when he ran an exciting Nature Centre in the mansion complete with a colony of bees in a see-through hive. People still come into the Visitor Centre saying they remember looking for the queen bee who was marked with a white dot. Bernie was the Conservation Officer for Lewisham for many years and was the inspiration for our present humble Visitor Centre.

School Visits to BPP for Nature Lessons

A community officer from Lewisham Council is in the process of setting up facilities to allow local schools to make nature visits to the park. A classroom would be set up in one of the rooms in the mansion and the Visitor Centre would be included as a part of the resources. Some visits are now being arranged, but until things are finalised we cannot publish contact numbers. Hope to be able to give more details in the next newsletter. The Friends website will publish any new information as it becomes available.

The opening of the Visitor Centre. The Visitor Centre is now open again. The work inside has been finished on time. The outside of the mansion is now sporting a fetching line in scaffolding, which we hope will not effect the Visitor Centre opening.

Mansion lettings for wedding receptions etc.

At the moment this enterprise has had to be suspended. If it starts up again we'll put the details in the newsletter and on the website

BURNING YARD UPDATE

This blot on the landscape continues to rumble on growing to great heights and obliterating a public path created and cleared by volunteers. This path was put in because it created a link between the river side of the park and the wooded areas. It was a route that was flat offering an alternative to people who have difficult with hills.

As a group we have been contacting as many organisations as possible to try and get this dreadful and daft idea removed from our Local Nature Reserve, a designation that BPP has.

If you aren't happy with this sorry state of affairs please let the Mayor and Lewisham Council know, because it is not just Glendale that are running this.

SNOW!

When in early Febrrrruary winter let us know it wasn't moving over to let spring start cheering us all up, the park was transformed into a winter wonderland. As a good many people could barely get out of the house, let alone the drive, some areas of the park were turned into giant slides. Out came the sledges, tin trays and dustbin lids for old and young to enjoy a couple of days away from work and school. Here is a reminder this heavy snowfall.



BEEES. Bee numbers are declining at an alarming rate and some species are already extinct. These creatures are so important in the food chain. If only viewed selfishly by looking at how it would affect us, bees pollinate a wide range of foods we enjoy, such as apples, broccoli, tomatoes, cherries, peas, beans and strawberries to name but a few.

Albert Einstein said "If the bee disappeared off the surface of the globe, then man would only have four years of life left. No more bees, no more pollination, no more plants, no more animals, no more man."

So you can do your bit to help by planting a few plants they are attracted to and keep them happy through the seasons.

March and April flowering:- Cowslip, Bluebell, Deadnettle (lamium), Lungwort (pulmonaria), Bugle(ajuga reptans), Flowering currant(ribes), Winter flowering heathers (erica)

May and June flowering:-Columbine (aquilegia), Geraniums (real one, not pelagoniums),Campanula, Californian lilac (ceanothus), Chives, Cotoneaster, Honeysuckle (lonicera), Foxglove (digitalis), Lupin, Thyme.

July and August flowering:-Butterfly bush(buddleja), Cornflower (centaurea), Delphinium, Escallonia, Hollyhock, Lavender, Scabious, Marjoram, Eryngium.

References: Telegraph.co.uk. Jimmy Lee Shreeve. 3rd August 2007
Coolings Garden Centre Cuttings Magazine. Spring 2009 edition.

BLUEBELLS. I hope some of you will be able to join Nick Bertrand on this years Bluebell Walk in BPP, he is so knowledgeable it will be a real treat. It does look as if a good display is waiting to thrill us again this year. Much work has been carried out in selected areas of the park controlling holly and sycamore, which means more light can reach the woodland floor. This gives the bluebells a chance to flower and set seed before the trees come into leaf and the canopy closes allowing only filtered light.

The habitat stronghold of our native bluebell is broadleaf woodland which our park has, but there are threats from hybridisation with the more robust Spanish bluebell grown in gardens. So far the park bluebells seem to be true English ones, but pollen carried by insects and bees could threaten in the future. In a world of predicted climate change the bluebells survival on that front is unknown. Best thing to do is get out there and enjoy them while we can.

See you 2.00 pm at the mansion Saturday 18th April.