

Winter Bird Walk 30th January 2010

Conditions: Sunny, bright blue sky, clear, very cold, on freezing point at start of walk, very little wind.

Walk started at 10.00am from the mansion and returned 1.30pm.

Fourteen people attended.

Birds seen or heard

Moorhen	Robin	Magpie
Feral Pigeon	Great Spotted Woodpecker	
Chaffinch	Mistle Thrush	Redwing
Blackbird	Mallard (m & f)	Herring Gull
Wren	Goldcrest	Hedgesparrow
Siskin	Cormorant	GreenWoodpecker
Jay	Kestrel	Blue Crowned Parakeet
Blue Tit	Carrion Crow	Stock Dove
Coal Tit	Starling	Wood Pigeon
Sparrowhawk	Greenfinch	Black-headed Gull
Great tit	Redpoll	Ring neck parakeet
Goldfinch	Long-tailed Tit	
Fieldfare	Common gull	

And the star of the show... **LESSER SPOTTED WOODPECKER !!!**
This little bird is considered a rarity and although sightings have been recorded years back in BPP, this is our first confirmed one for some time. They are not easy to spot high up in the trees, so the leafless trees in the winter give the best chances.

The Lesser Spotted Woodpecker is a small black and white bird, approximately six inches in length (said to be slightly bigger than a sparrow) with a boldly black and white barred back. Males have a distinctive red cap which is lacking in the females. It frequents the high up, small branches of old trees and often mixes in with flocks of tits, in fact this male one had a group of blue tits in the trees around it. They drum frequently, but less powerfully than the larger Great Spotted Woodpecker. It is resident to England and Wales all year. Some of our party returned to the mansion by a different route due to commitments for the rest of the day and each group saw different birds.

Many thanks to Dave and Paul for guiding the walk and to those who braved the cold weather to join us. Many of the group were experienced bird watchers, so not much flew by or tweeted without being identified by someone.

NEWSLETTER 55

Spring: April 1st - June 30th 2010



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

Saturday 17th April **BLUEBELL WALK**

Meet 11.00 am on the mansion steps. For this walk, put your listening head on, Nick who will be leading this walk will be telling you so much interesting information that you won't want to miss a thing. On the other hand the scent, sight and colour of the bluebells might be enough for you.

Sunday 9th May. **BEATING THE BOUNDS WALK**

Meet 2.00 pm at the Mansion. Do come on this annual walk around the perimeter of the park and keep Nick, (another one, they're like buses wait ages and two arrive together!) company on this unusual annual event.

Thursday 17th June. **LISTENING WALK**

Meet 2.00 pm at the mansion. This is a walk to find out how much we miss when we walk around the park chatting to one another. After the walk we sit down, probably with a cup of tea, and talk about all the sounds we have heard (birds, children, planes etc). Last time we did this walk everyone was really surprised at how much we all enjoyed it.

Mansion Access. Sometimes the mansion cannot be accessed at short notice due to bad weather/ maintenance etc, so if making a special journey for indoor events, you may like to check with us on one of the links below.

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. Minors are welcome, but must be accompanied by parent or guardian. 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.

THE FRIENDS OF BECKENHAM PLACE PARK, THE SECRETARY,
18 GREYCOT ROAD, BECKENHAM, KENT BR3 1TA

TEL: 020 8325 8781 E-MAIL bpp.friends@ntlworld.com

Website: www.beckenhamplaceparkfriends.org.uk

Beckenham Place Community Trust

This is the shortlisted name of the new Trust which is being formed as a partnership between the Lewisham Environment Trust, Enviroworks, Friends of BPP, and other interested parties including architectural historians, journalists, buildings conservationists.

The majority of the Trust's board are Lewisham residents which belies the opinion that most of those interested in the park are from Beckenham or Bromley and has always been a political sticking point. The first meeting took place on 26th March.

The aims will be to bid for the management of Beckenham Place Park Mansion and possibly other parts of the park such as the Homesteads and Stables.

The aims, objectives and mission statement are already in draft form and our members on the embryo board of trustees can confidently support the actions we have witnessed so far.

We have already and from the past, a long list of possible uses and activities which include education and training, community events and participation of various groups. Unfortunately Lewisham Council are still offering a division of the park into Mansion occupier and Parks management to include the Stable block. It has long been an aim and activity of the Friends to provide a visitor centre and interpretation of the parks history and ecology.

There will be a target of fundraising from grants, bequests, donations, voluntary work and the long term retention of the buildings for public access and use is a priority.

We have long appreciated that the Friends need partners and other resources to achieve our aim of conserving the park and buildings. Since the last round of consultation when the people of Lewisham, Bromley and other areas that use the park as well as a number of people who weren't aware of the parks presence confirmed that the local community want the park and buildings to remain as a whole and in public ownership and use.

There will be a meeting of Lewisham Environment Trust and Friends members on the 11th April (Sunday at 2pm in the Mansion) and our members are welcome to hear the latest news.

The new trust is under some pressure to express its interest to Lewisham Council, prepare a management bid and to become fully established and constituted.

We will try to keep a full record of progress available in the visitor centre and on our website. Do come along on the 11th if you are able.

Recent Events Report

Saturday 30th January Winter Bird Walk

Details, see back page. It was such a good walk, it needs a page of it's own!

Sunday 14th February Nestbox Workshop

This a was a good event and several people made boxes on the day including two young children and a senior citizen. We have several made up boxes and kits for sale in the mansion at £5 each.

Sunday 14th March Nature Walk

Only a select few went on this walk to try out the new Nature Trail, but the low numbers didn't stop them from having a very good walk (and a good moan about the cycle path and its associated mess).

VISITOR CENTRE NUMBERS. The Visitor Centre has had some very high attendances so far this year despite the fact that we haven't opened all the Sundays due to bad weather or building maintenance. Our previous record of 104 was broken in January with 107 on the 17th. The rest of the days have been in the 90s and 70s, makes standing around in a cold building worth while when so many people seem to enjoy their visits. In the Visitor Centre we have second hand books on offer for a donation to the Friends, but we are very short of children's books. If you have any you don't want or can't pass on, we would be very grateful. Thank you.

SENSORY GARDEN.

This seems to be a project that might actually come to fruition. Everyone seems keen to get involved and the funding is looking promising. We have enclosed a short questionnaire. If you would like to fill it in, it can be returned to the Visitor Centre, or by post or by hand to The Secretary, FBPP, 18 Greycot Road, Beckenham, Kent BR3 1TA. Many thanks for your support.

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.
- April 23rd Naval Victualling in Deptford. Janet MacDonald
- May 21st Thankfull Sturdee and the Deptford Jack. Sarah Crofts
- June 25th Telegraph Hill-The History of a Community. Malcolm Bacchuss

Conservation Workdays.

Due to the weather the first on 9th January was snowed off, the second one on 6th February was a great success with seven people coming to help out. It was decided to attack the rhododendron as it could be a future threat to the well-being of the oak trees. We contacted DEFRA before Christmas and they have said our woodland seems to be in no danger of this disease at the moment, but there is a need to be vigilant. We know many people find the rhododendron an attractive shrub, but not in an area of ancient woodland. Historically it was apparently planted by gamekeepers on large estates as cover for the birds.

Our last winter workday this year was also a great outing. It was a continuation of the previous one working on the rhododendron in the same area. The day was very bright, sunny, bitterly cold, windy and dry. One excitement was finding several clumps of snowdrops growing deep in the woodland and a few garden plants, aucuba, mahonia and some euonymus. On several old maps small buildings can be seen in this area although traces on the ground are not visible. We speculated that this could be the remains of a garden around a gardeners/gamekeepers cottage (we love a distraction from working!). Back to work and then another 'what's this?' shout, downing loppers and forks, we found the new discovery was probably an old concrete lined cesspit, not the 'oh, it's an ornamental pond' fancied by the editor on first glance. Well, on reflection it added credence to the cottage theory, no mains drainage deep in the woods. The pit is about a meter wide by one and half meters long with a stone floor and about four or five inches of water in it. We took the brambles off so that no one would fall in accidentally, but it is an area very overgrown and seldom trekked through. We have informed the council as they may need to cover it to abide by the health and safety regulations.

Many thanks to everyone who came along to this year's Conservation Workdays, despite the cold winter a great deal was achieved.

Now, you can see what fun we have come and join us when the workdays start again in October.

The Rivers and People Project.

This project is running a great many exciting events this spring. For more information and to join the mailing list email the project officer,

Chris.McGaw@Lewisham.gov.uk or phone 07850 713 974.

All events are free and most don't require booking.

The Composting Scheme.

The saga goes on despite all our protestations. Over the winter the contractors were careless and even reckless. One other worrying aspect is the possibility of diseases being introduced to the flora of the ancient woodland and seeds from invasive species. If you find this totally unacceptable both visually and from the safety aspect, please write or email Lewisham Council, complain to the Mayor, your local councillor or MP and make your feelings known.

If this operation remains it may become a permanent feature and even be put in a worse position in the park if that were possible. There are still many threats to the overall appearance and well-being of Beckenham Place Park. 'Recycling' sounds harmless, but in this case we are accommodating the 'fly tip'.

Cycle/Pedestrian Path Installation by Ravensbourne River.

Work has started on what most of us seem to think is a totally unnecessary expense and feature. Heavy machinery is involved so please take care when walking in the river area with children and dogs.

We have just found out that the removed soil is to be deposited in another area of the park rather than being removed. Please complain to Lewisham Council when you see motorbikes or inconsiderate cyclists. Pedestrians have priority on this path.

Park Signage.

The seven new signs have gone up and very nice they look too. The map is very good. Some of the words and pictures are not entirely accurate, but when it came to the printing, apparently the printers restricted the words, complained about the number of colours and wanted drawings rather than photos, so some of the submitted plans were changed in a rush. The biggest problem is the lack of a bluebell illustration and the depiction of a yellow iris, no we haven't seen those in the park either! But all things considered they are a helpful addition to park users.

Beckenham Place Park Nature Trail

The green posts are now installed, with the exception of number 9 that will be to the side of the new cycle path by the river, and will be installed when that is finished. There will be a brochure to guide you around the trail, but this is not ready yet. The Friends have prepared a guide of their own in the interim available from the Visitor Centre, so there's no excuse for not trying it out.

This article was discovered by one of our 'eagle-eyed Friends' in the Local Studies library in Bromley. It is from The Beckenham Journal. JUNE 1881. (edited to fit)

BAZAAR AT BECKENHAM PLACE.

On Saturday and Monday last, the 25th and 27th June, a grand bazaar was held in Beckenham Place, which was kindly lent for the purpose by Albemarle Cator Esq., the object being to aid in defraying the debt remaining on the Building Fund of St James' Church, School, and Working Men's Club, Elmer's End. The idea of the bazaar had been originated and carried into effect by a number of ladies desirous of assisting the church, whose efforts had been made quite apart from those of the Building Committee. They had secured influential patronage, H.R.H. Princess Mary Adelaide, Duchess of Teck, who had kindly promised to honor the bazaar with her presence, and to perform the opening ceremony. Great anxiety had been manifested to make the bazaar a success, the ladies who con-sented to take stalls, pledging themselves to provide stock to the value of at least £100, a sum which was unquestionably exceeded in nearly every case. Consequently there was no lack for those who came, to use the words of Marzials' popular song, "With their pockets full o' money," to exercise their liberality in a good cause.

At Beckenham Place excellent arrangements had been made for accommodating the large number of visitors expected, and all that was necessary to render the occasion completely successful was fine weather. Unhappily Saturday proved unpropitious in this respect for rain fell during the greater part of the morning, at times very heavily, so that by two o'clock, the hour fixed for opening the grounds, every place was thoroughly wet. This misfortune necessitated the alterations of some of the arrangements by rendering any proceeding in the open air impossible. Thanks, however, to the care of those who had the arrangements in hand, no inconvenience was felt beyond that occasioned by the crowding of the rooms.

Shortly after three o'clock, Princess Mary arrived, accompanied by her daughter, Princess May, and her little son, Prince Randolph, and attended by the Honorable Mary Thesiger. The Princess was received at the entrance of the fine old mansion by the Rev. A. Barber, Incumbent of St. James', Lady Inglis, Lord Chelmsford, G.C.B., Albemarle Cator, Esq., Mrs. A. Cator, and Rev. W. Cator. Having declared the bazaar open, the Princess proceeded to inspect the stalls. In the apartment on the left of the entrance-hall were three stalls, the first held by Lady Inglis, the Misses Inglis, and Miss Buckworth; the second by Mrs. Barber, Mrs. Pascall, Mrs. Strickland, and Miss Isaacson; and the third by Mrs. Wallace and family, assisted by Mrs. Phillips. Each of these stalls was well stocked with the thousand-and-one articles always provided for such occasions, Lady Inglis' being arranged as effectively, perhaps, as any in the bazaar. Mrs. Barber's stall, the goods on which were valued at upwards of £250, contained a number of contributions from working-men and women, who had devoted their spare time of some months past to their production. A room on the other side of the building contained stalls kept by Mrs. and Miss Kirby, and by Mrs. W. C. Jones, Mrs. Green, and Miss Smart. The latter stall was stocked to a large extent with fancy stationery and kindred articles, amongst them being some beautiful views taken by

instantaneous photography.

There was also a collection of New Zealand native spears and other arms, which soon secured purchasers. A spacious apartment, arranged in a most enticing manner, was devoted to refreshments, which were dispensed by a number of ladies under the direction of Mrs. Cameron and Mrs. Bicknell. Further provision in the way of creature comforts was made by Mr. Cameron, who had furnished a first-rate cold collation. The most attractive stall, at any rate in appearance, was that for flowers and fruit, which occupied a room by itself, presided over by Mrs. Radcliffe, Mrs. Blundell, Mrs. Newcombe, Miss Burleigh, and Miss Jones. These ladies had furnished themselves with a stock of choice flowers and fruit, which they had arranged so artistically that it was not at all surprising to find that the Duchess of Teck spent some little time there - indeed there was no department more worthy of a visit than this. Upstairs, Dr. Phillips had a number of microscopes, with some most interesting and instructive slides, on view; while Mr. Bloken was in charge of a Fine Art Collection, which preferred no claim to be considered "aesthetical." Another item calling for notice is that sketches of the new church of St. James, which has been designed by Mr. A. R. Stenning and will be a very handsome structure, were on view.

Her Royal Highness, having completed her tour of the stalls and made several purchases, proceeded to a concert room, where some of the pupils of the Royal Normal College and Academy of Music for the Blind, Upper Norwood, were about to give selection of music. Mr. F. J. Campbell, the Principal, having been introduced to the Princess, who referred to the affection entertained for him by his late pupil, Prince Alexander of Hesse, the following pieces were performed, by Her Royal Highness' request :-Humerous glee, "Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall" (Caldicott); song, "Die beiden Grandieri" (Schumann), Mr J. Prydie; trio, "O Memory" (Leslie), Miss A. Campbell, Miss A. Carson, and Mr A. Hughes; piano solo, "Silver Spring," by W. Mason, a lad aged 14; and the humorous glee, "Little Jack Horner" (Caldicott.) All these pieces were performed with that skill and effect for which the members of the College are justly renowned, and they secured the hearty applause of the Duchess. Her Royal Highness left soon afterwards.

During the afternoon a very large number of persons visited the bazaar. A brisk trade was carried on at the different stalls, and there were several canvassers for subscriptions towards articles to be drawn for. A second selection of music was given by the Blind College, and the Band of the Royal Artillery, which was present under the conductor-ship of the Band Master, Mr. Albert Mansfield, also provided some most enjoyable music. In the evening a Promenade Concert was given under the direction of Mr F. T. Newcombe.

On Monday there was a very large attendance. The proceedings were enlivened by the band of the Duke of York's School. The total receipts of the two days amounts to over £750, which sum, after paying all expenses, provides the Ladies Committee sufficient to pay off the debt on the building fund, and a balance of £50 for other purposes.