



NEWSLETTER 64

Summer: July 1st - September 30th 2012

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.

July 17th The Barings of Lewisham Clara Harrow

August No meeting

September 28th The Peasants Revolt Dan Jones

The Rivers and People Project.

This project runs a great many exciting events. 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.

Bromley Borough Local History Society.

All meetings start at 7.45pm in the small hall at Trinity United Reform Church at the junction of Freelands Road and Upper Park Road, Bromley BR1 3QA. **There are facilities for the disabled.**

The Hall has a small car park and free off street parking. Buses 162, 269 and 314 pass nearby; nearest bus stops are Freelands Road and St Joseph's Church. Nearest stations Bromley North and Bromley South.

Tea and coffee are usually available. Non-members of all ages are welcome to join us. Meetings are 1st Tuesday of the month unless otherwise stated. Occasional visits to local places of interest.

3rd July No meeting. Trip to Stone House ,Lewisham. Sorry fully booked

No meeting in August

4th September Members Evening

An opportunity to display, ask questions and talk about items of local historical interest. Quite an informal evening, but usual very interesting.

More information ;www.blhs.org.uk

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

Sunday 5th August FRIEND'S AGM

In the mansion 2.00pm, Sorry this is so late this year, but a chance to air your views.

Saturday 18th August BAT WALK

An event organised by Lewisham Council. See page 2 for details.

Sunday 19th August BUG HUNT

Meet at the mansion 1.30pm. A wander around the park looking for the smaller inhabitants of the park that are very important players in the web of life.

Wednesday 5th September THE MANSION FROM AFAR.....

Meet at the mansion in the park 1.30pm. Intrigued? This is a circular walk that leaves the park and gives an unexpected view of the mansion. Some hilly bits, not many roads and mostly in green areas.

Sunday 7th October FUNGI WALK

Meet at the mansion 1.30pm. Our expert will be leading expertly as usual. This is only an identification walk, not picking to eat!

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,
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E-MAIL: bpp.friends@ntlworld.com

Website: www.beckenhamplaceparkfriends.org.uk

BAT WALK. (from front page)

Saturday 18th August 6-10pm at Beckenham Place Park.

Meet at the mansion. The mansion will be used as a drop in centre from 6.00pm with the **bat walk heading off at about 7.15pm (8.16pm sunset).**

Arrangements have been to lock the main driveway gate after the event (10pm) so parking will be available outside the mansion.

This event is an introduction to bats and will be good for children & families. Huma Pearce, a bat specialist, will hold an informal drop in session and talk prior to the walk. Plenty of bat detectors will be available for use on the walk.

The Friends will be on hand too and open up the Visitor centre. A very good evenings entertainment is planned, let's hope the weather is fine and warm.

Sensory Garden Update. There has been a great deal of activity in the garden in recent weeks as the plants were delivered and needed to be planted quickly. Each bed is themed along the lines of sound, sight, scent and touch, not always an exact science as so many plants tick several boxes. The raised planters have mainly herbs and low growing perennials. Our small groups of volunteers worked very hard to try and install a pleasing planting scheme for each bed. There will possibly need to be some adjustments over time, but we do have a framework to work to now. Fruit trees and climbers have been put in by the gardeners and other volunteer groups. The lavender in the central bed and the grass edging are all settling down well. Luckily for us the rain has come along at just the right time to settle everything in, even if it is not so welcome as summer weather. The touch and scent beds need more plants and there is money left to buy some more.

We hope the garden will mature over the years into an attractive area to walk through and sit in, so if it looks a bit haphazard at the moment please bear with us, Rome wasn't built in a day!

The Composting Scheme. The mounds of compost have now been removed and tree planting has started by volunteer groups, including the Friends. An area for this parks composting has been mapped out. There is a large heap of rubbish still to be removed but it is near the path and should be taken away without disturbing the reclaimed areas. Eventually Willow Carr Way will be reinstated with a slightly modified route. The mixture of trees should make this a pleasant area again even though it will be shared with a modest composting area.

Slugs and Snails

Most of us will have seen plenty of these this summer, but besides moaning about them eating your petunias, they are interesting and some are beautifully patterned. The Leopard slug has various arrangements of stripes and spots and some snails have pink, yellow and striped shells.

Slugs and snails prefer to live in damp, shady places, amongst plants, plant debris and humus. They locate their food by smell. They crawl into crevices, under stones, flower pots, bits of plastic, even cellars during cold weather or on hot sunny days. Long hot spells dramatically reduce their numbers as they lose moisture rapidly in dry heat. Snails hibernate, sealing themselves within their shells and hiding away until the weather warms up. Slugs are much hardier in the cold and only really become inactive in freezing weather. Both are at their most active two to three hours after sunset.

When slugs and snails travel they lay down a layer of slime, this is to protect their soft foot. They don't like rough, drying surfaces as their slime lifts up as they go along, making progress difficult. To deter them from munching your plants a barrier of some of the following may help crushed eggshells, wood ash and soot, coarse sand, gravel, sawdust or bran. Frogs, toads, birds, beetles, birds, poultry and if you're lucky enough to have a hedgehog, all predate them nature's way.

References: www.powen.freeserve.co.uk

and images for slugs & snails



FBPP RECENT EVENTS REPORT.

Saturday 21st April Bluebell Walk.

This was a very enjoyable walk, it couldn't have been any other way with the knowledgeable and charismatic Nick Bertram leading it. A great crowd of over forty people trekked through the woods on a bright, cold and dry day. The bluebells were out in force too, it has not always been easy to predict when they will flower in recent years. A big thank you to Nick and everyone that came along.

Sunday 13th May Beating the Bounds Walk.

About a dozen sturdy souls made the circumnavigation of the park's boundary, led by Nick Goy. Some of the party hadn't been to all the nooks and crannies we explored. Our attempt to cross the Ravensbourne at a fording point was dumbfounded by the considerable growth of nettles on the east bank (note to self: remember machete next year).

Sunday 17th June A Summer Nature walk

The weather was fine and bright as a select few went for a meander around the park. Leaving the mansion there was a striking piece of fungi on a tree beside a shaded path. Bright yellow, quite large and called Chicken of the Woods, a good start for a nature walk. There were a couple of butterflies, but not a great deal of wildlife in evidence. Plenty of crows on the fields by the river, which despite the rain of recent weeks had hardly any water in it. The meadow at Crab Hill looked impressively full of different grasses and some clover, not a great deal of flowers but it is becoming more meadow-like each year.

Anyway everyone enjoyed the walk, chatting to each other and some of the party discovered new areas of the park. Nice afternoon and nice company, thank you for coming along.

Sensory Garden Work Group.

There is a small group of people who have signed up to help in the garden, so far the number seems to be enough. The work in these early stages has been quite heavy with digging, weeding and planting to set it up. Future work should be less frantic and pressured now the framework is set up. Thanks to all our helpers from the Friends, you have been brilliant teams just quietly doing whatever needed doing.

Flood Alleviation Scheme

The Environment Agency is evaluating a proposed Flood Alleviation Scheme for the Ravensbourne in Beckenham Place Park. Initially test borings need to be taken to determine the make-up of the ground and survey other features in the area.

We have raised certain points already which we consider possible improvements. It is of course quite possible the any scheme would not take place depending on many factors. If the scheme should progress beyond the evaluation stage there will be public consultations and publication of plans. We will keep you informed.

WHY THE DELAYS OVER BECKENHAM PLACE PARK?

For many years the (Grade 2* listed) Mansion at Beckenham Place Park has featured in English Heritage's 'Buildings at Risk' register, along with the (Grade 2 listed) Homesteads – the original stable block. Years of neglect – and aborted attempts to find a 'commercial solution' - had reduced both to a sorry state before the owners, Lewisham Council, initiated individual tendering procedures for the park and the mansion in April 2010. A glimmer of hope had appeared.

Tenders were prepared and submitted to the council. Re-submissions were presented and shortlists drawn up. Decisions were promised for later in the year – but deferred. The 2 bidders 'contesting' the mansion contract were asked if they wished to tender a combined bid – the commercial bidder declined. The other bidder, Beckenham Place Community Trust (which would restore the mansion and open it to full daily community use) pointed out that it would make practical (and historic) sense if that contract were extended to include all the historic buildings in the park (most notably the Homesteads). The council looked favourably on this suggestion and arranged for the Trust to have access to the Homesteads, where they found considerable damage and lack of security. The following month (July 2011) the Homesteads were gutted in a fierce fire.

Meanwhile, the tendering process to manage the park collapsed as no bidder was prepared to underwrite restoration of the Homesteads.

The 2 bidders for the mansion resubmitted bids in September 2011. The Trust re-emphasised the unity of all the buildings in the park (and indeed with the park itself), and represented a schedule for restoring the mansion under the direction of English Heritage – who had indicated general approval for these proposals. The Trust also noted that they had received favourable response from informal approaches to the Heritage Lottery Fund, whose policy was increasingly to favour 'major restoration' projects (of which Beckenham Place was a typical example). The Trust was confident that it could secure the funds necessary for full restoration – something that the council could not. However, the council delayed further from making any decision. The fire was used as a reason to bring in property consultants Knight Frank – whose report has still not been made public after some 6 months. While an 'interim solution' for managing aspects of the park – using the current contractors – is due to be made in July, the council has still not formally presented its response to last September's revised bids to the Mayor and Cabinet. First scheduled for October, it now seems unlikely that this will take place until at least mid-July. When will this much-loved building be allowed to be restored and returned to full public use?

David Hansom, Chair of the Friends

Maps and the Ordnance Survey

The Friends Visitor Centre has a large collection of local maps and people are often fascinated to see how their local area has changed over the years, such as what was on the site of their home before it was built.

The park is the main reason we started to collect the maps, to see what the setting of the park was and how it has changed.

We started with bits of Rocque's Maps produced between 1744 and 1761 And subsequently Andrews, Drury and Herbert's Map of Kent of published in 1769 and republished in 1794. Books such as Village London had maps from Ordnance Surveys from early/mid 19th century. Another book, The History of London in Maps has a wide selection of extracts from maps including Rocque's and Andrews, Drury etc.

A series of reprints of Ordnance Survey maps of London areas and England from about 1860 from Alan Godfrey maps cheaply available at £2.50, and various other websites, such as Mapco, display a vast selection of London maps through the ages.

A recent publication, Map of a Nation by Rachel Hewitt (2010) is the inspiration for this article. It explains how the Ordnance Survey evolved from military maps commenced in Scotland by David Watson and continued by William Roy, beginning with mapping of roads and rivers. How that developed into a triangulation survey to establish major triangulation or trig points across the southern counties starting with a baseline measured and established across Hounslow Heath, much of what is now London Airport. 'Triangulated' to the south coast where measurements were taken to join up with a similar process begun in France to confirm the distance from Paris to London meridians. Data from the survey was available to the public and other mapmakers through publications, though not actual maps, prior to 1800.

During the 18th century, contemporary with the building of Beckenham Place, the Society of Arts offered a prize for maps that might meet a standard of one inch to the mile, very few mapmakers were successful in acquiring the prize and strangely perhaps the book doesn't mention Rocque who is otherwise a significant name in mapmaking although we agree his map is not particularly accurate or detailed.

There are too many names to mention here but Ramsden the instrument maker who built the accurate theodolites used in the initial surveys; Mudge the mapmaker among others who ran the Ordnance Survey based in the Tower of London; Banks and the Royal Society how they supported the

process; How the Napoleonic Wars both encouraged the mapping process for strategic planning but delayed publication of maps for security reasons.

The first Ordnance Survey map to be officially called such was of Kent in 1801. Other mapmakers such as Stanford used Ordnance Survey data to produce his own maps and in many cases the maps of the 19th century are superior in detail to more recent publications, showing individual trees in their actual position in many cases.

The Map of a Nation book mentions how the surveyors had problems identifying place names, particularly in Wales and several corrections had to be made. We appreciate that local accents of the day could have influenced the understanding of names as Stumps Hill within Beckenham Place is given as Stomps Hill in Rocque's map.

Modern mapmaking was based on the triangulation method to establish a grid of major geographic features. This was carried out by one team of surveyors and subsequently another team mapped the features within the large triangles by carrying out further triangulation of the small details in the landscape, churches, buildings, roads, rivers etc. as well as the hills and valleys of the landscape. Early maps show shading of hills rather than the contour lines on modern maps.

As the survey progressed the engineers carved bench marks into pavements and buildings to mark positions and heights, one of which is carved into the foundation stones of the Stable Block (subject to surviving the fire). These bench marks are usually marked as BM on OS maps.

Most walkers will have discovered at least one 'trig point' perched on the summit of a hill. The first trig points merely consisted of a cairn of stones. The men carrying out the survey encountered great difficulties, having to haul heavy equipment around without the help of a Land Rover and often walking 40 miles in a day, and camping out on exposed hills in all weathers.

With the advent of GPS (global positioning satellites) mapping and surveying has become electronic and digital. And now we are more likely to look at aerial photos acquired by satellite or aeroplane on Google Earth and internet maps. Drivers often rely on GPS to tell them they've missed the turning, rather than their wife... sorry navigator. Walkers can have hand held GPS devices which display the digitised Ordnance Survey map and can show the landscape in 3D. One point to mention is that the Ordnance Survey maps are only available for a fee although produced out of the public purse, whereas it seems in the USA and some other places maps are public domain (free). For this reason 'copyright' has to be observed in the UK.