



LEWISHAM LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Programme of talks for this quarter. Most meetings are held on **Fridays** at Methodist Church Hall, Albion Way, SE13. Starting at **7.45pm**. Visitors welcome. Full access for people with disabilities.

January 25th Radio Works at Blackheath David Shaw

February 22nd ? John Beasley

The March meeting will take place at Lewisham Methodist Church Hall, Albion Way, Lewisham SE 13 at 7.45pm.

March 22nd Grove Park John King

Bromley Borough Local History Society.

Most meetings start at **7.45pm** in the small hall at **Trinity United Reform Church** at the junction of Frelands Road and Upper Park Road, Bromley BR1 3QA. There are occasional meetings at other venues and visits to local places of interest.

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

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

January 8th History of Keston Common since 1485

Tudor Davis

(Note: January meeting is 2nd Tuesday of the month)

February 5th Visit to Local Studies section at Bromley Central Library in Bromley High Street to see latest acquisitions and meet the archivist.

(Note: Start time is 7.00pm on second floor or the library and not at the usual church venue.)

**March 5th From Shillibeer to Borismaster:
The Story of the London Bus** John Wagstaff

April 2nd AGM followed by Bromley in WW2 Brian Williamson

More information: www.blhs.org.uk

NEWSLETTER 66

Winter: January 1st - March 31st 2013

Wishing everyone a Happy New Year

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

Thursday 17th January. **KEN WHITE MEMORIAL WALK**

Meet 1.30 pm on the Mansion steps. This walk is to celebrate the life of a local historian and good friend to the park, who passed away in January last year. He was particularly interested in the boundary posts and our walk is sure to visit some of them.

Saturday 2nd February **BIRD WALK**

Meet at the mansion steps 9.30am. Calling all bird watchers. Our expert is hopeful that he will be able to be there, but may have to travel abroad for his work. We usually attract such a knowledgeable group of people to these walks that nothing will get passed us unidentified!

Saturday 23rd March **THREE PARKS WALK**

Meet 10.00am on the mansion steps. This walk is long and takes us far from the park. Walking to Kelsey Park and then to South Norwood Country Park. The route is as rural as possible avoiding too many stretches of pavement and is never too far from 54 (and others) bus route.

WORKDAYS. Meet at mansion 10.00am. Tools, gloves, etc provided.

Second Saturday of the month 12th Jan, 9th Feb, and 9th Mar

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

Sensory Garden.

Things are still progressing with the garden. Some donations of materials such as paving slabs and gravel as well as two donations of bulbs have been installed and planted. Thank you very much. Most plants are now dormant for the winter period and some money remains to add plants in spring. Look out for notification of a formal Open Day in the spring. More things will be added like nest boxes, bug hotels, wildlife friendly features in the coming months.

BEE HIVES in the PARK

Perhaps this item should be on the same pages as Ash Die Back. Bee keepers want several hives in Beckenham Place claiming it is a large site that can support them. We are more concerned with the welfare of the wild bumble bee population which covers about 10 species of bee and there are other insects which carry out pollination of plants. Even the RHS garden magazine carried an article warning that there are too many bee hives/honey bees in London and are negatively impacting wild bees. There is other evidence that honey bee populations negatively affect other species by competing for the food sources. While we might support a couple of hives for educational purposes the suggestion that more are desirable by the bee keepers is in our view ‘undesirable’ and purely a business proposition for their benefit. It has been suggested that higher densities of honey bees might increase the risk of stings especially as we are encouraging people to explore the sensory garden.

MANSION, PARK, HOMESTEADS and now an HOLISTIC APPROACH to BPP.

The Council are still researching options including Lottery Park Scheme funding applications (at last). Glendale will take over golf and catering in the mansion on a short contract basis. The Friends through their presence on the working party are monitoring matters and it appears that the Beckenham Place Community Trust will have some role to play in this renewed approach to saving the mansion from further decline.

Membership Fee rise and email newsletters

Some members have already agreed to receive the Newsletter by email. We invite anyone else willing to do this to email us to that effect. We hope people will still remember to pay their annual membership fees in January when getting the newsletter by email.

From January 1st 2013 annual membership fees will be: Family £6.00, Single £4.00 Concessions £3.00

Those who prefer the printed copy can still receive it by post or collect it from the Visitor Centre

The Composting Scheme.

Young trees have been planted and hopefully will survive. There were concerns that the conditions might be too dry there but as it turns out maybe we should have planted some rice as well!

Jordan organised volunteers to plant trees and liaised with Glendale to get compost and rubbish removed.

Tennis Courts and Ancient Pond

Grant applications are being pursued by Jordan (see article below) and we hope these will come to fruition to restore tennis courts to playable condition and dredge the ancient pond before it fills up with sediment and becomes dry land.

Jordan Ihama

Some of you will not know, but for some years the park has had a council employee who has run events for schools, made some fundraising applications and worked with volunteers in the park. Jordan Ihama has worked closely with the Friends raising funds for the Sensory Garden, arranging contracts etc etc. There are several projects in progress under his initiatives. We heard recently that his post is being considered for removal as part of Council cut-backs. We urge our members to write to Steve Bullock, Mayor of Lewisham or Cllr Susan Wise, responsible for parks, and urge that the council retain this post otherwise the park, the schools that use it, the other park users and volunteers will all lose a valuable member of ‘our team’.

Contact steve.bullock@lewisham.gov.uk and
cllr.susan.wise@lewisham.gov.uk

Ancestors of the Cators.

A few Sundays ago we had an unexpected visit at the Visitor Centre from descendants of the Cator family, builders of the mansion and owners of the large surrounding estate. After the death of John Cator in 1806, having no surviving children of his own, his estate was left to his nephew John Barwell Cator 1781-1858, son of Joseph Cator his brother who lived at Clockhouse also in Beckenham. On the death of Joseph Cator in 1818, John Barwell Cator with his now considerable wealth, bought an estate at Woodbastwick in Norfolk where, being a great sportsman, he spent much of his time. The family didn't leave Beckenham Place completely until 1849 then the mansion was leased out to a series of tenants, not always as lucrative as might be expected as there were many periods of inoccupation.

In Norfolk, around several of the Norfolk Broads, Woodbastwick Hall had been purchased with 1,200 acres of agricultural land which John increased in the 1820s. The Hall was a 16th century house, but was damaged by fire in 1819 and rebuilt by the architect George Smith. However, this Woodbastwick Hall was demolished in 1971 'possibly to avoid listing' according to the Lost Heritage website.

The present day estate is still owned by the Cator family and has been enlarged to 5,000 acres. In 1840 a pedigree herd of British White Cattle were introduced and the Cators continue breeding today keeping this historic rare breed going.

Our visitors a few weeks ago, were Charles Cator and his wife, who are still part of the family business in Woodbastwick and Ranworth. They had not been in the mansion before and we gave them a tour. They confirmed that some Adam fireplaces from Beckenham Place had been taken to Norfolk. It had been thought that the Joshua



Reynolds portrait (opposite) of John Cator was lost, but it is alive and well hanging in one of the old residences in Norfolk.

It was really nice to meet the Cators and we tried not to bombard them with too many questions about the family history.

References: The Cators of Beckenham and Woodbastwick by Pat Manning Authors Online Ltd £9.95

There are copies of this book for sale in the Visitor Centre. It is crammed full of interesting information.



FBPP RECENT EVENTS REPORT.

Saturday 6th October. OPENING CEREMONY of SENSORY GARDEN

The weather was lovely, bright and sunny, showing off to great advantage the efforts of all those involved in getting this project off the drawing board. Councillor Alan Till was invited to plant a large cherry tree to mark the occasion, which he duly did. Several other councillors came along too and it was really good get together.

Sunday 7th October FUNGI WALK. As usual Dr Mark Spencer led a great walk with 36 people joining him to see the good variety of fungi in the park. Many thanks Mark.

Saturday 24th November SILENT WALK. A really good walk, which amazed new comers that so many sounds are overlooked in our usual chatty strolls around the park. It was single file and no speaking, probably looked a little odd to other park users, but no one commented! Thanks to Beryl for leading.

Wednesday 12th December MINCE PIE WALK. Defeated by the weather on this one. Just too cold. Waiting to see if anyone would be coming along for five minutes was quiet enough of a breath of fresh air for that day!

CONSERVATION WORK. 2nd Sat of Oct, Nov and Dec

Spent the first two Saturdays working in the Sensory Garden by mutual agreement. At the December meet, four people did litter picking in Stumpshall Wood collecting nine sacks of rubbish and another five planted bulbs and did general tidying in the Sensory Garden.

ASH DIE BACK

Ash, *Fraxinus excelsior*, die back is caused by the fungal pathogen *Charnara fraxinea*, a stage in the life cycle of a cup fungus *Hymenoscyphus pseudoalbidus*. The arrival of this disease in Britain appears to have been inevitable when even a little research on line it appears that some practices by those responsible for the management of our woodlands seem to verge on madness. As Jon Heuch of the Forestry Commission's biosecurity programme reports, the seed of the ash tree is frequently sent abroad from the UK and the trees grown from these seeds are then imported back. A full 10 million plants are imported annually for forestry planting and half a million ash trees alone are imported into the UK every year for use in woodland and gardens.

Ash dieback has been advancing across Continental Europe since the 1990s, with Latvia being the first affected country. It was first found in Denmark (getting closer to us), in 2002 and by 2005 it had spread throughout the country and it is now considered up to 90% of their trees are susceptible to the disease. Any action taken to halt its spread may have had little effect, but surely an earlier ban on importing trees from the near continent would have helped.

Well it is in Britain now and no one seems to have a remedy to eradicate it, so unfortunately we can look forward to our woodland, new, old and ancient being thinned out considerably. Some trees will be resistant , it is thought about 10% will survive.

There are reckoned to be about 80 million ash trees in Britain. Here is a picture of one, just to see what we will be missing.



Little attention has been paid to the implications of the vast international trade in trees and plants. Not that you would know it from a visit to your local garden centre. The Horticultural Trade Association admits that many of the saplings grown abroad are labelled as British because customers like to think they are buying local produce, is this despite a union flag on labels? This international trade has come about largely because growing plants and saplings in other parts of Europe which are more geared towards mass production makes it cheaper for UK producers than growing them here. Importation and general movement of plants internationally raises many questions. More awareness of the potential environmental damage needs to be a priority instead of the short term economic gain of importing cheaper plants. Defra's chief plant officer, Martin Ward, has pointed out, ash dieback is just one of a "tidal wave of pathogens" arriving in Europe. There are many more dire declarations of future nationwide disasters not only about plants but animals too.

I myself, FBPP editor, have had a slightly alarming encounter with a small grub-like parasite which I discovered was gaily burrowing around under the skin on my finger. After a trip to the dermatology clinic in Beckenham Hospital, it was revealed as a creature normally picked up in Thailand and as I hadn't left the country for at least eight years, the doctor said it must have been acquired here. With a bit of detective work it was decided it could only have come from a recent birthday gift (thanks son!) of an orchid. The doctor concluded it had got into my hand when prodding the soil to see if it needed watering. Needless to say our house will always be an orchid free zone.

It seems in doubt if the ash will recover and take up it's position as our fourth most common tree again, but with bit more fore-thought this loss might have been avoided. The Dutch Elm disease was devastating for the countryside and this could be worse as there are more ash trees.

REFERENCES:

- The Guardian on line. Articles in November .
- RSPB website.
- British Wildlife, Vol 24. Number 2. December 2012 (Copy in the Visitor Centre.)
- Numerous websites: just put 'ash die back' in search engine.