

NEWSLETTER 71

Spring: April 1st - June 30th 2014



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

Sunday 27th April Ancient Bluebells of Beckenham

Meet outside the mansion at 2.00pm. Come and see our wonderful display of bluebells in the ancient woodlands, which hopefully will be still blooming as it has been difficult to predict the exact time in the last few years due to our somewhat erratic climate.

Sunday 25th May Beating the Bounds

Meet outside the mansion 2.00pm. This is an annual event which keeps an ancient tradition alive. The walk is as close to the perimeter of the park as possible. Our walk leader, Nick, has been leading this walk for at least the last twelve years and always makes it an enjoyable trek whatever the weather.

Sunday 15th June Walk – Mapping the Landscape

Meet 2.00pm at the mansion. A look at early Ordnance survey maps of the park and how they were created with some activities using survey equipment.

WORKDAYS: Saturdays: Apr 12th, May10th and Jun 14th.

Meet on the mansion steps at 10.00am. This work will be in the Sensory Garden but if anyone wants to litter pick they are very welcome to do that. We usually only work for a couple of hours. Gloves, tools and instruction provided.

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. 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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Odds and Ends and Snippets

River Ravensbourne. Several people have written about the joys or otherwise of this tributary of the Thames including Ben Johnson and H G Wells. In the Bromley Record of July 1878, it was commented that it was quite impracticable for 'ladies' to walk along the riverside path because of the habit of Bromley youths bathing in the adjacent pond. This path was only yards from the pond and the water only came up to the boys knees! It also commented on the disgusting language that abounded.

Camille Pissarro. This famous painter sometimes referred to as the 'father' of Impressionist painting, as he was older than most of the others, spent quite a few years in Crystal Palace, Norwood and the surrounding area. He arrived here with Julie, although not married, and their two children in December 1870. The area would have been far more natural with woodland fields, farms and streams. This is reflected in many of his paintings and sketches he did while here. It was not all a rural idyll, many of the big villas were already built encouraged here by the moving and enlarging of the Crystal Palace to the top of Sydenham Hill from Hyde Park where it had housed the Great Exhibition of 1851. There is a Blue Plaque to commemorate his short stay in Westow Hill, the site is the old National Westminster Bank.

Kent House Farm so called because it was the first house in Kent on the route out of London. It stood not far from the junction of Kent House Road and Lennard Road. The estate dates back to the 12th Century when it was owned by a French nobleman. It has been owned by many families in its time including the Cators. It was stayed in by William Makepeace Thackeray and was probably visited by Samuel Pepys. It continued as a farm until the 1900s when it was first a nursing home and then a private hotel. The house was demolished in 1957 to make way for modern housing.

Lastly, some homework. Sydenham Hill forms the boundary between the boroughs of Lewisham and Southwark, the ancient parishes of Camberwell and Lewisham and the landed estates of Dulwich College and the City of London's Bridge House Estate. This is one of the latter's boundary stones. It is at the junction of Sydenham Hill and Kirkdale or is it? Is it still there? Answers on a postcardor email.



Recent Events Report

Sunday 26th January

Bird Spotting Walk.

The conditions underfoot were extremely muddy and walking was difficult in places, even on flat stretches. Despite the cold and wet plenty of birds were seen and heard. Many thanks to Dave for his expertise and the people who attended for their dogged perseverance on the adverse terrain. 30 birds noted.

Time: 9.30am – 12.30pm circular walk from mansion.

Attending: seven people led by Dave DaSilva.

Weather: wet, bit windy, conditions underfoot extremely muddy.

Wren	Robin	Goldcrest
Ring neck parakeet	Wood pigeon	Carrion crow
Kingfisher	Magpie	Jackdaw
Great spotted woodpecker	Jay	Redwing
Lesser black back gull	Herring gull	Blackbird
Mistle thrush	Cormorant	Starling
Great tit	Long tailed tit	Moorhen
Feral pigeon	Treecreeper	Stock dove
Green woodpecker	Common gull	Mallard
Grey wagtail	Black headed gull	Blue tit

Saturday 22nd February

Short Winter Walk

This was well attended walk with fifteen people. The weather was fine and bright, which made it some much more fun than the previous months walk! Starting by walking through Stumps Hill Wood after checking out the ancient pond and on to the river. Then on to Crab Hill, up through the woods and back to the Mansion. A few trees have been battered and by the river several of the Crack Willows have fallen in the recent very stormy weather. This short walk was also to give a thought for those Friends, some of whom had come on these little meanders through the park in the past, that are no longer with us, but will not be forgotten. Thanks to everyone that came on the walk, I think we all enjoyed it.



On this walk we came across this character near to Crab Hill, spooky !

Wednesday 19th March

BPP to Chinbrook Meadows

This was a lovely long walk with an unscheduled stop for tea and biscuits! After leaving BPP the route took in Downham Playing Fields and Shaftsbury Park along the Spring Brook as it sedately flowed past willow trees covered in fat catkins. After following a short stretch of Rangefield Road, named for the rifle range that previously occupied this spot, we arrived in Milk Street. Milk Street got its name from the dairy farm (the farm house survives) at the end of this short road. One of our Committee members, who lives in this area very kindly served tea and biscuits to the group, before joining us for the next leg of the walk. At this point our walk joined the Green Chain Walk following a narrow pathway between allotments and Sundridge Park Golf course. A necessary short stretch of road walking beside the golf course led to a narrow foot bridge over the railway, which took us back to another run of country path high above the railway cutting. Then we were there, Chinbrook Meadows, a public park with a fairly natural run of the Quaggy river running through it. Here there was a first for all of us, on the railway embankment a large wild rabbit was munching its way through some of the local flora. Is this a first sighting of wild rabbits in Lewisham? There is a Peace Garden in the park and we had lunch there which was very pleasant.

Leaving the park a short walk along the road took us to Grove Park rail station, our lovely 'tea lady' decided to catch a bus home, but the rest of the group started on the trek back to BPP by a different route. Walking along Downham Way and cutting through to Shroffold Road led to Downham Fields and views across the valley to the mansion in BPP. Crossing the large swathe of lush grass and up around Bonus Pastor school to join the Downham Woodland Walk. This very pleasant walk takes you right into Downham and the Bromley Road where a couple of the group could get their buses back home. The rest of the group crossed the road and went back into the park through the Downham entrance in the Old Bromley Road. Taking the quickest route back to the mansion, as eight miles of walking was just beginning to take its toll, the group said their goodbyes in the car park outside the mansion.

Everyone said how much they had enjoyed our long trek and the pace was fairly even at about two and half to three miles an hour which made it manageable for all of us. Many thanks to everyone that came along and a special thank you to the 'tea and biscuits' lady.

Conservation Workdays. On 12th January, attacking the bramble in the only patch of gorse in the park was the task. A couple of the group did some tidying around the Sensory Garden. The 8th February was only a short stint as the weather unleashed heavy rain, thunder and lightening and it got very cold and unpleasant. On the 8th March the great tidy up in the Sensory Garden started in earnest. Thanks to all our volunteers for all your hard work.

Make some simple (and cheap) bug homes for your garden.

Bugs are vital to keeping the ecosystem working. If you want to help them get through the hard times or give them somewhere to breed, provide them with their own place to stay.

Bugs mainly seek out somewhere nice and damp, lots of mess and a bit of mould for good measure. There are lots simple types home you can provide. One easy way is to take a bundle of bamboo canes or other preferably hollow twigs of various widths and tie them together with a piece of string or use an old tin or trimmed drinks bottle. This makes sure one end is covered to stop wind blowing straight through. Put the bundle in a hedge or bush if nothing moves in this year it may in future seasons. Also you can take a plastic drink bottle, cut off the bottom, make holes in the sides and fill it with dead leaves after the autumn fall. Or take an old plant pot, fill with leaves and turn upside down. Put it somewhere damp rather than a dry place.

Different bugs live in different homes. **Ladybirds**, important for controlling aphids, like to hibernate in the nooks and crannies in dead wood. **Lacewings** are pretty insects that offer a similar service of pest-control. They don't make it through the winter as easily though, so give them a chambered box to stay when it's cold. **Bumblebees** would rather be on the ground among the undergrowth so piece of rough ground below hedging or shrubs will suit them.

Siting your bug home. Somewhere the rain can't get in. An insect box takes up little space so you could put one on a balcony or fix it to the wall. You could even secure it to your window box – if it's not too heavy. You can put a bunch of twigs on a balcony, hang them up from a wall, or just leave them in a planted container. Make sure your bug home can't be blown away in the wind.

Bees, butterflies and some other insects sometimes find their way into your house to hibernate where it is warmer. This can mean they may wake up when you put the heating on, so if you find one hiding in your house, try moving it to a cool, dark place to encourage it to go back to sleep until spring.

Generally, a not too tidy area will suit many hibernating and breeding insects, but don't go and clear it up too soon in the spring as many insects need the warmer weather to get going. Or alternatively leave the area permanently 'natural', one less gardening job to do?

Lewisham Parks Forum

A group of representatives of Friends Groups from Lewisham parks have begun meeting to discuss issues which affect all Lewisham open spaces. As it develops you may wish to support it if you are a visitor to one or more parks in Lewisham. We will be supporting and attending the group. The aims of the group are to conserve and improve open space and encourage appreciation of parks. In these times of government cut backs and pressure for building space then threats to open space and its management may be present. The London wide group which meets at the London Assembly building has noted several damaging activities occurring in open spaces such as 'boot camps' which are exercise regimes which have been found to trample green areas. In Beckenham Place we note damage to flora from people venturing off paths, cycling through woodland and perhaps cross country running.

So promoting appropriate use of open space is a timely issue. We will be attempting to add a page about the forum to our website as well as a list of activities taking place in various parks.

Blue crowned parakeets. Also known as Blue crowned conure.

(Thectocercus acuticaudatus)

Everyone will have seen the Ring Necked parakeets, but there were/are several areas where a different parakeet has been living and had been thriving. There were groups of Blue Crowned parakeets around Crab Hill in the park, around the area of the Avenue, in Kelsey Park and beyond. These are less noisy, a little bit stockier than the ring necks with a shorter tail, straw-coloured beak and a blue head. There have been less and less sightings of these birds over the last couple of years and we would like any sightings to be reported to us (phone, email, vc visit) or to Kelsey Park Friends.



Park Plans

There is at the moment nothing concrete to report on. In February an officer of Lewisham Council submitted a preliminary bid for Heritage Lottery fund money to refurbish the mansion. There are also plans to apply for substantial funds for the parkland. As there has been no Beckenham Place Park Working Party (BPPWP) meeting since early December last year and these plans haven't been open to scrutiny and discussion. The BPPWP is supposed to be a regularly assembled forum to discuss park matters with the council and interested groups. As usual things move on a pace with members of this group none the wiser as to what is going on. There are rumours on several fronts that Lewisham council are again wanting to close or shrink the 18 hole public golf course, graze cattle, reinstate the lake and hold 'events' in the park. The truth at the moment is not apparent. Hopefully none of the above will be allowed to happen without considerable public consultation.

An unpublicised consultation event was held at the old Green Man venue which is now a community centre/cafe. Options for the park which were presented a few years ago appear to have been resurrected. We don't know whether any conclusions were drawn from the consultation. Our main fears are that refurbishment will be an excuse for new buildings such as park maintenance depot and indoor sport which we think are either not needed or not suitable for Beckenham Place which should, in our view, be preserved as open space and heritage resources. The existing golf course does ensure a parkland landscape and a constant presence in the park adding to safety.

2014 Membership.

Many thanks to everyone for renewing your membership. If you receive the newsletter electronically please remember to pay your subscription. There is also a facility for payment by electronic banking transfer, for details email us at bpp.friends@ntlworld.com

Membership fees via electronic banking. Generally we have found this very convenient but one issue which has arisen is that if a member pays over the counter in a bank then we don't get an identifiable reference when the amount appears on our statement. If members do pay over a bank counter please email us to inform us of the date and amount. This has only happened with one membership fee and we will email our 'electronic members' to find out whose payment it is.

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.

25th April **History of the Elephant & Castle** **Steven Humphrey**

30th May **Biscuits, Chocolate & Jam: the Bermondsey food industry**

Jenny Howells

27th June **History of Crystal Palace**

Ian Bevan

Website: www.lewishamhistory.org.uk

Contact: Gordon Dennington 020 8464 9260

A couple of Events run by Kelsey Park Friends.

Sunday 6th April **Kelsey Park Heron Watch.**

An annual event by the large lake in Kelsey Park is from 11.00am-4.00pm. The island in the lake has been home to a sizable heronry for many years, but the numbers are well down on previous years.

Tuesday 8th April **Dawn Chorus Walk in Kelsey Park**

Meet 6 am at the post box on Manor Way.

New activities in Beckenham Place

Nordic Walking Email: Ulrika.inch@gmail.com Phone: 07722 464 118

Website: <http://www.swedishnordicwalking.co.uk/>

Dog training Francesca Cross Email: francesca@realdogslondon.co.uk

Phone: 07779 485 259

Bromley Borough Local History Society.

Most meetings start at **7.45pm** in the small hall at **Trinity United Reform Church** at the junction of Freeland 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 Freeland 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. **More information: www.blhs.org.uk**

Meetings are **1st Tuesday of the month** unless otherwise stated

NOTE: The April meeting is at the Langley Park Boys school, South Eden Park Road, Beckenham, BR3 3BP

1st April **AGM followed by 'A Night at the Langley Museum'**

Members of Langley Park Boys school

6th May **Shorncliffe Camp & Napoleonic Fort**

Chris Shaw

3rd June **Orpington High Street—Now & Then**

Phil Waller

1st July **Relationship between Darwin & Sir John Lubbock**
Anne Kemkaran-Smith