

NEWSLETTER 72

Summer: July 1st - September 30th 2014



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

Sunday 27th July **Insect Homes Workshop**

Meet in the mansion 2.00pm. Making homes for insects, either for your own garden or for the Sensory Garden. No unaccompanied minors.

Sunday 10th August **Bug Hunt**

Meet at the mansion 2.00pm. Go on an exciting safari for mini-beasts in many different habitats around the park.

Sunday 17th August **Friend's AGM**

Meet in the mansion 2.00pm. Hopefully there may be a bit more information about LBL's plans for the parkland mansion if they deign to inform the Working Party members.

Friday 5th September **Bat Walk**

Meet at Westgate Road entrance to the park at 7.30pm. This is a short walk to the bat 'hotspots' and back to the Foxgrove Club. (which could be the only destination if the weather is wet and windy or both!)

Saturday 11th October **Fungi walk**

Meet at the mansion 11.00am. The park has a very wide selection of fungi and occasionally Mark, our expert, discovers a rarity. This is a walk to see the fungi and not to pick it.

SENSORY GARDEN WORKDAYS. 2nd & 4th Saturdays in July, Aug & Sept

Meet in the sensory garden at 10.00am. The work includes all kinds of general gardening tasks, weeding, watering, planting etc. We usually only work for a couple of hours. Gloves, tools, water and instruction, if required.

About The Friends Events. 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 a mobile.

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



Jean Kysow

22nd June– 8th April 2014

Dear Jean was a very spirited lady, who fought strongly all through her life for the many causes close to her heart. She supported the Friends wholeheartedly and attended the Working party meetings even when she was very unwell. There is little more to say except that she is very much missed and to say a grateful thank you for all her support for Beckenham Place Park over many, many years.

Sensory Garden. The garden is coming along nicely, well we think it is and judging from the unsolicited comments from passers-by when we are working there, they seem to think so too. It isn't intended to be a neat and tidy area so it will never look like the formal gardens above it. The brief for it's creation was to provide an assault on the senses, touch, scent, taste and sight with plants to cater for wildlife. Well, we try! Some plants can look untidy to us when they are feeding insects. Our cabbages have many holes in their leaves, but this means there are butterfly caterpillars, amongst others, feeding which in turn provide a tasty meal for a passing bird. Plants are often left with their seed heads for birds, voles and mice to eat.

There are still areas we haven't got to grips with yet (don't mention the pond) and we are supposed to provide habitats for wildlife. Probably bird nest boxes and bat boxes wouldn't be used here, but some insect homes would be useful. (See front page for our insect home workshop).

One of our regular team has spent many happy hours planting up a patch of camomile which seems to be thriving. It may have been a nice idea to have all the grassy areas as camomile but it can't stand too much traffic on it, so we just went for a small patch.

We continue to have a few plants stolen as soon as they go in, the thieves that do this (and the formal gardens suffer from this too) are really just despicable.

In the summer months the garden needs more attention and although the regular team of volunteers is about a dozen, understandably, they can't all make it every time. If you feel you would like to pop along and help even on just the odd occasion you would be most welcome. We cannot have unaccompanied minors as they need too much supervision. See front page for session times or contact us.

Flood Alleviation Scheme proposed for Beckenham Place Park in the area to east of Railway line.

The Environment Agency have announced consultation dates and venues as below, Ravensbourne Community Centre is in the Ravensbourne Estate at the Old Bromley Road end of Brangbourne Road.

We have some details in our Visitor Centre on Sundays and are trying to get full details available for the visitor centre and for our website.

Friday 4 July, 10am-3pm - Lewisham Shopping Centre (main entrance), SE13 7HB

Friday 18 July, 10:30am-1pm - Catford Civic Suite, Catford Road, SE6 4RU

Friday 18 July, 1:30pm-3pm - The market on Catford Broadway, SE6 4SN

Saturday 26 July, 10am-2:30pm - Ravensbourne Community Centre, Brangbourne Road, BR1 4LW

Lottery Bid and Consultation

The council have made a preliminary application to the Heritage Lottery Parks for People fund and have based it on what they say is the most popular choice of the focus groups they consulted. The choice is the heritage landscape restoration option which would mean the loss of the existing golf course.

If the preliminary application is successful then the Council would have to work up a comprehensive bid for actual funding, the preliminary bid only provides some funding for the cost of further planning, consultation etc. This was revealed by a brief written statement from the council officer organising the bid process, unfortunately he did not attend the working party meeting of 26th June 2014.

The BPP Working Party (park user groups representative body) felt unanimously uninformed regarding the application process and results of the consultation. The council intend to apply to three lottery funds and we want to know what the progress and intent is with those bids. Will there be further attempts to put the mansion and other buildings into private hands?

We have concerns as to what the interpretation of heritage landscape could mean without further explanation.

The heritage lottery fund have recently released a statement saying that public parks are at risk because of council budget cutbacks among other things. We may have to question what the effect of lottery funding might be if capital cost features are created that can't be maintained because of subsequent revenue costs.

Recent Events Report

Apologises for the many walks being scheduled for Sundays, but it depends when our walk leaders are available.

Sunday 27th April Ancient Bluebells of Beckenham.

This was a well attended walk and guess what, there were bluebells! It is always difficult to predict if the plants will be in flower or finished or on some occasions not even started to bloom. As usual Nick Bertrand gave copious amounts of information on all manner of flora as well as bluebells. He spotted a small new sapling of the Wild Service tree, a tree which is a bit of a rarity. It was near to our own rather magnificent specimen. If it survives the rigours of woodland management remains to be seen. Many thanks to Nick for leading the walk which was enjoyed by all on this warm sunny day.

Sunday 25th May Beating the Bounds

Another well attended walk for a walk around the perimeter of the park (as much as possible). The tradition of beating the bounds goes back centuries and was done to establish the boundaries by beating them often the whole of a village would attend. Sometimes it involved hurling younger boys into local streams or beating them! Well, there was none of that here it was all very sedate and rightly so. Although one of the younger members of the group was persuaded to hit a few boundary posts with a stick just for authenticity. It was a long walk and the weather was dry with sunny periods which made for a pleasant afternoon. Many thanks to Nick Goy, another one they're like buses come along in twos, for leading the walk.

Sunday 15th June Mapping The Landscape

Not so many people on this walk, just 5, but those that came along really enjoyed finding out, by using surveying equipment, the drop in the level of the land between the two ends of the river as it runs through the park. The expertise of a veteran of the old construction skills college opposite Lower Sydenham station was very helpful. Many thanks to Paul and Mal for lugging theodolite, poles and various other bits of paraphernalia to made this walk something a bit different from our other walks.

We hope to do a similar walk in the future, for instance on Crab Hill to calculate the distance to Crystal Palace.

Discover The Foxgrove Club this summer

If you've ever walked past The Foxgrove Club at the Westgate Road entrance to the park but not gone in, please do so this summer. The Foxgrove is a community club that needs the support of visitors and members if it is to avoid being another sad story of vacancy and vandalism in the park.

The Foxgrove is precious to our park. Back in 1906, local residents approached the owners of Cator Estate with an idea to build a golf clubhouse. By 1907, those industrious local residents had built The Foxgrove. In 1934, the golf clubhouse moved up to the Mansion House. Becoming a club open to all in the community, maintenance of the building has been funded solely through membership ever since.

Frank, resident manager for the past 36 years, knows the rich history of The Foxgrove; "We have many of the ledgers dating back to 1907. They're a fabulous read for anybody interested in the park's past". Discussing the current state of the building, Frank explained; "We need lots of visitors and new members to help get the building back to its former glory. We need locals to support our summer of entertainment and to pop in regularly to enjoy our old-fashioned community atmosphere".

So, do go into The Foxgrove club for a drink this summer, take the kids and tell your friends. There is a pretty garden to sit in and admire the view.

Though it may not look it, the club is open 11am-3pm, 7pm-11pm (closed all day Wednesday and Sunday evenings).

Forthcoming events:

Friday 18th July from 8pm.

Live music with Malcolm Mills and Friends,

Sunday 20th July.

CASPA charity garden party & live music from The Sticklebacks,

Friday 1st August (All day event, starting at 1pm)

Foxgrove Golf Summer Shield with BBQ and live music from Fred Dylan.

Quiz night is on the first Saturday of each month at 8pm - join a team or bring one with you.

Call for more info 020 8650 1707

See also www.facebook.com/thefoxgroveclub.

2014 The Year Of The Bus: Catford Bus Garage Centenary

On Saturday 10th May 2014 Catford bus garage, Bromley Road SE6 held an open day to celebrate it's 100th anniversary. The London General Omnibus Company began services from the garage on 11th November 1914, with routes **21** Crouch End-Lewisham, **36** West Kilburn-Catford and **47** Shoreditch-Farnborough running daily.

With the outbreak of World War 1 many buses were requisitioned by the military and the garages soon followed. Catford garage was taken over by the Royal Army Service Corps on 23rd January 1915 and used as a repair depot. Canadian troops were billeted locally and the name of the nearby Berlin Road was renamed Canadian Avenue in honour of them.

On the 3rd October 1920 Catford Garage was returned to civilian use with Thomas Tilling taking over. On 1st July 1933 the London Passenger Transport Board was formed and all London buses received the familiar London Transport red livery.

During World War 2 many buses were parked over night in nearby roads so that if there was a direct hit on the garage fewer buses would be destroyed.

In London there are 24,000 drivers plus support staff, 700 routes with 2.3 billion passage journeys made in 2013. The facade of Catford Garage is very little changed, but the buses that now come out of it are very much changed.

Jack Cade's Island, Southend Pond

While waiting for one of our walks to begin someone asked what the name of the little island in the pond at Southend, Downham was called. It was agreed that it had been referred to as 'something' island, but what, no one could think. One of our intrepid investigators got onto the internet and came back with the answer. It was Jack Cade's Island named after a rebellion in 1450, led by Cade who marched on London from Sevenoaks after a successful battle there with King Henry VI troops. The mob were objecting to forced labour, corrupt courts, the seizure of land by nobles, the loss of royal lands in France, and heavy taxation. The rebellion eventually failed and Cade may or may not have hid on the island as he made his escape. Cade was mortally wounded when he was eventually captured near Heathfield in Sussex. His body was brought back to London and after the customary gruesome mutilations, popular at the time, his head was displayed on a pikestaff on London Bridge.

Excaliber Estate – Prefab Heaven

Almost hidden away between Baudwin, Boundfield, Longhill and Hazelbank Roads lies the Excaliber Estate of over 180 prefabs. Up until they were built in 1946, the land was owned by the Forster family and was open space and allotments. The prefabs were built by Italian and German prisoners of war and intended to be temporary dwellings with a lifespan of just 10 years!

Detached and each with their own front and back gardens, well laid out inside and with a gas fridge included, provided the residents with exceptional mod cons for the times. There were two designs, front door in the middle or to the side and there were Crittalls metal wrap-around windows on two sides.

When they were first erected all the prefabs were painted ‘off white’, but over the years residents have added their own embellishments to the houses and the gardens, resulting in the present hotchpotch of individual styles.

One current resident has lived in their prefab since 1946 and wants to stay. Lewisham Council want to redevelop the area and demolish most of the estate (6 are listed Grade 2 by English Heritage). Although some of the prefabs are hidden behind hoardings, they all still exist and local residents are fighting to save them. The estate has no shops, telephone or post boxes, but does have a ‘Nissen hut church’ called St Marks.

Elisabeth Blanchet, a professional photographer, has taken a great interest in these historic buildings and has opened a prefab museum at 17 Meliot Road, Catford, on the 124 bus route. Opening times are Saturdays 11.00am-5.00pm until the end of September.

Incidentally, the Meridian line passes through the museum. Visit while you can before it becomes not living history, but just history.

For more information:- www.elisabethblanchet.com

More about Southend Pond. This is more of an enquiry. In some photos of the pond, kindly given to us, there is one with a miniature train shown in the foreground of the pond, carrying some happy looking little children. Does anyone remember this? There are photos of the boats when it was a boating lake and some of the fair when it was called Peter Pan’s Pool. Someone remembers a ‘house’ on the island as part of the fairground attractions, is he dreaming? The pond looks bigger then, was it cut down in size when Homebase took it over? Any information gratefully received. Contacts at bottom of front page.

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.

25th July London’s Air Defences in World War 1

Gordon Dennington

August

No Meeting

**26th September From Shillibeer to Borismaster:
The Story of the London Bus**

John Wagstaff

More information:-

Website: www.lewishamhistory.org.uk

Contact: Gordon Dennington 020 8464 9260

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.

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

1st July Relationship between Darwin & Sir John Lubbock

Anne Kemkaran-Smith

August

No meeting

2nd September Members’ Evening

At this meeting members can do a short presentation (5-10 minutes is fine, but longer is also OK) about local history they have researched or have a particular interest in. Meeting is not confined to members, visitors welcome.

More information: www.blhs.org.uk