

NEWSLETTER 73

Autumn: October 1st - December 31st 2014



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

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!

Wednesday 5th November Silent Walk

Meet at the Mansion at 1.00pm. This could be described as a listening walk, as there are so many different sounds that go unnoticed on our usual rambles around the park chatting away nineteen to the dozen. An unusual walk which has been enjoyed in the past. We sit for a few moments at the end to reveal just how many things we've heard.

Thursday 11th December Mince Pie Walk

Meet on mansion steps 1.00pm. Just a short walk around the park in the festive season with a mince pie and a soft drink to keep the cold at bay.

SENSORY GARDEN WORKDAYS. Meet in the sensory garden at 10.00am.

Saturday 4th October, 18th October & 8th November.(Due to the Fungi walk on 11th October the usual second Saturday of the month was unavailable) The work includes all kinds of general gardening tasks. Gloves, tools, water and instruction provided, if required. Work is only for a couple of hours, but anyone can come late or go early, it is all very relaxed.

Woodland Workday. Saturday 13th December. Meet at mansion 10.00am.

Only light work, holly control, tidying broom and general work. Gloves, tools provided

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.

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What about the (BPP) Workers!

On Sunday 14th September we had a visit from a family that live in Vancouver and were keen to trace close relations that had grown up living in buildings in the park. At the time we could offer no real help, but looking into their past was a spur to searching for those who had lived in the lodges and gardeners cottage in the past.

Looking on the 1871 census the lodge at the main entrance on Beckenham Hill was occupied by Edwin Covell, 35, described as a meat salesman, his wife Annie 33, their seven children, a niece, and five servants living in the same lodge! Looking at the size of the lodges it must have been a bit of a squeeze. By 1885 Mr Covell is listed as living in the mansion, but he died in 1890 and his wife leased the mansion until her death in 1895. They are both buried in St George's churchyard, Beckenham.

In 1881 Thomas Wilson, 29, a gardener, born in Boddington, Northants lived in Gardeners Cottage with his wife Annie, 33 their year old son Cecil, and 10 year old step-son James Restell. At this time the lodge near the main gate was lived in by fishmonger Frederick Jupp, 26, his wife Amy 25 and five month old Flora. The lodge at Foxgrove Road was occupied by George Thomas, a joiner and his family at this time. This lodge is listed as having only three rooms.

Moving on to 1906 the lodge at the Foxgrove Road entrance referred to as Park Lodge, was occupied by George Rogers, 64, a general labourer, and his wife Caroline 65. By 1911 she was widowed and moved to the Lodge at the main gates of the park and described as a lodge keeper. During this census she was being visited by Daisy Boultard, whose family lived/ had lived in the stable block. Daisy was working as a cook at The Cedars, 8 Westgate Road, Beckenham, the other side of the park, for a Frank Hay, solicitor, and his family. Daisy has a tragic story, she was working as a servant in 1912 (possibly at the Cedars) at the age of 22 and sharing a room with another servant, who on a very cold night lit a fire. The chimney was blocked and Daisy died of smoke inhalation. She is buried with her father in Elmers End cemetery.

Referring back to Caroline Rogers, she lived until 1932 and died aged 90 in Bromley.

There is some ambiguity over the exact dates, but it was a long while ago so this is probably inevitable.

Reference: Various census and BPP Friends own archive.

Lottery Bid and Consultation

Flood Alleviation Scheme and Heritage Lottery Scheme

We will put full details on our website as we acquire them but the short story so far is that Lewisham Council received approval of the Stage 1 bid from the Heritage Lottery Fund Parks for People program. This means they receive some money to fund the full stage 2 bid. Stage 1 is so that they can continue to plan and make a fuller consultation of the public views of the plans. Most of the money will go to consultants and architects or other wasteful areas in my opinion. It is important to remember that both this and the Flood Scheme are still subject to further consultation and that plans in both schemes are ideas and intentions rather than firm decisions.

We are informed by the Lewisham Officer managing the lottery bid that the stage 2 application might be ready by August 2015 but could slip back by a further six months if necessary. So nothing much will happen until further plans are produced and consultation is made. I am putting the most informative text from email exchanges on our website and they will also be available at the visitor centre.

The most contentious issue is the proposal to close the golf course and the golfers are getting up petitions to oppose this. The Friends have it in our constitution to support the existing 18 hole public pay and play course on the grounds that it protects open space and has an environmental protection value if managed in an eco friendly fashion e.g. no pesticides or herbicides. It is also the only public course in Lewisham and in easy reach via public transport. There is also some disagreement on the level of use of the course which needs clarifying with the golfers, Glendale who currently manage the course and the Council's assessment of use. Furthermore, the financial viability has been the subject of discussion for some time.

An issue regarding a lottery bid for the mansion is that the Heritage Lottery and/or English Heritage would require that the surroundings of the mansion are not in the form of a golf course, for what good reason I cannot fathom. The Stage 1 bid is based on supposedly restoring the 'heritage landscape' which wasn't a golf course, neither was it a public park as it was a private estate. Modern day use and lottery funding requires that substantial numbers of users or visitors are attracted. Those who know the park well will see how inconsiderate park users are destroying woodland by wandering off of the path network trampling places where bluebells and other plants would grow and allowing dogs to foul without clearing it up, not to mention motorbikes etc.

However, some features of the Council's stage 1 bid imply an ongoing cost in maintenance and most would agree that upkeep of the park has always been less than successful. Restoring the lake for example would require ongoing maintenance to prevent silting up and keeping water supply running. Additional features envisaged to attract visitors would also need upkeep. The existing childrens play area suffers from lack of care, the water feature there is often in need of cleaning and doesn't seem to work as intended. So grand ideas need careful consideration of their likely future survival.

We don't deny that the park needs care and funding but the current conditions regarding Council budgets don't seem to favour ambitious costly unsustainable installations.

The Flood Scheme has the potential to improve some aspects of the east side of the park but the building of considerable embankments or bunds to retain any flood water would require the destruction of existing woodland areas which would take many years to re-establish. We are keen to discuss with the Environment Agency (EA) several details of their proposals and hopefully we will get the opportunity. Again, following local consultation sessions the EA are considering the future of the scheme. The EA answered several points we posed to them and again some text is on the website.

Both these schemes will require some match funding from Lewisham Council and that could be an obstacle. Also, the issue of restoring the mansion should be the subject of an additional bid which as far as we know hasn't been submitted yet.

A London-wide forum of parks Friends groups acknowledges that parks are at risk from lack of Council funding and other issues such as inconsiderate dog owners or walkers. The Heritage Lottery Fund also warns of parks being at risk, but funding unsustainable features won't help the situation. I noticed that Richmond Park requires professional dog-walkers to acquire a licence.

There is no provision that I have seen in any plans to improve security and park warden presence as this would be a cost not fundable by Lottery money (revenue funding). The Lottery only provides capital funding to put features in. My last observation is that the administrative machinations involved in accessing, acquiring and expending lottery money eats up much more than 50 percent of the money ensuring that only small sums actually get delivered to where needed. Someone will identify a kind of Parkinson's Law for it one day....

Recent Events Report

Sunday 27th July Insect Homes Workshop.

Not a great attendance, but those that did come along made some really good homes for our 'buggy' friends. It was good fun and our youngest participant drew a bee on one of the bee homes to help potential residents spot a 'des.res' when they saw one. Some of the homes are being put up in the Sensory Garden over the coming weeks. Thanks to everyone who came along to help.

Sunday 10th August Bug Hunt

It was all going so well when the remains of hurricane Bertha arrived in the park, sending our bug hunters scurrying for shelter in monsoon-style rain. They did have some illuminating information imparted before the deluge. Apparently male hoverflies have eyes that face forward to help them spot females, but you didn't know that! Everyone enjoyed the walk despite it having to be cut short. Many thanks to Grant for all his efforts and expertise.

Friday 5th September Bat Walk

At least the weather was fine for this event! About thirty people came along including a good number of children, who were incidentally very well behaved. There weren't as many bats as we have seen on other occasions, but Lewisham Council Conservation kindly loaned us ten bat detectors so the bats could be 'heard' if not always seen. Walking in the woods in the dark, albeit with a good number of torches, could have been tricky, but everyone was sensible and careful so there were no tumbles.

The walk ended up at the Foxgrove Club at the Westgate Road entrance to the park where the landlord gave us free tea, coffee or chocolate and even handed round the biscuits. Always a nerve-racking walk for the walk leaders, in the dark over rough surfaces, but it all went so well even we enjoyed it. Many thanks to LBL and the Foxgrove Club for their help in making it a successful event.

Sensory Garden

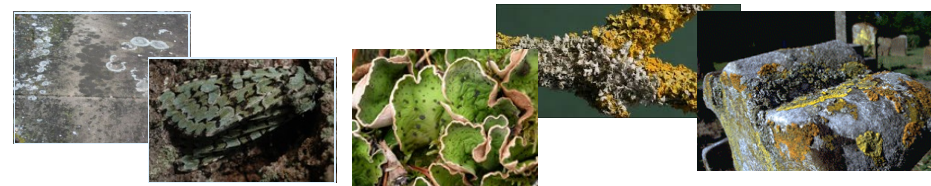
A good number of volunteers have been regularly working hard in the garden. There is always plenty to do, weeding being at the top of the list and keeping the paths neat (the only things we do try to keep neat in the whole garden!) We hope you like its informality and freestyle planting. More bulbs will be put in the coming months and some plants which are too successful may be moved to other areas of the garden. Many thanks for everyone's continued support.

Lichen - it's complicated.

Lichen often goes unnoticed and unidentified, but it can be seen on roofs, pavements, fences, trees almost anywhere in various colours and shapes. Lichen is a strange 'thing', so here is a technical description. 'Lichens are composite organisms comprising a symbiotic relationship between a single species of fungus and one or more species of algae. The fungal partner provides structure and protection for the algae, which through photosynthesis provides energy and assimilates for the fungal partner.' Now you know?

Lichens obtain their nutrients from the atmosphere, as they are organisms without roots. This makes them highly susceptible to changes in the chemistry of the atmosphere. For more than a century lichens have been used as indicators of air quality in Europe, which makes them an important resource in monitoring changes. Recent research on oak and birch trees across the UK have identified increasing concentrations of nitrogenous pollutants in the atmosphere. Sources of nitrogen are, very broadly speaking in layman's terms, released by combustion from power stations and cars. Some sources are more rural, mainly emissions from farming, arable and livestock. These emissions are emitted as ammonia gas.

Some urban examples of lichen that are noticeable are 'chewing gum' lichen (*Lecanora muralis*) which can easily be mistaken for the curse of our pavements. Apparently the base of trees, an area frequently used as a 'loo' by dogs, provides the perfect habitat for certain species, such as *Candelariella reflexa*, which thrive on the nitrogen in the urine. There is even a moth, *Merveille de jour*, which has lichen style camouflage markings.



Do look out for these plants, often very colourful and strangely shaped, and apparently keeping a weather eye on our environment

References: Field Study Council (FSC) guide to lichen based index to nitrogen air quality.

Plantlife magazine issue 69 Summer 2014. Pictures various websites.

Local History Society News

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.

- 31st October** Mr Guy's Hospital and the Caribbean
Jane Bowden-Dan
- 28th November** History of Women in Parliament
Oonagh Gay
- 12th December** London's Shops: the World's Emporium revisited
Susan Jenkinson

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 Freelands 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 Freelands 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.

- 7th October** Grove Park in the Great War
John King
- 4th November** London Underground
Neil Lloyd
- 2nd December** An Edwardian Nursery Magic Lantern Show
Frank Paine

More information: www.blhs.org.uk

More about the Prefab Museum

The prefab museum is a unique living museum celebrating post-war prefab life through art and by sharing memories and archive. Opened in March 2014 as a pop-up museum only for one month, the prefab Museum has had a resounding success and therefore been kept open thanks to the artists involved, the volunteers, the residents and the Whitefoot Ward councillors. At the end of August, Lewisham Council, acknowledged its existence and success and gave us the wonderful news that the museum could stay open till 2017. It's a new exciting phase for the Prefab museum whose team is full of ideas and enthusiasm.

Created and curated by photographer Elisabeth Blanchet, the Prefab Museum is located in an authentic post war prefab. The wonder of these 'prefabs' is that they were meant to last just 10 years to alleviate a post war housing shortage but people really fell in love with them and have been fighting tooth and nail to make sure that they remain living in them. Elisabeth has been photographing residents and their homes and collecting their stories for more than a decade all over the UK.

The biggest remaining prefab estate is Excalibur, in Catford, South London, where Elisabeth has been lent an empty prefab to create the museum about the history of the estate and prefabricated living. The museum features her photography and documentary film, as well as the work of 17 other artists who are interested in prefabs.

The museum has attracted more than 2,000 visitors to the area so far and was be part of the Open House weekend . At the Prefab Museum, staffed by knowledgeable volunteers and residents who have popped in for a cup of tea and a chat, historical tours around the estate and special events are regularly organised. Visiting the museum is a unique experience, where visitors stay longer than they have planned to, share ideas and stories, come out inspired and often come back. Part of the museum's activities is to recreate a post-war atmosphere, so we are looking for utility furniture, original ration books or any memorabilia from the era the prefabs were built just after WW11. Also, we are building an archive and would love to find more information, photos, documents about the time (Spring 1946 till 1948) when the German and Italian prisoners of war were around. Especially documents about the Excalibur being built (Spring 1946)

More information.

Please contact Elisabeth Blanchet: elisabethblanchet@hotmail.com and on 07815 731 165

Visit our website: www.prefabmuseum.uk and or pay us a visit at 17 Meliot Road, Lewisham, SE6 1RY. Open Saturdays 11 am till 5 pm. Weekdays by appointment. Free entry Finally as money doesn't grow on prefab trees, we have launched a crowd funding campaign to raise money for the museum. Please help us support the Prefab Museum and spread the word:<http://www.kickstarter.com/projects/1413215915/the-prefab-museum>