

NEWSLETTER 75

Spring: April 1st - June 30th 2015



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

Sunday 26th April BLUEBELL WALK

Meet at the Mansion steps 2.00 pm in partnership with Creekside Education Trust and led by Nick Bertrand. Will there be bluebells?

Wednesday 20th May A WALK TO CHINBROOK MEADOWS

Meet at the mansion steps 10.00am. This is a repeat of a walk from a few seasons ago, but this time the route will be different. There are buses and trains from Grove Park, but we intend to walk back to BPP via a different route for anyone keen to do a long walk.

Sunday 14th June FRIEND'S AGM

Meet in the mansion for 2.00pm start. A chance to see if any progress has been made with the council plans for the park.

SENSORY GARDEN WORKDAYS (sessions last about 2 hours)

Dates 2nd Saturday of the month, 11th April, 9th May, 13th June.

Meet 10.00am either at the mansion or go straight to the Sensory Garden. There will be work to suit everyone. Planting, weeding, hoeing, path maintenance and no previous skills are necessary. Tools, gloves and guidance provided. In the summer months there is more to do so there are often two sessions a month. Call/email for date of any second session, contacts below.

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 a 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.

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

Recent Events Report

Short Winter Walk .Wednesday 21st January.

This walk was not only short in distance but short of people with only four of us wandering around on a fairly chilly and damp day. The nuthatch, a regular to the sensory garden bird table put in an appearance and an obliging song thrush gave a nice close up of their splendid markings. It was a nice walk and blew away the cobwebs as winter starts to give way to early spring.

Bird Walk .Saturday 21st February. From 9.30am to 12.15pm starting and ending at the mansion. Ten people.

Conditions: Bright, cold with a very cold wind springing up during the walk. Very muddy everywhere.

Sadly our expert, Dave, was unable to attend due to a back injury, but luckily Michael, a regular attendee, of these walks was on hand to help with identification, although none of us were as good as Dave at recognising by song. but the walk was enjoyable and we saw and heard quite a few birds. Here is a list of the birds seen or heard.

Blackbird - male and female	Blue Tit
Great Tit	Song Thrush
Great Spotted Woodpecker	Green Woodpecker
Kingfisher	Carrion Crow
Feral Pigeon	Black headed Gull
Herring gull	Nuthatch (several)
Chaffinch	Magpie
Robin	Duncock
Wood Pigeon	Chaffinch
Ring necked Parakeet	Jackdaw (probably)
Wren	

Early Spring Walk .Sunday 22nd March

The weather was fine and about ten people went on the walk. The Lesser Celandine was out in places and the Bluebells are possibly a bit too far advanced for our walk to see them in April! Visiting the river it was good to see the path was clear of fallen trees.

CONSERVATION WORKDAYS

Our January workday was on the gorse patch at the beginning of the woodland. A very good turn out of people on a cold, blustery day. This is an annual task to try and keep the bramble from strangling the life out of the gorse, our efforts so far seem to be modestly working.

National Parks Forum and Lewisham Parks Forum (LPF)

With all the budget cuts taking place in local authorities, parks have been among the most targeted areas. Park user groups have responded to this by forming 'Forums' of Friends groups in many London boroughs and nationwide.

Friends groups in Lewisham came together to form the Lewisham Park Forum (LPF), see links at end of this article and Friends of BPP are a member.

The cuts in Lewisham have involved reduction in park keeper and gardener posts for 2014. And in 2015 the management of Greenscene, Lewisham's park management department, have lost one post and two others have gone part time.

The objections to cuts made by LPF contributed to reduction of this years cuts from the proposed £180,000 to £108,000. Councils are also aiming to get volunteers from user groups to participate in park management and maintenance in the longer term. Lewisham have suggested that a further £150,000 in savings might be achieved by this, not said how they arrive at that figure yet. The LPF have been assured that they will be more closely involved in future discussions regarding further cuts. Beckenham Place would certainly miss it's permanent Glendale keeper who keeps litter under control, we know when he is on holiday as litter noticeably increases.

There are several complications in Lewisham park management in that Beckenham Place is managed by both Glendale Management Services and Lewisham's own staff, and further complicated by the Lottery Bid which would require the council to provide match funding and a long term commitment to maintenance of installations.

There are some on-line petitions to urge government both national and local to ensure maintenance of open space. There are threats to open space as developers and government become hungry for building land.

Perhaps it should be remembered that in WWII many parks

were used in the dig for Britain campaign to grow food and that the United Kingdom has not been self sufficient in food or timber for hundreds of years. As the worlds population continues to explode the need for land will not only relate to housing space, but for production of food and building materials. Strangely developers use green field or agricultural / wooded land for building in preference to brownfield or contaminated land because costs of reclaiming 'spoilt' sites deter them. Also, as the population grows and is housed in ever smaller or tightly packed habitations, the need for recreational open space will grow. Unless of course we are destined to live in a virtual reality world.

See <http://e-voice.org.uk/london-friends-network/>
<https://lewishamparksforum.wordpress.com>

Sensory Garden.

The Friends volunteers numbering about 12 regular members continue to work in the garden, once a month from autumn to spring and twice a month during the summer. The last workday on 14th March witnessed the emergence of daffodils and other bulbs. Other plants thinking spring has sprung are also showing signs of life. Some early tidying up was started but not too intensely as it is best to leave places for wildlife to search for food in case the weather gets colder again. We planted a few plants mainly donated or salvaged from gardens. This year we are hoping to add mimosa and agapanthus as well as other plants. When the weather warms up some summer bedding can go in.

The plan is to remove some grass and scatter wildflower seeds just to see what comes up. The soil seems to be pretty good so wildflowers might find it too rich, but it's worth a try. We also want to rebuild the water feature which is not yet as we envisaged it (will it ever be, one wonders?).

It is apparent how well the park is used, despite Lewisham Council stating that BPP is under used, because of the number of people in and around the gardens and the Friend's visitor centre on Sunday regularly gets up to 100 people during its 2 hour opening. Volunteers always welcome, see contact details on front page.

HISTORY FEEDBACK.

Over the years many people have been in touch to tell us of relatives that had past connections with the park. In the summer last year there was a visit from an architect based in Chicago who was related to the Cators through the Irish side of the family. It was nice to meet him, but I don't know if we managed to give him any more information!

More recently a lady from Australia emailed to say she was delighted to find information in a newsletter article from 2012. 'My ggg grandparents were Elizabeth Jones & John Glover who were married at St Georges Church Beckenham on 15 February 1810. She was listed as one of the servants who received money when Sir Francis Baring died. Quite often it is difficult to find out any information as you go further back this was a fabulous find for me. I am descended from their eldest child Elizabeth-Ann who was born in Lewisham in January 1811. She came to Australia in 1832, married here and had a large family.'

A man emailed from New Zealand was looking for more information on his ancestor who was a kitchen porter, aged 19, in 1911 who worked on the staff when the mansion was a Sanitorium. He subsequently became a WWI soldier and was in the New Zealand Army. We sent him some copies of photos of staff living in the Homesteads at the right time, but couldn't positively identify him.

With the increasing access to the census records via computers people have become more interested in their ancestry. It appears that quite a few of the past occupants, both upstairs and downstairs, moved great distances to start new lives in far flung places.

FARINGDON BEDS

There are fossil remains from these beds to be found on some of the loose gravel paths in the park. Although this material does not originate here, the Faringdon Beds are in Berkshire, it is interesting to find it. A friend, who is a keen geologist identified the material on a park walk last year. The pieces are small fragments of fossilised corals and shells from the Middle Jurassic period and would have found their way here as part of various aggregates used to make up the paths.



Lottery Bid and Flood Control Scheme Progress Reports

The Lottery bid process is at a further tendering stage whereby the Council have to invite tenders from organisations wishing to develop the plans set out in the initial bid i.e. Prepare the stage 2 bid, which would involve public consultation on the proposed plans.

The Friends, via the Working Party, and with other groups are endeavouring to get changes and improvements to the proposed plans. This includes considerations relating to the flood scheme plan for the east side of the park which at this point is just a proposal and not yet confirmed as a project by the Environment Agency.

Lewisham Council's desire to close the golf course has galvanized action from golfers and other park users to form the Save Beckenham 18 campaign which is lobbying to retention of the golf course. They have a website, facebook, twitter presence as well as a government petition on <http://epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/70912>

Many non golfing park users find the golfers an assurance that there is some security in the park based on people being on the course in most conditions.

Issues we would want to modify would be not to destroy woodland in order to restore a man made lake on its original site. Minimise the destruction of woodland on the flood scheme site. Consider having a lake on the flood scheme site as the project would require large scale excavation of the site, remembering that this area was once wetland, marsh and reedbeds prior to WWII.

No one argues that capital expenditure is required to rebuild the stable block into a public asset. A further bid is needed to restore the mansion, again into a public asset.

It will not be until early 2016 that any tenders have been decided and preliminary work on stage 2 bid preparation accomplished. Further consultation is pencilled in but dates not set yet. We will be urging for the fullest consultation and public meetings and awareness raising events.

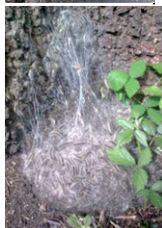
The Squirrel Statue. This has not been looking its best for several years due to renovation work being started and left unfinished as the restorer fell ill. As there seems very little prospect of him ever returning to finish it, the Friends of BPP are going to ask if the Council would let us clean off the remaining coating and give it a lick of paint. At least that would get rid of the dreadful grin recently bestowed on it by someone with bad eyesight and /or no artistic talent.

Oak Processionary Moth.

The Forestry Commission have been carrying out checks of the Oak trees in BPP as these moths were found in Bromley and Croydon last year. They have been marking the trees with pink dots if the tree appears to be free of them and pink lines if there is some evidence of a nest.

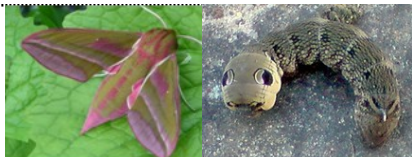
These moths live almost exclusively in oak trees and the caterpillars move around in a nose-to-tail procession, hence the name. The nests are white, silken webbing trails and clusters, usually in a dome or teardrop shape on the trunks and branches. The caterpillars feed on the leaves and in large numbers can strip the tree bare.

If you do see these caterpillars report them to the Lewisham Council or to the Forestry Commission by using the Tree Alert app or on-line reporting form available at forestry.gov.uk/opm. There is much more information on this website too.



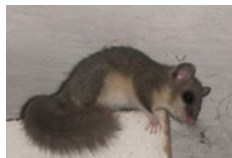
Elephant Hawk Moth.

This attractive moth, not often seen as it flies at night, has been laying its eggs on the garden plants, fuchsia, as a food plant for the caterpillars which usually preferring willowherbs and bedstraw. The caterpillars are big, handsome creatures with markings that look like eyes, worth looking out for.



Harris Hawk. Some of you may have seen this beautiful bird with his owner as he tries to exercise and train it. It doesn't seem to be causing any problems and as far as we are aware there are no bylaws against it, so perhaps we should all just enjoy seeing such a lovely creature up close.

Glis glis or Edible Dormouse. This cute-looking creature had, apparently, been spotted around the Foxgrove Club. It is smaller than a grey squirrel, but are not particularly welcome as if they get into houses can cause a great deal of damage. They hibernate for about 7 months so now will be the time to look for it. Their range is supposed to be confined to the Amersham, Bucks area, but is spreading. This one must be lost.



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.

April 24th **Ernest Shackleton** **Michael Smith**
He lived in Sydenham, went to Dulwich College and went on to great exploits.

May 29th **Beckenham Place & its Park** **Mal Mitchell**
The history, ecology and geography of this park, a neglected jewel in Lewisham borough.

June 26th **Pioneers of Photography** **Roger Mead**
Strange stories of early photograph, illustrated with vintage photos and equipment and looking at some of the south London connections.

More information: www.lewishamhistory.org.uk

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

7th April AGM, plus **The Elephant & Castle** **Steven Humphrey**
Rise & fall of S London's premier shopping & entertainment venue.

5th May **Beckenham from A to Z** **Ian Bevan**

THURSDAY 4th June VISIT Bromley Local Studies & Archives at the Central Library. 6.30pm this event needs to be booked with **Mike Marriot 07971 710 1520 or mike.marriot1@ntlworld.net**
More information: www.blhs.org.uk