

NEWSLETTER 76

Summer: July 1st - September 30th



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

Sunday 19th July Around the Park

Meet outside the mansion in the car park 1.30pm. Literally around the park following the perimeter. Having forgotten to do a Beating the Bounds walk this May this will make up for it.

Sunday 16th August Litter Pick

Meet at the Mansion portico at 10.00am. Lewisham council have cut the number of days the excellent Peter works in the park to two a week, so a bit of help to keep BPP clean would be useful. Tools provided.

Sunday 13th September Know your Park Walk

Meet 2.00pm in Old Bromley Road Car Park. This starting point is at the Downham end of the park close to the river. A walk around all the varying areas of the park. Explaining the many different types of habitat and what you might expect to see throughout the year. Ideal for people not familiar with the park.

SENSORY GARDEN WORKDAYS. Saturday 11th Jul, 8th Aug,

12th Sept Meet at the Mansion 10.am or go straight to the Sensory

Garden. No experience needed. There will be work to suit everyone. Tools, gloves and guidance provided. In the summer it is often necessary to put in extra workdays, either phone or check the website for the dates.

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.

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

Thanks to David Hansom.

Having known David for a really long time it is a shame that he and Glenda are leaving the area, but good luck to them in Frinton on Sea. They won't be lazing around, there's golf and sailing and a big garden to keep them busy.

David has done so much for the Friends group and the golfing fraternity over the years in the many crises with London Borough of Lewisham. He has been Chair of the Friends for eight years, but worked within the group before becoming Chair and going to many, many meetings with the London Borough of Lewisham (LBL), writing letters and generally trying to point LBL in the right direction. The Friends of BPP thank him for his dedication, enthusiasm and expertise over the last couple of decades.

AGM Sunday 14th June in the mansion.

Attended by seventeen people, it was a good meeting with much discussion about LBL's park plans. Two more people volunteered to come onto the present committee, a new Chair to be elected at the next committee meeting. A local resident raised the issue of motor bikes in the park the only advice is to contact the police every time and eventually they should get the message that it needs to be dealt with. The police recently contacted us via LBL and incidents are being pursued a bit more vigorously.

Committee Meeting Monday 22nd June

This was a well attended lively meeting and very useful with fresh ideas from new people. A small sub-group are going to devise our own short survey to find out what park users actually want for the park and make their wishes count. It is hoped to put it on the website, in the Visitor Centre, probably in the next newsletter. We will also be at the numerous park entrances at variable times to ask visitors their opinions. The results will be presented to LBL.

The position of Chair was reluctantly taken by Mal Mitchell until we get a better offer! Thanks for making it a productive meeting.

Handy contact numbers

Glendale for issues on Downham side of park 020 8318 3986

Police non emergency number 101

Mansion cafe/golf shop 020 8650 2292

Lewisham Green Scene LBL switchboard 020 8314 6000

Smart Phone app: **fix my street** for park vandalism, litter, etc

National Parks Forum and Lewisham Parks Forum (LPF)

The Lewisham Parks Forum continues to meet regularly and general park issues are discussed and pursued. There is national concern regarding the condition and status of public parks. An initiative to get London declared a national park city to protect open space is being pursued but this is not envisaged to be a solution to the crisis in park funding cutbacks.

There are petitions online and information via <http://www.greaterlondonnationalpark.org.uk/> and <http://www.lpgsf.org.uk/>

We have met with LBL officers to discuss and review the management contract performance monitoring. It is certain that further cuts in council spending will affect local parks and the forum is hoping to help investigate ways of minimising the impact. Strangely the Heritage Lottery Fund are aware of the problems but their inability to fund ongoing maintenance and management only adds to the problems as they are funding elements in parks capital infrastructure that do require more maintenance and management e.g. The scheme in BPP

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The is a copy of a postcard produced by

GreaterLondonNationalPark.org.uk @LondonNP

#GLNP

**‘Let’s make London the world’s first National Park City’
is their aim.**

47% green space	3.8 million gardens
3,000 parks	36 Sites of Special Scientific Interest
13,000 species of wildlife	4 UNESCO World Heritage Sites,
8.6 million people	300 languages spoken
8.1 million trees	50 canoe clubs
142 Local Nature Reserves	30,000 allotments
1,300 Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation	
850km of streams, rivers and canals	

This is an impressive list for a city the size of London, but with the never ending expansion of housing and transport needs this is probably a very good time to take stock and try to preserve what is left for future generations.

Recent Events Report

Our walks are on weekdays occasionally to try to cater for those who are retired or whose weekends are too busy.

Sunday 26th April Bluebell Walk

Nick, our walk leader had a big group to guide through the beautiful bluebells this year, and yes there were bluebells as it gets trickier to predict when they will be blooming. Although the weather was a bit chilly and drizzly everyone enjoyed this annual walk in Becky Park as Nick often refers to it. Many thanks to the walk leader and everyone that came along.

Wednesday 20th May A Walk to Chinbrook Meadows

This is one of our long walks outside of the park. Only a couple of people, Ann, Sheila and Beryl came along, but they enjoyed the walk and had some excellent refreshments at the cafe in Chinbrook Meadows. The weather was cloudy, mainly dry and fairly warm. Thanks to those that came along.

Sunday 14th June AGM

See inside front page.

Sensory Garden Workdays

The work has continued steadily and the garden is getting quite full. Many people have expressed their delight in our efforts which is very gratifying to the small band of volunteers who work very hard and efficiently on the workdays. The theft of plants continues, a rather attractive rose in the sound bed has ‘walked off’. There is very little to be done about thieves. When planting we look for plants that aren’t too showy when they go in, in the hope they will be unnoticed until they mature.

Keeping the paths clear from weeds is a job on its own, but one of the volunteers has tackled them every time we work, certainly improving the whole look of the place. At the time of writing everything in the garden is blooming and in places is a little too full, but as it is also for wildlife we will not be cutting down flowers just to make it look ‘neat’. Nature doesn’t do neat and neither do we. A few more helpers for our workdays would be good, if you are interested the contact numbers are at the bottom of the front page. Come along, its good fun and we’re only there for about two hours.

The Mansion - how old is it?

The internet can sometimes help when there seems to be no way of discovering anymore about past events. Recently we have found several letters written by Peter Collinson, John Cator's father in law, and one seems to throw more light on to the date the mansion was built. Collinson (1694—1768) was an eminent horticulturist and botanist who corresponded with Carl Linnaeus and many plant collectors of the time. He introduced many plants that are now grown commonly in our gardens today. Below is an extract from a letter dated of June 8th 1763 from Collinson to John Bartram, a plant collector in America, and reads thus:

‘Pray look, where grows nearest, some Azaleas, Kalmias, and Rhododendrons, for my son-in-law, who has lately bought a fine estate, and built a noble house, and made extensive plantations, and is quite cracked after plants, - has plundered my garden all he can, and looks with such a longing eye on what remains, that unless thou sends me a box of those plants to keep all quiet for my own son is so ardent to keep what I have that I shall have something to do to manage my two sons. They are so fond of plants, and take such care in planting in proper soil and situation, it gives me entertainment to see their ingenuity and emulation. But my son (*in law*) Cator deserves encouragement; for when he married my daughter, about ten years ago, he scarcely knew an apple tree from an oak ; but by seeing often my garden, and conversing with me and his brother (*in law*), is now resolved, if he can, to rival us. In his new, fresh soil, plants thrive finely. I wish thou may pick out what I mean: being much engaged, can add no more, but that I am thy sincere friend,

P.Collinson’

According to this letter the house was built by 1763 and the landscaping had begun. It has always been vaguely referred to as being built between 1770-1780 as there seems to be no real recording of who the architect or the date of construction. According to one of the several surveys and consultations instigated by Lewisham Council over the last twenty years, parts of the house are older indicating a previous house was here and may have been altered to its present state. It is thought that the front part with its columns were recycled from Wricklemarsh, a mansion in Blackheath. There is a very noticeable change in the style of the external architecture in this part with the ornate windows. The main ‘cube’ of the building has plain windows with no surrounding embellishment. We will continue to hunt for more clues about Beckenham Place. Thanks to Mal Mitchell for his diligent research

Lottery Bid Progress Reports

The money awarded under Stage 1 of the bid, about £200k, is being used to commission surveys of the park for various information, Topographical survey to be followed by species surveys for trees, flora etc. The Friends have been speaking to an Interpretation consultant who is working on a strategy for relating information about the park. She has worked on strategies for the Woodland Trust, National Trust and projects similar to BPP. All this work will form part of the stage 2 bid being prepared by Land Use Consultants (LUC). The public consultation on detailed plans is scheduled to begin soon and we will be expecting the Council and LUC to perform the widest possible consultation unlike the very limited and short notice process for the stage 1 bid.

The campaign to save the golf course goes on with various people opposing closure and challenging the stated cost or losses claimed to relate to the golf course. We still believe that losses could be eradicated by a significant change to management processes. It was stated recently that if the golf did close then no staff in the park would face redundancy so the major part of the costs, salaries, would remain as the park staff maintain the whole of the west (mansion) side of the park. Another cost, business rate, is paid by the Council when logically it should be paid by the company receiving income, Glendale. The end of the current golf contract with Glendale ends in December so we are anxious as to what will happen for the safety of the Mansion and park generally. One of our major objections remains the proposed restoration of the lake which would require destruction of woodland whereas digging a lake on the riverside area would help restore wetland which once was a feature of the rivers heritage landscape.

LBL have an email address for you to say what aspects of the park interest you, so tell 'em! bppfuture@lewisham.gov.uk

Flood Control Scheme

There has been no news regarding the Flood Scheme from the Environment Agency (EA). At the recent working party meeting concern was raised that if the scheme did not go ahead then the Downham side of the park would be left without any regeneration funding as the Lottery funding applies only to the west side (Bellingham/Beckenham) side of the park.

Composting—recycling at its best.

Compost is organic matter that has been decomposed and recycled as a fertilizer and soil conditioner. At the simplest level, the process of composting simply requires making a heap of wetted organic matter and waiting for the materials to break down into humus after a period of weeks or months. This is not rocket science and if you have a garden it can provide a bit of free ‘good stuff’ to boost your garden soil. There are plenty of cheap bins of various shapes and sizes on the market so it could take as long as ten minutes to site it and get it started.

Site. This should be a level well drained area, to allow surplus moisture to soak away. We find that a degree of dampness helps the process and bins sometimes become too dry in a very sunny position. The heap will generate its own heat through the decomposition process.

What to compost: grass cuttings, soft prunings, annual plant and weed remains before they have set seed, fruit and vegetable scraps, old cut flowers, tea bags and coffee grounds, cardboard (torn up), newspaper, paper bags and scrunched up/ shredded paper, straw.

What not to compost: diseased plants, meat and fish, dairy, cooked food, coal ash, cat and dog litter, disposable nappies, perennial weeds eg bindweed. Many of these materials could attract vermin. It is not a good idea to compost too many fallen leaves in the autumn, best to put them in sacks with a sprinkling of water and leave tucked away to make leaf mould over the winter..

A variety of compostable materials is best, too many grass clipping at one time could make the compost slimy. Too little air circulating or too much moisture would have the same result so turning the heap occasionally is a good idea. There are loads of creatures, worms, wood lice and beetles and micro organisms that will arrive to help you. Leave the heap for about a year just adding more material to the top, you will notice the material shrinking in volume as if by magic. If you have space consider two bins, one for new material and one ‘maturing’.

When its time to empty the bin the compost can be scooped out of a door at the bottom of the bin or lift the bin off the heap. Put any unrotted material to one side, spread the well rotted compost around your garden between plants, lightly forking it in. When the bin is replaced put the unrotted material back in and start again.

It is not a difficult process and when all your old kitchen and garden waste has turned into a lovely compost you can feel very pleased with yourself!

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

23th July A talk at the Broadway Studio Theatre

Linked to Lewisham Youth Theatre’s Catford Tales production.

This is a Thursday and must be booked, look on line for more details.

31st July Seaside Sauce - The life and times of Donald McGill, Blackheath resident and a leading pioneer of the humorous postcard.

Alan Payne

August No meeting

25th September A former Lewisham schoolboy reflects on fifty years ago.

His eminence the Metropolitan Seraphim of Glastonbury

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 July Two talks on local aspects of WW1 **Peter Leigh and Christine Hellicar**

August No Meeting

1st September Members evening

Members give short talks on aspects of local history.

More information: www.blhs.org.uk

Programme Co-ordinator mike.marriott1@ntlworld.net