

NEWSLETTER 81

Summer: October 1st - December 31st



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

Sunday 16 October FUNGI WALK

Meet on the mansion steps at 1.30 Mark Spencer and some of his fellow fungi experts will lead a walk around the park searching for interesting specimens. This is an identification walk and not to collect edible fungi.

Sunday 13 November LATE AUTUMN WALK

Meet on Mansion portico at 1.30pm. A straight forward walk around the park looking for some autumn colours in the leaves and any migrant birds.

Wednesday 7 December MINCE PIE WALK

Meet on mansion portico 1.30pm. This is a bit of a tradition now. Come for a short or long walk depending on the weather and have a mince pie, soft drink and some chocolate when we stop for a sit down. All welcome.

SENSORY GARDEN WORKDAYS (sessions last about 2 hours)

Dates 2nd Saturday of the month, 8 and 22 October, 12 November, 10 December. Meet 10.00am either at the mansion or go straight to the Sensory Garden

There will be work to suit everyone. Tools ,gloves, instruction 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 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. (At least until end of October)

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

Lottery Bid

Well the second stage application for the approximately £5 million has gone into the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). The actual content of the bid is subject to confidentiality and we cannot access it despite it being a 'Parks for People' scheme and funded by public money raised via the Lottery. A very closed shop restrictive practice in my opinion.

We do know the tennis courts and golf course will close and planned to be eradicated from the landscape. The cafe and toilets will close with the golf course at the end of October.

The toilet block next to the mansion is supposed to be brought back into temporary use but we fear for the future of the mansion with no regular use. We will be discussing the feasibility of keeping the visitor centre open on Sundays but without the security of an operating cafe we have concerns.

Future plans thus far revealed by the Project Manager is to have a Public Engagement officer and a volunteer coordinator. 2 more salaries to find out of the decreasing borough parks budget and we will be looking to have some say about how staff are deployed in the park as there is no plan to get rid of current park staff who will no longer be needed for golf course maintenance or needed to be in the park before 7 or 8am to prepare golf greens etc.

The Project Manager, Alison Taylor recently attended a meeting in the Mansion which was attended by many members of the public and also a meeting of the Beckenham Society in Beckenham Public Hall. It was stated that major works would not start until 2018 as tenders for work have to be acquired after the funding is approved, expected this December. Regardless of the stage 2 application the Save Beckenham 18 Golf course campaign continues and an application to have the course declared an Asset of Community Value has been registered.

There is also a move to re-establish the **Community Trust** and bid for management of the mansion, golf course and other parts of the park. Lewisham Council have been seeking expressions of interest in the Mansion and Foxgrove Club and the Trust is responding to this.

Apparently an open day for interested parties revealed that no one was interested in running the mansion without the income from the golf course??

The **Foxgrove Club** has been occupied by a caretaker tenant since the Council evicted the social club for non payment of rent or lease. But they're not getting any income now so leaving the social club in possession on a caretaker lease would have perhaps solved a problem if a lease could have been regularised to the satisfaction of all involved.

Author: Malvin Mitchell (who continues to be dumbfounded by the policies applied to Beckenham Place)

BPP Working Party

The working party was disbanded by Lewisham Council earlier in the year before the end of May. It had been deemed 'unproductive', for whom we do not know. We were told a new reformed group would be established. This has not happened thus far and I get the impression its a ruse to disable people from having input into the Parks for People.

Flood Control Scheme Progress Reports

The Environment Agency (EA) are still going ahead with the flood scheme and public consultation is scheduled for early 2017.

Consultants have been appointed to develop plans and we suspect Land Use Consultants are involved but not confirmed.

This timetable was acquired from the EA

Please find below the **outline** programme for the whole Lewisham and Catford FAS project.

Date	Technical activities
Oct / Nov 16	Ground investigations
March 17	Public consultation
April 17	'Freeze' design
May 17	Submit planning application
Sept 17	Planning application approved
Jan – May 18	Time buffer for tendering and early works
2018-2020	Construction

Beckenham Place Park Community Trust

I regret that people not on email or the internet are disadvantaged from hearing some news until this newsletter comes out. Anyone wishing to become a member of the Community Trust can write or phone us and we will put you in contact with the Trust Chair and Secretary.

Several of our members have joined via email contact. So far no fees are payable and an inaugural meeting is being arranged.

It will depend on Lewisham Council's willingness to let local people have a say in local issues and control local assets.

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. Light refreshments and time for questions.

28 October The Thames Discovery Programme

Archaeology when the tide goes out **Elliott Wragg**

25 November The 1930s Fight for Sunday Cinema

Gordon Dennington

16 December Christmas on the Home Front in WW2

Mike Brown

More information: www.lewishamhistory.org.uk

Bromley Borough Local History Society.

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 are welcome for a nominal charge of £1.

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

4 October The Work of Coles Child in Greenwich

Mary Mills

1 November A Beckenham family's WW1 archive

Aura Hargreaves

6 December A history of some famous London shops

Susan Jenkinson

More information: www.blhs.org.uk

David Love, has produced this material about the Beckenham rectory which was contemporary with John Cator's time at Beckenham Place.

WILLIAM ROSE'S BECKENHAM RECTORY: A LOCAL MYSTERY?

Beckenham once had at least one building designed by a top architectural practice, Robert Adam's rectory, probably built shortly after 1788 by the Rev. William Rose. It was demolished c.1930 for another, more distinguished, neo-classical building also now lost, the massively towered Beckenham Town Hall (c.1932-92).

A number of drawings survive in Adam's office records. The mystery is why the built design is so much plainer than the earlier proposals, whether the exotic outbuildings also proposed were ever built, and what if anything this might show about the internal politics of the well-connected London people who owned houses in parks or extensive gardens around what was then a small, farming village.

As the son of the head of one of the leading building contractors in the country (Joseph Rose and Co., which did the plastering work on many of the most palatial buildings of fashionable architects like the Adam brothers and James Wyatt) and the beneficiary of two livings, Beckenham and Carshalton in Surrey, Rose had the expertise, connections and, presumably, money to build something special, and sufficient interest to commission successive alternative designs.

Among his contemporaries Adam was perhaps the most reliant on decoration. The first surviving design was a bravura performance on a small scale (ill. 1). It shows the entrance front of a square three-storey town house embellished with two rows of classical pilasters one above the other, a small, single-storey columned and pedimented entrance portico, an 'Adam-style' fan decoration over the central window above, flanked by two pictorial roundels, the window framed by pairs of smaller pilasters duplicating the portico columns, and at the base of the roof a decorative band and narrow entablature topped by two guardian Greek sphinxes looking outward.

Rose seems to have thought better of this. An equally striking, but more restrained and robustly monumental, second design dropped the minor decoration while keeping the main pilasters, adding a balcony above the entrance portico, moving an enlarged pediment up to the base of the roof, rustivating the ground floor, and softening the overall effect by developing the upper decorative band (ill. 2).

Finally this too was discarded, in favour of a plain and modest façade with few architectural pretensions, almost undecorated (ill. 3). This is dated 1788 and signed off by Adam himself, with a full set of elevations and plans.

Taste in this period looked two ways, towards neo-classical 'purity' and towards the 'gothic' picturesque. Thus there are also two designs for Rose of thatched barns with rustic tree-trunk columns and slit windows (in one case shaped as Latin crosses), rather like the popular garden 'hermitages'.

Several questions arise which local historians may be able to answer. Were the *outbuildings* ever constructed? Is anything known about the rectory *interiors* since, unless Rose was a particularly austere clergyman, he would surely have turned to the family firm for some fine plasterwork? Has its *foundation stone* and *fireplaces*, reportedly relocated to Beckenham's transient Town Hall (one fireplace said to be now in Bromley's Mayor's Parlour), or anything else, survived from what is now

Marks and Spencer's car park?

More important, is there any collateral evidence to suggest what the successive designs may say about *Rose as a patron* and even perhaps about his relations with John Cator who built Beckenham Place in 1760-62? A significant curiosity is that the rectory layout seems to duplicate the Place, albeit on the smaller scale of a town house, not a country villa. In itself no great surprise, as they derive from a common arrangement for 'grandly simple' country retreats favoured by the sixteenth-century architect Andrea Palladio and his many followers. But the Place was exceptionally plain and understated externally, and in that sense un-Palladian, as was the entrance front of the rectory as built. Visualising the Place's original entrance front from what survives internally suggests that the rectory may have mirrored it before its later, rather discordant, extension. The rectory's one deviation, besides the external windows of its top floor, is on its more private, garden side where the two reception room windows flanking the central bay were recessed behind small Serlio-arched internal balconies.

To speculate, it could be that Rose was simply the kind of patron who commissioned elaborate designs but in the end settled for what he could afford. But he was no novice in the building world, so the earlier, more ambitious plans probably embody his own first thoughts, not flights of fancy by Adam's office.

An alternative solution is that in the end he thought it imprudent to build something more showy, and even apparently competitive, than one of the largest local landowners, and chose instead to make a differential compliment to Cator's taste, at least where his house was visible from the road? Cator was most likely a family friend, almost certainly instrumental in Rose's appointment to Beckenham, and in 1796 he bought the right of appointment to Rose's other living, in Carshalton, presumably with Rose's agreement or at his suggestion. What is recorded about Cator himself derives from the little, not always flattering, that his smart London and Streatham Park literary acquaintances wrote about him. *Is there any local evidence or tradition about his or Rose's characters, and their relations?*

David Love (c)

Note::There is a picture (noted as ill 1)of the plan for a more ornate design for the frontage but it does not reproduce well. We will put it on the website where it can be enlarged and seen better. Editor



Ill.2 All the designs for the entrance façade are described as north-facing whereas the building faced south, towards the present Church Avenue.



ill.3 The central lightwell above the hall too small for the top floor to be lit from within like Beckenham Place.

Local People.

A local artist, Edith Ransford Produces a calendar with prints of her work.

The calendar for 2017 is coming out about now and may be acquired from Beckenham Bookshop and some other outlets.

This years theme is lost buildings and although the stable block in BPP is subject to rebuilding. Edith has



National Parks Forum and Lewisham Parks Forum (LPF)

LPF has been addressing recycling in public parks, attending the londonwide forum which is pursuing a change in government policy regarding parks i.e. Trying to get parks made a statutory responsibility of Local Authorities. Surveys and petitions have revealed that over 70 pct of people are in favour of this.

The campaign to have London made a national park city continues which plans to protect open space or 'green' bits of the city. An honourable cause but I'm a little concerned that it favours the garden bridge over the Thames which I regard as a complete waste of money , time and effort in these days of supposed austerity.

Visitor Centre.

It is highly likely that we will have to close the Friends Visitor Centre. When the proposed closure of the golf course and cafe at the end of October (according to local gossip) the mansion will be empty and we don't want to be responsible for the building. Also with nobody playing golf or visiting the cafe it won't feel very safe. The Friends committee are having a meeting in early October with Alison Taylor as Lewisham say they are happy for the VC to continue, which came as news to us with no visitor centre mentioned in the plans. When there is any news we will endeavour to keep people informed.

Recent Events Report

Saturday July 16th TO CHINBROOK MEADOWS. This is one of our longer walks which takes us about 4 miles from the park. Some of the walk is along short stretches of road, but considering the distance and that this is Inner London most is parkland and other green areas. It was a really hot day so there was only a small group of walkers, what we like to term a select few? By the time we reached Chinbrook Meadow's cafe everyone was in need of refreshment. It was good to run into a BPP park employee, who had been moved to Chinbrook, at the cafe and catch up with the gossip. Several of the party left here, but the walk leaders returned to BPP via a different route, still very green and including the very tranquil Downham Woodland Walk. Thanks to everyone that came along.

Wednesday August 10th SILENT WALK. Walking in single file in silence doesn't sound like much fun, but it is amazing what you hear and sense. In ideal walking weather a small group of us set off for an hours walkin BPP stopping now and then for a few moments to take in the sounds, smells and sights around us. Plenty of traffic on Beckenham Hill Road. The trains were on time! Aircraft on the routes to far flung destinations in the skies above. Dogs barking or being called. Park users and golfers chatting. Birds everywhere ,calling, fluttering and watching us! Mowers, Zebra crossing bleeps, river Ravensbourne babbling along. The list could go on and on. We spent longer chatting about our walk, with a nice cuppa looking over the golf course, than the walk itself! Thank you to those that came and enjoyed a few 'quiet' hours in BPP.

Sunday September 4th GEOLOGY WALK. There were quite a few people on this walk which was led by a really knowledgeable local geologist. The walk included the outcrop of conglomerate near the Ravensbourne station/Crab Hill entrance which people often mistake for the remains of an old building, quite understandably as that's what it looks like. It was in fact formed 54 million years ago. The walk was enjoyed by all that came along and many thanks to Paul for his great guided tour of the very distant past.

SENSORY GARDEN. Our workdays have been the 2nd and 4th Saturdays in the month. 10am to 12noon, meet in the garden. Maintenance work includes removing or dead heading, replanting, weeding, etc. We get a lot of complementary comments from park users. We have a regular team of 10 or so volunteers and new volunteers are always welcome whether you can come regularly of just now and again. When the autumn tidying up is finished we will be doing one day per month with some work taking place in woodland areas. Check via phone or email if you would like to help, just to confirm where and when work will be taking place.