

# NEWSLETTER 82

Winter: January 1st - March 31st 2017



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

## **Saturday 28th January BIRD WATCH**

**Meet on the mansion steps at 9.30am** Dave De Silva will lead a walk around the park identifying birds by sight and sound. Bring binoculars if you have them.

## **Wednesday 15th February WALK in ST GEORGES CHURCH YARD**

**Meet at the lych gate of St. Georges Church, Beckenham at 11am.** Just a short walk around some of the Cator memorials and others with connections to Beckenham Place.

## **Sunday 19th March KNOW YOUR PARK WALK**

**Meet at the mansion steps 1.30pm**

An exploration walk, some things you may not know about the park. A chance for those who wouldn't walk in the park alone (especially now there are no golfers to keep it safe) to come on a little informative wander with the Friends.

## **SENSORY GARDEN or Woodland WORKDAYS** (about 2 hours)

**Dates 2nd Saturday of the month, 14th Jan, 11th Feb, 11th Mar**

**Meet 10.00am** in the Sensory Garden

There will be work to suit everyone. Either in the garden or in the woodland. 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. (

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## **BPP Working Party**

The working party was wound up by Lewisham Council probably because it kept telling them things they didn't like hearing about park management. The new arrangement is that there is a steering group of limited representation and three forums focussed under three headings: Events and Activities: Children and Schools: Nature, Interpretation and History.

The Friends have representation on all three. We are seeking representation on the Steering Group.

Some pluses and minuses, people are expressing good and not so good ideas. No formal minuting of meetings. Some people are not familiar with the park. Some people appear to be pursuing their personal and financial interests. We'll see how it goes

## **Golf Course Closure**

This took place at the end of October. Some attempts are being made to reverse the decision but the recent cycling event over the course shows the council are determined to close it.

Ironically the golf course and lines of trees are unacceptable but lines of cycle track and mud are a welcome sight. So much for the 18th century heritage park landscape described in the initial HLF bid blurb which golf course removal was based on.

## **Recent Events Report**

**Fungi Walk:** Dr. Mark Spencer and friends led a walk in search of fungi and found many interesting species regardless of the dry conditions. Perhaps Turkey in the Woods was the most spectacular.

**Autumn Walk:** A few people came along and enjoyed the ramble.

**Mince Pie Walk:** a small number made the excursion but enjoyed it.

**Sunday 4th December. Festival of Lights.** An event organised by the new tenant of the Mansion. The Friends opened the Visitor Centre and ran a Christmas Card making event for the children. Also in the days before several of the Friends volunteered making garlands and decorations. There were a great deal of visitors on the day, estimated at 1,200. It all seemed to go well, especially as it was all hastily arranged in about two weeks.

## **Article from Alison Taylor | Project Manager**

### **Regeneration and Asset Management**

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We were delighted to hear from the Heritage Lottery Fund yesterday (14<sup>th</sup> Dec) that they have approved the Round 2 funding bid for the regeneration of Beckenham Place Park. This means the Parks for People funds of a further £4.7m for the park and the homestead restoration are now confirmed, and the restoration of this wonderful, rich open space will become a reality!

As you will already be aware, we began a new era in the park in early November, when the golf course closed, and RJK Properties Ltd took on a short term lease in the mansion.

At the same time, the external toilets (just next to the mansion, on the terrace area) were refurbished, to ensure that toilets in the park are open throughout daylight hours, even when the mansion is not. Unfortunately, these do not include disabled facilities at this time – though it is often possible for users with disabilities to be let into the mansion to use the facilities there.

The new lease in the mansion is going very well. Already the café has been refurbished, (it looks amazing – do go and check it out!) *opening times are in Sydney Thornbury's article in this newsletter—next page*

Together with RJK Properties, Lewisham Council put on the Christmas event 'Festival of Lights' which was a wonderful festive celebration. Around 1500 people came – which was significantly more than we were expecting! 'Unfortunately, due to the wrong post code being published on the marketing materials, there were parking and crowding issues on Foxgrove. However, we have the correct post-code now that directs people to the entrance gate on Beckenham Hill, so we should be able to avoid that problem in future. It was great to see so many local people enjoying the music, art workshops and snow machine and having festive fun in the park and mansion!'

The next step for the regeneration programme is to tender for the architects who will be involved in the next phase of design work. The planning application has been submitted and should be determined in the next 2-3 months. Detailed design work will begin in March.

Between now and then we will be doing some more woodland tree planting in the park with volunteers – so we'd love you to come and get involved.

Events will be publicised in the park, through the Friends email list and on social media.

## **Responses to questions posed to Sydney Thornbury regarding the Mansion Lease.**

**Q. Initial response to your taking over the mansion is good on the whole. you've undertaken a lot of work. would you like to outline your plans for the near future?**

We've been overwhelmed by the warm and positive welcome we've received in taking over the Mansion, (not least from the Friends of Beckenham Place Park!), so firstly we'd like to say thank you to everyone. We had so much fun meeting people at the festival of lights event in December and we're really pleased that people enjoyed it so much.

This is definitely a labour of love and we are very excited about it. Our main aim is to get the Mansion in active use by and for local people as soon as possible. As you can imagine, there has been a lot to do - basic stuff like getting the electrics and heat up and running were top of the list!

We've been giving the mansion a good cleaning as well, including painting and decorating the old café to brighten it up, removing carpeting in the formal rooms on the ground floor to sand down and varnish the wood floors (which will look beautiful when they're done!), cleaning more bird droppings than I care to think about from both the front portico and the attic upstairs (and installing bird repellents!). We've also painted and decorated the first floor rooms, which will be used as flats for the caretakers and also studios for up to 10 artists.

We should have all this finished by the end of January. Other than those improvements and some additional painting, we think we've got enough here to work with to start opening the doors to the public for classes and events as of March. Although the mansion does need a lot of restoration work, as we only have a 22 month lease, we're not undertaking anything major during that time. We will; however, continue to look after the building and make little improvements.

Our vision for the Mansion is to be a place where the natural surroundings inspire creative practice, wellbeing and community building. By the summer we should have the whole building open daily and humming with activity!

We are already accepting applications for artists who would like to rent a studio, so if you would like to apply, please check out [www.beckenhamplace.org](http://www.beckenhamplace.org) for more information and to download a pack.

Until February, we will be selling hot drinks and baked goods in the snug Fridays-Sundays from 9am-4pm. On Mondays-Thursdays the snug will be open for people to come in out of the cold for some warmth and you are welcome to bring your own hot drinks or winter picnic!

From February, we are aiming to have the snug open 7 days a week as it becomes home to a series of pop-up cafes which will offer a range of food and drink options and change every 12 weeks or so!

We are also aiming to be offering pilates, yoga and other wellbeing classes in the mansion from the end of April, holiday courses in art and music over the Easter Holidays and also (hopefully!) a regular farmers and food market on Saturdays from the spring.

Over the next few months, we are working on programming a regular series of events and activities that will include pop up dining, classical and jazz concerts, cinema screenings, theatre events, talks and workshops. If people are interested in providing an activity, please feel free to get in touch with me at [sydney@beckenhamplace.org](mailto:sydney@beckenhamplace.org). Also, if you have suggestions for what you'd like to see happening here, please get in touch. We will also be reaching out to local partners and schools to begin working with them as well. As part of this, we look forward to working with the Friends of BPP to showcase part of their fantastic collection in a full-time display in the foyer and also to find other ways to provide more opportunities for local people to engage with the park and the great work that the friends do.

**Q.Can you tell us a bit about Copeland Park and Bussey Building or the parent organisation?**

The Wilson family - Jon and Lori and their three grown sons Tim, Chris and Alex, have owned Copeland Park and the Bussey Building for the last 25 years. Over that time, they have transformed an old industrial estate and Victorian Cricket Bat

factory into the cultural quarter of Peckham and one of the most dynamic creative centres in London. They've done this by taking a long-term and organic approach that focused on making it a great place for local people to both work and play.

The Bussey Building is just one of the buildings that make up the Copeland Park complex and it houses over 70 artist studios as well as a yoga studio, nightclub and rooftop cinema (no, we're not opening a nightclub or putting a cinema on the roof of the Mansion!). There are also restaurants, local community organizations, micro start-up businesses (the Wilson's are particularly interested in supporting new business start-ups), African churches, a mosque, import/export businesses, three galleries, the famous Khan's everything-store and a fitness studio. It's a very lively place and is never dull.

In addition, the site hosts a number of regular vintage and food markets and also last year ran the inaugural Peckham Festival – a weekend celebration of arts, culture and food across Peckham which attracted over 10,000 people and had 250 events.

Jon and Lori are surveyors who have had their surveying business in Hither Green for 30 years and the entire family simply loves old buildings and finding creative ways to keep them in active use for local people. Although they do run what has now become the hippest corner of South East London, anyone who has met Jon will be reassured to see that there's no chance of mistaking him for a 'hipster'. (Early rumours that we were a group of hipsters taking over the mansion still makes us giggle). The Wilson's are very down to earth people, they run their businesses to make a difference in their community and as an arts and social enterprise CEO I have always been really impressed by that.

**Q. Would you like us to publicise your contact details for enquiries about activities?**

We now have a website, which is [www.beckenhamplace.org](http://www.beckenhamplace.org) and we are posting information there as well as on our Facebook and Twitter accounts, which are @bppmanion. You can sign up for our mailing list via the website and we will keep you up to date with our progress and events. People can email us directly at [mansion@beckenhamplace.org](mailto:mansion@beckenhamplace.org).

### 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.

**27th Jan: Royal Fans: History and Owners Mary Kitson**

**24th Feb: Above your head, below your feet. Sue Hayton.**

**31st Mar: A G M at 7:30pm**  
followed by: **Modern Nature – Living on the Edge Nick Bertrand**

**More information: [www.lewishamhistory.org.uk](http://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 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 for a nominal charge of £1.

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

**7th Feb: The Lubbocks of Kent Lyulph Lubbock**

**7th March: A 100 years of Biggin Hill Airfield Alan Piper**

**4th April: AGM followed by**  
**Not Forgotten: V2 attack on Bickley Jennie Randall**

**More information: [www.blhs.org.uk](http://www.blhs.org.uk)**

### Flood Control Scheme Progress Reports

As no further news has been received we assume the timetable in the previous newsletter is still relevant. i.e. Public consultation scheduled for March.

### **Local People: Edith Ransford**

Following our piece about local artist, Edith Ransford in the last newsletter we heard that she sadly passed away at about the same time as her calendar was being distributed to outlets.

The calendar for 2017 may be acquired from Beckenham Bookshop and some other outlets if any remain. We saw a couple of Edith's paintings for sale in a gallery on Chislehurst Common.

This year's theme is lost buildings and although the stable block in BPP is subject to rebuilding. Edith had included it as a subject in her calendar. She will be sadly missed by many.

### **WILLIAM ROSE'S BECKENHAM RECTORY: A LOCAL MYSTERY?**

Further to the article in the last newsletter, three Ordnance Survey maps (1861/71, 1894 and 1930, now available online) confirm that, as in Adam's plans, the entrance to Rose's rectory was on its north side, its rear facing the area now occupied by Church Avenue. The engraving and photographs in Bromley's archives of the ivy-clad south side therefore show that the house was built to an even plainer design than Adam's stripped-down final proposal. The grandly decorative Serlio-style windows which he planned for the rear facade were replaced by plain ones like those on the entrance side, and the central bay was reduced from full height to only the basement and ground floors. See fuller article Friends website

