

FRIENDS OF BECKENHAM PLACE PARK

September 2021 – NEWSLETTER No. 92



Hello everyone

We hope you have all had a good summer and enjoyed the Park. Any thoughts you might have for the park would be welcome.

As a group, the Friends are still exploring new ways to go forward to protect the natural beauty of the park and the wildlife it harbours, plus the enjoyment of the beautiful floral garden and also the community celebrations.

Events

Sunday 26 September. A History Walk led by Mal Mitchell.

Meet by the front steps of the Mansion at 2pm.

Please wear suitable footwear and well behaved dogs are welcome.

The Walk will be subject to COVID regulation in force at the time.

The Degeneration of the Ravensbourne

In 1894 HG Wells, a young writer of 28 years, wrote an article for the Pall Mall Gazette. Below is a summary:

“The river Ravensbourne was a holiday wonderland - river meadows with buttercups and birds-foot trefoil, red sorrel and dog daisies.” The rivers edge with a “tangle of sedge, sapphire, forget-me-nots, floating leaves with pink flowers, cress in the quieter places and waving green forests of waterweed”.

He caught 23 fish and a water beetle in one afternoon.

With the growth of Bromley the river began to shrink, with gravelly islands covered in dried green algae appearing. The fish had to crowd into the deeper parts and were more easily caught.

The next winter the meadows were not flooded and the next summer fish and tadpoles had disappeared with just a thin thread of water. 1

“I saw it from the train yesterday” he wrote, “the little trickle of water is still running and there are hats in it in all stages of decay, old boots, rusty relics of meat tins, kettles and broken pails”. He saw the houses around, with overflowing dustbins and all the detritus of human habitation.

“It was hard to believe ever a minnow lived in that desolation”.

Honey Bees

I live a ten minute walk and only two minutes beeline from the park. I always have bumble bees in my little garden but there have sadly been no honey bees for a few years.

Recently I am totally rejoicing as the nectar rich flowers are now brimming with very busy bees.

I am wondering if this is due to a hive introduced recently into the park? I believe it is well hidden for the protection of the bees and the public.

A Friend

(Kew Gardens have suggested that the number of hives is negatively affecting bumble bees. Obviously Insecticides harm all bees.).

A little bit of history

In 1871 the then tenant and occupier of Beckenham Place Park (see History timeline on the Friends website) was Sir John Kirkland Bart. J.P.

His son also lived in the Mansion with Sir John.

At the end of 1871 Sir John died and the entire contents of the estate (park) were put up for sale.

This is an extract from the Auctioneers particulars:

“Messrs Baxter Payne & Lepper will sell by Auction on the premises of Beckenham Place Park on Friday December 1st 1871 at 11a.m. the whole of the farming stock consisting of : (2)

6 fine short horn cows in calf and full profit, 5 three year old heifers, sow and 6 pigs and 2 sows in pig; a pair of well matched high stepping geldings, 6 years old, quiet in double and single harness and to ride and 2 useful carthorses; 6 ducks and 2 drakes, 15 fowls and 21 turkeys.

The usual farm implements, 2 stacks of meadow Hay, the produce of 85 acres, stack of wheat straw, clamp of Mangold about 16 tons, 2 tons of Regent potatoes etc. etc. “

Presumably his son (shown as living in the Mansion in the later census) only took over the tenancy of the Mansion - not the whole Estate.

(earlier leases only covered 1/3 of the park - a large part as Foxgrove farm. See our website for more details)

Friends Committee

Elaine Story has resigned from being Chair (pressure of work) and Carole Hope has resigned from the committee (she has other interests and will be moving away).

There is a real danger that without new committee members the Friends will wither away.

Please email bpp.friends@hotmail.co.uk if you are interested.

The Friends Aims and ambitions

The Friends of BPP should move into a new phase now that the park has changed following the Lottery Funding. Although the Friends pursued conservation of the golf course for several reasons, we have to acknowledge the landowner and manager (Lewisham Council) chose otherwise. That does not change our main aims of conservation of the natural and heritage features. Those aims have been supported in real terms through funding of the refurbishment of the ancient pond with dredging and decking area, the funding and maintenance of the sensory garden (in and since 2011), and our hitherto programme of walks and talks. Also, the Visitor Centre (3)

which ran for 25 years, and was run by volunteers, was the only educational resource in the park and although replaced to some extent by the educational suite in the stable block that has not been able to operate since the beginnings of Covid.

We acknowledge that even without the eviction from the mansion room then Covid would have required at least a temporary closure of the Visitor Centre.

The Friends have a website providing a wide range of information and we have a page on Facebook although that isn't used to full effect.

Over the years we have raised funds for various projects including the Ancient pond & the Sensory garden.

The Friends are still in a healthy financial position even though we have waived membership fees for 3 years. Some of our reserves are allocated to the pond and garden but a considerable sum as an unallocated reserve for whatever purpose the friends choose (so long as it is park related).

To 'run' the Friends we do require a few administrative positions to be maintained and these are not onerous requiring only the odd hour or two to perform. Most roles can be shared and currently we have to thank Elaine for being chair for recent years, Juliet for acquiring the funding for the pond, Glenys who has organized events and Roger who is managing the bookkeeping, email contacts and membership list and Mal who has organised & run the Sensory garden since its inception in 2011.

There is a long list of people who have contributed in the past and several who currently help with sensory garden work. (4)

BPP Parking charges

For anyone visiting the park it is worth noting the very expensive parking charges made by Lewisham.

£2.00 per hour or any part of an hour with no reduction for longer stays.

Ancient Pond

This picture was sent in by a park user and shows the pond covered in weed with added rubbish and a life-belt thrown in by thoughtless yobs.



(5)

Maintenance work is urgently needed to clear the weed and litter and to save the quite expensive life-raft.

Beating the Bounds

Beating the bounds was an ancient Anglo-Saxon custom which customarily took place on Rogation Sunday. It was used both to re-affirm boundaries (often between local boroughs) and to remember them in times before detailed maps existed.

They were especially important in marking out 'common' land which was essential for common villages to use to graze their livestock.

During the 16th and 17th centuries 'enclosures' took place where large landowners 'enclosed' or fenced off common land. This practice led to a great deal of rioting and protestation.

John Taylor wrote the following biting poem about how landowners enriched themselves, through enclosures, at the expense of their neighbours.

**“One man in garments he doth wear
A thousand akers on his back doth beare
Whose ancestours in former times did give
Meanes for a hundred people well to live
Now all is shrunke, (in this vaigneglorious age)
T’attire a coach, a footman, and a page. “**

There are still boundary posts in Beckenham Place Park which delineate the boundaries between the parishes of Beckenham (Bromley) and Lewisham.

The Friends used to have a yearly 'beating the bounds' walk organised and run by Nick.

We hope that he will re-instate the walk after Covid restrictions are lifted.

(6)

Friends of Beckenham Place Park Membership

Over the years many people have moved home or changed email addresses.

For those members who receive the newsletters by email link would you please email us if you no longer wish to be on our mailing list.

To keep the overall membership of the Friends free for as long as possible we are going to introduce a nominal charge for those members who receive the newsletters by post.

We think a charge of £3.00 per year should offset the costs of printing and postage to some degree. This fee will start in October this year.

For those members who only receive the newsletter by post could they please contact us by email or by post to confirm their address details including postcode and that they still wish to receive the newsletter by post and agree to paying the charge of £3.00 (Bank transfers would be preferable).

If we don't hear from you by October 10th 2021 we will assume that you no longer wish to be a member of the Friends.

Our email address is bpp.friends@hotmail.co.uk

Our address for correspondence, relating to newsletters, is :
Friends of BPP
10A Manor Road, Beckenham, Kent, BR3 5LE

Our Bank details are :

Bank Lloyds bank

Account name Friends of Beckenham Place Park

Sort code 30-84-51

Account number 41505260

Summary of Friends Accounts

Friends of BPP Accounts 2020/21 @ 31/03/2021

Income

Donations & bank interest	£16.23
Veolia Pond grant	<u>£1,710.00</u>
Total	£1,726.23

Expenses

Insurance, Web hosting, N/letters	£244.79
V.C. closure expenses	£110.00
Sensory Garden, & Ancient Pond exp.	<u>£573.12</u>
Total	£927.91

Income less expenses £798.32

<u>Total monies Bank & p/cash</u>	<u>£13,707.27</u>
Grant money Sensory Garden & Pond	£5,997.98
Total Net funds	<u>£7,709.29</u>

Small witticism from the Oldie.

Man went to the doctor's and said, 'I think I'm going deaf.'

And the doctor said, 'What are the symptoms?'

He said, 'That yellow family on television.'

Websites of Interest

<u>Friends of Beckenham Place Park</u>	www.beckenhamplacepark.org.uk
Lewisham Local History Society	www.lewishamhistory.org.uk
Bromley Local History	www.bblhs.org.uk
Ravensbourne Valley Preservation Soc.	www.rvpsbromley.org.uk
Deptford Creek	www.creeksidecentre.org.uk
Kent Archeology	www.kentarcheology.org.uk (8)

(7)

