



# Newsletter

Spring 2014



## From the Chair

As I write the sun is shining, but you may be reading this in snow, such is the nature of our weather. The parks have fared reasonably well through the adverse conditions with relatively few tree casualties but there is still a lot of standing water to negotiate. Visitors to

Birch Glade in the Woodland Gardens will be impressed by the mass of daffodils; this is the result of 5,000 bulbs that were planted in October by our volunteers.



Annie Murray

The AGM was an enjoyable evening and it was lovely to see so many Friends. We were honoured to have Mike Fitt speaking; his enthusiasm, knowledge and energy are truly inspiring. I announced the various ways in which we plan to spend our appeals monies; further planting in the Woodland Gardens, metal tree crates for Lime Avenue and eel passages in Home Park. There may well be other projects that can be considered through the year; all ideas welcomed.

Looking ahead we have a full programme over the next few months. A new event on our calendar is the Litter Pick organised in conjunction with the Royal Parks and Keep Britain Tidy. The contractors, in the main, do a good job but there are areas of the park that it is difficult for them to access. We hope to clear the park of detritus potentially dangerous to wildlife, before the young deer appear. The plans for the Summer Party on Sunday 20 July are well underway and we are delighted to have the Stockyard as our venue. This year's theme is "vintage"; so look out some appropriate attire!

Finally an appeal for help; we are looking for someone who might be able to assist us in creating our posters and publicity material. If there are any budding artists out there please do contact me.

**Annie Murray**

## Dates for your diary

**Saturday 12 April 2014 (note changed date)**

### HOME PARK

**Walk led by Paul Douglas**

Meet at 11.00 am just inside Lion Gate, Hampton Court

**Thursday 24 April 2014**

### RESTORING THE KING'S KITCHEN GARDEN

**Talk by Anthony Boulding**

St John Ambulance Hall, Park Road, Teddington, commencing at 8.00 pm  
Refreshments will be available from 7.15 pm

**Sunday 27 April 2014**

### LITTER PICK

Bushy Park 2.00 to 4.00 pm  
Contact Jane Cliff for details: 020 8287 4609  
[jane.cliff@fbhp.org.uk](mailto:jane.cliff@fbhp.org.uk)

**Thursday 8 May 2014 (note changed date)**

### JAM YESTERDAY, JAM TOMORROW

**Talk by Verusca Calabria**

St John Ambulance Hall, Park Road, Teddington, commencing at 8.00 pm  
Refreshments will be available from 7.15 pm

**Sunday 11 May 2014**

### CHESTNUT SUNDAY

Parade starts at 12.30 pm from Teddington Gate

**Saturday 17 May 2014**

### THE WOODLAND GARDENS

**Family walk led by Jane Cliff**

Meet at 10.00 am at the Pheasantry Welcome Centre

**Saturday 14 June 2014**

### STOCKYARD MEADOWS NATURE TRAIL

**Walk led by Pippa Hyde**

Meet at 11.00 am at The Stockyard, Hampton Court Road, TW12 2EJ

### Gillian Oosterhuis

It is with sadness that we report that Gillian gave up her fight against lung cancer and passed away peacefully at Princess Alice Hospice on 14 March. She was a valued member of the volunteer team and active supporter of the Friends. She will be missed.

## Water meadows restoration talk

Jason Dibney and Rebecca Law from Thames Landscape Strategy (TLS) explained how one particular project, to restore some water meadows in Home Park, fits into the overall plans to control the waters of the Thames in this area. TLS works in partnership with 14 organisations and 200 local interest groups to manage riverside projects between Weybridge and Kew.

Jason described how, in an attempt to adapt to climate change, the strategy is evolving from the historic approach of building higher walls to the current policy of making space for water. He emphasised the need for emergency and resilience planning, with the use of controlled inundation of water meadows to cope with the increased flow of the River Thames.

Much of Home Park falls within the land which is assessed as being likely to flood every 100 years. The welfare of the flora and fauna which inhabits these areas of flood plain needs to be taken into account.

Rebecca then spoke about the recent project to restore part of the drainage system in the paddocks area of Home Park. The land had been damaged by horses, culverts had been lost, old ditches were no longer connected to the river and the structures needed repair. Surveys of the animal and plant species were undertaken. Hydrology consultants recommended new controls and connections to give the ability to manage the flow of water into the Thames.

The structures were drained and animals moved before the walls were repaired using recycled stone from Hampton Court Palace. Coir rolls were used to host plants in the channel and logs with hessian lining were employed to maintain the reed beds. New fences were erected to allow the horses access to water in designated areas while protecting the remainder. New sluices were built to enable the flow of water to be controlled. Measures are being introduced to encourage particular wildlife and kingfishers are already established. Future plans include the installation of eel passes and fish nurseries.

Long term management has been included in the design of the project and will be carried out by Historic Royal Palaces staff, aided by volunteers.

## Hampton Court Gardens mistletoe walk

The rain held off just long enough for the annual mistletoe walk to take place in the gardens of Hampton Court on 15 February. Nicholas Garbutt, Tree & Wildlife Conservation Manager Historic Royal Palaces, and David Ivison, from the Friends, led the walk.

David, who has helped in the survey of mistletoe in the gardens for many years, took us through The Wilderness, along Lime Walk and ended at The Long Water. He explained the life cycle of this parasitic plant which seems to flourish in parts of our parks.

After a walk along the Thames towpath and past the flooded moat of the Palace, Nicholas took us into the Tiltyard. During the 20th century the six parts of this area were put to recreational uses such as tennis, bowls and putting, as well as for the tea room and the rose garden. One of the sections is now being turned back into a kitchen garden as it would have been in earlier times. The planting of fruit trees has already started and it is hoped to open this to the public in early summer.

## The Royal Parks - past, present and future talk

Preceding the AGM, Mike Fitt who was manager of Richmond and Bushy Parks from 1990 to 1997 before becoming Deputy Chief Executive of The Royal Parks until 2006, gave us a brief history of the parks from their time as woodland and meadows, through their enclosure for hunting up to their current use for leisure. Although some of the ground covered was familiar to Friends, Mike used many personal photographs and anecdotes to illustrate his fascinating talk.

One particularly interesting aspect was his identification of four "lost" royal parks. In the 19th century it was planned that Victoria Park in east London, and Battersea and Kennington Parks in south London would be royal parks, but their maintenance was handed over to local authorities after a few years. His final "lost" park was Phoenix Park in Dublin which it seems was a deer enclosure that was to be turned into a public park using Bushy Park as a model. It is now undergoing restoration by the government of Ireland.

Mike is now chairman of The Royal Parks Guild, amongst many other honorary posts; so he is still busy promoting partnerships and contributing to the well-being of the Parks.

## Photographic competition winner

Congratulations to Caroline Buckingham for winning our "close up" photographic competition. Her photograph called "Hunting" was taken on 30 September 2013 near Leg of Mutton Pond in Bushy Park.



This beautiful image will soon be added to our range of greetings cards available from the Pheasantry Information Point and at events.



## Dr John Cobb (1938 - 2013)



In 1989 John was among local residents who were outraged to learn of the plans of the Department of the Environment to fell and replant Chestnut Avenue in Bushy Park. He identified others who were equally furious. Objections to the Department were made forcefully by a protest group organised by the Teddington Society and subsequently, the DoE modified its plans. However, it was felt by the local community that Bushy, together with Home Park, should have watchful eyes kept on them in future and The Friends of Bushy and Home Parks was formed. John became its first Chairman, and the group was welcomed by those who valued the parks both locally and further afield.

John saw clearly that the new group would flourish most effectively if it focused on communication and constructive discussion. It was with great skill and application that John brought The Friends group from its beginning as a means of protest about possible depredations of the well-loved Chestnut Avenue to a group dedicated to the well-being of both Parks. His early initiatives included a mass planting of fritillaries in the Woodland Garden, followed by the creation of a butterfly garden. His ebullient and generous nature persuaded the management of the Parks to recognise this new group could be a positive force for the good of all who loved and worked in the Parks.

John later retired to Sussex where he continued his interest and affection for The Friends and all it has achieved. He is greatly missed.

**Kathy White**

## Oak processionary moth caterpillar spotters wanted - can you help?

In 2014 volunteers will join Royal Parks staff to search for caterpillar nests of the invasive foreign insect pest oak processionary moth. The caterpillars of the moth can be a major defoliator of oak trees and also carry toxic hairs that can be a serious threat to human and animal health.

Gillian Jonusas, a Royal Parks arboriculturist, is looking for new volunteers in 2014 to build up the team from 2013. If you can commit a regular amount of hours a week in June and July, are available for a day's training in May, are comfortable walking on sometimes rough terrain and are prepared to spend time in the sometimes neck-breaking task of looking up tall oak trees with binoculars, The Royal Parks would love to hear from you. For more information or to volunteer, please contact Gillian by 25 April on [gjonusas@royalparks.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:gjonusas@royalparks.gsi.gov.uk) or phone 0300 061 2201. Volunteers from 2013 who have already volunteered to help this year do not need to respond again.

## News from the parks

- We welcome back Ray Brodie who will be returning as manager of Bushy Park on 1 April. This means we will say farewell and thank you to Simon Richards who will continue to manage Richmond Park.
- In Duke's Head Passage the old hawthorn has been transformed by specialist hedge layers. This has opened up views and improved the habitat.



- There will be new fencing by Canon Gate and around to NPL Sports Club by Chestnut Avenue and also around Broom Clumps from the Pheasantry car park to the works yard.
- The refreshment kiosk near the Diana Fountain has been moved about 20 metres to an improved site. Seating and fencing are to follow.



- There have been some sightings of buzzards, including a honey buzzard, over the paddocks of Home Park this year.

## Advice from The Royal Parks

Stay at least 50 metres away from deer. It is also important not to feed deer as they can become accustomed to this and then think that food being given to ducks is also for them.

The skylark breeding season has started; so dog walkers are asked to keep their dogs on a short lead in the areas of grassland in the south east corner of Bushy Park where there are signs.

## Litter pick in Bushy Park on Sunday 27 April

This is going to be a very big, family event with lots of publicity and many local groups taking part. The object of the exercise is, not only to support the Keep Britain Tidy message, but to clean up the park which is becoming increasingly plagued by litter. It is an important message that the Friends want to get across to park users but we hope it will be fun too. For further details contact Jane Cliff on 020 8287 4609 [jane.cliff@fbhp.org.uk](mailto:jane.cliff@fbhp.org.uk).

## From the membership secretary

Thank you to those members who have already renewed for membership year 2014. It is not too late to renew; if you have not yet done so, please send your subscription to Membership Secretary, 55 Elmfield Avenue, Teddington TW11 8BX.

I'm sorry for any confusion that may have been caused when we provided a second renewal form with the Winter Newsletter. We are not able to target those members who haven't renewed individually, so we provided a second form for those members who prefer to wait until the beginning of the year to renew. We are very grateful to all of you who are able to provide a stamped addressed envelope with their renewal form; we are looking very hard at ways to reduce costs so as much income as possible can be used to support our aims and SAEs are a great help in this respect.

*Jean Smith*

## Bushy Park Information Point news

It is very pleasing to be able to report a near 50% increase in income from merchandise sales during 2013, in particular from the calendar and our Christmas cards, even though the Information Point was closed for 6 months from January to June last year. At our recent AGM, the Treasurer, John Elrick, personally thanked the volunteers for this achievement and I would like to echo this sentiment.

Particular credit must go to Jane Cliff who organises all the merchandise (in addition to putting together our Walks and Talks programme) and ensures that we have sufficient stock.

Improvements continue to be made to the Information Point to make it a more welcoming space for visitors and more user-friendly for the volunteers. A new wall heater has been fitted and we are looking forward to new planters being placed in the outside area. These will be planted out by Royal Parks in the first instance but the continuing maintenance will be down to us; so it will be over to the gardeners amongst us to take an interest and to keep them looking in good shape.

*Rosemary MacColl*

## New newsletter team



We have been members of the Friends for several years and, since retiring last summer, we felt able to take on the production and distribution of the newsletter. You may have seen us at the Pheasantry Information Point as well as many of the walks and talks. We hope to get to know more of you and look forward to receiving contributions to the newsletter.

*Claire and David Ivison*

## 2014 Committee

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### Electronic Newsletter

We would encourage as many Friends as possible to sign up to receive the quarterly newsletter electronically. Please email your request to [newsletter@fbhp.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@fbhp.org.uk)

If you have any comments about this newsletter or information you would like to share with us you can email [newsletter@fbhp.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@fbhp.org.uk)

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