



Newsletter

Spring 2020

From the Chair

By the time this newsletter arrives we may all be suffering the restrictions brought about by the coronavirus. We want to use the parks as a place to get away from such circumstances and enjoy fresh air, space and the joy of nature, especially as spring emerges. Unfortunately, we have been forced to close the Bushy Park Visitor Centre and to cancel our programme of walks and talks for the foreseeable future. We will try to keep visitors informed about what is happening in the parks through our website, Facebook page and on park notice boards. The circumstances provide the worst scenario to greet the arrival of our new park manager, Phil Edwards. He takes up the reins of Bushy Park on 14 April. His enthusiasm for the park was tremendous when he and I met in January and walked around it. I know members and visitors will be impressed as he makes his mark.

In between Ray Brodie's departure and Phil's arrival, Bill Swan, the acting manager, has been working hard and maintaining good relations with all park stakeholders. That is no mean feat. Bill has been managing things while faced with the most appalling weather. This has been rather difficult for everyone over the past few months. It is not often that all Royal Parks are closed due to weather conditions. Fortunately, both Bushy Park and Home Park did not suffer too much from the storms. Our thanks to Bill Swan, so aptly named, for paddling hard below the surface.

Two others to whom our thanks are recorded are Jane Cliff and John Elrick, two of our former trustees who stood down at the AGM. John had been our treasurer for some years and asked to be relieved from that role early in 2019, with Adrian Heywood taking over last summer. John has served the Friends diligently and well, and he steps down from trusteeship with our best wishes. Jane has been a trustee for over 10 years and for many years organised our walks and talks programme. Under Jane's guidance this programme has gone from strength to strength with numbers who attend regularly reaching over 100 for the talks and around 40 to 50 for the walks. She arranged our successful move to the Normansfield Theatre as the venue for our talks. She has been an active and leading member of the volunteer team for many years. Jane retires from trusteeship with a substantial legacy of achievement for the Friends.

I must end this piece on an upbeat note despite the pandemic circumstances. At the AGM our keynote speaker, Nicola Andrews, spoke of the need for Historic Royal Palaces to ensure the estate is conserved with a view to the next 500 years. That is what the Friends also want to ensure for Bushy and Home Parks. Whatever is thrown at us all in the coming months, let us keep our eyes on a more uplifting horizon, so that future generations will appreciate that we did.

Colin Muid

Dates for your diary

Due to the outbreak of coronavirus all walks, talks and our summer evening at the Pheasantry, have been cancelled until further notice. Please keep an eye on our website for further information.



David Bellamy at Hindhead

The death of our patron David Bellamy in mid-December, coinciding with widespread bushfires in Australia, took my mind back three score years. During a dry summer, a heath fire came up the Devil's Punchbowl. We seized besoms with which to beat it out: appropriately as the youth hostel had formerly been the cottages of the 'broom squires' who (among other skills) made besoms. Unfortunately, we only had a couple of brooms. However, with a number of youth hostellers around, we were not short of firefighters. Folded blankets from the hostel proved effective, and the advancing fire was halted – although the blankets were ruined. Most people, looking at the charred landscape of Highcombe Bottom, would have been dismayed. Not so David Bellamy who, upbeat as usual, accurately predicted the order in which plant species would re-establish themselves.

Iain Innes Burgess

Newsletter

For the past six years we have organised all aspects of the production and distribution of the newsletter. We have decided to step down next year. The various elements of the task could be divided between a larger team of people. We have already had an offer to manage the distribution, and now seek volunteers to take on the editorial and compilation aspects. If you are interested please contact us at newsletter@fbhp.org.uk

David and Claire Ivison

Space sapling

It was a cold and damp Monday morning on 13 January 2020 when a small party from Bushy Park and the National Physical Laboratory (NPL) arrived at Woolsthorpe Manor, a few miles from Grantham in Lincolnshire. Why had we travelled to this remote National Trust property which is the birthplace and former home of Sir Isaac Newton? We were to be announced as one of the winners of a competition, organised in late 2018 by the National Trust, the UK Space Agency and the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. We had competed, alongside some 50 other bids, for a space sapling and we were one of the seven winners. What had we won? A space sapling. When Major Tim Peake had gone into space at the International Space Station he had conducted a number of scientific experiments. One experiment was to take pips from the 400 year old apple tree at Woolsthorpe under which Isaac Newton supposedly had sat and discovered gravity. The pips would experience zero gravity, and when brought back and grown they would be examined to see if it made any difference.



The competition was to identify seven locations around the country where each sapling could grow and would be used to inspire future scientists, engineers and horticulturalists. The joint bid submitted by Bushy Park, NPL and the Friends of Bushy and Home Parks succeeded alongside prestigious others, including the Eden Project, Jodrell Bank Discovery Centre, the Brogdale National Fruit Collection, and the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (who knew there was such an outfit?). So there we were, Bill Swan, Bushy Park acting manager, Sarah Dalmedo from NPL and me, the team who put together the bid, accompanied by Sharon Donovan, The Royal Parks media relations officer, all brushed up to receive a sapling presented by Tim Peake. Bill made a short acceptance speech, as did the other winners' representatives, and then everyone wanted to have their photo taken with Major Tim. We returned home, delighted and spaced out.

The young tree is currently being nurtured at the Hyde Park super nursery. The plan is to plant the sapling in the Woodland Gardens and surround it with a secure and sculptural fruit cage. The cage is expected to be in the form of a daytime planetarium, decorated to depict Newton's discoveries, the universe, and engineering and horticultural inspirations. Children and students will be able to visit it as part of the NPL outreach programme where they will hear from scientists and engineers who are at the cutting edge of research. Park visitors will be given information about the tree and its background by Friends' volunteers and Rangers. It is hoped it will become another part of the fascinating heritage of Bushy Park.

Colin Muid

Will it still be here in 500 years' time? - talk



When Nicola Andrews was at school in Dorset, she enjoyed visiting Kingston Lacy a nearby country house and estate under the care of the National Trust. This inspired her to want to work for the conservation charity, which she subsequently did for more than 20 years. In 2018 she moved to Historic Royal Palaces (HRP) as Palaces Group Director. Prior to our Annual General Meeting, held in the Garden Room at Hampton Court, Nicola explained her motivation for taking on the challenges of conserving the buildings and inspiring people to visit the estates under her management while keeping within a tight budget.

There are many difficulties in looking after such old and complex buildings, as are currently being encountered during a major rewiring project at Hampton Court Palace. HRP aim to retain the traditional use of the palace, including the chapel and the real tennis court. There are plans to open more rooms to public viewing, but this often involves costly work. Families and school groups are encouraged to visit to inspire children's interest in history and horticulture. Money is raised in a variety of ways to cover the costs of running the palaces and their grounds. Revenue is gained from entrance fees, cafés, shops, cottage lets, filming charges, various festivals and private hire events.

This year a series of special events has been planned at Hampton Court to mark the 500th anniversary of the Field of Cloth of Gold meeting between Henry VIII and Francois I of France. Nicola described how HRP are always looking for innovative ways to engage with children and to encourage adults to visit in less busy times of the year. She concluded by wondering 'Have we stirred enough spirits?' Nicola was thanked for delivering an inspiring talk in a beautiful venue.

Battlefields to Butterflies - talk



Richard Flenley worked in landscape practice for 40 years dealing with a wide range of projects, including the Water Gardens in Bushy Park. Since retiring in 2011 he has contributed his expertise to several organisations, one of these being the Royal Parks Guild. At the January talk Richard described his part in the evolution of the Battlefields to Butterflies scheme and its close links with the Lottery-funded 'The Royal Parks in World War I' project jointly run by the guild with The Royal Parks.

There are many memorials in the Royal Parks but there was nothing to the 24 Royal Parks staff who died in World War I. The aim of Battlefields to Butterflies was to help create a permanent legacy to them while including elements of horticulture. Richard showed rough sketches of designs and images of inspirations, including the paintings and words of war artist William Orpen (1878-1931). Another key purpose of the project was the involvement of volunteers and horticultural apprentices. Partnerships with Historic Royal Palaces and the Royal Hospital Chelsea (RHC) led to the creation of a replica trench landscape, visited by an estimated 25,000 people, at the 2018 Hampton Court Palace Flower Show and an exhibition at RHC in March 2019. Information boards from this exhibition were on display before and after the talk. In armistice week in 2018 a wildflower meadow was planted, and a stone plaque commemorating the men of the Royal Parks who died in the Great War was unveiled, in Brompton Cemetery which fittingly is managed by The Royal Parks.

Riverside Richmond to Twickenham - walk

Thirteen suitably-clad Friends and one dog met at Richmond station on 15 February to defy storm Dennis by joining the walk beside the river to Twickenham. Our knowledgeable guide was Paul Jackson who explained many royal and celebrity connections along the way. Monarchs from Henry I in the 12th century to Charles II in the 17th lived in Richmond, and the former homes of Elihu Yale, Virginia Woolf and Harold Wilson were pointed out. Paul described the influence of the Thames and the people who lived and worked by the river, followed by the changes brought by the building of bridges and the arrival of railways. We felt the power of the river as we were taken across (for the fee of £1) on Hammerton's ferry from Ham House to Marble Hill House. Our walk continued, with regular stops to hear interesting information, through the gardens of York House and ended overlooking Eel Pie Island.



Bushy Park volunteer litter picking scheme



Bushy Park is a most beautiful and precious landscape, and extra special as home to its ancient herds of red and fallow deer. It is so important for all who use the park to care for and protect it, and, in so doing, look after not only the beautiful and often rare flora, but also protect the wildlife from harm. As a volunteer litter picker in Bushy Park, I am dismayed and puzzled as to why some visitors to the park - who clearly go to the park because they love it - so thoughtlessly drop their litter and feel it is all right to do so. All litter should be securely placed in the litter bins around the park or taken home for disposal.

Litter collection is one of the biggest drains on the park's funds. The volunteer litter picking scheme - which started just over a year ago - is, therefore, an excellent initiative. It is a very enjoyable and flexible volunteer role. Once provided with the necessary kit, you can litter pick any area of the park you wish, on any day you wish, however often you wish, on long or short walks. A monthly report to the Chair of the Friends of Bushy and Home Parks, mainly outlining the dates of walks, the routes taken, number of rubbish bags collected, items collected, and any general comments, helps identify any specific problems or problem areas.

On my route from Church Grove Gate along by the perimeter wall and path to Teddington Gate and on to the Pheasantry Café, I have found the main regular rubbish to be tissues, sweet and food wrappings, glass and plastic bottles, plastic shards of all shapes and sizes, bottle tops, and dog litter bags. There are also dropped items such as hats, gloves, single shoes and bootees, scarves, dummies, hair slides, disintegrating tennis balls (a very dangerous choking hazard) and quite a few pieces of male underwear. If you love Bushy Park and want to feel you are helping to look after the park, its beautiful landscape and its precious wildlife, then consider picking up litter on your next visit.

Sue Hart

From the Membership Secretary

Welcome to all our new members who have joined us this year and welcome back to all existing members who have renewed their membership for 2020. Your interest and support in promoting the care and enjoyment of our parks is very much appreciated. A large proportion of our members have already renewed their membership for 2020. Those who have not yet renewed will find a reminder letter enclosed with this edition of their newsletter, together with a renewal form. Subscriptions were due on 3 January; so if you have not yet renewed, we hope you will take this opportunity to continue your membership by completing the form and returning it to me, either with your subscription, or indication that you have authorised your bank to pay by standing order by using the lower half of the form. Our subscription rates remain very low; so it is a significant help in reducing our costs if you can also enclose a stamped addressed envelope for your membership card.

Those who, for whatever reason, do not renew their subscription, will shortly be removed from our membership list and so this will be their last newsletter. We thank them for all their support in the past.

Pat Dickinson

Call for 2021 calendar photographs

I am coordinating the Friends calendar for 2021, taking over from Rosemary MacColl, who has done a wonderful job producing the calendars for several years. Thank you to all who donated photos for this year's calendar which proved very popular and sold out completely. We now invite you all to submit photos showing views, fauna and flora across the seasons in both Bushy and Home Parks for our 2021 calendar. All profits from the calendar go towards supporting projects in the parks.

Please submit your photos to fbhpdigitalphotolibrary@yahoo.com in the following format: JPG; landscape orientation; send as an attachment, rather than in the body of an email; if you have more than one image which is similar, please add a number; maximum number of photos per photographer is six; please rename your photo with your surname, title (optional), month, the park where the photo was taken and the approximate location, or you can put the photo information in the text of the email if this is easier, eg Smith2, February, Bushy Park, Woodland Gardens or Jones, June, Home Park, Kestrel near the Long Water. The deadline for entry is **31 May 2020**. Any photos submitted after this date will be put forward for the 2022 calendar. Photos selected will be credited on the calendar with the photographer's name.

Thinking ahead, we are considering having a theme for the 2022 calendar which you might like to bear in mind when you are out and about taking photos. The theme would be photos of the parks that are amusing or make you smile. Thanks in advance and we look forward to seeing your photos.

Sue Robertson

Walks and talks organiser wanted

We are seeking a member to organise our programme of walks and talks. Jane Cliff has done this for a number of years and is happy to continue helping with this year's events. She has also started planning for 2021. Please contact Jane (details in the adjacent column) if you are interested in this position.

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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

If you have any comments about this newsletter or information you would like to share with us you can email newsletter@fbhp.org.uk

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