

NEWSLETTER 77

October 1st - December 31st 2015



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

Sunday 18th October **Photography Walk**

Meet at the Mansion 2.00pm. Recently a local professional photographer had an impressive photo shoot in the mansion and kindly agreed to do a walk for us. He will also be able to help with taking photos inside using the mansion.

Saturday 24th October **Bird Migration Walk.**

Meet 9.00am at the mansion. Eyes to the skies for birds on the move and a look around the park for birds resting on route to sunnier climes. Binoculars would be useful, we do have some to lend out.

Thursday 10th December **Mince Pie Walk**

Meet on mansion steps 1.00pm. Just a short walk around the park in the festive season with a mince pie and a soft drink to keep the cold at bay.

CONSERVATION & SENSORY GARDEN WORKDAYS

Saturday Oct 10th, Nov 14th and 12th Dec. (About 2 hour sessions)

Meet at the Mansion 10.am. Probably Sensory Garden work will be less and the December, January and possibly February days will be work around the park. Tools and instruction provided.

About The Friends Events. All our events are free, but any donations to funds are much appreciated. 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 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.

THE FRIENDS OF BECKENHAM PLACE PARK, THE SECRETARY,
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Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) Bid and Environment Agency Flood Control Scheme (EA) Progress Reports **Lottery Bid for Park**

Land Use Consultants are still working on the stage 2 plans and several park users have noticed various surveys being carried out toward the plans. We have discussed a future 'interpretation strategy' which seems positive from the educational point of view. The negative aspects in our view are still the Council's intention to close the golf course, the unclear consultation process and a lack of information coming from the council or consultants about detailed plans. At a working party meeting on 1st October we were informed that consultations would begin this month and in November and carry on until next May with opportunities for amendments in line with public opinion. We are attempting to organise a public meeting or open day when plans would be available in late January to February. Discussions are taking place regarding this.

Environment Agency Flood Scheme

The latest information we have, obtained by one of our members, is that the scheme has passed a business case stage and has been referred to a national review group. A response is not expected before December. We will attempt to keep you informed of further progress. We were informed at the working party that if the flood scheme did not go ahead than some part of the HLF funds would be used to improve the eastern part of the park.

We are still disappointed by the Council's stonewalling of the golf course issue, vagueness regarding costs and some anxiety that park maintenance costs after HLF changes will be higher than the current.

Work on a bid for the mansion is foreseen as starting next August after a final bid for the park goes into the HLF

Friend's Survey—form enclosed.

We are carrying out a simple survey of park users and a form is enclosed with posted newsletters. The form is also on our website and available at the visitor centre.

We would appreciate any help from volunteers in conducting the survey in and around the park, if you can spare a bit of time. Please return completed form to the address on the bottom of the front page or drop it into the Visitor Centre or send it via email. Any problems or volunteering to help contact Glenys on 020 8650 0617

National Parks Forum and Lewisham Parks Forum (LPF)

Various concerns keep appearing about the future of public parks. There is a need for more active volunteers to make pro-park groups more effective. Some council's are looking to volunteers to contribute toward park upkeep, Crystal Palace is being transferred to a Trust, but will still be under some threat I assume because of the sport centre's unsure future. Other council's are trying to sell off bits of parks or sports field.

More information available on www.loveparks.org

A Sponsored Walk in September

On Saturday September 5th there was a sponsored walk to raise awareness of depression and suicide. There were bright pink posters around the park 'Do it for Danielle'. The details were not fixed before the last newsletter so it could not be advertised by the Friends. The lady that organised it, had not done anything like this before, but made a really good job of it, with a very high turn out. She is hopeful of making it a regular event which we will happily promote in the future.

Oak Processionary Moth. One tree was discovered to have this moth, whose caterpillars can cause skin and breathing irritation. It has been treated. You may see marks on trees, dots of white, yellow or pink. These have been used when trees were surveyed for the moth or caterpillar. Occurrences of this pest can be reported to the Forestry Commission or DEFRA or the local council tree officer. Apart from the irritant to humans, severe infections of the tree can cause its death if all the leaves are stripped by the caterpillars.

Recent Events Report

Sunday 19th July **Around the Park**

As we overlooked the annual Beating the Bounds event back in May, we had a boundary walk around the park and a small group enjoyed venturing into the nooks and crannies around the edge of the park.

Sunday 16th August **Litter Pick**

Not a very exciting way to spend a Sunday morning, but very worthwhile nonetheless. Concentrating on Stumpshill Wood, an area along side of Beckenham Hill Road, the six of us amassed many black sacks of goodies for the refuse collectors. Didn't find a bicycle to recycle this time (found a fox skull though), but it was a good clear up in view of the excellent Peters hours having been cut to two days a week.

Sunday 13th September **Know your Park Walk**

This walk started from the Old Bromley Road Car park, but that didn't help increase the number of participants, only two people took up our offer 'to know your park'. It was, I am told, a good walk enjoyed by the three walkers as they visited diverse areas, some were new to at least one of the party, which made it all worthwhile!

Sensory Garden.

The garden continues to be a success with park users, when doing our workdays we get regular praise from visitors. The regular team of volunteers work well together and there is a friendly atmosphere, so if anyone is interested in participating you can be sure of a warm welcome. It is important that we follow at least a vague plan of action, but everyone has their particular strength. Some raise plants from seed, some enjoy planting, others are tenacious weed removers or path maintainers, but at busy times everyone just gets stuck in.

It is sometimes disappointing when plants get stolen or damaged but the upside of appreciation from most overcomes any negatives. The friends have replaced two planks on the picnic table after someone decided to have a fire directly on the table. There have been 'goodies' from the plants, grapes sweet enough to eat, several courgettes and tomatoes, besides snipping bits of herbs to use in cooking.

Mansion Building Date and other evidence.

Further to some work being done regarding future interpretation of the park's heritage, we renewed some of our research into the Cator's and their contacts. The emergence of more documents on the internet has aided us in that we discovered a book called Hortus Collinsonianus which is a catalogue of the plants grown by the botanist and merchant Peter Collinson who was John Cator's father-in-law. The catalogue in original handwritten form passed through the hands of John Cator and thence to John Barwell Cator. It was discovered in his possession by Aylmer Bourke Lambert, who advised Sir E. H. Smith, the founder of the Linnaean Society, and eventually it passed into the hands of Lewis Dillwyn who had the catalogue printed. Though not published as a book the document seems to have resided in the Linnaean Society and the Bodleian Library.

Why so interesting..... Well, we have always been unsure of the building date of the mansion and the arrival of John Cator in the park. The catalogue has anecdotes from Peter Collinson and the most poignant being *“Sept 17 1762 went for the first time to visit my son-in-law John Cater (sic) who married my daughter at his new built house, now finished, at Stump's Hill half way on the South side of the road between Southend and Beckenham in Kent, began in the Spring of 1760 on a pretty wooded estate which he had then purchased.”*

We attempt to update our history on our website and are finding that information can vary on several references to the park and the Cators. Pat Manning who has written extensively on the Cators is presenting articles to local history societies including this and other information. We have also found a record of John Cator negotiating a loan to

the then Prince of Wales, future George IV, for £10,000 but the deal wasn't finalized, 'Prinny' being heavily in debt at the time. Search online for Cator Prince of Wales and its in the history of the life and reign of William the fourth.

We also found a record that John Cator's purchase of lands from Lord Bolingbroke weren't free of problems, court cases in King's Bench and Chancery addressed matters relating to the sale. Another online search for Cator v. Earl of Pembroke or Cator Bolingbroke will find it. It seems Bolingbroke sold lands to Cator which already had some income from them contracted to a Mrs Hare, which Cator unknowingly, then became responsible for. John Cator got sued by Mrs Hare for the income, then Cator sued Bolingbroke/Earl of Pembroke for recompense. There are records in many places including Kent records at Maidstone, Bromley Library archive, etc. etc. We would be pleased to hear about anyone's discoveries on the subject. Just this week we had an enquiry from Australia about the time the Mansion was leased to Craven College from someone descended from the college's owners.

POW feedback or news

The News Shopper recently carried two articles regarding the Prisoner of War camp on Crab Hill in Beckenham Place Park. The camp known as Summerhouse revealed its former presence in the dry summer weather by parch marks in the grassland. The paper got several responses from readers. Maybe some recollections got a bit mixed as this was not the only camp in the area. One was also in Worsley Bridge Road, for German Navy POW's we believe, and other camps at Chislehurst etc held German POW's. We have been told the 'Summerhouse' Camp as it was called, held Italian POW's but some say both nationalities were held there. That seems unlikely as the enmity between Italians and Germans near the end of the war would have caused disharmony to say the least, with German troops occupying Italy.

BIRD FOOD

In this season of the year most birds have an abundance of food, both in our parks and gardens, and in the countryside. By selective planting many different birds can be attracted into your garden. They will be seeking seeds, fruit and insects. Tits, finches and other seed eating birds will enjoy plants such as sunflowers, teasel, Michaelmas daisies, antirrhinums and forget-me-nots to name a few. These will produce lots of seeds, large and small, and will be more help to the birds if not cut down until later in the year. Weed seeds such as thistles and knapweeds in a wild area will also be snapped up along with the insects that live on them.

Berries provide a rich food source, cotoneaster, holly, barberry, rowan, elder and hawthorn are good for the locals as well as migrant birds. Blackbirds, thrushes and starlings will need them to get through the winter. Winter visitors, such as redwings, fieldfares and if it's really cold, waxwings, will tuck into the plump berries of all these plants.

The larger trees have a feast on offer too, acorns are not only dined on by squirrels and jays, recently ten wood pigeons were spotted gorging the acorns on a large oak near our house. Apples (it seems to be a bumper year), crab apples and pears are favoured by many birds even the fallen, decaying ones will be eaten.

A bird table is an interesting addition to a garden, but once winter feeding is started it needs to be regular as with little food available in the depths of winter the birds will come to rely on it. Most kitchen scraps are suitable, cooked rice, biscuits, cooked potatoes, fat and dried fruit (only as an expensive treat). Try to gauge how much the birds can eat in a day and put the food out early to stop encouraging rats and mice with a pile of leftovers.

It will help the birds greatly if when you are doing the autumn tidy up to try and leave some dense bushes and trees for shelter and roosting. After all you might be in your garden a few hours a week, but many creatures live their whole lives there.

If you don't have a garden, our park has many areas that sustain the birds. Along side Crab Hill there are blackthorns with sloes and the many oaks have good supplies of acorns most years. The dead trees, both standing and fallen, provide many grubs and insects for those with the right beaks to dig them out, such as the woodpeckers.

Lewisham Local History Society.

Programme of talks for this quarter. Most meetings are held on **Fridays** at Methodist Church Hall, Albion Way, SE13. Starting at **7.45pm.** Visitors welcome. Full access for people with disabilities.

30th October **Show and Tell Evening**

27th November **Dr WG Grace, the great cricketer**
Ian Bevan

11th December **An Edwardian Magic Lantern Show**
(small display of some of the toys included) **Frank Paine**

More information: www.lewishamhistory.org.uk

Bromley Borough Local History Society.

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

6th October **Windmills of NW Kent and Kentish London**
Rob Cuming

3rd November **Along the River Cray**
Katherine Gray & Denise Baldwin

1st December **The History of the Christmas Card**
Emma Harper from British Postal Museum

More information: www.blhs.org.uk

Programme Co-ordinator Mike Marriott 07917 101 520