

# NEWSLETTER 79

April 1st - June 30th 2016



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

**Sunday April 24th Bluebell Walk**

**Meet 2.00pm at the Mansion.** Nick Bertram (Creekside Education Trust) will lead. If no bluebells, knowledgeable Nick will keep your attention with all manner of information. This walk is dedicated to Roy Ramsey who died 20 years ago and fought diligently to protect this park.

**Thursday May 5th Bat Walk**

**Meet Crab Hill entrance near Ravensbourne rail station at 8.15pm**

The weather is always a factor in the bat sightings, but by May it will hopefully be warm and dry.

**Sunday May 15<sup>th</sup> Beating the Bounds**

**Meet at the Mansion 1.30pm.** Walk around the perimeter of the park as part of this ancient tradition.

**Sunday June 12th AGM**

**In the mansion 2.00pm.** There is a need to elect a new Chairperson as the present Chairman needs to retire after decades of working for the Friends. A new newsletter editor would be good too!

**SENSORY GARDEN WORKDAYS**

**Saturdays 9th April, 14th May, 11th June** (About 2 hour sessions)

**Meet at the Mansion 10.am or in the garden.** Routine garden work, something for everyone. 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,  
18 GREYCOT ROAD, BECKENHAM, KENT BR3 1TA. TEL: 020 8325 8781

E-MAIL: [bpp.friends@ntlworld.com](mailto:bpp.friends@ntlworld.com)

Website: [www.beckenhamplaceparkfriends.org.uk](http://www.beckenhamplaceparkfriends.org.uk)

**Friends Membership renewal**

Many thanks to everyone for paying membership for 2016. It has been a great help sending the newsletter by email but if you also want a paper copy they can be picked up in the Visitor Centre and some are put in the cafe each week. Bank transfer details are on the membership form. Reminder enclosed if we don't have a record of your renewal.

**Lottery bid and Flood Scheme**

First of all, the Flood Scheme has been give initial approval at the Environment Agency. There is a tendering process for the next stage of the work and landscape design firms will tender for the work. A public consultation on this project will not take place before the latter part of this year. Lets guess at November and see if we are right. One concern is that this project is out of step with the Lottery bid work. In February the Mayor of Lewisham decided to close the golf course at the end of this year. On present information this will leave the park without any significant income stream and no evidence has been put forward to show that the park will be financially sustainable under the Lottery bid proposals.

I hope many of you were able to get to the various 'consultation' events. We are critical of the overall process as the initial consultation on which the golf course decision is based was seriously flawed. We are yet to find out how the data feedback from the consultations will be analysed. The project managers for the scheme have been attending various meetings of ward assemblies etc to promote the scheme. It also seems that elements in the initial bid have been amended or dropped from the plans i.e. tennis courts were to have been moved but now have been totally removed from the plan. The initial proposal to restore the lake has been modified to restore about half of the original lake. The main elements of the scheme now seem to be rebuilding of the stable block and the addition of paths for access to various areas. The most frequent comment heard at the visitor centre is 'why do they want to change anything?'

**Downham Events - Downham at 90 - St John the Baptist Church, 353 Bromley Road, London SE6 2RP**

**Monday to Saturday\* 14th - 28th May 2016 10am to 4pm**

A photographic exhibition to celebrate 90 years of Downham and St Johns Church  
An exhibition of written materials, photos, maps and memories.FREE to attend!!

**Saturday 21 May 7pm 1920s Cabaret evening**

A musical evening featuring local choirs and singers to celebrate 90 years of Downham and St Johns

**Sunday 22 May 4pm Reminiscence afternoon tea**

Share your memories and recollections of Downham, St Johns and the local area and hear from a local historian at our special afternoon tea.

Suggested donation £5

For further information please contact Fr Martin Thomas on 07460 257 103 or email [fathermartinthomas@gmail.com](mailto:fathermartinthomas@gmail.com) [www.stjohncatford.org.uk](http://www.stjohncatford.org.uk)

## **National Parks Forum and Lewisham Parks Forum (LPF)**

### **LPF meeting March 4th 2016**

The meeting was attended by various Friends groups representatives from across Lewisham and members of Greenscene (Lewisham's Park management department) as well as Cllr. Rachel Onikosi the Lewisham Council Cabinet Member who has responsibility for parks as well as other aspects of the Council's activities.

The first subject addressed was the budget for parks and it was stated that no cuts are being considered beyond those already agreed for the year 2016/17. The contract with Glendale includes a 3 percent reduction year on year but also an increase related to inflation so a net cut in the cost of about 1 percent is envisaged. However Beckenham Place Park remains mostly outside of the Glendale contract having 6 on site council employed ground staff. We remain concerned as to how the Heritage Lottery Fund bid will affect future park maintenance costs. When asked if BPP would be realigned with the management approach to the rest of Lewisham's parks Greenscene managers said the HLF process determines that BPP will remain in house with the Council. To my mind this implies that the staff costs will remain the same but future income is unidentified.

The meeting was asked by Greenscene and Cllr Onikosi where a 'bottom line' in park management was foreseen and most people thought that we were at the rock bottom of necessary park management (probably gone beyond it as most parks are unattended by staff for most of the time).

A discussion about events in parks to raise revenue included the council's policy of applying a £3 per head fee from event organisers. As well as assessment of any impact and associated costs on the venue. Also included in the discussion was the possibility of future cuts in expenditure and the possibility of closing some parks. I stated that it was better to leave an open space unmanaged rather than close it, which would these days result in the space being built on. I believe there was support for this should it prove necessary at some point in time. Greenscene when asked whether any local authorities were making significant income from events, one response was that one borough had abandoned events, cutting its event management staff as it was a net cost area of activity. As Lewisham allow Glendale to manage events in its parks then Lewisham expect to make net gains from events, However I guess that currently and in future that if this was part of a contract then the management cost would be assessed by the tendering company. (no gain without some pain).

The future remains uncertain as it is foreseen that the Mayor of Lewisham will stand down at the next election (2019?), the contract with Glendale expires in 2020 and will have to be retendered in about 2019.

These reasons support our need for new blood in The Friends groups to represent, monitor and hopefully influence the future of BPP and all parks.

## **Recent Events Report**

**Winter Walk Wednesday 27th January.** It was a very windy day and as there was only three of us we decided not to walk.!

**History Walk Sunday 28th February.** There was a very big group of people for this walk and judging by the comments it was enjoyed by everyone that came along. It is always nice to hear people say they have learnt something new about the park and its history after a walk. Many thanks to Mal for coping with such a big group.

**Three Parks Walk Saturday 19th March.** This is always a good walk and about fourteen of us started at the mansion steps. By the time we reached South Norwood Country Park some people had left as they had walked as far as they wanted to. We added in Crease Park, a small sloping, pleasant open space between Kelsey Park and Elmers End roundabout. By the time we reached the Mound in South Norwood Country Park, (to see the remarkable 360 degree view from not a very high piece of ground), numbers were getting more depleted. After leaving S Norwood Country Park, with just four of us left we decided to walk back by a different route which encompassed Maberley Gardens, Churchfields Recreation Ground and Cator Park. It was a great day and every one did as much of the walk as they wanted to. Many thanks to everyone that came along, I sure we all slept soundly after such a long trek.

## **Conservation and Sensory Garden Workdays.**

**January** we worked on the one patch of gorse near the woodland, an annual task to try and keep the nettles from taking over.

**February** was spent removing the redundant and unsightly fencing along the path from the 'Braeside' entrance, top of Beckenham Hill road, and continuing along the path in Stumpshill Wood. The amount of work done was incredible, everyone worked so hard.

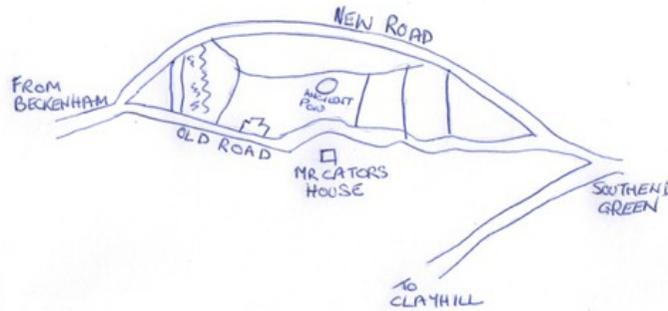
**March** was a start on the Sensory Garden with tidying, cutting back, sweeping the paths, making plans for the coming year and probably forgetting to do some things that should be done. Everyone enjoys the Sensory Garden work as it is not like work in your own garden

There has been an excellent number of volunteers turning out for these days, but if you fancy joining us do get in touch or turn up on the day. All are welcome, but young children do need to attend with a suitable adult.

### Past Park Plans by the Cators

John Cator had Beckenham Place built in 1760-62, the dates being established by letters written by his father in law, Peter Collinson and despite not acquiring the Lordship of the Manor of Foxgrove until 1792, he was able to alter many aspects of his estate. The several alterations he carried out would have had effects on people locally and in February 1785 he was granted the necessary permissions to alter two roads bisecting his Beckenham estate.

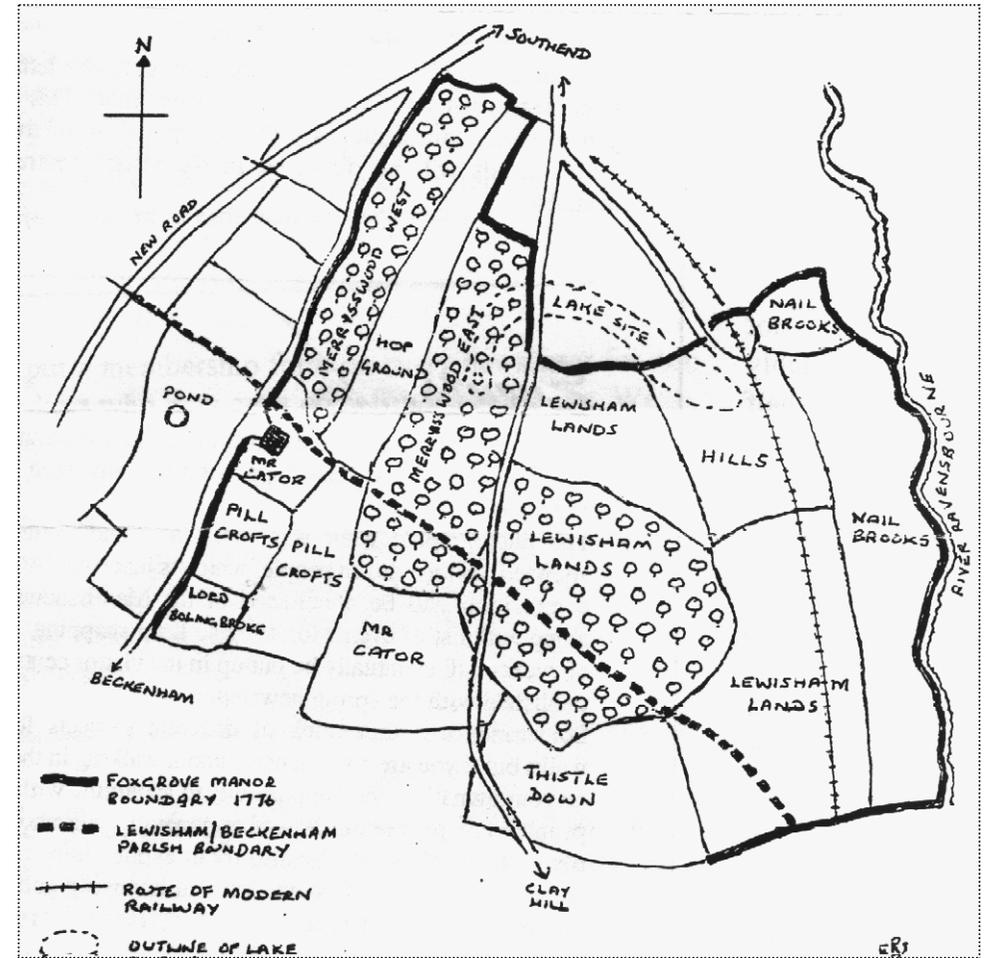
To put in his large ornamental lake he closed a road running from Southend Green to Clay Hill 2,250yards long. The road from Clayhill by Beckenham Church to be used in its place. On Rocques map of 1746 this is referred to as Langstead Lane as it ran through woodland called Langstead Wood, a long detour for road users, despite Cator describing it as 'long disused', He added that it would save the parishes of Lewisham and Beckenham charges for its repair, a great incentive no doubt!



At the same time Cator put in a request to remove the public road, which ran past his house, further away. He applied to the New Cross Turnpike Trust, of which both he and his younger brother Joseph were trustees, who approved his requests. The new road would eventually become the stretch of Southend Road and Beckenham Hill Road along the park boundary, a stretch 1,518 yards long. When it was surveyed by the Trusts surveyors they approved the alteration as it would be an advantage to the public, regardless of the fact that it is much steeper, not so good for the only modes of transport at that time being horse drawn or on foot. Cator paid for the new road which was to be thirty feet wide including a four foot footpath. The upkeep of the road, path and the fencing was to be paid for by the Cators for a term of four years after which it should be handed on (presumably to the parishes) in good condition.

The two maps are based on sketches by the late Eric Inman.

The two maps are based on sketches by the late Eric Inman.



It wasn't just in the eighteenth century that the Cators altered the park. By 1849, possibly even earlier, the Beckenham estate was purely a commercial enterprise, as the family were based in Norfolk at Woodbastwick. The estate map of 1864 shows an intention to build a road through Summerhouse Hill Wood to facilitate more house building. This fortuitously didn't happen, if it had the whole park would be housing by now. In 1892 they were active in granting yet more land to facilitate the building of the Shortlands Nunhead railway in an effort to encourage building development in the park and surrounding area.

Although there has been house building nibbling around the edges of the park a good sized area has remained open for informal recreation.....so far.

## The Chequers, a pub sign with several roots or routes in history.

When the Chequers was used as an inn sign, the origins are numerous and not entirely clear, many pubs so named do tend to have their signs based on heraldry or chess boards. Further back in time the Romans are said to have brought the name and the chequered sign into this country to signify an inn, ale house or indicated that a bar also provided banking services. They in turn were believed to have adopted it from the Egyptians. The sign has also been found on houses excavated in Pompeii, where the interpretation is that it indicated that games such draughts were played on



the premises. A chequered sign was used by money changers to advertise their business. One old 'The Cheques' inn in Oxford High Street was originally the house of a fifteenth money-changer.

Roman paymasters calculated soldiers' wages on squared cloths and these 'checked boards' were used as an aid to counting and the origin of the word exchequer. In the times when many agricultural workers could not read or write, such boards with pieces of wood-chequers- would be used in calculations.

But, there is another entirely different explanation, less well known, though more likely origin for the name, is in relation to the Wild Service Tree or Chequers Tree (*Sorbus torminalis*). The fruit of the Wild Service Tree, which is also called the chequers were used as a flavouring for beer before hops were introduced. The bark of this tree is check pattern and quite distinctive with maple-like leaves. The specimen in the park is large and is thriving at the moment, which is a good thing as they are now not particularly common trees. It is near to the Green Chain walk sign in the woodland not on the path but can be seen from it.

So this 'chequered' history is probably still no clearer but is quite interesting anyway.....I hope? (the editor)

## 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.

**April 29th Introduction to All Saints Cemetery, Nunhead**

**Jeff Hart**

**May 27th Windmills of Kentish London (and their builders)**

**Robert Cumming**

**June 24th The Rise and Fall of Robert Cocking (1776-1837)**

**Anthony Cross**

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

**April 5th AGM followed by**

**Uncovering Scadbury with an Aerial Survey**

**Janet Clayton**

**May 3rd Some historic Buildings in Chislehurst**

**Joanna Friel**

**June 7th Street Furniture in South London**

**Sue Hayton**

**July 5th History of the High Level Railway at Crystal Palace**

**Bernard Winchester**

**August No Meeting**

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

**Programme Co-ordinator Mike Marriott 07917 101 520**