

# FRIENDS OF BECKENHAM PLACE PARK

Winter 2022 – NEWSLETTER



## Hello everyone

**Let us hope the coming year will be an improvement on the current one Covid-wise. Happy New Year to you all.**

## Events

We hope to have several walks this year (subject to Covid restrictions) and look forward to hearing from our knowledgeable walk guides/leaders.

We will detail these events when dates are settled in future newsletters and on our website.

## Visitor Centre Collection

When we were evicted from the Visitor Centre Lewisham reluctantly allowed us to store some of our possessions in a large storage container near the Foxgrove Club.

When a few of the Friends went to the container last year to catalogue the items they were surprised to find that the lock had been changed.

On gaining entry they discovered that Lewisham had allowed the group running the lake activities to store their belongings in the space and had jettisoned our stuff.

Fortunately most of the precious items was stored elsewhere but Lewisham didn't know this.

It must be heartbreaking for Margaret Mitchell who spent years collecting, arranging & displaying our wonderful collection in the V.C.

## Ancient Pond Terrapin

During the late summer a terrapin was spotted sunbathing on a plant in the Ancient Pond. Presumably it had been put there by an IQ-challenged individual who thought it would benefit from a big pond, possibly the same person who thought the lifebuoy would be happier in the middle of the pond.

Terrapins will not survive a harsh winter they will eat plants and small creatures to survive and are destructive to a natural pond's well-being.

## Mansion decorations 35 years ago.

We have been contacted by Mark who as an 18 year old worked as an apprentice decorator for Collins Contractors Ltd in Ladywell. The company is still going strong.

The firm were employed by Lewisham Council together with English Heritage 35 years ago to re-decorate some of the main rooms in the Mansion.

The refurbishment took about 18 months.

It was all painted white back then. A subcontractor chemically peeled all the paint off (around 25 coats) and then English Heritage found small samples of the original colours and the firm set about restoring the rooms to their former glory.

Mark re-painted all the ceilings & cornices himself as his foreman had a bad neck at the time. Mark enclosed some pictures of the work.

We knew that there was a plan to install the Mander Mitchenson theatre collection as a museum but the story goes that not enough funding was attracted to enable the completion of the project. Unfortunately although the collection was housed in the mansion the museum was not realised and the artefacts and archive of the collection were pretty much just 'warehoused' in the mansion.

Among my earliest recollection of the mansion going back to about 1980 was the Nature Study room run by Bernard Bligh of Lewisham Council which had various items connected with environment including the visible or transparent beehive, some animals in fish tanks etc. Of course the golf facilities were also run from the mansion and the floors of the entrance and atrium were boarded over to protect the marble from golf shoes which had metal spikes in those days. Some of you may have clearer memories of the features in the mansion and when they may have changed.

During the various consultations about what to do with the mansion I did get to see the Theatre Collection which took up some rooms on the first floor and with one room of the ground floor set up as a kind of music room while the other rooms were just stacked with various boxes of material. The attics were also used for storage. As the theatre museum project was abandoned with the trustees apparently unable to raise funds even with the emergence of the National Lottery with various heritage and culture funds then the collection

was urged to move and it went first to Greenwich University and then to Bristol. When it was moved the managers of the collection seemed to not value various parts of the collection and our visitor centre volunteers rescued various items from a skip. We had taken up residence of a room in the mansion for a visitor centre about the year 2000 having been in a cottage in the stable yard since about 1995.



To return to the restoration of the reception rooms and ceilings, the often less than perfect management of the mansion led to some leaks in the roof which did damage to some parts of the ceilings and that is visible today. And of course no long term solution has been found for the occupation of the mansion or its conservation. The visitor centre was evicted just as the first Covid lockdown started and the RJK properties tenancy of the mansion had started about a year before.

Whatever your feelings or point of view of events it's a shame that things turn out considerably less than perfectly.

With thanks to Mal



With thanks to Mark for the pictures.

### **Newsletter Articles**

If anyone has any interesting memories or stories about the park or the Mansion please get in touch. We would be pleased to hear from you and we would hope to include any articles and/or pictures in future newsletters.

### **Churchill quarter (potential) development**

For those interested in Bromley Council's attempt to make Bromley centre resemble a miniature New York please look at :-

Churchill Quarter Campaign Team [www.bromleycivicsociety.org.uk](http://www.bromleycivicsociety.org.uk)

### **Calverly Close, Southend Road**

A public consultation has begun concerning the entire redevelopment of the estate, after residents voted in the summer for complete regeneration.

Built in the 1980s near the brow of Beckenham Hill, the estate currently has around 200 homes and is operated by Riverside Housing Association, which

manages the Borough's council housing. They also operate Coleridge House, a Victorian villa at 79 Bromley Road, which is proposed for demolition and redevelopment. According to information published in April by Riverside, the existing homes at Calverley Close are proposed to be demolished and replaced with several new blocks ranging in height from three to seven stories. The total number of new homes would be 358, half of which would be allocated for private sale. The remainder would be for social rent. Demolition and construction would be phased over four stages of redevelopment.

A planning application is expected to be submitted after Christmas.

Riverside's latest information showing current proposals, consultation process and timescale for the redevelopment can be found here: <https://calverleyclose.co.uk/>

### **Krankbrothers**

The dates for 2022 Music Festivals are:

10th and 11th September, 17th and 18th September. But allowing for setting up and taking down there will be disruption 2-23 September.

Krankbrothers recently held a zoom for those who had voiced complaints about the 2021 Festival (160 including 90 noise specific). Residents of Beckenham Place Park had suffered very loud music, especially base vibration, litter and urination in gardens. They had experienced cars travelling up and down trying for park entry and even heavy articulated lorries loaded with equipment stuck trying to navigate into the park the wrong way (sat.nav mistakes). Some noise had been experienced as far as Cator Park and Sundridge Park.

Obviously many of the problems were caused by selfish, ill-mannered people attending the event. The noise issue is entirely down to Krankbrothers and they seem very concerned and hope to address all problems. They did have a lot of staff trying to direct people away from the Foxgrove Road side, also policing antisocial behaviour but obviously, they now realise, not enough. For 2022 they will have a new noise plan, more urination control (temporary toilets off site), more rubbish control, more efficient security staff, better signs and leafleting and talk of closing off Beckenham Place Park-the road not the

park- (which received the brunt of things last year). They will be re-assessing siting of the stages for the main music direction.

They did certainly reach out to those attending the zoom and took on board all concerns. They have a Reparation Bond with Lewisham as to the damage to the natural environment and have ecological awareness. The damaged ground does seem to be getting back to normal. Some attending the zoom enjoyed the music and congratulated Krankbrothers on such a great Festival.

Concerns can be addressed to [community@krankbrotherbpevents.com](mailto:community@krankbrotherbpevents.com)

### **History Walk on Sunday 26 September 2021**

Mal Mitchell guided about twenty of us around the park. He gave us a brief history of the Mansion, built in the eighteenth century by John Cator, and also the various occupants through the centuries.

We walked over to the ancient pond, which has had a lot of work in the last few years, funded by grants via the Friends. The decking and seating is made from wood sourced in the park. The pond and surrounding trees will need regular maintenance and clearance (items still thrown in by thoughtless people) to enable it to completely naturalise.

The responsibilities for the park are now completely with Lewisham but we found various iron markers in the ground depicting previous boundaries with Bromley and local parishes.

Mal showed us some fascinating maps from previous centuries showing how fields, names and roadways have changed with different owners over the ages (maps.nls.uk shows before and now maps side by side).

We walked up Crab Hill where there used to be a little sports pavilion and a football pitch - on a curved hill! There is now a Lewisham notice board by the pathway showing where the prisoner of war camp used to be.

We walked through the woods, noting more bare patches depicting the incursion of the public onto vegetation, including bluebells. We came to the new 'wet woodland' where at one time Lewisham had plans to extend their new lake into the full footprint of the one in John Cator's time. It will be interesting to see how this area develops.

We passed alongside the new lake and saw large areas of ruined grass beside the footpaths due to the intense activity of motor vehicles when

setting up and dismantling everything from the recent very large music festival. It will be interesting to see how this regenerates.



These two photographs, taken during the walk, show how forgiving Nature can be as the badly damaged areas are already (after a relatively short time) starting to 'regenerate'.

With thanks to Glenys

### **Sensory Garden**

Our group of volunteers are still working regularly on the garden although we've had a bit of a break over the Christmas and New Year weekends. We will have resumed on the 8<sup>th</sup> of January weather and any Covid restrictions permitting. New volunteers are always welcome with tools and directions provided. We ask people to bring their own gloves and we aim to follow any guidelines on distancing and precautions. We are still catching up with work which built up from the first lockdown and some plants got a bit out of control but it's gradually coming back together.

### **.Future projects**

We are considering contributing towards some bird/bat boxes and a bird ID noticeboard—we are also having a table at the 'So Last Century' Century'

fair in the park on 5<sup>th</sup> June. If anyone has ideas or would like to help please get in touch at [bpp.friends@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:bpp.friends@hotmail.co.uk)

### **Park use in the past**

On July 1<sup>st</sup> 1875 for the anniversary of 'Court & Sanctuary – St. George' 'Foot, Sack, Wheelbarrow and Donkey' races were held in the Park. An 'Efficient Band' was in attendance and the entry price was 6d. (the numbers attending are unknown). How proud Lewisham would have been !

### **There is a program on Radio 4 called 'I'm sorry I haven't a clue'.**

One section involves making up new dictionary definitions for words. Quite a good game to play at home. Examples below:

Walnut - an obsessive bricklayer  
Virgin Broadband - a chaste female musical group  
Barbeque – a long line of Barbie dolls  
Busking – owner of a fleet of buses  
Inquest – a search for pubs  
Childhood – a young gangster

Our email address is [bpp.friends@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:bpp.friends@hotmail.co.uk)  
Our address for correspondence, relating to newsletters, is :  
Friends of BPP  
10A Manor Road, Beckenham, Kent, BR3 5LE

### **Websites of Interest**

**Friends of Beckenham Place Park** [www.beckenhamplaceparkfriends.org.uk](http://www.beckenhamplaceparkfriends.org.uk)  
Lewisham Local History Society [www.lewishamhistory.org.uk](http://www.lewishamhistory.org.uk)  
Bromley Local History [www.bblhs.org.uk](http://www.bblhs.org.uk)  
Ravensbourne Valley Preservation Soc. [www.rvpsbromley.org.uk](http://www.rvpsbromley.org.uk)  
Deptford Creek [www.creeksidecentre.org.uk](http://www.creeksidecentre.org.uk)  
Kent Archeology [www.kentarcheology.org.uk](http://www.kentarcheology.org.uk)