

FRIENDS OF HYDE PARK & KENSINGTON GARDENS

www.friendshpkg.org.uk

SPRING 2018

FOUNDED IN 1991 TO PROMOTE THE PEACE AND BEAUTY OF THE PARKS

ISSUE 46

Spring 2018 Newsletter

All change at the Royal Parks and the lure of pastures new

Chairman Sue Price reports on personnel moves in 'our' Royal Parks, affecting some who have been among the Friends' closest allies over the past few years.

Robert (Rob) Dowling who, until the end of January, was the manager of Hyde Park, has been head-hunted. He has been made an offer he felt he could not refuse to re-locate to Qatar to help build and then develop Al Bidda, a large park in Doha.

Rob has been a great friend to the Friends and many of you will have met him at our events in Hyde Park. One of the most memorable was a tour of 'hidden places' when, with a large bunch of keys, he led us round Hyde Park in to places we barely knew existed.

He has been very generous, not only with providing us with enjoyable activities, but also with his time, often happy to act as a human sheepdog, helping with late arrivals and coping with extra questions from the back. His illustrated talk 'A Year in the Life of Hyde Park' at the 2017 AGM was fascinating. Sadly we won't see this year's effort, which he had almost completed before he flew off. He goes with our very best wishes.



Andrew Williams (Andy), who has been the manager of Kensington Gardens, is moving the short distance from his store-yard offices to the Ranger's Lodge in Hyde Park and will for the time being take on managing Hyde Park.

Many members have met Andy at the Albert Memorial and have been led down into the Undercroft for a memorable experience and a very good tour. He has kindly repeated this every year for us since he arrived at Kensington Gardens and it has become our most quickly booked event. This year Andy has very kindly facilitated some more special visits and a re-visit to Brompton Cemetery. Some of you will remember a visit there about four or five years ago, before magic, masses of hard work, funding and organisation have transformed the overgrown grounds and sadly dilapidated buildings into structurally sound places for us to visit.



At last year's AGM, Andy gave us a superb illustrated presentation on Kensington Gardens and we learned more about veteran trees, bore holes and modern irrigation systems among other facts and statistics, which we couldn't have guessed at. Both he and Rob repeated these presentations to other groups following their success at the AGM.

This year, as Rob has gone, Andy has been persuaded to continue on his own at our AGM on Wednesday 11 April and we're glad that he has agreed. He too gets our thanks and very best wishes.

continued on next page

All Change at the Royal Parks *cont'd*

And now for the third move: Theresa Short, who has been assistant park manager at Kensington Gardens, is stepping into Andy's shoes and taking on the management of the Gardens. At last year's Undercroft visit Theresa talked to members and guests about the history of the South Flower Walk (the 'Baby Walk' in Peter Pan) and her ambitious plans for replanting and enlarging the magnificent flower beds.

Many members will have met Theresa at our AGMs and had a chance to talk with her. We are



not forcing Theresa to give us a presentation this year....we think it only fair to let her have a bit of time to find her feet. But with Theresa's great love of flowers, and her already impressive displays and improvements, we look forward to her educating us on this aspect of Kensington Gardens in the near future. Perhaps at our AGM in 2019 she'll be wowing us with a collection of glorious flower photos. No pressure....

We offer Theresa our full support and best wishes in her new role.

Sue Price

News round-up from the Parks

Kensington Gardens

Theresa Short, Park Manager

Parkland Management

The lawns and municipal grass areas are receiving their winter maintenance, which consists of aerating and top dressing the soil with mulch produced on site from last year's leaf litter and green waste. This will mitigate the effects of soil compaction caused by thousands of feet that tread over them throughout the year.

This winter we have continued implementing our Avenue Tree Strategy by planting 34 large root ball London Plane trees along Lancaster Walk to fill in the gaps. Other Tree Strategy plantings include Black Walnuts on Budgies Walk and Hornbeams adjacent to The Diana Playground.

A group of native Hawthorns have also been planted on Buck Hill, to bolster the layer of scrub and provide pollen in the spring and food for song birds in the autumn.

South Flower Walk

The development of the North side of the East end near the Albert Memorial is now complete. The new plantings consist of a range of early flowering ornamental trees including Cherries and Magnolias, Oak Leaf Hydrangeas, drifts of herbaceous perennials and pockets of seasonal planting.

Seasonal Planting

As ever, the South Flower Walk has drifts of spring bedding, waiting to bloom as the weather warms up. In the Italian Gardens, there is a mix of purple Wall Flowers and blue Polyanthus, punctuated with the white lily flowered Tulip 'White Triumphator'.

Diana Playground

Please be aware that the annual maintenance shutdown will be between Monday 14th and Friday 18th May inclusive, to prepare for the million or so visitors we see each year.

There are alternative playgrounds situated at Buck Hill, East of the Italian Gardens, or further afield, in Hyde Park, to the southern boundary along South Carriage Drive.

Wildlife

Lots of winter project are underway to encourage wildlife in Kensington Gardens throughout the winter:

Funded by the Peoples Postcode Lottery Mission Invertebrate project, The Italian Gardens Fountains planting cages have been enlarged, giving greater scope for providing aquatic plants. This provides shelter for fish and a hatching ground for invertebrates such as dragon and damsel flies. The additional vegetation cover will keep the water cool, discouraging weed and algae growth. The cages have been specifically designed to keep waterfowl out,

which will quickly damage and destroy the delicate plants, but will also allow wildfowl to leave, should they find themselves inside them.

Coppicing the lower layer of native woodland trees in The Long Water enclosures has commenced. This traditional woodland management technique ensures that light can penetrate to the woodland floor, encouraging the proliferation of native flora and increasing ecological diversity. The crop of straight poles is used around the gardens in hedge laying and in the allotment as bean sticks. Any larger material has been laid into 'dead hedges' providing habitat for all manner of invertebrates. The work also opens the view to the Long Water, so that the wildfowl can be observed on the water. The work will continue until the birds start nesting, with the work continuing again after leaf fall in the autumn.

The Serpentine Galleries

Kensington Gardens is currently hosting the Lee Ufan sculpture entitled 'Relatum - Stage' just outside the Gallery. For more information on upcoming exhibitions please visit www.serpentinegalleries.org

Events and Activities

Gorilla Circus will be returning with their flying trapeze school for the 4th year. The school will be operating on the Picnic Lawn, adjacent to West Albert Lawn between May and September. Please see <http://www.gorillacircus.com/flyingtrapezeschool/> for more details.

*Weather permitting, the Shire Horses, funded by Bloomberg, shall be returning to Buck Hill to undertake the spring meadow. **Feel free to come and observe this traditional meadow management practice on the mornings of April 10th, 12th, 19th and 24th.***

If you are thinking of organising an event in the Kensington Gardens please consult the Park Regulations displayed on sign boards at the more prominent gates or contact us, details below.

The Allotment

Whilst the new rescue hens have settled beautifully and are a real success with our visitors, we are also excited to announce that we have now appointed a Garden Manager for the Kensington Allotment.

They will be there one day per week to work with the established volunteer team to get the garden growing all year round. Their task is to put systems in place to facilitate the garden planning and management, and work with the Royal Parks to create a long term vision for food growing across the parks.

Contacts

*If you have any enquiries, please don't hesitate to contact us on:
Phone: 0300 061 2000 Email: kensington@royalparks.gsi.gov.uk
Visit: www.royalparks.org.uk*

News round-up from the Parks

Hyde Park

Andy Williams, Park Manager

Biodiversity initiatives

In spring 2018, as part of the Mission Invertebrate programme, we hope to perform a significant amount of native plug planting to sections of our meadowland with the help of corporate volunteers. Our objectives focus on establishing new, and reinforcing existing wild flower communities, which will assist pollinating insects and other invertebrates.

'Bug hotels' are planned at the Berlin Wall/ Bumblebee shrub bed in the south west corner of the park. This will provide a warm and sheltered site for above ground nesters.

Winter Shrub Bed improvements

The team are busy undertaking improvements to areas across the park with a focus this winter and spring on the Dell Garden, Victoria Border, Lido shrubbery and Queen Caroline's enclosure. Formative and routine pruning maintains the overall shape and effect of woody plants and opens up opportunities for replanting in the Spring. At the Dell, careful tree lifting and crown reduction works will let more light into the beds and reduce the dominance of some of the evergreens.

We are making good use of generous amounts of composted green waste material from the Leaf Pen in Kensington Gardens for use both as a mulch and soil conditioner. Mulching shrub beds has the benefit of conserving moisture, preventing weed growth and raising levels of organic matter in the soil.

Tree Planting

During February and March we will be planting 45 new trees in Hyde Park including adding more multi stem silver birch to The Silver Jubilee copse near to Curzon Gate. We will also be continuing with our cherry tree planting to give more Spring colour and replace those trees that have reached the end of their lives.

Grassland Maintenance

We are extensively vertidrainage (deep spiking) large areas of Hyde Park and incorporating the organic material from Kensington Gardens. We primarily target high footfall areas noting the problems associated with compaction i.e. Cockpit, Parade Ground North, Boathouse Lawns. This encourages deeper rooting, improving the resilience of grass to withstand wear and tear and drought and by ameliorating the soil this way soil structure is improved which is vital to long term soil health and fertility.

The western section of the Old Football Pitches is currently closed off in order to rest it, fill dips and hollows and overseed in order to reinstate the worn grass. A similar exercise was carried out in the eastern section last winter and as a consequence has been more resilient to the intense level of use over the summer.

Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting

From 16-20 April, the Commonwealth Heads of Government will be meeting in London. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) is leading on this event and it requires the Old Football Pitches in Hyde Park as part of its arrangements.

As a result, the area will be unavailable for recreation use throughout April, and also during a 2-3 month reinstatement period. For security reasons the Metropolitan Police may also require a series of temporary road closures in Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens over the duration of the event.

The timetable for this event, the road closures and the resulting reinstatement is being finalised, and the latter is weather dependent.

Whilst the event is outside The Royal Parks' direct control, we are working closely with the FCO and others to mitigate the impact and will continue to keep stakeholders informed as soon as we receive further details.

Further information on the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting can be found at; www.chogn2018.org.uk/

The Mastaba

This summer Hyde Park will host the artist Christo's Mastaba on the Serpentine from 18th June – 23rd September. This temporary art installation coincides with an exhibition exploring the history of Christo and Jeanne-Claude's use of barrels in their art at the nearby Serpentine Galleries.

The installation offers an opportunity for the public to enjoy the work of an internationally renowned artist, for free, in the unique setting of Hyde Park. It will be made of 7,506 multi-coloured barrels and will be positioned in the centre of the lake between the island and Serpentine Bridge.

The installation recently secured planning permission granted by Westminster City Council and The Royal Parks is currently in the process of finalising a licence agreement with Christo.

Parade Ground Reinstatement 2018

Work to reinstate the Parade Ground after a successful series of major events throughout 2017 is well under way.



Covering approximately 11ha of parkland, the works involve a series of operations to provide optimum conditions for grass growth. Firstly existing turf is removed leaving the organic root mass in place followed by deep cultivation and stone burying to relieve compaction and improve drainage. Finally sand and top soil is dressed and levelled to form a true surface prior to cultivated large roll turf being laid. The turf is principally a mix of Perennial Ryegrass cultivars selected for the site. Each roll of turf covers 21m² and on a good day the team can lay in excess of 3,200m².

It is arguably one of the largest single turf reinstatement projects undertaken in the UK and Talbot Farms Landscapes, who undertake the work, have recently received national recognition for their work.

Temporary closures of some areas and footpaths are necessary to undertake the work – these closures are clearly signposted with pedestrian diversions in place and the team work hard to ensure that access is restored as soon as possible. It is reassuring to note that the underlying integrity of the parade ground improves each and every year due to the amelioration of the soils across the site.

Weather depending we hope that the work will be completed by April 2018.

Update on membership

The following new members have joined The Friends since the Autumn 2017 Newsletter:

Mr Christopher Bellew
Mr Andy Beverley
Mr Alain Camu
Mr Tommy Chan
Mr & Mrs Chris & Tina Coulcher
Ms Gillian Craig
Ms Leah Daly
Mrs Chris Dixon
Mr & Mrs John & Susan Gau
Ms Susan Griggs
Miss Susan Gunning
Mr Richard Hall
Mrs Josseline Langmuir
Mr Martin Lewis
Ms Nancy Lyndhurst
Ms Jordan Page
Mr Andrew Peck
Ms Helen Perkes
Mrs Pinkey Reid
Dr Raghunanda & Sherry Zhou
Mr & Mrs Struan & Christine Robertson
Ms Fay Sandler
Mrs Victoria Stainow
Mr Douglas John Temple

As of February 2018 we have:

TOTAL MEMBERS 615 (including 20 Honorary)
LIFE MEMBERS 148
NEW MEMBERS 29 (of which 5 pay joint Membership,
1 Associate & 1 Life)
Corporate members 12
Associate members 13

NOTE! Do you have any details of:

Mr J M Williams and **Ann Rosamund Harr** have been members since 2015 but we cannot communicate with them as we have no addresses.
Mr Harry Turner, a member since 2002, of Deepcut, Surrey, continues to pay, but is no longer at this address.

OBITUARIES

Mrs Pamela Joseph died October 2017. Her husband, Philip Joseph who was President of The Friends from 1991, died Oct 2015.

John Wilson died September 2017 and had been a member since 2003 Susan Calderon, his daughter wrote:
"My father lived to the age of 90, spending his "retirement" phase, the last 27 years of his life, living on the Hyde Park estate. Following a working life in exports for ICI, travelling extensively in Europe, the Middle East and Africa, settling in central London was suitably cosmopolitan for my parents. However both drew enormous solace and pleasure from the peace and beauty of Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens. I have wonderful memories of visiting the ducks, watching the model boats, enjoying the changing seasons with them and my growing children. My father was always particularly fond of the spring bulbs, and looked forward to their arrival each year. Walking through the Parks I will always think of them."

Lynden Easton

Bringing the Hyde Park Bandstand Back to Life!

Friends with long memories may remember the days when concerts at the Bandstand were a regular feature of summer in Hyde Park. Now, thanks to a combined initiative by the Friends and Hyde Park Management, this August will see a short series of free Sunday afternoon concerts at the Bandstand - the first concerts since its restoration in 2015. And if all goes well, this summer's concerts will be just the start - with the prospect of more in years to come.

With the help of the extra funds that have come with our new charitable status, we have been able ourselves to fund three concerts. Booked already are the South London Jazz Orchestra and the Snowdown Colliery Welfare Brass Band. With the third booking still to be arranged.

The Hyde Park Management team are providing considerable support including linked events such as the "Big Din" for children on Saturday August 4th. They will also be responsible for publicity, the provision of special deckchairs and logistics in general. To add to the occasion, there will be an ice-cream van and, we hope, other refreshments too.

How you can help!



The concerts can only take place because of our involvement in sponsoring all three of them. But our commitment doesn't stop there. We have agreed to provide practical on-the-spot support in the form of volunteer stewards to be on hand as needed. We'll also have a table displaying our newsletters and other publicity material - an excellent opportunity to drum up new members.

The Sundays in question are August 5th, 12th and 19th. If you think you might be able to help with even just one of the concerts, please get in touch. (e mail : julianpeach@tiscali.co.uk.)

And whether you can help or not, why not enter the three concert dates in your diary now? First rate band music, a deckchair and an ice-cream in sunny Hyde Park . . . What, as they say, is not to like?

Julian Peach

Chairman's Report

A milestone for the Friends

Congratulations to you all. Over the last few years our membership numbers have been most satisfactorily gradually climbing. Some time ago, for no particular reason, I fixed 600 as a target figure in my head and then shared this number with fellow trustees. As Christmas approached we hovered tantalizingly close to it but our membership secretary is very tough with us (rightly so; thank you Lynden) and would not let us celebrate. Suddenly, in mid December, we sailed past the 600 mark and are now nearer 620. One new member even joined on Christmas Day (it was a present from her Mum). I think we have lots of people to thank for this: our loyal members who bring guests to events and then encourage them to sign up, our excellent website, which is kept up to date by its editor, Paula Dyche, and our nice half-page advert in the South East Bayswater Residents Association (SEBRA) magazine. Our Newsletter with its contributors, its great photography and exciting events is, I know, very much appreciated. The AGM is an occasion to enjoy meeting in the flesh, over a drink, the trustees and helpers who work so hard. Lynden, our aforementioned membership secretary, is always on hand to count you in and help out with questions about membership subs.

Your donations, your gifts

Our charitable status is now well established thanks to our trustee Tom Newman. Looking back on my report in spring 2017 we were 'creeping towards being in a position to be able to contribute something towards modest projects...' in our parks. In autumn 2017 I wrote '...the funds we...have described will be used for a smallish project for each park, which will be outside the normal budget'. I noted that the managers were deciding on these projects. Elsewhere in this edition you will read what progress we have made, things chosen and examples illustrated. I also in the autumn wrote about funding that the Friends were now in a position to offer towards some concerts in the bandstand in Hyde Park. The arrangements for these are also described elsewhere in this Newsletter.

Hyde Park Hammered?

For some time now the trustees have been concerned that an enormous responsibility for fundraising for a major part of essential income for all of the Royal Parks seems to fall on Hyde Park. We know that that there is a series of major events, including Winter Wonderland, which generate huge income, without which the Royal Parks' budget would be severely reduced and we recognise that of the 14 million annual visitors a large proportion very much enjoy these events, and visit especially for them. Repair work following these events is a well-organised but lengthy business. Restoration of the Parade Ground turf is now down to a fine art; prizes have been won by the specialists who achieve a velvet green sward after Winter Wonderland. The costs are covered by the organisations that promote the events. But what of other parts of the parks? The result of

the hammering by millions of feet all over the park is clear to see. The loos, cafés, bins and kiosks are, especially at weekends, full to bursting and scale of service of food almost undeliverable. Ever tried getting a drink, a pizza and somewhere to sit down on a sunny weekend at the Serpentine Bar and Kütchen? Again, all these concessions bring in valuable income for all the parks. But, once again, Hyde Park takes the bashing.

CHOGM

As mentioned in the Hyde Park Manager's report the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting takes place in London for one week in April. The FCO (Foreign and Commonwealth Office) has announced that it needs the Old Football Pitches in Hyde Park from the beginning of April. This area of Hyde Park is on the east of West Carriage Drive and runs between the Will to Win tennis centre and the Hyde Park Barracks. It is home to a row of football pitches used by hundreds of schoolchildren during weekdays and thousands of participants in weekend sports activities. All this space for fitness and exercise for tens of thousands of Londoners is going to be removed for the whole of the period when it is normally most used. Again, at the time of writing, I have not been told what CHOGM wants to use this very large area for.

Love it or loathe it?

The decision is yours; the Friends do not take a particular view on art; committees are notoriously bad at making these judgments. As you will have seen in the Hyde Park Manager's report, The Serpentine Gallery, together with Christo, the sculptor, is bringing to The Serpentine 'Mastaba'.

It was originally planned for a body of water in the USA, and a smaller version was shown in the south of France a year or two ago. It will certainly be an international attraction in Hyde Park. Once again, my argument has been for extra funding to be made available to cope with the effects of the wear and tear which all the extra visitors to Mastaba will have on Hyde Park.



You can still find quiet, leafy areas but without doubt, Hyde Park in particular is becoming more and more hectic. It is telling that our photographer normally visits at sunrise because, he says, by mid-morning it's too busy to get good results.

However, do check out our new posters which are appearing on notice boards all over Kensington Gardens and Hyde Park. There are plenty of action photos on them as well as long views and close ups of water and flowers. I hope to meet as many of you as possible over the spring and summer at our events, all treats which I'm looking forward to very much.

Sue Price

Donations to support the Parks

The Friends of Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens became a charity in July 2016 and started attracting additional charitable donations, enabling the Friends to provide financial support for projects in the parks that could not otherwise be funded. A great milestone was reached last year when the Friends were able to commit to making two grants of £2500 for use by each of the parks. The trustees wanted to fund projects identified by each of the park managers that they felt would benefit their park, but for which there were no funds in the budget. Rob Dowling, manager of Hyde Park, felt that the corner near Speakers Corner was barren and needed attractive and long-lasting replanting.



He decided that the space would be best served by planting Cyclamen coum. We can look forward to seeing the area filled with lovely flowers like those shown in the picture, rather than the current mud and struggling grass.

Andy Williams, manager of Kensington Gardens, was keen to replace an old and dilapidated sign about The Buck Hill Bastion in the photograph below with an attractive new sign.

The grant would also provide for two rustic benches nearby that not only would look wonderful, but also provide a convenient seat for weary walkers or just people pausing to take in the beautiful surroundings. Please help us raise additional grants to help ensure that the peace and beauty of Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens remain available for everyone's enjoyment.

Making a donation to the Friends is easy to do either on on-line on our page on MyDonate (<https://mydonate.bt.com/charities/friendsofhydeparkandkensingtongardens>), or by sending us a cheque or by increasing your standing order. Remember, if you qualify for gift aid you can increase the amount the Friends get by 25% at no cost to you by signing a Gift Aid declaration if you have not yet done so. **Thank you!**



Tom Newman

Out and about with the Friends

Winter Wonderland - fun for all ages

Plenty of our members enjoyed visits to Winter Wonderland this year and we got lots of reports. Members and guests were entertained extremely well for an afternoon before Christmas. Our poor newsletter editor was looked after very professionally by their medical team, ambulance and paramedics when she was knocked down and quite badly injured by a cyclist on the Hyde Park Broadwalk. And the restaurant review in this edition comes from a very unusual location.

Here are three reports from members, from varying age groups, all of whom clearly enjoyed their visit!

1) *"We had such a jolly time at the Winter Wonderland and I can't believe with it just on our doorstep that I haven't been before. There was such a terrific atmosphere and for young children it must be soooo exciting Jamie and I did the Wild Mouse and I screamed the entire way round the circuit with my eyes firmly closed at every corner. The next door ride, the Magic Mountain, however was even more exciting. Eyes open this time as no scary encounters with the black void of night at high altitude. We just tore round at ever increasing speed in a little cart with us both holding the rail for dear life should we spin right out. Huge fun. We found the Bavarian tent and Jamie said the sausages were delicious."*

Joanna and Jamie

2) *"My daughter, friend and I had an amazing day on Friday at Winter Wonderland. I had never been before and to be honest had avoided it! Well I won't be avoiding it next year for sure... all three of us had a fantastic time. The rides were truly amazing and the Viewing Tower beat the London Eye. Cinderella on Ice was breath-taking and I could not believe the level of dancing and moves. My daughter was quite mesmerised. We also thoroughly enjoyed mulled wine, hot chocolate and mince pies.*



The photo of Annabel's expression in the Magical Ice Kingdom sums up our day."

Paula, Anna and Annabel

3) *Having received our instructions to wrap up very warm and to approach the site from the Marble Arch entrance, about 28 Friends arrived for our wonderful Winter Wonderland experience. We started in the glamorous sounding Crystal Lounge where copious quantities of mulled wine, hot choc (with whipped cream) and delicious mince pies were offered and consumed. Sue Price, Chair, introduced us to Suzy Griffiths, Event Director for the last 10 years of WW, at whose invitation we were there. Suzy told us a bit about the history of the event and how it has grown over the 11 years since it first started – it is now the biggest festive event in Europe. Suzy works on WW all year round but said she has a big team working with her. A lovely part of Suzy's job is travelling around Europe looking for new attractions to bring to Hyde Park.*

Which takes us to the first attraction which is new to WW this year – called the Winter Wonder View Tower. A doughnut shaped cabin surrounds the 80m tower – you get in at the bottom and then the cabin rises slowly and rotates round until it gets to the top where it rotates a bit more and then comes down again. The views were amazing and all the lights of the Winter Wonderland site looked most fetching. There were lots of oohs and aahs as people spotted London landmarks and it was most enjoyable.



Next we walked through some of the Christmas market stalls selling all manner of tempting things, including a lot of edible treats, to the Magical Ice Kingdom. This was why we had been told to dress up warm! It was a

very bracing -10 degrees C in there. It has a deep sea theme this year so think seahorses, fish, deep sea divers and a huge octopus. The ice sculptures are beautiful and pristine as all impurities are removed from the water beforehand.

Last but not least we headed to the Cinderella on Ice show. I think for many of us this was our first ever ice show and it was a fantastic experience. Suzy had told us that many of the Russian skaters are ex-Olympic athletes, and my goodness it showed. The skating was wonderful and the staging really professional. The absolute highlight was when Cinderella flew high in the arena and the whole ceiling glowed with twinkling lights. A magical moment on which to end a fabulous Monday afternoon at Winter Wonderland.

Many thanks to Rob Dowling, Hyde Park Manager, who suggested the event and to Suzy for hosting us and looking after us so well.

Cathy PAnson

Letter from your (somewhat damaged) Editor

Until shortly before Christmas, I was reasonably tolerant of cyclists in the parks and had no strong feelings on the merits or otherwise of paths shared by cyclists and pedestrians. I don't feel the same since being mowed down by a speeding cyclist close to the entrance to Winter Wonderland where I was due to meet our Chairman Sue Price and fellow trustee Tom Newman. The impact propelled me face first against iron railings, causing various injuries including deep cuts, bruises and a broken nose. Following a 13-hour stint in A&E and several stitches later, I am now firmly of the opinion that without better controls, shared paths will continue to cause accidents like mine - my GP said she had seen 4 patients knocked down by cyclists over the Christmas period.



A&E post accident



More or less back to normal

On the plus side, I owe a debt of gratitude to my fellow trustees Sue and Tom, who remained with me (Sue for the full 13 hours!) and to the staff of Winter Wonderland, who organised an ambulance and medical support. And I saw at first hand the sort of pressure the NHS is under in A&E and the tireless efforts of the overworked medical staff. I am not against cyclists in general, only those who speed on shared paths - and luckily I've made a good recovery! I've shared my pre-Christmas incident with you at the request of Sue Price. Any comments welcome to newsletter@friendshpkg.org.uk.

Tessa Singleton

Park News

You will have read on our front page that it's all change in our two Parks.

We interviewed Rob Dowling in January before he left us to take up his exciting new role at the Al Bidda Park in Doha, Qatar.

It is not so long since we spoke to Rob when he first became manager, although he has been at Hyde Park for thirteen years as a Technical Officer, Assistant Manager and Manager.

Some of the answers to questions we originally asked him remain the same:

What is your favourite place in Hyde Park?

It's the Dell.

When Rob first arrived, you couldn't see the stream for brambles, he cleared it out and restored it to its original glory. Actually, it is now probably even better with interesting plants to look at on the top level and a mixture of tropical plants in the main part. So this special place is both his favourite and what he's most proud of. (see photo)

What would be the next thing on your wish list for Hyde Park?

If he had another few years he would have liked to improve the marshy area which was originally the path of the Tyburn Brook. Although the Tyburn Brook now flows through pipework the area (just north of the Old Police House) tends to get soggy. Its profile is of a small valley heading towards the Serpentine.

His plan would be for a seasonal river and a series of ponds, using run off water from the Parade Ground, it would include a little Swale with paths.

While he was at it he would develop SUDS (sustainable urban drainage system), improve sewers and drains under the Parade Ground, improve pipe work for fibre optic cables and, while he's at it, redesign the mobile kiosks.... So that's not much then! We'll wait to see if any of these reach fruition.

But now he's off to Doha to help with the completion of the Al Bidda Park and then the running and development of it.



Sue Price presents Rob with a farewell gift from the Friends

It runs along the Corniche and links the heart of Old Doha with West Bay (the new city area). There is a pink tarmac road (copied from the Mall) running through it to the Emir's Palace.

There is an underground car park with lifts which pop up throughout the Park and lots of planting to disguise these.

It is due to open in the second half of February. One of Rob's first jobs will be to appoint a deputy and create a team.

The winter will always be its busiest time as summer temperatures reach 52°C. It comes with CCTV already installed and with its own police force. There will be heavy fines for dropping litter.

There has been investment to make the Park green (tough creeping grass which resists wear and tear) and will be irrigated using grey water (treated sewage).

The designs are there and the concept was that it was not to be a pastiche of another country's park. It will use native plants and Rob wants to extend the planting possibilities. He's looking forward to working with completely different plants, getting to know about them as his experience has been using a European palette.

He will be building up all the things we know about and enjoy here, volunteers, education programmes, cycling paths, playgrounds, a possible allotment and there's a strong request for events! So no pressure there then.

He looks forward to Al Bidda becoming a world famous, world class park which he will have put on the map, having overcome a few challenges.

Good luck Rob. We'll keep in touch and maybe even get a link going with the yet to be set up Friends of Al Bidda Park. And we would certainly like updates to share the news and progress.



The Dell restored

Tree Champion

Greg Packman, Royal Parks arboriculturist, takes Tessa Singleton on a tour round our two parks and tells her about his work and his passion for trees

Many people would think that having to spend two hours in each direction on a train every day to get to work would be an unwelcome slog. And coming from the country to London to work in a park might seem the wrong way round. 28 year-old Greg Packman disagrees: he puts his train journeys to good use by studying and expanding his knowledge of all aspects of arboriculture.

I asked Greg how his passion for trees began. "I loved playing outdoors as a child. I joined the Scouts and then helped as a volunteer at the local country park, but perhaps the key event in my childhood was seeing the Disney film 'Swiss Family Robinson'. I remember coming home and telling my parents I wanted to live in a tree."



Rare 200 year old British field maple

In 2009 Greg had started a history degree, but decided to transfer to a foundation course in arboriculture at Moulton College in Northampton. In 2011, with jobs difficult to find, he set up his own business in gardening and tree maintenance, collecting along the way additional

qualifications in chainsaw operation and an RHS Certificate in horticulture. In 2015, Greg's mother happened to visit Hyde Park, saw a Royal Parks advertisement for an arboriculturist - he applied for the job and got it.

So what are the main tasks of an arboriculturist?

"The most important aspect of our work is risk management", says Greg. "There are 4 arboriculturists and between us we cover all the Royal Parks. There are many old trees - the oldest is a sweet chestnut dating back to the 1700's - and we have a duty of care to park visitors, to ensure that they are not in danger of being hurt, principally by falling branches."

He adds, "We also need to manage the landscape within the parks sympathetically. You can't simply replace an old tree with a young one, without altering significantly a view that may be iconic, so we have to plan carefully. Ecological management is an aspect of our work that has become much more important in recent years. Twenty years ago dead wood was simply



Massaria apparent on upper side of branches



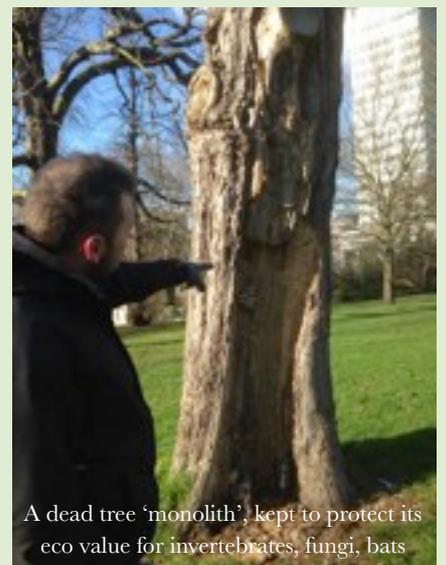
removed, whereas now we recognise its importance within the ecosystem and keep 'monoliths', old dead trees that provide a habitat for fungi, invertebrates, bats. They help build the ecosystem from the bottom up."

What about tree diseases? As mentioned, Greg's daily train journeys have been productive - through his studies, he's become a recognised expert on a disease that attacks only London plane trees: Massaria. This is a fungus that degrades the cellulose component of the wood and develops on the top sides of branches. To date, it's not certain whether its relatively

recent spread is due to the drying effect of climate change on the latent structure of the tree, or whether it's fungal, with wind-spread spores. Massaria is just one of a range of diseases against which the arboriculturists are constantly on the alert, pooling knowledge internationally and trying to stop new threats reaching the UK.

As Greg takes me round his Park, he points out monoliths, outlines the historical and cultural importance of veteran trees and shows me a rare 200-year old British field maple, which will be used for propagation. He explains how pruning techniques have changed since the 1980's, with the focus nowadays on supporting the overall wellbeing of the tree, rather than pruning for appearance and shape, which can cause it stress and thus make it more susceptible to disease.

As he sees it, his role is to help the trees live - "My job is a constant battle between risk management and tree happiness!"



A dead tree 'monolith', kept to protect its eco value for invertebrates, fungi, bats

Members will have a chance to learn more about tree management by joining Greg on a guided walk in Kensington Gardens on **Tuesday 26 June 2018** (see Events List). This will be the first of a series he is planning, to include Brompton Cemetery and possibly St James and Green Park. Members can email for more info on future plans to GPackman@royalparks.org.uk

Post Christmas...

... and one way of beating the winter blues by finding unexpected Gemütlichkeit in the heart of Hyde Park

The turkey is tired and the ham's had it. It is past Boxing Day and we *must* get a bit of fresh air and exercise and, because our tummies have stretched, we feel the need to eat.... again! Where to go that's a bit different? Six of us left London far behind and headed for a little rustic restaurant, the Alm Hütte, buried in the Bavarian village in Winter Wonderland in Hyde Park.



We were shown by a friendly waiter to a pine table in a booth surrounded by gingham curtains, cushions, antlers, small mountain creatures and all the paraphernalia you find when you stop for lunch on a hiking or ski holiday. The music on the little platform came from a lively Oompah Band, four Bavarian gentlemen all wearing their proper costume, and all terrific musicians. They had been staying in London for the duration of Winter Wonderland and were sorry to miss their German Christmas.

Periodically they broke into "Ein prosit, ein prosit" and we all raised our steins of Bavarian Gold (a pint at £5.50) and drank a toast to each other and to them. As you will gather from this, our best intentions at restraint had flown out of the rustic window when we walked into the mountain hütte.



We waded through a selection of roast pork, bratwurst, red cabbage, rosti and sauerkraut and thoroughly enjoyed them. Service was friendly and efficient and there were several other groups also enjoying themselves.

We were nearly beaten, but the Black Forest Gateau on the menu was impossible to pass over so one portion, (£5) and six forks were produced. It was light and full of cherries and Kirsch.

We cannot report on the Apfel Strudel and Vanilla Sauce. But if I'd known about that gateau earlier in the season I'd have been a frequent visitor for Kaffee and Kuchen.

Unfortunately we'll have to wait until next winter, which is probably just as well.

Recommended, and the Alm Hütte is worth finding in the Bavarian Village.

Sue Price

Will Brexit affect our birds?

One of our most charming and elegant birds is the Black-headed Gull. Dainty at around 35cm long, black tips to wings and tail with striking red legs and beak they are gregarious and live in large social groups, which also means noisy and quarrelsome. The head in the breeding season is more chocolate brown than black but in the winter this is represented by a black spot each side of the head. They are proud little birds, they look you in the eye as an equal, unlike the shifty herring gull.

They are found around the world in the northern hemisphere, the Eastern Canadian Coast, Japan, China as well as Northern Europe. The UK has a large resident population, around 140,000 breeding pairs but this number is hugely swollen by winter visitors to around 2.2 million birds (who does the counting?).



Our own numbers in Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens tally with this national statistic.

And here in lies the potential trouble. Ringed birds show that while our other wild fowl is positively sedentary - one coot made it as far as Surrey but everyone else remains very local - the feedback on our pretty gulls is that they are mainly Baltic residents.

Will they have to get new passports, provide nest origins, prove they have return flights in mind? Chicks hatched in Copenhagen and the Netherlands have wintered here for two or three years, adults ringed in east coast Norway and Poland are also regular visitors. The Polish one is particularly interesting: already an adult when ringed in 2012, he has spent several winters on the Serpentine. These gulls are not pelagic birds but this one is a positive landlubber as his ringing took place just outside Warsaw. The gull most likely to be in trouble with the Authorities is the one from Lithuania, who has taken up residence by the Serpentine café, illegal immigrants taking crumbs from natives will not be tolerated.

So enjoy these perky, enchanting birds while you can.

Dimity Spiller

Ratty and Caroline...

... and the challenges of communicating clearly in a park



I am really a country dog but I had to spend a few days in London last summer. It's very boring – I sit on the sofa while Caroline sits downstairs in front of a screen clicking buttons. It is no life for a dog

The only highlight is the trip to the park at lunch – where I chase (but never catch) squirrels. On this Wednesday there was no lunch trip to the park and I could see from the big clock on the wall it was eight o'clock before I was taken to the park. Because of this, rather than my usual squirrel-chasing, I felt the need to run wildly back and forwards to get the energy out of my system.

Someone was calling “Ratty, Ratty” in a very shrill voice – but I don't think that was anything to do with me. Anyway I was a bit cross because we've been to this park lots of times – and Caroline has never taken me anywhere near the birds and the lake which would be my favourite spot. (I hate to say it but I think she may have deliberately kept me away) Anyway on one of my wilder swoops I came right by the lake where a little moorhen was about to have her evening swim.

I could still hear the merry music of someone shouting “Ratty, Ratty” in the background and thought how odd that someone in London knows my name when I am here so little. The moorhen sweetly invited me in after her, and we had a lovely swim one after another, over to the island: in and out of the blue boats that are called pedaloos; and nearly to the Lido on the far shore.

The person shouting “Ratty” seemed to be becoming a little hysterical and the note had just reached its highest pitch when the moorhen turned and we both came back. Caroline wasn't pleased to see me. She pulled me out of the water and put me on the lead. I just managed to give a nod goodbye to the moorhen and say “See you tomorrow I hope” when I was hauled off home. I haven't been taken down there again.... Until today when I was kept on a lead the whole time and a man wanted to take photographs. If anyone knows that moorhen, please tell her I'm very keen to come back to play another day.



As recounted by Ratty to Caroline Sheldon

The Civil Service Riding Club

Associate Member of the Friends

ran the London Riding Horse Show in Hyde Park on 1st October to celebrate the Club's 80th anniversary.

CSRC Chair Nancy Lyndhurst reports:

We are very pleased to report that the event was a resounding success. The Club has experience of running shows and used to organise an annual, three-ring event in Perks Field by Kensington Palace. Members regularly took part in the London Riding Horse Parade on Rotten Row and to some extent the London Riding Horse Show is a rejuvenation of that meet including the turn-out and safety classes which were created back in the late 1930s to promote safe riding in Hyde Park.

A generous bequest from long-term member Harry Fleming, who joined when the Club had premises in De Vere Mews, south of Kensington Gardens, funded the venture.

Most of the classes, which included dressage and showing, took place in the outdoor school opposite Hyde Park Barracks. The Club had helped secure



Photo thanks to Adam Blackmore-Heal who serves in the Household Cavalry

civilian use of the school by contributing to its building costs in the days when Club horses were stabled in the Royal Mews and ridden to the Barracks for lessons. The relationship with the Household Cavalry continues today.

The CSRC wanted to promote riding in London and classes were designed to be inclusive and encourage participation by London stables and charities, including Wormwood Scrubs Pony Centre, Operation Centaur and Brixton's Ebony Horse Club. The only addition to previous schedules were two dressage classes which were very popular. Older members recall hacking in the

Park before work and on summer evenings. The Show allowed newer members to connect with the Park and the Club's history.

Save the Date!

The Club have announced that they will be holding the Show again on 8th October 2018. Friends and volunteers welcome to attend.

For more information visit www.csrc.org.uk

Nancy Lyndhurst

News update on FHPKG concessions

Full details of all concessions are on the back page of the newsletter

New!

Warm welcome from Salt & Honey Bistro

An introductory email from Delia, manager of Salt & Honey, to the FHPKG website offering the Friends a special price for lunch and brunch with all main courses at £11.95, (including one glass of wine) and for dinner a 20% discount on the whole menu, spurred two of your committee members to try lunch there.

Salt & Honey is tucked away in Sussex Place, close to Lancaster Gate tube station. It's small and welcoming with a menu that is varied but not too long, as everything is cooked to order. Delia greeted us with a glass of prosecco and we then decided to have two starters each, rather than a main course, it being not long after the excesses of Christmas.



Our choices were all delicious and our impression was that whatever you choose, it will be tasty. A glass of the house white was a pleasant accompaniment to our food.

Salt & Honey has a total of 55 covers and dining space is divided between the main seating area downstairs and a half-landing containing a large table which can seat up to 10, and further private dining space upstairs. Private functions are welcome and there is no hiring charge. A special brunch and lunch menu is offered on weekends between 10am and 3pm.



The impressive range of gins on offer, including several new London-produced ones, was enticing. However, your dutiful representatives resisted temptation this time, hoping perhaps that a Friends' gin tasting could be organised at some stage in the future. As mentioned, Lancaster Gate tube station is only a short walk away...

The menu is an interesting fusion of Asian/European/British cuisines, with starters ranging from spicy steak tartare to roasted butternut, coconut, ginger and lemongrass soup, while mains went from Italian inspired roast fillet of hake to a salad of grilled Romero peppers, with cauliflower, hazelnut, pickled lemon and tahini. There is also a short and tempting dessert menu.

Salt & Honey
28 Sussex Place, W2 2TH
0207 706 7900

www.saltandhoneybistro.com

Tessa Singleton

Friends' Event!

Tasting at The Kensington Wine Rooms

Eighteen members turned up on a chilly afternoon on 1 February to take part in a tasting of 6 wines selected by Thor Gudmundsson, one of the owners of the Kensington Wine Rooms.

The tasting was structured to highlight differences between selected Old and New World wines. We were given the details of two red and two white and invited to comment on them, while the third of each colour was a mystery wine we were supposed to identify.

We were lucky to have Thor there to guide us through the wines he'd selected for us to taste, as despite our enthusiasm, we were not all the most brilliant of pupils. There was occasionally some confusion between the contents of the different glasses and the odd cry of "I can't remember which is which..."



Our collective ability to identify the mystery wines was not impressive either, even if one or two members shone rather more brightly than the rest.

Thor was patient with us and his own enthusiasm for his chosen profession was contagious. We all enjoyed the event and learned quite a lot. Our thanks go to Thor for presenting and managing our tasting and to Sue Heywood for organising it.

The Kensington Wine Rooms are happy to organise specific tastings for small groups.

The Kensington Wine Rooms
127-129 Kensington Church Street, W8 7LP
020 7727 8142

www.winerooms.london

Tessa Singleton

New developments!

Will to Win in Hyde Park launches new facilities

Longstanding friend of the Friends, Steve Riley, is keen to invite members to try out the new padel tennis court at Will To Win, which will be opening in the next month. The padel court, a Multi-Use Sports Area, external lighting on the 6 tennis courts and improved catering facilities have been introduced over the winter ready for spring launch.

As many members will remember, Steve, founder and CEO of Will To Win has



hosted successful and enjoyable summer parties and bowls competitions for the Friends in the past.

If you're interested in trying your hand at padel tennis, you're welcome to a free trial. For more information and to book a time, please contact Steve at steveriley@willtowin.co.uk or via the website www.willtowin.co.uk or call 0207 224 1625



FHPKG Concessions 2018

The discounts on the latest list below are available to the Friends on presentation of a current, personal membership card. Please get in touch with (contact@friendshpkg.org.uk) if you find any discrepancies or have any queries.

Will To Win

South Carriage Drive
Hyde Park
London W2 2UH
020 7262 3474

*10% off court fees off-peak
(Monday - Friday up to 5
pm)*

20% off food and beverages



Urban Meadow & Café Bar

150 Bayswater Rod
London W2 4RT
020 7792 7066

*20% discount on food and
beverages*



The Serpentine Lido

Hyde Park
London W2 2UH
020 7706 3422

15%-20% discount- to be confirmed for next 2017 swimming season.

The Orangery Café

Kensington Palace
Kensington Palace Gardens
London W8 4PX
020 3166 6113

10% discount on food and beverages

The Lodge Café

Hyde Park Corner
London W1 7NT
0203 058 1224

20% discount on food and beverages



Palace Café

Kensington Gardens
London W8 4PX
020 3166 6127

10% discount on food and beverages

The Lido Café

Hyde Park
London W2 2UH
020 7706 7098

10% discount for up to 2 people, of whom 1 must be a member

The Boathouse

Serpentine Road
London W2 2UH
020 7262 1330

Hire of all boats at children's rates

Serpentine Bar & Kitchen

Serpentine Road
Hyde Park
London W2 2UH
020 7706 8114

20% discount on food and beverages



Lancaster London

Lancaster Terrace
London W2 2TY
020 7551 6000

Become a complimentary Friend of the Lancaster London for 10% off in restaurants and bars and 10% off best available hotel rate.

The Magazine Restaurant

Serpentine Sackler Gallery
West Carriage Drive
Kensington Gardens
London W2 2AR
020 7298 7552

10% off food and beverages for up to 6 people at lunchtime.

Hyde Park Kiosks

Hyde Park Corner
Speakers' Corner
Triangle
Boat House
Playground
Diana Memorial
Diana Memorial Ice Cream
*20% discount on snacks and drinks at
each of the above kiosks*

Kensington Gardens Kiosks

Italian Gardens Café
Broadwalk
Palace Gate
Albert Memorial
Italian Fountain
Ice Cream Vans
*20% discount on snacks and drinks at
each of the above kiosks*



Royal Albert Hall

Kensington Gore
London SW7 2AP
020 7959 0500

10% off at Cafe Bar (at Door 12)

10% off Retail Unit (at Door 12)

20% off at Verdi Italian Kitchen (Tuesday to Sunday 1200 - 1600)

33% off Grand Tour, Inside Out Tour, Secret History Tour

38% off Behind the Scenes Tour

20% off Story of the Proms Tour

Royal Garden Hotel

2-24 High Street Kensington
London W8 4PT
020 7937 8000

*Check with restaurant staff for 10% Discount Card in Park Terrace
(A la Carte menu), Bertie's Bar and Min Jiang Bar*

Park Deck Chairs

www.parkdeckchairs.co.uk

On completion of a season ticket 30% discount.

Non-concessionary Rate Season Ticket £77

Concessionary Rate Season Ticket £31.50

The Kensington Wine Rooms

127-129 Kensington Church Street
London W8 7LP
020 7727 8142

*10% off entire bill for lunch Monday to
Friday*

Salt & Honey Bistro

28 Sussex Place
London W2 2TH
020 7706 7900

*20% off entire bill for dinner, concessionary
prices for lunch/brunch*

