

The Friends of Richmond Park



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"A new telescope for King Henry's Mound funded by someone living in the USA, more dog bins to go up inside the Park, a new Police Inspector, and a new Assistant Park Superintendent...". Whenever Park Superintendent Simon Richards (aka Park Manager) comes to talk to the Friends' committee, I am reminded what a wide range of matters are involved in managing and policing the Park. Those above were just four of 16 on his list in October.

New link from Ham Gate to Petersham

Another important item highlighted by Simon was a new path planned between Ham Gate and Petersham Gate. This will be made out of material similar to the Tamsin Trail, and will also be shared between walkers and cyclists. As well as creating a better link between these gates, it is meant to reduce the proliferation of tracks in the area and rectify some of the erosion below Pembroke Lodge. Simon explained that, apart from walkers and cyclists, occasional vehicles will use it - e.g. those of police, or of people servicing toilets. The construction will be jointly funded by the Borough of Richmond and Transport for London - i.e. at no cost to the Park budget. Simon expects the path to be completed during 2007. As a walker and cyclist, I welcome this development in principle. Meanwhile, our traffic sub-committee is examining it more closely.

Elm tree plantings

We learnt from Simon that there are also various tree activities going on this winter. First, 25-30 sponsored trees are to be planted, including about four elms of a disease-resistant variety, to go in near Sheen Gate. Second, the veteran tree work will continue. A storm in September took 20 trees in the Park, including four veterans, but Simon reassured us that tree planting outnumbers tree losses each year.

I was also interested to hear that "only" two deer have been killed by cars this year. This figure used to be much higher, so the 20 mph speed limit really seems to have helped.

Alison Donaldson

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MP Vincent Cable addresses the Friends in November 2005 – see News in Brief page 5. Clockwise from the speaker: Lady Rix (Elspeth Gray); Simon Richards; Lord Rix; John Collier; Jane Richards

Praise for newsletter

This newsletter was chosen as runner up by the London Forum of Amenity and Civic Societies - see flier enclosed with this issue!

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Who has the final say?

Who is ultimately responsible for the Park and its upkeep? This question came up at a recent meeting of the Forum of The Friends of the Royal Parks (a regular event attended by the Chairman of each of the Friends groups from all eight Royal Parks). We were looking at how we could influence the powers-that-be to make good the maintenance backlog I wrote about in our last newsletter. But we realised we did not know who the "powers-that-be" were! So, after doing some research, I thought I'd share the results with you and try to explain how responsibility for the Parks has evolved over the years.

Initially it was the Monarch who had the power. You may recall that it was a Richmond brewer, John Lewis, who asserted pedestrian right of entry to the Park through Sheen Gate in 1755 and then won his case at the Kingston Assize three years later. At that time The Park was very much the responsibility of the King, and the Ranger was George II's youngest daughter, Princess Amelia. John Lewis knew who he was up against.

But nearly 100 years later the picture began to get a bit confused. Queen Victoria continued to allow access to Richmond Park, but she passed on responsibility for all the Royal Parks to central government under the terms of the Crown Lands Act 1851. Today, this makes Tessa Jowell, as Secretary of State for the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), the person responsible, with the Chancellor of the Exchequer standing behind her as the provider of funds for her Department. In the words of an independent review commissioned by the Minister for the Arts and published four years ago this means:



"...she has to secure continued public access and the conservation of the landscape and the structures by the prudent application of appropriate public funding. Her responsibility extends to passing them on to future generations in an appropriate state, by resisting encroachments and making only appropriate enhancements. What is 'appropriate' will vary from time to time but it implies respecting the Parks' history, their international standing, and their status as a setting for national ceremonials..."

The Secretary of State does all this through the Royal Parks Agency (RPA), created in 1993. The RPA is an Executive Agency under professional management, but with an independent Advisory Board whose members she appoints. My conclusion is that if we want to raise really important issues about the Park we need to talk to quite a long list of people: Gordon Brown, to make sure the grant to the DCMS is enough; Tessa Jowell as Secretary of State; David Lammy, the Minister for the Arts accountable to Tessa Jowell; the Chief Executive of the RPA; and the Chairman of the Advisory Board. They all have some say but where does the buck stop? I believe there is a powerful case for a different structure and that the Government should look at this as a matter of priority. The Parks - either all together or some individually - could acquire independent status as "Non-Departmental Public Bodies" (NDPB's), with powers clearly vested in a board of trustees. Then we would know who is responsible.

John Collier

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Nigel Reeve, ecologist

Managing a mosaic

The "mosaic of habitats" contained within Richmond Park was the subject of an enlightening talk given to the Friends by Dr Nigel Reeve, Community Ecology Officer for the Royal Parks, in Richmond on 8 September. Woods and ponds, tussocky grassland and bracken, rivers and bogs - each feature of our familiar Park landscape is home to an amazing variety of wildlife forms. And each of these has its particular role to play in maintaining a sustainable ecosystem. Some of the statistics reeled off by Dr Reeve came as a surprise even to those who thought they knew their Park well. A close observer can, he assured us, find 250 fungi, 1350 beetles, 50 grasses, sedges and rushes, 63 breeding birds and some 170 burrowing wasps and bees. Samples featured in a remarkable selection of slides, for which Dr Reeve thanked the efforts of many naturalist photographers in the Park in recent years. With the Park being used by up to 3 million visitors a year, Dr Reeve made clear the need to ensure that this does not interfere with its function as a Nature Reserve, where the interests of wildlife are paramount.

Thriving on decay

"Why don't they tidy up the Park by removing some of the fallen timber?" It's a question that visitors often ask during Saturday morning walks with the Friends. The answer is supplied in a colourful leaflet, *Decaying Wood: Managing a Valuable Wildlife Habitat*, published by Richmond Biodiversity Group in partnership with The Royal Parks and Richmond Council. The leaflet explains in clear detail how our giant oaks and other trees, resplendent in their prime, play no less important a part in the ecology of the Park as they reach the end of their centuries-long lives. Cavities in still-standing dead trees provide nesting and roosting sites for bats and birds. Once fallen, the decaying wood is home to some 1800 of Britain's invertebrate species. Among these is the threatened stag beetle, subject of a special monitoring project in Richmond Park.

The policy of Royal Parks is therefore to prolong the life of mature and ancient living trees by careful pruning, and to leave fallen timber intact or in large pieces close to the parent tree. Rip cuts and coronet cuts, monoliths and loggers, bracket fungi and click beetles - all these terms and species related to woodland ecology are explained and illustrated in the free leaflet, available at Holly Lodge or on organised walks.

News in brief and photos by Michael Davison



A home for beetles

Jean Martin

Twickenham MP speaks to Friends

Dr Vincent Cable, Lib-Dem MP for Twickenham, and currently Lib-Dem Shadow Chancellor, addressed some 70 people at our annual lunch on 18 November in the refurbished Russell Suite at Pembroke Lodge in the Park. He stressed that a treasured amenity like Richmond Park needs professional care to maintain its natural beauty and protect its wildlife. Such care comes at a cost, said Dr Cable. The Royal Parks as a whole already face a maintenance backlog of more than £100 million. The Government, while committed to huge spending on such projects as the coming Olympic Games, must not 'skimp' on the funding necessary to preserve our natural heritage.



Friends' Patron Lord Rix talking to Vincent Cable MP at the November lunch

Good going for newcomers

A walk in Richmond Park was the highlight of Kingston Council's "Good Going Week" in September. The week is part of the Council's campaign to encourage people to walk, cycle or use public transport - and leave their cars at home. A large group assembled on a bright Sunday morning at Kingston Gate where they were welcomed by Sam Merrison, of the Council's Environment and Sustainability Department, and Michael Davison, one of the Friends of Richmond Park walk leaders. They ambled up to Pembroke Lodge, where each walker was presented with a £5 refreshment voucher. Afterwards, Sam and Michael led the group back to Kingston Gate via the Isabella Plantation. Several walkers admitted this was their first sight of Richmond Park and promised to return for one of our Saturday morning walks.



The September walkers

Bobbies on bikes

The police are "working towards 'bobbies on bikes'", said Sgt. Kelvin Clarke at a "Parkwatch" meeting in November. In order to meet health and safety requirements, two officers have been trained on a cycle course, involving cycling round cones, downstairs, etc., and they are now waiting for equipment such as the right helmets and lighting.



Helmets of the Metropolitan Police and the Royal Parks Constabulary (now the Royal Parks Operational Command Unit of the Met)

On the subject of car speeds, Sgt. Clarke reported that, between April and September 2005, 137 drivers were reported for excess speed in the Park. Those travelling between 20 and 30 mph get fixed penalty notices. Inspector Simon Broughton explained that the 20 mph signs have been moved nearer the Park entrances so drivers are alerted earlier.

Thanks to Friends' committee member John Repsch for this news item.

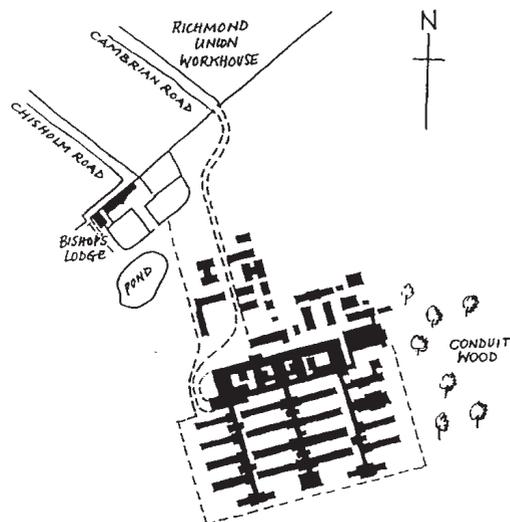
The army in Richmond Park

By Douglas Reynolds

In the last newsletter Michael Davison wrote about the Park's role in the 1948 Olympics, referring to the army camp that was there from 1938 to 1965. In response to our request for further information about the camp, I have received some interesting stories.

A number of men have told me about the games of football held against the Army during the period. And several ladies, including my wife, have said they attended dances at the camp.

One ex-soldier from the North was convalescing as a result of an injury, went to a dance, met a lady from Kingston and they



Former layout of the war hospital in the Park

eventually got married. I have no doubt that there were other marriages as a result of meeting in the Park during the War.

This camp was not the first: it is recorded that between 1652 and 1658 some of Cromwell's soldiers were accommodated in the Park. Among payments to keepers noted in the Chamberlains's Vellum Book in 1654 was £58.13s.3p. for assessments towards the maintenance of the Army.

I have found no further reference to the Army until the First World War (1914-1918), when a large military camp was established on what we now know as the golf courses. Also during this time, the South African War Hospital was erected between Conduit Wood and Bishop's Lodge, and Cambrian Gate was provided specifically to serve the unit.

The Hospital was eventually demolished in 1925, but military use of the Park was to linger on for a number of years.

In 1922 some 30 "Field Days" were held, involving a large number of troops; another regular visitor was the Household Cavalry, with the Guards regiments.

I am pleased that the Army no longer uses the Park today. There would be such security issues that people would not be allowed to enter the Park and enjoy this Natural Nature Reserve and Site of Special Scientific Interest.

Douglas Reynolds is a committee member, former Chairman of the Friends and one of our walk leaders.

Biodiversity on a summer's evening

By Sheila Hamilton

Diverse it certainly was! We saw Canary Wharf tower, the London Eye and the arch of the new Wembley stadium with its plane-warning lights. We heard the sounds of a disco in Sheen and fireworks signalling the end of a concert in Kew Gardens, while St Helier hospital loomed bright white in the twilight. But as we reached the centre of the Park, the sounds gradually faded and there were magical moments with no planes overhead and no human sounds.

Then there was the biodiversity we had come to be introduced to. We set off in three groups, led by Nigel Reeve (Community Ecology Officer for the Royal Parks Agency), John Hatto (London Wildlife Trust and local stag beetle expert) and Peter Burrows-Smith (committee member).

En route to Holly Lodge, we stopped to admire the subtle shades of acid grassland. Then we all saw a demonstration by a family of Little Owls, obligingly flying to and fro from fence post to tree stump. The young ones are virtually indistinguishable from the old tree stumps - you had to wait until they turned their heads to be certain that it was

not just a lump on the side of the old tree. Earlier we had sighted swifts, a kestrel, some parakeets, woodpeckers and various members of the crow family. We heard a tawny owl in the trees on our way to Pen Ponds, where a few common terns were audible – and just visible – in the dark.

Down by Pen Ponds we also heard two types of bat (Daubenton and Pipistrelle), with the help of Nigel Reeve's "bat meter", which enables one to distinguish the different types of bat as they emit at various frequencies. After nightfall, bats swoop low over the surface of the water, feeding on thousands of moths and other insects that hover there.

In contrast to last year's summer evening walk, pre-booking was essential, numbers were manageable and we had a member of the St John Ambulance Brigade in attendance. A great deal of organisation went into the walk, and we are grateful to the staff at Holly Lodge and other members of the Royal Parks Agency who advised and assisted, as well as to the marshals and particularly the three leaders. A lot of happy people trooped home late in the evening.



Peter Burrows-Smith pointing out a butterfly on a Friends' walk in the summer

Jane Braham - reflecting on 25 years in the Park

by Piers Eley

Jane Braham retired as Assistant Park Superintendent in September after working in the Park for 25 years. During my involvement with the Richmond Park Wildlife Group over the past 10 or 12 years, Jane has been at the heart of the Park's management team and has been an influential figure in its steadily increasing sensitivity to ecological issues.

Her contributions to our discussions in the Wildlife Group have always been valuable and to the point and, often, in her quiet way, she has corrected some misconception or headed me away from one of my wilder ideas, by pointing out some possible consequence that I might otherwise have overlooked. I



Jane in front of the bog garden she created with her team

shall miss her wise counsel and, rather than write my usual "Nature Notes" for this issue, in what is always a quiet period in the Park's wildlife year, I thought I would invite Jane to tell me a little about herself and her experiences in the Park, which she was kind enough to do.

PE: When you came here 25 years ago, what was your first job in the Park?

JB: I was an unskilled gardener in a team reporting to Wally Miller, who was Head

Gardener in the Isabella Plantation at that time. It was really Wally Miller, and George Thomson, the Park Superintendent who appointed him, who were responsible for creating the Isabella as we know it today.

PE: Did you have any previous gardening experience or qualification?

JB: No! I had a degree in fine arts and had been teaching art in a technical college for 13 years. I needed a change. I wanted to

train as an ecologist and thought that, if I had a day job as a manual labourer, my brain would be able to concentrate on my academic studies in the evening. Of course it didn't work out like that. I was hoping to learn about tigers and trees and found myself having to study topics like

thermodynamics and bacteriology, in which I had little interest.

Meanwhile, I became increasingly fascinated by horticulture – I learnt a lot from Wally Miller, who was self-taught, hugely enthusiastic and a mine of information, particularly on Rhododendrons, Azaleas and Camellias – and it became impossible for me to continue my ecological studies as well. Nevertheless, I have always retained my interest in ecology.

PE: When did you take over responsibility for

the Isabella Plantation?

JB: In 1990 the vacancy as "Horticultural Foreman" came up for the third time since Wally Miller's retirement. I applied for the job and was lucky enough to be appointed. Unfortunately, the job now had wider responsibilities throughout the Park and I was rarely able to get in there and work alongside the people for whom I was now responsible. I always enjoyed the camaraderie of working as part of a team of gardeners in the Isabella. I think those were some of the happiest years of my life. Then, of course, in 1992 the workforce was privatised and the whole thing changed.

PE: How did it change?

JB: Well, the workforce were no longer employed by the Royal Parks Agency, but by independent contractors. Instead of managing my team, I was now Supervisor of the ground maintenance contract for the whole of the Park, a mammoth task, working under Mike Fitt as Park Superintendent and Bill Cathcart as his deputy.

PE: But you were still in charge of what happened in the Isabella?

JB: Oh yes! I planned the work, designed new planting schemes and, with the help of my colleagues, chose what shrubs and trees to plant. But I didn't get in there to dig any longer!

PE: What are the things you are most proud of achieving during your time at Isabella?

JB: Everything I have been able to achieve at Isabella has resulted from the collaboration and support of the very good team of



Gunnera manicata in the bog garden

gardeners working there. In the early 1990s, with the assistance of John Bond of the Savill Garden, we set up a National Collection of the "Wilson Fifty" Kurume Azaleas, all of them shrubs introduced to this country by E H ("Chinese") Wilson, the famous plant hunter. At the same time we started exhibiting Isabella's plants at the RHS Shows in Westminster, winning three silver cups, one twice, and a great many first prizes for our Rhododendrons, Azaleas and other shrubs, which was a source of great encouragement to the whole team. An added bonus was that this put us in contact with gardeners from other great rhododendron gardens.

During my time as head gardener I also planned and saw through to completion three new garden areas. The first of these was "Wilson's Glade", a rather secret glade that we created near the Broomfield Hill entrance. In this we planted a selection of unusual shrubs and trees that Wilson had introduced from China and Japan. These include a selection of Japanese Maples, Chinese Magnolias, Tibetan Cherries, a Chinese Tulip Tree, a Birch-leaved Viburnum, and a host of others. They make a most attractive and

varied display. Then, in 2000 we created a really splendid Bog Garden with five pools fed by Thomson's Stream. This gave me the opportunity to introduce many varied and architecturally striking plants that thrive in that environment, like Bamboos, Gunnera, Hostas and Giant Grasses.

Next, in 2003, to celebrate the Garden's Golden Jubilee, we created a white garden, known as the Birthday Glade, on the mounds of soil that had been dug out to make the ponds in the Bog Garden. This is along the fence to the East of Peg's Pond and is well worth a visit. Here you will find many shrubs whose "blossoms" consist of white papery bracts, including the Handkerchief Tree, Cornus "Eddie's White Wonder" and Hydrangeas, such as *H. quercifolia*, the so-called Oak-leaved Hydrangea, which is one of my favourites.

Something that pleased us all very much was that Robin Lane Fox selected the Isabella as one of his 10 best gardens in the country, in his article for the Financial Times in April. On the same day, the Independent also included the Isabella in its supplement "The 100 Best Gardens in the Country", as one of the top 10 woodland gardens. We felt this gave the Isabella some of the recognition that it truly deserved.

PE: Can you remind me how the Isabella got its name?

JB: On old maps, before its enclosure by Lord Sidmouth in the mid-nineteenth century, it was already known as the "Isabel Slade". It is thought that this reflected the dingy yellow colour of the garden's topsoil. The use of "Isabel" to mean "dingy yellow" was coined after Queen Isabel of Austria swore never to change her linen until the siege of Ostend was successful. No-one knows quite why she chose to do this, but it appears that the siege lasted three years and the impact on her

clothing did not pass unnoticed.

PE: What changes have you noticed since you first came to the Park?

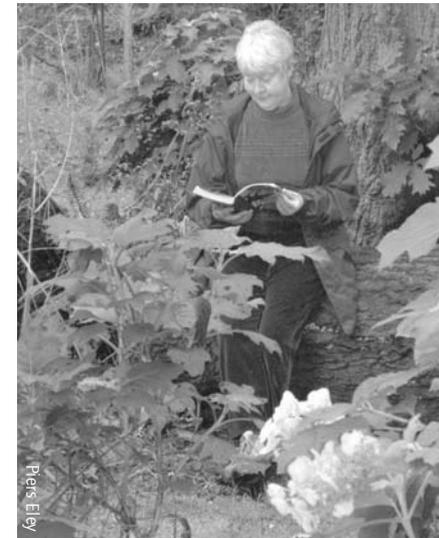
JB: Well, of course the emphasis is quite different. We are all much more aware of the ecological priorities than we were. This is most noticeable in the management of the trees, which are allowed, even encouraged, to retain dead wood, provided this is not considered dangerous, because of the wildlife which thrives on it, and when branches do fall, we leave them to rot on the ground. In the old days this would have been considered very sloppy management! Generally the management of the Park has become more sustainable. For example, I was given the task of developing a Park-wide recycling and composting system. This, together with cutting and composting bracken, has allowed us to become completely peat free.

I am afraid wildlife has inevitably become under greater pressure with the ever increasing numbers of people, dogs and cars that use the Park. Against that, some of the Wildlife Group's initiatives have born fruit. The re-enclosure of the Reed Beds at the South end of Pen Ponds has been very successful and the Bird Group's designation of Lawn Field, the grass area above lower Pen Pond, as a dogs-on-leads area, appears to have been very beneficial. Certainly the numbers of breeding Skylarks recorded in the area has risen year on year since we did this.

I regret the increase of signage in the Park, particularly that associated with the Tamsin Trail: it interferes with the natural feeling of the Park, but I can see that it is necessary. By contrast, the new illustrated notice boards, celebrating the Park's status as a National Nature Reserve, have been a wholly positive and successful development, much appreciated by the public.

PE: Tell me about the Bird Group, which I know you helped to organise.

JB: As you know, this was really an initiative of Jacqueline Shane, your predecessor as Chairman of the Wildlife Group. I was merely the facilitator who organised the meetings and made things happen. Nigel Reeve (the Royal Parks' ecologist) and I designed the circular "Transect Walk", which samples the varying habitats of the Park. This survey, now in its seventh year, has been a great success and has taught us a lot about the bird population in the Park. Now we are trying to map the resident bird population and their nesting areas, so that this information can be



Enjoying a quiet moment in her white garden

taken into account in planning the environmental management of the Park. We have a really excellent and committed team of bird recorders who also lead bird-spotting walks several times a year, which are very popular. This reminds me that we also have gardeners' walks in the Isabella, which we started in 2003, as part of the Birthday Celebrations, and which were so successful

that they have continued on a regular basis ever since.

PE: Now that you have retired, how do you plan to spend your time?

JB: At the moment I want to have a long rest with no commitments. Then I plan to explore the art and architecture of London in depth, learn Italian and visit the gardens of Italy and go travelling with my daughter, who is a choreographer and movement director in opera, when she goes on tour.

I also want to go to India, to see tigers. I have always been fascinated by tigers. They are the most beautiful of all creatures. I used to imagine them appearing through the grasses in the Isabella Plantation. Now I would like to go and see them in the wild. And when Mike, my partner and long-serving member of the "Isabella gang", retires in two years, I expect we shall do a lot of walking and birding, particularly on the North Norfolk coast.

PE: What about gardening? Is there a garden attached to your new house?

JB: Certainly not! One of our top criteria in choosing a house was that it should have no lawn for Mike to mow. There is a small back yard in which I may grow some herbs, but nothing that requires any serious work.

PE: What has been your overriding impression and memory of your time in the Park?

JB: Hard work, but with many rewards and a great deal of pleasure. I must say that I could not have had a nicer collection of colleagues with whom to work throughout my time here. I hope and expect that they will always remain our close friends.

PE: Jane, thank you!

Piers D C Eley

Piers Eley is Chairman of the Richmond Park Wildlife Group.

A bevy of Beverley beauties

by Tony Drakeford

My favourite damselfly and indeed to my mind the most beautiful of all British insects is alive, well and flourishing along Beverley Brook in Richmond Park. Until about five years ago, the Banded Demoiselle was rarely seen along the brook but now, as further proof of improved water quality, the lovely insect's population has increased to a point where it can be found in vast numbers from early to late summer, fluttering with slowly beating wings just above the surface and along the margins of the brook.

A comparatively large damselfly, the male sports an iridescent deep blue body with distinctive navy blue wing patches, whilst the female is metallic mid-green with bronze-green wings.

A walk along the brook in Richmond Park from Killcat Bridge upstream on a sunny mid-summer's afternoon can be a magical experience. Flanked by long grasses wherein Meadow Brown, Gatekeeper and Skipper



Female Banded Demoiselle

butterflies jostle for position on Ragwort and thistles, the brook plays host to hordes of Demoiselles.

Males are vigorously territorial and flicker like miniature helicopters as they display or chase prospective mates over the water. However, unlike most damselfly species, which can often be seen in tandem, mating pairs of Banded Demoiselles are encountered very infrequently.

A single specimen of a closely related species, the Beautiful Demoiselle, was recorded last year, so we hope to see more of them too, as both species share similar habitats to some extent.

Text and photos by Tony Drakeford, member of the Richmond Park Wildlife Group



More opportunities to find out about wildlife

by Peter Burrows-Smith

As a society, the Friends are strongly focused on increasing understanding of Richmond Park's importance as a National Nature Reserve. With this in mind, we are putting much energy into improving and expanding our educational activities in 2006.

First, we are expanding our walks repertoire to offer you a chance to learn more about wildlife. Most of our regular walks will include a wildlife option with extra guidance from a specialist. We plan to expand the topics covered to include deer, veteran trees, beetles, skylarks, wildfowl and even photography. It will be well worth getting up extra early on 29 April to join the Spring Birdsong walk starting at 7.30am (if you think that's early, the leader had originally suggested 4.30!).

Introduction to Birdwatching in the Park

In addition, we want to test your interest in special educational events, starting with an Introduction to Birdwatching. These two-hour courses will cover the basics in identifying the Park's birds and their songs.

They will take place in winter, when it is easier to focus on the many resident birds - ranging from the tiny but vocal wren, to the crow family, woodpeckers and the ring-necked parakeet.

Most of our time will be spent outside walking in the Park, but we'll begin with a brief session inside Pembroke Lodge, where coffee/tea will be provided. There's a choice of dates: Saturday 21 January or 18 February 2006.

The courses are free and you must book in advance via Peter Burrows-Smith, our walks organiser.

Biodiversity talk in January

We're also planning bi-monthly evening talks through the year, alternating between Richmond and Kingston locations. Our first, on "Biodiversity", is by Charlotte Williams in Richmond on 5 January.

Veteran tree discussion in April

Before our formal AGM business in April 2006, there'll be a forum for members to ask questions and put points of view about the Park. This will be followed by a discussion, with audience participation, about veteran trees in the Park. Mike Fitt, recently retired from The Royal Parks, will be there, as will Bill Cathcart from Windsor Great Park. We'll have at least two experts on veteran trees. There will also be something to eat and drink before the formal AGM. Fuller details in the next newsletter.

All these walks and events are listed on the inside back cover.

Friends of Richmond Park Committee members

Patron: Lord Rix, CBE

Chairman: John Collier

Vice Presidents: Richard Carter, Douglas Reynolds, David Thorpe

Other committee members:

Brian Baker (Hon. Secretary); Alison Donaldson (Newsletter Editor); Sheila Hamilton (Hon. Membership Secretary); John Waller (Hon. Treasurer); Ann Brown; Peter Burrows-Smith; Ron Crompton; Joanna Jackson; John Repsch; Mary Thorpe

PR & marketing expertise sought

Do you know about PR or press relations or marketing - or perhaps all three? Could you give some time to help the Friends? We want to expand our membership, encourage members and supporters to come to our walks and talks and, in particular, campaign for the Park and against any threats to its natural beauty and long term future.

Our Park walks in particular attract very good numbers but we would like more of our members and supporters to come to our talks and other events as well. We would also like to do more with local schools and community groups to raise awareness of the importance of the Park and the threats to it. But we are hampered by a lack of real PR, press relations and marketing skills on the Friends' Committee.

Can you help or do you know of anyone who might? The Committee meets six times each year but if you don't want to join you could advise us from work or home or liaise with the Committee in some other way.

We have recently launched a website (www.frp.org.uk), updated our membership application form and radically improved our newsletter. Our walks and events feature in the listings service of Richmond and Kingston libraries. In turn, some of the local papers pick up information from the listings service - so we have made some good progress in raising awareness of the Friends and what we do. But there is a lot more to be done.

If you can help or know of someone who can, please talk to or e-mail:

John Collier (Chairman) 020 8940 1921, johncollier@blueyonder.co.uk, or

Brian Baker (Hon. Secretary) 020 8546 3109, briangbaker@beeb.net

Can you help us become a charity?

Are any of you experts in current charity law? Would you be prepared to advise the Friends in making an application for charitable status? If so, please contact our Hon. Treasurer:

John Waller
020 8946 8435

From the Membership Secretary

As you may recall, we have now moved to new subscription rates (Individual £6, Households and Organisations £10).

If you pay by Bankers Order and have instructed your bank to amend your payment to reflect the new rates, thank you. If you have not, could I please ask you to do so now?

If you pay by cheque, there is a renewal form enclosed for the subscription year beginning 1 January 2006. If you have not received a form, this means that you are not due to pay until 1 January 2007. This is either because you paid for two years or more previously, or you have joined the Friends very recently. New members are informed of our renewal details in their welcome letter.

As always, if you have any queries, please do get in touch:

Sheila Hamilton,
Hon Membership Secretary,
16 Wayside,
East Sheen,
London
SW14 7LN

Telephone 020 8876 2623

Friends' Events

5 Jan, 7.30pm:

Vestry Hall
21 Paradise Road
Richmond

21 Jan, 10am:

meet at Pembroke
Lodge, Richmond Park

18 Feb, 10am:

As above

16 Mar, 7.30pm:

Mayo Hall, United
Reformed Church,
Eden Street, Kingston

22 April, 10am - 3pm:

Shiraz Mirza Hall
(by Norbiton Station)

Talk on Biodiversity

by Charlotte Williams, Chair of Richmond Biodiversity Group.

Introduction to Birdwatching

Basic birdwatching skills in 2 hours. Open to all. Mainly outside. Coffee/tea provided. Book in advance via Peter Burrows-Smith on 020 8878 4022.

Introduction to Birdwatching

As above. This is an alternative date.

Richmond Park – reading the landscape

Talk by David McDowall, author of The Walker's Guides series (www.davidmcdowall.com)

Veteran Trees

Discussion and Friends' AGM. More details in next newsletter.

Walks	Date	Starting and finishing at
All are welcome to join these free guided walks.	26 Dec 2005, 10am	Broomfield Hill car park (Boxing Day walk)
All except the Spring Birdsong walk begin at 10am and finish around midday at the car park or gate shown. Please keep dogs under control.	7 Jan 2006, 10am	Sheen Gate car park (with Winter Wildfowl option)
	4 Feb, 10am	Ladderstile Gate (including Veteran Tree option with Park Manager)
	4 Mar, 10am	Roehampton Gate car park (including Beetle option)
	1 April, 10am	Robin Hood Gate car park (including Skylark option)
For further information, contact Peter Burrows-Smith, Tel. 020 8878 4022.	29 April, <u>7.30am</u>	Pembroke Lodge car park (Spring Birdsong special)
	6 May, 10am	Broomfield Hill car park (including photography option with Joanna Jackson)

