

# The Friends of Richmond Park



Birds – what you might find in the Park

The oldest map of Richmond Park

A special job in a special place

Vital beetle research

## Birdo basics

This newsletter has a lot of birds in it, in keeping with the time of year. I just managed to squeeze into the Friends' March *Introduction to Birdwatching* course run by Peter Burrows-Smith. He put the March date in the diary after he realised that the January and February courses were fully booked! It was a real pleasure and I think it gave people a fantastic foundation, making it so much easier to continue learning.

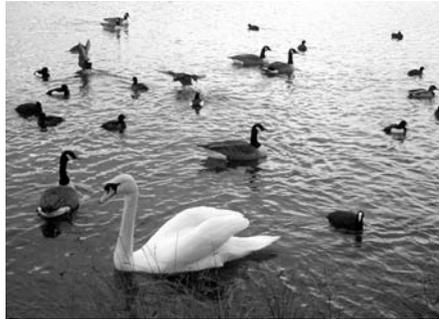
Peter told us that last year some 118 bird species were observed in the Park, of which 52 bred there. These 118 birds include many "visitors", on passage and resting briefly in the Park.

Winter is a good time to start to learn about birdwatching, he explained, because the birds you will see in the Park (and possibly in your garden) are mainly "residents", such as Blue Tits, Robins, Jackdaws, Wood pigeons and Woodpeckers.

In any case, it's probably best to focus on about 30 to 40 birds to begin with. The Park is a rewarding place to learn, partly because it also has a number of bird species that are at risk, such as Skylarks, Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, and Reed Buntings. We even have two to three pairs of Little Owls breeding there, Peter added.

You don't need much equipment to get started: binoculars, a basic bird book and a notebook to record unusual sightings. Bird identification, Peter explained, has three main elements: field marks (e.g. colour, shape, size, tail, legs); sounds (either song or call); and character or "JIZZ" (derived from "GISS", which stands for "general indication of shape and size").

He read out some delightful examples of "character" from one of the bird books, according to which the Carrion Crow has "a



*Wind chill at Pen Ponds*

menacing air", the Magpie is "canny, missing no trick" and the Jackdaw has a "cocky gait, looks neat and well turned out".

The only thing Peter forgot to say was that birdwatching in winter can be a frosty business! The wind chill factor at Pen Ponds, where we identified several varieties of ducks and geese, was ferocious! Nevertheless, it was a fantastic introduction and, based on its success, we hope to develop similar courses on other wildlife topics in future (trees, butterflies, and courses for children are some that have been suggested already, as well as more bird sessions). Further ideas welcome.

**Alison Donaldson**

[alison@donaldson.demon.co.uk](mailto:alison@donaldson.demon.co.uk)

Design: Anne-Claire Martin:  
[anneclaire.martin@berlin.de](mailto:anneclaire.martin@berlin.de)

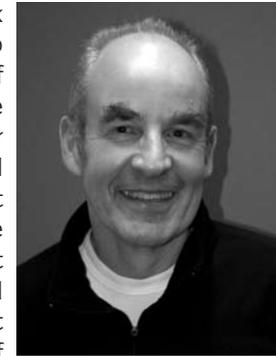
Print: Selsey Press Ltd:  
[derrick@selseypress.co.uk](mailto:derrick@selseypress.co.uk)

Photo on front cover by Tony Drakeford:  
jackdaw pair at nest hole

*Quark XPress tutor sought!*  
I am looking for someone to help me do the newsletter more quickly – any offers?

## Meetings, meetings, meetings...

The Friends of Richmond Park was formed in 1961 "to encourage the preservation of Richmond Park for the enjoyment of the public for air and exercise, leisure and recreation". There are eight more objectives but this is the first one and captures best what I believe the Friends is all about. How do we go about encouraging the preservation of



the Park? There are lots of ways, but one which falls to me as Chairman is to represent our views to the government, the Royal Parks Agency (RPA), local authorities and MPs. And this is best done by meetings.

There have been several recently, including an important one with the Minister for Culture, David Lammy. We met in January when I was joined by the Chairmen of the Friends groups for the other Royal Parks. The main thing we emphasised was the long-term underfunding by central government of all the Royal Parks and the huge backlog of maintenance expenditure. The Minister was sympathetic but, in the end, unhelpful. He says that everyone he sees wants more money – why are we different? And in any case other similar parks in the USA and Australia raise much more of their funding themselves. We pointed out that the inevitable consequence of this is that the RPA has to become more "commercial" – e.g. by putting on more paying events. There is a great danger of this commercialisation threatening the preservation of our Park.

We also tackled him over policing in the Parks. This is now the responsibility of the Metropolitan Police, so the Royal Parks police is (almost) no more. The problem is that policing the Parks is only a small part of what

the Met has to do. Terrorism, drugs and serious crime are its main responsibilities, and the needs of Richmond Park seem to be well down its list. I believe the Park needs sustained policing by experienced policemen who know and care for it, live locally and work here for a long time. Their main role should be enforcement of the Park bye-laws.

I also raised a personal passion of mine with the Minister – can we have our police horses back, stabled at Holly Lodge and out and about in the Park seven days a week? Sitting on a horse gives wonderful visibility for the rider, the horse itself is highly visible and can go anywhere in the Park. Sitting in a car or even riding a bike is no substitute. I see no reason why this cannot be a requirement of the Met as part of the service level agreement between it and the RPA. And not just in Richmond, but in all the Royal Parks.

We have also had meetings over the last few months with the Royal Parks Foundation and several with the Chief Executive of the RPA. In addition, there was a "stakeholders' meeting" in Pembroke Lodge in February, where we discussed what the Park does well, what it could do better and how it can play a greater role in the surrounding areas. It was a good-natured meeting with some great ideas.

The Friends are not alone in their passion for the Park and its preservation. I hope we can continue to build alliances with others so that we are well positioned to push for the things that are needed – not least, more money and improved policing.

**John Collier**

[johncollier@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:johncollier@blueyonder.co.uk)

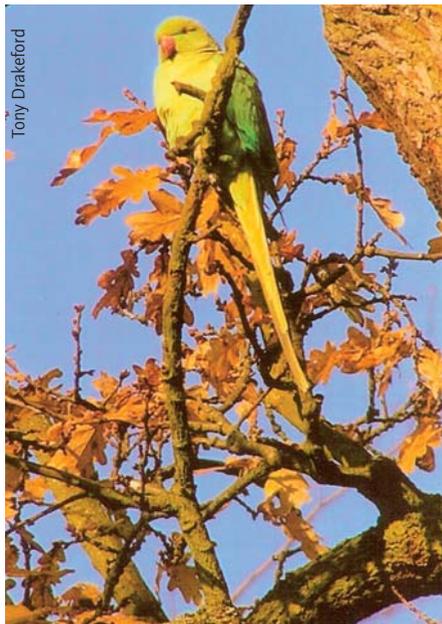
## Parakeets – pest or welcome interloper?

by Peter Burrows-Smith

With the peace of the Park being rudely interrupted by the rapidly growing numbers of raucous parakeets, there are two widely different views on this relatively new bird in the British skies.

On the one hand, there is the large group of wildlife enthusiasts, be they bird watchers or general conservationists, who find this interloper both a potential threat to our native birds and an infringement on the peace and natural wildlife sounds.

On the other hand, there are those people, with little previous interest in wildlife, who are now aware of a bright, noisy bird and are just thinking that maybe our wildlife could be interesting. Wearing my education hat, I have to accept that anything that can encourage new converts to the rich biodiversity of our outdoors should not be dismissed lightly.



Tony Drakeford

Whatever your views on this bird, there are many stories about its introduction to the UK. The most common seems to be that a number escaped from a late 1960s film set somewhere in South West London, and they have thrived ever since.

Whilst there are several species of parakeet now on the loose in the UK, especially in South West London, by far the commonest is the Ring-necked Parakeet, with as many as 100 nests in the Park already. This species, the RSPB's website tells us, is native to India, where it is found "in jungle and around farms and gardens" (see [www.rspb.org.uk](http://www.rspb.org.uk)).

Our main concern is that this early and prolific breeder may be taking over sites from the many other tree-cavity-nesting birds in the Park such as Woodpeckers and Jackdaws. This is mainly anecdotal at the moment, but we shall soon have to start monitoring the situation seriously. To the many people, myself included, who enjoy the sounds, and peace, of the Parks, these parakeets are a rapidly increasing source of "noise pollution". I have a great deal of sympathy for people living near the huge evening roosts in South London, where numbers in excess of 6,000 birds have been recorded!

So what about the future? With populations apparently growing by up to 30% a year, something serious has to be done soon. Is it the next major wildlife pest? Quite possibly. Since it is a protected bird under the Wildlife and Countryside Act, are there any natural ways to curb it? As it seems to have no natural enemies, how about introducing a few goshawks? Any other ideas?

*Peter Burrows-Smith is a member of the Friends' committee and is busy expanding our educational activities*

## Birding in the Park – an overview

by Barry Marsh

On 29 April our spring birdsong walk will take place again (see inside back cover for details). One of last year's walk leaders was Barry Marsh, who here gives an overview of birds to look and listen out for in the Park. Spring is one of the most interesting times for birdwatching. At this time of year, the birds are becoming more vocal as they try to attract a mate and establish their territory, and summer visitors are beginning to appear in the Park. And in early spring, the leaves are not yet fully out, making it easier to see some of the birds than later on when everything is green.

Any observant person even with a little ornithological knowledge must surely notice the varied bird life when walking in the Park. Those with experience and familiarity with calls and songs can easily notch up, during the course of a year, a total of 70 to 80 species. 95 and maybe even 100 is not impossible, though this might require at least two visits per week plus a lot of luck throughout the year.

The area where birds are most obvious is around Pen Ponds, the only large expanse of water in the Park with its small adjacent wetland of phragmites reed and bulrush. Here a number of species breed and/or spend the winter, and it is a good place to see spring and autumn migrants. The sharp-eyed will see eight species of goose and duck including Canada Goose, Mallard, Tufted Duck, Pochard and Mandarin during the breeding season and a further five species of duck in the winter months, with the possibility of the fish-eating Goosander and Smew as a bonus.

Perhaps the most interesting bird to watch, especially in spring, is the Great Crested Grebe for which we have fairly detailed breeding records going back to 1899 when it first appeared at the Pen Ponds. Once you have witnessed the end of its courtship performance, the penguin dance, you will be on the lookout for it every spring.

Away from the Ponds, all three species of woodpecker are present, the largest being the Green, which can often be seen on anthills in the open parts of the Park. It does not drum but has a distinctive laughing call. Next in size is the Great Spotted which is rarely seen on the ground and is black and white with red under-tail coverts. The smallest, the Lesser Spotted, again black and white but with no red (except the male, who has a red cap), is easier to locate by its call. Knowing its "kik kik kik kik" is the key to finding it. Both of the black-and-white species drum, but recognising the difference requires experience.

The habitat of low scrub, brambles and stinging nettles, so beloved by warblers, is scarce in the Park, but even so Chiffchaff, Willow Warbler, Blackcap and Common



Canada Geese flocking

Whitethroat can be seen and heard in suitable habitat as well as Reed Warbler in the reed bed at the Ponds. On a lucky day in spring you might well encounter others like Lesser Whitethroat, Sedge, Wood and Garden Warblers. The Cuckoo, a common breeding visitor before 1960, is now sadly an uncommon migrant, its well known call almost a thing of the past.

Regular migrants to the bracken and open areas in April include Wheatear, Whinchat, Meadow Pipit and perhaps the odd Yellow Wagtail. At Pen Ponds, Swallow, Sand and House Martin and Swifts appear but are often "here today and gone tomorrow". The Stonechat, which can be seen throughout the year, is doing well at the moment in some of the bracken areas but does suffer during hard winters. In the same areas the Reed Bunting breed and can be seen, like Stonechats, perched conspicuously on the top of bracken fronds.

The crow family are a conspicuous group in the Park, with the Jackdaw the commonest, found wherever there are ancient oaks. The Carrion Crow is widespread and in recent years has been increasingly attracted to the causeway between the Pen Ponds, attracted by the public feeding the water fowl. The Rook, on the other hand, has been practically unknown since the 1930s – do not be fooled by seeing large numbers of Carrion Crows together and calling them Rooks. The Jay and the Magpie can be seen over much of the Park.



Jackdaw

A noisy newcomer is the Rose-ringed Parakeet (also known as the Ring-necked Parakeet – see previous article), an escaped cage bird, now breeding over a wide area and surely not overlooked by anyone unless they are stone deaf! Its raucous calls can be heard from far and it frequently uses old Green Woodpecker holes for nesting.

Two species of birds of prey frequent the Park. The Kestrel is often seen hovering or perched in an ancient oak, while the Sparrow Hawk is more likely to be seen in flight with its distinctive "flap flap...glide" action as it passes from one plantation to another. The Common Buzzard, once confined to western Britain, is now almost an annual visitor, so do not forget to look skywards occasionally.

There are two species of owl regularly nesting in the park. One, the Tawny Owl, is mainly nocturnal but can sometimes be seen roosting by day in pairs high up in conifer trees. The second one, the smaller Little Owl can be seen and heard more easily (it yelps like a puppy) over most of the open parts where there are scattered ancient oaks. End of June and into July is a good time to locate them.

If you fancy some bird watching in the Park take binoculars... you may be surprised what you see. Good luck!

*Barry Marsh is a member of the Bird Group (a sub-group of the Richmond Park Wildlife Group)*

## The oldest map of Richmond Park

by David McDowall

Most Friends will know that Charles I enclosed Richmond Park during the period 1632-37 in order to create a hunting park for himself. The consequent protection of this wonderful stretch of landscape makes us grateful for his autocratic behaviour then, even though it is something we would now deplore.

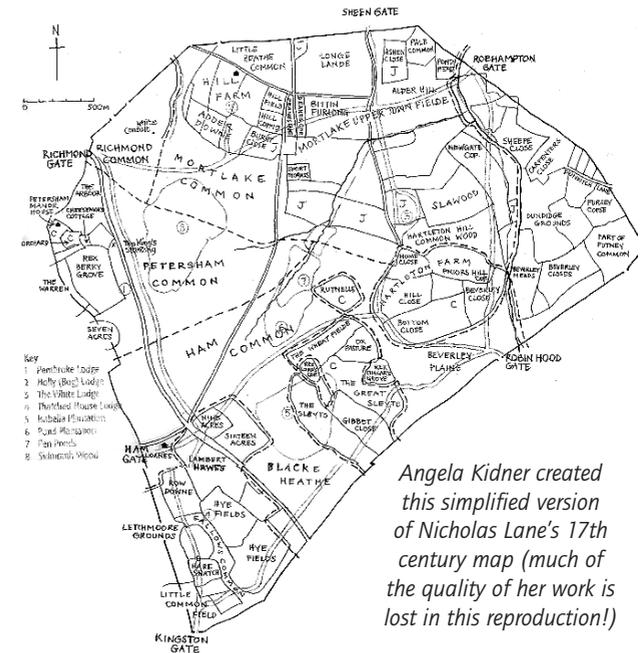
The landscape, as we all know, is poor agricultural land and for this reason almost all of it belonged to the commons or "wastes" of the manorial estates around it. A large segment of the proposed park lay inside royal manors (Ham, Petersham and Richmond). Elsewhere Charles had to deal with the respective manorial lord. Additionally, however, he had to ensure that the commoners of each manor would also be compensated for their loss. For most people this was essentially a loss of community grazing and other traditional rights.

We have further grounds to swallow our democratic principles and be grateful that he gave a written undertaking to the tenants of Ham that the surviving common fields and wastes would never be enclosed, hence the survival of Ham Common running from the Park wall into the heart of Ham.

However, the lords of each manor, including the royal manors, had also allowed certain people leases on lands, which they used for farming, and these too needed compensation. It was for this reason that Nicholas

Lane was commissioned to draw up a map showing who owned what.

Sadly we know almost nothing of interest concerning the tenants whose names are marked on the maps. William Murray is familiar because he was the occupant of Ham



*Angela Kidner created this simplified version of Nicholas Lane's 17th century map (much of the quality of her work is lost in this reproduction!)*

House. Charles had a soft spot for him because he was his childhood playmate and, more significantly, whipping boy, taking the chastisement on his own buttocks that was rightly due to the Royal Fundament.

Then there was Gregory Cole whose farmhouse stood at the foot of Petersham Park, just inside the present Petersham Gate. He lost land there, but also a much more substantial holding on the south eastern side of the Park: all of Spankers Hill down to Beverley Brook and also an equally large area

covering more than the Isabella Plantation and stretching up to the Park wall on Coombe Hill. Finally, there was the Juxon family in Mortlake, which acquired a militantly parliamentarian reputation during the Civil War. Beyond these three, however, there is almost nothing to be said regarding the many tenant names on Lane's map.

Nevertheless, there are important compensations for anyone walking the ground. For Lane's map tells us an enormous amount about the landscape in the 1630s, and one can tell many of these features were already several hundred years old, principally by the great age of the oak trees that still mark them. More than that, the few field names he gives us provide vital clues regarding land use or characteristics.

The steep slopes running down towards Ham Gate from Thatched House Lodge were called Row Down, meaning "rough hill". It was wooded, a few veteran oaks still surviving to tell the tale. On the opposite side of the Lodge the gentler slope down to the gully was called Lambert Hawes, almost certainly meaning "lambing enclosures".

It may be no accident that in 1990 the landscape archaeologist, Tom Greeves, identified a small circular animal fold dating back to the Middle Ages on this ground. Further along the escarpment the area just below Pembroke Lodge was also probably still wooded as its name Berry Grove implies. For "Berry" is probably a corruption of bearu meaning a small wood, so it is likely that the name Berry Grove was really a tautology. Growing timber and underwood, probably wet-loving ash, was the only intelligent thing to do with such steep slopes.

On the far side of the Park, two large strips of

land across the present Isabella Plantation and running up to the Park wall on the top of Coombe Hill were sheep walks: the Sleyts and the Great Sleyte, "sleyt" being an old word for sheep pasture. Elsewhere we get hints of a largely vanished landscape: Adder Down, with its hedgerow boundary trees which cross the access road to Holly Lodge, tells us of the reptiles we now seem sadly to have lost. Hare Snatch near Kingston Gate reminds us of another serious loss, of the hares which inhabited the Park until finally extinguished by the tide of human activity in the 1970s. Ox Pasture must have been grazing for Gregory Cole's ploughing teams. It is in Ox Pasture that the last shred of the heather that must once have been much more widespread grimly hangs onto life, now protected from trampling. You can still find Ox Pasture's boundary banks.

There is plenty more to find – signs of the once symbiotic relationship man had with nature here, a relationship we must recover if we do not wish the Park to be further diminished, and if we would like the Park to recover some of the assets it has lost over the past half century or so.

Discovering these features and exploring them on a walk adds not only another layer of delight to the many already offered by the Park, they remind us what a treasure house we are privileged to enter.

*David McDowall's revised and enlarged edition of his walker's guide, retitled "Richmond Park: The Walker's Guide", will be published in April 2006. You can buy the book from local bookshops or go to David's website [www.davidmcdowall.com](http://www.davidmcdowall.com)*

## A special job in a special place

by Michael Davison

*Richmond Park has a new Assistant Manager, Adam Curtis, to complete the Holly Lodge management team.*

The first meeting between Adam Curtis and the Friends of Richmond Park took place in the happiest of circumstances. Just eight weeks into his new post, he agreed to lead one of our Saturday walks. And as it was December, he gave the walk an original slant by pointing out flora and fauna associated with Christmas – hawthorn, ivy, holly, mistletoe, deer – and explaining not only their natural history but also the role they have played in myth and legend.

As Adam admits, he was in his element on that occasion, as this is the part of his job he likes best – roaming out and about in the Park's woodlands and open spaces, feeling at one with the atmosphere of what he calls "this very special place".

Adam Curtis comes to Richmond Park at the age of 34 with an impressive track record in countryside and conservation work, which started the moment he left school at 16. "I always wanted to be a naturalist and get outdoors to work with wild life", he recalls. In this ambition Adam was following a family tradition: his father collected snakes in the

Congo, while living with the pygmies, and his grandfather was a teacher at Merrist Wood College near Guildford, where Adam himself was to train in countryside management. He followed up this training with eight years' part-time study to achieve his MSc in arboricultural and community forest management.

Surrey born and bred, Adam has worked on Chobham Common, and served as a countryside ranger for Wokingham District and conservation officer for Ashted Common, where he devised his themed Christmas walk. His last post before coming to Richmond

Park was as Woodlands Officer for Surrey County Council. He has also found time to backpack through East Africa and visit Canada, Borneo, Senegal and The Gambia. It was on a bird-watching trip in Senegal that he met his partner Sarah, a linguist and police officer who works in London.

What attracted Adam to Richmond Park? As an outdoor man devoted to conservation, he sees the challenge of safeguarding and enhancing a National Nature Reserve as "an enormous privilege". In particular he finds the company of the Park's 1000 veteran trees a "humbling experience". He is particularly interested in preserving the Park's status as



one of Britain's major deadwood sites, where fallen timber is left undisturbed as home to myriad insects, including more than 200 beetles specialising in decaying wood habitats, some of which are on the "red data" list of threatened species. To certain beetles, says Adam, the decaying wood of a fallen tree is "as important as rain forest to the threatened mountain gorilla".

The house that goes with the job can't have been the least of the inducements that brought Adam to Richmond Park. Apparently, Oak Lodge, built in the 1850s for the Park Bailiff, isn't nearly as big inside as it looks from the outside – "it's a bit like Dr Who's Tardis in reverse", Adam observes. However, its enviable location at the edge of Sidmouth Wood means that his daily commute to and from the office in Holly Lodge is just a short walk across a corner of the Park.

On his way to and from work, Adam is usually accompanied by his dog Fitz. Like Park Manager Simon Richards, Adam is the proud owner of a German pointer, adopted from a rescue agency at the age of two. Fitz has already proved his breed's credentials by pointing to a nuthatch, which Adam suspects he would not otherwise have noticed.

The grounds of Oak Lodge, though much in use for estate maintenance, recycling work, charcoal burning and other purposes, still leave space for Adam and Sarah to rear their poultry. These include a cockerel with the unlikely name of Samantha. This bird was reprieved from the threat of an early demise (due to former neighbours not appreciating his early wake-up calls) by the move to Richmond Park, where he can crow to his heart's content.

Adam Curtis's experience in ecology and arboriculture will complement the skills of his

fellow Assistant Manager Jo Scrivener, whose background is primarily in horticulture (having trained at Kew). Jo has been at Holly Lodge for three years, and has inherited special responsibility for the Isabella Plantation from Jane Braham, who retired last year. He also directs the maintenance of Pembroke Lodge Gardens, and shares with Adam responsibility for the day-to-day management of the Park.

Is there any aspect of the Park on which Adam would particularly like to set his stamp? A little too early to say yet, perhaps, but he has already earmarked one action site. This, appropriately enough, is Adam's Pond, near Sheen Gate, where the water, silted up by years of duck droppings, is lacking in fish and other wildlife. In particular he would like to see more vegetation along its banks to encourage dragonflies and damselflies.

Adam is also particularly interested in the Park's bat population, and is training to gain his English Nature licence as a bat worker. He promises a bottle of champagne to any sharp-eared Friend who can help him to rediscover the rare barbastelle bat, unreported in Richmond Park since 1940.

Adam looks forward to a close working relationship with Simon Richards and Jo Scrivener and also with Nigel Reeve, Community Ecologist for the Royal Parks. He also welcomes close co-operation with the Friends and is confident of strong support at the Open Weekend on 15-16 July 2006.

For those who missed Adam's Christmas walk last year, the good news is that he has promised to repeat it on 2 December this year, other responsibilities permitting.

The Friends extend a warm welcome to Adam, and wish him well in his new job.

*Michael Davison is one of the Friends' regular walks leaders*

## Friends news

### Bike ride with Chief Executive

In March, Mark Camley, new Chief Executive of The Royal Parks, brought his bike and pedalled round the cycle track with Friends' committee members Brian Baker and Mary Thorpe. For this special visit, the weather placed Richmond Park under the grey, drizzly face associated with any attempt at festivity, such as an open air fete or a visit to the Park with overseas friends. But the ride was not doused as far as pleasure was concerned. We were pleased that Mark wanted to see the cycle track for himself and had spared the time to come. And we think that he was pleased to be away from his office and enjoying the lift which the Park always provides. Of more importance, we have the impression of a "hands-on" Chief Executive who likes to know what's what before making decisions and who was pleased to get his hands on the handlebars as far as the cycle track is concerned. We feel confident that these are good hands for The Royal Parks to be in. (Mary Thorpe)

### Learning about the Park

In addition to our usual walks, we have run a number of educational events since Christmas. Peter Burrows-Smith's Introduction to Birdwatching courses have been a tremendous hit. Starting with a modest target of 20 people for two Saturday mornings in January and February, the courses multiplied to around 30 on each, and an additional date in March was added. Peter reckons to have taken well over 150 phone calls and many people have been disappointed. Special thanks go to Daniel Hearsom for supplying a room at Pembroke Lodge and tea, coffee and biscuits for the participants.

In early January, Charlotte Williams, Chair of Richmond Biodiversity Group, gave a

fascinating talk on Biodiversity to a select audience. In March David McDowall gave a talk based on his enlarged and revised book about Richmond Park (see article by David in this issue). (Sheila Hamilton)

### Could you help with phone bookings?

Peter does a huge amount of work planning and organising talks and walks for the Friends. He would really appreciate it if someone could help him – especially with taking bookings for special courses and events such as the Introduction to Birdwatching. If you would be willing to help, please contact Peter on 020 8878 4022 or peter.burrows-smith@virgin.net.

### From the Membership Secretary

Thank you if you have already paid your subscription for this year by cheque. Final reminders to those who have not paid are enclosed with this newsletter.

On the Bankers Order front we continue to receive the increased membership fee as banks process your instructions. If you have not contacted your bank yet since fees increased in 2005, could you please do so now? Subscription rates are: Individual £6, Households and Organisations £10.

We would like to use electronic means of communication as much as possible as this is cheaper, quicker and more flexible. Can I urge all of you who can do so to look at our website from time to time, particularly in the periods between newsletters? We keep it updated regularly with news items and details of our events. The address is [www.frp.org.uk](http://www.frp.org.uk).

Our new membership application form includes a space for an email address. If you joined some time ago but would be happy for us to communicate with you by

email, could I ask that you email your email address, plus surname and postcode, to Barbara Cotton, who maintains the database for us? Her email address is: cottonbarbara@yahoo.co.uk.

If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to get in touch with me: Sheila Hamilton, Hon Membership Secretary, 16 Wayside, East Sheen, London SW14 7LN, Tel. 020 8876 2623.

### Inspecting golf course proposals



The Royal Parks are seeking to secure an operator for Richmond Park Golf Course, an historic 36-hole golf complex (comprising the Duke's and Prince's Golf Courses) located within Richmond Park. Members of the Friends' committee have been invited to walk the site and we will take this opportunity to review the proposal with the interests of the Park and its wildlife in mind. The Royal Parks welcome comments on the proposal. Details can be found on the RPA website, ([www.royalparcs.gov.uk](http://www.royalparcs.gov.uk)). Comments can be sent in by email (address on RPA website).

The current redevelopment proposals include:

- Access from A3 and new car parking
- New clubhouse
- Refurbishment of existing maintenance buildings
- 20 bay (non floodlit) golf-driving range
- Golf course alterations
- Five-hole approach course and putting green
- Golfing facilities for those with special needs.

### Park gates change

We have just heard that, from 1 April, private contractors will be replacing the police in opening and closing the Park gates each day. It will be interesting to see how punctual and efficient they are.

### New committee members

We are delighted to welcome three new members to our committee: Jackie Grimes and Karen Rockell, who are going to help us increase awareness of the importance of the Park and the work of the Friends, and Joanna Jackson, whom many of you will know as photographer and author of *A Year in the life of Richmond Park*. The committee is now:

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; Jackie Grimes; Joanna Jackson; John Repsch; Karen Rockell; Mary Thorpe

Patron: Lord Rix, CBE

## Vital beetle survey – please support

The beetle population of Richmond Park is one of three reasons why it is designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest, a National Nature Reserve and a European Special Area of Conservation (the other two reasons are its acid grassland and its ancient trees). The



*The cardinal click beetle*

beetles are also important nationally – Richmond Park is among the best sites in the country for decaying wood beetles (Windsor Great Park and Forest is top). Among its total of more than 1300 species of beetle, about 300 are decaying wood (saproxyllic) beetles, including rare examples such as *Ampedus cardinalis* (the cardinal click beetle), and of course the Stag Beetle, the largest species of beetle in Britain.

In order to conserve the beetle population in the Park, we first need to know more about it. Much of the data was collected in the 1980s, so we do not know the full range of species, their numbers or location, or how they are faring. This is why Nigel Reeve, Community Ecologist for the Royal Parks, wants an up-to-date survey, which would be conducted by Dr

Peter Hammond as the consultant, a well-known beetle specialist, and would start in May. (If funds allow, Nigel may also be able to pay for the identification of other important saproxyllic insect groups such as the flies (Diptera), which are “very understudied but no less important than the beetles”.

The Friends' committee view the survey as being vital in managing the ecology of the Park, and are therefore seeking donations towards the £6000 consultancy cost involved. The committee has already committed £600 from Friends' funds, and an anonymous donor has also given £500.

Please consider contributing. Your help will be greatly appreciated, whether it is £5, £25 or £500. If you would like to help, please send a cheque payable to The Friends of

Richmond Park, to:

The Friends of Richmond Park  
c/o Ron Crompton, 143 Palewell Park  
London SW14 8JJ

If you would like to discuss the survey further before contributing, please call Ron Crompton on 020 8876 1123.



We have also recently funded a plaque that marks the planting of Two Storm Wood in 1993 after the storms of 1987 and 1990.

**Could you help with fundraising?**

The Friends' committee would like to conduct an appeal like the beetle survey each year or so. If you have fundraising experience and would like to help, please contact Ron Crompton (see contact details on p.13).

**Ballet school opens doors on 24 June**

The Royal Ballet School at White Lodge in Richmond Park is holding a public open day on Saturday 24 June 11.00am-5.00pm. There will be dancing on the lawn at regular intervals. Other attractions are tours of the building, tours of the building site and a variety of stalls from home produce to jewelry and ballet bits and pieces. This is now a biannual event and about 1500 visitors are expected, including White Lodge pupils' families and local people.



*A perspective we don't normally see*

Tickets can be bought on the back gate: adults £3, children (5-16) and concessions £1. Optional tours of the building will cost £2. Parking will be on the polo field approaching White lodge, with disabled parking near the back gate. For enquires telephone 020 8392 8000 (White Lodge reception).

**Autumn visit to Fontainebleau**

Last May, The Friends of Richmond Park hosted a visit by The Friends of the Forest of Fontainebleau on the occasion of the "Twinning Affirmation Weekend" organised by the Richmond in Europe Association. (Richmond is twinned with Konstanz in Germany and Fontainebleau in France.) The Fontainebleau Friends have now invited us back for a long weekend, probably in September 2006!

Apart from the Forest, which is extensive, Fontainebleau also boasts its Palace and other tourist attractions. The Friends of the Forest will arrange suitable accommodation for us, and from this end we will organise travel by Eurostar to Paris and the short journey onward to Fontainebleau.

Any members interested in joining this trip please contact Mary Thorpe at 226 Sheen Lane, London SW14 8LB, or email Mary on marythorpe@inweb.co.uk or Brian Baker on briangbaker@beeb.net.

**Help wanted at Richmond May Fair**

We are going to have our own stand at the Richmond May Fair this year and would like volunteers who could help out, talking informally to people about the Park and the Friends. The May Fair is a great annual event, with local community stands colonising Richmond Green all day.

If you would be free to help us for an hour or two, or even for the whole day, please contact John Collier (johncollier@blueyonder.co.uk or telephone 020 8940 1921) or Peter Burrows-Smith (peter.burrows-smith@virgin.net).

**22 April, 10.30am-13.45pm:**  
Shiraz Mirza Hall (by Norbiton Station)

Veteran trees discussion followed by brief AGM. See flyer with this newsletter for details.

**13 May, all day:**  
Richmond Green

Richmond May Fair: the Friends will have a stand at this annual event

**15 May, 7pm:**  
Holly Lodge, Richmond Park

Parkwatch: police update the public on crime and safety in the Park. For info contact Kelvin.Clarke@met.police.uk

**15 June, 7.30pm:**  
Mayo Hall, United Reformed Church, Eden St, Kingston

Talk on butterflies by Piers Eley of the Richmond Park Wildlife Group. Free.

**24 June, 11am-5pm:**  
White Lodge, Richmond Park

Royal Ballet School open day 11am-5pm – see page 14 for details

**15-16 July, 11am-4pm:**  
mainly around Holly Lodge

Richmond Park Open Weekend, featuring exhibitions, demonstrations, guided walks, talks etc. The Friends are conducting hourly walks in the Park.

**Walks**

Anybody is welcome to join these free guided walks. There is usually a choice between a history and a wildlife option. All except the spring birdsong walk and the summer evening walk begin at 10am and finish around midday at the car park or gate shown. Please keep dogs under control.

For further information, contact Peter Burrows-Smith, 020 8878 4022.

Date	Starting and finishing at
29 April, <u>7.30am</u>	Pembroke Lodge car park (Spring Birdsong special, followed by optional breakfast)
6 May, 10am	Broomfield Hill car park (incl. Photography option with Jo Jackson)
3 June, 10am	Sheen Gate car park (including Acid Grassland option)
1 July, 10am	Pembroke Lodge car park (including Pembroke Lodge Gardens option)
15 July, all day	Hourly walks as part of Royal Parks Open Weekend – see above
July, time tbc	Friends' Summer Evening Special (date and time to be confirmed – see frp.org.uk)
5 Aug, 10am	Kingston Gate car park (including Butterfly option)
7 Oct, 10am	Sheen Gate car park (incl. deer option with Simon Richards)
14 Oct, 10am	Pembroke Lodge car park (autumn bird special)
4 Nov, 10am	Broomfield Hill car park (incl. fungi option)
2 Dec, 10am	Kingston Gate car park (incl. Christmas option with Adam Curtis)



© The Royal Parks

Contacting the Friends of Richmond Park

Hon. Secretary: Brian Baker

203 Park Road, Kingston upon Thames, KT2 5JY

Tel: 020 8546 3109

[www.frp.org.uk](http://www.frp.org.uk)