

## A special year for Sir David

Years ago, David Attenborough kept a small menagerie of animals in his home. One day a man turned up on his doorstep with a pitiable parrot and bluntly asked: "I can't look after this parrot any more, can you?"

Soon after, the alarm was raised in the Attenborough household: "Oh no, the parrot's escaped, it's on the conservatory roof!" It turned out that the adopted, now healthy parrot was still secure but the Attenboroughs had in fact witnessed a rare, early sighting of a ring neck parakeet!

For Sir David Attenborough, 2016 is a special year; he moved close to Richmond Park 65 years ago. And it's his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday, as he keeps being reminded. When asked why he chose Richmond, he cheekily replies, "Well, I couldn't afford Hampstead!"

In fact, the reasons he moved to Richmond back in 1951 were that he loved all the open spaces and mostly Richmond Park. His brother, film actor/director/producer, Richard Attenborough, also lived in Richmond and family friends and in-laws the Batten family (Sir John Batten was physician to the Queen) lived in Kew and the close families became known as 'The Battenboroughs'.

"When the children were young, we used to walk in Richmond Park" says Sir David. "We particularly loved the area around Cambrian Gate and I remember fondly the newts in Bishop's Pond".



Sir David has mostly enjoyed the wildlife while walking in the Park: "I've never liked to exercise too vigorously but I did once have to get fit for a gruelling trip to Papua New Guinea. For a couple of months, I marched around the Park's perimeter, but I'm not sure it did me much good".

"Today", he continues, "sadly I don't get into the Park as much as I'd like to but I'm looking forward to working on the Friends' film about the wildlife and protection of the Park".

Sir David reiterated what he said when he opened the restored Poets Corner last year. "Richmond Park is a very special place. It's a miracle it's survived. But, with nearly 5.5m visitors per year, the Park and its wildlife have never been under greater pressure".

We're sure all members of the Friends wish Sir David a very happy 90<sup>th</sup> birthday and hope he continues as a patron and spokesman for Richmond Park for many years to come.