

# The Friends of Richmond Park



Beetles that depend on decaying wood  
A walk with the litter pickers of the Park  
British deer – intriguing facts and figures  
The White Lodge – from hunting box to ballet school

Numbers can be interesting. For example, did you know that Richmond Park is home not just to 1350 or more beetle species, but to nine that are among the most endangered in the UK? Or that, over a Bank Holiday weekend, the Park's litter pickers may collect up to 1,000 bags of rubbish from the Park? Or that deers' antlers grow about one centimetre a day? I discovered all this by editing this issue.

Another good thing has happened since the last issue: I have discovered Marilyn Mason. You may be aware that I was looking for someone to help me with the newsletter. Marilyn responded and has written several pieces for this issue – on the results of the beetle survey funded by the Friends, on what the two remaining shire horses have been up to, and on the plan to introduce cows into part of the Park, to name just three. In fact, space ran out before I could accommodate all the interesting material she collected. And as I have always been interested in what happens to the venison produced after the deer cull in the Park, I thought I'd devote part of this page to what she found out about this topic.

*Alison Donaldson  
alison@donaldson.demon.co.uk*

### What happens to venison from the Park?

Deer have no natural predators in the UK, and so those that would normally be taken by predators – sick, weak, deformed or injured deer – have to be culled in November and February. Culling also prevents over-population and consequent malnourishment; the Park can only sustain a maximum of 650 breeding deer, and around 200 were born in the Park in 2007.

The by-product of this animal welfare management is venison. The meat is held at Holly Lodge for a short while but is not sold to local butchers. It is public property and has to be sold to the highest-bidding licensed game dealer. However, since the wholesale price of venison is very low at the moment, the income doesn't cover the cost of the winter feed supplements given to the Park deer. Currently the largest markets for venison are in Europe, particularly Belgium, so most of the Park venison is exported.

*With thanks to Marilyn Mason*

#### Photos

*Front cover: A longhorn beetle, the "tanner beetle" (Prionus coriarius) by Nigel Reeve.*

*Back cover: Rutting stags by Chris Howard.*



*Red deer, photographed by Chris Howard of the British Deer Society*

### We all affect the Park

Some research I saw recently prompted me to think about the impact we all have on the Park day to day.

The study, done in woodland near Sydney in Australia, showed that dog walking seriously disturbs birds' normal habitat. Birds abandoned areas up to 400 metres from where the dogs were walked regularly.

As a result, the numbers of birds in areas where dogs were walked was 35% less than in areas without dog walking, and 50% less for ground-nesting birds.

This research should come as no surprise to the Friends. For the past few years, there has been a skylark protection zone next to Pen Ponds, with people asked to stick to the paths and keep their dog on a lead during spring and summer. There are now 12 pairs of skylarks nesting in the area compared to just two pairs in the late 1990s.

This research refers to dog walking, but the message I want to draw is that all of us, however we use Richmond Park – dog walkers, non-dog walkers, cyclists, motorists, picnickers, kite flyers, children climbing trees – affect its environment.

Richmond Park is a particularly important and sensitive environment. It is a National Nature Reserve, a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and a Special Area for Conservation, not just an ordinary local park.

Our impact on the Park is steadily increasing as more of us visit it more often. Greater leisure time and interest in exercise, government access initiatives, The Royal Parks' marketing activities and growing commercialisation all encourage greater use of the Park.



This increase in visitors could be the greatest threat to the Park in the long term, as it already is in some National Parks.

Eventually there may even need to be restrictions on people visiting the Park, or the fencing off of certain areas simply to protect them (or let them recover) from the tramp of feet.

Interestingly, in an opinion poll I saw last year, 33% of respondents agreed that "only a limited number of visitors should be allowed to visit areas of natural beauty", so there is already some public acceptance of this.

What can we do about the impact we have? Well, one action is to take more care when we are in the Park. After all, one of the Friends' objectives is "to encourage the preservation of the Park and the protection of trees, plant, bird and animal life".

It is a responsibility we should all take seriously. We should not drop litter, cycle away from the designated paths, climb veteran trees, take away wood that shelters beetles, or let our dogs run in sensitive areas.

As Simon Barnes said in the Times, commenting on the Australian research, "we don't want to destroy what we love by sheer carelessness".

*Ron Crompton  
ron.crompton@frp.org.uk  
143 Palewell Park  
London SW14 8JJ*



## Richmond Park: top site for beetles that like decaying wood

by Marilyn Mason

You may have noticed those strange perspex traps in the trees when out in the Park last summer and wondered what they would catch. Now the results of this research project are out, and they confirm the Park's international importance as a top site for "saproxylic beetles" – beetles that depend on dead or decaying wood for at least part of their life cycle.

The survey found 347 species of saproxylic beetle in the Park; 46 of these (for example, a silken fungus beetle, *Cryptophagus falcozi*; a false blister beetle, *Ischnomera caerulea*; and the "Windsor" Weevil, *Dryophthorus corticalis*) were previously unrecorded in the Park. 138 have conservation status. Among these are 34 so-called Red Data Book species, nine of which are among the most endangered species in the UK – including the "rusty click beetle" pictured. This would be extraordinary for any site, but is particularly so for an urban site like the Park.

The study was partly funded by the Friends of Richmond Park and carried out by Royal Parks staff and volunteers, including Royal Parks Community Ecologist Dr Nigel Reeve and national beetle expert Dr Peter Hammond. It began in 2005 with a review of beetle records



"Rusty click beetle" (*Elater ferrugineus*)

for the site, field visits and hand searches, followed by placing perspex vane traps in 30 veteran English oaks and five individual trees in five areas of the Park. Between May and November 2006, 365 trap samples were collected. Some very rare species, such as the

*Trinodes hirtus* (a carpet beetle), *Ampedus cardinalis* (the Cardinal Click Beetle) and *Procerus tibialis* (a click beetle) were found remaining well-established in the Park, but, intriguingly, some other species that inhabit similar sites were not found. The researchers hope to

learn more about the reasons for these inter-site differences, and to undertake further work on the non-beetle species found in their traps.

The Park's status as London's largest Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), a National Nature Reserve (NNR) and a European Special Area for Conservation (SAC), is partly thanks to its 1350+ species of beetle (a third of the British list). The Park's saproxylic beetles, which include the Stag Beetle (*Lucanus cervus*, familiar to most of us and of national and European conservation importance), rely on its famous veteran trees and associated decaying wood or fungi, and their presence underlines the vital importance of this valuable resource. (See the free leaflet *Decaying Wood, Managing a Valuable Wildlife Habitat*, available at the Pembroke Lodge Information Centre, for more on this.)

With thanks to Dr Nigel Reeve



A longhorn beetle (*Leptura quadrifasciata*)

## Keeping weeds under control

The Park's two remaining shire horses (in the photo Jed is on the right, Forte on the left) were busy this summer pulling the roller that crushes bracken and rhododendrons, helping to stop them encroaching into valuable grassland. In other areas, bracken is cut for compost. And in areas where there are anthills which should not be disturbed, limited spraying with a selective herbicide is carried out.

Ragwort is also controlled. However, because it is a valuable late summer nectar source for a variety of invertebrates, it is left for as long as possible and visitors to the Park should avoid damaging it. Ragwort is only harmful to horses and cattle if they graze on it or are fed on hay which accidentally contains it.

## Pests in the Park – and beyond

The Park's horse chestnut trees continue to be attacked by Leaf-Mining Moth caterpillars, which damage foliage and cause early leaf fall. Despite the unsightly appearance of infested trees, there is no evidence of long-term serious effects on tree health, and chestnut trees appear able to survive repeated infestations. This year, perhaps because of the rainy summer, trees have been less infested and looked healthier than they did at the end of last summer. Significant dieback and/or death can also be caused by other factors: horse chestnuts are vulnerable to other pathogens such as bleeding canker, and poor weather conditions and air quality, partly because they are a non-native species.

Oaks can be affected by pests too. The Oak Processionary Moth, which can defoliate trees and cause allergic reactions in humans, has arrived in the Kew area and nests have been found in Kew Gardens, though none so far in the Park. The moth's natural habitat is the Mediterranean region, but in recent years its



range has extended northwards, possibly as a result of climate change, and it is now well established in Holland. Kew Gardens is working closely with other organisations to monitor the situation; in the Park trained specialists are keeping an eye out for the moth and eight traps have been set. Next spring and early summer will be key periods for monitoring.

## Ear tags and antlers

Though the deer in the Park are essentially wild animals, members of the public occasionally disturb young calves and fawns in the early summer and hand them in to the Park's wildlife officers. When they do, the team takes the opportunity to tag them, as this will provide useful data over time about their longevity and age at the time of culling. Deer are occasionally purchased from outside to bring new blood into the herds, and these are also tagged; this year two new deer, a stag and a buck, arrived.

Park staff also tell us that two deer in the Park have deformed antlers. One is a Fallow buck with a deformed antler obscuring his face and the other is a Red stag whose antler has been damaged since it commenced growing this season. Both animals are being monitored and are in no pain.

With thanks to Adam Curtis,  
Assistant Manager, Richmond Park

## The White Lodge – from hunting box to ballet school

by David McDowall

The White Lodge, so named on account of its fine Portland ashlar facing, is by far the most imposing building in the Park. The building had been commissioned by George I simply as a "hunting box". Mindful, perhaps, of the contemporary hymn, "As pants the hart for cooling streams, when heated in the chase..." George, as the chaser, thought he needed a place of plentiful refreshment too. However, the box was still under construction in 1727 when George panted no longer but rested in the cooling streams of eternity. So it was left for his son, George II, and his prime minister, Robert Walpole, to enjoy. Walpole was such a hunting obsessive that he instructed the Commons to abandon its previous custom of sitting on Saturdays, so that he could enjoy two days in the saddle. We are thus indebted to him for the two-day weekend.

The building was designed by Roger Morris in partnership with his patron the Earl of Pembroke, to be similar to their work three years earlier for George II's erstwhile mistress, Henrietta Howard, at Marble Hill. However, the pyramidal roof was abandoned either at the planning stage or after it in favour of the present hipped one. Both buildings are very early examples of the Palladian revival, Marble Hill preceding, and the White Lodge being exactly contemporary with, Burlington's own sensational villa in Chiswick.

Unfortunately, buildings seldom retain their original integrity. Princess Amelia, George II's snuff-sniffing daughter, added a couple of side pavilions joined to the central building by colonnades, after she became Ranger in 1751. Fifty years on, in 1801, George III appointed Henry Addington as prime minister, granting him the White Lodge for his residence. Since the White Lodge was still

only a hunting box, the king commissioned James Wyatt to enlarge it.

Thus, the original freestanding Palladian pavilion became surrounded by regency period brickwork. Wyatt had too many clients, living all over the country, and so did much of his work in his carriage, which he kitted out as a mobile office, to use his travel time profitably. It was in his carriage that he met his end, when his coachman, fancying himself as modern-day Jehu, bounced the carriage. Wyatt hit his head on the roof and was instantly killed.

The grounds were also modified for Addington by the renowned landscape architect (indeed the first to describe himself as such), Humphry Repton, but of his proposals virtually nothing remains, except the walk from the steps down to the Queen's Ride, and possibly the steps themselves, for drawings of the original building (indeed Repton's own proposals) show only a rusticated basement to the piano nobile.

Like Wyatt, Repton was undone by his carriage, which overturned one night on an icy road. His spine was irreparably damaged and he spent his final agonised years in a wheelchair.

As for Henry Addington, as prime minister he rapidly became the object of ridicule, subject to the biting wit of Pitt, and also of Canning who coined the damaging couplet: "Pitt is to Addington, As London is to Paddington." As deputy ranger for Richmond Park, however, we remember him with gratitude for all the trees he so assiduously planted around the perimeter of the Park. And you will be relieved to learn he suffered no carriage-borne misfortune.

Today, the Royal Ballet School has embarked upon a major construction programme to enlarge its premises to ensure adequate facilities for its students. It is being executed with as much sensitivity as possible. Fortunately, the key prospect of the Lodge from the Queen's Ride, the Palladian pavilion in its sylvan setting, remains uncompromised.

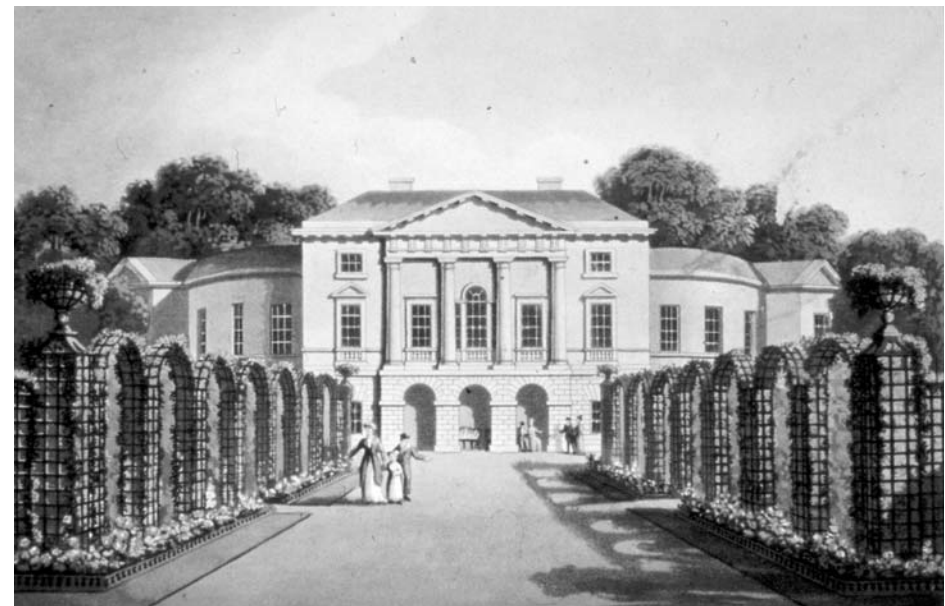
Furthermore the removal of the wooden fence, which for many years has marred the view, means that this prospect will return to something vaguely like what Repton had in mind when he produced his "Red Book" for the site in 1805. The gate is now erected, the pillars emblazoned with the escutcheon of the school's pirouetting charges. Behind the gates a brief and still immature avenue of fastigate yews will announce the building beyond. There have been mixed feelings about this recent encroachment into the Park.



Getting the balance right between amenity and conservation in Richmond Park remains a continuing challenge for those who love this great landscape.

*David McDowall's published landscape series includes "Richmond Park" and also the companion volumes: "Windsor Great Park", "Hampstead Heath" and two on the Thames between Hampton and Putney. See: [www.davidmcdowall.com](http://www.davidmcdowall.com)*

*Above and below: Repton's "before" and "after" proposals, reproduced courtesy of the Local Studies Collection, London Borough of Richmond upon Thames*





## A walk with the litter-pickers of Richmond Park

Text and photos by Michael Davison

Richmond Park litter picker Ron Herbert was already five hours into his working day when I caught up with him at his 10am tea break at Oak Lodge. I wanted to find out how, despite the thousands who pour in every day, the Park remains in general so remarkably litter-free. The answer, I found, lies in a hard-working staff of litter pickers employed by a firm called "fountains" who are at work rain or shine every day of the year, including Christmas Day, from 5am to 1pm in summer, and 7am to 3pm in winter. There are five full-time employees on the morning litter team, while a sixth does an afternoon shift.

As the birds start their dawn chorus, long before the earliest joggers make their appearance, Ron and colleagues arrive for work. Their first task is to make a circuit of the car parks, to clear the detritus left by the previous day's visitors from the litter bins and surrounding areas. Half the team start from Pembroke Lodge and work clockwise round the Park, while the remainder start from Ham Gate and move in the opposite direction.

They travel in trucks between the car parks, stopping on the way to clear litter from road verges. They also do a daily "sweep" of the Isabella Plantation and empty the bins there. This phase of work is scheduled to be completed by 8.30am – the deadline specified in fountains' contract. Only when clearance of car parks and verges is complete can work start on the offroad areas of the Park's 2,000-odd public acres. For this task the Park is divided into five areas, one of which is "swept" on foot by the team on each weekday. At weekends, the whole team is busy dealing with the tide of litter that accumulates around car parks and other heavily used areas.

To find out how this clearing operation works, I joined Ron Herbert for the second part of his day's work. He gathered his litter-picking tongs and a black bin bag, and we set off to cover a wide swathe round Sidmouth Wood. Ron followed a zigzag course, his eyes darting from side to side to spot the least shred of tissue or plastic, cigarette packet or orange peel. Often he stretched his arm through the railings to reach litter blown into the wood from the picnic area opposite the car park. Alert as I tried to be, Ron's eyes proved much sharper than mine – until at just one point I did have the satisfaction of spotting a crisp packet before he saw it (or so he let me believe).

Pausing for a short breather, Ron, 60, told me of his personal affection for the Park born of childhood days when, brought up in the area, he came to regard it as his personal playground. He regrets the coming of too many cars and dogs, which he feels has "changed the ambience" and been detrimental to wildlife, but still

*The litter-picking team*

enjoys his open-air job. He finds it ideally complements his enthusiasm for bird-watching – he pointed out to me a jackdaw, a kestrel, a mistle thrush and a stock dove during our walk. On his digital camera he showed me photographs of comma and purple hairstreak butterflies taken in the Park – as well as mementoes of a holiday in Kazakhstan.

Ron's bin bag was almost a quarter full by the time we reached the gate at the lower end of Sidmouth Wood. Here he added the contents of the nearby litter bin to his load, so it was with a full bag that we arrived back at Oak Lodge. One full bag after one man's walk of an hour and a half: no wonder that after a fine weekend the tally of bags from the team can reach 200-300. After a Bank Holiday there may be 1,000 bags in the skips at Oak Lodge awaiting removal. Recyclable material from designated bins at Park lodges is set apart for separate collection.

Back at Oak Lodge I met Ron's colleagues, relaxing at the end of their day's work. They included Tony and Susan (a husband-and-wife team), Bill, Jim and a second Ron, together with fountains contract manager Andrew Hand. Chatting to them I learned something of the challenges and rewards of their job. Susan (four years in the Park) told me of her delight in seeing a mother badger with two cubs crossing the road near Ham Gate early one morning . . . David (10 years service) saw a muntjac this summer . . . and a tame fox in the Oak Lodge grounds is a familiar sight. A less welcome encounter was with a cobra, apparently an abandoned pet, which had to be expertly captured and removed to London Zoo. Bunches of keys are frequently found: less common discoveries are clothes, bicycles fixed to railings, TV sets and even on one occasion a three-piece suite.

The team have a critical eye for the peculiar behaviour of the public. Why, for instance, do

so many people carefully collect their dog poo in a plastic bag – and then hang the bag on the nearest tree rather than take it to a "doggy bin"? Several extra bins have recently been installed to encourage proper disposal.

What should the Friends, and all who love their Park, do when they see litter? Obviously it is important to avoid handling anything which could cause infection (litter pickers carry a "sharps box" for discarded needles). If such an object, or any large accumulation of litter, is found, the advice is to call Holly



Lodge (020 8948 3209 – leave a message if it's at the weekend) and report the location as precisely as you can. For objects such as cans and bottles, walkers could carry a small plastic bag and pick the item up by the inside of the bag, in the way dog owners do.

When I talked to Park Manager Simon Richards, he commended the litter pickers for the thoroughness of their scavenging. He also referred to another role that they play. Roaming the Park as they do, they act as his "eyes and ears" in reporting any problems, such as for instance a tree that looks about to shed a branch. There is, I now know, a great deal more to the job of litter-picking than I had imagined.

*Michael Davison leads walks for the Friends*

## Police: public meetings to be held twice a year

Members of the public will in future be able to take part in consultation meetings about policing in the Park every six months – the next meeting is planned for late March 2008.

This was agreed at a public meeting on 25 September arranged by the new Community Panel. You may recall that this Panel was set up after reorganisation of the Park police into a Safer Parks Team (SPT) earlier in the year.

The purpose of the September meeting was to update the public, seek views on policing in the Park and also on what form public consultation should take (previously it was through "Parkwatch" meetings). Overall, it was a positive session and the underlying theme was that the Park is a very safe environment.

The meeting opened with reports from Peter Burrows-Smith (Friends and Panel Vice Chair), Inspector Mark Foden (Parks Police) and Simon Richards (Park Superintendent). There was then a question and answer session, which raised many different topics including:

\* The return of the police horses (likely to be at least a regular summer event, but can we make them permanent?)

- Weekend police rosters
- Cyclists
- Speeding traffic, particularly early and late in the day
- Stopping the autumn mushroom pickers
- Foot and mouth regulations.

## Cows postponed by foot and mouth

If it weren't for foot and mouth disease, two English Longhorn cows would by now be grazing a small part of



*Longhorn grazing*

Richmond Park. Following the foot and mouth outbreak in Surrey earlier this year, this plan is now on hold. Foot and mouth affects deer, and an outbreak in the Park could be devastating, involving a complete cull and Park closure.

When the cows do arrive, they will be participating in a trial conservation project aimed at increasing the variety of plants in the Park. By preference cows graze grassy tussocks and "pull at" their dinner, creating a small bare patch and providing opportunities for various species (including wild flowers) to move in.

Deer, in contrast, prefer to browse woody vegetation, eating mainly leaves and young trees. In grassland areas, they selectively eat the wild flowers, and eat the grass by snipping at it, making the sward denser.

## Tamsin Trail to be repaired

This winter should see repairs to the Tamsin Trail, used by cyclists and walkers, which has suffered much water damage this year. The Royal Parks will spend about £120,000 on it, taken out of a Transport for London grant for upgrading cycle routes. The work will focus on the hilly bits and will include both repairs and improved drainage.

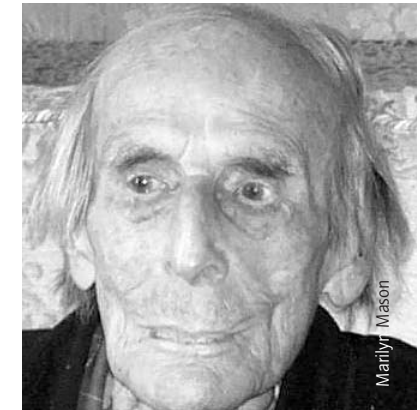
## I've seen many changes in the Park

Jack Davies has spent most of his 101 years living near Richmond Park, and two or three times a week he still walks the half mile or so from the flat he shares with his wife Margaret to Sheen Gate and Adam's Pond. He attributes his longevity and fitness to his regular walks as well as to the deep breathing he learnt from singing lessons as a boy: "First thing I do every morning is take a deep breath," he says, and he still has a fine singing voice which he occasionally exercises outdoors in the Park.

"I like the deer and the oak trees, and feeding the ducks and the delightful Canada geese – they are so docile," he says, and then describes how his long association with the Park began: "My father moved to Wandsworth from the Welsh countryside and used to come home from work – he supervised postal sorting-office workers in Victoria – and burst into tears, he was so depressed by his job and city life.

Then someone told him about Richmond Park. From then on, we would regularly take the 37 bus to Sheen Lane and walk across the Park to Robin Hood Gate and back. I was about eight when we started so it was a long way for me, and at first I liked the ice cream that my father bought me more than the walk. We acquired a dog, and my father, who didn't really like dogs, tolerated it because it was an excuse to go to the Park – though the family joke was that he would often return without it."

"I became a keen walker too, and carried on catching the bus to Sheen for a walk in the Park as a young man. Once I even walked from London to Wales – it took a week. I used to take girlfriends to the Park, and



later my own family and our dog. Eventually we moved to Sheen to be nearer the Park. I was an active member of the Friends (and I still know some of them) – we wrote letters about the Park to local papers and I used to enjoy the Friends' sociable lunches."

"I've seen many changes. When I was a boy it was a freer, wilder Park, largely left alone, with few paths and dense, uncultivated woods. But it was also more ceremonial – there were no mad cyclists whizzing around, the Park staff did their rounds on horseback, the Park always closed on time in the evenings, and games such as rugby were unheard of. The ballet school pupils used to march to White Lodge on foot, and cars were rare, as they were everywhere of course. Sheen was a rural spot where houses cost £800, which seemed way out of reach then!"

*Based on an interview by Marilyn Mason.*

*Jack Davies has also been interviewed for a film about the Park by committee member John Repsch.*



# PUZZLES AND ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN

by Karen Rockell

## Anagrams — birds found in Richmond Park

- OENOWGDOIP -----
- ATEPREKA -----
- KOWEGNERPEECORO -----
- NIOBR -----
- GATNISRL -----
- CDAJKWA -----
- DLAMLRA -----
- RNADIAMN -----
- NREOH -----



## Interesting website:

Watch the "antcam" and see different types of ant do different jobs.

[www.nhm.ac.uk/kids-only/naturecams/antcam/index.html](http://www.nhm.ac.uk/kids-only/naturecams/antcam/index.html)

## Grey squirrel facts

There are lots of grey squirrels in Richmond park:

- Their Latin name is: *Sciurus carolinensis*
- A baby squirrel is called a: Kitten
- The squirrel lives in a: Drey (it looks like a large messy bird's nest made of twigs.)
- Squirrels eat: Hazelnuts, acorns, tree bark, fungi, buds, leaves, shoots and flowers.



## News

Activity sheets for children are now available from the Richmond Park Visitor Information Centre at Pembroke Lodge car park.

## Creepy crawly word search

Find the following 8 creepy crawlies you can find in Richmond Park:

Ant, Bee, Butterfly, Caterpillar, Dragonfly, Ladybird, Spider, Stagbeetle.

Words can be found along a horizontal, vertical or diagonal line.



D	R	A	T	E	S	P	I	A	N	H	L
C	S	T	E	R	P	S	F	L	O	R	E
C	A	T	E	R	P	I	L	L	A	R	B
B	U	E	A	I	D	Y	H	I	R	D	R
O	T	N	D	G	E	D	N	A	T	T	E
S	T	E	T	T	B	E	L	L	A	N	D
E	R	B	U	T	T	E	R	F	L	Y	I
E	S	P	O	P	E	R	E	C	A	C	P
D	R	I	B	Y	D	A	L	T	B	I	S
S	P	T	A	F	E	R	I	R	L	E	A
B	D	R	A	G	O	N	F	L	Y	E	B
A	S	P	T	E	R	P	B	U	T	B	C



Anagram answers  
 Green Woodpecker: Tackdaw;  
 Heron: Woodpigeon; Robin:  
 Mallard; Parakeet: Starling;  
 Mandarin.

*Karen Rockell is a member of the Friends' committee*



## British deer — facts and figures from the experts

by M Burgess

Arriving at Pembroke Lodge on a sunny morning in September, looking forward to my first ever Friends of Richmond Park course and walk, little did I know what a treat I was in for. With over 40 years' deer stalking experience between them, Chris Howard and Glyn Ingram of the British Deer Society have a wealth of knowledge which captivated and educated their audience, throughout their talk and in the two hour walk which followed.

Touching on the six species of deer living wild in the UK, Chris and Glyn then concentrated on the red and the fallow deer, the two species living in Richmond Park. Facts flew thick and fast.....

Young deer acquire their darker, thicker winter coats earlier than the older deer (in September there is a variety of summer and winter coats on show) but at antler casting time (the annual shedding of antlers) actions are reversed with the old deer casting from the end of March, followed by the young.

Antlers are the fastest growing bone tissue in the animal kingdom, growing by about one centimetre a day, and taking only around 100 days to reach their full glory. "Why don't we find cast antlers on our walks in the Park?" They are a source of calcium we were told, so deer or other mammals might eat them if they haven't been collected by very early morning walkers.

Food consumption and metabolic rates vary from season to season. In winter the scarcity of food coupled with its low nutritional value lead deer to conserve energy by spending much time resting, and Chris advised us to avoid disturbing deer in winter. The arrival of spring with its abundant food supplies marks the start of a period of growth; the deer add weight by doubling their normal conversion

rate of food into muscle, until by September they are at their heaviest. Adding weight is crucial; females need to achieve a critical body mass in order to conceive and have a successful gestation, and males need bulk and stamina to excel in the autumn rut (mating season). During the rut an adult stag (male red deer) has no time for eating and may lose up to a third of his body weight. Autumn is the time to stock up on good food after the rut and before the winter lean times; in Richmond Park sweet chestnuts are an important food source and we were reminded that we must leave them for the deer to eat.

There was much more too, including Glyn's description of the eating habits of Muntjac deer and Chris's impersonation of the rutting belch of the buck (male fallow deer). The highlight of the walk was two young male red deer locking antlers in front of us: "Too young to participate in the rut this year", said Chris, "but a great show of autumn testosterone as they practise for the years to come".

*M Burgess works as a volunteer in the Information Centre at Pembroke Lodge*



Chris Howard

**Request for volunteers**

We need people to assist Peter Burrows-Smith in arranging our increasingly popular outdoor Walks and Courses programmes. Peter plans to keep overall responsibility, but there are three areas where he would like help:

1. Organisation prior to the event – this is fairly straightforward, as procedures are well established
2. Leading walks – please let us know if you have a special interest (n.b. Royal Parks training can be provided)
3. Supporting the walk/course leader on the day – keeping the group together etc.

If you are interested, please contact Peter Burrows-Smith on 020 8392 9888.

**Richmond Park Information Centre**

The centre is now open Friday, Saturday and Sunday 10 am to 3 pm. The Friends' volunteers would be delighted if other Friends called in to say "hello" and to see what goes on.

**Queries about the Friends?**

For more information about The Friends of Richmond Park see our website - [www.frp.org.uk](http://www.frp.org.uk) – or contact Brian Baker, Honorary Secretary, on 020 8546 3109.

**Subscriptions & membership**

Subscription rates: £6 individuals, £10 households and societies. All membership enquiries to Sheila Hamilton on 020 8876 2623. Application forms can be downloaded from our website [www.frp.org.uk](http://www.frp.org.uk)

**Queries about Park Management?**

If you have any observations or concerns about the way the Park is being managed please contact Park Superintendent, Simon Richards at:

The Royal Parks, Holly Lodge,  
Richmond Park, Richmond, Surrey,  
TW10 5HS  
Tel: 020 8948 3209  
Fax: 020 8332 2730  
E Mail: [richmond@royalparcs.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:richmond@royalparcs.gsi.gov.uk)  
Web: [www.royalparcs.gov.uk](http://www.royalparcs.gov.uk)



*Friends gathering for one of our regular walks*

**Friends Committee**

Chairman: Ron Crompton  
Vice-Chairmen: Peter Burrows-Smith & Sheila Hamilton  
Vice Presidents: Richard Carter, David McDowall, Douglas Reynolds, David Thorpe, Mary Thorpe  
Other committee members: Brian Baker (Hon. Secretary); Alison Donaldson (Newsletter Editor); John Waller (Hon. Treasurer); John Collier; Jackie Grimes; Joanna Jackson; John Repsch; Karen Rockell; Mary Thorpe  
Patron: Lord Rix, CBE

**Events**

**15 Nov, 12.30 for 1pm:**  
Belvedere Room at  
Pembroke Lodge

**Friends' annual lunch.** Speaker: Sam Walters, Artistic Director of Richmond's Orange Tree Theatre. To book, please contact Brian Baker on 020 8546 3109

**5 Dec, 7pm:**  
Richmond Parish  
Church

Christmas concert hosted by Mark Curry with St Peter's Singers of Hammersmith and readings by celebrities. Tickets £10 in aid of Holly Lodge Centre. Information: 020 8948 3209 Ext. 259, or [hlcinfo@thehollylodgecentre.org.uk](mailto:hlcinfo@thehollylodgecentre.org.uk)

**Friends' walks and courses**

**Walks**

All are welcome, except for walks where membership of Friends is specified. Most walks start at 10 am from the relevant car park and finish around midday.

Please ring Peter Burrows-Smith on 020 8392 9888 in advance if you need special support or help with the walk. Please keep dogs under control. See also: [www.frp.org.uk/walks](http://www.frp.org.uk/walks)

**Courses**

Friends Members only. £2 fee. Booking essential on 020 8878 5835.

Date	What and where
3 Nov, 10 am	WALK: including fungi option. Meet Broomfield Hill car park
1 Dec, 10 am	WALK: including Christmas nature option, led by Adam Curtis, Assistant Park Manager. Meet Kingston Gate car park.
26 Dec, 10am	WALK: Boxing Day. Meet Roehampton Gate car park
5 Jan, 10 am	WALK: including winter wildfowl option. Meet Sheen Gate car park.
2 Feb, 10 am	WALK: including veteran trees option. Meet Pembroke Lodge car park.
16 Feb, 10 am	COURSE: Introduction to Birdwatching, at Pembroke Lodge. Bookings: 020 8878 5835
1 Mar, 10 am	WALK: including Pen Ponds nature trail option. Meet Robin Hood Gate car park.
15 Mar, 10 am	COURSE: Spring Birds & Birdsong, at Pembroke Lodge. Bookings: 020 8878 5835
5 April, 10 am	WALK: including skylarks option. Meet Roehampton Gate car park





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)