



FRIENDS *of*  
RICHMOND PARK

*Protecting Richmond Park's peace and  
natural beauty for future generations*

SPRING 2014



**Valuing the Park**

**Celebrating our volunteers**

**Isabella today and tomorrow**

**Winter birds**

**Sleepwalking into war at Pembroke Lodge**

# Welcome

## Mud, glorious mud...

The Park escaped serious damage from this winter's storms and rain, though the established ponds were full, and there was plenty of mud and standing water around the Park, as the photo below shows.

But perhaps by the time you read this the rain will have stopped and spring weather will be encouraging us to go out and enjoy the Park once more – and this issue reminds us of how much there is to enjoy and to do in the Park.

Thank you to all our contributors, including Lesley Player, who volunteered to help with the newsletter and who reports on the January volunteers' event on page 4. We would still welcome help, particularly from anyone with experience of editing and Quark DTP software on a Mac.

*Marilyn Mason, editor@frp.org.uk*

## Cover photos

**Front cover:** a misty winter scene in the Park by Anne Ross

**Back cover:** an early sign of spring in Isabella Plantation by Anne Ross

Anne regularly contributes lovely Park pictures like these and the one below to the Friends' Facebook page.

## VOLUNTEERS WANTED

### TO HELP WITH OPM SPOTTING

Volunteers play an indispensable role in the management of the challenging pest, Oak Processionary Moth. If you can commit a regular number of hours a week in June and July, are available for a day's training in May, are comfortable walking on often rough terrain, and are prepared to spend time looking up tall oak trees with binoculars, The Royal Parks would love to hear from you. Last year over 40 Friends helped. For more information or to volunteer, please contact Gillian Jonusas on [gjonusas@royalparcs.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:gjonusas@royalparcs.gsi.gov.uk), or phone 0300 061 2201. Volunteers from 2013 who have already volunteered to help this year do not need to respond again.

This newsletter is printed on paper which is 50% recycled, 50% from certified sustainable forests.



Please pass it on to a friend or recycle it when you have finished with it.



*Photo by Anne Ross*



## The Park's value Getting the message across

In last spring's newsletter, I wrote about the value of the Park, citing the benefits to us of its peace and tranquility, its wonderful views, its fresh air and its

biodiversity. I carefully avoided putting any monetary value on all this.

Now, I find that the city council of Melbourne in Australia has done just that. They have valued their parks (and they have many superb ones) by working out what they would fetch as land for commercial or residential development.

Their logic is, that by protecting them as parks, the community is foregoing what they could get from developers for the land, and effectively that is the value they place on it.

On that basis, what is the value of Richmond Park? Land prices for residential development in London areas such as Richmond and Kingston are at least £7 million per hectare. Richmond Park has nearly 1,000 hectares. So the land value of Richmond Park with planning permission for residential development would be £7 billion. If you invested this, you could expect to get an annual income of around £175 million a year.

These are enormous sums and dwarf the £3 million a year The Royal Parks spends on managing and maintaining the Park. If we value the Park this much, isn't it worth spending time and effort protecting and conserving it?

The Park has been seeing a lot of new visitors recently. Some are tourists, some young urbanites (judging by their unsuitable footwear), some are Asian extended families picnicking, some are cyclists and runners. Being new, few seem to know much about the Park: its history, its wildlife and how to treat it.

How do we convey to these new visitors the need to respect and protect the Park? We have the message – "Tread Lightly" – but how do we get it across? It's a problem the Friends' Committee has been debating for some time now, without a good answer. It's unlikely to be through the Visitor Centre, since only 1% of visitors use it; nor via the noticeboards at the gates, since few visitors (and none of those coming by car) read them.

Nor is it through the Friends' website; it has relatively few visitors and 40% of those only want the Park opening times; nor via bigger signs, since we want to minimise signage to preserve the natural feel of the Park; nor by giving out leaflets to visitors, which risks confrontation and more litter.

Should we try a YouTube video (hoping it will go viral)? A free "Introduction to Richmond Park" app? "Shock horror" publicity in the *Evening Standard* or *Metro* about a deer dying from ingesting litter or run over by a car after being chased by a dog?

Answers or ideas, please, on a postcard – or its modern equivalent, an email to [chairman@frp.org.uk](mailto:chairman@frp.org.uk).

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## Celebrating volunteers *Lesley Player & Ron Crompton*

The second annual gathering of the Friends' volunteers took place on 18th January in the Belvedere Suite at Pembroke Lodge. Over 120 people came, attracted by coffee, pastries, and the chance to hear more about what is going on in the Park and how they could help it and the Friends. The room buzzed with the energy and enthusiasm of the volunteers, and new volunteers commented on the friendly atmosphere.

The meeting started with chairman Ron Crompton's review of 2013, a year of consolidation after the excitements of 2012 and 2011. Peter Burrows-Smith then talked about the importance of volunteers to the Park and thanked everyone for their contributions in time and effort.

The audience then turned to the various tables manned by volunteer groups offering opportunities to suit all levels of interest and involvement.

The Friends now have over 200 volunteers in eight groups: walks and courses; practical conservation work; the Visitor Centre; the History project; the Discoverers education programme; helping out at fairs, with sales of books and other marketing; Oak Processionary Moth (OPM) spotting; and monitoring the Park. There is also wildlife recording, run by the Wildlife Group, and Isabella horticultural and history work, run by The Royal Parks. If you'd like to volunteer please contact [volunteers@frp.org.uk](mailto:volunteers@frp.org.uk). You can see a fuller report of this event with many more photos on the Friends' website.



*Trustee Mary Pollard (left) runs the Friends' social media. Trustee Rachel Hirschler (right) works with the history project group.*



*Jan Wilczur (left) and Julie Anne Heys (right) work with the wildlife conservation groups. Jan is also an enthusiastic recorder and painter of bird life – see pages 9 and 12.*



*Ann Chambers (left) is an avid recycler who picks up litter in the Park. Valerie Reading-Kitchen (right) enjoyed meeting the various volunteer groups before signing up.*



*Nikki Wood (left) and Roy Berryman (right) are OPM-spotters who love being outside in all weathers and working with like-minded people. Nikki also helps organise FRP events and Roy does conservation work.*



*Zoe Vrnava (left) and Karen Stock (right) work in the Visitor Centre and enjoy helping with social events.*

## Volunteers visit Holly Lodge Centre *Mary Pollard*

Hidden behind The Royal Parks' offices at Holly Lodge is The Holly Lodge Centre, "A Special Place for Learning". Founded by The Royal Parks in 1994, but run as an independent charity since 1999, the Centre is where magic happens, and they recently opened their doors to let Friends of Richmond Park discover exactly what they do.

Torrential rain cascaded down as we arrived at the Centre, but we were immediately welcomed with warm smiles, tea and biscuits, and taken back in time to a Victorian classroom. Desks set out in rows and memorabilia from 150 years ago set the scene perfectly. Dr Pat Ealey MBE described the different opportunities offered to all and how people of all ages and abilities, especially those with special needs, can come along to learn in the rich environment of Richmond Park.

The Victorian classroom is not just a museum piece. Groups of children are encouraged to dress up as their Victorian counterparts and take lessons using slates to write on, in the same strict conditions that would have been imposed in that era. The Centre's costumed volunteers are trained to give classes with Victorian discipline, and some of our visitors experienced the discomfort of the back-board and the dunce's cap for chatting in class! This hands-on activity brings history home in a much more involving way than a text- book ever could.

With the rain holding off briefly, we were taken to meet the beautiful grey horses that work in the Park and were to have the job of pulling a magnificent landau for Christmas carriage rides (*pictured right, and see also page 7*). We also went to see the award-winning Victorian Kitchen Garden.

Beautiful flowers and vegetables grow in abundance amongst the specially adapted raised beds and paths, which make it possible for people with wheelchairs and mobility issues to participate fully. There is also a nature trail behind the Centre, with sensory activities for visitors of all abilities.

From there we visited the Victorian Pharmacy, a remarkable room that contains the original interior, artefacts and dispensing records of a pharmacy in Mortlake dating from the mid 1800s, which was donated in its entirety to the Centre. Having such a resource enables the Centre to teach local history, science, art and design in a unique manner. Visitors are encouraged to try out pill-making, using original equipment (though with plasticine instead of drugs!), whilst the kitchen garden provides the herbs which would have been used in remedies of the day. All in all, it was a fascinating morning!

Two groups of Friends' volunteers visited the Centre in November and two groups of members in January and February. There may be further opportunities in the summer; if you get the chance, go! To find out more about the Centre, go to [www.hollylodgecentre.org.uk](http://www.hollylodgecentre.org.uk), or to volunteer there, please contact [hlinfo@thehollylodgecentre.org.uk](mailto:hlinfo@thehollylodgecentre.org.uk).



### DISCOVERERS

For families exploring Richmond Park



The third year of the project seems a good time to take stock and think about the future. For example, up to now all Discoverers activities have been open and free of charge to FRP members and non-members alike. However, in the interests of encouraging all participating families to join FRP, non-members may be asked to pay something in future. This would also increase the options we can offer.

This year, we hope to build links with the Holly Lodge Centre. This would be particularly good for gathering participants before or after an activity. The Centre's facilities are excellent and access to them would considerably enhance our scope, as well as helping us to attract other potential user groups.

This year's events will include popular perennials like the Fathers' Day Trail and Picnic, and the Bat Walk. There are also some firsts, like our participation in Star Count 2014 in early March. This annual UK-wide survey, organised by the Council for the Protection of Rural England, monitors the extent to which light pollution affects our view of the night sky. The extent to which this environmental problem affects the Park may now be measured alongside the rest of the UK.

The volunteers' meeting in January was a good one for Discoverers, and we are happy to welcome to the team some enthusiastic new people with a variety of ideas and interests. However, there is always room for more – in particular, it would be good to have a few more fathers and grandfathers involved!

Details of all Discoverers activities can be found at [www.discoverers.frp.org.uk](http://www.discoverers.frp.org.uk) and [www.facebook.com/thefriendsofrichmondpark](http://www.facebook.com/thefriendsofrichmondpark), and you can email us at [discoverers@frp.org.uk](mailto:discoverers@frp.org.uk).

### Cliff Packham

Devotees of the Friends' monthly walks will greatly miss the company of Clifford Packham, who died recently. Cliff and his wife Pat turned out regularly for the walks; when they missed one it was usually because Cliff was away, indulging his other recreational passion, long-distance cycling. It was on a cycling tour that Cliff died suddenly at a hotel in Whitchurch, Shropshire, at the age of 71. Pat promises to continue turning out for Friends' walks whenever she can.

### Christmas success

The Friends sold about 2500 Christmas cards this year, making a profit of over £800. This year we sold them in packs of five as well as singly, which proved very popular and they sold out in early December. We sold approximately 600 calendars, which made in the region of £1,400, and again they were all sold out by mid-December. We will print more next year.

### Friends on Facebook

Many of the photos in the calendar and card were donated by fans of our Facebook page, which now has over 500 "Likes". We subsequently held a competition on Facebook to find images for the next set of greetings cards at the Visitor Centre, which resulted in some lovely new photos. The winner was Paul Sawford, with the stunning picture on the right of a stag in one of the ponds. You can see other entries at [www.facebook.com/thefriendsofrichmondpark](http://www.facebook.com/thefriendsofrichmondpark), where you can also get news and reminders of walks and talks coming up. You don't have to have a Facebook account to view the page, but if you do sign up we will welcome your comments and contributions.



## Carriage rides in the Park



At Halloween and again on December afternoons, you might have seen the magnificent sight of two grey horses pulling a semi-state landau through the Park, manned by liveried staff and carrying five excited people. The carriage rides were organised by The Holly Lodge Centre and Operation Centaur to raise money for Equine Assisted Learning and Therapy for children with special needs. Operation Centaur is based at Hampton Court and has a stable of horses, including the shire horses that once lived in Richmond Park and which you still see in the Park rolling the bracken and pulling out trees – the last working horses in London. The rides were not cheap, but were a unique way of seeing the Park in all its glory. People came from far and wide, and one booking was made by the concierge at the Ritz for an American couple staying there!

Our chairman experienced the ride. His verdict: “It was raining but was still wonderful moving at that stately pace through the grassland and woods. Cars were forced to slow down and overtook us very slowly, partly to protect the horses but partly so that they could get a good photo of the carriage and the horses. We felt like royalty. A magical experience!”



The carriage is similar to an Ascot landau, and was built specially in Poland to an original 19th-century design. On most days it was pulled by two greys but on occasion by four greys – the only place in London apart from the Royal mews that you can find four greys like this. The four are brothers with the same father and two mothers. Their names are all French: Henri II, Humour de Mesnil, Gaspar IV and Jackaroo du Pippemont. One assumes they answer to something much simpler. The photo on the left shows the landau pulled by the four greys setting out from the Holly Lodge yard.

The Equine Assisted Learning programme will start in the spring at The Holly Lodge Centre and there may be further rides later this year.

### Deer in the media

*The Guardian* used the Richmond Park rut in October to publish an interesting article on why males of the red deer and human species have deep voices. You can read it at [www.theguardian.com/science/2013/oct/06/rutting-stags-men-deep-voices](http://www.theguardian.com/science/2013/oct/06/rutting-stags-men-deep-voices).

It's not only the Park that has to control deer numbers in the absence of natural predators. Radio 4's *Shared Planet* in January discussed deer management, particularly the conflict between humans and the more than one million wild deer in the UK, a number higher than at any time since the Ice Age. There were also some interesting observations on country versus town attitudes to deer and to culling. You can still hear it at [www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b03nt8hv](http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b03nt8hv). Also in January, *The Independent* reported the booming deer population in the US capital Washington, with destructive effects on the natural environment and gardens.

### Management moves

The roles of Manager for Richmond and Bushy Parks have been split, with Simon Richards once again full-time Manager of Richmond Park. Welcome back, Simon!

### Gates' creator wins award

Joshua De Lisle, the young artist-blacksmith who made the St Paul's Tercentenary Gates at Sidmouth Wood, was awarded the Diploma of Merit for them by the Worshipful Company of Blacksmiths at their annual awards. He was also awarded the National Champion Blacksmith Award for 2013 for a sculpture of a stag beetle that serves as a boot-pull, presented to the Queen during her visit to the Park in May last year.

### Ham Ponds

By the time you read this, construction work should have been completed on Ham Gate and Ham Dip Ponds. The work to remove invasive weeds and silt from the ponds was done in December. The volume of silt was about 20 to 30% more than expected; the contractors managed to get it all out, but were on site for eight days rather than the four or five planned (they, rather than The Royal Parks, carried the extra cost). Construction of the headwalls and valves on both ponds was due to be completed early this year. Marginal planting, including the creation of reed-beds, is likely to happen in the autumn. The ponds will remain fenced off from the deer and public for at least a year to ensure that the invasive weeds have been fully removed and then to allow new vegetation to establish. The total cost for the restoration of the Ham Ponds is over £45,000, of which TRP paid half, with the other half split about equally between the Friends, the Visitor Centre and the conservation charity Healthy Planet as part of the Ponds and Streams Programme.

### Holly Lodge Centre updates

The Centre's Christmas concert at St Mary Magdalene Church in Richmond featured the Chiswick Gospel Choir, two school choirs (one from a mainstream school, the other from a special needs school), three readers (Prunella Scales, Diana Moran and

Paul Cola) and Adrian Mills as compere. In her blog on Primetime TV Diana Moran talked about how thrilled she was to be part of the concert and praised the Centre's "unique education, particularly for those with special needs".

The Centre celebrates its 20th anniversary this year. It was founded in 1994 by Mike Fitt, Park Manager at the time, as part of the The Royal Parks' education programme, and became an independent charity five years later. It is holding a celebration event in March and plans to spend the year upgrading its nature-related activities to commemorate Mike Fitt's vision in 1994 to "provide an inspirational place to experience the unique nature of Richmond Park, with accessibility for all."

### New bridge officially opens

The new bridge taking walkers and cyclists over the Beverley Brook near Robin Hood Gate was officially opened in November. The tape was cut by Linda Lennon, Chief Executive of The Royal Parks, at a ceremony attended by two local MPs, Justine Greening (Putney) and Zac Goldsmith (Richmond Park), Peter McBride, representing Transport for London which funded the bridge, and Jo Scrivener, Deputy Manager of Richmond Park (*all seen on bridge on the right*). Walkers and cyclists soon began crossing the bridge onto the half-mile path that leads to the new golf clubhouse at Chohole Gate off the A3.







**Recognition for Park favourites**

Our spring newsletter last year featured the Posteraro family's snack van at Pen Ponds car park, which attracts walkers and cyclists from miles around. Since then the family has acquired a grand new vehicle with more space and better facilities. Recently a

large group of regular customers gathered to present the Posteraros with a cake and a portrait painted by local artist Kathy Whyte, along with a glass of bubbly and tributes to their hard work and exceptional service. "They're lovely people," said one. "Many of us come here nearly every day – we've become quite a little club. The coffee is perfect, the bacon butties are fabulous. As we've said on the cake 'You're the best!'" Peter, Lisa, Oscar and Antonella Posteraro are pictured above left with their cake and portrait.

**Commercial dog walking**

The Royal Parks has now completed a review of its pilot of commercial dog walking licences and decided to retain the scheme in its present form: each walker must have an annual licence, wear a coloured armband, walk a maximum of four dogs, and adhere to a code of conduct. The police took a soft approach to enforcement during the pilot, focusing on educating dog walkers, but will take a firmer approach in future, including prosecuting persistent offenders.



**Antiques Roadshow screening**

The *Antiques Road Show* recorded at White Lodge in September was shown on BBC1 in January, and we understand there will be a second part screened on 15th June.

**A new Park heritage centre**

Plans are under way for a new heritage centre in Richmond Park. The Hearsam Collection registered charity intends to locate the new customised building near Pembroke Lodge, replacing dilapidated buildings in the area currently used for staff car parking. The new centre will house an expanded visitor centre, along with an exhibition and meeting area for displays and activities related to the history of Richmond Park. This space will be available for local community and education groups. The building will also provide storage and research facilities for the Hearsam Collection of some 5,000 historical items, including prints, paintings, photographs and postcards.

Friends of Richmond Park volunteers are being consulted in the process to set up and run the new heritage centre, which, it is hoped, will be funded by money from the Heritage Lottery Fund and Hearsam Family Ltd. Once funding is secured, the new centre will take about 18 months to construct and fit out.

*With thanks to Ron Crompton, Michael Davison, Teresa Grafton, Richard Gray, Rachel Hirschler, Mary Pollard and The Park Management for news items.*



*Skylark, painted by Jan Wilczur. Skylark news on page 11.*

## Isabella today and tomorrow

*Michael Davison*

When the diggers and tree-fellers moved into the Isabella Plantation to start work on the current Access Project there were, let's face it, many Friends ready to weep at what seemed the devastation of parts of their much-loved woodland garden. Huge swathes of shrubs were rooted out, leaving a landscape suggestive of battlefields; bulldozers churned through mud at the bottom of the drained ponds. Even a year into the project, large no-go areas remained, and the wet winter left a sea of puddles to negotiate on the paths that remained open.

Gradually, however, the Isabella of the future has begun to emerge – and for visitors during the coming months and years, there is a new and revitalised Plantation to look forward to. It will be a Plantation stripped, eventually, of all its familiar *Rhododendron ponticum*. Beloved of Victorian garden designers for its luxuriant green foliage and handsome purple blossom, *R. ponticum* became too successful for its own good. It invaded huge areas beyond its original plantings and robbed lower-growing shrubs of light and air, creating ideal conditions for the spread of pests and diseases. The death knell for *R. ponticum* in Isabella came when it was found to be particularly susceptible to a pathogen known as *Phytophthora kernoviae*, which, if unchecked, could devastate the Plantation's nationally important collection of other rhododendrons, azaleas, magnolias and camellias, and even spread into the wider Park and endanger its precious oak trees.

In clearing out the *R. ponticum*, a large party of Friends volunteers have played a major role, awarding themselves the proud nickname of "rhoddy bashers" as they hacked and sawed at the undergrowth, making a clear path for the machine diggers to move in.

The loss of *R. ponticum* will inevitably mean a permanent change in the appearance of the Plantation, but already new plantings are beginning to dot the cleared areas. It may be ten years before these provide a similar degree of cover to the banished *R. ponticum*, but this is, after all, a short time in the life of the Park. As the new plantings are mainly of deciduous trees, there will remain a clear passage of light and air to the soil, encouraging a wider variety of plant species.

Muddy paths will be a thing of the past, as new, all-weather accessible paths of Coxwell gravel on a bed of flint pebbles lead the visitor on a winding course among the long-established stands of trees and shrubs and the new plantings. Along these paths there will be additional benches, higher than the traditional seats and incorporating armrests; they are made in the Park's sawmill, using green oak from the Park.

Plaques beside the paths and markers at ground level will highlight special "character areas" – the ponds, the Bog Garden, the Acer Glade, the Camellia Walk, and so on. Appropriate symbols will pinpoint remarkable trees and other individual features of interest, which will be described in a printed leaflet or downloadable app. Such signage may seem superfluous to Friends long acquainted with the Plantation, but every volunteer at the Visitor Centre knows how many newcomers call in on their way to discover the Plantation for the first time.



At the northern end, beside the entrance from the newly surfaced Peg's Pond car park for disabled badge holders, there will be a new toilet block, shelter area and interpretation board. The pond has been cleared of 2,500 cubic metres of silt and enhanced with reed beds to encourage a greater variety of wildfowl, with broad



observation platforms to watch them from. Thomson's Pond has also been cleared of its long accumulation of dead leaves and bird droppings to create healthier water conditions; the adjacent stepping stones, favourites with young visitors, survive in a more accessible form for wheelchairs and buggies.

The Still Pond, famous for its azalea backcloth in spring, has an added border of deer fern and arum lily, as well as a widened all-weather observation area.

In the 1830s the Park's Deputy Ranger Viscount Sidmouth, a former Prime Minister and a man of vision, established Isabella as one of several enclosed plantations with which he enhanced the Park. In the 1940s, work began on developing the woodland garden we know today, opened to the public in 1953. Last year's 60th anniversary saw the beginning of the latest reconstruction, to harmonise the Plantation with the recreational and conservation requirements of the 21st century. Supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund and Big Lottery Fund, work proceeds in the hands of a large and dedicated team of planners, designers and contractors led by Assistant Park Manager Jo Scrivener, maintaining the visionary tradition of Lord Sidmouth.

## Skylarks *John Corkindale*

Since time immemorial, visitors to the English countryside have been able to see and hear that harbinger of spring, the Skylark. Who can forget its towering song flight, celebrated by innumerable poets and composers?

For very many years, Richmond Park has had its own breeding population of Skylarks, one of the closest to central London. Sadly, the number of Skylarks in the Park has been declining. The bird is a ground-nesting species and is therefore vulnerable to predation. This is probably why the Skylark has such a long breeding season; between early March and late August, the birds lay three clutches of eggs and must try, often unsuccessfully, to rear that many broods of nestlings.

Richmond Park is a National Nature Reserve and Park Management takes its wildlife conservation responsibilities seriously. In March 2002, at the request of the Park's Bird Recording Group, Park Management had signs erected around Lawn Field, asking dog-walkers to keep their dogs on leads in the interests of breeding Skylarks. More recently, the new Richmond Park Skylark Conservation Group under the chairmanship of Park Manager Simon Richards agreed that information signs and warning signs, to be enforced by the Park police, should be put in place at Lawn Field and Crown Field, to alert people to the damage dogs can do to breeding Skylarks and to warn them to keep dogs under control. These signs should be in place by now, and the Friends request everybody to take notice and act responsibly.

*According to the RSPB, Skylark populations are declining almost everywhere in northern and western Europe, probably because of changing farming practices. In the UK, the population halved during the 1990s, and is still declining.*

## Winter birds

Jan Wilczur



One can't always be certain which the first bird of autumn passage is. Was it the Red Kite or the Little Egret seen at the end of July? More likely they were dispersing birds from breeding areas in the south-east. The most definite first autumn migrant was the Common Sandpiper at Pen Ponds on 30th July. Some close relatives followed in the form of two Green Sandpipers on 8th August. A Tree Pipit on the 16th was a poignant reminder of the profound change in status of this once common breeding bird.

Early September saw the beginning of Whinchat passage and a few Buzzards passed through. A Redstart lingered for a couple of days from the 7th. The highlight of the autumn was a flock of six Spoonbills flying south-west over the centre of the Park on the 12th. They had been seen over a birdwatcher's house in Putney who phoned a friend who happened to be in Sheen. He managed to dash to Sheen Gate in time to witness the spectacle. The only previous record for this species was in 1976. Three Yellow Wagtails flew over on a couple of dates mid-month and the Swallow passage peaked on the 23rd with 1,150 heading south in half an hour. Another rare species recorded in the Park for a second time was a Ruff, flying low over the Pen Ponds on the 24th. It was last recorded in 1997. A Snipe was also heard and a dozen

Wigeon were the first of these winter visitors to arrive. A movement over the Park of eight Buzzards on the 26th included six together over Pen Ponds.

There was a more spectacular passage of birds of prey on 6th October. It began with a Short-eared Owl in the morning. Then in the afternoon 18 Buzzards passed overhead followed by a lone Red Kite. Another Red Kite occurred on the 10th, but the main event of the day was the 880 Redwing flying over in an hour, part of a London-wide movement. On the 15th a photographer took a picture of an unusual Grebe on Upper Pen Pond which a passing birder identified as a scarce Red-necked Grebe (*shown in my painting above*) – the first in the Park since 1985. Unlike the Spoonbills which were only seen by a single birder, the Grebe was seen by many who enjoyed excellent views. As is the case when a crowd of twitchers gather, another unusual bird was discovered – in this instance a juvenile Honey Buzzard flying over. The end of the month saw a heavy passage of Wood Pigeon with 7,600 over on the early morning of the 30th. A few other species were also noted migrating on this day: 24 Skylark, 20 Fieldfare, 250 Starling and 80 Chaffinch all flew west. Further Wood Pigeon passage occurred in early November with 5,500 on the 10th. The milder winter weather resulted in the usual winter visitors arriving in smaller numbers than normal.

## Sleepwalking into war *Elizabeth Nash & Annie Sullivan*

### An extraordinary Cabinet meeting at Pembroke Lodge

Whilst cataloguing the expanding archive in the Hearsurn collection at Pembroke Lodge, volunteers were astonished to discover that, incredible as it may sound, Britain's decision to invade the Crimea was taken by Cabinet ministers who were mostly fast asleep.

On the warm summer evening of 28th June 1854, the Cabinet of Prime Minister Lord Aberdeen were hosted by Minister without Portfolio Lord John Russell at his family home in Richmond Park. They were there to discuss the Minister of War's proposed despatch ordering the invasion of the Crimea. It was a very strongly worded order which effectively declared war on Russia, a serious and controversial step that might have been expected to provoke strong objections, or at least lively debate.

But according to the eminent contemporary historian A W Kinglake, the debate never happened. In his book *The Invasion of the Crimea*, published nine years after the Pembroke Lodge meeting, Kinglake reveals: "The Duke of Newcastle [Minister of War] took the despatch to Richmond... and he intended to make this the occasion for submitting the proposed instructions to the judgement of his colleagues. It was evening – a summer evening – and all the members of the Cabinet were present when the Duke took out the draft of his proposed despatch and began to read it.

There then occurred an incident, very trifling in itself, but yet so momentous in its consequences that, if it had happened in old times, it would have been attributed to the direct intervention of the immortal gods."

Despite efforts to arouse ministers' attention, "even those who had remained awake were in a quiet, assenting frame of mind... The despatch, though it bristled with sentences tending to provoke objection, received from the Cabinet the kind of approval which is often awarded to an unobjectionable sermon. Not a letter of it was altered."

Were Britain's rulers sleepy after a heavy meal, or drunk, or drugged with opium? Whatever the cause of their somnolence, the historical fact is that ministers, seated comfortably in the Soane room – the pretty room where today we take tea while admiring the view – approved without a word of dissent a document that prompted an immediate rush to war, with enormous consequences. You can read the full story at <http://www.frp.org.uk/richmond-park/articles>.



Cartoon entitled "God Defend the Right", from the satirical magazine *Punch*, or the *London Charivari*, 1854, now held in *The Hearsurn Collection*. It shows Lord John Russell standing on a Crimean battlefield in the character of Richard the Lionheart whilst a Russian Military leader looks on. This is the triumphant depiction offered to the British public, as yet unaware of the now infamous Cabinet meeting at Pembroke Lodge.

### Membership and Subscriptions

Membership is currently £10 for a household and £6 for an individual.

The membership form can be found on the website, [www.frp.org.uk](http://www.frp.org.uk): from the Home page click on "About the Friends" and then on "Get Involved". Forms can also be picked up from the Visitor Centre.

FRP also emails out monthly bulletins and if you are not getting these and would like to, please let me know via [bulletins@frp.org.uk](mailto:bulletins@frp.org.uk).

*Chris Mason*

### Queries about Friends?

See [www.frp.org.uk](http://www.frp.org.uk), or contact [secretary@frp.org.uk](mailto:secretary@frp.org.uk).

## VOLUNTEERS WANTED

### AT SUMMER FAIRS

If you can help at Richmond Fair on Saturday 10th May and/or Ham Fair on Saturday 14th June, please send your details (name, email address and telephone number) to Karen Scott at [events@frp.org.uk](mailto:events@frp.org.uk).

### FOR FRIENDS' BOOK DISTRIBUTION

We need one or two people to handle the distribution of the *Guidebook* and *Family Trails* to bookshops in the area. It involves taking orders from the shops, delivering the books and doing the paperwork so that our Treasurer can invoice them. The time involved is half a day a month at most, but you do need your own transport for delivery, a computer and storage space for, and ability to carry, a box of books.

If you are willing to help, please contact Richard Gray on [richard@rgcmktg.co.uk](mailto:richard@rgcmktg.co.uk).

**Police non-emergency telephone number: 101**

## Trustees

**Chairman:** Ron Crompton

**Vice-Chairmen:** Peter Burrows-Smith (Conservation & Ecology; Walks), Sheila Hamilton (Membership & Visitor Centre)

**Other Trustees:** Nick Coleman (Website; Events), Teresa Grafton (Education), Richard Gray (Marketing), P J Greeves (Events), Rachel Hirschler (History Project), Richard Polson (Hon. Secretary), David McLaughlin (Hon. Treasurer), Mary Pollard (Publicity; Social Media)

**Vice-Presidents:** Brian Baker, Richard Carter, John Collier, David McDowall, John Repsch, Douglas Reynolds, John Waller

**President:** Lord Rix, CBE

**Patrons:** Sir David Attenborough, Dame Jacqueline Wilson, Baroness Kramer of Richmond Park

### Queries about Park management?

If you have any observations or concerns about the way the Park is being managed please contact Park Manager Simon Richards at The Royal Parks, Holly Lodge, Richmond Park, Richmond, Surrey, TW10 5HS. Tel: 0300 061 2200

Email: [richmond@royalparks.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:richmond@royalparks.gsi.gov.uk)  
Website: [www.royalparks.gov.uk](http://www.royalparks.gov.uk)

## Friends' walks and courses

### WALKS

All welcome. Most, though not all, walks are on Saturdays and start at 10.00am from a car park.

Please phone Peter Burrows-Smith on 020 8392 9888 in advance if you need special support or help with the walk, and please keep dogs under control.

\* **COURSES** are typically a 30-minute talk at Pembroke Lodge followed by a two-hour walk. Courses are for members of the Friends only and places must be booked – please contact Sue on 0208 940 9114 or [sue.gibbons@npl.co.uk](mailto:sue.gibbons@npl.co.uk). Coffee/tea provided. There will be no charge.

See also

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

There are also free guided walks in Isabella Plantation led by Park staff throughout the year. These walks last about one and a half hours and are publicised on Park notice boards.

Date	Time	What and where
15 Mar	10.00am	COURSE: <b>Spring Birds and Bird Song</b> (Peter Burrows-Smith)
5 Apr	10.00am	WALK: meet at Roehampton Gate car park
21 Apr	<u>5.00am</u>	WALK: <b>Dawn Chorus</b> , meet at Sheen Gate
3 May	10.00am	WALK: meet at Broomfield Hill car park
5 May	<u>8.00am</u>	WALK: <b>Spring Birds</b> , meet at Sheen Gate car park
17 May	10.00am	COURSE: <b>Trees</b> (Janet Bostock)
7 Jun	10.00am	WALK: meet at Sheen Gate car park
5 Jul	10.00am	WALK: meet at Pembroke Lodge car park
12 Jul	<u>8.00pm</u>	WALK: <b>Summer Evening</b> , meet at Sheen Gate
19 Jul	10.00am	COURSE: <b>Butterflies</b> (Ray Garrett)

### Other events

12 Apr	<b>2014 Friends' AGM</b> , details enclosed with this newsletter
10 May	Friends at <b>Richmond Fair</b>
14 June	Friends at <b>Ham Fair</b>



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

*Richmond Park is a National Nature Reserve, a Site of Special Scientific Interest  
and a Special Area of Conservation*