



FRIENDS *of*
RICHMOND PARK

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

Autumn 2015



A Bird for Richmond Park

Future generations

Reduction of policing

Restoration works

Friends' 2016 Calendar

Dear Friends,

Hello! I have enjoyed editing and producing my first Friends' Newsletter and was greatly helped by the excellent handover from former editor Marilyn Mason, the support of Chairman Ron Crompton and sharing the role with a small team of Friends: Alison Glasier and Chris Ecob who helped edit the articles and Sally Wood our proof-reader. Please let us have your views about the content and the changes in layout.

Vivienne Press
editor@frp.org.uk

A thank you and a welcome

I would like to extend a huge thank-you on behalf of all the Friends to Marilyn Mason for editing the newsletter for the past seven years. With her guidance and hard work it has become an excellent, high quality publication and we owe a lot to her.

Our new Editor, Vivienne Press, came to live in Richmond twelve years ago and takes almost daily walks in the Park. Vivienne has retired from a career in public health, including policy roles in the Department of Health and Assistant Medical Director of the British Heart Foundation. She has also written on many subjects for health professionals, patients and the general public and is currently editor of the magazine of a small national charity, so this is her second editorship. We all welcome her and wish her the best in her new role.

Ron Crompton

Sir David Attenborough, new patron of Holly Lodge Centre

Sir David Attenborough kindly agreed to become a patron of the Centre when he opened its new nature trail (see the Summer 2015 Friends magazine). This event took place the day after his televised interview with Barack Obama and, speaking to guests and children from the Vineyard school and Linden Bridge special needs school, he took up the same theme – the importance of nature, particularly for children. He complimented the Centre on the new nature trail, saying, *"What you've created here, bringing children to it day after day, is a huge treasure"*.



A film clip of the opening has been posted on the Holly Lodge website www.thehollylodgecentre.org.uk alongside a film of the Centre in action, including some lovely comments from the schoolchildren visiting it. *Photo: David Attenborough with fascinated Vineyard School children by Karen Hatch*

Front cover photo:

Green Woodpecker in flight by Russell Ritchin. One of the many beautiful photos in our 2016 Friends' Calendar – see page 7.

Future Generations



One day last August I took my grand-daughters, aged 7 and 4, to explore the Park. They live in Peckham, close to a local park, but it's nothing like

Richmond Park and, without a car (like many young London families), they don't get to the country much.

We walked around King Charles Spinney (following one of the routes in *Family Trails*) and then Petersham slopes, investigating everything along the way: the tree stumps on which birds and squirrels hold nuts while they peck or rip them open, the lattice bark of the sweet chestnut trees, the three ages of silver birches, the enormous rabbit warren near Petersham playground, the male deer, red and fallow, with burgeoning antlers, a group of hinds happily munching on a tree, maintaining the browse line.

They were fascinated and excited by it all. They couldn't believe that deer grow their antlers anew every year or that stag beetles live in deadwood for five years before emerging for just a few days. They searched around the tree stumps for bits of acorns and nuts and looked down the rabbit holes. I recalled David Attenborough's comment to President Obama that he's never met a child that is not fascinated by the natural world – just turning over a stone and finding a slug underneath is exciting!

But there was more: my grand-daughters seemed at home in the Park, accepting it as a world in which things have a purpose and are interconnected – that an ecosystem is at work and that disturbing any part of it has consequences. They accepted that trees grow chestnuts which are food for the deer and by taking them (or the blackberries growing nearby) you are making the winter that bit harder for the deer. And that the deadwood on Petersham slopes provides homes for beetles and by building dens you are killing those beetles. They understood that nature should be left alone and not disrupted by our thoughtless actions.

It was an uplifting experience for me. They are part of the future generations for whom the Friends conserve and protect the Park. We conserve it as something radically different from their local park – as a wondrous survival, a natural ecosystem so close to the centre of the city where Londoners can experience and understand nature, how it works and how they should treat it. My grand-daughters' excitement and fascination shows we are on the right track and makes all the effort worthwhile.

Ron Crompton
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2,400 smiles at Park Open Day

Nearly 2,400 flocked to Holly Lodge for the first Open Day since 2010. Simon Richards, Park Manager, said: *"I think we can all be pleased with the event and look forward to a repeat in a couple of years. The feedback and experiences really show that we provided all the visitors with a lot of interesting content. Our sense is that it was predominantly local families that came".*



Having fun in a Victorian laundry

Friends' volunteers noted the interest of children in many of the wildlife exhibits and the curiosity and sheer enjoyment that were displayed in lots of smiles! The Holly Lodge Centre provided fun activities for children including pond dipping and crafts. Park skills and interactive activities on offer included shire horses with farriers, a Victorian classroom and laundry, tree surgery, pony rides and horse dressage.

Assistant Park Manager Adam Curtis provided a fascinating calculation: *"238 people from Durham to South Wales and from 51*

different organisations gave up their weekend to deliver 82 different things to see or do".



Farrier shoeing a shire horse

There were nearly 50 Friends' volunteers helping by welcoming, guiding walks, selling books and merchandise, signing up new members and entertaining children and families with the Discoverers activities' programme. The Royal Parks were also selling antlers with proceeds going to projects the Park.

As well as the Friends, many groups and organisations were part of the Day, including the Park's different wildlife groups, the Royal Parks Guild, the Holly Lodge Centre, the RSPB, the Hearsam Collection and the British Deer Society.

In summary, there was a wonderful range of activities and plenty of stalls to keep visitors of all ages entertained. All this and good food, delicious homemade cakes and smiles all around!

Big Cut in Richmond Park Police

By Ron Crompton

Changes that started in mid-October have drastically reduced the number of police in the Park. The police forces in Richmond and Bushy Park have been merged, Bushy Park police station closed, and the combined force reduced from 20 to 7 officers (i.e. 3½ for Richmond Park). With two shifts a day, holiday/sick leave and assignments to central London parks, there is now often only **one officer on duty for the two Parks combined.**

The special Royal Parks Operational Command Unit (OCU) has been retained, but responsibility for taking 'response' calls (999 and 101) will be transferred to the local Borough police (Richmond in our case). Those calls will be subject to the Borough's priorities, and calls about off-track cycling are not likely to figure highly.

There is also a new team at Royal Parks police HQ in Hyde Park who can be deployed here on a specific task such as policing mushroom picking. However, this deployment will be subject to priorities across all the Royal Parks and we expect central London parks' priorities will dominate. We are also promised

better police coverage of bank holidays and busy weekends, with the local recruitment of special constables (part-time volunteers who are trained and have the same powers as normal constables), but we won't be holding our breath...

Before 2004 The Royal Parks agency (TRP) employed its own police force, with 165 officers for all the Royal Parks, of whom 35 were in Richmond and Bushy Parks. They were then merged into the Metropolitan Police and funding and numbers steadily reduced to the 20 for our two Parks two years ago. Over the 10 years, the Met has repeatedly shown that, in spite of the best efforts of the officers on the ground, it cannot provide the type of environmental policing needed here. Its training, systems, targets, priorities and management approach are all focused on major crime and social disorder that are not issues affecting the Park.

We are very concerned about these changes, which will leave the Park with clearly inadequate policing and no policing at all for long periods of time.

A new charitable organisation for the Royal Parks

Moves are underway to change the status of The Royal Parks (TRP) from a government agency to a charitable public corporation, similar to the BBC. TRP would then have greater independence and flexibility in how it generates its income, in its recruiting and salaries and how it spends its money. It will merge with The Royal Parks Foundation, which was set up in 2000 to attract charitable donations that TRP could not. The changes will probably happen by April 2016.

Volunteering with the Friends

We have a new Volunteer Coordinator, Bettina Falkenberg. If you are interested in volunteering with the Friends in any capacity, please contact her on volunteers@frp.org.uk.

New videos of Poets Corner and Deer in the City

Short videos of two special events which took place in the Park this summer have been posted on the FRP website: highlights of the opening of the restored Poets Corner and the Deer in the City exhibition at Pembroke Lodge. See them both at www.frp.org.uk/news

The Poets Corner video features Sir David Attenborough and David Harsent, winner of the 2014 prestigious TS Eliot award for poetry, premiering his new poem 'A Dream of Richmond Park' which was commissioned by the Friends.

Well-known actors Anthony Calf, Julian Glover, Stella Gonet and Julia Watson read a range of poetry and prose, including works by Shelley, Tennyson, Edward Thomas and WH Hudson. All four actors gave a stirring rendition of poet James Thomson's most famous work 'Rule Britannia'. Poets Corner is dedicated to James Thomson.

The six-minute Deer in the City video has lots of information about how they have shaped the Park and what we can all do to respect and help protect them.

Friends oppose proposal for new cycling 'Quietway'

The Friends are opposing a Transport for London proposed 'Cycling Quietway' from Ham Cross to Pen Ponds car park and on to Sheen Cross. Transport for London says: *'Quietways are intended for less confident cyclists ... and existing cyclists wanting to go at a more gentle pace'*.

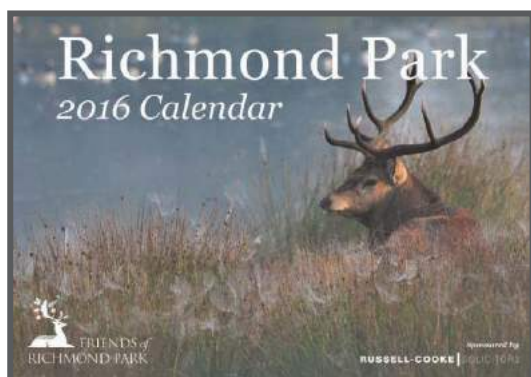
We are concerned that the publicity, signage and road changes will attract more fast cyclists (who are already starting to dominate the road), disadvantaging slower cyclists and bringing more traffic into the quiet centre of the park.

Traffic survey

Over the last few months the Royal Parks has been conducting a traffic survey in Richmond Park, the first for more than ten years. You may have noticed the cameras mounted on tall posts and rubber tubes across the roads at various points in the Park. The cameras count the number of cars and bicycles and the tubes collect speed data. Counting took place over the last ten days in August, to record traffic levels during the holidays, and will be repeated for one week in October/November during normal work/term time.

Richmond Park Calendar 2016

The 2016 Friends of Richmond Park calendar is **now available** from the **Visitor Centre outside Pembroke Lodge** and at **Holly Lodge**, as well as at the Barnes and Sheen Bookshops.



Our enormous thanks go to all 33 of the talented photographers who so kindly donated the amazing images and to Mary Pollard for single-handedly producing the calendar, from collecting the photos to laying out the calendar to working with the printers.

Our thanks also to Russell-Cooke solicitors who are our sponsors. The profit from sales will go to help conservation projects in the Park.

We are very proud to include award-winners such as Ian Skelton, whose October stag was recently voted Nikon Wildlife Photo of the Month, along with Bartek Olszewski and Chaitanya Deshpande who are both shortlisted for Wildlife Photographer of the Year 2015. We also have photos from four teenage photographers – see if you can spot which pictures they are!

The Visitor Centre is open from 11am to 3pm most days (subject to volunteer availability), and Holly Lodge is open Monday to Friday 9am to 4pm. N.B. The Visitor Centre and Holly Lodge can only accept cash payments.

Christmas cards are also on sale at the Visitor Centre, so please pick up a pack to support the Park.

Sponsorship of Friends by Russell-Cooke Solicitors

The Friends are being sponsored for two years by local law firm Russell-Cooke, who have previously sponsored several events, including our Poets Corner event, and contributed to conservation projects in the Park.

Russell-Cooke is a top 100 law firm with 170 highly-regarded solicitors and offers specialist advice on most legal matters, personal or professional – wills and estate planning, residential conveyancing, employment-related issues, family and children, relationship breakdown and the care and protection of the elderly. Russell-Cooke says: "It is important to us to support the community with whom we work, and we are delighted to sponsor the Friends of Richmond Park. Contact us at our offices in Putney, Kingston and Central London on 020 8789 9111 or visit our website: www.russell-cooke.co.uk.

Dann's Pond and Great Crested Newts

by Julia Clark BSc MCIEEM Head of Ecology Royal Parks



Male Great Crested Newt by James Grundy

With funding and support from the Friends of Richmond Park, we are working to enhance the waterbodies within the Park. One such project is Dann's Pond, located to the north of Coronation Plantation in the south of the Park.

Dann's Pond appears to have been named after Alfred Dann, a game keeper, who was on the staff in 1877 (Collenette, 1937). The first mapped record of the pond dates back to 1754 (McDowall, 2006).

In 2010, Froglife undertook a Great Crested Newt *Truturus cristatus* (GCN) survey of all of the ponds in Richmond Park, including the golf

course. This was the repeat of a survey conducted by Froglife in 1984. The survey found that several ponds within Richmond Park supported breeding populations of GCN (Froglife, 2010).

Great crested newts are by far the largest of the three native British newts and the most threatened. During the breeding season, the males look like small dragons; they have a large ragged crest on their back, which is used in their courtship display. These newts are a European protected species, so we're privileged to have several breeding populations in the Park.

In 2010, Froglife undertook a habitat suitability assessment of Dann's Pond and the surrounding habitat, to ensure that the site provided optimal aquatic and terrestrial habitat for the newts. The assessment identified that the pond was over-shaded by tree canopies, resulting in the production of a large amount of leaf litter which silted up the pond.

The shading also restricted the growth of marginal and aquatic plants, which limited egg-laying opportunities for the newts. With the aid of a combination of volunteers, tree contractors and machinery, half of the pond was transformed into optimal habitat for the newts.



Male Great Crested Newt by Julia Clark

In spring 2014, the Royal Parks Ecology Team carried out a repeat GCN survey in Dann's Pond. The survey found that the newt population had almost doubled since the 2010 survey. In response to these encouraging results, The Royal Parks are funding a project to undertake similar restoration work on the eastern half of the pond. Crown lifting and tree thinning began in winter 2014; silt removal will begin later this year.

OPM update

2015 has been a very challenging year for the Park management, volunteers and contractors working to manage **the Oak Processionary Moth (OPM)** tree pest. More than 10,200 nests (compared to 8,000 in 2014) were removed by five nest-removal teams working at full stretch from June to August. There was also a significant rise in the number of nests per tree, with 55 of those infested each having more than 30 nests removed. The risk to the public from the caterpillars' toxic hairs was reduced by the vigilance of the volunteer surveyors, who reported low-level nests early in the season, enabling their prompt removal. The Royal Parks and all of us in the Friends thank the volunteers for their diligence and commitment.

First wildlife apprentice for Royal Parks

The Royal Parks has trained horticulture apprentices since 1962 but is now about to recruit its first wildlife apprentice, funded by the Berkeley Foundation. She/he will work in Regents Park while studying for a Diploma in Environmental Conservation. The appointee will focus on 'habitat management practices that benefit wildlife, including the creation and maintenance of native hedgerows, meadows, copses and reed beds'. We are delighted by this commitment by TRP to wildlife conservation; hopefully Richmond Park will be next!

A Bird for Richmond Park

By Nigel Jackman

Richmond Park Bird Recording Group

Inspired by a campaign last year to elect a 'national bird' for Britain, the Richmond Park Bird Recording Group have followed suit and a bird for Richmond Park has been chosen.

The UK poll, launched by The Urban Birder ornithologist David Lindo, offered a shortlist of ten birds. More than 200,000 people voted with the robin winning, followed by the blackbird and the barn owl. Other contenders included the blue tit, mute swan, kingfisher, red kite and wren, and all these eight birds can be seen in Richmond Park.

Encouraged by the interest sparked by the national campaign, the Bird Recording Group decided to choose its own avian representative for Richmond Park. The criteria were that the chosen bird should:

- be an all-year resident
- be recognisable to all – not just enthusiasts
- truly represent the character of the Park
- not be selected just to represent a particular preservation cause

The resulting deliberations produced a shortlist of the following four candidates:

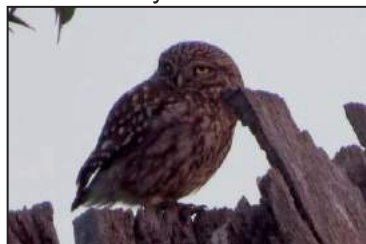
Green Woodpecker – commonly seen and heard, brightly coloured with subtle distinction between the plumage of the male (next column), female and juvenile (facing page). Symbolic of the park through its association with acid grassland and oak trees.



Jackdaw – numerous, seen everywhere, including around people; has a gregarious, 'cheeky chappie' personality and an easily recognised call. Frequently feeds on grassland and is often seen with (and on) the deer of the park.



Little Owl – well represented in the park, albeit a less common and more secretive bird. Unusually amongst owls it is diurnal, so it can be seen during the day. An owl for the park with its rich woodland and grassland habitat. A 'cuddly' choice.



Kestrel – small numbers in the Park but more populous than other raptors. Seen frequently, whether hunting or at rest, with subtle distinction between male and female plumage. Its soft and friendly face disguises the nature of this bird as a silent assassin.



The Richmond Park Bird Recording Group together with regular attendees of the Friday Bird Group **overwhelmingly voted for the Green Woodpecker.**

Endorsements received included:

"I think the green woodpecker wins because it combines a need for mature trees with tree holes for nesting with a requirement for ant-hilly, invertebrate-rich open grassland. So the acid grassland and ancient trees both fit into the picture. Also very likely for a visitor to see and hear anywhere in the park."

"My vote would go for Green Woodpecker – such a charismatic species both visually attractive and a wonderful yaffle call."

"I'd vote for the green woodpecker. I think people walking in the Park see it a lot as it flies up from the ground. It bridges the trees and the grassland."

The Friends marketing team is currently looking at ways to adopt the Green Woodpecker as a wildlife emblem for the Park.



Juvenile woodpecker above, female below and male previous page



Green Woodpeckers

- The largest of the UK's three woodpeckers
- Population of approx. 52,000 in the UK.
- Estimated more than 100 breeding territories in Richmond Park – the largest local population in London.
- Nests in holes in mature trees, especially oak, ash and birch
- 4 to 6 eggs laid March to mid-June
- Young hatch after about 19 days, fly after about another 21 days and become independent a further 3 to 7 weeks later

First stage of Beverley Brook restoration underway

Work on the first stage of the Beverley Brook restoration began in September and should by now be nearing completion. It was funded by the Friends' Beverley Brook appeal, which together with match-funding by the Friends and the Visitor Centre raised £35,000, and by contributions from The Royal Parks and the Environment Agency.

The total restoration work covers two sections of the river, stretching from the bridge where the Tamsin Trail goes over the brook south of Roehampton Gate car park, to the concrete service gate for the golf course half way to Robin Hood Gate. It involves various changes:

- Creating a more natural sinuous flow and a more complex habitat, by narrowing the channel at points with faggots fixed in place and introducing large woody material (e.g. logs pinned to the river bed)
- Creating fish refuges and spawning grounds with gravel beds at regular intervals and new backwaters outside the main flow of the stream
- Creating a new habitat by making the banks much shallower to give low-lying areas that will flood under high flows
- Planting native riparian trees such as alder and different types of willow to give more shading and reduce water temperatures
- Fencing sections of the brook to prevent access by deer and dogs and so allow new marginal vegetation to establish itself.



The aerial view of this first stage shows the narrowing of the brook (the yellow moon shapes), one of the two backwaters (the blue circle), the access for deer and dogs (the red circle) and two river gates (the red bars) to prevent deer walking along the river.

In time, the range and amount of flora and fauna should increase a lot. It's expected that fish will breed in the brook, kingfishers will nest here and water vole could be re-introduced.

The works have created a muddy mess for now, but the area should start to re-vegetate in the spring and in two to three years' time will be fully restored.

By Ron Crompton

Sheen Cottage

Looking carefully to the left of Sheen Gate, you may notice a section of wall opposite Adam's Pond that shows a noticeable change in style with cement rendering and alcoves. You may also see some broken brickwork and tiles lying nearby. These are the only remnants of Sheen Cottage, built in 1727 to house Sir Robert Walpole's huntsmen, hounds and harriers. By 1787 the extended property was granted by King George III to Sir William Adam after whom the nearby pond is named. In 1837 the extended cottage was renamed East Sheen Cottage.

In 1852 Queen Victoria granted the house to Professor Sir Richard Owen, founder of the Natural History Museum and during his tenancy the 3 ½ acre site and garden became a great attraction, visited by such notables as King Edward VII, David Livingstone and Gladstone. Sir Richard would sit

on the south-facing veranda and you can still see the remains of the water pipes there today. The house was renamed Thatched Cottage, then Sheen Lodge and finally Sheen Cottage.

After Sir Richard's death in 1921 the house was occupied by several other people and in 1942 became the grace and favour residence of a Miss Stewart-Robinson who complained bitterly at the move from comfortable quarters at Windsor Castle to the chilly cottage.

In 1944 the house suffered extensive damage from bombing and later that year was further damaged by fire. Despite moves to have it restored, it was finally demolished in September 1951.

With thanks to Barnes and Mortlake History Society for permission to summarise an article by David Catford in its 2004 newsletter. Summary by Alison Glasier.

Did You Know?

Although the Park is said to be surrounded by a wall, the fact is that sections of the original wall have, over the centuries, been removed.

Two of them – at the back of Roehampton Gate car park and between Petersham Park and Sudbrook Park – disappeared long ago. Two others show what a little influence can do.

Ancaster House was built in 1772 outside Richmond gate and extremely close to the wall, so that it had virtually no rear garden. Its owner, Sir Lionel Darell MP, is said to have approached George III, who gave Sir Lionel more land and also gave permission for the wall to be replaced by railings.

In 1828 Samuel Baxter built Kingston Hill Place, which can be seen from the back of Broomfield Hill car park. Baxter not only had the Park wall replaced by railings and a ha-ha ditch; he also had the Kingston Hill road itself diverted away from the Park so that he could build his mansion adjacent to the Park.

Membership and Subscriptions

If you are currently not receiving the monthly Friends' email bulletin and would like to, please email me at bulletins@frp.org.uk with the subject "Add to bulletin".

Can I also remind you that membership rates have changed from 2015 onwards, from £6 to £10 for individual membership and £10 to £15 for household and society memberships. If you have not already done so, please amend your standing order to continue to receive the newsletter and e-bulletin.

Chris Mason (membership)

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, TW10 5HS.

Telephone 0300 061 2200
Richmond@royalparks.gsl.gov.uk
www.royalparks.gov.uk

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

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Trustees

Chairman: Ron Crompton

Vice-Chairman: Peter Burrows-Smith (conservation and ecology; walks and courses).

Other Trustees: Nick Coleman (website, campaigning), Teresa Grafton (education), Richard Gray (marketing), PJ Greeves (events), Rachel Hirschler (history project), David McLaughlin (hon. treasurer), Chris Mason (membership), John Peake (visitor centre), Richard Polson (hon. secretary).

Vice-Presidents: Brian Baker, John Collier, Sheila Hamilton, Max Lankester, Douglas Reynolds.

President: Vacant

Patrons: Sir David Attenborough, Baroness Kramer of Richmond Park, Lord Rix CBE, Dame Jacqueline Wilson

Queries about the Friends?

See www.frp.org.uk or contact secretary@frp.org.uk



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www.frp.org.uk

Friends' Walks

All welcome. Friend's Walks are free, last about two hours and start from a car park. All except Bird Walks are on Saturdays starting at 10am, including a walk on Boxing Day! If you need special support or help with the walk, please phone Ian McKenzie on 020 8943 0632 in advance, or 07824 784335 only on the walk day itself. Please keep dogs under control. See also www.frp.org.uk

Date	Starting at 10am from
7 November	Pembroke Lodge car park
5 December	Kingston Gate car park
26 December	Roehampton Gate car park
2 January	Pen Ponds car park
6 February	Robin Hood Gate car park
5 March	Kingston Gate car park
2 April	Roehampton Gate car park

Plus Informal Bird Walks every Friday at 9.30am from Pen Ponds coffee kiosk.

Friends' Courses

Courses begin at 10am and are typically a 30-minute talk at Pembroke Lodge followed by a two-hour walk. Courses are for members of the Friends only and do not need to be booked – just turn up. There is no charge and coffee and tea are provided. See also www.frp.org.uk

16 January **Introduction to Bird Watching**
19 March **Spring birds and bird song**

Both these courses are led by Peter Burrows-Smith.

Isabella Plantation Walks

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

Other events for your diary

Holly Lodge Centre's Christmas Concert

Friday 11 December, 7pm at St Mary Magdalene Church, Richmond. Enjoy carols and readings by local celebrities, wine and snacks. Tickets £20, buy through the Centre's website or by phoning 020 8940 8730.

Volunteers' Event

The Friends' annual volunteer event will be on Sunday 24 January in Pembroke Lodge. Please see insert for full details and how to book.

Friends AGM

The 55th AGM will be held on Saturday 23 April at the normal venue, Kings House School. Full details in our spring newsletter.

 /thefriendsofrichmondpark

 @FRPtweets

www.frp.org.uk



Green Woodpecker, the Bird of Richmond Park by Russell Ritchin

Friends are sponsored by

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