

A new pond for the Park

Michael Davison

Much-travelled adventurer though he is, when David Attenborough was asked recently by a magazine interviewer to name his favourite spot on the entire globe, he answered unequivocally:

“Richmond Park”. Sir David’s devotion to the Park was never seen to better advantage than when he appeared at Robin Hood Gate on a damp morning in July to inaugurate the latest addition to the Park’s myriad attractions: a brand-new pond.

Sir David delighted a waiting crowd by arriving in a horse-drawn carriage.

Standing by a newly established information board, he thanked all those who had played a part in planning and

creating the new Pond, which he was

honoured to know was to bear his name.

After cutting the celebratory tape Sir David and friends proceeded to a new bench set beside the pond and bearing an

inscription he had chosen himself: “it’s not what you look at that matters, it’s what you see” – a quotation from the American naturalist Henry David Thoreau. Here Sir David sat and posed for photographs with representatives of The Royal Parks, the Richmond Park Charitable Trust, Healthy Planet and the Friends of Richmond Park, all of



*David Attenborough cuts the tape
Photo by Diana Loch*

whom had helped to fund the Pond. As a Patron of the Friends, Sir David found a particularly welcome companion on the bench in Wendy Macaulay, the sole surviving member of the group who founded the Friends 53 years ago.

Attenborough Pond, elongated in shape, is fed by an open channel from Martin’s Pond, a sequestered, tree-shaded spot higher up the hill towards Pen Ponds, and by water from the slopes of Broomfield Hill. It drains, via a new sluice gate and pipe, under the road into Beverley Brook. Perhaps more important than the Pond’s visual appeal is the new freshwater habitat it provides for a range of species including invertebrates, amphibians, birds and bats. It will also help to retain water in the Park, counteracting climate change and allowing the water to seep gradually down into the underground aquifers.

The Pond duly inaugurated, Sir David was driven to the nearby Beverley Brook where he spoke with passion in support of the appeal to raise money for restoration work on the Brook.

Even now our Patron’s day in the Park was not quite finished. As he was being driven away across the grass he spotted a party of schoolchildren with their teacher walking downhill towards him. He stopped the car, and spent five minutes chatting to the children about the wonders of the Park. He made their day – as he had already made ours.

Beverley Brook appeal raises £10,000

Ron Crompton

The public appeal for the restoration of Beverley Brook has now raised over £10,000 towards its target of £16,000.

We expect some work to start this winter, with the completion of the project dependent on the funds available. Beverley Brook runs through Richmond Park for two kilometres, entering by

Robin Hood Gate and exiting near Roehampton Gate. Its name derives from the beavers that lived in it in medieval times. Over the last 150 years, the Brook has been straightened and widened to take away water efficiently from upstream flood plains and sewage works. The original naturally meandering water-course became an ecologically sterile channel. As a result, the Brook lacks marginal vegetation and has few habitats for fish, birds and other wildlife. Some sections are over-shadowed by trees and the banks are heavily trampled and disturbed by deer and dogs.

The restoration work uses in-channel changes to create a more natural flow and a variety of new habitats to support a diverse fauna and flora. These changes include: flow deflectors, pinning logs to the riverbed to imitate a natural channel; fish shelters and spawning grounds, created with branches and gravel; Kingfisher nest tunnels, built into the riverbank; willow faggots, laid in the channel, to protect and stabilise the banks; pollarding of willow trees to reduce the overhang and shade; fencing along some stretches to protect against deer and dogs.

The total cost of the work is £30-35,000, of which half – £16,000 – is being raised through a public appeal. The Friends of Richmond Park, the Visitor Centre and the conservation charity Healthy Planet will provide match-funding for the other half. So far, over

£10,000 has been raised for the appeal, with a combination of a few large donations and many smaller ones. We hope to raise the remaining £6,000 within the next three months, so that the full project can be completed this winter.

“Phantom” pond

Ron Crompton



This year a pond appeared where Beverley Brook crosses the road from Roehampton Gate to Sheen Cross. In this summer’s hot weather the deer loved it (*see photo above*). The “pond” has appeared in previous years but never as large or for as long as this year. Old maps show a pond there, but it seemed to have dried or silted up. However, the greater winter rains of the last five years have caused an accumulation of water there. The water has then been held in place by the high banks of Beverley Brook, which have been built up in the past to allow large flows of water to avoid flooding in urban areas further upstream. Maybe a proper pond should be created there!

Please help us to reach our target! You can donate:

- online, by credit/debit card at <https://mydonate.bt.com/events/beverleybrook/186810>. Please remember to tick the Gift Aid box.
- by bank transfer to our “Ponds & Streams” account at Barclays, sort code 20-72-17, account number 43324680.
- by cheque, made payable to “Ponds & Streams” and sent to David McLaughlin, Honorary Treasurer, Friends of Richmond Park, 5 Crescent Rd, Kingston KT2 7RD
- in collection boxes at the Park Visitor Centre and at Holly Lodge.

There is more information on our website at www.frp.org.uk/ponds-and-streams.