



FRIENDS of  
RICHMOND PARK

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

Newsletter Autumn 2020

# Calendar 2021



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RICHMOND PARK



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**The first scheduled monuments in the Park**

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**Managing the Park during Covid**

While we were all enjoying Richmond Park's tranquillity during lockdown, and then the hot summer weather, what was it like to manage it? Simon Richards, the Park Manager's answer is 'a challenge'.

Staff numbers were well down. His management team and grounds maintenance contractors were fully staffed throughout, but 50 Royal Parks staff were furloughed, including the whole ecology team.

In contrast, the work was well up. Closing and then re-opening the Park and its facilities was difficult to plan and implement. For example, toilets were particularly challenging: it was difficult to maintain social distancing and the cleaning staff travelled by public transport, risking infection.



There was a substantial increase in visitors, many coming for the first time, and this caused a range of problems, including damage, litter and antisocial behaviour. In particular, large groups of young people partying into the night created mountains of litter. Litter, Simon says, was one of his two biggest problems.

Drought was the other big problem. At lockdown, the Park was saturated from high winter rainfall, but within a few weeks it became parched and, in places, badly eroded by the greater visitor numbers. Trees suffered. Staff were diverted to provide virtually continuous watering of the most vulnerable trees. Even so some trees died or were weakened and an abnormal number of days of high winds caused many to shed limbs, needing fencing to protect the public from them. Ragwort flourished and threatened to take over areas of acid grassland. On the plus side, however, it was a good summer for invertebrates, especially butterflies, and for birds.

Financially, the period has also been difficult. The Royal Parks (TRP) receives 85% of its money from commercial income and this year has lost most of it. The Hyde Park concerts, 'Winter Wonderland' and the Half Marathon have been cancelled; catering and filming income are much lower. In Richmond Park, the Duathlon and Ride London were cancelled, and Pembroke Lodge's weddings and catering are restricted (although the golf courses have been flat-out since the end of lockdown). Throughout TRP, budgets have been cut and big projects, including two in Richmond Park, have stopped. It will take two to three years before TRP's finances are back to normal and it has re-built the reserves that have been used in surviving the effects of coronavirus.

Simon's last words are a huge thanks to the sections of the local community and many volunteers who have supported him through this period. We in turn, give grateful thanks to him and his team.

Photos, front cover and above: @1WildShot © Bartek Olszewski

## The 2020 AGM

The Friends' AGM in April (our 59th!) was postponed because of the lockdown but we eventually held it in August with 50 members joining a Saturday morning virtual Zoom meeting.

Zoom's features allowed us to mimic many aspects of a live meeting, such as voting during the formal AGM, the Chairman's traditional slide presentation reviewing the previous year and on-the-spot questions (via its 'chat' facility). At times it was a technical challenge, especially during the nine votes!

The formal AGM elected two new Trustees – Hugh Deighton as Honorary Treasurer and Roger Hillyer as Honorary Secretary – and one new Vice-President, Richard Polson. It re-elected Sir David Attenborough and Baroness Susan Kramer as Patrons for a three-year term, with Dame Jacqueline Wilson stepping down.

The Chairman's review of 2019 highlighted the Heathrow campaign, the Year of the Tree programme, the work of our 250 volunteers, and the tranquillity of the Park during lockdown as well as the problems of the influx of new visitors.

The questions were either asked by the member onscreen or read out by Roger Hillyer. They covered a range of subjects including the increase in litter, the recently announced trial of restrictions on through-traffic, cycling, ice cream vans, knopper galls and acorns and visitors being close to wildlife.

### FRP Patrons, Trustees and Vice-presidents

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

**Chairman:** Ron Crompton

**Other trustees:** Janet Bostock, Nick Coleman, Hugh Deighton (Hon. Treasurer), Teresa Grafton, Richard Gray, PJ Greeves, Roger Hillyer (Hon. Secretary), Chris Mason, Vivienne Press, Steve Sandham

**Vice-Presidents:** Peter Burrows-Smith, Sheila Hamilton, Max Lankester, Richard Polson (VPs are former trustees).

### Would you like to receive your Friends' Newsletters as PDFs?

If you would like to receive future newsletters as pdfs instead of in print, please email Chris Mason at [membership@frp.org.uk](mailto:membership@frp.org.uk) with the Subject heading of **'Online Newsletter Only.'**

Examples of the newsletter as pdfs can be found at [www.frp.org.uk/newsletters](http://www.frp.org.uk/newsletters).

## THANK YOU! John and Dame Jacky

A very big and grateful thank you to both John Collier and Dame Jacqueline Wilson who are stepping down as a Vice President and a Patron respectively after many years helping the Friends.



**John Collier** was Chairman of the Friends from 2004 to 2007. In those 3 years he re-shaped the Friends from a pressure group focused on the single issue of traffic in the Park to a broader focused, more professional organisation. A website was launched, the printed newsletter improved, the walks programme expanded and talks introduced. In 2007 the Visitor Centre opened, managed and staffed by Friends volunteers, providing information about the Park and selling Park-related merchandise. It was the Friends' first large-scale volunteering effort. At the same time, the Friends expanded its role as a pressure group to protect the Park, membership increased and the finances improved.

John stepped down as Chairman in 2007 and became a Vice-President, attending the Friends' Committee meetings and offering wise advice. He also served on The Royal Parks audit committee, providing his experience as a qualified accountant. He has now stepped down as a Vice President, although he will continue to lead his twice-yearly walks around the Park's walls (or military style 'yomps' as he calls them).

**Dame Jacqueline Wilson**, known to many as Jacky, now lives in Sussex and has stepped down as a Patron of the Friends after almost ten years. She became a Patron in 2011 at the time of the Friends' 50th anniversary, when she was living in Kingston. As she then told the Friends' newsletter: *"I've enjoyed wonderful walks in Richmond Park for over 50 years...when I want to unwind after a morning's hard work, I'll head for the Park."* Her 'morning's hard work' was writing over 100 books, many of which were best sellers, and one of these was partly set in Richmond Park.



Dame Jacqueline was the children's laureate from 2005-2007 and in 2011 we were lucky to have her as the main judge of the Friends' poetry competition: 700 people entered, 600 of whom were children from over 30 schools. Of the winning entries, she said: *"I'm a veteran of judging children's poetry competitions, but these entries were truly outstanding. It may be a combination of local talent and the inspiring beauty of Richmond Park."*

Richmond Park and the Friends have greatly benefited from their work and we send them our best wishes for the future.

## Summer Tree Photography Competition Our international winners



Our summer competition has three very different winning photos. However, they share one very important aspect – they are all the result of the photographer making many visits to the same areas and becoming familiar with the changing appearance of the trees in different lights.

All the photographers also had more time in the Park this summer because of Covid regulations restricting their work. The winning image of the Phoenix tree lit by the rising sun gives a hopeful message at this difficult time.

**Winner: The Phoenix tree by Paul Thompson MBE** who was born in Canberra and is an international rowing coach. He has coached World and Olympic Champions and led British crews to three gold and two silver Olympic medals in London 2012, for which he was awarded the MBE. He is currently Head Coach of China's rowing team, working alongside Sir Steve Redgrave.

Paul says, "Richmond Park is a jewel of London and living on its doorstep is a privilege. My wife and I regularly enjoy running and walking in the Park. We have often photographed this Phoenix tree as its character changes with the seasons and with the different light throughout the day. Indeed, we have mounted and hung photos of this tree in our house. One morning, the sun was just rising into a clear sky, creating vivid bright orange shafts of light and a glow through and around the tree... the spirit of the Phoenix rising again through the Phoenix Tree."

Reported by Vivienne Press

**Joint runner-up: Monster Veteran Oak by David Lloyd** [www.davidlloyd.net](http://www.davidlloyd.net). David is a professional wildlife photographer, who came from New Zealand 30 years ago and now lives in Ealing. When Covid restrictions stopped him travelling around the world taking photos, he started to explore Richmond Park, going 2-3 times a week over the past 6 months in different weathers and at different times. Richmond Park now ranks with Uganda, Rwanda, Kenya and Botswana as among his favourite places!

David photographs in both colour and black and white, depending on the subject. The veteran oak in his winning photo looks like an angry monster about to strike! In 2011, his picture 'A Flick of the Tail', was the cover photo of the Wildlife Photographer of the Year Portfolio. He processes in Lightroom and, to keep things as natural as possible, rarely uses Photoshop. David says, "My best tip is to stay with your subject for as long as possible".



**Joint runner-up: Browse-line by Kasia Ciesielska-Faber**, an IT architect who moved to the UK from Poland 5 years ago, lives in St Margarets and now takes frequent walks in the Park. Kasia says: "Nature and photography have always been close to my heart, and Richmond Park holds a special place in those affections. I find joy exploring nature, and photography gives me the ability to show nature's beauty to others. It's also fascinating to learn about connections between the wildlife of the Park, biodiversity and human well-being."



It was the browse-line of the Park's trees that inspired Kasia to take this photo, and the early morning mist allowed her to capture cool shades together with warm sunlight slowly covering leaves. Interestingly, the colours have not been modified. She is a member of the Association of Polish Nature Photographers and last year was the winner of the Poland Nature Photographic competition with a photo of deer and starlings in Richmond Park!

See all the long and short-listed photos at [frp.org.uk/summer-photo-competition-results](http://frp.org.uk/summer-photo-competition-results)

**Autumn Tree Photo Competition closing date 30.11.20**  
See page 14 and [frp.org.uk/autumn-photo-comp](http://frp.org.uk/autumn-photo-comp)

# Fungi and the Wood Wide Web

by Hugh Bradshaw and Janet Bostock

There can be fewer more peaceful places in the Park than amongst its veteran oaks, especially on a warm summer's evening. And yet this tranquil scene appears to belie its true ambience – a cut-throat race, sometimes to the death, for each tree to out-compete its neighbour in search of light and nutrients.

However, this continual battle is not the full story. Although over ground the competition seems fierce, underground the story is different. Recent research has shown that related plants within a wood may aid each other, weaker specimens receiving succour from healthier ones, parent



trees giving a helping hand to their seedlings.

This surprising situation arises because, within a wood, the trees are part of a vast underground network, an inter-connecting web of organisms, which allows nutrients and chemicals to flow between them. This network has inevitably been coined the Wood Wide Web, as it allows the trees to communicate with each other!

Mycorrhizae fungi (also called root fungi) are the main conduit of the web (myco means fungus and rhiza means root). The familiar mushroom shape of a fungus is only its fruiting body – most of the fungus is underground in the form of miniature gossamer-like tubes called hyphae.

These hyphae permeate the soil and fuse with other hyphae to create vast networks. The hyphae also penetrate



the root cells of trees and other plants, and so a single fungus can connect with many plants. Once connected, there is a mutual exchange of substances: the fungi syphon off sugars from the trees (made by photosynthesis) whilst the trees take water, nitrates and phosphates from the fungus (absorbed from the soil).

In the UK, up to four-fifths of tree species are dependent on these fungi for their growth. This symbiotic relationship, benefiting both plant and fungus, is ancient, at least 450 million years old. Indeed, without it, many trees would remain pint-sized!



Messages from one tree to another can also be passed through the web. For example, if a tree is under attack from insect infestation, it will boost the presence of certain chemicals in its leaves to make them distasteful to the insects. Chemical signals then travel via the web warning neighbours of an impending attack, and they respond by making their own leaves taste nasty.

The relationship between tree and root fungi starts as soon as the tree seedling germinates, when it releases sugars and chemicals into the soil to attract the hyphae.

The fungus in turn produces chemicals to deactivate the seedling's defences, allowing it to fuse with the roots and so linking the seedling to the fungal web. Why is this helpful to the seedling? Because it can then receive sugars from nearby adult trees.

In other words, one tree can help feed another! This has made scientists reconsider the assumption that it's 'every tree for itself'. The Wood Wide Web may mean that evolution has produced a system whereby weaker individual trees can be aided by their healthier neighbours. A tree growing in the shadow of a larger tree may benefit from that tree's pole position in the wood; a dying tree may redistribute its stores of food and a parent tree may help nurture its seedlings.

Perhaps, after all, harmony does reign in the woodland copse!

In a future newsletter, we will talk about the great recyclers of the fungi world, the Saprotrophes (saprós means rotten and trope means nourishment) – they feed off dead organic material in the soil from fallen leaves, wood and insects.

*Photos of Mycorrhizae fungi fruiting bodies:*

*Top left, fly agaric by © Jutta Raftery. Centre, white Geastrum rufescens by © Janet Bostock.*

*These photos by © Barry Hughes: Bottom left, Cantharellus cibarius; Top right, Amanita phalloides; Bottom right, Boletus edulis*



## Bird ringing in Richmond Park

by Nigel Jackman

Particularly around Pen Ponds you might notice that many of the waterfowl have rings on their legs. These individually numbered metal or plastic rings enable each bird to be uniquely identified, and aid tracking of the movement of birds.



Photo © Phil Belman

This helps to generate information on survival, productivity and movements. In turn this can assist in understanding why populations are changing. The subsequent recapture of a bird, anywhere in the UK or abroad, helps in providing information on its movements in terms of migration, longevity, mortality, population, territoriality, feeding behaviour and other aspects that are of interest to ornithologists.

Bird ringing began in Britain in 1909, and in 1937 the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) took over running the scheme. There are different sizes of rings to fit each species and ringers use special pliers to fit them. The photo shows some very old gull rings (one was over 20 years old) that were replaced due to wear.

For many years Phil Belman has been

ringing the waterfowl of Richmond Park, fully supported by Park management and the wildlife officers. Phil has a strong professional background in natural history, is licensed by Natural England and is a BTO Supervisor Permit Holder. He rings birds all over Greater London and visits the Park regularly all year. Sometimes using an inflatable dinghy, and with the help of assistants for goose round-ups, his task is carefully to catch and ring whichever water birds he can, young and adult. A well-equipped vehicle is required to carry all the equipment and safety gear.

Caught by hand or hand-net, the birds include swans, cygnets, grey herons, geese, mallards, mandarins, coots, moorhens, common terns, black-headed gulls, swallows at Oak Lodge and (in Isabella Plantation) wood pigeons. More recently, sand martins have begun breeding in the artificial sandbank at Upper Pen Pond. In 2018 twenty fledglings were ringed and in 2019 the number increased to over seventy. The advantage of ringing young birds in the nest is that their precise age and origin is known.

All ringing data (new birds and recaptures) is digitised and sent in to the BTO. Summary information is available and is increasingly searchable. Should you ever read or find a wild bird ring you can report it online at [www.ring.ac](http://www.ring.ac). Finders receive full details of where and when the bird was originally ringed. One of our common terns was subsequently recaptured by a ringer in Senegal and our wildfowl regularly move between other parks and waterbodies in London and the neighbouring counties.

## Galls – not the French sort!

by Janet Bostock

Jutta Rafferty asked this question at the AGM: “Some acorns appear to be diseased with a kind of growth. What is it?” They are knopper galls! Galls are bizarre-shaped growths found on plants.



The growth that Jutta saw is called a knopper gall, which appears in the autumn on acorns of our native pendunculate or English oak, *Quercus robur*.

This strange growth is caused by a tiny wasp *Andricus quercuscalicis*. Two species of oak have to be present for the life cycle of the wasp to take place — the Turkey oak, *Quercus cerris*, and the English oak, and Richmond Park has both species. The Turkey oak is a Mediterranean species that was introduced to Britain in the early 1700s as an ornamental tree.

It was only in the 1950s that the wasp that causes knopper gall arrived in England, blown into Devon from Europe, and it is now established in Britain. The

wasps emerge in spring after overwintering in knopper galls on English oaks. They then find the male flowers of Turkey oaks, which hang in a loose catkin. There the wasps lay their eggs, causing the flowers to grow into another type of gall — this time currant-like.

The developing wasp larvae feed inside these Turkey oak galls and emerge as wasps by mid-summer. They then seek out developing female flowers on English oaks where they lay their eggs. Instead of the flowers developing into normal acorns, the eggs cause the misshapen growths of knopper galls. Inside these, the larvae feed and grow until they emerge as wasps in the spring, and the cycle starts again.

Deer will eat acorns but not knopper galls as they are hard and woody. The affected acorn will not germinate as an oak seedling but these galls do not otherwise harm the oak tree.

There are many other types of galls on the Park's oaks, including marble galls,

oak apples, spangle galls and artichoke galls. Each is caused by a different species of tiny wasp. There are many more galls to find on other plants, mainly caused by wasps, but also by other insects, nematodes, bacteria or fungi. It can be fun to look for them!



Photos © Janet Bostock.  
Top: English oak acorns, one with gall  
Left: Galls on Turkey oak catkins.

## The first scheduled monuments in the Park

by Max Lankester

Although we tend to think of the history of Richmond Park since it was first enclosed in the 1630s, there's obviously a wealth of history prior to that time. Flint tools some 400,000 years old were found near White Lodge, and the areas near Ham Dip, Dann's Pond and Pen Ponds have yielded up more recent flints from between 8,300 BCE and 3,500 BCE. The existence of at least one Late Bronze Age settlement is indicated by pottery shards from about 900 BCE discovered between Holly Lodge and Bog Gate.

At least four substantial earthworks, or 'barrows', obviously were present at the time of the Park's enclosure. Of the three that remain, two have this year been designated as Scheduled Monuments.

Barrows took two forms – long or round. Long barrows date from the Early Neolithic period, starting around 4000 BCE, and were typically between 20 and 70 metres long. Round barrows date from the more recent Early Bronze Age (around 3000-1200 BCE). It is widely believed that barrows were used for burials, but that was not true in every case. Some long barrows, with a ditch on either side, are thought to have marked the edge of a territory.

The most obvious round barrow is King Henry's Mound ('KHM'), which occupies the highest point in the Park with its

protected view of St Paul's Cathedral. Early drawings show that it had a conical top, lost during later works. The mound is known to have been opened, and a large amount of ash found at its centre.

A second round barrow, Oliver's Mount, was destroyed by gravel diggers in 1834. It lay some 600 metres north-east of KHM on the viewing line to St Paul's.

Running south from Pembroke Lodge gardens, and to the west (right) of the Tamsin trail, is the path leading to Ham Cross. About 20 metres beyond Martin's Oak, and about 1km from KHM, the path runs along the top of an un-named long barrow which is about 45 metres long and 22 metres wide. It is believed that this pre-dates KHM although it is not currently possible to categorically confirm a prehistoric origin. A further 300 metres further south is what is believed to be a second long barrow.

Earlier this year both KHM and the northern of the two long barrows were recognised by Historic England (HE) as Scheduled Monuments. Round barrows are rare in Greater London, long barrows even rarer. Details of the two scheduled earthworks (Entry numbers 1457267 and 1457269) can be found on the HE website.



Photo: Scheduled long barrow © Max Lankester

## Tamsin Trail by Ron Crompton

The Tamsin Trail is an established feature of Richmond Park's landscape, well used by pedestrians and cyclists, but it hasn't always been there.



In the early 1990s, Mike Fitt, the Park Superintendent, was concerned about the very high levels of off-road cycling across grassland and woodland, in spite of Park regulations against it. One day Peter Beckwith, a commercial property developer and keen cyclist, who lived near the Park, came in to Mike's office to complain about being stopped by the police for doing just that. They talked, Mike explained his idea for a new round-the-Park cycle track and Peter offered to help get the project started. In the end he sponsored the construction of the whole route. So was born the Tamsin Trail.

In discussion with Mike, Peter set up the Richmond Park Charitable Trust in 1993 to fund the cycle track and after a number of years of planning, consultation and construction, the Trail was officially opened in 1997 by celebrity Jerry Hall and named after Peter's daughter, Tamsin. Since then, the Trust has funded the refurbishment of the Tamsin Trail in 2008 and other donations have funded the upkeep of the horse rides and conservation and education projects. *Photo: Jerry Hall at the Tamsin Trail opening ceremony.*

The Trail has been remarkably successful in reducing off-track cycling in the areas it covers. But it has its own problems. It has a sinuous route, so cyclists regularly cut off the curves to straighten it. As a result, large tree logs have been placed at points to stop them. Stretches of the Trail are affected by heavy rain and get eroded, making walking and cycling difficult. It is intended to be for family leisure cyclists, but fast cyclists use it for exercise, exceeding the speed limit of 10mph and frightening pedestrians. And at peak times congestion forces many people to use the grass alongside, widening the path's footprint and eroding it.

However, it is hugely popular, with pedestrians now outnumbering cyclists, and it's difficult to imagine the Park without it.

The Trust has closed this year after almost 30 years of generous contributions to projects in the Park. However, Peter's dedication and work will continue to be recognised by the Trail named after his daughter and Beckwith Bridge where the trail goes over Beverley Brook near the golf course.



Tamsin Trail and Beckwith Bridge

## Photo Competition Trees of Richmond Park in Autumn

The overall theme is images that show the character of the Park's trees. Images can be of any part of a tree, whole trees or groups of trees.

**Free entry Closing date 30 November**

See [frp.org.uk/autumn-photo-comp](http://frp.org.uk/autumn-photo-comp)

for details of how to enter, the prizes and Terms and Conditions.

## Friends' activities Covid 19 update

We have now re-started all our volunteer activities, including litter picking, conservation work and the Visitor Centre.

Our monthly Saturday morning walks re-started in October and Discoverers is planned to re-start in November.

Our talks are going online; a Q&A with Simon Richards happened in October and we should have a talk on trees of the Park in November.

See our monthly e-bulletin for up-to-date information on the members' talks and our website has the walks and Discoverers programme.



Discoverers is the Friends' activities programme for families with school-age children. Please see our website or Facebook page for information: [www.frp.org.uk/discoverers/](http://www.frp.org.uk/discoverers/) or [/thefriendsofrichmondpark](https://www.facebook.com/thefriendsofrichmondpark)

## Membership and Subscriptions

Please note that membership renewals for those paying by cash is 1 January 2021. Individual membership is £10 and household membership is £15. Please send payment to Chris Mason – details below.

It's easy to become a member: you can sign-up online at [www.frp.org.uk/membership/](http://www.frp.org.uk/membership/) using your credit card. Alternatively you can obtain a form from the website, from the Visitor Centre at Pembroke Lodge or by emailing me at: [membership@frp.org.uk](mailto:membership@frp.org.uk).

If you are a member and don't receive the monthly Friends' bulletin by email and wish to do so, please email [bulletins@frp.org.uk](mailto:bulletins@frp.org.uk) with the subject 'Add to bulletin'. Please also include the first line of your address and post code. You can easily stop this at any time using the unsubscribe button.

If you change your email or home address then please let me know by emailing [membership@frp.org.uk](mailto:membership@frp.org.uk) and including your previous address.

Chris Mason, Membership Secretary  
(Post applications to: 38 Chesham Rd,  
Kingston, Surrey KT1 3AQ)

## Friends' Quiz

So many of you enjoyed our lock-down quizzes — here are a few questions to test you with! You can still find the quizzes on our website at [www.frp.org.uk/quiz](http://www.frp.org.uk/quiz)

1. Richmond Park's wall (first built in 1637) is 8 miles long but to the nearest million, how many bricks does it contain? a) 2 million; b) 5 million; c) 10 million
2. How many car and pedestrian gates are there in the Park?
3. A grit path, shared by both bikes and pedestrians, runs around the perimeter of the Park; do you know its name?
4. Which mammal, found in Richmond Park, was first introduced to Britain by the Romans?
5. 40 trees of which species were planted as an avenue beside the path to Petersham Gate in 2018?
6. True or false: there were public executions in Richmond Park during the 18th Century.
7. Richmond is not only a National Nature Reserve but is also London's largest SSSI; what does SSSI stand for?
8. These large fungi pop up all over the Park — what is its common name?

*Photo © Diana Loch*



9. Following the execution of Charles I in 1649, who owned the Park for the next 11 years until the restoration of the monarchy? a) Parliament b) the Corporation (City) of London or c) the parish of Mortlake?
10. The Royal Parks charity works hard to manage and maintain Richmond Park for our enjoyment. How many Royal Parks are there? a) 5; b) 8; c) 10?

## Newsletter people

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**Park management:** contact Park Manager Simon Richards, 0300 061 2200 or email [Richmond@royalparcs.org.uk](mailto:Richmond@royalparcs.org.uk). **Police non-emergency** telephone number: 101

## Quiz answers

1.(b); 2 11 excluding Chole; 3, Tamsin; 4 rabbit; 5, Elm; 6, No. 7, Site of Special Scientific Interest; 8 Parasol; 9 (b); 10 (b)





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*Acer in the Isabella Plantation © Paula Redmond.  
One of 45 beautiful photos in our 2021 Calendar*

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

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