



FRIENDS of
RICHMOND PARK

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

Newsletter Summer 2020



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Friends of Richmond Park thanks its sponsors for their generous support



Russell-Cooke Solicitors is a Putney-based top 100 law firm, working for a mix of clients, which has sponsored the Friends of Richmond Park for over 4 years.

Thames Water is the UK's largest water and wastewater services company, serving Greater London and the Home Counties.

Property Partnership is a local, award-winning estate agent representing areas spread around Richmond Park from Chiswick to Hampton.

Photo Competition Trees of Richmond Park in Summer

We are back! This competition is part of the Friends of Richmond Park's 2020 The Year of the Tree. 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 Open now
Closing date 30 September

See www.frp.org.uk/photo-comp-summer for details of how to enter, the prizes and Terms and Conditions.

There is a separate competition for each season. The spring competition will be run in 2021, as it was postponed because of Covid 19.

King Henry's Mound now a scheduled monument.

On 27 May, King Henry VIII's Mound was designated, and so protected, as a scheduled monument due to its national archaeological and historic importance. The Mound is likely to be a prehistoric round barrow, rare in Greater London. At c57m elevation, this is the highest point in Richmond Park and it was recorded as 'Kings Standinge' on a map of 1630. Standings are platforms that provide a view of the hunt. From the 17th century it has been valued as a landscape feature, and now forms a viewing platform for the protected view of St Paul's Cathedral from Richmond Park.

Cover photo: The Royal Oak ©Eric Baldauf

Winter Tree Photo Competition Results!

Congratulations to Cath Gothard, the winner of our Winter Tree Photographic competition with her atmospheric image of the willows of Beverley Brook. The judges admired the excellent composition as well as the way Cath had captured the character of the willows as they cling to the banks through harsh winter weather, showing them as part of the ecosystem of the brook. Our 2021 calendar will include this winning photo as one of the main winter images.



Cath says: "It all started in August 2018 when I decided to take up photography as a hobby after a bout of ill health, thinking that it would channel my creativity while I recuperated and had some time off work as an animator. So, I bought a Nikon D750 and began exploring Richmond Park with new eyes and my new toy, searching for compositions that I haven't seen taken by anyone else before, which is a tricky

but fun exercise. Often I'll just come home with a classic sunrise at the Pen Ponds. However, I nearly always come home muddy, and always with a big smile on my face".

Congratulations also to the runner up, Amanda Boardman. The judges particularly liked the way Amanda captured the character of the tree in the very clear silhouette, with a bird having just taken off from the upper branches, indicating the tree's importance to wildlife even in the depths of winter.

Amanda's photography also started just 2 years ago when she began to take photographs with her iPhone on early morning jogs, and this became a good balance to her sometimes stressful work with the Family Court. She now uses a Huawei phone for landscape and a new Nikon Coolpix B600 for wildlife. Amanda says: "It's incredible what you begin to learn about the wildlife and habitat when you take time to study your surroundings through the eyes of a lens."

You can see their photos as well as the short-listed and long-listed entries at www.frp.org.uk/results-of-the-year-of-the-tree-winter-competition/



Reported by Vivienne Press

Review of Signage in the Park

by Vivienne Pres and Nick Coleman

There are many signs in Richmond Park that give visitors information on how to keep themselves safe and how to avoid harming the wildlife and environment. However, in spite of these environment signs, harmful behaviours are increasing, as in many nature reserves across the world.

In discussing signage with our members, we found completely opposite points of view. Some members said there wasn't enough signage, others said there was too much and it was confusing, Some wanted more explanation on the signs, others said they should be simple 'don't do this' signs.



So, in the summer of 2018, Friends' trustee Nick Coleman reviewed all the Park's signs and trustee Vivienne Press looked into research from around the world on what makes environment signs effective. The survey covered the number, position, size and content of signs in the Park excluding inside the Isabella Plantation and Pembroke Lodge Gardens, and solid white lines and arrows on the roads.

Nick found 1235 signs in Richmond Park of which 295 were permanent signs about the environment, and 70 were temporary environment signs. The others were road, traffic and Tasmin Trail signs. The environment signs were concentrated around gates (45%), car parks (33%), and Pen Ponds (15%). The Park's environment signs cover topics such as deer, dogs, littering, Oak Processionary Moth, ticks and Lyme disease, cycling and fires and BBQs.

But the signs have different sizes, formats, colours and messaging, as new signs have been added over the years in response to new concerns about visitor behaviour (see photos above and left).

Vivienne's research showed that well-designed signage can be effective in decreasing harmful behaviour. However, signage is most effective with new or infrequent visitors as they are often simply misguided or uninformed. It is less effective with frequent visitors whose harmful behaviours have become a habit.

Photos: Above, small signs on narrow passage through gate, so visitors don't to pause to read them; left, small signs only readable very close to the board.



The best environmental signage around the world attracts attention through its position, size and design.



Some key aspects of effective signage are:

- ▶ Position signs where pedestrians and cyclists naturally pause which is usually around 5 metres inside the gates (see photo left).
- ▶ Main messages and images need to be readable from 5 metres
- ▶ Design and colours need to stand out, not blend in.
- ▶ Any image complements and helps to convey the message
- ▶ Design with simplicity and space

Of course, signs also need effective messages. They need to be specific, simple and clear about the action that visitors are being asked to take, with the action as the main message

In early 2019, we presented our findings to Simon Richards, the Park Manager and the TRP's then Director of Communications, Sally Nichols as she started to develop a new signage strategy. Unfortunately, she left a few months later and has only recently been replaced by a new Director, Ali Jeremy, who is similarly committed to improving signage for all the Royal Parks.



Photos this page: top, cyclists at natural pause-point; above, signs on fence 2.5 meters from path, so not readable from path; right, example of well designed sign.



Richmond Park under lock-down

by Ron Crompton

Looking back, Richmond Park under lock-down seems like a different world.

The lock-down really began on Saturday 21 March. With warm weather and rumours of impending national restrictions, people headed for the Richmond Park, almost as a last burst of freedom. The Park was swamped, the car parks full and traffic backed up outside the gates, with angry scenes. In mid-afternoon the police asked The Royal Parks (TRP) to close the gates, and cars were banned from the Park.

The following Monday the government announced the national lock-down. During that week there was an influx of cyclists doing their allowed daily exercise and attracted by the car-free roads. They rode in groups, congregated around the cafes and kiosks (still open) and ignored social distancing. By Friday TRP banned cycling in the Park. They also closed the Isabella and Pembroke Lodge, and all cafes and kiosks

And so, the Park settled down to an existence without cars or bikes or planes or sporting events, and gradually social distancing became a habit. While the lock-down disadvantaged many people, for those who were able to come to the Park it was the most tranquil that anyone could remember. 'Idyllic, relaxing, calming, peaceful, wonderful' people exclaimed followed by 'Can it be like this forever?'



New sights emerged. Without school or week-end sports, young families poured in, walking or running together, the younger children riding (or learning to ride) their bikes on the now-quiet roads. Couples, young and old, strolled along the roads, chatting

and often thanking others passing by at the required distance. There was less deer harassment, less disturbance of skylarks, and the birdsong was more noticeable (and it seemed much sweeter!).

The Park attracted many new visitors (who had more time at home) and helped by the very warm weather, became steadily fuller. The peak came at the late May bank holiday, when the increased numbers caused serious erosion of the dry landscape and stress on the deer as people occupied even the traditionally quiet areas, and left large amounts of litter from picnics.

Many new visitors seemed unfamiliar with the Park and its rules, particularly concerning dogs. There were there were numerous incidents of dogs attacking and chasing deer, causing stampedes, putting visitors at high risk of injury. With the deer-birthing season starting, on 18 May TRP introduced the requirement for all dogs to be on a lead.

At the same time, the Park, like the country, was emerging from lock-down. Kiosks re-opened and in early June, the Park was re-opened to cyclists on a limited basis, with restricted hours and sections of the road, to allow young families and strollers to continue to use them. By the time you read this many other aspects in the Park are likely to be back to normal.

The lock-down was an exceptional time. But it has shown that Richmond Park doesn't have to be the busy, buzzy, often stressful Park (especially at week-ends) that we accept as the norm. Can we retain some of the good features of the lock-down – the quieter, more family-friendly atmosphere?

Maybe there should be at least one week-end a month without cars, bikes and sports events, when we can return to the tranquil, relaxing, idyllic Park of the lock-down.

Heathrow Campaign update

In our response last September to the Heathrow Expansion (3rd Runway) Consultation we said that its assessment of the environmental impact on Richmond Park was completely inadequate. We subsequently had three meetings with Heathrow, with a fourth planned in April. Our aim was not only to press our case but also to try to reach agreement on what would be a proper assessment for the Planning Enquiry. In practice, it became clear that there was little we could agree on.

Heathrow then suffered three setbacks to their plans. First the Civil Aviation Authority, their regulator, refused their proposed massive preparatory spending proposals. Then the Court of Appeal ruled that the government's agreement to the expansion was unlawful because it did not allow for the UK's climate change policy (Heathrow will appeal against that ruling). And finally, Covid-19 arrived, causing immense financial damage to the airlines and Heathrow itself.

As a result, the expansion has been delayed until the 2030s. Heathrow has stopped its planning process and laid off the consultants who were developing the environmental assessment, so we have no one to talk to!

Meanwhile, the parallel Airspace changes - the first redesign of UK airspace for 50 years – may still go ahead without Heathrow's expansion, and the proposed new flight paths pose a much greater threat to the Park than the third runway. It is not clear how that process will develop, since Heathrow was leading the work, but our campaign to protect the Park against overflights will continue!

2020 The Year of the Tree

Our bumper crop of activities!

Don't forget to enter our
Photography competition:

Trees of Richmond Park in Summer

See page 2 for details.

New!

Richmond Park Short Nature Walks

This new series of nine short, self-guided nature walks from Park gates is especially for those coming to the Park on foot. Each walk is around a mile long and mostly easy with gentle slopes. All nine walks are available now for you to download free from our website...

www.frp.org/short-nature-walks

Thanks to Simon Richards, manager of Richmond Park, for the original idea.

These Short Walks complement our Walks with Remarkable Trees (see below).

Remarkable Tree Walks

Set 2 now available!

Our Walks With Remarkable Trees are between 1.5 - 3.5 miles long and start from each of the car parks in the Park. Through them, you can discover the diversity and majestic beauty of some of the Park's most interesting trees.

There are two sets of 4 walks and they are on sale, for £5 per set, at the Visitor Centre. Please check that it is open from our website. The second set was delivered from the printers, with stunning timing, the Friday before lock-down started!

For more information see... www.frp.org/tree-of-the-month

The first set of four walks has been very popular and we have received lots of excellent feedback; 'Brilliant, well written, superbly laid out, good levels of information.'

Our thanks to Christopher Hedley, Ken Edwards and Vivienne Press for the development, design and production of these three series of publications.

Tree of the Month

There are now five of these interesting and amusing information sheets and an introductory colour leaflet.



The July tree is the English Oak. Written and designed in a family friendly style, they provide an opportunity for everyone to explore and learn about a different tree each month and are free to download from our website

www.frp.org/tree-of-the-month

Watch out for a different tree on the 1st of every month for the rest of the year

Friends' member and Visitor Centre volunteer, Ken Edwards, is the designer of the Tree of the Month and Short Nature Walks series.

We discovered his skills when one of the posters outside the Visitor Centre was damaged and Ken offered to design the replacement. Following on from that he produced some worksheets and a map of the Nature Trail at Holly Lodge.

Bug Town has been destroyed! Reports from the scene suggest the disaster was caused by young humans 'Making a Den!'



As a design teacher in secondary school, Ken prepared his own student workbooks and illustrated them with cartoons. He believes that humour is an important aid to learning and made much use of his drawing skills throughout his teaching career.

It all began in the late 70s when he featured Mr Men type cartoons on posters as a school workshops safety campaign ('Because they're easy to draw.' He says.) This led to producing teaching and learning resources, which he has been doing ever since.

Before joining the Friends Ken was a volunteer teacher with a local charity - The River Thames Boat Project - where he also did some design work, but his involvement with the Friends is all due to his much-loved dog.

He and his wife had wanted a dog for a while, but because they were both working, they kept putting off the decision. At last, when Ken retired, having a dog became more realistic and after some research, they found a suitable charity and adopted what Ken calls 'a little black street dog from Romania'. They called him Bumper.



Bumper & friends

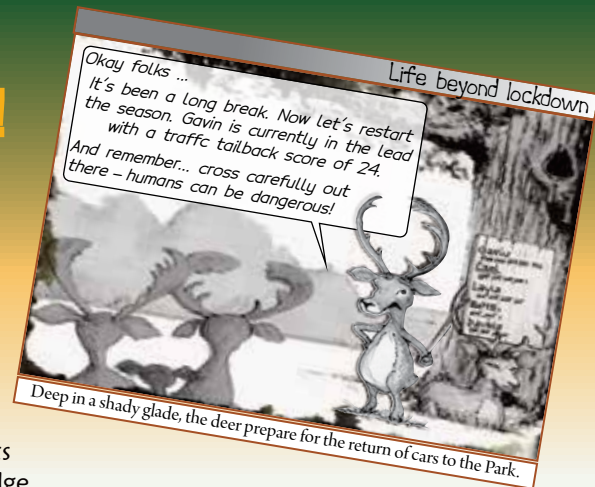
Watch out for the staples boy!



Although Ken had lived locally since the late 1980s, he didn't really know Richmond Park very well. It was a place he cycled through, or took visitors to. But Bumper changed all that - he loves to run. Regular walks through the Park took Ken to the Visitor Centre where he met a friend who happened to be a volunteer there and one thing led to another - Ken became a regular volunteer at the centre too.

So if you're walking in the Park, and you come across a smiley, black street dog, say hello to Bumper and Ken won't be far away.

Centre pages artwork by Ken Edwards. Article about Ken and Bumper by Alison Glasier.



RIP Mrs Adams' Swan

by Ann Aitken-Davies

The Pen (female swan) who lived on Adam's Pond died in mid-May from natural causes. Some of her cygnets hatched a few days earlier but sadly they perished within 24 hours. She was probably unwell then and so the cygnets were weak. She lost her cygnets last year in the same way.



She was over 15 years old, having been ringed as an adult (at least three years old) at Windsor in 2008. I first spotted her on Adam's Pond in 2014. When she started breeding at Adam's Pond she produced unusual Polish (white) cygnets. She and her mate moved to Roehampton University for a while but returned to Adam's Pond. When Adam's Pond became too busy the pair would walk their cygnets to Beverley Brook. They were often also sighted on the pond at Richmond Park Golf Course and in the autumn sometimes flew to Hyde Park.

She seemed very 'flat' on her last day, which we put down to her losing her cygnets. It was much better that she died naturally on 'her' pond rather than be caught and taken to the Swan Sanctuary. She had always had the same mate and he saw her body and would have understood that she had died. If he had watched her being taken to the Swan Sanctuary he would have spent several weeks waiting for her to return. She was much loved by her devoted cob and many park users too.

Dens destroy homes for Park's smaller residents

by Janet Bostock

Den building is fun – for the person doing it. But it's not fun for the Park's wildlife.

Dens are built by gathering up fallen branches and logs and leaning them against a tree. As the wood dries out, the life that depends on it dies. This dry wood becomes truly dead wood. Look and you will see shrivelled fungi and lichens. There will be no rare beetles or other insects living in the dried out logs.

The trees, especially veterans, that the dens lean against can also be harmed by the dens: they are stressed by the dens leaning against them, and dens are also the cause of fires, which kill the tree, the creatures living in it and the surrounding grassland. People can also be harmed as the dens often collapse, with unfortunate injuries to those playing in them. See [www.frp.org.uk/.....](http://www.frp.org.uk/) to read the full article.



Conservation volunteers

by Janet Bostock

For the past 10 years up to 20 volunteers have been working each Saturday morning from September to the end of February (when we stop for the bird breeding season). Finally we have completed clearing the 50-year spread of purple flowering *Rhododendron ponticum* from Pen Ponds Plantation (on the eastern side of Upper Pen Pond).

Rhododendron ponticum is toxic to insects and its nectar is poisonous to honey bees. Its leaves are thick, large and evergreen and the heavy shade they cast prevents other plants growing underneath. Planted widely in Victorian times it has become an invasive nuisance and throughout the UK attempts are being made to eradicate it.

On the south and west side of the plantation birch trees had self-seeded and along with the *rhododendron*, had created a dense forest. We first cleared the birch and then, in November last year, the Shire Horses were brought in to remove the remaining logs (see picture). Most of the work was close to the exterior fence so we invited the public to watch the horses and many did.

On the south side of the plantation there is now a deer-free strip, and over the past three years we have planted hawthorn, blackthorn, rowan, field maple, crab apple, holly and dog rose. These will provide flowers for pollinating

insects, fruits to feed birds and a thicket as a nesting site for birds and a habitat for insects. We will plant a second deer-free fenced area on the west side during next winter. The Friends are funding the fencing and planting.

In March we started working in the Driftway, the public footpath through the middle of Sidmouth Wood. After previous clearance, both birch and *rhododendron* have self-seeded making a dense forest, as at Pen Ponds Plantation. Our aim is to dig up the *rhododendrons* while they are still quite small and we will also thin the birch to allow hawthorn and field maple planted last year to establish.

Apart from the regular weekend work, we often meet mid-week in smaller groups. Over the last two years we have coppiced (cut back) a quarter of the gorse in the two enclosures west of Holly Lodge enhancing the nesting sites for migrant warblers. The coppicing encourages new growth lower down making a better thicket which the birds prefer. In early summer this is a good place to see the whitethroat display flights and hear them singing.

Janet Bostock has run the Friends conservation volunteers for the last ten years.

Tern Rafts — battling the gulls!

The Common Tern is a migratory seabird that breeds in the UK between April and September, when it leaves to spend the winter in west Africa. For many years it has been seen in Richmond Park on its migration or as a post-breeding summer visitor, but never stopped to breed here.

That changed in 2009 when a pair attempted to breed on a small, dilapidated raft on Upper Pen Pond and so began a decade of continuous breeding. In 2010 a purpose-built raft was installed by The Royal Parks (TRP), funded by the Friends and the Visitor Centre, and the (presumed) same pair returned and hatched one chick which unfortunately drowned

In 2011, a couple of platforms were added to the side of the raft enabling the pair to fledge a youngster ('fledge' meaning they grew feathers and learnt to fly). The following year two youngsters fledged and several other terns visited, so a second raft was installed in 2013 and a third in 2016, both also funded by the Friends and the Visitor Centre. By 2017 there were 5 pairs breeding, including three pairs on the new third raft; eight young fledged from the ten that hatched.

During this time, the terns visited every summer and bred successfully, becoming a regular feature as they skimmed the surface of Pen Ponds at great speed, thrilling everyone who saw them.

However, the terns found themselves in competition for the rafts with Black-headed Gulls that had never previously bred in the Park and in 2018 one gull chick fledged on one of the rafts. The gulls not only outnumbered the terns, but began breeding earlier before the terns had returned from Africa. Last year, the gulls arrived early again and the terns were unable to secure a place on the rafts. Sadly a tern was found dead on one of the rafts, presumed killed by the gulls.



So for this breeding season, TRP and the Park's Bird Group decided to fit temporary covers on to the rafts, preventing the gulls from commandeering them, and to remove them once the terns arrived.

Two of the covers were removed in mid-May and within ten days there were two pairs of terns on the rafts. However hopes were soon dashed. By early June all the rafts were occupied by gulls with only one tern seen in the vicinity. The battle will continue next year.

Photo: covered turn raft ©Nigel Jackman

Reported by Ron Crompton

Orchard and Fruit Trees

by Jo Scrivener and Ron Crompton

Orchards used to be a common sight in the traditional British landscape. Many had occupied the same site for hundreds of years and been managed organically without the use of pesticides and herbicides. They provided a rich habitat for insects, birds and bats and a wide range of plants, fungi and lichen.



Since the 1950s the number of orchards across England has declined by more than 60%, due to factors including neglect, intensification of agriculture, pressure from land development and the import of cheaper fruit from overseas, which made them economically unviable. Traditional orchards are now rare and have become a priority habitat under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan.

As primarily a deer park, Richmond Park itself had few fruit trees. However, for centuries the Park was surrounded by orchards, especially on the northern and western slopes leading down to the river. Their produce was then shipped by boat to central London so there is a strong local tradition of fruit growing.

Now the Park has its own small orchard in the grounds of Holly Lodge, part of 'Mission Invertebrate' funded by the Peoples' Postcode Lottery.

In 2018/19 a half-acre plot of the garden was cleared for the orchard and then planted with a range of South East heritage varieties of apple, pear, plum, damson and cob nut. Native hedgerow plants including Hawthorn, Hazel, Blackthorn, Spindle, Guelder Rose and Field Maple were also planted on the soil banks that surround the site, followed by a perennial wildflower meadow below the trees. The sandy soil mix includes Wild Carrot, Lady's Bedstraw, Rough Hawkbit, Musk Mallow, Hoary Plantain and Selfheal.

The fruit trees, hedgerow plants and wildflower meadow will provide a valuable nectar and pollen source for a wide range of invertebrates and add a habitat for insects, birds, bats, fungi and lichen. It's planned to add an interpretation board and an accessible brick paved path leading into the orchard.

New fruit trees have also been planted around the Park including on the east side of Spankers Hill, along the borders of Pen Ponds Plantation and Isabella Plantation, at the bottom of Broomfield Hill and below Pembroke Lodge. The planting includes varieties of apple, crab apple, damson and pear and was funded by the Friends and the Visitor Centre.

Photo : New orchard ©Jo Scrivener

Friends activities Covid 19 update

Because of Covid 19, we had to cancel the Friends AGM in April. We now hope to hold it in October, either in person or by video call. It will still include a conversation with Mark Frith, the artist who created the Royal Oak drawing.

Also, by the time you read this we hope to have re-started out Adopt-an-Area and Visitor Centre volunteer activities and possibly our regular monthly and tree walks. We will update members through the monthly e-bulletin, our facebook page and our website.

Enquiries

Friends: see www.frp.org.uk. If your query is not answered here, please email secretary@frp.org.uk

Park management: contact Park Manager Simon Richards, 0300 061 2200 or email Richmond@royalparcs.org.uk

Police non-emergency
telephone number: 101

New honorary secretary

Ric Polson has stepped down as honorary Secretary after over 6 years in the role. His replacement, Roger Hillyer has lived in East Sheen for 25 years, is a regular cyclist and an accountant with experience in governance and data protection. We are very grateful to Ric for everything he has done for the Friends; he has agreed to be a Vice-President. The changes need formal approval at the next AGM.

Membership and Subscriptions

We have recently tidied up the email database. If you are no longer receiving our monthly email bulletin, or if you are a member and would like to start to receive the email bulletin, then please request this by emailing membership@frp.org.uk, and include your full name. You can easily unsubscribe at any time should you wish.

If you change your email or home address then please let me know by emailing membership@frp.org.uk and include your previous address.

It's easy to become a member of the Friends. You can sign up on-line at www.frp.org.uk/membership/ using your credit card. Alternatively, you can download a membership form (at the bottom of the membership page) or pick up a form at the Visitor Centre when this reopens, and post to the address given at the bottom of the form.

Individual membership is £10 and household membership is £15.

If you have any questions about membership please email membership@frp.org.uk or send to the postal address below.

Chris Mason, Membership Secretary
38 Chesham Rd, Kingston, Surrey KT1 3AQ



Friends' lock-down Quizzes

What is the more usual name for the wildflower sometimes known as "stinking willie"? In what year was Robin Hood Gate closed to motor traffic? True or false: Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother lived in Richmond Park for two years?

These are some of the questions that appeared in the eight Park-focused quizzes that the Friends published on our website every week during April and May. Composed for families and ages from 9 up, four were general knowledge with a mix of questions while four focused on particular aspects of the Park – trees, birds, invertebrates and history.

We designed them to help our members survive the lock-down and they proved very popular. They were advertised in our monthly e-bulletin, Facebook and Instagram pages and also by The Royal Parks and Richmond Council. The first quiz was accessed by 3,000 people and altogether we had xxxx visits to the site.

Richard Gray, who conceived the idea and was quizmaster and designer, said "Quizzes proved generally popular across the UK during lockdown and I thought it would be great to tap into this for Richmond Park. The objectives were to entertain and amuse but especially to encourage people to enthuse about - and therefore respect and love - the Park's wildlife and ecology."

We received many great comments, including:

"Just to say we are loving the FRP quiz, competing with friends over Zoom in a weekly basis, don't stop sending them! Well done!"

"Can I just say a huge thank you to whomever pulls the quizzes together. I really enjoy them and look forward each week to it hitting my mailbox.Thank you."

You can still find the quizzes on our website at www.frp.org.uk/test-your-knowledge-of-richmond-park-in-our-family-quiz/

Answers to the four questions: Ragwort, 2003 and true.



Discoverers is the Friend's activities programme for families with school-age children. We hope to restart our activities in the autumn - please see our website or facebook page for information For full details visit: www.frp.org.uk/discoverers/ or [f/thefriendsofrichmondpark](https://www.facebook.com/thefriendsofrichmondpark)

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**FRIENDS of
RICHMOND PARK**

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Common tern ©Bryan Miller

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

Friends of Richmond Park is sponsored by:



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