

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

2021 The Friends' 60th Anniversary

Autumn Newsletter

Calendar 2022



Richmond Park National Nature Reserve

Calendar, cards and unique gifts The Park's Covid Recovery plan Friends' Noise Survey results Let's Discover! with Olly the little owl Saprotrophic fungi — the great recyclers Hawthorn, superstar tree

3

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RICHMOND PARK

The Royal Oak fine art print

35cm x 28cm, from the Visitor Centre or www.frp.org.uk/shop, £32 (from 26 November - photo see page 6)

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40 amazing images of Richmond Park's scenery and wildlife.



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Front cover: little owl; above left: two hinds, both © Tammy Marlar. Above: Olly © Ken Edwards

THANK YOU! Steve and Teresa Welcome Monique and Nigel

Many readers will know or have volunteered with two Friends Trustees, Teresa Grafton and Steve Sandham, who are stepping down after ten and six years respectively. Teresa initiated the Discoverers programme for young families over ten years ago and has been running it ever since, with a small group of volunteers. It has up to six activities a year, ranging from a popular Bat Watch to Fungi spotting and Meet the Giants tree awareness, and its own poster competitions such as the very successful Bag it, Bin it, Take it Home litter posters. Over the years it has brought much joy to children and their parents and is a key part of the Friends' education programme.

Steve initiated and ran the highly successful Adopt an Area litter picking scheme, which now has over 150 volunteers, some looking after an area of the Park, some 'roaming' pickers; the volunteers include over 20 young people currently working for their Duke of Edinburgh award. Steve has also managed our monthly e-bulletin, website and social media, including leading the development of our new website last year and overseeing our moves into new social media channels with significant growth of followers. We're very sorry to lose Teresa and Steve and thank them for everything they've done. They have done a lot to make the Friends what it is, and we'll miss them.

We now welcome two new leaders:





I have covered the Sheen-Roehampton Gates/ Sheen Cross Wood area since AaA's start. A resident of East Sheen for over 30 years, I retired in 2015 after a career in financial regulation, mainly at the Bank of England. With my wife Alison I continue to enjoy walking, cycling and bird-watching in the Park (as well as litter-picking!). My other activities include Treasurer of the Barnes, East Sheen and Mortlake Probus Club, playing golf, watching Fulham FC, cricket and tennis, and listening to rock music, notably Neil Young.



Monique Sarkany, Discoverers

I initially trained as a research scientist in Molecular Genetics and then retrained as a Primary School teacher. I love walking and birdwatching in the Park. Every time I am there I find something new and interesting to look at. You might find me in my orange top as a Volunteer Park Ranger or in blue at the Visitor Centre! I am looking forward to combining my passion for science and teaching by taking on the leadership of Discoverers in January 2022. (See page 15 for info on Discoverers).

The Park's Covid Recovery by Simon Richards

By summer 2021 the Park was suffering badly from the impact of increased visitor numbers during the third Covid lockdown. The situation was made worse by very wet weather early in the year, which left the Park soils waterlogged, followed by almost drought conditions in April, which hardened and cracked the ground.

The greatly increased footfall widened existing paths and created new ones as people avoided muddy areas and each other. This damaged grassland, anthills and trees, and caused harm to other wildlife through loss of their habitats. It seemed likely that the Park would take 2-3 years to recover (see the article in our summer 2021 newsletter).

Fortunately, however, from July onwards, things improved rapidly. The easing of lockdown saw a fall in visitor numbers. And more benign weather, with warm temperatures and moderate rain, brought good growth of grassland, trees and especially bracken, which covered some of the damaged areas.

A further boost came when The Royal Parks (TRP) were awarded £1.3 million from the Government Recovery Scheme and the People's Postcode Lottery. Most of this sum will be spent on Richmond Park as it was the park most affected by the lockdowns.

The recovery programme has now been finalised and will involve:

- Repairing paths, including the paths from Sawyers Hill to Pen Ponds, from Pembroke Lodge to Pen Ponds, around Pen Ponds, around Holly Lodge, in Isabella and the Tamsin Trail.
- Renovating the islands in Upper and Lower Pen Ponds, enlarging them, protecting them from future erosion and improving wildlife habitats.
- Improving water retention in the boggy areas of Pond Slade and Dann's Valley near Ham Cross, including more wetland habitats.
- Creating deer refuges the first refuge at Ham Cross has already been fenced.
- Repairing Park walls for example two sections near Kingston Gate and in the plantation next to Bog Gate.
- Strengthening the dams at Pen Ponds (the causeway and the outlet from Lower Pen Ponds) to reduce the risk of overflow and collapse from increasingly heavy rainfall.
- Begin preparing new strategies outlined in the Park's management plan a tree strategy, a visitor management and path strategy and a review of the deer welfare report published in 1990.

This is a big programme with a short timetable of 6-12 months and TRP have already hired two new project managers, both landscape architects. It should go a long way to heal the Park's wounds and increase future resilience to climate change.

Quieter than breathing

by Ron Crompton, Nick Coleman and Hugh Deighton

We often say that Richmond Park is the quietest place in London. But how quiet is it, which areas are the quietest and what are the biggest sources of the noise?

The answers to these questions are important for the protection of wildlife in the Park (especially noise-sensitive owls and bats), for reducing the noise for visitors seeking tranquillity and, of course, for our campaign against the proposed new flight paths over the Park (which have been delayed but not gone away).

In the Spring the Friends commissioned a professional noise survey of the Park, with day and night one- or two-hour measurements at fifteen locations and longer-term measurements (with equipment left for ten days) at four locations. The results are fascinating.

The most striking result is just how quiet the Park is at night. All four long-term locations recorded lows of under 25 dB (decibels) at 3 a.m.; even breathing is louder! The consultants' report called these '*very low for any location*" (even a rural area) and *"exceptionally low for an urban environment such as London*". Fortunately, most of the owl and bat habitats are among the quietest areas.

During the day the average noise rises to 40-50 dB, equivalent to a typical office, partly due to background and traffic noise outside the Park and partly due to people talking loudly or calling their dog, to birds (such as parakeets!) and to traffic in the Park.

Traffic inside the Park on the two main routes (Richmond to Kingston) and to Roehampton Gate dominates day-time noise levels in those areas. We are still analysing the data to see how far this noise extends into the body of the Park.

What of aircraft noise? The survey was deliberately done when aircraft activity was very low, so that we could get a 'normal' base level without it. But the few aircraft that did fly on the current departure flight paths that go over the southern part of the Park, created maximum noise levels of 70-80 dB, equivalent to inside a noisy factory, over a wide area from Kingston Gate to White Lodge. That is what the new flight paths proposed by Heathrow would create across the whole of the Park and would certainly destroy the Park's claim to be the guietest place in London and the tranquillity visitors seek when they come here.

Our light and noise monitoring volunteer group are now doing follow-up recordings to the professional survey. If you'd like to join us, please email ron.crompton@frp.org.uk

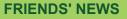
Note: The decibel (dB) is the unit commonly used by meters to measure the intensity of a sound; the intensity roughly doubles for each 3 dB increase.

5

FRIENDS' NEWS

7

6





Year of the Tree ends – after two years!

This November marks two years since we held the launch event for Year of the Tree (YOTT) at Pembroke Lodge. This featured Tony Kirkham from Kew Gardens, the unveiling of our specially commissioned Mark Frith drawing of the Royal Oak, our emblem for YOTT and the publication of set 1 of Richmond Park Walks with Remarkable Trees. Image left: The Royal Oak

It was not the best of timing. Three months later Covid struck and all in-person members' events and public walks and talks were put on hold. So we went online. But the delays and Covid restrictions meant two years instead of one to do all the things we'd planned.

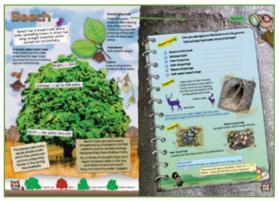
The aim of YOTT was to increase awareness of the importance of trees for the Park and its biodiversity. We wanted Park visitors to feel an emotional attachment to them and the need to protect them. We also wanted to make a practical difference by funding tree conservation projects, and we raised over £30,000 from the Mark Frith drawing, through 100 limited edition large signed prints and smaller unsigned prints.

Walks with Remarkable Trees, sets 1 and 2, were available at the Visitor Centre (when it was open!) but other educational productions and activities went online. This included a new set of Short Nature Walks featuring trees, specially designed to help people through the lockdowns, a regular Tree of the Month for children and four seasonal tree photography competitions. And we've had many tree articles in our newsletters (including this one!).

In YOTT's second year we held a 'Remarkable Trees' webinar with Simon Richards, the Park Manager, and over 400 attendees. The mood was set by a 15-minute film about the

history and management of the Park's trees, presented by our new patron, Clare Balding, and a time-lapse film: *'Protecting a Richmond Park Veteran Oak ... in less than two minutes'* (both films are available on YouTube).

The final event was the launch last September of our Let's Discover activity booklet for children – it's about trees and their wildlife in Richmond Park and features Olly the little owl (see centre pages and page 15).



Let's Discover beech pages

During the two years, we've donated £70,000 for tree conservation projects in Richmond Park. This includes the protection of forty veteran trees, protection of seedling hawthorn trees, planting of goat willow and fruit trees around the Park, fencing of deadwood to create invertebrate habitats and, most recently, a tree quarantine area.

Our conservation volunteers have also contributed with planting and fencing of trees, thinning trees and collecting and fencing deadwood.

Has YOTT succeeded in its aims? Hopefully, there is greater awareness and understanding among our members and the public who have accessed our activities. We've funded important tree conservation projects. And anecdotally people do seem to have a greater attachment to the Park's trees.

YOTT lives on in Frith's artwork, in Walks with Remarkable Trees, in our 'Let's Discover!' booklet for children and in continued funding of veteran tree protection. Long may it do so!

Our many thanks to Richard Gray, Christopher Hedley and Vivienne Press who led Year of the Tree and worked tirelessly to ensure its success.

What's in a name? Wood, plantation, copse, spinney or clump?

High Wood, Saw Pit Plantation, Bone Copse, Prince Charles Spinney, King's Clump. All are areas of trees in Richmond Park but are called different things. Why?

'Wood' is a very old term and implies trees growing naturally; High Wood and Barn Wood are completely natural and date back to medieval times. 'Plantation' is much newer (the 17th-18th century) and implies something deliberately planted. Most of the Park's plantations date from the 19th century (although why the largest of these is called Sidmouth Wood rather than Plantation is a mystery).

'Copse' is a small group or thicket of trees grown for regular cutting or coppicing. It's also an old term but has become more widely used recently; Bone Copse and Queen Mother's Copse were both planted in the 1980s. 'Spinney' is a small wood or a copse, derived from the Latin 'spina' or thorn. Sadly, Prince Charles Spinney, planted in 1951, has only a few thorn trees and hardly justifies the title. Finally, a 'Clump' is a small group of trees growing together, for example in a large open field; King's Clump, dating from 1901, is next to the open area above Kingston Gate.

So, the terms used for areas of trees is a mix of their characteristics, when they were created and probably the whim of those creating them, with enough exceptions to the rules to make it interesting for historians and the just plain curious.

Richmond Park Walks with Remarkable Trees

1. Royal Oak Walk Starting and finishing at Pembroke Lodge car park



Distance: achilor Remarkable trees on this walk: the to s on British native and na sond Park Walks with Remarkable Trees are p The Friends of Richmond Park



Let's go to the Park! **Monique Sarkany**

"Let's go to the park!" are words that mean joy to parents and children alike. They bring the prospect of time spent outside, breathing in fresh air and having fun and freedom!

In our local public parks, the attraction of space, green fields, swings and other play equipment is what we love, Richmond Park has space and green fields, and at Kingston and Petersham Gates there with children who reminded us from the start that children love animals.

Intended for children aged 7-11, our booklet enables children to identify the four trees that account for 70% of all the trees in the Park. (If you are not sure what they are, £1.50 wisely spent on the booklet for yourself will answer that question!).



But identifying trees is just the beginning - children want to know more than that. The

are dedicated play areas too. But there is so much more than that: in Richmond Park there's adventure!

Richmond Park is a National Nature Reserve and Site of Special Scientific Interest, steeped in history, with uninterrupted views of St Paul's and the City, where trees as old as 700 years still stand. It is the place where 600 deer roam freely across 2,500 acres of open grassland and woodland. It's home to the rare stag beetle, to the increasingly rare skylarks and to yellow meadow ants, who have built over 400,000 anthills. There are around 140 bird species, 750 butterfly and moth species and 11 species of bats to be discovered.



Richmond Park is a precious old stage where wildlife is performing a non-stop show, meticulously in tune with the seasons and the ground it is enclosed in. There are no buttons to press or screens to activate, it's all just there, but it takes a little initiation to know where to look and to make sure we enjoy the Park while taking care of it.

With that in mind, The Friends of Richmond Park has written a new booklet for children entitled 'Let's Discover!' that was launched in September. It was written in consultation





observation. They can discover what lives in and around the trees: work out how old and how tall a tree is and how far its roots reach out: look at the trees' bark structure and colour; and learn about the existence of fungi, mosses and lichens. Their exploration is made all the more fun thanks to the colourful illustrations and Olly the little owl who is hiding on every page.

Children love nature, they love animals and they love

to be amazed by the beauty of the natural world around them. The everyday messages of climate change, and

struggling species on the brink of extinction resonate deeply with them. They always want to do whatever they can to help and the booklet's golden rules reflect their love of wildlife.

So, let's go to the Park and learn to look after it together with the children - they will show us how if we let them discover.

Images: top left: Olly the little owl; centre: volunteer briefing; Right: front cover; Tawny owl © Paula Redmond.

Other photos are stills from the launch video. See page15 about our launch events and video.



9

8

Saprotrophic fungi – the great recyclers by Janet Bostock



We all know fungi are rotters! We see them making our bread mouldy or turning an orange in the fruit bowl a powdery green colour. We could be forgiven for thinking that fungi are only a nuisance, but the world could not do without them.

Fungi that feed on organic matter from plants are the best recyclers in the world. They are called saprotrophs and without them we would be overrun by dead plant

material! These fungi have enzymes that can break down the tough lignin and cellulose of plants. This starts the process of decomposition that then allows insects and bacteria to feed and live in the rotting plants, returning nutriments to the soil.

However, some saprotrophic fungi feed off living plants often causing disease and death. A healthy-looking tree may already have fungi within its trunk, roots, leaves and even its seeds. Fungal spores in the air can enter the trees in various ways, including through wounds caused by losing a branch or by insect damage. In Dutch elm disease, the beetle causing the trouble carried with it a fungus that softened the wood ready for the hatching beetle larvae to enjoy.

Some saprotrophic fungi actively feed on the heartwood (the inner part of the trunk) hollowing it out. The living part of the tree is beneath the bark so, if the heartwood is rotted by fungi and inhabited by insects, the tree can continue to live but it is weakened.

Fungi are feeding and growing all year round - within trees and logs, underground, in

piles of dead leaves, on acorns and in grasslands. However, we may only notice them in the autumn when many produce their fruiting bodies. These come in a wonderful variety of colours and shapes, including brackets, parasols, caps and puffballs and these all produce spores that are blown away on the wind, producing the next generation of fungi.

Brackets can be large or small and include large perennial brackets, such as the tinder bracket, and small bracket fungi such as

See our autumn 2020 newsletter for Janet's article on Mycorrhizae fungi.



Photos: top: tinder bracket; above;:fairy bonnet; both © Janet Bostock.

blushing bracket. Caps on a stalk seen in the Park include the fairy bonnet and shaggy scalycaps.

Some saprotrophic fungi choose specific hosts – the birch polypore only lives and feeds on birch, while others, such as turkey tail, are found on a wide variety of trees. Dyers mazegill will only grow on conifers, others only on deciduous trees. The oak polypore grows only on ancient oaks making it quite rare but it does appear in Richmond Park.



Beefsteak and chicken of the woods fungi cause red rot in the heartwood of oaks in the Park. These fungi remove the cellulose leaving the darker red lignin. The rare cardinal click beetle, found in Richmond and Bushy Parks, develops in the red rotten heartwood of old oaks and also feeds on the larvae of other invertebrates living in there.

White-rot in heartwood is caused by a number of fungi that break down lignin leaving the whitish cellulose. The resulting wood is soft and structurally weak resembling sheets of polystyrene! I saw this in sheets within the trunk of a large oak, which fell a few years ago in Conduit Wood.

So this autumn, as you walk in Richmond Park, look out for and enjoy the spectacle of these champion recyclers or rotters at work!

Photos clockwise from top left: oak polypore ©Nigel Reeve; beefsteak ©Janet Bostock; shaggy scalycap ©Nigel Jackman; turkey tail and chicken of the woods ©Nigel Attenborough.

10

11

Hawthorn, superstar tree by Christopher Hedley

Hawthorn, despite its small size, is a superstar species. The Royal Parks (TRP) wants to see more, and its management plan calls this a 'flagship indicator' species because of the wildlife and habitat benefits these trees bring.

Hawthorns can live for 400 years, growing slowly to a maximum height of 15m, and have an abundance of

character. The branches twist and turn and are irregularly spaced, while the trunks of older trees can divide into several twisting parts. The small leaves have deep lobes cutting back towards the centre. As part of the rose family, the twigs have many short, sharp thorns.

Hawthorn is invaluable for wildlife. It can support hundreds of invertebrate species, including pollinators, which are attract-

ed by the flowers' nectar and pollen.

The caterpillars of many moths, like the lappet, depend on the leaves for food. The red haws or fruits are popular with small mammals and birds, especially fieldfares, redwings and thrushes. Dormice like to eat the flowers and birds often shelter or nest in these trees.

Their flowers have given the tree at least two extra names: Shakespeare extolled the beauty of the white blossom (hence whitethorn), which comes out in May (hence maytree). Their leaves provided the epithet 'bread and cheese tree', as farm workers ate the fresh leaves with their ploughman's lunch.

Hawthorn is the second most common veteran tree in the Park after English oak. Before the Park was created, hawthorn was often planted along local field boundaries to help create hedg-

> es and its successors persist today. Some of the oldest can be found in the lower slopes of Petersham Park alongside the track near to the golf course. One of the best places to see them is 'hawthorn valley' between Cambrian Gate and Conduit Wood, where they are a magnet for birders in the autumn.

12

13

TRP aims to increase the extent of scrub

habitat but the combined attentions of hungry deer and parakeets limit the ability of hawthorn to regenerate naturally. In response, the management plan includes several new fenced enclosures round the Park as well as encouraging bramble growth to allow young hawthorns to become established. The Friends has agreed to fund some chestnut paling fencing to protect various hawthorn saplings around the Park.

For so many reasons, here's to the hawthorn!

Photo: Extraordinary veteran hawthorn halfway up Broomfield Hill road, held together by reinforcing bars © Christopher Hedley.

The Friends funds tree and plant quarantine area

The Royal Parks (TRP) generally buys trees and plants grown in nurseries in the UK. The trees for the Elm Walk, planted three years ago, and the fruit trees planted around the Park last year are recent examples. However, sometimes nurseries import their stock from the EU.

Imported trees are the most frequent way pests and diseases are introduced into the UK. The risk is particularly acute for parks with a large population of trees of a few species, like Richmond Park with its oak, chestnut and beech trees, and for collections of exotic plants, such as in the Isabella Plantation. Oak Processionary Moth came here on trees imported for a development in Kew and quickly spread to Richmond and Bushy Parks. It now costs TRP £250,000 a year to keep under control.

As part of its biosecurity strategy, TRP requires the nurseries it buys from to guarantee that their trees have been grown in a nursery for a full year before they are sold, so that diseases can be spotted. However, it is not always possible to ensure full compliance, especially for rare or exotic trees from smaller nurseries and for native stock that is imported from the EU.

So, for the final project in this 'Year of the Tree', the Friends is substantially funding the creation of a tree and plant quarantine area, and work started on this in October. Here, newly acquired trees can be quarantined and grown on for a year or two until they are ready to be planted out in the wider Park, Isabella Plantation or Pembroke Lodge Gardens.

This new quarantine area is within the existing nursery area at Isabella but set away from the rest of the nursery. It has concrete hard-standing, large enough to store and stand out smaller potted plants such as exotic trees and shrubs for the Isabella Plantation. There will be fixed tree lines for larger native trees and nursery beds to grow bare rootstock, such as native whips, before planting as hedgerow and scrub in the parkland. The irrigation will be from the existing Isabella system but with drainage into a separate soakaway for safety. And, of course, it will have tough rabbit-proof fencing!

When completed this should go a long way to protect the Park's trees and plants from new pests and diseases and we are delighted to be funding it.

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 with the subject heading of 'Newsletter as PDF'.

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15

Friends' Walks

All are welcome – the Friends' Walks have restarted after a gap because of lockdown requirements. They are free and last about two hours and start from one of the car parks at 10 am on the first Saturday of each month plus the 26th of December.

Details of which car park each walk will start from can be found on the Friends' website www.frp.org.uk. Also included are the details of which gates into the Park have access to the car parks by motor vehicles, so you can plan your journey to arrive in time.

If you need more information or special support or help with the walk, please phone Ian McKenzie on 020 8943 0632 or email him at walks@frp.org.uk in advance, or phone 07340 766573 only on the day of the walk.

In addition there are informal bird walks every Friday at 9.30 am from Pen Ponds car park, accessible only via Roehampton Gate.

Dogs must be kept on leads during all walks.

Date:	Starting at 10am from these car parks with their car access due to road closures:
4 December	Pen Ponds – via Roehampton Gate.
26 December	Pembroke Lodge – via Richmond, Ham and Kingston Gates.
1 January	Robin Hood gate – via Roehampton Gate.
5 February	Roehampton Gate – via Roehampton Gate.
5 March	Kingston Gate – via Kingston, Ham and Richmond Gates.

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@royalparks.org.uk. **Police non-emergency** telephone number: 101



Discoverers is the Friends' activities programme for families with schoolage children. Please see our website or Facebook page for information: www.frp.org.uk/discoverers/ or f/thefriendsofrichmondpark

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Let's Discover! Booklet, trails and video



Our Let's Discover! booklet, written for 7-11 year olds, was launched in September with a free event – a new walking trail to explore the wonderful trees of Richmond Park and their wildlife. The booklet is beautifully illustrated and features Olly the little owl and his friends.

Volunteer guides, including children who helped us develop the booklet, welcomed families at each tree. There, children could choose to take part in an activity and receive a stamp. At the end of the trail, there was a little Olly surprise to collect. Families enjoyed the event so much that we ran a similar event in the autumn half-term.

The Let's Discover! booklet costs £1.50

from the Visitor Centre – card payments only. See a 5 minute video of the event on our website, www.frp.org.uk/letsdiscover.

Photo: guides Sophia and Charlie

Membership and Subscriptions

Please note that membership renewals for those paying by cash is 1 January 2022. 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/ 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. 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 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 and including your previous address.

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



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Parasol mushroom © Kasia Ciesielska-Faber

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

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