

Park Life

In Richmond's National Nature Reserve

Memorial to
HM the Queen
The new wood



Our new Park Manager
The wonders of winter
New children's booklet
Calendar, cards and
unique Christmas gifts

The Friends of Richmond Park thanks
its sponsors for their generous support



High quality and unique Christmas cards and gifts



Delight your family and friends whilst supporting the Park

All these available now at the Visitor Centre by Pembroke Lodge car park.
Calendar, cards and The Royal Oak print also at www.frp.org.uk/shop

Calendar 2023



Children's gifts and stocking fillers

New! 30 piece little owl jigsaw,
Let's Discover booklets,
I-spy booklets, singing birds,
mini toy animals,
Olly and wildlife badges,
notebooks, wooden magnets,
keyrings, and more!

Little owl jigsaw



For all the family

The Richmond Park Calendar,
The Royal Oak fine art print,
Isabella Still Pond jigsaw,
wood-turned fruits,
snowy deer tea towel,
china deer tea-light holders,
books and walks etc!

Park Life front cover photo: Stonechat ©Lawrence Chatton @lawrencechatton
Calendar front cover: stag and jackdaw ©Dolores Mateo www.doloresmateo.com
Olly © Ken Edwards; Little owl jigsaw photo ©Paula Redmond @pr_ultra

Meet Paul Richards Our new Park Manager

In becoming Park Manager in April this year, Paul Richards was coming home as he lived in East Sheen throughout his childhood.



From his earliest days, when his mother took him in his pram to Adam's Pond, he became a regular visitor to the Park, walking and cycling. His memories include frequent outings to Pen Ponds with his grandparents and many family walks on Sunday afternoons in through Bog Gate and back via Sheen Gate. It was in Richmond Park that Paul first developed an interest in nature.

As a teenager, Paul had a Sunday job at Squires in Fulwell, in the trees and shrub department, and realised that this interest in nature could become a career. His training then included a two-year residential course at Wisley and a three-year diploma in Horticulture in Edinburgh.

Paul's varied career has included looking after the trees at Kew with Tony Kirkham, working at Wisley on a new arboretum, and then as Gardens Manager at Wakehurst Place where he created new gardens following the storms of 1987 and 1990.

He then worked for Legoland managing its landscapes and then at the Natural History Museum organising big exhibitions such as Dino jaws and Dino dig – but he missed horticulture and wanted to return to a job closer to nature.

More recently, Paul has worked for local authorities – latterly his responsibilities included the 200 green spaces of Hillingdon Borough Council including the Ruislip Woods National Nature Reserve.

Paul is often seen out and about in the Park as he gets to know it again, now from his new perspective as its Manager. He is understandably cautious about revealing any thoughts on changes at this early stage.

Paul has already found the Friends to be a noteworthy, active group, praising the Friends' volunteers for their commitment to making positive contributions to support the Park and he welcomes challenges and questions from the Friends.

Richmond Park is Paul's dream job, with his childhood memories of the Park, the biodiversity of its trees, grasslands, gardens and wildlife; we wish him well in managing the Park that he first grew to love as a boy.

Reported by Roger Hillyer

Lord Sidmouth — a mixed legacy

by Hugh Bradshaw

Posterity has not looked kindly on Lord Sidmouth. As Henry Addington, he was a short-lived prime minister whose greatest achievement, during an unremarkable three years in the post, was the 1802 Treaty of Amiens which lasted less time than his term of office. After leaving Downing Street, he was ennobled in 1804 as the Viscount Sidmouth.

This was not the end of his political career however, as he went on to hold several cabinet posts. It was during this period that his reactionary views came to the fore. As Home Secretary, the Peterloo massacre occurred on his watch and he gave unswerving support to the magistrates who sanctioned it. He was an implacable opponent of Catholic Emancipation and he voted against the Great Reform Act.

Although his political record may be questionable, by contrast Richmond Park owes him a great debt of gratitude.

While he was Prime Minister, George III had invited him to live in the White Lodge, which would remain Lord Sidmouth's home until his death in 1844. Being in situ no doubt helped Lord Sidmouth's appointment, in 1813, as the Park's Deputy Ranger.

The Ranger, George III, was preoccupied with State affairs and his own health, and Lord Sidmouth took effective control of the Park. Luckily for us, he took his role as Deputy Ranger seriously and the fruits of this are very apparent some 200 years later.

Lord Sidmouth commenced an extensive programme of tree planting: many of the Park's most-loved woodlands owe their origins to this planting regime, including

Spanker's Hill Wood, the eponymous Sidmouth Wood and the Isabella Plantation. In all, over 20 plantations were created or extended during his time as Deputy Ranger.

It is likely that Lord Sidmouth was the first to introduce Sweet Chestnuts to the Park. Many oaks were planted, no doubt supplied by the nursery established under his management.

He also sought to obscure the walled boundaries of the Park with his planting — perhaps he could envisage the future urbanisation around its perimeter.

To this day, there are places where it is hard to see the Park walls, hidden as they are by the trees he planted or their replacements. This is particularly apparent between Bog Gate and Roehampton Gate.

While the formal gardens he created at the White Lodge have all but disappeared, his legacy of adding to the natural beauty of the Park lives on, for which we should all be thankful.

Lord
Sidmouth
as
Prime Minister
and
Deputy Ranger



Illustrations by
Ken Edwards from
Let's Discover
booklet

Olly's back! with stories about the history of Richmond Park



The Friends have just published their second booklet written especially for children, this time about the history of the Park.

Olly the Owl is back, and now has a family (Olivia and their offspring Tweet and Twoo). They tell us stories from times gone by, as told to them by the ancient oak trees of Richmond Park where they live. The stories are from prehistory, through the Middle Ages, the creation of the Park and on to more recent changes concerned with preservation of this unique environment.

Once again, schoolchildren were involved in creating the booklet by providing pertinent feedback on the drafts. It is thanks to them that the booklet is so clearly laid out and accurate, down to the colour of the Royal Ballet School students' outfits!

We drew again on the Friends' talent pool, including tree expert

Christopher Hedley, Park Ranger David Beaumont and local historian Gordon Elsdon. Monique Sarkany (Discoverers) checked the educational content and Ken Edwards' fabulous illustrations make the reading fun. All this, together with editing by Vivienne Press and Rosie Leydon, has resulted in a booklet that is both beautiful and educational.

This new A5 colour booklet is available for sale at the Visitor Centre, £2 each or £3.50 for two.

Cover photo: Tawny owl © Bartek Olszewski

Reported by Monique Sarkany

Thank you to the pupils of Twickenham School and their teacher Mark Elbourne who organised an ice-cream sale last term and raised £85 for the Friends.

Our thanks to Sheila Hamilton and the mailing team

For longer than anyone can remember, the Newsletter was mailed out by an enthusiastic team putting the Newsletters into envelopes, applying the address labels and sticking on the stamps. The changing economics of postage and packing means that we now use our printing company to send out what is now Park Life magazine. We thank Sheila Hamilton and her team for their work over these many years.



This is just one of many roles in which Sheila has served the Friends – as Membership Secretary, as a Vice-Chairman and in setting up the Visitor Centre. Happily, Sheila continues to serve as a Vice-President.

Friends' volunteers help create new meadow

FRP members Janet and Chris Ridout had often wondered what lay behind the closed gates of Holly Lodge, so when the opportunity arose to do some volunteering work there they jumped at the chance. Together with a team of fellow FRP volunteers, led by Mary Gledhill, John Hudson and Van Quan, they were amazed to find a beautiful garden and behind it — a secluded wild area overgrown with brambles and weeds. Their mission: to turn it into a wildflower meadow.

Over the following weeks, they set to: digging, weeding and even learning how to use a scythe rather than a strimmer (easier than you think, apparently, and great exercise). The team were a friendly and hardworking bunch from many different backgrounds and they enjoyed not only each other's company but the home made cakes that appeared in the breaks.

The meadow has started to thrive with an abundance of wild flowers but continued maintenance will be needed, and Janet is clear that she and Chris will carry on in this role: "It makes you appreciate the benefit to the environment."

Holly Lodge is not open to the general public, so if you want to see this little gem you will need to attend one of the events that are held there. Or join the volunteer team – details on our website www.frp.org.uk/volunteering.



A brutal summer

It was a brutal summer for Richmond Park, with temperatures well above 30 and no significant rain for 2-3 months.

The Park's grassland turned from English green to African savannah brown and stopped growing, its height half that of a normal summer. Trees in the dry grassland suffered most, with some scorched and others stressed. Some sweet chestnuts suffered badly, despite being from southern Europe and some beech looked very sorry for themselves, but oaks seem to have survived well. Park staff watered newly planted trees and also the Elm Walk and the new fruit trees planted last year. They also bought more watering bags that were attached to trees and filled with water that then slowly trickled into the roots.

Water levels in the ponds and streams dropped and a large tanker was used to pump water from Pen Ponds to help water the young trees and Jubilee Pond to protect fish and other aquatic life. The gardens at Isabella Plantation also suffered, despite being irrigated from water pumped from Pen Ponds. Park management is currently investigating improving the pumps for the future.



There were bright spots.

Everyone feared a major grass fire started by a portable BBQ. The fire brigade familiarised themselves with the Park and practised taking water from Pen Ponds. Signs were put out and the Park Manager, Paul Richards, appeared on BBC News to appeal to people not to bring a BBQ to the Park. The decision of large retailers to no longer sell portable BBQs also helped. In the end there were only a couple of minor incidents — and everyone breathed a sigh of relief.

The deer also seemed fine. They sheltered from the heat deep in the woodlands and swam in Pen Ponds or bathed in Beverley Brook to cool down. The Wildlife Officers had emergency feed available but it was not needed.

During the very hot weather more people visited in the evening than during the day and litter was much less of a problem than during lockdown. And some things thrived, including ragwort, which is resilient to dry weather, and bramble.

It will be next year before we see the full impact of the summer on the grassland, trees and deer. The impact on less visible wildlife, such as invertebrates, will be more difficult to assess.

The Queen's Green Canopy woodland — a living legacy

We were deeply saddened by the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. Many of us will recall seeing her on her Diamond Jubilee visit to Richmond Park in 2012, when she planted a holly tree at Holly Lodge. Torrential rain fell on the waiting crowd, but it had largely cleared by the time she arrived. She visited the Friends' marquee, with its display of our work, and chatted to volunteers. To commemorate her visit, the Friends organised and funded Jubilee Pond (near Sheen Cross), which was inaugurated on the same day by Sir David Attenborough. So it's fitting that we once again fund an addition to the Park with a new wood as part of the Green Canopy, to commemorate her long and extraordinary life.

Queen Elizabeth II launched the Queen's Green Canopy in March 2022 by planting a tree at Windsor Castle, and inviting individuals, groups and communities to plant trees throughout the UK to mark her Platinum Jubilee. The Royal Parks took up the challenge and Simon Richards, then Park Manager, came up with an ambitious programme for Richmond Park.

Simon's plan is to create a peaceful, enclosed woodland sanctuary that includes 70 new trees — one to mark each of the 70 years of the Queen's reign. This number of trees needs a large area to enable them to grow without overcrowding and the chosen area near Ham Cross is ideal, being the size of about two football pitches.

Planting will start in the autumn and the trees have been chosen with the advice of Jo Scrivener (Assistant Park Manager) and Gillian Jonusas (Arboriculture Officer). There will be a mix of oak, sweet chestnut, small-leaved lime and disease-resistant elms, all from UK-grown stock. These will be able to survive the stresses of changing weather conditions and blend harmoniously with the rest of the Park. One of the larger oaks will provide the centrepiece of the planting, with seating so that walkers can relax in the tranquil environment.



Before planting begins, the area will be enclosed by fencing to protect it from the deer, with four gates for easy access.

The perimeter will be planted with a variety of shrubs, including hawthorn, blackthorn, hazel, elder and mountain ash. Work has already begun to eliminate the bracken in the area as this can overwhelm other plants and destroy wildlife habitats.



Hopefully, the woodland will support a wide variety of wildlife including the endangered white-letter hairstreak butterfly and the cardinal click beetle as well as small mammals and invertebrates.

The cost of the programme will be around £100,000 and the Friends of Richmond Park are donating around £30,000 to cover the cost of the trees and their maintenance. Other funding is provided by The Royal Parks and the People's Postcode Lottery.

Work should be finished before Christmas and there will be an opening ceremony to mark the project. Simon says, *"The Green Canopy woodland will provide a welcoming community space for rest and relaxation and inspire discovery and enjoyment of the natural environment for generations to come. It will also serve as a reminder of the legacy of our much loved late Queen."*

Our Winter Wonderland!

You don't need to wait until spring to enjoy the flowers, birds and trees in Richmond Park. There are yellow, pink and white winter-flowering plants, visiting birds and trees and shrubs with colourful, textured barks. So wrap up warm and seek out the wonderful sights, colours and smells that await you in the Park.

Winter birdwatching by Nigel Jackman

Winter months are good for birdwatching, when visitors add to the over 50 resident species in the Park. Birds are also often easier to spot in winter, with fewer leaves and less ground cover, and fewer hours of daylight in which to feed.

Resident thrushes are now joined by redwings and fieldfares from Scandinavia.

Stonechats can turn up anywhere in the bracken areas of the Park, sometimes accompanied by reed buntings, meadow pipits or perhaps a Dartford warbler.

And look out for dainty nuthatches and

tree creepers on tree trunks and bare branches.

Also look out for mixed flocks of tits and goldcrests as they move through the tree canopies together seeking food. Woodland birds from the Continent, siskins and redpolls, may also be seen in small flocks, particularly when feeding on seeds in alder and birch trees.

Pen Ponds can be an exciting place to watch water birds in winter, including winter visitors, occasionally even a pintail or goldeneye.



Photos above: left, robin and dogwood © Paula Redmond @pr_ultra; right, nuthatch © Robert Page
Facing page: left, witch hazel © Andy Scott; right, bee on winter honeysuckle © Paula Redmond.

Winter flowers in the Isabella Plantation by Jo Scrivener

Assistant Park Manager for Richmond Park



It's wonderful to see and smell flowers in winter and the Isabella Plantation is great for this. The Witch hazel by Broomfield Hill Gate has very fragrant yellow tassel flowers.

On the lawn opposite Bluebell Walk, east of the Acer Glade, you will find the honeysuckle shrub 'Winter beauty' which has fragrant cream flowers in December. To the south of the Acer Glade, find 'Beal's mahonia' whose yellow flowers smell like Lily-of-the-valley.

Wintersweet, with its pale yellow flowers and honeyed fragrance, grows at the east end of Bluebell Walk near the gate into Isabella Plantation conservation area.

Sweet box, an evergreen shrub grows alongside the Main Stream and produces very fragrant white flowers in December.



A single stand of Viburnum Bodnantense 'Dawn' grows in a glade just off the Main Stream and has densely packed clusters of sweetly scented, rose-tinted flowers throughout the winter.

The heather garden is full of winter colour, including the pink and white Erica Darleyensis 'Darley dale', a type of winter heath, and Cornish heath, which has tawny seed heads that remain decorative all winter.

The sacred bamboo provides a stunning backdrop to the heathers in this area, with its red-tinged leaves and profusion of round, red fruits. Also here is the tall Portugal heath with its mildly fragrant, tubular white flowers that open from pink buds all winter.

Christopher Hedley's tips to explore trees in winter

Fantastic trunks and branches of deciduous trees, especially the veteran oaks in High Wood.

Parts of the tree you normally don't notice: the colours, patterns, ridges and direction of bark. The emergence of different shaped buds as they get ready to sprout in the spring.

Conifers in the Isabella and Pembroke Lodge Gardens as well as the cedars in Petersham Park.

Cherry Plum, flowering dramatically in late February, by Dann's Pond. What a harbinger of spring!

Tranquillity

Richmond Park is one of the most tranquil places in London, possibly the most tranquil. In visitor surveys, people say this is the number one reason for them coming to the Park.



© D Llewellyn-Jones Photography

So the Park's tranquillity is highly valued by visitors, but what are the factors that lead to tranquillity and how can the amount of tranquillity be measured? These are important questions because if a value can be placed on the tranquillity of an area then this can be used to assess the impact on it of any change in its environment.

Lots of work is going on to establish a method of measuring tranquillity, and there are many factors that are known to contribute to it. These include the absence of crowds, low levels of man-made noise, the visual appearance such as a beautiful landscape, the presence of water (particularly running water), birdsong (parakeets may be an exception!), perceived safety and comfort, and natural smells and textures.

Richmond Park scores very highly on all these positive factors. The professional noise

survey conducted by the Friends last year said noise levels were, in the context of London, 'exceptionally low'. And even on busy weekends, there are areas in the Park where you can escape other people. At other times it can be idyllic – see our new short film of the Park's tranquillity on our website.

The biggest negative factor by far in people's perception of tranquillity is intrusive man-made noise, especially from aircraft and road traffic. The Friends are currently in discussion with Heathrow Airport about the enormous threat to Richmond Park's tranquillity of the possible new arrival flight paths. These would go right over the middle of the Park, from the golf course to Richmond Gate. If you want to get an idea of what it would be like, just visit Kew Gardens when aircraft are flying low over it. Tranquil it isn't....

Autumn colours of Richmond Park

Every leaf speaks bliss to me
Fluttering from the autumn tree.
Emily Brontë

Autumn brings the bliss and riot of colour all around the Park with yellow, orange, crimson, scarlet and purple leaves. Especially brilliant are the Park's red oaks, pin oaks, hawthorns and beech trees and the acers in the Isabella Plantation. Here, reflecting colour in Thomson's pond, is a tupelo tree and nearby are a liquidambar, a swamp Cyprus and a dawn redwood.



Thomson's Pond 2018 ©Vivienne Press

Friends' fungi expert Janet Bostock says: "But look closer and fungi are joining in! Among these are scarlet wax-caps in grassland and russulas with red, brown or yellow caps near trees. If you are lucky, among the trees you may also see a fly agaric, red with white spots on the cap, just like the one in Alice in Wonderland, although the hookah smoking caterpillar may be absent!

"Fungi are here all year round but hidden below ground or within a plant. We notice them only when they form their beautiful fruiting bodies, mainly in the autumn. For lots more information, see our 2020 and 2021 autumn newsletter articles on fungi and the Wood Wide Web.

"Take a camera on your next walk in the Park to see how many different fungi you can photograph, without picking them of course".



Fly agaric ©Paula Redmond @pr_ultra



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/
 or [f /thefriendsofrichmondpark](https://www.facebook.com/thefriendsofrichmondpark)

Photo ©Brendon Blake

Friends' Walks

All are welcome to come on these free guided walks.

Each walk lasts about two hours and starts from one of the car parks at 10am on the first Saturday of each month.

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.

Dogs must be kept on leads during all walks.

Due to road closures in the Park, we show the gates that those arriving by motor vehicle will need to come through to reach each car park.

- 3 December Pen Ponds car park via Roehampton Gate only
- 26 December Pembroke Lodge car park via Richmond, Ham or Kingston Gates
- 7 January Robin Hood Gate car park via Roehampton Gate only
- 4 February Roehampton Gate car park via Roehampton Gate only
- 4 March Kingston Gate car park via Richmond, Ham or Kingston Gates

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Richmond@royalpark.org.uk.

Police non-emergency: phone 101

Our thanks to Piers Eley

In May, Piers Eley stepped down after over 20 years as Chairman of the Richmond Park Wildlife Group (RPWG). The Group brings together the Park's various wildlife experts and volunteer groups – birds, butterflies, flora and so on – to help The Royal Parks manage the Park's ecology.

Over that time Piers has been the inspiration for many conservation projects, including new ponds and watercourses, enclosures to encourage regeneration of flora, planting of trees (the Elm Walk was his idea) and recording of the Park's wildlife. Piers was also the Park's expert on butterflies, his real passion, and led the Butterfly Group for many years. He received a Wildlife Conservation Award from The Royal Parks Guild in 2009.

Simon Richards, the Park Manager for all of Piers' time as RPWG Chairman, has called Piers the 'conscience' of the Park, the person who really understood its ecology and wildlife and called out anything that threatened it.

Membership — Joining and Renewals

Please note that membership renewals for those paying by cash or cheque only is 1 January 2023. 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.

If you wish to receive Park Life as a pdf instead of as a printed booklet, then email membership@frp.org.uk with the subject as 'Park Life as pdf' using the email address registered with us.

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



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**The Friends of Richmond Park work to protect the Park's peace
and natural beauty for future generations.**



Waxcaps ©Janet Bostock

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

**RC | Russell
Cooke**



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