

Park Life

In Richmond's National Nature Reserve

**Climate change
and
Covid projects**



Summer in the Park

Tawny and Little owls

Discoverers' Jubilee tea

**Calendar and new gifts
coming soon**



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RICHMOND PARK

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Welcome to Park Life

The Friends' Newsletter has transformed into Park Life magazine!

The Newsletter was first published around 30 years ago as a printed black and white single sheet with only news. By 2006, this had evolved into a similar format and content as now, issued three times a year, with articles as well as news.

Around 10 years ago, we also started to produce a monthly email bulletin, which is of course a much quicker way of conveying news to our members. We know that around 70% of members with email addresses open the e-bulletin, most soon after it appears in their inbox. However, if left, then it's all too easy for it to become lost among the plethora of emails most of us now receive.

The printed publication offers more opportunities for members to read at leisure, and to enjoy the beautiful photos and longer articles on wildlife, projects and challenges in the Park. The Newsletter has become a magazine that complements the monthly email bulletin.

So welcome to our new magazine. We also welcome comments on the design and the articles. Write to: editor@frp.org.uk

Front cover photo: Fallow deer
© Ryan Ming Sheng Ten [tenryan](#)

New Let's Discover!

The second Let's Discover children's booklet, about the history of the Park, will be launched in September. Details in the September bulletin.

Early September 2023 calendar arrives Online shop re-opens

The Friends' Richmond Park Calendar and Christmas cards will be available both online and at the Visitor Centre, plus more unique gifts exclusively at the Visitor Centre.

**See the August bulletin for
launch date**

Magazine people

Editor, Artwork and Production

Vivienne Press

Assistant editors: Christine Ecob,
Alison Glasier

Proof reader: Sally Wood

Advisors: Roger Hillyer, Ron Crompton,
Monique Sarkany, Helene Feger.

Contact: editor@frp.org.uk

Meet our new Trustees

Five new trustees were voted in at our April AGM. Two – Monique Sarkany (Discoverers) and Nigel Sherwin (Adopt an Area) – are already well known to many of you and were also profiled in last autumn's newsletter.

Judith Pearson (FRP Secretary)

I have lived near Cambrian Gate for over 30 years. Our sons were lucky to grow up with Richmond Park as their 'back garden'. During the lockdowns, to the surprise of myself and my family, I took up running. This has hugely increased my knowledge and appreciation of the Park. It's the tranquillity, trees and birdsong that I enjoy as much as the exercise.

My professional background is in the law, working in various City firms, and specialising in corporate tax. I also have experience of being a trustee of other charities. I look forward to making a contribution to the work of the Friends.



Helene Feger



Helene has lived in St Margaret's for over 30 years. She enjoyed bringing her children to Richmond Park when they were young and running here regularly over the years.

"During the pandemic, walking in the Park with friends became a vital part of my regular routine. I felt so grateful to have easy access to such a beautiful, green and open space in London. Becoming a trustee of FRP is my way of giving something back."

Helene has worked in the NHS as a director of communications for more than 15 years. She will apply her expertise in media management and communications to support the Friends' aims of conserving, protecting and improving the Park.

Lucy Tarleton

I have lived in Putney for 15 years and love walking and running in the Park. I am a Chartered Accountant and still work part-time in the City. Our office was, until very recently, in Richmond, so I used to start and end my day with a fantastic cycling commute. My three-year-old daughter is also starting to enjoy her time in the Park — one of her favourite activities currently is to go and see the 'reindeer'!

I am delighted to have this opportunity to lead the Events team of volunteers and helping to educate the public in relation to the Park's special status.



Platinum Jubilee Teddy Bears' Picnic

by Monique Sarkany



The children decorated their own golden crowns and some made their own artwork on the spot.

To mark the Platinum Jubilee FRP Discoverers held a 'Teddy Bears' Picnic' in the Isabella Plantation on 31 May and it was a huge success. The Discoverers teamed up with Holly Lodge Education Centre to hold this free event, which was attended by around 120 children and their families, accompanied, of course, by their teddies! The weather was mixed but the Jubilee spirit was certainly alive.



They also learnt how to make a paper pot which they filled with compost and seeds and took home. In time, they will bloom in red, white and blue!

The teddy bears and their families settled down for picnics in our lovely setting near Thomson's Pond. Some attendees even brought along homemade Union Jack-themed cupcakes and generously shared them around.



It was such a pleasure to see everyone come together in this happy celebration of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, in our most beautiful Royal Park.

Keep an eye out for more Discoverers events over the summer: We run free events for the public every other month, as well as birdwatching nature walks every first Sunday of the month for those subscribed to our mailing list. Word spreads via social media, the FRP website, school newsletters and local tourism websites.

See: www.frp.org.uk/discoverers/

Photos: with kind permission from parents and children

Simon Richards retires



Simon Richards, the Manager of Richmond Park, retired in May after 25 years in the role. After qualifying in landscape management and horticulture, Simon joined The Royal Parks in Hyde Park in 1985 and became Superintendent or Park Manager of Richmond Park in 1997.

Simon's 25 years have been 'interesting times' as they say. He's faced rapidly increasing visitor numbers while government funding and police numbers have steadily fallen. He's had to deal with the impact of climate change on the Park and new pests and diseases, such as Oak Processionary Moth and Acute Oak Decline, and of course the last two years of Covid.

Despite this, he's overseen many new initiatives: the development of valuable visitor facilities such as Pembroke Lodge and the Visitor Centre; events including the Olympics

cycling road races; the Queen's Visit in 2012; the introduction of Rangers and the curbing of through traffic. The latter began in 2004 with the closure of Robin Hood Gate and the introduction of the 20mph speed limit, followed by implementing the current road closures.

Most important from the Friends' point of view, he has steadily focused The Royal Parks' priorities and funding on conservation of Richmond Park's fabric and wildlife, with a wealth of activities, some funded by the Friends. Projects such as protecting veteran trees, creating new ponds, clearing rhododendron, planting new native trees, re-wilding Beverley Brook and most recently re-establishing Upper Pen Pond Island. These will all have an impact far into the future — it's quite a legacy.

As Chairman of the Friends for over half of Simon's tenure, I really appreciated his generous support for the Friends, helping us to develop our volunteering activities, giving talks, leading walks, speaking at our events, and appearing in our videos and webinars. We also co-operated on many conservation projects, campaigns and events.

Simon has combined calm, common sense management of the Park with a real concern and passion for its well-being. We couldn't have wished for a better Park Manager.

Simon is moving to his home county of Devon, but will be around until the end of the year in a part-time role overseeing some key Royal Parks' projects. So, there's still time for us all to send him our thanks and best wishes.

by Ron Crompton

Simon Richards and Sir David Attenborough at the launch of the Elm Walk © Ian Skelton

Richmond Park helps spread peace and calm

This spring, photographer James Kliffen submitted beautiful photos for our 2023 calendar. James also shared with us the following amazing story about the photos.

“During lockdown I started to take landscape photos for the first time in 40 years. I purchased a camera and tried to capture the magical stillness found at dawn in Richmond Park. My mission was to share that tranquillity with colleagues working in the frontline with Médecins Sans Frontières / Doctors Without Borders (MSF).

“We have a message board (Yammer) that allows us to share photos globally. With a bit of practice, I started to gain confidence and posted pictures. Comments came back from colleagues in Yemen, Sudan, Ethiopia, El Salvador, Bangladesh and many more countries.

Each post generated thousands of views, and the feedback was consistent — views of Richmond Park carried a feeling of peace and calm into the midst of armed conflicts, refugee camps and hospitals.

“The attached photos are sent to you and your members with heartfelt thanks. You helped make the Park a sanctuary during lockdown whilst dealing with a massive rise in visitor numbers, bringing moments of reflection and calm to people providing medical help to communities across the world.

Thank you!” photos © James Kliffen



FRP fights against flights over Richmond Park

After a two-year delay due to Covid, Heathrow has re-started developing its proposals with the threat of new flight paths over Richmond Park. Implementation is planned from 2027.

Last autumn, the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) re-started the programme for restructuring the whole of UK airspace (the first for fifty years) with a revised process and a set of design principles. We made a submission on the process, emphasising the importance of environmental factors.

It's now been passed to individual airports, such as Heathrow, to come up with their proposals. Heathrow is behind other airports and is still deciding on the exact process it will use, including consultation with local stakeholders like us.

Heathrow's previous proposals were for new arrival flight paths over a wide area of the Park, from the golf course to Richmond Gate, creating factory-type noise levels of 70-80dB in the quietest place in London. This would destroy the peace and tranquillity that visitors seek when they come here and the quiet that wildlife such as bats and owls need to forage.

We are now working hard to put the case for the Park and its visitors and wildlife. Expect to hear much more from us!



Restoring the Park and combating climate change

Walking in Richmond Park in recent months, you will have noticed lots of construction work, with new paths seeming to appear everywhere. The paths are part of a programme of work that will result in the most significant changes to the fabric of the Park in the last 25 years.

The work is needed to repair damage done by the large number of visitors during lockdown and to make the Park more resilient to climate change and improve biodiversity; threats which are facing all parks and nature reserves in the country.

The impact of climate change

Richmond Park is suffering badly from extreme weather events related to climate change. Both 2020 and 2021 saw periods of intense rainfall followed by heat waves and near-drought conditions. High rainfall damaged anthills, while drought dried up ponds, threatening amphibians like newts, and hardened the ground so that invertebrates struggled to burrow into it. Trees were especially affected with both water logging and dry weather affecting their roots.

At the same time, surging visitor numbers meant paths were damaged and widened by people walking on path edges to 'socially distance' from each other, inadvertently trampling adjacent vegetation in the process. The resulting bare soil led to more surface run-off after heavy rain and more footpath erosion.

Improving Paths

The restoration and upgrading of paths throughout the Park is the largest and most visible programme of work in progress. Paths widened during Covid have been narrowed again and eroded surfaces replaced with hoggins; new ditches alongside paths take away the increasingly heavy rain-water that erodes the paths; new hedges, and screens of bushes and small trees have been planted to create new wildlife habitats.

In some places, more significant changes have been made to protect wildlife habitats. To the south of Pembroke Lodge, the paths have been completely re-designed and the edge overlooking the slopes has been fenced to protect the veteran trees

and vegetation below as well as the row of Hornbeams to the south. The slopes themselves have been planted with dozens of native small trees to improve biodiversity whilst also deterring off-road cyclists.

On the east side of Lower Pen Pond the path is being re-designed to reduce encroachment on an area used by ground-nesting birds on one side and to create a protected pondside habitat on the other.

Like many people we are concerned that the new paths could detract from the natural character of the Park, but in the short term we can see no realistic alternative. We also expect that they will 'blend-in' over time as planted shrubs mature.

Upper Pen Pond Island

The largest single project is the re-building of Upper Pen Pond Island. Over the years the island has been steadily eroding, reducing its size and value as a habitat for nesting herons and other birds.

However, its position in the middle of the Pond makes work there difficult and expensive. The

solution is to use a pontoon as the base for the work, with a barge carrying materials across to it. The nesting herons were re-located to the nearby plantation for the duration. The new island is three times as big as the old one, providing a much larger bird habitat and leaving the island better protected against erosion.



Digger on Upper Pen Pond Island ©Roger Hillyer

Managing water

A group of projects aims to retain more water in the Park to combat the impacts of both flooding and drought. This is a continuation of the work done over the last ten years by The Royal Parks and the Friends, such as the creation of the Jubilee and Attenborough ponds.

In Pond Slade, between the Isabella Plantation and Pembroke Lodge, ditches have been re-aligned and improved to slow the water flow and increase the wetness of the surrounding area, improving that habitat. In Dann's Valley, south of Ham Cross, two new seasonal ponds, or scrapes, provide a new habitat for invertebrates and a deer-wallow in dry weather.

These projects will not be the last. In the years ahead, the impact of climate change on Richmond Park will continue to increase faster than its fabric and wildlife can adapt and more such projects will be needed to maintain the Park's resilience.

The Owls of Richmond Park

by Nigel Jackman

Eerie calls at night, characters in children's fiction, owls are fixed in our imagination. We would have to invent them if they didn't exist, so much are they a part of our world.

Rarely, a barn owl or short-eared owl may be seen in Richmond Park, but our two residents are the tawny and little owl. They are widely spread, albeit in small numbers, the little owl being more numerous here and more likely to be seen.

Owls have a number of special characteristics. Their eyes are fixed in their skulls, so to look from side to side they can swivel their heads up to 270 degrees in either direction. They have no sense of smell, but

their hearing is ten times better than ours, helping them to locate their prey. Their plumage is adapted to deaden the sound made by their wings in flight, essential when hunting.

An owl swallows its food whole. Later it regurgitates a pellet containing what cannot be broken down and digested (bones, fur and insect parts). Finding a pellet is a sure sign of an owl's presence, and breaking one open can be quite a revelation!



Tawny owls favour woodland habitats, are plump, large-headed birds and live for about four years. If you are lucky you may spot one in the daytime, dozing in the entrance of a tree hole or on a branch, nestled close against the tree trunk, but mostly they remain out of sight unless disturbed. Being nocturnal these silent assassins hunt at night, mainly eating voles and other small mammals, lizards, bats, moths and worms.

Occasionally tawnies call in the daytime, but mostly at night, particularly in October and November when looking for, or holding on

to, a territory. Only the male utters a hoot, but both male and female make the well-known 'kewik' call.

Pairing for life, they nest in the bottom of a chimney-like tree hole, laying their eggs at intervals of several days, meaning that the age and size of the young in the nest will vary. If food is scarce, the largest chick is fed first and may survive while others perish. After 7-12 weeks the owlets are adult-sized and will hunt for themselves under the guidance of their parents, until the latter chase them away to preserve their territories.

Little owls were introduced from Europe in the mid-19th century, since when they have spread widely; Richmond Park probably has the largest population in Greater London.

They differ from the tawnies in size, appearance and their tendency to be active during the day. They hunt chiefly at dawn and dusk when you may see one, but they also fly by day or, more often, sit out in view on a woodland edge, in a copse or on a favoured tree stump. They may also be quite vocal, calling to one another if excited. They will not share territories with tawny owls which are stronger birds and may take them as food.

Little owls are small and dumpy, almost goblin-like, with fierce frowning faces

and glaring yellow eyes. When disturbed and nervous they will bob and twist their heads. They breed between April and July, laying three to five eggs.

Although you should never get too close or disturb nests and young families, the best time to observe little owls is towards dusk on a summer evening when family groups may be found around the woodland edges. The young are active, but still dependent at that time, and the parents are in over-drive to feed their hungry offspring, relying mainly on earthworms, insects and small mammals.

Tawny or little owl, either is a treat to see and a delight just to know they thrive in our wonderful Park.



Photos: ©Paula Redmond: facing page: left tawny owl; right tawny chick; above: little owl.

Summer Wildlife in the Park

by Monique Sarkany

Summer is a busy time in the Park, particularly for the management of wildlife. Much work goes on behind the scenes, and we caught up with some of those involved.

I met with Tony, the Senior Wildlife Officer, to find out more about his role. Tony and his colleague Felix work tirelessly throughout the year but summer is their busiest time, particularly with the deer herd. Patrolling the Park from dawn until dusk, Tony counts and assesses the red and fallow deer herds; the spring birthing season increases the population by approximately 30%. The tagging of a few stray newborns can aid in monitoring the herd over several years.



The summer months also see an increase in calls from the public reporting incidents involving the Park's wildlife. In response, the officers work closely with the Surrey-based charities Wildlife Aid and The Swan Sanctuary. On one occasion, a 25kg giant snapping turtle was rehomed to the London Aquarium after it was found in a ditch in Pond Slade, not far from Upper Pen Pond.

Photos: above: stag and oak ©Mark Funnell; top right: buff-tailed bumblebee on brassica ©Louise Oliver, bottom right: brimstone butterfly on campion ©Nigel Jackman,



During periods of dry weather, Tony and Felix may have to operate sluice gates on the Park's ponds to prevent them from drying out. If the situation worsens and the pond dries up, they rescue the fish and move them to another location in the Park.

In addition to the work carried out by the Wildlife Officers, volunteers play an important role in the monitoring of wildlife over summer. Trained volunteers seek out and report Oak Processionary Moth nests, enabling their targeted removal by professionals in July and August. The 20-strong Butterfly Group surveys the whole Park on a weekly basis giving a clear picture of numbers and trends. With climate change threatening many butterfly species, this is vital work.

It is however, a quiet time for our conservation volunteers, who work mainly in the winter months on projects such as rhododendron clearance but in the summer, many also volunteer with other groups.

Whatever the season, the work of the Wildlife Officers, supported by the FRP volunteers, is paramount to the well-being of Richmond Park and we are all so grateful for the work they do.



With thanks to Anne Dixon

Anne, together with Steve Sandham, took over The Friends' Facebook page eight years ago. Through attractive and frequent posting, our Facebook followers grew steadily from 1,500 to over 13,000!

Anne stepped down earlier this year and we are missing her, but grateful to Amanda Boardman for adding Facebook to running our Instagram and Twitter pages.

Anne is also a wonderful photographer and has contributed many photos to our calendars, cards, newsletters, website and gifts including our first jigsaw!

See Anne's photos at  dixon46



Discoverers is the Friends' activities programme for families with school-age children. Please see page 4 and our website or Facebook page for information: www.frp.org.uk/discoverers/ or  /thefriendsofrichmondpark

Enquiries

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

Park management:
Richmond@royalpark.org.uk

Police non-emergency: phone 101

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.

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

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.

- 6 August Kingston Gate Car Park via Kingston, Ham or Richmond Gates.
- 3 September Roehampton Gate car park via Roehampton Gate only.
- 1 October Sheen Gate Car Park (deer + Walk the Wall) via Sheen Gate only.
- 5 November Pembroke Lodge car park (fungi) via Richmond, Ham or Kingston Gates.

2022 Annual General Meeting

The Friends' Annual General Meeting on 23 April was, for the third time, held using Zoom. The officers and trustees elected are shown in the adjacent box.

Hugh Deighton summarised the financial position and it was good to see the significant financial contribution that the Friends continues to make towards conservation projects.

Roger Hillyer then outlined the Friends' activities in 2021, illustrating his presentation with photographs and two films of Friends' activities.

The meeting finished with a varied question and answer session with topics including the traffic trial, dogs on lead and habitat improvements.

FRP Patrons, Trustees and Vice-Presidents

Patrons: Sir David Attenborough, Clare Balding, Baroness Kramer of Richmond Park.

Chairman: Roger Hillyer

Other trustees:

Judith Pearson (Secretary), Hugh Deighton (Treasurer), Janet Bostock, Nick Coleman, Helene Feger, Chris Mason, Vivienne Press, Monique Sarkany, Nigel Sherwin, Lucy Tarleton.

Vice-Presidents: Peter Burrows-Smith, Ron Crompton, Richard Gray, Sheila Hamilton, Max Lankester, Richard Polson

Membership Joining and Renewals

Please note that membership renewals for those paying by cash/cheque was 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.

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

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



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



**Two of our six new fridge magnet designs available now
only at the Visitor Centre, £2.50 each.**

Rabbit © Tammy Marlar; Egyptian gosling © Adeel Khan

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