

The magazine of the Friends of Richmond Park

Autumn/winter 2024

Park Life

In Richmond's National Nature Reserve

Protecting the Park's mighty oaks

**King Henry's Mound – more
than a viewpoint**

Holly Lodge Centre turns 30



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From the Chairman

Welcome to this latest edition of Park Life.

The last two or three years have seen a lot of changes in the Park including path works, crossings and new kiosks. While we don't expect such an extensive range of change this winter, there are still some important developments.

The Roehampton Restored project, involving the replacement of the current café and improvement of the facilities and landscape, passed a significant milestone with the submission of the planning application in the summer. The repair work to the causeway at Pen Ponds, which we report on in this issue, is proving to be a major piece of work.

The Friends is an organisation entirely dependent on our volunteers – we have no paid staff. So I was pleased to have the opportunity to thank the volunteers

at a party for them held on a beautiful sunny evening in June at Pembroke Lodge. Their contributions range from litter picking, staffing the Visitor Centre, leading our guided walks, running our Discoverers events for families and carrying out conservation work. But there is also the less visible work campaigning and monitoring activities in the Park. It all adds up to about 15,000 hours of volunteering a year.

Finally, congratulations to the Holly Lodge Centre on its 30th anniversary. The Friends has had a close relationship with the Centre going back to its first fundraising event and its initial search for volunteers. So I was pleased to speak at the party to celebrate this milestone.

Roger Hillyer

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*Cover photo by Dolores Mateo
Instagram doloresmateo2018*

Pen Ponds causeway works

Major engineering work has been taking place at Pen Ponds after it was discovered that the culvert draining water from the Upper to the Lower Pond had partially collapsed. The work will continue into December and the causeway between the two ponds – closed since June – should be reopened to visitors by February next year, once the downstream slope into the Lower Pond has been reinforced and replanted.

During the excavation work, the engineers were taken aback to find the original brickwork and base of the culvert, including timber foundations dating back to 1746, were much more seriously eroded than at first thought. If the culvert had given way, there was a risk of severe flooding from the Beverley Brook, on its way through the Park, via Barnes and Putney to the Thames.

The repair works were complicated by the need to drain the Upper Pond – officially designated as a reservoir – in order to avert the risk of flooding and to allow the base of the culvert to be accessed safely. This meant a task force of

TRP staff and volunteers rounding up and catching shoals of fish, including 38 carp (one weighing 48lbs or 22kg), 12 pike and hundreds of tench, rudd and eels. These were painstakingly transferred to the Lower Pond, where emergency solar-powered aerators were brought in to oxygenate their smaller and now more crowded temporary home.



One of the 'monster' fish retrieved from the Upper Pond

When the ponds were drained during the war in 1940 (to deprive German bombers of landmarks to navigate by) they yielded up many more fish than the latest catch, but they were much smaller. The largest carp then weighed only 8lbs. When the reservoir was fully drained this summer, the bottom was surprisingly bare of aquatic vegetation. The voracious “monster” carp found this summer may well be responsible.

The reverse process of returning the fish to the Upper Pond may be even more complicated and will have to wait for the end of the repair work and the gradual refilling of the water from its natural streams and hopefully plenty of rain for the ponds if not for the rest of us!

*By Jim Fish. Jim is an FRP member and volunteer ranger
Photos by Jim Fish and Jane Parker*



The damaged culvert dating from 1746

Seal of approval for Park's SSSI status



Natural England has reassessed the Park's SSSI status and says it's now in a favourable condition.

Richmond Park has been a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) since 1992, recognised for its rare acid grassland and veteran and decaying trees which provide a habitat for invertebrates like the threatened greater stag beetle.

But that status had been deemed “unfavourable” or “recovering” because of the perception that the acid grassland was declining, partly due to the spread of bracken. After visits to the Park and studying the reams of data collected by the Park's staff and volunteers from the Richmond Park wildlife groups, Natural England has now upgraded the Park's SSSI status to favourable.

It acknowledged the significant changes in habitat management and hard work which had gone on since the last formal assessment in 2004 including over deer management, bracken control, bramble and scrub encroachment and veteran tree and dead wood management.

Bracken rolling has controlled its spread allowing other species to grow. Path restoration has helped limit erosion by encouraging people to stay on the path. The Park management team are also trying to discourage walkers creating new paths, so-called “desire lines”, with fencing or strategically placed logs.

The Park's assistant manager, Pete Lawrence, says the challenge is always to strike a balance between the need to protect some key features of the Park while mitigating the risk of harm in other areas. So more dead and decaying wood is now left for invertebrates, but that carries an added risk of wildfires. And protection of any precious habitat has to go alongside welcoming millions of visitors to the Park every year.

Natural England still has concerns about the rate of loss of ancient hawthorns, which is being addressed with a tree planting strategy.

Bracken rolling helps control its spread

Photo by Operation Centaur

Protecting oak trees from Oak Processionary Moth

Alison Glasier goes on the trail of the oak processionary moth, an invasive insect which threatens the Park's magnificent oak trees.

Day 1. It's 8.30am in June and I'm standing at the foot of one of my oak trees, gazing up at the high branches and tentative new foliage. My heart sinks as I spot a lump of cobwebby material clinging to the underside of one of the higher branches of this majestic tree. An OPM nest. On the first day of OPM surveying? In the first tree? Surely not. I reach for my binoculars to confirm the sighting. Not round my neck? Not in my bag? Oh.

Day 2. I'm back. Same time, same place, same oak tree. This time I have my binoculars, hammer, nails, clipboard, wax crayon, yellow tags, orange tags (more of this later), GPS tracker. I've remembered the log sheet, notebook, information sheets, permanent marker, ball point pen, lanyard, high-

*Pollarded veterans, the amputees,
the hollow oaks,
hornbeam and black
poplar, sing gently down the wind;
lean into them*

*and you'll hear it, centuries old, song
of longing,
song of loss, kings come to dust,
crowds of shadows that follow where
you walk.*

vis jacket, water, hat, suncream, tick remover. Oh yes, I'm fully equipped.

I scan the tree with the binoculars, leaning ever further backwards to get a better view and resist the temptation to fall flat on my back into a pile of what looks suspiciously like dog poo. The nest is still there and I spot another one further round the tree. The information on the yellow tag that I nailed to the tree some eight years ago has faded and I must give it a new number. The GPS tracker gives me a location; I note this and the new tree number on the log sheet.

I extricate a yellow tag from my bag, faithfully copy the details with my permanent marker. Each tag indicates the area, tree number, year of inspection and number of nests found. Then I hammer the yellow tag into the tree, watched at a distance by a couple with a dog who are looking disapprovingly at this act of apparent vandalism. They hurry off, tutting gently as I use my wax crayon to mark the tree with two parallel lines showing that it has been "done".



The tell-tale signs of OPM infestation on an oak bough

So what is/are OPM? Oak processionary moth came to this country 18 years ago, brought in on imported oak. Since then, the moths have flourished in this part of London in particular. The caterpillars consume the new leaf growth, weakening the tree and making it vulnerable to other diseases.

But there is also a health risk to humans as the tiny hairs of the caterpillars can cause a nasty rash. It's not just humans who are susceptible; dogs and horses can be badly affected too.

The Royal Parks have a robust programme to tackle OPM and every year in June a team of surveyors, like me, set out in their allotted area to survey the oaks and report any nests found so they can be removed or monitored. Thankfully it's not up to us to remove the nests as it requires donning full hazmat protective clothing and working at height. That's done by specialist teams brought in by the Royal Parks.

In my first few years as an OPM surveyor, I found literally hundreds of nests. But fortunately numbers have declined and this year after my initial first tree shock I only found 3 or 4 more.

Because of the lower numbers, surveying practice has changed so that we don't now tackle all the oak trees in our area but choose a "sentinel" tree in areas with lower footfall. I chose my sentinel tree, gracing it with one of the new orange tags and was secretly and foolishly rather pleased when I went back a week later to find a new OPM nest in it. At least I had chosen well.

Why the decline in numbers? Nobody really knows. It could be the weather: too hot/cold or wet at critical stages in the caterpillar's development.

It could be the spraying, but this has been kept to an absolute minimum to avoid collateral damage and in fact no spraying was done this year.



The operation to remove OPM requires full hazmat clothing

There is some evidence that blue and great tits feed on the caterpillars and there is also a parasitic fly (*Carcelia iliaca*) that has been shown to have an effect in reducing numbers. Probably it's a combination of all these things and we will just have to wait and see.

In the meantime, if you happen to be sitting under an oak tree with a yellow tag on it maybe move away a little. And if you see one with an orange tag – think of me!

*By Alison Glasier, a member of FRP and an OPM volunteer
Photos by Roger Hillyer*

*The poem is an extract from A Dream of Richmond Park by
David Harsent*

A sustainability strategy for the Park

Anyone who visits the Park on a summer weekend will see how much waste is generated by visitors - the bins are often overflowing.

Around three tons of waste are collected every week, a huge increase since Covid when visitor numbers rocketed. Most of it made up of bottles, cans and food packaging. But fly-tipping is an ongoing problem.

Some of it comes from garden waste being thrown over the wall. Bags of household waste are also left beside the bins or even in woodland areas. Once the door of a safe was found dumped in the Park.

cans, the other for general waste. Both are designed to be jackdaw-proof!

The drive to reduce waste and emissions is part of The Royal Parks' 10-year sustainability strategy. TRP aims to be a UK leader in the sustainable management of parks and green open spaces by 2025 and has invested heavily to achieve its ambition.

The aim is to increase the Park's recycling rate to 45 percent with the rest sent to a waste-to-energy plant



New signs on litter bins designed by the famous illustrator Quentin Blake

Petrol and diesel-fuelled equipment like strimmers, leaf blowers and small vehicles have been replaced with electric models. The Park's transit vans are also EVs. The larger plant machinery like the digger is run on HVO biofuel.

But there's more to sustainability than recycling waste and reducing the use of fossil fuels: the aim is to use the Park's own resources in its management and upkeep. So most of the natural materials needed to look after the Park are sourced from the Park itself.

Posts for signage or tree crates? The trunks and branches of larger trees provide these. Smaller branches are turned into woodchip to be used as mulch to spread around tree roots or on flower beds, while the Park's green waste is shredded and turned to create rich, dark, earthy compost for the gardening teams.

The recycling rate has been poor - only about 10 percent - but the aim is to increase that to 45 percent with the rest sent to a waste-to-energy plant rather than landfill. The old crate-clad litter bins are being replaced with pairs of bins, one clearly marked for recyclable materials like paper, plastic bottles and

Heathrow flight paths threat remains

The Civil Aviation Authority have now, after a year of challenges, approved a short list of new flight paths – many over Richmond Park. The threat of up to 60,000* deafening aircraft per year over the Park for decades to come is even more likely now.

A year ago, Heathrow published a short-list of 151 options for new flight paths, many over Richmond Park (see maps). After complaints from the Friends and others, the CAA refused to approve the short-list, saying that it was not satisfied with Heathrow’s stakeholder engagement. Heathrow re-engaged with us and others in the Spring and in July published virtually the same short-list, which the CAA approved.

Heathrow will now develop a handful of ‘system’ designs using the short-listed flight paths. One of these ‘systems’ will, after public consultation, be chosen to replace today’s way of operating Heathrow airport.

We are now engaged with Heathrow on the environmental assessments they must also do, including tranquillity and

biodiversity – and they’ve committed to minimising the impact on Richmond Park “wherever possible”. We will hold them to that commitment. Public consultation on all of this is now unlikely before 2026!

Meanwhile, there is growing interest in and support for a ‘Do Minimum’ option. It would use the new technology (satellite rather than ground-based radar for controlling aircraft) but largely keep the flight paths as they are.

‘Do Minimum’ as an option was approved unanimously by the London Assembly in November 2023 (it also called on Heathrow not to put flight paths over Richmond Park) and has created a lot of interest among MPs. It achieves airspace modernisation and it would avoid uncertainty and stress for many residents, as well as avoiding Richmond Park.

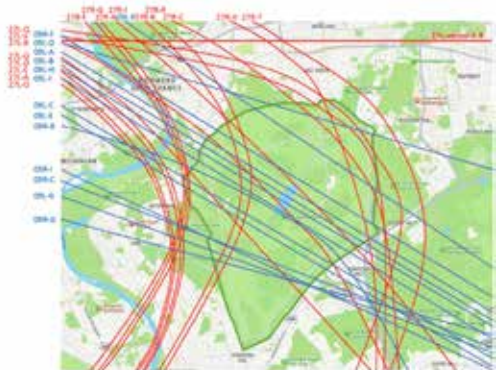
Go to our website at frp.org.uk/save-richmond-park/ to read more and join our special mailing list to receive regular updates. And tell your friends and neighbours!

*our website has details of how this figure is calculated

Now



Short-listed Options



King Henry's Mound – more than a viewpoint



A new look for King Henry's Mound is designed to both protect it and reveal its hidden history.

One of the most famous and favourite spots to visit in the Park is King Henry's Mound: this is where you can stand and have an uninterrupted view towards St Paul's Cathedral, the jewel in the City which survived the 1940 Blitz, 10 miles away.

The trees in Sidmouth Wood just across the road are cut back regularly to keep a clear view and up until recently, a neat hole was cut in the ivy hedge on top of the Mound to allow perfect alignment with the free telescope mounted on a platform for all to enjoy the view.

The name 'King Henry's Mound' refers to the myth that Henry VIII once stood here awaiting a signal confirming that his second wife Ann Boleyn had been beheaded. A good story but untrue. Nor is there any evidence linking the Mound

to his father, Henry VII. In fact its history goes back a lot further than that.

At 57 metres above sea level, King Henry's Mound is the highest point in Richmond Park and a rare prehistoric monument dating back to the Bronze Age (c2500 BC - c1000 BCE). It is a man-made round barrow, most likely the burial site of someone (man or woman) who would have held a high status at the time. Edward Jesse, Deputy Surveyor of the Royal Parks in the 1830s, recognised that it was a barrow and noted: "It has been opened and a considerable deposit of ashes was found in the centre of it."

Although no evidence of dwellings from that time have been found in the Park, Tom Greeves, the archaeologist who undertook a thorough survey of the Park in the early 1990s, says that prehistoric pottery points to that possibility. It's also known that there were earlier generations of people in what is now

Richmond Park dating back to the hunter-gatherer Mesolithic people at the end of the last Ice Age, about 10,000 years ago. Several of their flint tools have been found as well as stone axes of the Neolithic period (c4000 - c2500 BCE).

In 2021, the Mound was designated as a scheduled monument due to its national archaeological importance, its rarity and the fact that it has survived for so long. Since then, several meetings with Historic England have taken place with TRP, with the aim of better connecting the Mound to the Park. There were also concerns that it was being undermined by the badger sett underneath it. But any work to open up the Mound needed to ensure the badgers were unaffected.

"It has been opened and a considerable deposit of ashes was found in the centre of it."

The sett, one of many in the Park, is very valuable to the Park's biodiversity and badgers are legally protected. Careful surveying was undertaken in 2022 by a specialist ecologist appointed by TRP so that any work on the Mound would cause minimal disturbance to the sett – the badgers themselves are used to many people passing by and regular garden maintenance.

Earlier this year, the vegetation was cut back in order to give better access for specialist survey techniques like ground penetrating radar so staff could assess the extent of the badgers' tunnelling. Cutting back the vegetation, including the gorse, has allowed them to get a sense of how the Mound might look if it was re-landscaped to become a more prominent feature of the Park. The vegetation on the fencing around the top of the Mound



The Mound before the vegetation was cut back

has been cleared with the view to St Paul's still framed by the metalwork and the path through Sidmouth Wood.

The views of the Mound from Petersham and the Richmond-Kingston road have also been improved. All this is intended to highlight the Mound's importance as an archaeological monument in itself, not just a viewing platform.



The view through Sidmouth Wood to St Paul's has been opened up

So all in all, a new look for an old viewpoint which you may or may not like, depending on your point of view.

By Monique Sarkany, a trustee of FRP

Photos by Roger Hillyer and Jo Scrivener

A walk around the Park gates

Before you start, have a go at this quick quiz: How many gates are there? Going anti-clockwise from Richmond Gate, can you name them all?



Ladderstile Gate

Few people notice Richmond Park's gates as they hurry through them by car, bike or on foot. Unless, of course you are locked in with your car at dusk, as I once was, when you have time to study the padlocked gate in detail until someone lets you out.

When Charles I enclosed Richmond Park in 1637, to some local resentment since it meant the loss of common rights, he allowed the local people to have six gates. Richmond Gate was the most important, since he came through it from Richmond Palace on his way to hunt. The other five were Sheen and Ham (which carried the important route from Mortlake to Kingston), Roehampton (leading to Putney), Robin Hood (originally called Wimbledon and leading there) and Ladderstile (originally called Coombe).

Further gates were added over the centuries. Chohole Gate (currently the entrance to the Golf Course) was built

in 1680 to give access to the farm and pasture there. Bog Gate (originally called Queens Gate) was created in the 1730s to give Queen Caroline, wife of George II, private entry on her journeys to White Lodge. Kingston Gate came a few years later.

In the 19th century, Bishop's Gate was added to bring cattle into the Park for grazing and Petersham Gate was built when the grand estate located there was demolished and the land incorporated into Richmond Park. Finally, Cambrian Gate was made during WW1 to give easy entry for ambulances to the South African military hospital just inside the Park.

Richmond remains the grandest gate by far. The present gates and the lovely cream lodge next to it were designed in 1798 by Sir John Soane, he of the Soane Museum and the architect of the Bank of England. The gate also has the 'GR' and 'CR' cyphers of George III, the monarch at the time, and his wife Charlotte. Robin Hood Gate is the next grandest, with a lovely monogram of Edward VII from 1907, though its name dates from



Richmond Gate lodge, designed by Sir John Soane



Cambrian Gate

1750 and comes from a local inn on the London-Portsmouth stagecoach road.

Most of the pedestrian entries to the Park are 'cradle gates' in design, to help prevent deer from escaping; it's very rare for deer to escape through the vehicle gates, even though there's no cattle grid.

Seven gates - the original six and Kingston - have lodges, built to house gatekeepers, who were introduced in the 1740s to control access to the Park. Their instructions were to admit only "respectable persons" on foot and carriages with the right ticket.

Access was restricted even further when George II's daughter Princess Amelia was Ranger, leading to a number of petitions and a mass break-in. The campaign for free access came to a head in 1755 when the gatekeeper at Sheen Gate barred the

local brewer John Lewis from entering. Lewis won the subsequent court case and with it the right of public access to the Park, which is why the pedestrian gates are open 24/7 except during the cull. A plaque on the gatepost, organised by the Friends, commemorates the 250th anniversary. The lodges were once occupied by police and Park staff but most are now privately rented.

The gate posts at Sheen, Ham and Kingston have plaques with mileage to other gates and Ham also has a post box and decorative lantern lights, still lit by gas (installed in 1921!), though the gate was badly damaged by a car last year and has yet to be repaired.



Bog Gate - a typical cradle gate

Sheen, Ham, Kingston and Robin Hood also have a small hut with black weather-boarded walls inside the gate, once used as a shelter by Park police in inclement weather.

So, next time you're in the Park, take a closer look at the gates; there's a lot of history to marvel at.

Quiz answers: Twelve gates – Richmond, Petersham, Ham, Kingston, Ladderstile, Robin Hood, Chohole, Roehampton, Sheen, Bog, Cambrian, Bishop's



Sheen Gate with John Lewis plaque

Text and photos by Ron Crompton, a former chairman of FRP

Holly Lodge Centre celebrates 30th anniversary

The Holly Lodge Centre celebrated its 30th anniversary on a glorious sunny day in September with a party and a surprise appearance by Sir David Attenborough, a patron of the Centre.

The celebration brought together present and former trustees, staff and volunteers. Founder Mike Fitt, Park Manager in the early 1990s, described his idea of setting up an educational centre for people of all abilities. Also there was Pat Ealey who established the Centre and Anna King, her successor as Centre manager.



More than 7,000 people visit Holly Lodge each year to enjoy a wide range of activities inspired by the nature and heritage of Richmond Park. The Centre's workshops, many designed specifically for children with special educational needs and disabilities, range from pond dipping and nature walks to art workshops and life in a Victorian pharmacy.

Calendar's young photographer

Our 2025 Calendar has 17 beautiful photos, and one of these – the green woodpecker – is especially remarkable because it was taken by a ten year old.

Tyler says, "I started taking photos with a kiddy camera in 2019 during Covid and was going on walks everyday and seeing all the different wildlife. I like birds best – birds of prey and sparrowhawks are my favourite."

He now has an 80D Canon and taught himself to use with the help of his aunt, herself a keen photographer. He lives in Norfolk and travels to Richmond a few times a year and says, "I have tried

most seasons but do like June and July the most to see all the babies."



Calling all young photographers - share your photos of Richmond Park with Discoverers, our activities programme for families with school-age children.

Park wildlife survey enters new phase

Members of the Friends will soon have the opportunity to take a further part in the wildlife survey of the Park, which is being run and funded by the Friends. Last spring 151 camera traps were installed across the Park by 80 FRP volunteers and collected three weeks later. The cameras captured more than 600,000 images which have been uploaded by ZSL (the Zoological Society of London) who are overseeing the survey in collaboration with The Royal Parks.

ZSL are now beginning to assess the images, which they'll compare with other spaces in London which have been part of the ZSL Hogwatch project.

The next phase will be a citizen science project in which members will be invited to identify the animals in the images using online software called Zooniverse.

About a third of images captured by the cameras only feature animals, which need to be classified. Once the Zooniverse system is fully functioning, all members will be invited to contribute to the survey, with the support of ZSL.



The image of a fallow doe with a jackdaw hitchhiker and followed by its fawn is an example of what you might see.

Look out for...

In autumn we start to see fungi appearing. These are the fruiting part of the fungus which produce spores (the equivalent of seeds in plants).



Look out for the Parasol whose cap can be 15cm in diameter. The tall stem usually has a snakeskin pattern and a ring below the cap. It grows mostly in grassland but also in open woodland.

Fungi come in a variety of shapes: cap and stem, both small and large brackets, jelly fungi, round puffballs and more.

Have your camera ready, but don't pick as these are seeding the next generation of fungi. Insects also lay eggs in fungi making them an important part of the ecosystem.

The Parasol (Macrolepiota procera)

An old Park map gives up its secrets

What can a 160-year-old map tell us about flood control in the Park in the 21st century?

Quite a lot it turns out.

The huge map (it measures 180 x 260 cm) has been in a storage room at Holly Lodge for many years but has recently been restored and digitally scanned. It's revealing new clues about the Park including why some areas are prone to flooding whilst others rapidly dry.

It was drawn in 1864 and outlines the drainage infrastructure of the Park, showing recognisable water features like the ponds linked by a network of hundreds of drainage channels, pipes and features.

At that time, the focus was on draining boggy areas, probably to improve the land for woodland planting, agriculture and deer grazing and when marshes and bogs were seen as wasteland. The Victorian approach to flooding was to drain land as quickly as possible by channelling water into streams and rivers which were often artificially straightened to speed up the process.

Now, in an era of climate change and extreme weather, flood control relies on slowing the flow of water, allowing it to seep into the ground both to prevent flash flooding and to make the land more resilient to drought.

So what is the map teaching the Park management team?

Assistant Park Manager Pete Lawrence says it shows where key drainage features may be and, in some cases, indicates

that some areas are at risk of flooding because the 19th century drainage pipes are channelling water there from springs elsewhere in the Park. So it's not enough to deal with the flooding where it occurs; Park staff also need to disrupt the flow and allow the natural restoration of boggy areas without putting at risk habitats like acid grassland which require drier ground (and are likely in part a function of drainage).



A drainage pipe exposed during desilting of a pond last winter

The map provides only part of the jigsaw. What's not known is how many of the channels shown were actually constructed. The evidence suggests it is an 'as-built' drawing of works which were completed in 1861 showing about 80% of the Park having been drained.

It's also not known what condition the channels are in today. It's likely most were made of clay pipes which might have collapsed or been damaged by tree roots over the years.



There is visible evidence of the underground infrastructure on the surface in the form of discharge points into Beverley Brook, linear areas of rushes indicating failed pipes, and brick junction wells where drainage channels come together. Over the years some of these have been opened up creating wetland habitats in ditches, scrapes and ponds and brick junction wells where drainage channels come together.

The map itself has been damaged

around the edges and some of the lines have grown very faint, but it still provides a fascinating glimpse into the hidden man-made waterways which lie a metre or two beneath our feet.

Its restoration was funded through The Royal Parks *Help Nature Thrive* project, thanks to the support of players of People's Postcode Lottery.

By Joanna Mills, editor of Park Life

Bramble: too much of a good thing?

Bramble plays an important role for wildlife. It provides nectar for bees, butterflies and other pollinators; fruit for birds, mammals - including foxes, badgers and deer - and insects; shelter for deer, small mammals and grass snakes and protection from grazing for tree seedlings.

This valuable native plant spreads quickly and easily through perennial rootstock, suckering or 'tip layering' (new shoots rooting) and spreading seed via mammals and birds. But too much of a good thing can cause problems.

The Park's rare acid grasslands are threatened by the spread of bramble. Clumps of bramble kill off grass and wildflowers, shade the ant hills which need sunshine, and bramble leaf litter makes the soil more nutrient rich. Bramble also blocks paths.

Although deer graze the leaves and young shoots, providing some control, it's not enough to prevent bramble spreading. Milder winters also mean it grows more vigorously. So intervention is needed.

Assistant Park Manager Pete Lawrence explains: "We appreciate bramble's importance in the Park's biodiversity but

try to find a balance, retaining areas for dependent wildlife whilst protecting acid grasslands and other sensitive areas."

Besides the deer, a number of other methods are used to combat bramble's spread. The Friends' conservation volunteers cut back and remove thick clumps. Petersham Slopes, below Pembroke Lodge and Richmond Gate, is a recent example of their great work.



The wonderfully nicknamed Roboflail is another recently used key tool. This small, remotely controlled, rubber-wheeled unit gets into difficult areas, without causing ground damage, and flails dense bramble clumps.

As well as in certain strategic open areas, Pete points out that bramble is left in and close to woodland and wet areas, providing shelter and food. It's also left to grow around SSSI-listed veteran trees providing protection from human traffic.



By Richard Gray, a vice-president of FRP

Photos by Nigel Jackman, chair of Richmond Park Wildlife Group

The thriving elms of Elm Tree Walk



Enter the Park through Petersham Gate in summer and you're met with a magnificent avenue of trees stretching up the hill ahead of you, framing the path. This is Elm Tree Walk, planted in 2018 to bring back elm trees to Richmond Park.

Most of the Park's elms succumbed to Dutch Elm Disease in the 1970s and there are no mature elms. With them went species such as the White-letter Hairstreak butterfly which inhabits the tree canopy and is entirely dependent on elm.

The idea to bring back the elm had been around for a while but it was a low priority for the Royal Park's limited funds, so the Friends organised a public appeal for each of the 48 disease-resistant trees to be sponsored by an individual or family donor. Their names are recorded on an information board at the start of the avenue, with the first tree in the name of Sir David Attenborough, a patron of the Friends.

Six years on, the elm trees are thriving, the information board has just been refurbished and the avenue is established as a wonderful addition to the Park.

And the White-letter Hairstreak butterflies have re-appeared. After single sightings in 2022 and 2023, five were observed one day in early summer, with more almost certainly present. Hopefully the population will increase in future as the elms continue to develop.



The White-letter Hairstreak butterfly

By Ron Crompton. Ron is a former chairman of FRP

Photos by Nigel Jackman

Friends of Richmond Park Discoverers

If you cut a worm in two, do you get two worms?

That was just one of the questions asked at the Discoverers' group introduction to the world of bilateral animals with a long tube-like body that live in our gardens. This was the final session of a programme of activities for children in Richmond Park, organised and run by the indefatigable Monique Sarkany and her team of volunteers.

Every Tuesday, activities in Pembroke Lodge drew crowds of enthusiastic children of many ages, accompanied by their equally enthused parents. Craft tables were set up and children could make mini books or finger puppets, invent stories using story cubes



Listening to stories can be so exhausting. Luckily the lion thinks so too

that they coloured in or decorate a bookmark with stickers and their own artwork. One week they made field note booklets and ventured out to do bark rubbing or collect and identify leaves they picked up from the ground.

If the children got tired of all this artistic activity, they could flop down on cushions and listen to a story book read by one of the volunteers, cuddling up to the big soft lion or Buttercup the extra large teddy bear. (It was the children who cuddled up, not usually the volunteers although it was tempting).

A firm favourite was Cops and Robbers by Janet and Allan Ahlberg, brought to life by a volunteer who very appropriately is an ex-police officer.

Some of the children invented their own stories, like the one about the man who built an airport or the tale of a girl who didn't like broccoli so flushed it down the loo. Others with a flair for drama directed finger puppet performances of Shakespearian quality, usually ending in a battle or a cuddle.

In addition to the Tuesday sessions, the Discoverers were invited to take part in the National Butterfly Count and were given an introduction by the Chairman of the Park's Wildlife Group. Apart from finding and identifying butterflies, the children were particularly delighted to find a young fox roaming in the bushes.

Then there was the Royal Parks Roadshow and a day of fun in the Isabella Plantation in August where they were able to make their own observation booklets to collect data on flora and fauna in the Park.



But what about the worms?

This was the final day of Discoverers activities and turned out to be a major triumph. Live worms were made available in trays so the children could observe their behaviour and there was a large model which enabled them to determine which was the head and which was the tail (not as straightforward as it sounds – presumably the worms find it a bit easier).



Children were able to calculate how many worms they might expect to find under Pembroke Lodge lawn using a square meter template cut out of paper so they could visualise the area. And they used their craft skills to make worms out of pipe cleaners and Cheerios (other cereals are available but clearly wouldn't do the job so effectively).

All in all, an amazing summer of fun with a bit of learning thrown in for the children, many of whom were repeat attendees.

Oh yes – what does happen if you cut a worm in half? Chances are you'll end up with two dead worms.

Do not try this at home...

By Alison Glasier

Photographs by Monique Sarkany and Louise Hearsum

Special thanks to the Hearsum Family for hosting the Discoverers in the Belvedere at Pembroke Lodge

Friends Information



Discoverers is the Friends' activities programme for families with school-age children. Events take place twice a month throughout the year and during school holidays. All Discoverers events are free. For information, please see www.frp.org.uk/discoverers/

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.

Dogs must be kept on leads during all walks.

We show the gates that those arriving by car will need to come through to reach each car park.

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 on the day of the walk.

December 7th	Pen Ponds car park (vehicle access via Roehampton Gate)
December 26th	Pembroke Lodge car park (vehicle access via Kingston, Ham or Richmond Gates)
January 4th	Robin Hood car park (vehicle access via Roehampton Gate)
February 1st	Roehampton Gate car park (vehicle access via Roehampton Gate)
March 1st	Kingston Gate car park (vehicle access via Kingston, Ham or Richmond Gates)
April 5th	Sheen Gate car park + Walk-the-Wall (vehicle access via Sheen Gate)

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Park management:

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Police non-emergency: Phone 101

Friends Information

The Friends – Who we are and What we do

The Friends of Richmond Park is a charity founded in 1961 and dedicated to the conservation and protection of Richmond Park, its peace and natural beauty, for the benefit of the public and future generations.

The Friends fund conservation and interpretation projects, organise the Discoverers programme for families, monitor events in the Park, and offer guided walks, talks and webinars.

Our more than 300 volunteers staff the Visitor Centre, carry out conservation work, monitor sporting events in the Park and pick litter as part of our Adopt-an-Area scheme.

We lobby and campaign on issues such as the ecology and wildlife of the Park, policing, car access to the Park, cycling, flight paths and local planning issues. We also publish books, leaflets, the Richmond Park calendar, Park Life magazine for members and provide a monthly email bulletin.

You can find out more about the work of the Friends on our website (*frp.org.uk*), Facebook, Instagram and on X.

New members are always welcome so please join us. You can do so via our website or pick up a form from our Visitor Centre, or email *membership@frp.org.uk*

Membership – Joining and Rewards

Please note that membership renewals for those paying by cash or cheque only is 1 January. 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 a digital copy of Park Life instead of a printed booklet, then email *membership@frp.org.uk* with the subject as 'Park Life digital copy' using the email address registered with us.

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



Photo of birds over Beverley Brook by John Gillespie



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

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

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