



FRIENDS *of*  
RICHMOND PARK

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

SUMMER 2014



**The Park's spring birds – and small creatures**

**The new ecology team**

**World wars in the Park**

**Rhododendron clearance – why?**

## Welcome

...to this summer issue, and thank you to all our contributors, as well as to Chris Ecob, who helped with editing, and Sally Wood, who once again has undertaken much needed proof-reading. We would still welcome more help, particularly from anyone with experience of editing and Quark DTP software on a Mac.

*Marilyn Mason, editor@frp.org.uk*

### WANTED – help with Stag Beetle monitoring

The Richmond Park Beetle Group would like experienced members of the Friends to help increase their coverage of the Park by reporting signs of Stag Beetles between now and August. The Group offers helpers plentiful guidance – for more information please email [Johnhatto@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:Johnhatto@yahoo.co.uk), or see the Richmond Park Beetle Group website, <http://e-voice.org.uk/rp-beetle>.

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## MEMBERSHIP NOTICE

At the 2013 AGM it was agreed that our annual subscription rates should be increased, as the current rate for individuals barely covers the costs of the member. The increase will restore that balance and also produce more money for conservation of the Park.

The rates will increase from £6 to £10 for individual members, and from £10 to £15 for household membership, and will take effect from 1 January 2015 for existing members (and from 1 September 2014 for all new members). An email or letter (with the November newsletter) will be sent out nearer the time to remind people of the forthcoming changes and to allow those paying by standing order time to update it, although you may wish to make that change now.

We are aware that the increase is substantial in percentage terms, but the rates have not increased for many years (and the proposed increase merely reflects the impact of inflation over that period) and it is unlikely, unless we face a period of massive inflation, that a further increase will be needed for many years to come. We believe that membership of the Friends is still very good value and, of course, any additional funds generated will go to conservation activities in the Park.

## The Starry Night

I walked away from the fairground-bright street lights outside Richmond Gate and was slowly enveloped by the darkness. The Park was still and mysterious, the silence broken occasionally by an owl calling or a deer mewing nearby.

As I approached the top of Sawyer's Hill a dull glow started, and over the brow the landscape was illuminated by the light of the Roehampton Estate a mile or more away. The stars, which had been sharp in the darkness, were now dimmed and blurred by the light. By Sheen Cross they were invisible. This is the night sky in much of Richmond Park. There are darker skies in the centre of the Park, but there are many brighter ones, tainted by the light from houses and flats just outside the Park and by the yellow glow of the city beyond.

It is a far cry from Van Gogh's "Starry Night", a sky he described in his diary: "In the blue depth, the stars were sparkling, greenish, yellow, white, pink, brilliant, gemlike" – yes, the stars do have different colours when seen in the really dark skies that he knew.

Richmond Park is the darkest place in London at night, but even it is polluted by light. It is many times lighter than it was 50 or 100 years ago. Over the last 50 years, the amount of light emitted in the UK has increased eight-fold. New residential developments have been built all around the Park, many with large picture windows or spotlights outside.

Does this matter? Well, it does to bats, owls and other nocturnal creatures. Most bat species will not emerge from

their roosts or feed in light levels above 1 lux (a natural full moon on a clear night). Once they emerge, light, especially bright white light, disrupts their vision and their patterns of movement and foraging. Artificial light at night also affects owls, preventing them from hunting successfully, especially at dusk when they become active. Little Owls, of which there is a high concentration in the Park, move elsewhere if regularly disturbed by light; with steadily increasing light pollution, their numbers will fall.

And surely it should matter to us. A hundred years ago most Britons had plenty of experience of really dark night skies – of Van Gogh's "Starry Night" (painted in 1888); now virtually nobody does. Only 1% of the south-east is now counted as "truly dark". We live in a world that is permanently light, where we have a "great yellow sky", as one author has put it, not a dark one.

Starry night skies and natural darkness are one of the "resources" that the US National Parks Service is sworn to protect. The UK National Parks is working to set up Dark Sky Reserves. Maybe Richmond Park, especially its centre, should be designated as London's Dark Sky Reserve?



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## Cover photos

**Front cover:** Cygnets by Pen Ponds by Adrian Moysey of Adrian Moysey Photography

**Back cover:** Summer in the Park by Anne Ross

Anne and Adrian both contribute lovely Park pictures to the Friends' Facebook page – well worth a look – and both have their own website albums.

### New fridge magnets



These beautiful mementos of the Park pictured above are now available at the Visitor Centre. Our thanks go to Ottilia Markusz-Job for the beautiful deer photos, Michael Davison for the stunning photos of Isabella Plantation and Pembroke Lodge, and Diana Loch for the fabulous London skyline. Profits will help conservation projects in the Park.

### Friends' AGM

About 65 Friends' members attended the AGM in April at King's House School. In the morning Ron Crompton gave a review of 2013, which was much quieter than 2012 (the Queen's visit and the Olympics) and 2011 (the Friends' 50th anniversary). He highlighted progress with volunteering, Discoverers, the History Project, ponds and streams, and communications (Facebook and the monthly e-bulletin). John Corkindale and Jan Wilczur of the Park's Bird Group then gave a fascinating talk on the Park's birds and bird recording (there are continuous records since 1921), including the decline in some species, especially the Skylark, and how they might be protected.

The formal AGM in the afternoon included discussion about: how to solve the conflict between cyclists and cars, including closing the Park to all traffic on summer evenings; a suggestion that anyone doing business in the Park should have training in its ecology and

wildlife; the idea of volunteers providing information to people out in the Park; and a suggestion for the Friends to develop a Richmond Park app.

### Changes to the Friends' Trustees, Vice-Presidents and President

At the AGM, there were three changes to the FRP Trustees. Mary Pollard stepped down as a Trustee, although she will continue to manage the Friends' Facebook page and the calendar. The new Trustees are Chris Mason, who has become Membership Secretary, replacing Sheila Hamilton, and John Peake, who is the new Trustee overseeing the Visitor Centre. We are very sorry to see Mary leave the Committee, but delighted that Chris and John are joining it – and we thank them all for their contributions past and present to the Friends.

Among the Vice-Presidents, Richard Carter, John Repsch (both ex-Chairmen) and John Waller (an ex-Treasurer) have stepped down at the end of their three-year term, and Max Lankester, until last year Hon Secretary, has become a Vice-President. Lord Rix, who has been President of the Friends for 15 years, has stepped down from that position but will continue to be a valued Patron. We hope to appoint a naturalist or conservationist as the new President and public face of the Friends.

### Friends at Richmond May Fair

The Friends had an excellent location for our stall this year, new advertising with a picture of Sir David Attenborough (see photo above right), and Susanna Ramsey's wonderful exhibit of the Park's wildlife, with the result that many more people visited the stall than in the previous two years. Our volunteers concentrated on telling people about the Friends' activities and why they are so important for the conservation of the Park, recruited 12 new members, and sold 16 Guidebooks, 13 Family Trails and 25 maps of the Park.



The weather was kind to us in the morning, but in the afternoon the heavens opened, and as the rain fizzled out the gusts of wind strengthened till one got under the roof of our gazebo and took it off entirely. Our fearless volunteers stayed stalwart, calm and focused, and, assisted by a passer-by, had the gazebo looking like new within 15 minutes. It proved a busy, enjoyable and very worthwhile day.

### Cycle count

On Saturday 29 March a group of 15 Friends volunteers, stationed at Ham Cross, Sheen Cross and Roehampton Gate car park, counted the number of cyclists and cars in the Park. Over a two-hour period from 9.00 to 11.00am they counted 2,200 passing cyclists, of whom about a third were in pelotons (the pelotons and some individual cyclists would have been counted two or three times since they would have been doing two or three circuits of the Park). The number of passing cars was 950 at Ham Cross, 800 at Sheen Cross and 500 at Roehampton Gate car park; the high number at Ham Cross reflects the density of traffic on the Kingston to Richmond Gate route.



At the end of April, Discoverers families took part in a Weather Workshop, using the Holly Lodge Centre as our base. We really appreciated having access to the Centre's excellent facilities, including the Park weather station. The route there lay through the Nature Trail, and Discoverers had great fun looking under logs and stones and spotting tiny toadlets.



Activities (pictured above) included constructing a rain gauge and windmills, and simple temperature experiments, focusing on the effect of weather and climate on the Park and its wildlife. It was particularly interesting to visit the weather station with Brian McDonald, a volunteer weather station monitor and one of the Discoverers team.

The annual Fathers' Day Trail and Picnic in Isabella Plantation also went well. Lowering skies and the fact that England's First World Cup game was played late the previous night, ensured that the Isabella was unexpectedly peaceful that morning – a welcome bonus!

In a bid to broaden our user base, the project to work with a Roehampton primary school gets under way in July when some of the team attend a school assembly to talk about the Park and the Discoverers.

Details of all our activities can be found at [www.discoverers.frp.org.uk](http://www.discoverers.frp.org.uk), or email us at [discoverers@frp.org.uk](mailto:discoverers@frp.org.uk).

### Royal Parks' Government grant cut

The Royal Parks' grant for this financial year has been cut by over 10%. The Government now covers less than 40% of TRP's costs, and the rest of TRP's income has to come from cost-cutting and commercial income, both of which the Friends complain about.

### Royal Parks Major Events Strategy

The Royal Parks agency has published a new Major Events Strategy for all the Royal Parks. It focuses on the central London parks, where most of the 30 major events, such as concerts and the half-marathon, take place. However, it sets criteria for events that apply to all the parks, for example, that they should minimise the impact on the park's fabric and ecology.

The strategy recognises that Richmond Park "is not generally well suited to holding major events" because of its SSSI status and poor public transport links, but says that TRP will "consider hosting up to three major events a year" in the Park. This is one more than the present two (RideLondon and the London Duathlon) and three more than seven years ago. The women-only Human Race is not counted as a Major Event, although arguably it causes as much disruption to users of the Park as RideLondon.

Although it says that the principles set out for the Major Events should apply to smaller events, the new strategy does not offer any solutions to deal with smaller sporting events, which are the real problem in Richmond Park as there are more than 1,000 of them every year.

### Pembroke Lodge entrance

Work began in January on improving the entrance and arrival space at Pembroke Lodge, and the first stage has now been completed.

Improvements include extended Yorkstone paving outside the kiosks, relocated and rationalised furniture, and clearer routes for cyclists and pedestrians. The car-park by the entrance now has new drainage and an asphalt surface with marked-out accessible parking bays. The next stage, which will probably start later this year, is to shorten the car-park at the top end to protect a veteran oak there which is suffering badly from compaction, and extend the bottom end into the area which has been used as an overflow car-park in the past. Repair of some of the other car-parks, especially at Sheen and Kingston gates, is also scheduled for this year.

### Oak Processionary Moth

From May to July volunteers and staff are again surveying the Park for the caterpillars and nests of the invasive insect pest Oak Processionary Moth. This vital task culminates in the removal of the nests by specialist operators at the optimum time in June and July. If you come across the caterpillars or their webbed nests please do not touch them, and keep children and pets away.

### Isabella Access Project

Most of the work is now complete, though the Plantation will take time to return to its natural state – see page 9 for an item on ongoing



Rhododendron clearance. Improvements include new paths, benches (*one pictured above*), bridge surfaces, better disabled access and signage, a new toilet block, and restoration of ponds and streams.

### Holly Lodge Centre 20th anniversary and appeal

Television presenters Ben Shephard and Sir Trevor McDonald, along with The Royal Parks Chief Executive Linda Lennon, were among the guests celebrating 20 years of the Holly Lodge Centre in March. The Centre was established in 1994 by Mike Fitt, then Superintendent of Richmond Park, to provide access for people of all abilities to the unique nature of the Park. It became an independent charity in 1999, and now offers a range of educational activities to school groups, especially those with special educational needs.

The Centre has launched a 20th anniversary appeal for £15,000 to fund improvements to its nature activities, including bird-watching screens, more "mini-beast" habitats, a raised pond for visitors in wheelchairs, new hedging, a woodland glade, and a sensory room to create a nature environment for those with severe or profound learning difficulties.

### Park lodges to let

In the past, most of the small lodges in the Royal Parks were occupied by Park staff, serving or retired. A few years ago, TRP decided that, as the lodges occupied by retired staff became vacant, they would refurbish them and rent them on the open market. Half of the 12 small lodges in Richmond Park are now rented. Lodges available to rent, should you fancy living there, are: Richmond Gate (2 beds, next available



*Trevor McDonald at the reception with Pat Ealey and Lord True, leader of Richmond Council*

September 2015), Bishops Gate (4 beds, December 2015), Sheen Gate Lodge (3 beds, November 2014), Sheen Gate Bungalow (3 beds, August 2014), and Chohole Gate (3 beds, June 2104). Roehampton Gate Lodge is currently being refurbished and will be let shortly.

### Sheen Gate fountain

The drinking fountain at Sheen Gate has been inadequate and

unreliable for some years. Now a new fountain has been installed, courtesy of Tiffany, the luxury jewellers, as part of their \$1 million donation to the Royal Parks Foundation for the refurbishment of many of the fountains and water-troughs in the Royal Parks. The new fountain is not diamond-encrusted, but it does work well. It is freestanding a few feet away from the gate, whereas the previous one was attached to the brick post of the gate itself. Park Management had discovered that the old fountain was often used as a leg-up by people trying to get out of the gate when it was closed for the cull, which was the reason it was so often broken!

### Ancient tree forum

The Park has 1,300 ancient trees, the vast majority of them oaks. If you like ancient trees there is an Ancient Tree Forum, mainly for those who manage such trees but full of interesting information – see <http://www.ancient-tree-forum.org.uk>.

*With thanks to Ron Crompton, Teresa Grafton, P J Greeves, Gillian Jonusas, Anne Ross and Park Management for news items and photos.*

## Good news for the Park



*Claudia, Sam and Julia*

In paying tribute in the autumn newsletter to Nigel Reeve's work as Ecology Officer for Richmond Park, I observed that his retirement left a big gap to fill – but the news is reassuring. Nigel's successor, Julia Clark, heads a Royal Parks ecology team of four, and when I sat with Julia and two of her team in the rose garden behind Holly Lodge I discovered what a wide-ranging contribution they are making to protecting and enhancing the entire range of wildlife within our Park.

Julia, 30, the newcomer to the team, has studied ecology since she was 11, and took a First Class Honours Degree in Countryside and Environmental Management in 2006. She worked as an ecological consultant for eight years, then joined the Royal Parks last year after learning about the vacancy for a Head of Ecology through her work as a volunteer with the Richmond Bat Group. "I've been very lucky," she says. "I have a five-minute cycle ride to work in a job I love – what could be better?"

Supporting Julia with their many years' experience in Royal Parks ecology are Sam Wilkinson, Ecology Officer, and Claudia Watts, who represents Greenspace Information for Greater London (GiGL), the major repository for

## Michael Davison

open space and biodiversity records in the capital. The fourth member of the team is Tony Duckett, Conservation Officer (*pictured below*), who has worked for The Royal Parks since 1977. The team work in close co-operation with Arboriculturist Gillian Jonusas and Senior Wildlife Officer John Bartram.

While the ecology team's work covers all eight London Royal Parks, Richmond Park, as the largest, claims the largest proportion of its time, and Holly Lodge is its base. From there, the team keep watch over the health of the Park's myriad species of flora and fauna.

Each member has a particular field of expertise. Julia specialises in small mammals, especially bats, and has an interest in the Great Crested Newt, a European Protected Species that breeds in Richmond and Bushy Park ponds. Sam shares Julia's interest in newts, and has made a study of reptiles; she has also been involved with Jo Scrivener in preparing a new wildlife interpretation board for Isabella Plantation. Claudia, in her GiGL role, has collated environmental records for 250,000 wildlife species, and liaises with the bird and butterfly monitoring groups in Richmond Park. Tony Duckett



has spent years as a Waterfowl Keeper, then Wildlife Officer, in Regent's Park; in his new role he will oversee conservation projects in the Parks.

Surveys conducted by the ecology team help to guide the management of the Park, with Skylark decline a particular current concern. The ponds at Ham Gate are watched to determine how soon invasive weeds will be eradicated enough to permit removal of the fences. Different methods of bracken control are compared for their effectiveness.

Engagement with the public is an important part of the ecology team's remit. There are interpretation boards, website bulletins and wildlife information leaflets, as well as regular co-operation with the Park's wildlife volunteer groups and local school and university projects. Julia and her team strongly commend the "Tread Lightly" leaflet explaining how to protect the Park and its wildlife. "If only visitors would follow these simple rules, about leaving plants and fallen wood alone, disposing of litter and dog waste, controlling dogs and cycling only on designated paths," said Julia, "our task as ecologists would be much easier."

The leaflet originated with the Richmond Park Wildlife Group and was developed by the Friends (who paid for the leaflets) in co-operation with The Royal Parks and the Metropolitan Police. It is now on the back of the new maps of the Park, and widely used elsewhere. Of the Friends, the ecology team speak with enthusiasm: "Do tell the Friends how lucky Richmond Park is to have such a strong and influential group of supporters." I would add that the Park is also fortunate to have such an experienced and dedicated team of ecologists to look after its treasured wildlife.

## Isabella Plantation Rhododendron removal – why?

*Ron Crompton*

There has been much recent change within Isabella Plantation, notably the removal of *Rhododendron ponticum*. 70% cent of it is being removed by machine in three phases, of which two have now been completed, with the third starting in October; the rest will be removed over the following two years by hand by volunteers and gardeners.

Why is it being removed? Although *R.ponticum* forms a backdrop, divides space and adds character to Isabella, it also brings problems. Of little benefit to wildlife, it blocks out light, restricts air flow and creates ideal conditions for the spread of pests and diseases such as scale insect and sooty mould, both of which have taken hold. The removal of *R.ponticum* tackles these problems and safeguards against new diseases, such as Phytophthoras. Soil-borne pathogens are a real threat to the garden, attacking large stands of *R.ponticum* and potentially spreading to devastate the Plantation's valuable cultivated Rhododendrons and other trees and shrubs. The clearance of *R.ponticum* also creates space to add to Isabella Plantation's rich plant collection.

Nursery stock has been cultivated and replanting has begun. Over the next few years some cleared areas will be grassed and replanted or left open to improve vistas and spread visitor load, while others will be planted with native trees and shrubs to add food and shelter for birds, bats and insects. This will take time to establish, but represents an exciting time for Isabella Plantation.

**Spring birds****Jan Wilczur**

In contrast to last year, this spring was warm and sunny, and winter visitors departed, summer visitors arrived, and resident birds started breeding on time. One of the Park's special birds, the Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, became marginally elusive, though, sadly, a male was found dead in what appeared to be a new breeding territory. There was the annual flock of Skylarks on the rugby pitches in March, this year numbering 33, but only nine males began to establish territory, a number similar to last year. Despite the new protection measures in place, there was still only one pair on Lawn Field. By the end of May, however, there was an unprecedented influx of 11 singing males to Crown Field. They were joined by a couple of singing Meadow Pipits, which last bred in the Park in 2009. Another surprise was a breeding pair of Stonechats which fledged three young.

Raptors were very evident with an increase in sightings of Peregrine, Red Kite and Buzzard, the latter a displaying pair. Hopes were high that they might breed, which would be a first for the Park since at least 1900.

Of the water birds the resident pair of Grey Herons had hatched three young by early March and they were joined by three other nesting pairs. A pair of Shelduck lingered and were even seen inspecting rabbit burrows as potential nest-sites, which would have been another first for the Park if they had stayed. There was the usual trickle of Common Sandpipers which are normally the sole representatives of passage waders, but they were joined by an Oystercatcher, probably the same bird on two occasions, which were only the second and third recorded in the Park. Slightly less rare were a Whimbrel and a Little Ringed Plover which both flew through. Snipe, unusually unrecorded last winter, appeared as passage migrants, and a Lapwing flying

over Isabella Plantation was a surprise. Two Water Rail heard in the reed bed indicated that at least a pair might be present. Three pairs of Common Terns were a further increase in breeding numbers but one pair chose rather riskily to nest on an old fish raft instead of the purpose-built version. A juvenile Kingfisher indicated successful breeding either in or just outside the Park.

Of the scarcer migrants, a male Pheasant risked becoming road kill at Ham Cross, and a Crossbill flew south in March. In mid-April a male Redstart spent a couple of days in the paddocks with an overflying Rook, a rare sight. Then another scarce game-bird, a Red-legged Partridge, was also found in the privacy of the paddocks. A couple of Cuckoos sang unseen in May, and a Lesser Whitethroat was just glimpsed, though a Spotted Flycatcher was rather more obliging. A Honey Buzzard completed the spring raptor sightings.

**Wee, sleekit, cow'rin, tim'rous beasties\* in the Park**

Though readers may well have seen foxes, badgers, rabbits (*photo on the right by Anne Ross*), bats and grey squirrels in the Park, there are also many smaller animals that play an important part in the Park's ecology. Though we rarely see them, these small, largely nocturnal creatures – frogs, toads, newts, and mice, voles and shrews – provide food for a variety of predators from foxes to owls and birds of prey.



*Redstart, by Jan Wilczur*

The once common Brown Hare has long vanished from Richmond Park, but several surveys over the years have found that the Park's acid grassland and long grass provide cover for healthy populations of smaller mammals, much better than cut or closely grazed areas or bracken. A 1996 review of published records included seven species: Common Shrew, Pigmy Shrew, Water Shrew, Wood Mouse, House Mouse, Bank Vole and Field Vole.

More recent sightings and trappings include a female Yellow-Necked Mouse in 2000, a Weasel in 2000, and a Stoat in 2005. There were live sightings of Bank Vole in 2006 and 2007. Common Shrews are seen regularly, especially under the mats put out for reptile surveys, Pygmy Shrews and Field Vole less often. Brown Rats are also seen regularly, and, though there are no recent records of House Mice, they probably still live around Park buildings. There are no Hedgehogs in the Park, or Moles (though one was mentioned in a 1990s golf course report). The Park's abundant insects and plentiful trees also provide a good habitat for bats, and there are recent records of at least nine species, including all three species of Pipistrelle, Noctule, Serotine, Brown Long-Eared and Daubenton's bats.



Evidence for the continuing existence of small mammals in the Park can also be found in the owl pellets collected and analysed by Susanna Ramsey for her Nature Collection (see [www.thenaturecollection.co.uk](http://www.thenaturecollection.co.uk)). All kinds of owls, including Tawny Owl, Little Owl and Barn Owl, cough up

pellets; they contain the material which the birds cannot digest, such as bones, fur, feathers and beetle exoskeletons, which can be analysed to discover what the different birds eat. The tiny bones found inside Barn Owl pellets are the best preserved, and so it is these that Susanna takes apart in school workshops with classes of children aged 9 to 11.

Most of the bones in Barn Owl pellets are from small mammals, and by looking closely at the jaws and teeth of the remains, it is possible to identify which species of mouse, vole, shrew and rat the owls have been eating. In July 2010, 15 Barn Owl pellets were taken apart; they contained the remains of 30 Field Vole, 21 Common Shrew, three Wood Mice, one Bat and one young Brown Rat. In March 2012, 20 Barn Owl pellets were analysed; they contained bones from 33 Field Vole, one Bank Vole, one Common Shrew, one Pygmy Shrew, and 18 Wood Mice. In January 2013, 10 Barn Owl pellets were dissected; they contained bones from 19 Field Vole, three Common Shrew and two Wood Mice. Susanna has not found any Barn Owl pellets in the Park for over a year, though she did find some feathers from a Barn Owl wing in spring 2012, which might explain why the pellets have stopped appearing.

This spring, Church Lane, just outside Ham Gate, was closed to protect the toads migrating across it to reproduce in Richmond Park. A survey of Great Crested Newts is currently under way, with felt mats left out for surveyors to observe what hides under them.

*With thanks to Alison Fure, Susannah Ramsey, Claudia Watts (GiGL – see page 8), and Park Management.*

*\* From Robert Burns' "To A Mouse, On Turning Her Up In Her Nest With The Plough"*

## Winnie Watson's wartime memories

*Interview by Michael Davison*

One of the Friends' oldest members, local resident Winnie Watson, remembers the Park as a much-loved playground during her childhood in the 1930s. "It was a lovely time for me," recalls Winnie, now 89 and living in a retirement flat in Kingston.

Even when access to the Park was restricted during the war – Pembroke Lodge was used as the billet for officers of the clandestine Phantom Squad – Winnie found a way in. "The Park superintendent was a personal friend of the family – we called him 'Pop'. He gave us a key to the gate at the top of our road, and together with two girl-friends who lived nearby, I often went over to see him in his home at Bog [now Holly] Lodge."

The war had one happy consequence for Winnie: she met her future husband Cliff at a local dance. He was serving in the RAF and billeted in Queen's Road. "His section had their meals at White Lodge. Their job was to light dummy fires to make the Germans think they were over London, fooling them into dropping their bombs on the Park instead," explained Winnie.

Another memorable wartime encounter has stayed with Winnie to this day: "One morning on my way to work in Richmond, I was reading a letter from my fiancé Cliff when someone bumped into me. It was David Niven, He was a Phantom Squad officer and was on his way to take morning parade in Marlborough Road, where the squad's private soldiers were billeted. I walked to work on cloud nine. I really idolised David Niven. He was my favourite film star!"



Winnie and Cliff married in August, 1944. They lived with Winnie's parents in Richmond before moving to Ham in 1950, but still enjoyed frequent visits to Richmond Park with their two children.

So how does the Park today compare with the Park of Winnie's childhood? "There are so many more people, of course. In the war only people with business in the Park would be seen there," she said. One sight Winnie misses today is that of women riding side-saddle: "It used to look so elegant." She also misses the concerts that took place on Sunday afternoons in summer at the bandstand near Richmond Gate. Winnie is impressed by the general well-being of the Park today, and particularly by the recent and continuing improvements to the Isabella Plantation.

Having enjoyed the Park for so many years herself, she recognises the important role the Friends play in helping to balance the needs of the Park as a nature reserve with those of the huge number of people who come to roam its open spaces.

*You can read the full version of this interview in "Articles" on the FRP website at [www.frp.org.uk/articles](http://www.frp.org.uk/articles).*

## Richmond Park and the First World War

*Mary Pollard & Robert Wood*

When the First World War broke out in 1914, Richmond Park proved to be an invaluable resource for the military and the war effort in general. One hundred years on, FRP volunteers have been working at Pembroke Lodge with the Hearsam Collection of Park heritage material, to uncover and display material relating to some of the notable things which took place here at that time.

Early on in the war, army encampments were set up in the Park, including a large camp near Roehampton for volunteer rifle regiments and a depot between Roehampton and Robin Hood Gate for the Royal Naval Air Service. Out in the Park itself units were trained for battle, with the cavalry practising their charges across the grasslands. In 1916, a fully equipped military hospital was built in the Park for South African troops injured in the fighting. With access via a new gate at Cambrian Road, it was on a considerable site of some 12 acres between Conduit Wood and Bishop's Lodge. It eventually housed over 600



beds, workshops and a concert hall. As part of the war effort, the hospital performed over 2,000 operations and treated over 9,500 patients. Morale was maintained by a programme of activities such as concerts and fancy dress parties. Patients, staff and volunteers wrote and published a magazine, *The Springbok Blue*, with articles, pictures, poems and cartoons, examples of which are preserved in The Hearsam Collection. The hospital was not removed until the 1920s.

As the war progressed, German Zeppelin bombing raids terrorised Britain and the Government announced an award of £25,000 to anyone who could create a weapon against this alarming new threat. An English inventor, Harry Grindell Matthews, created an "electrical light ray" system, using selenium cells. In a secret experiment on Pen Ponds in December 1915, Matthews successfully demonstrated his invention, using a remotely controlled boat to detonate mines at a distance. Matthews won the £25,000, but the invention was never used, as other means of dealing with Zeppelins were eventually adopted.

The huge war effort meant that at home many women took on jobs previously exclusive to men. To release more soldiers to fight, the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) was formed in 1917, and we have evidence that a unit served in Richmond Park.

Discovering these amazing stories has been a fascinating journey. You can see more about them in a small display of pictures, photographs like the one on the left, and other items from 100 years ago in the entrance to Pembroke Lodge from August this year. You can also visit the Hearsam Collection website at [www.hearsumcollection.org.uk](http://www.hearsumcollection.org.uk).

**Membership and Subscriptions**

Please see notice on page 2.

The membership form can be found on the website, [www.frp.org.uk](http://www.frp.org.uk): from the Home page, click on "About the Friends" and then on "Get Involved". Forms can also be picked up from the Visitor Centre.

FRP also emails out monthly bulletins and if you are not getting these and would like to, please let me know via [bulletins@frp.org.uk](mailto:bulletins@frp.org.uk).

*Chris Mason*

**VOLUNTEERS WANTED  
to help with campaigning**

The Friends is involved in a range of campaigning: lobbying The Royal Parks and other bodies; objecting to planning and other developments in and around the Park; and public education including "Tread Lightly". We are looking for people to work with the Chairman and other Trustees on public information, preparing proposals, and communicating with various bodies. You can choose which campaigns you want to be involved with. If you have interests or skills in this area and can help, please contact the Chairman of the Friends at [chairman@frp.org.uk](mailto:chairman@frp.org.uk).

**Police non-emergency telephone number: 101****Queries about Friends?**

See [www.frp.org.uk](http://www.frp.org.uk), or contact [secretary@frp.org.uk](mailto:secretary@frp.org.uk).

**Queries about Park management?**

If you have any observations or concerns about the way the Park is being managed please contact Park Manager Simon Richards at The Royal Parks, Holly Lodge, Richmond Park, Richmond, Surrey, TW10 5HS. Tel: 0300 061 2200  
Email: [richmond@royalparcs.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:richmond@royalparcs.gsi.gov.uk)  
Website: [www.royalparcs.gov.uk](http://www.royalparcs.gov.uk)

**Trustees**

**Chairman:** Ron Crompton

**Vice-Chairmen:** Peter Burrows-Smith (Conservation & Ecology; Walks), Sheila Hamilton.

**Other Trustees:** Nick Coleman (Website, Campaigning), Teresa Grafton (Education), Richard Gray (Marketing), P J Greeves (Events), Rachel Hirschler (History Project), David McLaughlin (Hon. Treasurer), Chris Mason (Membership), John Peake (Visitor Centre), Richard Polson (Hon. Secretary).

**Vice-Presidents:** Brian Baker, Richard Carter, John Collier, Max Lankester, Douglas Reynolds.

**President:** vacant

**Patrons:** Sir David Attenborough, Baroness Kramer of Richmond Park, Lord Rix CBE, Dame Jacqueline Wilson.

**Friends' walks and courses****WALKS**

All welcome. Most, though not all, walks are on Saturdays and start at 10.00am from a car park.

Please phone Peter Burrows-Smith on 020 8392 9888 in advance if you need special support or help with the walk, and please keep dogs under control.

\* **COURSES** are typically a 30-minute talk at Pembroke Lodge followed by a two-hour walk. Courses are for members of the Friends only and places must be booked – please contact Sue on 0208 940 9114 or [sue.gibbons@npl.co.uk](mailto:sue.gibbons@npl.co.uk). Coffee/tea provided. There will be no charge.

See also [www.frp.org.uk](http://www.frp.org.uk).

There are also free guided walks in Isabella Plantation led by Park staff throughout the year. These walks last about one and a half hours and are publicised on Park notice boards.

Date	Time	What and where
5 July	10.00am	WALK: meet at Pembroke Lodge car park
12 July	<u>8.00pm</u>	WALK: <b>Summer Evening</b> , meet at Sheen Gate car park
19 July	10.00am	COURSE*: <b>Butterflies</b> (Ray Garrett)
2 Aug	10.00am	WALK: meet at Kingston Gate car park
6 Sept	10.00am	WALK: meet at Robin Hood Gate car park
20 Sept	10.00am	WALK: <b>Autumn Birds</b> , meet at Sheen Gate car park
4 Oct	10.00am	WALK: meet at Sheen Gate car park
11 Oct	10.00am	COURSE*: <b>Deer</b> (Peter Burrows-Smith)
25 Oct	10.00am	COURSE*: <b>Fungi</b> (Janet Bostock)
1 Nov	10.00am	WALK: meet at Pembroke Lodge car park
<b>+</b>		
2nd & 4th Fridays each month	<u>9.30am</u>	<b>NEW – INFORMAL BIRD WALKS:</b> meet at Pen Ponds coffee kiosk.



*This young Great Spotted Woodpecker at its nest-hole was spotted on a recent bird walk; photo by Angela Buxton.*





Registered charity No. 1133201  
[www.frp.org.uk](http://www.frp.org.uk)

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