

**Autumn 2016**



Litter harming wildlife

David Attenborough stars in Friends' Film

Park people

Raptors and Fungi

Friends' 2017 calendar

## In memory of Lord Rix



One of the Friends' Patrons, Lord (Brian) Rix died last August aged 92. Lord Rix was a renowned actor and theatre impresario, and later became a fierce campaigner for children with learning difficulties and President of Mencap.

He became a Friends' Patron in

1996, when he lived in Roehampton in a house backing onto Richmond Park. He subsequently became President and spoke eloquently at the Friends' 50<sup>th</sup> event in 2011 of his experiences and love of the Park. He stepped down as President and became a Patron again two years ago. His wife, the actress Elspet Gray, died in 2013.

### Newsletter people

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by  
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 Photography

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## Friends' Calendar 2017 available now!



The 2017 Friends of Richmond Park calendar is **now available** from the **Visitor Centre outside Pembroke Lodge** and at **Holly Lodge**. The price is £7.50 – cash only please.

All the photographs, design and sales work for this calendar are contributed free by volunteers, allowing sales of the calendar to make around £4,000 for conservation projects in the Park.

Our enormous thanks go to all 33 of the talented photographers who so

kindly donated the 66 amazing images, and to Vivienne Press for producing the calendar, from collecting the photos and laying it out to working with the printers.

The Visitor Centre is open from 11am to 3pm most days (subject to volunteer availability), and Holly Lodge is open Monday to Friday 9am to 4pm. **Christmas cards are also on sale at the Visitor Centre now**, so why not pick up a pack while you are there and so further support the Park.

*Calendar cover photo by Dave Llewellyn-Jones*

### Lloyd Grossman, new Royal Parks Chair

Lloyd Grossman has been appointed as the Chair of the new Royal Parks, which will combine the existing government agency that manages the parks and the fund-raising charity Royal Parks Foundation. He has a long involvement in the heritage sector, and is Chairman of NADFAS and of the Heritage Alliance of over 100 heritage organisations. He has been on the board of English Heritage, the Museum and Galleries Commission and the Churches Conservation Trust.

He is perhaps best known as the former presenter of Master Chef and for his range of sauces, but he has also been a restaurant critic, the winner of an edition of Celebrity Mastermind and a member of a punk band. He and his band New Forbidden played at Glastonbury this year.

We are delighted to welcome him to the Royal Parks community and look forward to his visits to Richmond Park. You can read a letter from Andrew Scattergood, The Royal Parks CEO, to stakeholders introducing Lloyd Grossman and the new organisation on our website at [www.frp.org.uk/news/1393-new-royal-parks-chairman](http://www.frp.org.uk/news/1393-new-royal-parks-chairman). YouTube also has videos of him and his band at Glastonbury.

## Raptors of the Park

by Nigel Jackman

As a group of bird enthusiasts tracked three buzzards wheeling high in the sky above Pen Ponds car park, a visitor asked them whether there were golden eagles in Richmond Park. The following week a single buzzard soaring over the same location prompted another bystander to ask whether it was an eagle.

Many raptors are seen over Richmond Park, most often kestrels and sparrowhawks which are both resident here throughout the year. However, eagles are only seen extremely rarely in England and these are presumably strays – our last resident golden eagle was in the Lake District until 2015 and is now presumed dead.

The kestrel is the Park's most common raptor, producing broods of up to five young. It is often seen hovering with tail fanned and wings beating rapidly as it hunts. Kestrels feed on small rodents, insects and worms, but will also take birds such as larks and pipits.

The sparrowhawk, secretive and usually solitary, feeds on small birds. The female is larger and accordingly will often take somewhat larger birds. Clutches are of two or three eggs.

Common buzzards are also now seen regularly in or over the Park where it seems a few may be resident and have attempted recently to breed. Another large bird that is becoming an increasingly common sight in the sky overhead is the red kite with its distinctive forked tail, but as yet it is not locally resident.



*Hovering kestrel hunting for prey  
by Nigel Jackman*

Raptors occasionally seen in Richmond Park include the peregrine falcon, seen in any season, and the hobby which over-winters in Africa and is sometimes seen hunting dragonflies or other insects over Pen Ponds. Rarely an osprey may be seen flying over the Park on its way to or from West Africa where it over-winters.

Extreme rarities are (with the numbers of reported sightings in the Park in the past 10 years): marsh harriers 5, hen harrier 1, Montagu's harrier 1, rough-legged buzzard 1, honey buzzard 6; merlin 1.

Quite exceptionally, *A History of Richmond New Park* (1877) ascribed to John Lucas, says "a very large eagle was shot in Richmond Park on 14<sup>th</sup> November 1842". In his book *A History of Richmond Park* (1937), C. L. Collette states that it was most likely a white-tailed eagle.

So, in the unlikely event that you should see an eagle in Richmond Park, you should probably ask yourself which zoo or collection it might have escaped from.

## Fascinating Fungi

by Hugh Bradstock

It should come as no surprise that the Park is a prime site for fungi since it owes, in part, its SSSI status to its ancient parkland and associated abundance of dead wood. In fact, more than 400 species have been recorded, including the nationally rare *Oak Polypore*.

It is in autumn when the weather is mild and damp that many fungi are most visible. These conditions encourage them to produce their fruiting bodies, be they the familiar mushroom shape structures underfoot or the larger brackets found on wood, all of which are full of spores. The main part of the fungus is active all year but is out of sight, forming cotton-like threads in the wood or soil.

The Park's decaying wood is host to many fungi and the larger species are hard to overlook as they form colourful protrusions on boughs. These include the *Chicken of the Woods* whose noticeable rubbery brackets resemble omelettes erupting from the trunks of trees.

The fungi that live on decaying wood thrive when the wood is kept damp. All the more reason to leave fallen branches undisturbed and not to be tempted to build dens with them which quickly dries them out.

However, not all fungi are found on dead wood. Many instead form symbiotic (mutually beneficial) relationships with plants. Indeed, nearly 80% of British shrubs and trees benefit in this way. The fungi interact with the roots of these plants helping them to take in water and

nutrients, while the fungi, in return, receive carbohydrates. These fungi include the *Brittlelegills* whose mushrooms have purple reddish caps and can be found near to the Park's oak trees with which they live.



The acid grasslands, too, are excellent places for fungi. These range from the small waxcaps, conventional-looking toadstools with sticky or waxy caps of many colours, to the large *Parasol*, the stately cousin of the field mushroom, which, as the name suggests, bears an uncanny resemblance to an Edwardian lady's parasol.

Many of the Park's mushrooms are edible. However, picking them in the Park is strictly forbidden. With the number of visitors to the Park so high, if picking were allowed many species would simply disappear altogether.

If you see anyone picking the fungi in the Park you should call the police on the non-emergency number 101 to ensure that these fascinating organisms remain to be enjoyed by all.

*Photo of Waxcaps by Hugh Bradstock*

## Isabella Plantation's ponds and streams

by Jo Scrivener and Sam Wilkinson

An ecological survey of Isabella's ponds and streams has shown a transformation since the improvement works two years ago. It confirms what is immediately noticeable to visitors: the formerly murky waters are now clear, the ponds are teeming with life and the planting around their banks looks beautiful.



*Peg's Pond above and right*

The improvement works were part of the Isabella Plantation Access Project (IPAP) and were funded by a grant of £120,000 from the SITA Trust. The Friends contributed £6,000 in partial match funding.

A survey of water quality, silt loadings and plant and animal communities was carried out before the works and repeated in 2015, two years after the works were completed. All the ponds showed a marked improvement in their scores for water and habitat quality – those of Thomson's Pond and Peg's Pond increased by 120% and 80% respectively! Thomson's Pond also showed a greater range of invertebrates such as bugs, dragonflies and damselflies. The addition of reed beds around Peg's Pond has attracted new

species such as little grebe and seen the return of reed warbler, which was last recorded in 2007.

The changes to Still Pond were minimal to retain its character as a reflective pool mirroring the tree canopy above and the spectacular seasonal display of ornamental rhododendrons and azaleas. However, the addition of submerged deadwood has added ecological value to this pond and provides an opportunity for specialised aquatic invertebrates to establish over time.

The project also greatly improved access to and around ponds with the addition of natural gravel paths, decked areas and stepping stones. Benches have been placed which aim to allow visitors to enjoy the ponds and their wildlife and new interpretation boards aim to increase public awareness and understanding of these special habitats.

*The works involved and the full article can be read on our website:*

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



*Jo Scrivener is the Assistant Park Manager and led the IPAP project. Sam Wilkinson is Ecology Officer for The Royal Parks*

## Winter in Richmond Park by Edward Thomas



Edward Thomas (1878–1917) is celebrated for his lyrical nature poetry, but many people may not be aware of his early love of Richmond Park. *A Woodland Life*, published in 1897, when Thomas was just 18 years old, is a collection of prose which includes a chapter about Richmond Park. This describes the landscape and its inhabitants on a winter's day and includes the following evocative words:

*“A keen frost and a grey hanging fog have numbed and silenced all life within the Park. Not a sound trembles through the heavy air. The rooks that travel over, each day at dawn, linger yet in their roosting-trees, and no sullen caw reaches us from their dark forms high up in the elms.”*

*“Slowly the landscape is unfolded as the fog retires, and depths of woodland, unseen before, loom slowly into view. When at last the mist hovers above the elms of the horizon and the far-off mere, from a kindly veil of fern doubling back to the grass, the morning lark climbs high into grey space.”*

Further observations of the natural life in the Park are noted in another chapter of *A Woodland Life*, entitled *A Diary in English Fields and Woods*.

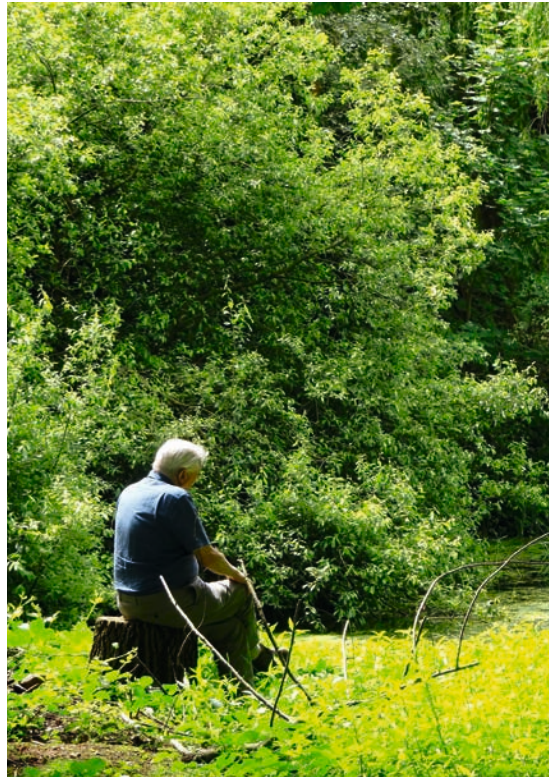
Biographer Michael Hollis writes of his work, “Thomas brought a unique eye to the English landscape at a moment when it was facing irreversible change. His work seems distinctly modern in its recognition of the interdependence of human beings and the natural world...”

Sadly, there are few elms now in the Park and several other wildlife sightings by Thomas, so common in his time, are now rare. However, last spring Sir David Attenborough planted the first tree of a new Elm Avenue in the Petersham area of the Park, funded by the Friends and the Royal Parks.

A copy of *A Woodland Life* is in The Hearsam Collection. Read these chapters and more about Edward Thomas: [www.hearsumcollection.org.uk/a-poets-prose-on-richmond-park/](http://www.hearsumcollection.org.uk/a-poets-prose-on-richmond-park/)

Photo by Andrew Wilson  
[www.unity-publishing.co.uk/](http://www.unity-publishing.co.uk/)

# A day in the filming of Richmond Park







Filming continues to the end of 2016 for **the Friends' conservation film starring Sir David Attenborough**. This small spread of pictures captures just one summer day's filming with sequences on stag beetles, veteran oaks and the importance of water in the Park.

Two of the UK's most renowned wildlife film makers are helping us: **Director George Chan** (top left with Sir David) whose work includes Planet Earth and Wild China; and **Gavin Thurston** (top centre and above) who has worked extensively with Sir David winning BAFTAs and EMMYS for films including Frozen Planet, Madagascar, Human Planet and Life. Special cameras including drones (above and left) have also been used.

The film, due to be released early next year, seeks to encourage viewers to appreciate, love and respect this very special place and 'tread lightly' and to highlight the pressures on the Park's wildlife from increasing visitor numbers.

## A Gamekeeper's Life: John Bartram retires

One of the great characters of Richmond Park, John Bartram, retired in October after thirty years as the Park's gamekeeper, looking after the deer herds and other wildlife. It was the end of an era.

When John joined The Royal Parks in 1986 there were 1,500 deer in the Park, far more than it could support. Deer starved to death, especially in winter. John and his team steadily reduced that to the present 600 red and fallow deer. Today the Deer Society rates the Park's red deer as the finest captive herd in the country in terms of animal welfare. John is justifiably proud of the achievement.

John grew up in Ham, one of nine children. The family kept chickens, rabbits, his father's racing pigeons and a pet seagull. He also learned to shoot.

When still a teenager, John met the head groom for Richmond Park. When he worked as a gamekeeper at Kew, managing the ornate pheasants/peafowl and waterfowl, he also helped out with the cull in Richmond Park at weekends for the experience. The job of the Park's gamekeeper came up and he jumped at it.

"It was the ideal job for me and I was so happy," says John. "The Park was very quiet – maybe only a million visitors a year – you could spend half a day working at Pen Ponds and see no-one else."



The main part of the job is managing the deer herd, monitoring their health, dealing with deer killed or injured by cars, feeding them in winter and, of course, the two culls in November and February. There's also pest control of rabbits, squirrels and crows and incidents with swans, badgers and other wildlife.

"The biggest threat to the deer," says John, "is dogs – deer are terrified of them". Then there's litter "which goes in but doesn't come out; it calcifies in their stomachs, turns to grey concrete-like stuff". And people getting too close: "they forget these are wild animals – surprising I know when you're facing an eight foot stag."

John will miss living at Kingston Gate Lodge. "I get badgers coming up to my window while I'm watching TV, but it's noisy with cars and cyclists and families shouting". Walton, where he's moved already, is much quieter for the coarse fishing and bird-watching he loves.

We wish him a long and very happy retirement.

## Litter in the Park

by Ron Crompton

Visitors often remark on how little litter Richmond Park has. It would be nice to report that it's due to people respecting this lovely place, but it's all down to hard work and money.

The Park has a team of seven litter pickers working shifts from 5am to dusk seven days a week. Their target is to clear all 'front-of-house' litter (roadsides and car parks) by the time the Park opens. Then they tackle the 'back-office' litter away from the roads, 'sweeping' one of five areas every week day. There's also a daily 'sweep' of Isabella. At weekends they are often flat out just coping with the tide of litter around car parks and popular spots, with the aim of clearing all litter by Monday.

The cost of all this? About £200,000 a year for the contract staff, vehicles and waste disposal. A tidy sum.

The litter pickers love the job. Few leave. They say that either you can't stand it and only last a day or you're there for life. It's the open air, the freedom and the Park itself, which you quickly grow to love.

110 tons of waste were collected last year in 130 bins (85 for general waste and 45 for dog waste). These are located at the most popular places but have to be accessible by vehicle for emptying. 50% of the waste is dog waste, 20% general waste and 30% recyclables. The recyclable waste can't be separated cheaply, and so around 90% of the total waste goes for incineration and landfill.

There's also litter on the ground; research in central London Royal Parks shows that 1 in 5 visitors drop litter.

The amount of litter has increased in recent years, along with visitor numbers, and the type of litter has changed: fewer cigarette butts, but more coffee cups (found in bins) and sports waste such as water bottles and energy gel packs (found on the ground – see next page).



*In September, Sula Riedlinger captured this terrified deer trying to untangle itself from a balloon around its neck. It looks as if it may have eaten the string.*

Litter can have a serious effect on wildlife – on deer that eat litter and can't digest it and on foxes and rabbits – undernourished from eating picnic waste.

A final word for the 'unsung heroes' – those who pick up litter as they walk along, especially valuable in the quieter areas that the litter pickers don't visit so often. This includes the Visitor Centre volunteers who can be seen picking up litter as they walk to start their shift. It's an example we could all follow.

## Monitoring the Park last summer

by Nick Coleman



The Friends' monitoring team has continued its hard work this year with a comprehensive survey of two warm weekends in spring, work on particular problems (e.g. dens, deer harassment) and monitoring of large sporting events (Ride London and the Duathlon). What are the results?

The weekend surveys showed widespread breaches of Park regulations, with one off-track cycling offence every 2-3 minutes and more than 60% of dogs off lead in on-lead areas. This is 50 or more times the official police statistics and demonstrates the scale of the problem on warm weekends.

Some problems are becoming much worse. Our den survey estimated there were 200 dens in early summer, with some areas having no deadwood on the ground for invertebrates. Deer harassment has become widespread, with 20+ people often surrounding a group of deer to take selfies ('for my mother in Brazil for her birthday' as one woman said) and children chasing them, with the deer clearly stressed.

The large sporting events are generally well-organised, with limited impact on the Park's fabric and wildlife. But we found 182 energy gel packs (above photo) in a 600m stretch of the route between Richmond Gate and Pembroke Lodge the day after the clean-up of Ride London, nearly twice as many as last year. These can be eaten by deer and kill them. Our and TRP's concerns have led the organisers to clamp down on this next year.

The article on the facing page discusses the long-term outlook for the Park if these problems continue to get worse.

*Too close!*  
by Paul Taylor



## Is Richmond Park sustainable?

by Nick Coleman and Ron Crompton

For the last 150 years, since an 1872 Act established it as a public park, Richmond Park has provided an experience of nature close to a big city. This has required a delicate balance between the needs of the wildlife it harbours and the demands of visitors.

The recent rapid increase in visitors and the intense way the Park is now being used is challenging that balance and questioning how long it can be sustained.

There were 5.5 million visitors to Richmond Park in 2014, up 35% in six years and approaching the 6.8 million visiting the British Museum, which is the largest visitor attraction in the country. Population pressures, the popularity of sports such as running and cycling and Richmond Park becoming 'cool' on social media all contribute. The pressure is most evident on warm weekends when parts of the Park are a "peoplescape" rather than a landscape.

The impact on wildlife and the natural fabric of the Park is widespread. Human footfall erodes the paths and compacts the roots of veteran trees, gradually killing them. Den building (there are more than 100 at our latest count) destroys deadwood, home to a range of invertebrates including the iconic stag beetles. Getting too close to deer makes them stressed and potentially dangerous and litter such as energy gel packs affects their health. Disturbance of skylark

habitats reduces the number of nesting pairs and threatens their survival.

In response, Park management is being forced to re-surface paths with gravel or hard surfaces, put fences around vulnerable trees, dismantle dens and put warning notices and partially fence off the skylark fields.

At this rate, one can see a scenario in 10 to 20 years' time where all the present natural earth paths will have gravel or hard surfaces, all veteran trees will have fencing around them and areas will be set aside for children to build dens and climb trees. The deer will be contained in large enclosures to protect them from the public (and vice-versa) and there will be large areas of the Park, similar to Sidmouth Wood at present, which are closed to visitors to protect wildlife.

Richmond Park is not alone in this. Nature reserves worldwide face the same problem and are forced into a similar response. UK National Parks get large crowds in popular spots and have to hard-surface paths and viewing areas (Snowdon has a paved path to the summit). Some US National Parks, vast though they are, are overwhelmed in some areas on public holidays when ecologically sensitive areas are sometimes closed to the public.

The problem is clear. How can we maintain the balance between nature and people so that Richmond Park retains its unique character? We need to solve it otherwise we'll see a steady deterioration in the fabric and wildlife of the Park until it becomes like any other city park.

## Meet our Park Police



Many readers will recognise the two police officers pictured here, who now lead the police presence in Richmond Park: PC Paul Barber (above) is the dedicated Park Officer and the first point of contact for all problems. Sergeant Michael Boulton (below) is in charge of Bushy and Greenwich Parks as well as Richmond Park.

Barber (above) is the dedicated Park Officer and the first point of contact for all problems. Sergeant Michael Boulton (below) is in charge of Bushy and Greenwich Parks as well as Richmond Park.



They have similar backgrounds. Both joined the army at 16, Paul in tanks and Michael in artillery. Subsequently

they joined the Met and spent seven years in specialist units, Paul in transport police, Michael in a mounted unit. They both joined the Royal Parks unit in 2009 and have spent most of their time at Richmond Park.

Both are nature and country lovers: Paul is a fisherman and photographer; Michael's passion is horses and country sports. Both are married: Paul with a daughter and Michael with two dogs!

For advice on Park policing matters, call them on 07920 586 546. *If you need police to attend an incident, phone 101 for non-emergencies and 999 for emergencies.*

## Membership and Subscriptions

If you are a member and wish to receive the monthly Friends' bulletin by email, and are not already doing so, then please email [bulletins@frp.org.uk](mailto:bulletins@frp.org.uk) with the subject 'Add to bulletin'. You can easily stop it at any time. If you change your email or home address then please let us know by emailing: [memberships@frp.org.uk](mailto:memberships@frp.org.uk)

Individual membership is £10 and household membership is £15. **These increased last year: please update your standing order if you have not already done this** so you continue to receive the newsletter and bulletin, and more importantly so that you continue to support the Friends of Richmond Park and all its projects.

**Membership renewals for those paying by cash will be due on 1 January 2017.**

With thanks from Chris Mason

## Enquiries

**Friends:** see [www.frp.org.uk](http://www.frp.org.uk). If your query is not answered here, please email [secretary@frp.org.uk](mailto:secretary@frp.org.uk)

**Park management:** contact Park Manager Simon Richards, 0300 061 2200 or email [Richmond@royalparks.gsl.gov.uk](mailto:Richmond@royalparks.gsl.gov.uk)

**Police non-emergency telephone number: 101**

This newsletter is printed on paper which is 50% recycled and 50% from certified sustainable forests.

## Friends' Walks

All are welcome. Friends' Walks are free, last about two hours and start from a car park. All except Bird Walks are on Saturdays unless otherwise stated.

If you need special support or help with the walk, please phone Ian McKenzie on 020 8943 0632 in advance, or 07824 784335 email [walks@frp.org.uk](mailto:walks@frp.org.uk) only on the walk day itself. Also see our website: [www.frp.org.uk](http://www.frp.org.uk)

Please keep dogs under control.

Date	Starting at 10am from
7 January	Robin Hood Gate Car Park
4 February	Roehampton Gate Car Park
4 March	Kingston Gate Car Park
1 April	Sheen Gate Car Park Walk the Wall

**Plus Informal Bird Walks** every Friday at 9.30am from Pen Ponds coffee kiosk.

**DISCOVERERS**  
For families exploring Richmond Park



Planning for the 2017 programme is underway. As well as repeating favourites like the Autumn Bat Watch and Fungi Trail, we are looking at potentially exciting ways of expanding the range of Discoverers activities – for example in the area of practical conservation. For programme details see [www.discoverers.frp.org.uk](http://www.discoverers.frp.org.uk) Ideas are always welcome – or join the team!



*Photo by Brendon Blake*

## Friends' Courses

Courses begin at 10am and are typically a 30-minute talk at Pembroke Lodge followed by a two-hour walk. Courses are for members of the Friends only and do not need to be booked – just turn up. There is no charge and coffee and tea are provided. See also [www.frp.org.uk](http://www.frp.org.uk)

26 November	Veteran Trees led by Simon Richards
21 January	Introduction to Birdwatching led by Peter Burrows-Smith
18 March	Spring Birds & Bird Song led by Peter Burrows-Smith

The stunning images on the back cover are the main photos for September and October in the Friends' 2017 Calendar (see page 3) in which their attributions were unfortunately swapped, for which we apologise to the photographers.

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



Two main images from the Friends 2017 calendar:

Above: September photo by Ian Lilley; Below: October photo by Andrew Wilson



 /thefriendsofrichmondpark

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

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