



**FRIENDS of
RICHMOND PARK**

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

Newsletter spring 2018



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Latest News!

Richmond Park Film chosen as a finalist in the Charity Film Awards 2018. The winner will be decided solely by public vote.

Please vote!

Go to:

**www.charityfilmawards.com
or www.frp.org.uk and follow the instructions.**

Film's 'Tread Lightly' message seen by 250,000

Across all platforms, the film's 'Tread Lightly' message has been viewed by over 270,000 people and the Tread Lightly leaflet has been distributed widely. This includes over 100,000 views of the film (long and short versions) via social media and over 120,000 views of the film on London Live TV who also ran a news feature on the film and Tread Lightly over Christmas. The film was also presented at the Cambrian Centre in Richmond, was featured at the Barnes Film Festival and will be shown at other events and through local societies.

As well as releasing and selling the DVD, we've offered it free to all schools in the neighbouring three boroughs (Kingston, Richmond and Wandsworth) and fulfilled over 70 requests from secondary and primary schools. A number of schools have invited us to present the film, provide assemblies about the Park and explain the Tread Lightly conservation message. **If you are a school, club or other institution who would like to present the film, please contact Richard Gray at press@frp.org.uk.**

Friends of Richmond Park thanks its sponsors for their generous support

Russell-Cooke Solicitors is a Putney-based top 100 law firm, working for a mix of clients, which has sponsored the Friends of Richmond Park for over 4 years.

Thames Water is the UK's largest water and wastewater services company serving Greater London and the Home Counties. We welcome them as a new sponsor.

RUSSELL-COOKE | SOLICITORS



Front cover: *Spring in the Isabella* by Andrew Wilson. See Andrew's 'Wild about...' book series including 'Wild about Richmond and Kew' at www.unity-publishing

Friends fund four conservation projects

By Ron Crompton

The Friends are partnering with the Visitor Centre and The Royal Parks to provide £70,000 in funding for four conservation projects in the Park.



The largest, funded partly by a donation from Thames Water, is the next phase of the Beverley Brook restoration. This will be on the stretch opposite Roehampton Gate car park, where the stream from Pen Ponds enters the brook. The present stone and concrete will be removed, the banks re-naturalised, a new backwater habitat for fish created and a kingfisher nest bank installed. The horse track crossing and nearby pedestrian bridge over the stream will be replaced and a new gauge board measuring the height of the brook installed. The work will be done this summer.

We have also agreed to create an annual fund for small-scale improvement schemes and maintenance work to the recently restored stretch of Beverley Brook. The first such scheme – to put more large woody material in the water to create a more natural stream – was completed last autumn.

The third project is to put up a new deer fence in Pen Ponds Plantation, where Friends volunteers have been working to remove rhododendron. As this has been removed, a new perimeter hedge has been planted, with a mix of hawthorn, sloe, briar rose, rowan and willow, creating a habitat for birds and insects. The hedge needs protection on its interior side from deer, which get into the plantation from Pen Ponds. There will also be a new wetland habitat where the fence meets Pen Ponds, with reeds and other marginal vegetation similar to Adam's Pond.



Finally, we are funding new metal fencing on the west side of Upper Pen Ponds to protect the shoreline and breeding waterfowl. This was put up in the autumn and is already allowing the regrowth of vegetation that will provide a screen for the breeding birds.

Top photo: Stream from Pen Ponds meets Beverley Brook courtesy of South East Water Trust. Bottom photo: Fencing at Upper Pen Ponds

Surprise 10th anniversary celebration for Ron Crompton



Ron Crompton, Chairman of the Friends of Richmond Park, thought he was attending a routine meeting with Daniel Hearsum just before the usual Trustee Christmas lunch

at Pembroke Lodge. But as he entered the Russell Suite, the assembled trustees and Patron Baroness Susan Kramer launched into loud applause – and with delight that we had kept the secret!

There were short speeches and then Susan Kramer presented a commemorative gift – a stunning photograph of deer in Beverley Brook by Anne Ross, printed and framed by Ann Healey. The mount is signed by Sir David Attenborough and Susan Kramer. On the back are signatures of current and past trustees.

Ron, the Friends hope this gift has given you pleasure and that you know it marks our appreciation for your service and exemplary leadership.

Baroness Susan Kramer said:

“I should begin by expressing regrets from Sir David Attenborough who cannot be here today and is a great admirer of Ron and as a Patron of the FRP has seen his effective leadership. But as a fellow Patron I am delighted to present this award to Ron for his exceptional 10 years as Chair.

“Leading a community group like FRP is not easy. We are an energetic and opinionated community, which is why FRP has

been so effective in supporting and protecting the Park. But it requires diplomacy and a genuine respect for differences of opinion in order to lead it.

“Times are difficult. Government financial support for all the Royal Parks has been cut pretty much year on year. Larger numbers of people every year use Richmond Park. Noise, pollution and the impact of planned developments are relentless. Finding that balance between protection for Richmond Park and its enjoyment by people requires sensitivity and judgement. And that is one of Ron’s greatest strengths.



“Ron never puts himself into the limelight but works with people across the community and across the political spectrum to build trust and find a way forward. FRP is not afraid to campaign – the Tread Lightly campaign has now indeed been adopted by Park management. The Save the View campaign is a powerful voice to preserve the protected view of St Paul’s.

“And a good part of the effectiveness of these campaigns is the respect which both Ron and FRP have worked hard to earn.”

*This article is also a surprise for Ron!
Photos by Anne Ross*

Visitor Centre celebrates 10 years with awards and sales record

When it opened in 2007, the Visitor Information Centre handled questions from fewer than 20,000 visitors a year. It now provides information to over 55,000 people, sells a range of over 50 Park-related products and has become a fundamental part of Richmond Park life.

The “VC” (as it’s known affectionately) has marked its anniversary with special 10-year awards for volunteers who have given their time freely ever since the opening. Current volunteer manager, Mary Davies, and Friends Chair, Ron Crompton, presented awards to 13 volunteers. A total of 102 different volunteers have worked at the VC over this period.

In November 2017 the VC introduced a credit/charge card reader which helped sales reach a record of £59,581 up 18% on 2016. All profits from sales go to conservation projects in the Park and between 2014 and 2017, over £32,000 was contributed towards Ham Ponds’ restoration works, redesigning Poet’s Corner, works on Beverley Brook and the Friends of Richmond Park film.

Thank you to all who have helped at the VC and here’s to the next 10 years.



‘Adopt an Area’ update by Steve Sandham

The Adopt an Area litter picking scheme started last August, and is now well established with no fewer than 45 volunteers regularly collecting litter across the entire park. This ground-breaking scheme supplements the work of the Park’s full time litter contractors. We are delighted with the way the Park is now looking more like a nature reserve with little or no litter, and we celebrate the success of the volunteers responsible for this great initiative.

A typical experience..... “Brendan and I headed into a bedraggled Park this morning. A fairly reasonable haul of rubbish – plastic and tissues mainly, plus 1 poo-bag, a bottle and a tennis ball. We also got a thanks for ‘doing a great job’ from the occupant of a passing Royal Parks Land Rover!”

Find out more at www.frp.org.uk/news/1462-adopt-an-area

Photo by Richard Gray. Key people in starting and managing the Visitor Information Centre in its first decade. Left to right: Sheila Hamilton, Brian Baker, Rachel Hirschler and Mary Davies.

Frogs and toads in Richmond Park

by Nigel Jackman

Richmond Park is home to two amphibians that are not regularly seen, belying their names: the common frog and the common toad.

Frogs are clearly distinguishable from toads. Their bulging eyes are on top of their heads, their skin is smooth and sometimes shiny (to help them move through water) and their hind legs are long and strong with webbed feet to help them with jumping. By contrast, toads have dry, bumpy and warty skin, and a squatter appearance with a shorter body and legs.

Each in its own way is adapted for the environmental conditions in which it lives. Unlike frogs, toads prefer a dry environment except for breeding and do not need to live in or near water to survive.



Frogs and toads are omnivorous, each feeding on insects, worms, small fish and other aquatic creatures. Toads love snails and slugs. Both have an average lifespan of seven to 14 years, but some individuals can reach 40. Both species hibernate over the winter before emerging to breed from February/March onwards.

Frogs lay their eggs in water in clusters whereas toads lay theirs in chains.

Tadpoles hatch with tails and internal gills two to four weeks later and by 12 to 16 weeks will have metamorphosed into adults and left the pond, usually after rain. Many juveniles will be predated during this time. Mature frogs and toads are prey to herons, buzzards, foxes and other species.



Toads single-mindedly migrate to ancestral ponds as the days lengthen and temperatures rise, and this is when they are most likely to be seen, at dawn and dusk. They are at great risk where their migration routes cross roads. Church Road in Ham has sometimes been temporarily closed and monitored by volunteers as toads make their way from the Park and surrounding areas to breed in Ham Common Woods.

Whilst frogs and toads are an important part of the Park's ecology, there have been no comprehensive surveys to find

Photos by Nigel Jackman. Left: common toad; above: common frog

out their numbers, population trends and distribution. Nationally both species have declined significantly, and numbers in the Park have been adversely affected by disease, including the deadly chytrid virus and probably also by rana virus.

Improvements to the Park's ponds and streams has been beneficial to amphibians. However, the linkage between ponds and other watery features is also important as frogs and toads spend a lot of time living and feeding in terrestrial habitats, sheltering under stones and wood piles.

The Royal Parks are looking to make further improvements, working with partners such as the national wildlife charity Froglife.

Rhododendron clearance

By Hugh Bradshaw

Winter is a good time to see how efforts to eradicate *Rhododendron Ponticum* in the Park are progressing. It has now been completely removed from Sidmouth Wood, will soon be cleared from Spankers Hill and the trusty band of conservation volunteers have made commendable inroads at Pen Ponds Plantation.

Although some may mourn the loss of the dazzling display of purple flowers, *Rhododendron Ponticum* is an invasive species whose dense canopies shade out native flora. Insects avoid the plants so, where it grows in large patches, a sterile monoculture arises. If this were not bad enough, *Rhododendron Ponticum* can carry diseases that are a death knell to our mighty oak.

Once the rhododendron has been cleared, the ground is exposed to sunlight – perhaps for the first time in years – and very quickly bramble and silver birch move in. These pioneer species are well adapted to exploit new environments and start the process of natural regeneration.

The bramble is found on the periphery of the plantations and its ability to propagate by suckers, and its prodigious growth rate, enable it to swiftly colonise new areas. The tiny seeds of the silver birch can fall in vast numbers on the bare ground and quickly germinate to form a forest of saplings.

Removing the rhododendron stumps disturbs the ground and awakens long dormant seeds of foxgloves and other wild flowers.

As the birch saplings grow they, in turn, shade out the bramble, allowing other species of flora to colonise, like bluebells and campion. In amongst the birches, oak and sweet chestnut, saplings can take hold. Unlike the birch trees, which rarely live past 80 years, the oak and sweet chestnut are there for the duration. Eventually they take over from the birch and the regeneration of the woodland is complete.

Spring is Sprung! The Grass is Riz...

by Alison Glasier

I wonder where the birdies is? Well, I can tell you: they're in Richmond Park. As the clocks spring forward, the days lengthen and temperatures start to rise, the skies, meadows and ponds are filled with activity.

Look out for passing migrants – wheatear, bobbing up and down or whinchat, perching on a bush; soon the swifts will be soaring above, joined by swallows, house martins and

sand martins, perhaps searching for a nesting site in the bank on Pen Ponds. There, you may be lucky enough to see the great crested grebes performing their synchronised courtship ceremony and you will certainly notice the ungainly grey herons perched on their large, straggly nests on the island trees. Egyptian geese also breed early in trees, pushing their fluffy offspring off the branch when they're big enough (but they do fly down to care for them). Common terns might be nesting on the tern rafts in Upper Pen Pond.

And it's not just birds to be spotted. Butterflies seem to appear ever earlier and the brimstones and peacocks are already about. You might notice a white butterfly with delicate green markings (*green-veined white*) and later the little common blues are flitting around. Bumble bees are busy gathering nectar and if you are really lucky you might see the amazing stag beetle, much favoured by David Attenborough.

Not to be left out, spring is an important time for the animals in the Park. Most of the deer have lost their antlers by now, but you may see one or two hanging on (or indeed hanging off). Don't worry – they will re-grow, ready for the rutting season in October, at the alarming rate of up to an inch a day. The stubby little new antlers are covered with soft velvet for protection. By May or June, the female deer are ready to give birth and they hide their



young in the bracken. At this time of year they are very defensive so never approach a lone female deer. Better to retrace your steps. But tread lightly – grass snakes and common lizards will be ending their hibernation about now, and the rabbits have been doing what rabbits do best so look out for Easter bunnies.

Spring is all about new growth and the trees are starting to wake from their winter slumber. Willows take on a green misty mantle; oak leaves start to unfurl. We all know the magnificent azaleas and the swaying carpet of bluebells in the Isabella Plantation, but look out for the golden yellow flowers of *Narcissus bulbocodium* with conical cups and pointed petals on the Wet Lawn, or the pocket handkerchief tree (*Davidia involucreata*) with its voluminous snow-white dangling bracts. You can find this near Thomson's Pond and also in Prince Charles's Spinney, which has an equally breath-taking display of bluebells. Elsewhere in the Park look around the ant-hills and you might come across heath speedwell with its delicate blue flowers or the red-stalked sheep's sorrel.

Oh to be in Richmond Park, now that April's here!

Photos: Above left: heath speedwell by Nigel Reeve

Above right: green-veined white butterfly with egg by Ann Healey

Above middle: Egyptian gosling and Wheatear both by Paula Redmond

Left: stag in velvet; right: honey bee both by Paula Redmond



Old Lodge

by Max Lankester

When Charles I enclosed the Park between 1635 and 1637 a number of buildings already stood within it. These included two farmhouses: Hill Farm, close to where Holly Lodge now is, and Hartleton Farm, which stood on the slopes of Spankers Hill Wood, within a few yards of the modern Pen Ponds car park. Later known as “Old Lodge”, it was to become one of the most significant buildings within the Park.



For several decades it served as the official residence of one of the two Keepers of the Park, who carried out much of the day-to-day work of the Ranger. Its heyday came in the 18th century, when it became the weekend home of Sir Robert Walpole, who is generally regarded as the country’s first prime minister. Sir Robert’s son, Lord Walpole, was appointed Ranger in 1727, but it was Sir Robert who called the shots and who made use of Old Lodge.

The building had become very run-down, and Sir Robert spent a good deal of money on renovating and enlarging it. He also created a pond in its grounds.

Sir Robert seems to have used the Lodge for two reasons. First, he habitually hunted in the Park with King George II, and the Lodge provided a useful place to stay. But he also found that he could get through much more official work when he could escape the many interruptions he would suffer when in central London. A House of Commons fact sheet notes that the 5-day working week of the House dates from Sir Robert’s time, when he preferred to be in Richmond on Saturdays rather than in Westminster.

Sir Robert was also able to live openly at Old Lodge from the late 1720s with his mistress, Maria (“Molly”) Skerritt. Walpole is known to have incurred the displeasure of Queen Caroline on at least one occasion when his presence with Maria at the Lodge meant he was not able to respond quickly to her summons.



18th century lithograph of Old Lodge (foreground) and White Lodge (background)
Map and image from John Cloake’s ‘Palaces and Parks of Richmond and Kew, Volume 1’

Capturing Richmond Park’s History

by Rachel Hirschler

After eight years of dedicated work, the Friends’ History Project volunteers have completed cataloguing material relating to the history of Richmond Park held in the Hearsurn Collection and the group has been wound up. Thank you to all those who contributed to this task.

Back in 2009, the Friends entered into a partnership with Daniel Hearsurn to work on the Collection, with the goal of cataloguing and scanning every item to museum standard. Luckily a volunteer IT expert was on board from the start and a specialist collections management database was set up with detailed instructions on how to record all the relevant data with images attached. A professional curator was also on hand to reassure us that we were on the right track!

Eight years on, over 4000 records have been created, including 785 postcards, 259 prints, 691 books, and 842 newspaper cuttings. It was not all plain sailing due to the diversity of the Collection’s contents but the challenges were met and problems ironed out along the way. A recent audit now ensures that all the items match their record and are stored correctly. Over the life of the project, volunteers also helped to enhance the Collection by researching sources for new acquisitions, such as the National Archives.



Throughout the project, volunteers have shared stories inspired by their discoveries. From politics to paintings, royalty to regency architecture, the First World War to the first female parachutist; illustrated articles have appeared in the Friends’ newsletters, on the Friends’ Facebook page and on the Hearsurn Collection website.

Two longer, illustrated documents have also been uploaded to the website – ‘What’s In a Name?’, which explains the origins of place names in the Park and a timeline of key events in the Park’s history.

The volunteers produced display boards of their work for the Friends’ 50th Anniversary celebrations in 2011 and for The Queen’s Jubilee Visit in 2012. Their work also helped provide material for the history board on the side of the Visitor Centre building and for exhibitions in Pembroke Lodge on the First World War, the Deer in the City project and, currently, a selection of diverse images from the Collection.

Friends’ Chairman, Ron Crompton said: “The Friends will continue to support the Collection and its plans to build a Heritage Centre to house and display the material in it, for which fundraising is under way.”

Above image: ‘Feeding the deer’ from *The Graphic Magazine* 1875. The Friends created a Christmas card with this image in 2012.

Deer casualties

In 2017, 28 deer are known to have died unexpectedly, compared with 15 in 2016. In 19 cases the cause is known: 5 deer were killed by cars, 5 by dogs, 7 from injuries sustained in the rut, and 2 from other causes. In another 9 cases, however, it was difficult or impossible to tell the cause (often the decaying body is found in undergrowth with any tell-tale marks having disappeared). It's not clear why the number in 2017 was so high although unusually poor weather in the birthing season could have caused some deaths from exposure. Of most concern are deaths associated with dogs and traffic, as these should not happen.

New scrapes

Scrapes are shallow depressions in the ground, which may seasonally hold water. They provide an important habitat for a wide variety of plant life and invertebrates, including solitary bees and wasps (see the centre pages of our autumn newsletter). An existing scrape was re-dug and seven new ones were created across the Park in January. If you walk in the Park, see if you can spot where they are!

Damselflies and dragonflies



Ham Gate Pond was restored in 2013, partly funded by the Friends, and the restoration is now showing results in terms of wildlife presence. A survey last summer of Odonata (damselflies and dragonflies) revealed that the pond now supports 14 different species. Odonata thrive where there is fresh water, an abundance and variety of aquatic plants (many species lay their eggs into floating plants), shelter (especially from the wind) and minimal disturbance, all of which Ham Gate Pond now provides.

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Two Storm Wood – sponsored or commemorative trees

Two Storm Wood near Sheen Gate was planted in the early 1990s following the devastation caused by the great storms in 1987 and 1990. Work is now planned over the next few years to improve the growing conditions and enhance the habitat, which will include removal or thinning of some existing trees. If you have a sponsored or commemorative tree in the wood, and know where it is located, please contact the Park office as soon as possible via email: richmond@royalparks.gsi.gov.uk or call 0300 061 2200.

Photo: Widow emperor damselfly by Paula Redmond

Lyme disease – new guidelines for doctors

By Dr Vivienne Press

In April, there will be new guidelines* for NHS doctors on how to diagnose and treat Lyme disease. It has been preceded in the past year by much media attention, especially about celebrity cases such as former England rugby captain Matt Dawson.



Lyme Disease is a relative new-comer to the UK with the first recorded case in the 1970s. However, over the past 10 years, the number of people diagnosed with the disease has

increased dramatically. It is caused by a bite from an infected tick. Ticks live on mammals, including deer, and some carry the bacteria that causes Lyme disease. The south of England is a particularly high-risk area.

Climate change appears to be behind the rise, with warmer weather leading to more ticks, and allowing them to remain active later into the year.

Because it's a new disease in the UK, many doctors will not have seen an infected patient. It is also a difficult diagnosis to make as the 'typical' bulls-eye rash is only seen in a minority of cases; symptoms can mimic many other conditions and tests may not be conclusive.

**by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence
Photo: California Dept of Public Health*

Within the first few weeks of a bite, some people may have flu-like symptoms with or without a rash. Then months or years later more serious symptoms can develop such as heart problems (which Matt Dawson experienced), arthritis and memory loss.

Prevention is better than cure

In Richmond Park ticks are found on deer and in the grass and wooded areas. It is easy to brush against them and pick one up as you walk. Once on you, they usually travel along your limbs to your armpits, groin, backs of knees or trunk before biting.

To avoid picking up a tick, keep to footpaths, wear long trousers and long sleeves and shoes, tuck trousers into socks, and use an insect repellent on skin and clothing that touches grass.

When you get home give yourself, your children and your dogs an all-over tick check, including hairline and neck. Ticks are very small and the bites don't hurt. If you find one remove it carefully with a special tick remover (sold in the Visitor Centre) or tweezers. Lyme disease is not usually transmitted for at least 24 hours after the ticks get onto you and it is thought that only a minority carry the bacteria that cause it.

If you develop a round, spreading rash or flu-like symptoms up to around 30 days after your visit, see your GP.

The Royal Parks has published a helpful leaflet, available on the Friends' website or from the Visitor Centre.

John Bartram talks

John Bartram, recently retired former Richmond Park Gamekeeper and, later, Chief Wildlife Officer, entertained a packed Belvedere Suite at Pembroke Lodge in January with memories and stories. John was being interviewed about his recently published book of memoirs, *Park Life*, celebrating his 30+ years working in the Park which has sold over 2,500 copies.

John is contributing all his share of royalties from the book to conservation projects in the Park and will be speaking again at the Friends' AGM on Saturday 14 April. The book is on sale in the Visitor Centre and bookshops.

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Park management: contact Park Manager Simon Richards, 0300 061 2200 or email Richmond@royalparks.org.uk

Police non-emergency
telephone number: 101

Membership and Subscriptions

Membership renewals for those paying by cash were due on 1 January 2018.

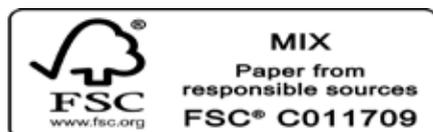
If you wish to become a Friend, membership forms can be downloaded from our website: www.frp.org.uk/friends/get-involved, or picked up from the Visitor Centre at Pembroke Lodge or by emailing me at membership@frp.org.uk. Individual membership is £10 and household membership is £15.

Membership fees increased in 2015. Please update your standing order if you have not already done this, so you continue to receive the newsletter and bulletin, and continue to support the work of the Friends of Richmond Park.

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 your first line of address and post code. You can easily stop it at any time.

If you change your email or home address then please let us know by emailing membership@frp.org.uk and include your previous address.

With thanks
Chris Mason
Membership Secretary



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 more information or special support or help with the walk, please phone Ian McKenzie on 020 8943 0632 or email walks@frp.org.uk in advance, or 07824 784335 only on the walk day itself. Also see our website: www.frp.org.uk

Please keep dogs under control.

Date Starting at 10am from

7 April	Sheen Gate Car Park (+walk the wall)
5 May	Broomfield Hill Car Park
2 June	Pen Ponds Car Park
7 July	Robin Hood Gate Car Park

Plus Informal Bird Walks

Every Friday at 9.30am from Pen Ponds coffee kiosk.

Friends' AGM

The AGM will be on 14th April at 10.30am at Kings House School, 68 Kings Road, Richmond TW10 6ES. The guest speaker will be John Bartram, the former gamekeeper and wildlife officer for Richmond Park.



Discoverers is the Friends' activities programme for families. Join our mailing list for early notification of events. For full details visit:

www.discoverers.frp.org.uk/ or [f /thefriendsofrichmondpark](https://www.facebook.com/thefriendsofrichmondpark)



Look what I've found by Brendan Blake

Friends' Courses

Courses begin at 10.15am and are typically a 1-hour talk at Pembroke Lodge followed by a 1.5 to 2-hour walk in the Park. 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. The following courses are planned, but at the time of printing we do not have dates. Please check on our website for more details of these and dates of other courses throughout the year: www.frp.org.uk

21 April	Buildings of Richmond Park: Max Lankester
12 May	Introduction to Flora of the Park: Mary Clare Sheanhan
30 June	Butterflies: Nigel Jackman



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Great tit by Sue Lindenberg

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

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