



Extracts from *The Royal Parks Corporate Plan 1997-2000*

Regent's Park has evolved from the 1811 plans of John Nash, Crown Architect and friend of the Prince Regent, who to raise revenue for the crown, designed a private residential estate set in parkland. The site is gently undulating rising to the steep conical summit of Primrose Hill from which there are fine views of Westminster and the City. Many changes have taken place within the framework of Nash's original scheme. The area now open to the public exceeds 400 acres, predominantly open parkland but supporting a wide range of facilities and amenities including fine gardens, a lake with islands, heronry and waterfowl collection, sports and catering facilities, children's playgrounds and an Open Air Theatre.

Review of 1996/97

Some progress was made in reducing the backlog of building and hard landscape repair and maintenance. Works included:

- rebuilding the tennis pavilion changing rooms and toilets;
- refurbishing Primrose Hill toilets with provision of facilities for the disabled;
- reconstruction and resurfacing of the Inner Circle road and pavements and associated drainage works.

The essential road works, which will be completed in 1997/98, proved to be more extensive and costly than envisaged and led to the deferral of maintenance work in other areas.

A new safety surface was laid beneath the equipment at the Primrose Hill playground to meet current safety standards. A shelter was constructed within the Avenue Gardens with the assistance of public donations

£'000	'96/97	'97/98	'98/99	'99/00	2000/01
Major maintenance works and landscape repair & restoration	1,121	1,084	30	400	0
Works Maintenance (excl. major projects)	884	542	634	634	634
Grounds Maintenance	1,654	1,660	1,594	1,594	1,594
Other operating costs	608	982	92	921	921
Running costs (excl. salaries)	129	21	42	42	42
TOTAL	4,396	4,289	3,341	3,59	3,191

and houses a plaque in recognition of those who gave towards the restoration of the gardens.

A stone plaque and compass points were installed in the centre of the gardens to commemorate the completion of the restoration works.

Draft proposals for traffic calming on the park roads were produced. In the interest of pedestrian safety, traffic control lights and pedestrians crossings were installed at the Hanover gate, Outer Circle junction and a zebra crossing was provided where the Broad Walk crosses Chester Road.

The application for the restoration of the Ready-money drinking fountain, plus reforming and rejuvenating the surrounding landscape and providing new public toilets, was resubmitted to the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Certain elements of the proposals for restoring and improving Queen Mary's Gardens were reconsidered and redesigned following consultation with English Heritage and Westminster City Council Planning Department. General consultation commenced prior to submission of a lottery application.

The relandscaping of Hanover Island was completed, and, although it will be several years before the vegetation matures, public response to the changes

has been enthusiastic. Additional land drainage was installed at Cumberland Green to allow sporting and other activities to take place all year round.

Plans were made for improvements to the north eastern area lake, including the reconstruction of revetments to the Islands and the establishment of a lower layer of vegetation. This work started with the desilting of the area around the eastern island and will be staged over a number of years. An additional hectare of wild flower meadow was established including the bank to the south of London Zoo. The tree planting strategy was further developed with proposals for the next five years. The programme of replacing worn out rose and shrub beds continued, and several new varieties of roses were donated by rose growers.

The summer entertainments programme proved successful with a general high standard of performance. The birds, bats and bees walks and talks were oversubscribed, with much interest in the bee keeping demonstrations. "Regent's Park - Your Park", an exhibition on the origins, present - and future proposals was well attended.

The tennis courts and the golf and tennis school introduced changes in pricing systems to encourage greater use by children and at times of day which are traditionally quiet.

Half term and holiday children's football coaching in conjunction with Queen's Park Rangers proved to be popular with both boys and girls.

Income targets were met through better promotion of facilities.

Good liaison continued with the Friends and other users groups with offers of financial support towards particular projects. Information on all proposed change or development was made freely available and usually displayed in the park for public comment.

The park toilets again won one of the Loo of the Year awards.

(See Chairman's comments on page 3)

Diary dates

see details on other pages

Stephen Crisp
'Horticultural Diplomacy'
 Wednesday, 12 November 1997

Concert at
The Royal Academy of Music
 Wednesday 3 December 1997

Park Watch
 Wednesday 14 January 1998

Annual General Meeting
 Tuesday, 31 March 1998.

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Funeral of Princess Diana

We have many times complained at the lack of consultation in matters relating to the Park, and so we were gratified that we were telephoned by the department dealing with the arrangement for the funeral of Princess Diana, to inform us of the details of the arrangements in so far as this affected Regent's Park, and to ask whether we had any further suggestions. Understandably there was not enough time to communicate with all our members on this.

The giant screen which was erected on Cumberland Green was mainly watched by local residents, who wanted to be part of the funeral rites.

Although the location was mentioned in the press, presumably fewer attended this venue than were expected, as there must have been one temporary WC for every 15 people present, and as it happened, a great excess of marshals and security personnel.

We applaud the organisation, and the effort by all concerned.

The service was watched silently and compassionately, except for the applause which greeted the un-hypocritical address by Earl Spencer, and many people left Cumberland Green to pay their respects to the cortege as it passed by elsewhere.

We regret that due to the funeral, the Barbecue was cancelled. We hope to hold one next year.

Open Air Theatre's Lottery Application

Between 90-100,000 people attend the Open Air Theatre every season, most of them Londoners, especially locals. The New Shakespeare Company has applied to the Arts Council Lottery Fund for about £2.2 million to rebuild and refurbish many of its facilities. Several Friends have enjoyed tours of the Theatre's backstage

area and seen for themselves the decaying and rudimentary conditions in which the cast and staff operate. As Sheila Benjamin, the manager, explained to us there is inadequate cover for the bar and eating areas, particularly so this past summer.

The Theatre has been here since 1932, the New Shakespeare Company in residence for 25 years. The new concrete auditorium, which was built in the 1970's, will remain but in the proposals shown to us by the scheme's architect, Hawarth Tomkins, a two-level wooden extension will replace the rather dark bar area behind the auditorium, giving more space for intervals and wet weather, while adding a lighter, more naturalistic design to the whole. The plans include conservation of the woodland site, by planting new trees where old ones are nearing their end or where, as in the case of the horse-chestnuts they were planted too closely. There will be a moss garden and plants that enjoy wooded shade. It is proposed that a new and larger ticket office should be erected.

If the Arts Council decision is favourable, the Company must raise 25% of the total sum, so that work can begin as soon as the next season ends in the first week of September 1998. Then it can re-open as usual at the end of May 1999.

New Royal Parks' Regulations

From 1 October 1997 new regulations have been applied in the Royal Parks, which bring rollerblading under the same restrictions as cycling. The emphasis of the new regulations is changed, making it illegal to cycle or rollerblade in the Parks, except where it is specifically allowed, rather than allowing it except where it is specifically banned. There are other important changes, such as prohibiting damage to forms of wildlife, which was omitted from previous regulations. Taxis will be able now to ply for hire in the parks.

The Old Metal Works

English Heritage has withdrawn from this site on the Inner Circle adjacent to the public tennis courts and the Royal Parks are now deciding what to do with the buildings. It was always an anomaly that there should be an industrial site in the middle of Regent's Park, where over the last years English Heritage has been restoring ironwork from its various estates. It would be excellent if this area could be restored to park users, rather than remain an unsightly group of old buildings.

Royal Academy of Music Concert

Wednesday 3 December 1997 at 7.30pm
Duke's Hall, Marylebone Road

A programme of Grieg, Elgar and Janacek, plus the Mozart Flute Concerto in D Major, is offered by the Academy String Orchestra. This will be followed by a buffet supper in the restaurant, and arrangements will be made for the Friends of Regent's Park and Primrose Hill to sit together. Tickets for the concert and the buffet are priced at £14 per head and are available from Margaret Elliott 0171-935 8936.

Visit to Kensington Palace State Apartments

On the 24th September a group of Friends was taken on a guided tour of the Kensington Palace State Apartments. William III bought a Jacobean mansion in 1689 for £14,000; he made improvements, Queen Anne had rooms added, and George I turned it into a palace. The tour followed the history of the building, including rooms designed for Queen Mary II, formal rooms and a picture gallery built for William III but now refurbished in the style chosen by George I and George

II, and the bedroom which Princess Victoria shared with her mother until she became Queen. The tour lasted over an hour, and most members of the group stayed for a sandwich lunch in the Orangery, an elegant building of the time of Queen Anne.

Membership

Thank you to all Friends who have helped increase our membership by putting our leaflets through their neighbours' letter boxes. Current membership is 724. We are particularly anxious to get our publicity into those blocks of apartments with no external letter boxes. We have no members for example in all the Bickenhall Mansions. If you have a friend who lives in such an apartment block, and might be willing to put a few of our leaflets through their neighbours' letter boxes, please contact Margaret Elliott on 0171 935 8936.

Letter

29th July 1997
to Mr David Caselton
Park Manager
Dear Mr Caselton,

I was dismayed when walking by what used to be the wild English border just within the inner circle of Queen Mary's Garden, to find that the bed has been entirely given over to ugly uniform rows of staked chrysanthemums*. It is inconceivable that the marvellous tradition of imaginative and colourful planting schemes, so cleverly contrasting heights and textures in the style of an English country garden, should have been displaced and the bed so crassly planted as to resemble a battle-field grave-yard.

If the planting was a practical joke it has been played at the expense of the loveliest flower bed in all the London Parks. Please have it restored to its former glory in time for next year's summer.

Yours sincerely, Mark Evans
c.c. Richard de Ste Croix -
Chairman, The Friends of Regent's
Park & Primrose Hill

*actually it is even worse, they are dahlias! (Editor)

Parkwatch

7 October 1997

Park police were severely stretched during the week following the death of the Princess of Wales. All leave was cancelled, and many Regent's Park Police were deployed around the palaces, some officers working up to 16 hour shifts. As four of the nineteen constables attached to Regent's Park are on long-term sick leave, and two others work only part time, services in the Park were severely limited.

However Pc Szymaniak was able to report that 9 arrests were

made in connection with the 51 reported crimes in the Park, quantities of drugs were seized, and six truants returned to their homes during the quarter July 1st to September 30th. 275 people were reported for various road traffic offences and another 56 formally warned. In addition 994 park users were reported for offences under the Royal Parks Regulations and an additional 290 were formally warned. However the police report that some fines at Marylebone Magistrates Court have been derisory; £5 for a cycling offence is hardly a deterrent. The young female found dead at the rear of the Rose Garden Restaurant has been identified, but identity of

the young male found dead in the Avenue Gardens in August has still to be established. There are no suspicious circumstances in either case.

Ps. Alder advised that from 3rd November police will clamp vehicles parked near Regent's College that have three or more outstanding fines against them. This is to deter repeated offenders, particularly those whose cars are registered abroad, meaning police cannot trace the owners. He also said that the police will be demonstrating their laser speed detection device outside the Zoo on Saturday, 8th November at 9.00am. All are welcome.

It was noted by those present,

that although adjoining police forces and the CEPC were represented at Parkwatch, yet again there was no representative from the Royal Parks Agency. Surely policing of the Park is of importance to them, and they would wish to have their input on matters that arise? A question was asked about the Park's claim that benches were being stolen. The police say that no reports of stolen benches have been received by them.

A representative of the Royal Parks Agency might have been able to explain the discrepancy.

The next meeting of Parkwatch will be on 14th January 1998 at 6.00pm at the back of the police station.

Primrose Hill: View from the top - 1902

Of all the views of London, perhaps none is so fine, and certainly none is so comprehensive, as that which may be obtained, under favourable conditions, from Primrose Hill that "little molehill," as it has been called, "in the great wen's northern flank." It is a splendid and inspiring panorama. Few people know of it; yet it is a sight not to be forgotten. Go thither on a clear spring or summer evening, three-quarters of an hour before sunset, and you will be richly repaid. What a view! Grime and dinginess are as they were not; the smoky atmosphere is transformed, as if by magic, to a golden, transparent haze - mellowing, brightening, idealising. "Who," as a recent writer says, "would have imagined that this grimy, smoky wilderness

of houses, with its factories and its slums, ... could ever look like the fair and beautiful city of some ethereal vision, embosomed in trees and full of glorious stately monuments? It is even so. Regent's Park lies below, a frame of restful greenery. To the left rises Camden Town - prosaic neighbourhood! - up a gentle slope. In the evening sunlight it is transfigured into a mass of brightness and colour, rising in clear-cut terraces, like some fair city on an Italian hill-top. St. Pancras Station is a thing of beauty, with a Gothic spire, and lines like those of a Venetian palazzo on the Grand Canal. Hard by rises the dome of the Reading-Room of the British Museum, embowered in trees - a stately witness to the learning of a continent. St. Paul's soars up grandly above its sister spires, in misty purple - dominating feature of the city - as St. Peter's in Rome. Away towards the mouth of the river rises the high line of Blackheath, and the hills of the Thames valley curve round in a noble sweep above the light haze which marks the unseen river, past the crest of Sydenham Hill with the Crystal Palace shining out white and clear, past

Big Ben and the Abbey, and the Mother of Parliaments, to where the ridges above Guildford and Dorking fade away into 'the fringes of the southward-facing brow' of Sussex and Hampshire, towards the English Channel. Innumerable slender church spires point upwards to the wide over-arching sky. Northward, again, are the wooded heights of Highgate and Hampstead, and the long battlemented line of the fortress at Holloway. What a view! On Primrose Hill on a summer's evening the Londoner feels, indeed, that he is a citizen of no mean city. Wordsworth, truly, thought that 'Earth had not anything to show more fair' than the view from Westminster Bridge in the early morning. But it needs a modern poet - a poet of the whole English-speaking race - to do justice to this view of the great city on the Thames, Iving bathed in the magic glow of a summer sunset beneath Primrose Hill."

From "Highways and Byways in London" by Mrs E T Cook published by Macmillan & Co, 1902

Reading the fifth Corporate Plan (*see front page*), leaves me with the impression that its Government paymaster is obliging it to operate on less and less money while setting higher and higher performance standards.

The Agency started its life in 1993, inheriting a legacy of underfunding. The cuts have gone on year by year. Last year the agency cuts its staff from 94 to 74. The back log of maintenance is currently £8m. In effect the trouble is being stored for the future.

I believe it is enormously to the credit of the Agency's staff and its contractors that horticultural standards remains so high despite the financial strait jacket. Regent's Park & Primrose Hill are too important to be allowed to be permanently underfunded.

*Richard de Ste Croix
Chairman, Friends of Regent's Park
& Primrose Hill*



Primrose Hill: View from the bottom 1995

from "Primrose Hill to Euston Road" published by Camden History Society, 1995

Friends of Regent's Park & Primrose Hill Newsletter October 1997 page 3

How fortunate we were! The day chosen for the Friends' picnic turned out to be one of perfect picnicking weather. It was very hot, but we assembled our rugs and deck chairs under the trees in dappled shade, and enjoyed the warmth and sunshine, and the company of other Friends. Some picnickers enjoyed elegant affairs with hampers and gourmet food, others were content with sandwiches and a drink, but all agreed it was a delightful way of spending a hot Sunday, and we hope to make this an annual event.

A Midsummer Picnic



Stephen Crisp Horticultural Diplomacy'

Wednesday, 12th November 1997 at 7.30pm Regent's Park Tenants Association Hall Redhill Street (off Albany Street)

Stephen Crisp, head gardener and chief landscape designer of Winfield House, and himself a member of the Friends of Regent's Park and Primrose Hill, has kindly agreed to give a slide illustrated lecture to the Friends on 12 November. He has headed the team responsible for the 121 acre garden at Winfield House for the past ten years, and is also responsible for the floral decorations inside the house. He is also an expert on the history of the house and its contents. Members who were unable to be part of his tour of Winfield House and gardens earlier this year now have the opportunity to find out what luckier Friends were so enthusiastic about!

Tickets priced at £2.00 each are available from either Margaret Elliott 0171 935 8936 or Ann Müller 0171 935 3498. We plan to use some of the proceeds to plant a tree in Regent's Park recognising Stephen Crisp and his work. The C2 bus stops at Redhill Street, and Great Portland Street, Regent's Park and Camden Stations are all within walking distance.

NOTE: Many people have requested that we repeat the tour of Winfield House. The house is currently closed for refurbishment, and it is not known when, or even if, tours will be available again.

A Summer Evening Stroll

in Regent's Park
Monday, 11th August 1997.
7.30 - 8.15pm

Ienter the Park via York Bridge. A duck keeps an eye on her large, late, brood, some sleeping, some diving, in the water, and a moorhen swims around with her brood. It is still very hot, and many people are in the area. Two boys, about eleven years old, are learning to smoke by the eastern lakeside. One tears low hanging branches off a tree and strips off the leaves. I wonder what they want the sticks for? The other is paddling, and furtively puts something into the water, watching me closely.

Many limousines wait at York Gate for people enjoying Queen Mary's Gardens. One group of black robed ladies strolling along a path are flanked obviously by two watchful bodyguards. I wonder what they are afraid might happen? Should I be nervous too? So many of those enjoying today's sunshine are tourists.

Presumably they cannot understand the notices prohibiting of ball games inside the Inner Circle, as several balls are being kicked or thrown around. One family group sit around chatting, while their nannies watch the children set up impromptu goal posts by the garden surrounding the "Boy with Frog" statue. The goalkeeper misses a shot and one of the boys climbs over the chain protecting the garden to retrieve the ball. He joins small groups of visitors inside the garden taking photographs. I wonder what chains across entrances mean in their countries? Two girls, well into their teens, are trying to roller blade on the grass. They must be very hot exercising with their heads fully covered in this heat. Nearby a child falls off his bike onto the hard, dry grass, and cries for his nanny to pick him up.

The Triton Fountain looks delightfully cool. How the fuschias wilting in the heat behind it would enjoy the splashes made by two youths in the water, showing off to their girlfriends I wander on, admiring the last of the sweet peas, and wondering if, with the heat and the lack of rain, the dahlias will ever be as big as their supports. Fortunately I keep an eye out for whatever is happening around me, as a cyclist continues his ride from Chester Road, and I am forced to move smartly to get out of his way - not so easy now I am in my eighties. At least there are many seats in this area of the Park, so I can recover from my surprise. I had thought cycling was

prohibited, even for smartly dressed businessmen.

I have to keep a watchful eye out in the Rose Garden too - still fragrant, but past its prime now. A group of teenage boys rollerblade past as I admire some late blooms, and I hear a small child ask his father why they can skate there if he can't. I wonder what his father replied? Along the lake small children try to feed the ducks, but the ducks are not interested, and even the pigeons are indifferent to all but the tastiest morsels. A squirrel though is enthusiastic about my peanut offerings until two small children climb over the fence to catch him.

Crossing the road leaving Queen Mary's Gardens, I incur the wrath of a speeding motorist not wanting to pause as he turns from York Bridge onto the Inner Circle. His radio drowns whatever he shouted at me. Back on York Bridge the two boys are still playing, although one has somehow climbed onto the opposite ban and is picking up stones. I watch them, and one points out a 'lobster' in the water to me which he pokes with a stick. He says he has a much bigger one on the other side, but that it is dead. Just one duckling, sleeping in the middle of the lake, is on the water now. As I continue on, I look back and see through a gap in the hedge that one of the boys has already hurled a stone at it.

Nobody seems to enforce Park regulations these days....

A lover of Regent's Park