



Commercial activities in the Park

The Investors Chronicle in December published an account headed 'London's parks fall into private hands', which described how the Ofex company Cardington has secured the rights to develop the commercial potential of the royal parks.

It explains how the parks comprise eight areas of glorious green and rolling land totalling some 5000 acres, which are thought to attract between 53m and 55m people every year. "Trying to balance the preservation of open spaces with the efficient capitalisation of their commercial offerings has never been easy. Expertise and understanding are required for both and a degree of empathy for what can be wildly conflicting agenda is equally important". The Royal Parks' Agency has hitherto achieved such a

balance, but it has now appointed the royal Parks Enterprises Limited (RPEL) as its commercial and marketing partner. The report points out that RPEL is the fully owned subsidiary of Cardington plc, a company set up in October 1997. Cardington now has a five year contract for developing the commercial potential and raising the profile of the Royal Parks.

The parks have hosted several lucrative events over the years including the Proms in the Park and concerts by Pavarotti and the Rolling Stones. So far Regent's Park has been recognised as an unsuitable venue for large scale events and the noise generated even by the Strollerthon has caused park users and local residents to complain. Let us hope that Cardington will ensure that Regent's Park and Primrose Hill retain their tranquillity in the future.

AGM

6.30 for 7 pm Wednesday
24 March 1999 at the Zoo Meeting
Rooms on the Outer Circle. (near
the north end of the Broadwalk
and St Mark's Bridge)

Please send any matter for
the main agenda to the
Hon. Secretary,
Valerie St. Johnston,
30 Fitzroy Road,
London NW1 8TY.
There will of course be
a floor discussion.

Membership

*Malcolm Kafetz Honorary
Treasurer writes:*

The membership is thriving, we have 840 members and send our newsletter to 578 addresses. I should like to thank the 233 members who have signed standing orders, as well as the 44 life members. If all the members signed Standing Orders, on an annual basis the Friends would save £54 on postage as well as time spent in printing and sending 270 letters to the remaining members who pay by cheque. Please help us by filling in and signing the form that comes with you next renewal

We have recruited 90 new members in the last year. We have lost 10 members due to changes of address and mortality. Thank you for your support in 1998, I look forward to seeing you at the AGM.

The King's Troop Royal Horse Artillery We would warn Friends that the King's Troop sometimes change arrangements at the last minute (see diary dates)

Unexploded, anti-aircraft shell, of World War I at the Veneto Villa

On Tuesday 17 November 1998, at 9.45 am a workman digging in the rear garden of the Veneto Villa, on the Outer Circle, Regent's Park, uncovered a very large, unexploded, anti-aircraft shell, of World War I vintage. Unfortunately, in uncovering it, they split the outer casing and the contents began to seep out.

The Veneto Villa, on the north west side of the Park, is the official home of the Ambassador of the United Arab Emirates, who was in residence at the time, and across the road from the Villa is Winfield House, the official home of the US Ambassador, but this building was not occupied as it was being refurbished.

Police were called at 9.48 a.m. and officers arrived on the scene within four minutes. They immediately began to clear

people from the area and to close surrounding roads. This led to serious, but unavoidable local disruption. Around 60 police officers, both from the Royal Parks and the Metropolitan Police were required to deal with this incident, together with representatives from the fire and ambulance services.

An Explosives Officer attended to make the shell safe and did this by way of a controlled explosion. His professionalism prevented any damage occurring to the Veneto Villa, or to any of the surrounding buildings. In fact, the only casualty was the mechanical digger that was in the hole next to the shell. It could not be removed and ended up looking somewhat the worse for wear.

By 1.10 pm it was considered safe to take out the police cordons and the area was able to get back to normal.

The Friends need a new Secretary, someone who can handle communications with members, the Park management and outside authorities. Someone who believes in the aims of the Friends, Telephone Valerie St. Johnston 0171 722 5932.

Diary dates

see details on this page & pages 3 & 4

Visit to studio at Madame Tussaud's 10.30am Thursday 4 March 1999

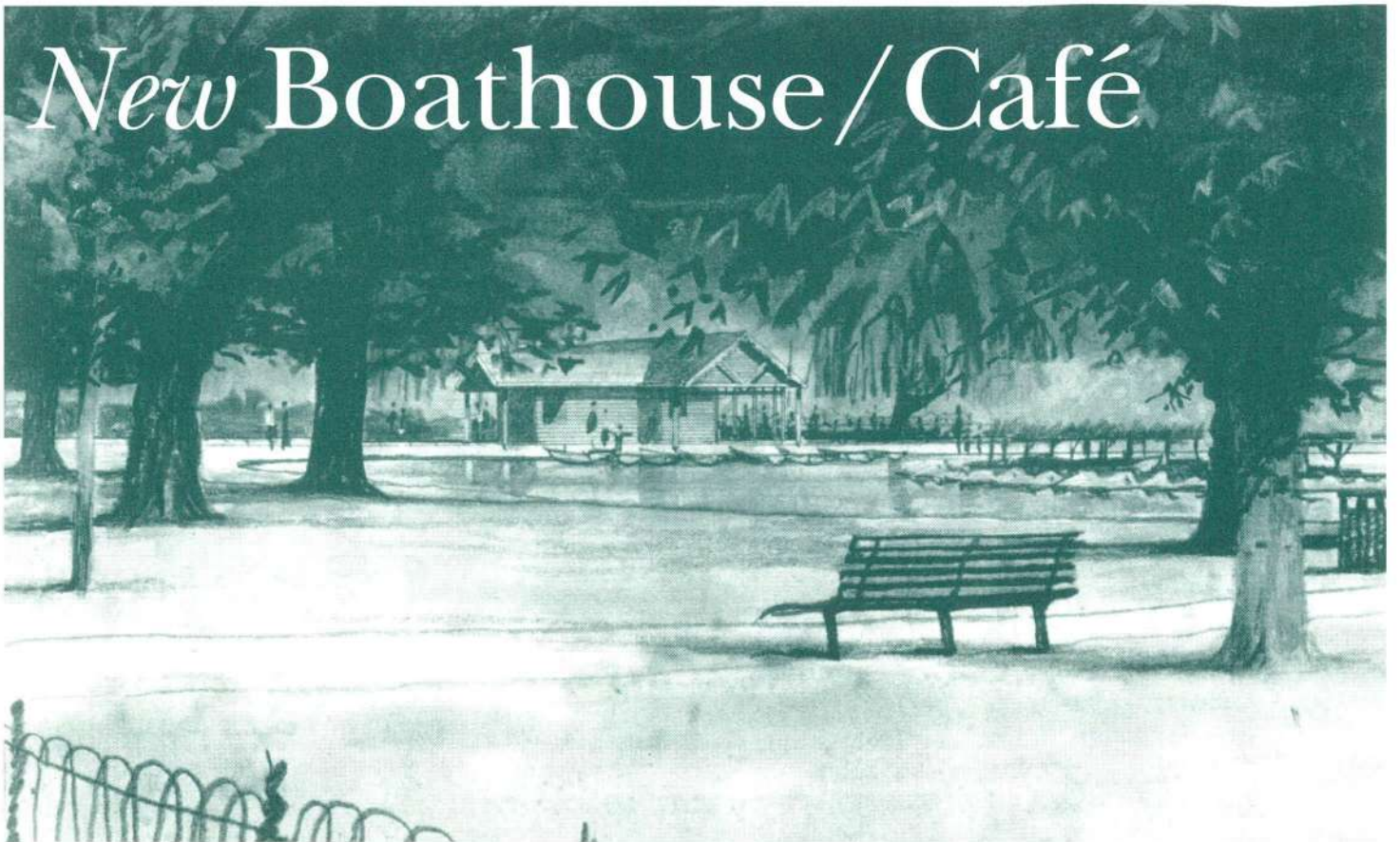
Annual General Meeting 6.30 for 7 pm Wednesday 24 March 1999

The King's Troop Royal Horse Artillery Cumberland Green 10.30am Friday 9 April 1999 (*see footnote col one)

Parkwatch 6 pm Tuesday 13 April 1999

Talk: 'Researching for the Restoration of the Avenue Gardens'. 6.30pm Wednesday 26 April Joint meeting with St. Marylebone Society (please telephone Ann Müller for information 0171 935 3498)

Speaker: Richard Flenley from Land Use Consultants
Topic: 'Researching the Restoration of the Avenue Gardens, Regent's Park.'
Wednesday 26 May 1999
Joint meeting with the St. Marylebone Society at University of Westminster



New Boathouse / Café

Colvin and Moggridge were asked by the Royal Parks Agency to co-ordinate further improvement works to the Hanover Gate area. These works include the proposal for a new boathouse/café for which Park Café Property Ltd is the successful financial tenderer. The architects for Park Café are LMP Architects and Stuart Ward is acting as Planning Advisor.

Regent's Park was the subject of a government-sponsored review by the Royal Parks Review Group chaired by Dame Jennifer Jenkins. They reported on Regent's Park and Primrose Hill in 1993 and made the following comments on

the Hanover Gate area.

"...at the moment, the whole area is messy and unsure of its role. It needs firm imaginative- guide-lines to draw the threads together to maintain and enhance the natural qualities of the park and provide better design and control of the cosmopolitan honey pot."

They commented that *"... the Hanover Gate area, including bird-breeding facilities on the island and neighbouring; land to the east, needs professional reappraisal to provide a framework for phased improvements to cope with conflicting pressures."*

The site today

The Hanover Gate area is at the north-western arm of the Boating

Lake, opposite Hanover Terrace. Close to this busy park entrance is a pool for children's boating, a children's playground and kiosks for snacks, tickets and public conveniences.

Hanover Island now forms an attractive "stepping stone" across the lake, giving access to the north of Regent's Park and for boating on the lake. The earlier Phase 2 works rearranged the bridge and path layout of the Island to increase public enjoyment of the setting and to enable the Waterfowl Centre to function as a single unit. Some unattractive remnants of buildings were removed as well as unsympathetic detailing and planting. The scheme co-ordinated the new island paths, structures and planting to give the area a distinctive waterside character. However on either side of the island there are still large unattractive areas of tarmac from which paths radiate outwards. A small Victorian drinking fountain sits forlornly in the centre of a sea of macadam west of the island.

The proposals

The main elements of the proposals are as follows:

All existing trees and shrubs to be preserved

Removal of the existing boat station, boat store and jetty to open up historic views to Sussex Place and to provide a southerly facing grass bank for sitting in a sunny spot near the Lake.

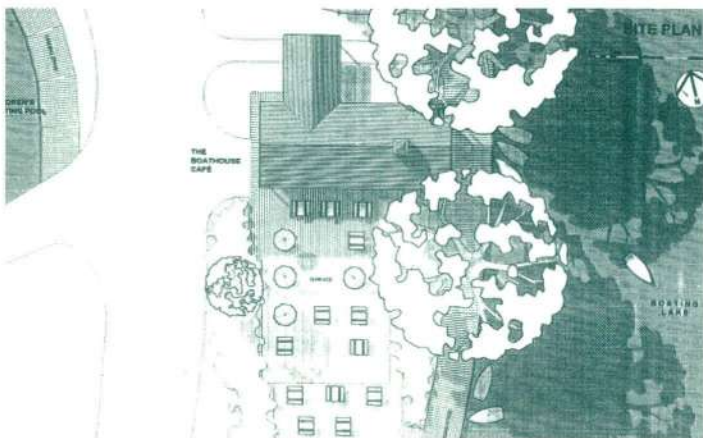
Removal of existing kiosks plus a boating ticket office and replacement with a single building on the west bank of the Lake; c.f. approximately 100sq m of existing buildings (some removed in Phase I) with 87sq m of proposed building. This building would serve boating on the Lake and the Children's Pool combined with catering functions. A terrace to sit and enjoy a drink and views down the Lake would also be provided.

Relocation of the Drinking Fountain so that it has a more appropriate setting to the side of the open paved space.

An increase in the shrubbery around the Children's Playground to its west and south so that the Playground is more effectively incorporated into the parkland. The increase in planting must take account of the needs of safety and security.

A softening of the concrete edging of the Boating Lake by establishing a margin of aquatic plants along certain lengths of the shoreline.

From The Planning Proposal RPA



The apprentice Training scheme in Regent's Park

The Royal Parks have run an apprentice training scheme for over 30 years combining the teaching of theory and practical gardening skills. The contracting out of the grounds maintenance work in the Parks in 1992 saw the closure of the Royal Parks own Apprentice Training School at Eltham and the re-location of the students to horticulture college.

The grounds maintenance contractor in each of the Royal Parks is required to employ a set number of apprentices, dependent on the size of the contract, on a three year apprenticeship. In 1996 The Royal Parks joined with the National Trust to provide a training programme which leads to the RHS exam and NVQ at level 2 and 3. The current scheme involves 6-10 weeks per year block release of intensive training at Bicton College in Devon.

Between periods at college the students learn practical skills on site in a park working alongside experienced staff. Serviceteam in Regent's Park have their own Apprentice Training Officer and

NVQ assessor, PJ Rattenbury-Neate who supports the apprentices with tuition and on-site skills, plant identification etc.

The aim of the Modern Apprenticeship for Amenity Horticulture is to develop a well rounded, multi-skilled individual who will be able to meet the needs of the industry both now and in the future. Amenity Horticulture is the care and management of public and private parks and gardens, sports grounds and municipal 'green' areas. It involves, in particular, the development and maintenance of lawns and borders, trees, shrubs, hedges, herbaceous plants and bedding displays. It includes arboriculture, the upkeep of amenity woodland, and landscaping as well as plant propagation. Apprentices study aspects of business and financial management, together with the management of people.

We have one first year apprentice in Regent's Park at present and when on full strength will have one apprentice in each year of the training programme. Serviceteam currently employ 5 staff in Regent's Park who have graduated through the Apprentice Scheme, while many others over the years have gone

on to further training. Interviews are conducted during the Summer and employment with the Grounds Maintenance Contractor would

commence between June and September each year. Further information can be obtained at the park office.

be very interesting. Because it is only small the numbers are limited so this is open to members only and tickets will be allocated on a first come first served basis.

Thursday, 10.30 am 4 March 1999. Tickets £2.

For further details and to book a place please contact Ann Müller Tel./Fax 0171 935 3498.

users of the parks. I have yet to see a cyclist cause any disturbance to a single park user and I can't help feeling that it is a total waste of police time trying to stop cyclists using these parks.

Are there any other Friends out there who hold these views?

If not, I have clearly joined the wrong group and shall resign my membership.

Yours faithfully, Abi Berger

Having witnessed my two year old granddaughter almost run down by a cyclist racing down the Chestnut Avenue leading to Gloucester Gate, has convinced me that until there are designated cycle paths, cycling should continue to be banned in the park... Editor



on to further training.

Interviews are conducted during the Summer and employment with the Grounds Maintenance Contractor would

commence between June and September each year. Further information can be obtained at the park office.

Visit to Madame Tussaud's Studio

The Head of the Studio at Madame Tussaud's has kindly agreed to show a small group of members round the studios at Marylebone Road. This is not the main studio (that is in Acton), but still should

Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor,
Following in the spirit of Duncan Sparkes' letter in Newsletter 20, I am really interested in finding out why the Friends of Regent's Park & Primrose Hill are so vehemently against cycling. Had I realised this before becoming a friend myself, I would certainly not have joined the group.

London is being choked to death by the use of motorised vehicles. I simply do not understand how any thinking and intelligent group of people who enjoy living and working in central London could possibly be opposed to a form of transport which does not impose fumes, filth and frustration on other

Don't forget to visit the daffodils!

The Daffodil Walk is on the west side of the Broadwalk in the Avenue Gardens. There are over 200 varieties to admire.



The Friends of Regent's Park & Primrose Hill

The society is a non-political body. Our aims are to help conserve, defend and, where necessary, urge the improvement of all the area within the Park boundary and the adjoining Primrose Hill

Annual subscription £10 To join please contact the Treasurer

Watch this space

According to a notice that has recently appeared in Queen Mary's garden, the delphinium border is being replaced.

"The plants in this border have become tired and the soil is in need of replenishment. During the course of the winter the existing herbaceous material will be lifted and split to allow a change of soil. A new stock of named delphiniums has already been received which will be planted and labelled in the early Spring together with the lifted plants."

We hope it will be restored to the lovely silver and blue border it was originally.

...and this space



In the last newsletter (Autumn 1998) Richard Burge, then Chief Executive of the Zoo, wrote an article about the 'Web of Life', the building now nearing completion adjacent to the Broad Walk. He wrote "while it appears very prominent at the moment, once the landscaping between it and the Broad Walk is complete it will be far less obvious and considerably enhance the view from the outside which used to face on to an old works." However although much of the building is concealed by shrubs and trees, the chimneys are very prominent (yes, Richard, we know they are ventilators but they look like chimneys). The trees on the



Broad walk are large mature trees so will not grow up to cover this very conspicuous element of the design.

Richard Burge has left the London Zoological Society, his successor has not yet been announced.)

Park Watch

There was quite a low turnout at the meeting held on 13 January 1999 and all but two of those present came from the 'Chesters'! These meetings with the Regent's Park Police are for all Park users and residents of the surrounding areas, they are set up so that we can support the police, make

suggestions or express concerns – so, please, those of you who live on the north, west and south of the Park as well as people from the east side, do come to the next meeting.

If the park seems to you to be swarming with police at the moment, it is not because Inspector Pollock has been more successful than his predecessors at getting more staff; it is just that there is tutor group for police being held at the Apprentice Training Room behind the Police Station. The number of police assigned to duties in Regent's Park remains stable.

Date of next Park Watch meeting: Tuesday 6 pm 13 April, in the Apprentice Training Room on the Inner Circle behind the Police Station.

Police ask for help with the following Incident 1

On Sunday 29 November 1998 at approximately 12.45 am on the Outer Circle opposite Cumberland terrace a female was involved in an incident with a male. The Outer circle traffic gates would have been closed to traffic at this time, but apparently one vehicle stopped and the driver asked the female if she was all right.

Police would like to speak to the driver of this vehicle. If you have any information on this incident please let us know.

Incident 2

On Friday 8 January 1999 at approximately 11.45 pm on the Outer circle by Chester Gate a West Indian male driving what is believed to be a red Vauxhall Astra motor car, approached a female.

If you saw anything relating to this please contact us.

Incident 3

The following vehicle has been involved in thefts of scaffolding equipment and has been seen in Regent's park. If you do see it, please contact us.

A dark coloured Range rover registration number AFM 245A

Incident 4

Involved in incidents of Indecent Exposure during 1998 and already during 1999 is a white male, aged about 20 – 25 years old, 5' 7" / 5' 8" tall, slim build, dark hair, wearing a dark suit.

Police are keen to speak to this person who is believed to be a regular park user.

Any information will be treated in strict confidence. Please phone Regent's Park Police on 0171 935 1259 or RPC Force Control Room on 0171 298 2076.

Photographs by Ann Müller

Chairman
Richard de Ste Croix
9 Wellington Place,
London NW8
Tel: 0171 286 7358

Hon. Secretary
Valerie St. Johnston
30 Fitzroy Road,
London NW1 8TY
Tel: 0171 722 5932

Treasurer
Malcolm Kafetz
10 Chalfont Court
236 Baker Street
London NW1 5RS
Tel: 0171 935 1143
Fax: 0171 486 3437