

endangered animals, the fen raft spider. One of the biggest spiders in Britain, it has the remarkable ability to walk on water. As part of the Zoo's worldwide conservation work, zookeepers at ZSL London Zoo worked with Natural England to rear tiny fen raft spiderlings into adults, which were then reintroduced back to the wild.

Endangered Asiatic lions on the rise but population still under threat

There are now approximately 500 Asiatic lions (*Panthera leo persica*) living in the Gir landscape, according to the latest count, up from 411 in 2010 when the last official figures were released. Although this is an increase, this small number of isolated lions is particularly vulnerable to the threats of disease and conflict with humans.

Earlier this year ZSL signed a memorandum of understanding with the Government of Gujarat in India, pledging expertise and support to safeguard the future of Asiatic lions and it is supporting the commendable efforts of the Gujarat Forest Department (GFD) to safeguard this precious population of Asiatic lions through its science-based conservation, wildlife health, community engagement and animal husbandry expertise. This support includes vital



A selfie with a spider

lion patrols and monitoring within Gir National Park, the training of forest guards, assisting in community outreach, and investing in state of the art veterinary facilities. As well as providing animal husbandry and specialist veterinary and technical expertise, ZSL will be able to gain insights from working with GFD and Wild Life Institute of India.

ZSL supports Nepal in the wake of earthquake tragedy

ZSL would like to acknowledge and thank everyone for the donations received so far in support of the safety and security of Park Guards.

The Nepal earthquakes and their aftermath have claimed thousands of lives. The epicentre of the first quake on 25 April lay between Kathmandu and Pokhara, close to the region where ZSL has

concentrated conservation efforts.

Forest Guards and National Park Staff are stranded in remote locations, living in makeshift tents without warm clothing and field gear. Donations are needed to support their safety and security as well as the area's iconic species such as tigers, rhinos and snow leopards, which face the threat of opportunistic poaching.

Funds raised will go towards meeting immediate needs for food, fuel, clean water and shelter for park staff particularly at high altitude and at key sites in the lowland as well as safeguarding Nepal's national parks to curb poaching.

Donate to Nepal today at <http://campaign.justgiving.com/charity/zsl/nepal>
James Wren,
Development Director, ZSL

Visit & guided tour of the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park

Tuesday 15 September 10.30 am

Cost £10.00 per person
Come on a tour of the QEOP with Anne-Marie Craven, your newsletter editor and also Blue Badge Guide, who led tours around the outside of the park prior to the Olympic Games and inside since its reopening. She has seen the 600 acres develop over seven years from an industrial wasteland to become one of the most innovative and stunning series of landscapes. The walk will take around two hours with a stop for coffee. There are many cafes and restaurants for lunch in the Westfield Shopping Centre by Stratford Station. We meet at the information centre at the entrance to the park.

Please contact Anne-Marie to book a place

For your diary

24 July 2.00-3.30
Macclesfield Youth Brass Band
The Band Stand

National Gardens Scheme

Cost £4.50
children free
1 and 2 August
2.30-5.30 pm
The Holme,
NW1 4NT

9 August
2.30-5.30 pm
70 Gloucester
Crescent NW1 7EG

9 August
16 August
Allotment Sunday
Regent's Park
allotments

5 September
Pup Aid 2015
Primrose Hill

6 September
Klezmer in the Park
Holme Green

19 September
Harvest Festival
Regent's Park
allotments

14-18 October
Frieze Art Fair
London
Marylebone Green
and Gloucester
Green

Open Air Theatre

16 July-29 August
Seven Brides for
Seven Brothers
3-12 September
Lord of the Flies
Book by telephone
0844 826 4242

Book by telephone or online There will be a special rate for the Friends of £25.00 for the best available seats bookable in person at the Box Office from two days prior to the performance. There is a maximum of two seats per transaction and this excludes the Premium Seats and performances on Saturday and Sunday evenings.

Your email address

Would all members with email addresses please send an email with their name, postal address and email address to Linda Johnson (lindamj@btinternet.com). We would like this information so that we can communicate more efficiently with our members.

Friends of Regent's Park & Primrose Hill

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Useful phone numbers

Police telephone numbers:
Emergency: 999
Non-emergency crime reporting:
020 7706 7272
Non-urgent matters:
020 7161 9701 or 07711 028 422

Police NEW NUMBER for non-emergency police matters is 101. Use this number for Park Regulation offences where, for example, unauthorised activities are interfering with the comfort and convenience of park users.

Park Office 020 7486 7905
(Mon-Fri, 9am-4pm)

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The Friends of Regent's Park & Primrose Hill

Summer 2015

The 24th AGM

Once again St John's Wood Church was the venue for the AGM on 23 April with Alistair Bayford as guest speaker.

Conall Macfarlane, chairman (but intending to stand down by Christmas 2015) announced that Linda Lennon, the CEO of the Royal Parks was leaving at the end of June. She had had to grapple with severe funding cuts during her tenure which resulted in finding two-thirds of the running costs of the Royal Parks by self-generation means. She would be greatly missed. He then reported on the plans for the cycling superhighway on the Outer Circle, the delay on Todd Longstaffe-Gowan's strategy report for the CEPC and the proposed increase in the membership fee when the new treasurer, Robin Das, and computer programme were up and running.

The other Honorary Officers, Judy Hillman, Conall Macfarlane and Linda Johnson were

re-elected as were the current committee members.

Alistair Bayford then gave a presentation on the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park and his work at Regent's Park.

He is the Assistant Director of Strategic Parks Management and General Manager of the Landscape Group, has won Bronze and Silver medals at Hampton Court Palace and at Chelsea and is a Chartered Landscape Architect. He is the fifth generation of his family to work with natural landscapes and has been pruning since he was 5! Alistair explained that he now works as part of the Regent's Park team of the Landscape Group which is the largest ground-maintenance group in Europe.

He worked on the 2012 transformation of the Olympic Park now known as the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park and described the work involved in its transformation from a toxic post-industrial wasteland to the spectacular park which it is today.

Alistair said that the transformative process was partly based on Sir Patrick Abercrombie's vision of the need to create "green lungs" for the capital. The transformed area is now twice the size of the original Olympic park area with an active biodiversity plan including the introduction of reed, buntings, eels and many invertebrates. He said that the works had now created a well-managed wetland which had proved its worth as well as its beauty last winter when it had flooded twelve times but without any damage done to nearby housing.

Alistair believes that his involvement in the management and maintenance of green spaces, whether at the post-Olympic Queen Elizabeth Park or at Regent's Park enables him to fulfil all his ambitions in terms of design because of the close contact with plants themselves. Finally, Alistair would like to employ a local workforce, which is challenging in London with its high housing costs. The Olympic games, however, brought many young people into garden and

open space maintenance with older workers passing on their skills to the younger generation. He hopes that this will continue.

When asked about the possibility of creating a wild-flower meadow and bird hides in Regent's Park he replied that it might be possible to adapt existing meadows and perhaps more creative planting to provide natural hidden vantage points for bird-watching.

The meeting continued with Nick Biddle and Inspector Chris Churchman answering questions on New Years' Eve on Primrose Hill. The crowds for 2014 were generally well-behaved and only a few people had caused trouble. Crime rates have been very low in spite of severely stretched staffing levels. Chris will be retiring soon but leaves the Park in good hands.

Nick Biddle confirmed that the zoo car park will be used by HS2 if it goes ahead. He asked for sponsors for his marathon run to raise funds for the new cherry tree avenue in Chester Road.

Linda Johnson, Hon Secretary

First aid in the Park

Friends probably notice at least the noise of the yellow Royal Air Force Rescue helicopter which occasionally circles the park and lands on Gloucester Green. Usually it transports very sick children en route to and from Great Ormond Street Hospital and other parts of the country, the lap in central London being completed by

road in an ambulance. The park police are normally notified a few hours ahead. Months may pass without a landing but recently there have been quite a few. *Judy Hillman*



Will (above), one of the gardeners in the park planting annuals in the entrance way to the secret garden.

Lords & the First World War

When war broke out on August 4 1914 and since three-quarters of the County Championship had already been completed, Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC) believed there would be no good purpose in cancelling matches. The August 17th 1914 minutes of MCC's committee meeting made no mention of the war whatsoever. However, by the end of the month, with attendances falling rapidly and 80,000 British Expeditionary Force troops in Belgium being routed by the German army, the MCC Committee changed their minds.

Prior to war breaking out, 1914 was a celebratory year for MCC, as it was the 100th anniversary of the Lord's Ground that year, and a match between an MCC South African Team and The Rest to commemorate this anniversary had taken place in front of the king.

During the war, however, the ground was used for military purposes, with accommodation provided for certain units, as well as classes undertaken on wireless instruction, foreign languages and military cooking. No.2 Grove End Road, situated behind the Ground, was let as headquarters to the Royal Volunteer Battalion

In the Pavilion, Lord's staff and some members helped the effort by making hay nets for horses, with 30,000 sent to the barracks at Woolwich. Geese were kept on the outfield during the war so the grass could be maintained between matches.

On 8 March 1918, a bomb went off near the main entrance of Lord's, causing considerable

damage to adjacent buildings, including the hotel. Many windows were broken around the ground.

Roll of Honour

In 1920 MCC commissioned a Roll of Honour for members who had died in the war, which included 330 names. This was later revised in 2004 after research revealed that 33 names had been included incorrectly with a further 26 missed out. The names included two recipients of the Victoria Cross, three Test match cricketers, and another 69 who had played first-class cricket. The Roll of Honour remains in the Pavilion today.



Photo © Richard Valencia

On show in the MCC Museum is a bat, donated by A Podmore, that was sent to Sergeant J Piggott on the frontline in France in 1917. The bat was

pierced by shrapnel after a shell burst, and Sgt Piggott, unhurt in the attack, sent the bat back for a replacement.

Test casualties

Three members of MCC who had played in Test matches were killed during the war. Kenneth Hutchings, who was one of the stand-out performers in Kent's County Championship success in 1906, played seven Tests for England after being invited to tour Australia with MCC in 1907-08. He served in the King's Liverpool Regiment, and was killed in September 1916. He was struck by a shell in Ginchy, France, and died instantly.

Second Lieutenant Leonard James Moon died of wounds in Salonika, Greece in November 1915. Moon played cricket for Middlesex for ten years, and played in four Test matches for England against South Africa in 1906. Reggie Schwarz also played cricket for Middlesex, before emigrating to South Africa. As well as three appearances for England at rugby, Schwarz played in twenty Tests for his new nation. He died of Spanish influenza on the Western Front seven days after the Armistice in 1918.

Sir Pelham Warner's name will always be synonymous with Lord's and MCC, and he spent some time as a captain at the War Office during the war, and later served in the Department of Information at the Foreign Office. Recently a trunk of his items was given to the museum by Marina Warner, his granddaughter, which included an eight-page letter sent to him by his friend Hughes R Davies. Davies had lost his son Geoffrey

at Hulluch in September 1915, and the letter details his sorrow over his son's death. Geoffrey had played first-class cricket for Essex for two years prior to the war.

Cricket continues

While the war was going on MCC continued to send teams to play public schools, and in the second half of the war, Lord's was used for matches to help raise money for the war's casualties. In 1917 a game of baseball was played between Canada and United States to help the widows and orphans of Canadians who had died in the war - 10,000 people attended this match.

In 1917 two matches were played at Lord's, one was an English Army XI v an Australian Army XI, and the other was a Combined Army & Navy XI v a Combined Australian & South African Forces team. £1,320 went to two funds, the St Dunstan's Hostel for blinded soldiers and sailors, and Lady Lansdowne's Officer's Family Fund. In 1918, two more matches were played at Lord's between an England XI and a Dominions XI, the second of which was attended by King George V. It was very rare in those games to look down the scorecard and see a name not prefixed by a military rank.

The MCC received a letter from the War Office congratulating them on their assistance during the war, which was framed and hung in the Pavilion immediately afterward. Nowadays, this letter remains on display in the MCC Museum. *Chris Smith, Communications Officer, Marylebone Cricket Club*

five years in Paris, he was able to fulfill a hope from his student days in London that one day he would live in Camden. Moving in with John and his wife was a dog, a collie, and since then they have gained an extensive knowledge of the park as each walks the dog there for at least an hour each day.

John joined the Friends during the fight to prevent the building of 5-a-side football facilities in Regent's Park. Recently he was concerned about the deteriorating standard of maintenance by the contractors employed to look after the park, so agreed to become a member of the committee of the Friends. He believes a change of contractor

has improved the maintenance, but that it remains important for the public to keep a close eye on what is happening in the park.

With his background as a chartered accountant, John is able to assist the committee treasurer with financial matters. His love of flora and fauna, and particularly of the bird life in the park, is also an asset to the committee, and John has been campaigning to get the board used to report bird sightings in the park replaced. He considers that the Friends provide a means to ensure a strong public input on decisions regarding the park, and cites the prevention of 5-a-side football as a classic illustration of what can be achieved. For this reason it

is important that membership of the FRP&PH remains high. Current concerns John has for the park include the need to get the right balance between the provision of income-producing sports facilities, which already dominate some areas, and the need to keep the park as parkland. He is also concerned about the time taken to restore damage caused by events such as the Frieze Art Fair, and the necessity of removing many trees should a decision be taken to restore the park to Nash's original concept. John Malpass is a welcome addition to the committee of the FRP&PH.

Margaret Elliott

In the park

Birds galore

A pair of native European shelduck has successfully reared nine ducklings which are now too big for the gulls and herons to swallow. The pair has bred in previous years but lost all its chicks.

There are eight singing male reed warblers in the various reed beds around the park.

Two male sedge warblers are holding territory in the boathouse reed bed, a first for this species in central London. It is hoped they will attract a mate and breed as they are usually only seen for a day while on migration.

The reeds and other plants in this reed bed are obviously attractive. It would be good to plant other shrubs for wildlife in the fenced-off grass area behind this reed bed as well as increasing its size as funds allow.

There is also a pair of reed buntings in this reed bed but this species has never bred successfully in central London.

The herons have had a good breeding season with Regent's Park being the largest heronry in London.

Some of the migrating birds which have visited the park this year include a male firecrest and male whinchat along with five wheatear, not forgetting yellow wagtail, meadow pipit, swallows, house and sand martins, swifts,

whitethroat, blackcap, lesser whitethroat, buzzards, red kites, marsh harrier.

A surprise visitor on the lake in late March was a kittiwake and also a male scaup. And a pair of peregrine falcons was playing together above the lake.

Dave Johnson, Wildlife Officer

Anyone for compost tea?

A grant has been received from The Royal Parks to trial the benefits of using compost teas to improve the soil biology and therefore health of the plants. The process is used quite a lot on golf courses and it was the contractor's head groundsman who suggested the idea. Reports are mixed about the success of this process but, after visiting a number of golf courses and contacting other gardens where this compost has been used, it was decided to try it out at Regent's Park.

Plant nutrients can be available in the soil but unavailable to the plants as bacteria and fungi are needed to assist in the uptake. By brewing a tea of formulated mixes of micro-organisms and applying it to the soil it is thought that this increase in the soil benefits plant health and growth, thus leading to a significant reduction in the use of artificial fertilisers and pesticides.

This process will be trialled on areas of the sports turf, roses, herbaceous plants and bedding over the next two years leading to a more organic management

approach in Queen Mary's Garden.

Hedgehogs

The work recording the hedgehog population in the park continues due to another significant donation by a local benefactor. This year, in May, over a hundred volunteers clocked up 735 hours of monitoring. 31 hedgehogs were tagged with eight being monitored over the week including all night on three nights. There is now significant data on how to manage the park and how to improve the habitats for hedgehogs. DNA from the tagged hedgehogs will be examined by Dublin university and more surveying work will be done in September.

Mark Rowe, Assistant Park Manager

To adopt a hedgehog contact Claire Bowen of The Royal Parks Foundation on 020 7036 8057.

Zoo news

The only exhibit of its kind in Europe, *In with the Spiders*, which opened in May 2015, helps visitors get gently acquainted with the UK native species and regular house guest 'spider in a bathtub' before meeting fascinating exotic species such as the black widow, huntsman and giant bird-eating spiders. With the opportunity to take home a special souvenir from the walk-through exhibition, visitors can pose for a picture with the golden orb spiders in front of the "Spider Selfie" mirror. A sneak peek into the Spider Nursery will give visitors an insight into the breeding work carried out by keepers at ZSL London Zoo, and hopefully a glimpse of tiny spiderlings. The zoo is home to one of the UK's most *(continued on page 4)*



Surveys in the park

In recent surveys carried out in the Royal parks, most people questioned in Regent's Park agreed with the idea of a limited number of paid ticketed events, provided the money was used to help maintain the park and the Royal parks more generally. The actual figure was 78 per cent compared with 12 per cent who were against the whole idea. The surveys were carried out in 2013 and 2014.

The estimated numbers of visitors for all the Royal parks was 77.7 million including 2.2 million dog walkers and 9.1 cycle rides. So far as Regent's Park and Primrose Hill were concerned, the interviewees actually spoke to 197 visitors. Of these 58 per cent were Londoners, 17 per cent came from the rest of the United

Kingdom and 20 percent from outside the British Isles, mostly mainland Europe.

Almost everyone rates the quality of the parks as excellent or good. But there was a range of views - 96 percent praising the quality of the natural environment, down to 88 percent for tidiness and cleanliness and down again to 82 per cent for peace and quiet, which was lower than the average for all the Royal parks. Then down again to 76 percent (i.e. three out of four) for the overall quality of the public toilets and on down to 61 percent approving the friendliness of the staff and even lower for their visibility.

Most people came on foot or by public transport, only four per cent by bike. Most stayed between one and three hours. Generally they came intending to walk and stroll and relax in peace and quiet. On the whole, Regent's Park visitors were said

to spend £7.25 on food and drink as a group - or £2 more than the average in the Royal parks as a whole. But most people spent nothing.

Judy Hillman

Peter Pan at war

Peter Pan kicked off this year's first performance in the Open Air Theatre with a marvellously dramatic setting for Peter's balletic flights against the backcloth of trees in full summer dress. A packed audience in the final week was happily appreciative. The production was awe inspiring and imaginative with a large cast moving with almost a musical's choreography. Actors disappeared through round concealed holes in the stage and underneath into Neverland as well as storming up the aisles and into bushes. A rectangular

chunk front of stage was lifted at one point to reveal the fangs of the crocodile, which clamped down on Captain Cook. Amazing suspended jelly fish dangled their arms (or should it be legs?) to help convince of a watery universe. The underside of hospital beds were used to transform the set.

It was really clever. Yet somehow the idea of presenting the Darling family and their adventures as perhaps an escape from the dreadfulness of world war one and its impact on that generation did not quite gel. It was almost as if the two stories were competing, a brilliant idea which did not quite come off. Perhaps the Peter Pan family play tradition was too strong to allow it to become subservient to the terrible tragedy of the trenches and a lost generation. A wonderful production but strangely something was missing. *Judy Hillman*

Meet your committee

When John Malpass returned to England in 1992 after twenty-

