

Inner Circle. Consultation on the scheme has been taking place before submission to Westminster City Council for the necessary planning permission this autumn.

The present structure was originally built as a rehabilitation workshop for wounded world war one veterans and occupants since have included English Heritage, the open air theatre and currently an events firm called Innovision. The proposals would involve change of use to residential with a top end of market two-story house above ground and two storeys at basement level. The lower basement level includes parking via a lift plus a gym, swimming pool and cinema. The floor above, but still below ground, provides two staff bedrooms, a family room, sauna and function kitchen. The main floor at ground level includes a large reception room together with kitchen, dining room and study. The second floor, described by the architects Hub as attic accommodation, includes four bedrooms en suite. The site is a strange jigsaw piece shape squashed between the entrance to the 'secret garden' by St. John's Lodge next to Frazer Lodge and a driveway used by the Royal Parks next to the park's offices. The footprint of the proposed house, somewhat gothic in appearance at least at this stage, follows that of the present building. The architects did consider the possibility of flats but rejected that idea in

part at least because of the lack of parking space. As it is, the roof of the swimming pool would be landscaped to provide some outdoor space. For historical reasons, the Crown Estate still owns a number of freeholds within as well as around the park including the Holme, St. John's Lodge, the villas beside the canal and Regent's University. The site almost abuts the nursery which is about to become redundant, which means the Royal Parks will be seeking ideas for its future use and regeneration, but hopefully something sympathetic to the role of the park. In addition the brickwork of the park offices is literally splitting at the seams. At the very least, development of all three sites will need to take account of each other and the overriding importance of the park.

Judy Hillman, Patron

Early Birds with Tony Duckett

Early on a grey Sunday morning a group of about ten members of the Friends were met by Tony Duckett, the Royal Parks conservation officer, by the bandstand to commence a most enlightening few hours looking at bird life in the park. We started looking across to Heron island at a pair of herons feeding their chick on a nest they had built on a willow tree. This island and the duck enclosure provide shelter for water fowl to nest safely with a feeding station designed to exclude birds which do not require help.

Tony showed some of the other areas used by various species to nest in the park including setting aside an additional wetland breeding area and installing nesting boxes and baskets on various trees. Dead trees are made safe and then enough trunk and branches kept for crevices to be used by song birds. Owl boxes are also provided, some paid for by the Friends. Bramble thickets have been grown as habitats for chats.

Tony amusingly described some of the bad bird behaviour observed around the park. The swans disputing territory to the point of hospitalisation. The little grebe newbie attempting to steal its neighbours' nest hidden in the reed beds. The parakeets are believed to be ousting smaller birds. The Canada geese that 'never stop' defecating on the grass by the lake.

During the walk, the group was lucky enough to have pointed out to them both the little grebe and the great crested grebe. These (and other) species are still recovering after being over hunted for their ruff feathers which were used in the past to trim hats.

Tony also pointed out a few of the many other species which can be seen or heard in the park. Members may recall that the Friends helped to pay for the restoration of a sign identifying ducks. There is also a sign by the song bird feeders providing further useful information. He sighed over the damage to

diversity caused by no doubt well meaning members of the public who are distributors of stale bread etc. Apart from rats, mice and squirrels, the main beneficiary of unsuitable food such as this is an expanding population of crows, magpies and gulls crowding out the smaller birds. Few if any sparrows, for example, remain.

All in all a fascinating and much appreciated tour with the expert. Let us hope he will be persuaded to do a repeat tour before too long.

Alison Kemp, committee member

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 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 7995 (Mon-Fri, 9am-4pm)

Friends of Regent's Park & Primrose Hill

Chair: Ianthe McWilliams
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For the diary

10 June
Primrose Hill Fair
14-18 June
Taste of London

19 June
Royal College of Physicians
Medicinal plant lecture: Helpful and troublesome plants. Medicinal plants in the treatment of respiratory disease Dr Noel Snell, RCP garden fellow and consultant physician at the Royal Brompton Hospital. A history of plants used in the treatment of respiratory disease from ephedrine to sodium cromoglicate. Allergic reactions and how plants are involved Dr Joanna Sheldon, consultant clinical scientist at St George's Hospital protein reference and immunopathology unit, and Dr Tim Wreghitt, retired consultant virologist at Addenbrooke's Hospital. Lectures start at 2pm with tea and coffee and garden tours at 3pm followed by lecture at 5pm. Book on social. events@rcplondon.ac.uk or tel 020 7034 4901

Saturday 24 & Sunday 25 June 2.30-5.30
Saturday 5 & Sunday 6 August 2.30-5.30
The Holme for the Open Gardens Scheme Admission £5.00, children free

28 June-October
Frieze sculpture park

Monday 26 June
Royal Academy of Music, Duke's Hall 6.00 - 7.00pm *The great pianist, Alfred Brendel, talks to Professor Joanna*

MacGregor about his earliest experiences recording and performing the complete Beethoven sonatas. Free, no tickets required

Thursday 29 June - Sunday 2 July 19.30
Love's Labour's Lost by Royal Academy of Music at Hackney Empire
Tickets £20 - £15 (plus £1 per ticket online, £1.25 per ticket over the phone) Buy tickets now from the Hackney Empire Box Office: www.hackneyempire.co.uk tel 020 8985 2424
Age limit: The production is recommended as suitable 13 years + with parental guidance.

14 August
Mission Invertebrate Giant story-telling snail tour Interactive

story-telling, and a range of free creative activities focusing on some of the fascinating creatures found in the parks, from spiders, dragonflies and grasshoppers to worms, butterflies and moths. All activities are free
Gloucester Gate Playground. 11am-3pm and also on 15 August Hanover Gate Playground

Sunday 10 September
Klezmer in the park 1-6pm Regent's park Bandstand. For the first time ever, Harif will be injecting a Sephardi flavour into this popular music festival. There will be a Moroccan Jewish-Henna Ceremony and photo exhibition, complete with Sephardi delicacies and Sephardi-style musical bands such as Los Desterrados

4-8 October
Frieze London & Frieze Masters London

Open Air Theatre productions

10 May-1 July
On the Town

7 July-5 August
A Tale of Two Cities

17 July-5 August
Oliver Twist

11 August-23 September
Jesus Christ Superstar

Friends of Regent's Park and Primrose Hill are offered a discounted price again. Tickets for £25.00, which are bookable in person at the Box Office. These are available to purchase from 2 weeks prior to the performance. Excludes

Saturday evenings, and a maximum of 2 tickets per transaction. *The full performance schedule is available at www.openairtheatre.com/schedule*

The Allotment garden events
17 June Open Garden Square weekend 10am-3.30pm
16 September 10am-5pm

Twilight gardening Wednesdays
Every other Wednesday evening from 7 June, 5:30pm to 7pm. If you'd like to get your hands dirty, meet new people and learn about growing food please email julie@sustainweb.org to book your space.

Newsletter 92

The Friends of Regent's Park & Primrose Hill

Summer 2017

Chairman's round-up

I was delighted so many of you came to the AGM in March (described below) and let us know your views on survey sheets and flipcharts. We are gradually contacting those who volunteered to help organise activities in the park, so don't despair! Anyone with ideas for interesting events they might organise in the park, please let us know!

You may be interested to see a summary of the views we received:

Only 30 forms were returned, so the sample was about one third of those who attended, but interesting nonetheless: about half of respondents might like to join in nature walks (birds, plants and trees), and a third would like bandstand concerts. I do hope they and others will hear or have heard the Sunday 11 June concert given by the

Help the Heroes band (and ideally donated through their website, as no one is allowed to rattle collection tins in the park).

About 70% of replies disapproved of proposed closure between 3pm and 11pm of the four gates (intended to reduce through traffic and make it safer for cyclists using the proposed CS11), whereas 88% would like traffic kept to 20 mph in the park. I am feeding this into the continuing discussions with TFL on how CS11 will affect Regent's Park, decisions for which are probably due in June or July. Over half the survey respondents identified themselves as retired, and although all but one said they visited the park on foot, about a third also visited by car, and a third to drive through. About half went alone, but a third went

with children and a third with dogs. So it is clear that these park users not only walk, but also wish to drive in the park.

We welcome the newly resurfaced tennis courts at Will to Win off the Inner circle. If you want to book or find out about their courses and events please ring 0207 4864216 or email regentspark@willtowin.co.uk.

This issue invites your views on our plans to double our subscription next year, and in parallel we hope to streamline our membership arrangements. We will also be introducing a new business category of membership. Is there anyone out there who might be willing to help with some of the administrative work involved in the change, please let me know on chair@friendsofregentspark.org, giving your telephone number and when it might be convenient for me to call you.

We plan a membership drive once our new system is up and running, so do let us know if you have ideas for groups of people who might like to join.

The Royal Parks will be seeking donations towards their exciting proposed new eco-friendly Gloucester Gate playground, and it would be good if families who may benefit from it get involved in fund-raising events, and of course using the playground once it is finished.

We do want to be able to email people when things come up at short notice, so we are very keen to collect the many missing email addresses!

Ianthe McWilliams, Chairman

The AGM in March

There was a good turnout of Friends at the AGM on March 9 where members were invited to fill in survey sheets on their likes and dislikes, their suggestions for the future and offers of help as volunteers. Topics such as CS11 proposals for park gate closures, HS2 and the Zoo car park were all discussed and Wesley Kerr, OBE Trustee of the Board of The Royal Parks contributed to an open discussion. Subjects included the Park police officer Rebecca England's excellent work and constraints, speeding cyclists, use of the bandstand and suggestions for the future use of the nursery site.

Lloyd Grossman CBE, newly appointed CEO of The Royal Parks, gave an interesting presentation. He was born in Boston where there is a huge network of parks known as the

'Necklace'. Parks were very important there, but London is even more notable for its parks. We should remember that we have the best city parks anywhere in the world. London is strong in beauty, history and ecology. We are the greenest city with 40% green space. The parks owe their existence to the monarchy, and were originally created for hunting. The difference for the Regent's Park is that it was planned by John Nash and hosts an extraordinary mix of features. He claimed that it takes a foreigner to tell us what is great about our city. Composed of many towns within the city, London is 'the unique city'. The English taught the world how to use parks for their mental and physical wellbeing. They are vital. Parks mean different things to different people because space is so valuable. No one

should chip away at the Royal Parks: they must be defended. Challenges facing the parks included the need to generate increasing income from personal activity or philanthropy; pressure of increasing population; plant diseases, and the difficulty maintaining the parks against increasing pressures. The new organisation should have more flexibility to protect and preserve the parks and 'Keep our parks as the best parks in the world' for future generations. Key elements should be - a careful events strategy; encouragement of philanthropy; fund-raising for the new Gloucester gate playground. The new Hyde Park nursery will mean careful thought over what should be done with the existing nursery site in Regent's Park, which may be highly contested. CS11 has raised vocal lobbies.



Lloyd Grossman

The Chairman, Ianthe McWilliams thanked Lloyd Grossman and presented him with a book by Martin Sheppard.

Restoration of the Readymoney Fountain:

The Royal Parks have undertaken a major restoration project over the winter to renovate the Victorian fountain in the Broad Walk. The stonework has been cleaned and damaged carvings replaced including major work to refurbish the pinnacles, which were in a dilapidated state. (The process is described in a note by Nick Biddle below.)

The Fountain was the gift of Cowasjee Jehangir, a "Parsee gentleman of Bombay". His family had made its wealth

through involvement in the lucrative Chinese opium trade which was controlled by the British East India Company. The Parsees are a minority sect who were descended originally from the Iranian Zoroastrian religious community, one of the world's oldest religions and thought to date from 6,000 B.C. Today the sect consists of some 100,000 only, and is still centred on Bombay. The family used their extraordinary wealth to make substantial donations to charity both throughout India and in the United Kingdom. Cowasjee Jehangir was created a Knight Bachelor in 1872 in recognition of his donations to the Indian Institute in London

and other charitable causes including the erection of several Indian-style drinking fountains. Through this philanthropy he and his brother earned the sobriquet "Readymoney", which they later adopted as a surname and by which the Regent's Park fountain is known today.

The fountain was unveiled by Princess Mary of Teck in 1869. She was the mother of Queen Mary of Teck, wife of the Prince of Wales and future Edward VII. Princess Mary was similarly a great philanthropist, perhaps inspired by Cowasjee Readymoney's generosity, giving away some 20 per cent of her annual allowance of £5,000 granted by parliament. She

was often involved in charitable activities opening schools, visiting orphanages, and in laying foundation stones. As such, she was a frequent visitor to the East End where she was affectionately known as "Fat Mary". (It is thought she weighed over 17 stone). She inculcated her charitable habits in her daughter who was to play a key part in the monarchy's welfare role and which formed the firm basis on which the Royal family continues to be involved in supporting many charities today.

The restoration of the white and pink marble Readymoney fountain has enabled us to appreciate the artistic merit of this fine example of Victorian Indian-style architecture.

John Malpass, committee member

From Nick Biddle

The fountain has been fully cleaned, which required steaming algae from within the grain of the relatively porous marble, replacing the carved elements in the worst condition and raking out and renewing the grouting. The marble has been treated with a limestone wash to protect it from future algal colonisation and a maintenance programme has been recommended to preserve it in the best possible condition. Sadly the design of the drinking element is such that it can no longer be used to serve water. However the gift of water which was integral to the donation of the monument in 1869 has been preserved by the installation of an elegant but discrete modern drinking fountain sensitively positioned at the edge of the Broad Walk



Hold your hat, we need more of your money

The committee of the Friends has reluctantly decided to increase the annual subscription to £20 from next January 2018. The current rate of £10 has been in operation for 20 years, in other words, since the Friends were first set up. Perhaps this move has been postponed for too long but the impact of current inflationary pressures means it has become inescapable.

A close inspection of the accounts presented at the annual general meeting in March demonstrates the need for the change if the Friends are to continue to

operate at the same level.

At the moment, members receive four newsletters a year. They can come to the annual general meeting and/or the end of season review and quaff a glass or so of wine, eat substantial finger food, enjoy a talk, question the park manager and other staff and of course meet other Friends. In addition they receive a badge which then entitles them to a 25 per cent reduction in the cafes in the park. On a coffee at the Hub, for example, this reduces the cost from £2.60 to £1.95. The same 25% reduction applies to food. For those who choose to stop off in the park and take advantage of this privilege, the cost of membership is extremely worthwhile, even without leverage in contact with park management that membership confers.

But why is the increase so necessary? Last year, income from subscriptions amounted to £6,123. We were left with just £39 to transfer into our reserves at the end of the year. The newsletters including postage cost £3,741. The two social gatherings at St John's Wood church hall cost £777. And we gave donations of £1,650 to the park, which compared with more than £7,000 a year earlier. The Friends do not just give the cash to be swallowed into some Royal Park's account but to provide for a specific need or improvement, which would otherwise not happen.

In the year before, the Friends were able to transfer more than £6,000 into the reserves. This year the net amount left over at the end of the year was only

£39. We believe members enjoy the newsletter and the social gatherings. But to continue on the present level of subscriptions would make it increasingly impossible to make any significant donations to the park and, even more important, to conduct a campaign should the park, for example, be threatened with unsuitable development, as has happened in the past.

Do please write or email the editor of the newsletter with your views. And it really would help if more members would give their email address to the membership secretary as use of snail mail (normal post) costs £650 for just one special mail out.

*Judy Hillman
Patron of the Friends*

In the gardens

Hanover Bridges

The renovation of the blue bridges near the Mosque is complete. Park users had to find new routes around the park for a month but with all of the timbers replaced, a new non-slip deck and the bridges repainted in their original colours they are now looking splendid.

Primrose Hill Café

Planning permission has been granted to extend and convert the central section of the toilet block between the playground and Primrose Hill in order to provide a much needed small catering facility. The Royal Parks are now working up the detailed design so that the cost and timescale of the development can be assessed and the project prioritised accordingly.

The Tennis Centre

The eleven adult courts have been resurfaced and repainted. The fence posts were in good order so have not been replaced but the chain link fencing has been renewed. Planning permission has now been granted to

refurbish and reopen the disused toilet block as a public convenience with shower and changing facility. Internal works to the pavilion will be carried out in the autumn. A further planning application is with Westminster City Council to install a padel court. Padel is a fast-growing sport which is something of a cross between tennis and squash. We are told it is easy to learn and play. Staff from the Royal Parks visited an established set of padel courts at another London venue and felt that it would be a good addition to the Tennis Centre. It will take the place of one of the mini-tennis courts but will double up for mini-tennis when not in use for padel.

A New Borehole

Regent's Park now has its second borehole. The ground water from the chalk aquifer 68 meters below the London clay will be used for irrigation and to provide much needed fresh water to the southern arm of the lake which will significantly improve water quality there.

Head of Park Operations

Following the departure of Director of Parks and Deputy

Chief Executive, Colin Buttery, to take up the role of Director of Open Spaces at The City of London, a new role, Head of Park Operations, has been established to cover much of the work he undertook. Simon Richards, whose substantive post is Park Manager of Richmond Park, is covering this role for the coming months. He is a very safe pair of hands having worked for the Royal Parks for 30 years and prior to moving to Richmond Park managed Hyde Park for 12 years.

Nick Biddle, Park Manager

Austrian Gravel

Two trial sites on Primrose Hill have been constructed employing a technique known as Austrian Grass Gravel; one outside the playground and the other site on the back side of the summit. A prescription of stone flint and loam mix has been found to keep grass surfaces from compaction from foot traffic and vehicle movement. Each trial site has a different proportion of loam and it is hoped that the technique will be a success and will then be used for other sites of worn grass around the Hill and Regent's Park.

Lack of seasonal rain and of germination has meant that the fencing which should

have been removed by now will not be taken down until the grass seed germinates and thickens. The ground will then be monitored for its resistance to compaction from both vehicle and foot traffic.

*Mark Bridger,
Assistant Park Manager*

Plant list 2017 from the RCP

The Royal College of Physicians' head gardener, Jane Knowles and associate Sam Crosfield have produced a really useful list of all 1093 plants in their medicinal garden with their reasons for growing and location. Invaluable to supplement the excellent tours of the RCP led by the garden fellows in the summer, it is available from the front desk at the RCP. The tours are held on the first Wednesday at 2pm until October. Please call Please call 0203 075 1200 to book. Group tours can be arranged at other times via the Social Events Manager on 0207 034 4901.

Zoo news

Jimmy the Gibbon is returning to ZSL shortly after his stay at Whipsnade while his new enclosure was being constructed. The night-time summer events return, this year under the new name, Zoo Nights. New talks and events, exciting performers and some of London's finest food stalls, should provide a truly special Friday night experience.

ZSL is delighted to announce that world-renowned architects Fosters + Partners have been appointed to redesign the aviary. We are sure that Lord Foster and his firm will produce a truly unique exhibit and something which would have made the aviary's conceiver, Lord Snowdon, proud.

Sign up for membership today at zsl.org/membership or call 0344 225 1826. Zoo nights runs on Friday nights from 2-30 June, is just for adults and costs £17.50

*James Wren,
Development Director, ZSL*

Another house in the park

The Crown Estate, which is effectively a government development agency, is working with architects on proposals for a six bedroom house, with underground swimming pool and gym, to replace the Studio on the



Alison Kemp

There cannot be many members of the Friends of Regent's Park and Primrose Hill who would opt to swim in the Hampstead Ponds on a cold December morning, but that is how committee member Alison Kemp had chosen to start her day when I met her. Like so many members of the Friends' committee Alison leads a busy life. She works full-time as a surveyor, and is an active member of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, and a former primary school governor. She also enjoys singing, and met her husband while both were singing, in different choirs, in St Mark's Church, Regent's Park. Although she does not have a specific role on the Friends' committee, Alison is hoping to help increase membership, which has fallen recently.

She moved to Primrose Hill with her husband and family in 1983. When her children were little they often played in the park; the biggest change that Alison has noticed in the park since then is that it has become

so much more crowded. She believes this is partly because so many of the smaller open spaces in London have been, or are being, developed and lost. More people have to travel to Regent's Park and Primrose Hill in order to find a calm and pleasant place in which to breath fresh air, see the sky, exercise and 'restore their inner selves'. Given how important this is for people's health, Alison wonders if the NHS should provide some of the funding for the park? Open space is obviously