

We also need your help and support to ...

Ensure summer music on the Bandstand

The Friends are supporting a summer programme of music on The Bandstand. Friends member and Crown Estate Paving Commissioner Mark Elliott has put in a great deal of time and effort, working with the Royal Academy of Music and others to put together what looks to be a terrific programme on Sundays between 3-5pm running from late June to early September. As soon as the dates are finalized posters will be placed on park notice boards. There are still some vacancies for Friends to fill the site supervisor role for a few of the afternoons. Training and guidance notes will be provided as will a clear schedule for each afternoon's performance. Anybody interested in volunteering should make contact via chair@friendsofregentspark.org

Nick Biddle, Park Manager

Save the home for birds and primates

ZSL is calling on animal lovers to help renovate ZSL London Zoo's iconic Snowdon Aviary – offering donors the chance to become an integral part of the historic building's metamorphosis.

The historic exhibit is set to be transformed into a state-of-the-art walk-through primate enclosure, allowing visitors and schoolchildren to get closer than ever before to its troop of incredible colobus monkeys.

Last year the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) granted an incredible £4.9m for the Aviary to be overhauled by architects Foster + Partners, but we still need to raise a further £1.8m before restoration work can begin. We're giving donors the opportunity for their names to be immortalised in the structure for a £100 donation, or for their own personal message to become a permanent part of the London skyline for £400.

To donate and save a local landmark of historic, cultural and architectural significance visit zsl.org/savethesnowdon.

Transform Play in the Park at Gloucester Gate

The Royal Parks are excited to share with the Friends of Regent's Park and Primrose Hill that they have now launched their public fundraising appeal to raise funds to transform the playground at Gloucester Gate. Look out for posters on site, in the noticeboards and a video online! The name of the fundraising appeal is 'Future Memories Made Here'. So many happy memories are

made in playgrounds and it is these memories that have inspired the Regent's Park team to create a beautiful play space where so many more children can make memories that will last a lifetime. If you have any memories made at Gloucester Gate playground then the Royal Parks team would love to hear from you.

Using natural materials such as wood, rope, willow and new planting, the vision is to bring the park into the playground and take play out into the park. Another key priority of the designs has been to improve accessibility and

ensure that children of all ages and abilities, along with their family, can play together, not in isolation.

It will cost £1million for this transformation to become a reality and The Royal Parks are appealing to the local community for support to help raise £100,000 towards this target so that works could begin this winter. Every penny received will really make a difference and major gifts will be acknowledged within the playground itself. Your support will help create a state-of-the-art, fully accessible playground that blends beautifully with the surrounding landscape and fires the imagination of all who visit. If you would like to find out more, please contact Maggie on 0300 061 2290 or email mmay@royalpark.org.uk

To make a donation please visit www.royalpark.org.uk/playscape



For the diary

First Monday each month at 1pm on the Broad Walk by the old gazebo
Free dog training
We work with puppies, adolescent and adult dogs, regardless of their breed, size or age
Contact Susan at the Dog Hub, 07875 778 785
at the.hub@btopenworld.com or www.thedoghub.co.uk

28 March 12.30
The Spencer Collection: A Musical Banquet
Royal College of Music Museum Ground Floor
Free – tickets from the Academy Box Office

28 April 8.30 am
Another wonderful bird walk with Tony Duckett.
Please email or telephone Anne-Marie to reserve a place.
ame@dsl.pipex.com or 07711 433 468

12 May & 19 May 11.00-15.00
Postcards from Park's past
Open Day
The Home Depot revisited on Marylebone Green

9-10 June
Open Gardens Weekend
Park Square & Park Crescent
Royal College of Physicians's Garden

11 June 13.00
Medicinal plant lecture
Royal College of Physicians
Tickets £10.00
020 7034 4901 or social.events@rcplondon.ac.uk

14 June 18.00
1700s Enlightenment, revolution & a college in crisis
Free but advisable to book
020 7034 4901 or social.events@rcplondon.ac.uk

13 June-17 June
Taste of London
Tickets on sale soon

Regent's Park Open Air Theatre

17 May -15 June
Peter Pan
22-30 June
The Turn of the Screw
6-28 July
As you Like It

3 August-15 September
Little Shop of Horrors

Remember Friends have a discount

Friends of Regent's Park & Primrose Hill: £30 best available bookable in person at the Box Office. Available to purchase from 2 weeks prior to the performance. Excludes Saturday evenings. Max 2 tickets per transaction.

Park management

Park Office: 0300 061 2300
Park Manager: Nick Biddle
nbiddle@royalpark.org.uk

Police: 999 (if a crime is being or you believe is about to be committed)
101 (anti-social behaviour, Park Regulations offences or to report a crime already committed)

Friends of Regent's Park & Primrose Hill
Chair Ianthe McWilliams
chair@friendsofregentspark.org

Treasurer Robin Das
treasurer@friendsofregentspark.org

Membership Administrator Alan Martin
membership@friendsofregentspark.org

Secretary Jacky Erwtaman
secretary@friendsofregentspark.org

Newsletter Anne-Marie Craven
newsletter@friendsofregentspark.org

The new website is now www.friendsofregentspark.org

Newsletter 95

The Friends of Regent's Park & Primrose Hill

Spring 2018

From the Chair

Welcome to another newsletter! in parallel with the 8 March AGM (see friendsofregentspark.org). As well as great news and updates about the Park, this issue covers subscription renewal (with a prize!), consultations you can respond to, funding requests, and calls for volunteers to help run events. Please respond to any of these.

Zoo prize We knew that raising the subscription and changing our membership records system at the same time could be tricky. Indeed in order to tempt as many of you as possible to sort out this bit of important administration, we are offering a prize donated by the Zoo.

20mph in the Park You can find out more about, and comment by 12 April on draft regulations put forward by the Royal Parks: there are four key changes proposed affecting the Regent's Park:

- **20mph limit for motor vehicles (not bikes) on the roads in the park**
- **an increase in parking charges for inflation (to 70p per 15 mins) and to make Sunday charges the same as weekdays**
- **to enable paying for parking by phone**
- **clarification that drones and fireworks and barbecues are not permitted except where designated or with written permission.**

These will not come into force until the Parks complete their consultation and the regulations are passed by Parliament. The consultation is on the Royal Parks website at www.royalpark.org.uk/whats-on/latest-news/consultation-on-amendments-to-the-royal-parks-regulations. You can reply by email or by letter (to Consultation - Regulations Review, The Royal Parks, The Old Police House, Hyde Park, London, W2 2UH).

Safer Parks Police Panel

held its AGM and quarterly meeting in January. Our dedicated police officer for Regent's Park, PC Rebecca England, described the range of effective initiatives that had been taken and the resulting increases in warnings and fines. **CS11** Finally, many people ask about the proposal for a cycle superhighway (CS11) which would shut four of the gates to the park at least during the rush hour. No further official information has emerged. But in a flurry of leaks and fake news at the start of February, various groups were blamed for obstructing the plans. A cycling group claimed that no stakeholders now oppose it. That was patently untrue, ignored individual park users, and has since been contradicted. So we continue to await developments (while Westminster councillors collect signatures on a petition against the gate closures). Meanwhile I have suggested there should be consultation with local park users about how best to signal the new 20 mph speed limit and to get behaviour to change when it is introduced. In my view the effect of the new limit should be tested before any attempt is made to close the gates.

I would be very interested to hear your views on these or other matters, so I can properly represent the Friends when I meet all the various authorities.

Our new membership system and website enable people to

And a plea

Have you yet set up to pay your new subscription on our new system?

DO YOU WANT TO WIN
Zoo tickets for a family of four to visit the Zoo for a day? This prize has been kindly donated by ZSL.

This fabulous prize could be yours if by the end of April, you have logged onto the online membership record we have created for you, and

pre-authorized your renewal payment by Direct Debit. If you haven't provided us with your email address, you need to do that first. PLEASE DO THIS WHILE THIS INCENTIVE IS AVAILABLE!

James Wren our committee member from ZSL (the Zoo), has kindly offered this prize to help us persuade you to get online and make use of our new membership system (as we have been asking since November!). On 1 May we will draw the winner randomly from the group of those who have pre-authorized their renewal payment by Direct Debit using the new online membership system.

Many of you Friends have just not answered our communications, let alone taken the action we requested! I quite understand that something for which you have happily paid £10 a year on a standing order, for up to 26 years without needing to take any action, may not be at the top of your action lists in the morning!

But as Friends we need to move with the times, and the reason for uplifting the subscription for the first time in 26 years was so that we could do more to support the parks, and not spend increasingly limited resources on merely keeping going with our newsletters and our meetings (as printing and costs continue to go up).

Our new membership system and website enable people to

see more clearly and with more regular updates, what we are offering, and to sign up as members straight from the website. (The address is still www.friendsofregentspark.org so do have a look.)

What is the competition for? Out of 703 people on our list of paying Friends, only 162 have pre-authorized their renewal by Direct Debit (which saves us having to send them reminders in future). 27 have told us they cannot or will not, as they have no email, no computer or are nervous of banking online. Of course, these people are not being banned from membership! But we must reassure you that the new system gives you control over your details: lets you give us your consent to communicate with you (in line with upcoming data privacy legislation); and means that when you adjust your subscription to take account of the new agreed rate of £20, (which you need to do something about anyway) you can set it up to pay until you choose to stop it. You also get the option to receive this newsletter electronically if you wish to relinquish getting your hard copy.

If you have not had (or kept) letters or emails from our membership administrator Alan Martin (membership@friendsofregentspark.org) or from me, Ianthe McWilliams, explaining what you need to do, then the simplest thing is to go to our website, and click on the membership tab. That will enable you to check your own details, give us permission to communicate with you, and then set up future payments. We do of course then ask you to cancel existing standing orders when you set up your direct debit, so you don't pay twice!

If you haven't had an email, it may be that you once gave us an email address which you have since changed. Please



help us by checking to make sure what we have transferred from our old system are in fact your current details.

You may ask why we want you to logon onto your membership record and arrange payment before your membership renewal date: **First:** If you have a standing order for £10, you need to cancel that before it pays out, so replace it with the new Direct Debit for our new £20 subscription level.

Second: New data protection law is coming in May. By logging on, you can give your consent to us communicating with you; by signing up you give that.

Third: We are offering a prize!

[Technical detail: until your subscription is due when you logon, the system will say 'no money due', but if you tick the box to 'pre-authorise future payments', you will have the option to set up a Direct Debit. We appreciate that some people prefer to pay by Credit/Debit card and this is acceptable, but it means you will have to logon on each year to make your renewal payment. However, because you can't pre-authorise payments using a Credit/Debit card, we are not offering those who chose to pay by this method eligibility for the Zoo prize.]

Also, please note that a Bank Standing Order does NOT link to the new online Membership system, so incurs more time for membership administration.

Even if you don't want a prize, please do logon and help us run our membership and mailing system appropriately for the 21st century!

In the Gardens

Following extensive reed bed creation and management over a number of years the work is paying off with four water rails spending the winter in the park. Two can be seen from the north side of Hanover Bridge, if you are patient and lucky!

Meanwhile spring is in the air, some grey herons are already incubating eggs, tawny owls are pairing up and being very vocal, great crested grebes are displaying and nest building, woodpeckers are drumming and adult male mute swans are being very aggressive towards each other trying to secure a mate and territory. Recently peregrine falcons could be seen displaying high above

the park. And a number of visitors have commented on a limping moorhen at the Long Bridge arm of the lake. Whilst we do everything we can for the wildlife in the park our primary responsibility is towards the collection birds. The wildlife officers have attempted to catch this bird, however it is fit enough to fly away. As it is feeding well and is not in distress the decision in this case is to leave it alone.

Work on the Winter Garden, near the Charlbert Bridge was completed at the end of February and there will be a mass planting of spring flowering bulbs next autumn. It is hoped that this will improve the look of the landscape and of the birch trees and ultimately the gates will be open to access to the area – dogs on leads however.

November saw the first games on the new hybrid pitch, a trial undertaken for Sport England which has been a success. Compared to the natural turf pitches which allow less than ten hours of play with cancellations due to too much rain, over fifteen hours of play have been possible on this new pitch.

Another pitch to be trialed in the Spring is Rugby 1 with a product called Carbon Gold. A golf course in Oakhampton has found that this product provided many benefits, producing healthier grass with less feed needed, better drainage and water retention. The automatic mower which was trialed on Nannies Lawn in Queen Mary's Garden has been brought inside for the winter and it is hoped that the manufacturer will allow its use next year as it kept the grass under control.

*Mark Rowe,
Assistant Park Manager*

Austrian gravel lawn

or "Schotterrasen" which is frequently used in Austria, Switzerland and Germany to surface areas with light to moderate vehicle traffic was installed in two areas of Primrose Hill in 2017 - one site in front of the playground and the other to the rear of the summit and both have proved effective. The stone aggregates including flint mitigate the degree of compaction of the ground, allowing the grass roots to survive and air to remain in the soil profile thus keeping the areas green.

The same Schotterrasen soil profile will be installed in front of the summit this year.

De-silting & improving water quality of the lake York Bridge end

The lake at York Bridge at the water cascade and the Community Wildlife garden adjacent to the Tennis Courts will be improved by removing the silt and detritus. This will be poured into eco-bags left on site to dry out producing organic matter which can be incorporated into the mulches made in the leaf yard.

De-compaction of mature trees on the Broad Walk

The tree contractor, City Suburban, undertook work around trees affected by ground compaction due to footfall from visitors and regular joggers.

Two areas were trialed – one opposite the espresso bar on the Broad Walk and some trees on Marylebone Green.

A "Terrain Aeration Terralift" machine has a compressor that aerates soil around tree roots by driving a probe into the ground to a depth of one metre and releasing compressed air into the subsoil. This de-compacts the soil after which a seaweed soil conditioner is injected.

*Mark Bridger,
Assistant Park Manager*

The Tennis Centre

With the main courts now resurfaced work is underway to install a padel court and improve the floodlighting. New lighting technology will enable twice as many courts to be floodlit with less light spill than previously.

The Broad Walk Café

The Café which has been operating as The Smokehouse since 2014 and as The Honest Sausage prior to that will be transformed during February to reopen in March as The Broad Walk Café. Key elements are the removal of the central grill and servery area to be replaced by a counter running along the back wall serving some of the currently popular items like the hot dogs together with what is known as a "deli style offer" i.e. a selection of plated dishes with a choice of salads as well as sandwiches, drinks and great coffee. The aim is to make a café that is more welcoming, accessible and with more space for internal seating.

Goose Deterrent

In June every year several hundred geese descend on Regent's Park to moult. This causes many problems including high levels of fouling and severe damage to the lawns. Many years ago a low-strained wire fence along the lakeside deterred this and park management is considering reintroducing something very similar. Once a design has been prepared The Royal Parks will consult with local stakeholders, including The Friends and the local planning officers before confirming the proposal.

Avenue Road Access Ramp

The Canal and River Trust are working with the Transport for London Quietways team to enable the construction of an access ramp to the canal towpath for pedestrians and cyclists at the south end of Avenue Road. This will require planning permission and the usual consultees will be approached before an application is made to the planning authority, including the Friends and local amenity societies. Comments by 23 March, www.royalparcs.org.uk/avenue-road-access : please give your views direct to the response addresses given, but if you wish, do copy to Ianthe McWilliams, our Chairman, so she knows your views as well.

From muddy boots to corporate treats

For many Friends, the Hub may just be that round overtly modern building which rises alongside the vast acres of grass in Regent's Park, much loved by dogs on weekday mornings and taken over at weekends by sports enthusiasts, young and old. Upstairs with a terrace with superb panoramic park views, Benugo runs the café which attracts people stopping off from their walk or others who wish to escape the city but not their contacts. So they concentrate on their tablets or mobiles and of course their coffee.

Downstairs, inside the submerged entrance with its automatic doors, the visitor will find one or two young men at a reception desk juggling with pitch bookings and payments, and, behind a glass partition,

the sports manager, David Ellis. The Hub is a hub of really impressive sports activity with an annual throughput of more than 400,000 players each year playing football, rugby, lacrosse and cricket. Numbers peak at weekends with some 270 junior football teams present in the winter season between September and Easter. Local adult clubs take their turn on Sundays. And then there are schools mid-week, all provided, of course, rain does not stop play because the ground is sodden. Hence the interest in the new experimental hybrid pitch of plastic underlay and 90 percent grass, funded by Sport for England.

David Ellis, the sports manager, comes originally from Leeds. He did a sports science degree at Loughborough and then worked as fitness manager in a Notting

Hill gym. He joined the Hub a few years ago when the focus of the Royal Parks was more geared to community engagement. Since then the emphasis has changed, not to belittle sport, particularly for children, or an awareness of wider community needs, but to ensure more income. Now a charity, the Government is weaning the Royal Parks off most of its grant income.

David and his team of four manage and rent out the pitches. To hire a football pitch costs £70 for two hours, a changing room is another £50 with an extra £15 if the game needs goal nets and corner flags. Most of the lower ground floor is made over to changing rooms and wash-rooms. After the weekend when a multitude of teams with muddy boots has trampled through, Mondays have to be

reserved for deep cleaning.

If team sports monopolise the grass swards, two of the somewhat pie-shaped rooms on the Hub's lower level with floor to ceiling windows and views of the park are used for regular exercise classes including pilates and yoga from Tuesday through Saturday. These cost £7 a session on a drop-in basis and attract local residents, mainly women, from St John's Wood, Primrose Hill and Camden Town. There are also exercise sessions for special needs.

These spaces can also be hired for parties and meetings for £250 for four hours. Children's birthday celebrations predominate with about 40 last year together with a number of corporate gatherings. These often involve softball or tugs of war outside and have to finish

by 8.30pm. Also guests have to be sufficiently mobile to walk at least from the Outer Circle where cars can be parked. In addition the café upstairs can be rented out at £1,000 plus catering by Benugo, but only five times a year because this involves its early closure at 4pm.

David and his team are also responsible for the very popular trim trail at the foot of Primrose Hill with its array of almost sculptural keep fit rails and obstacles. And they also organise the licensing of private trainers who bring their clients into the park or onto the hill. There was a time once when one or two of them sampled yoga, thinking it would be an easy wheeze. To their surprise, they found they, like the regular class, had a testing work out.

Judy Hillman, Patron

Postcards from the Park's past

The September 2014 edition of the newsletter carried a feature on the Home Depot in Regent's Park which sorted the enormous quantity of mail going to and from the Western Front during

the First World War. In May this year, The Royal Parks and The Royal Parks Guild are organising an activity programme for schools in conjunction with the Postal Museum to tell this amazing story. Pupils will make their own postcards representing the park in wartime, get put to work in

an interactive recreation of the sorting office, and spend time at the allotment, where they will meet a First World War gardener. There will be two public open days (12 & 19 May, 11-3pm) in the pop up Post Office on Cumberland Green.

A walk is also planned which will look at the scope

of the Home Depot and what else was going on around the park during the war.

For more information and to volunteer to help as stewards or leaders of school groups in the allotment to help during this fortnight, *please contact* Eleanor Harding eharding@royalparcs.org.uk



Sorting the mail at the depot in the park, copyright Royal Mail Group, courtesy of the Postal Museum