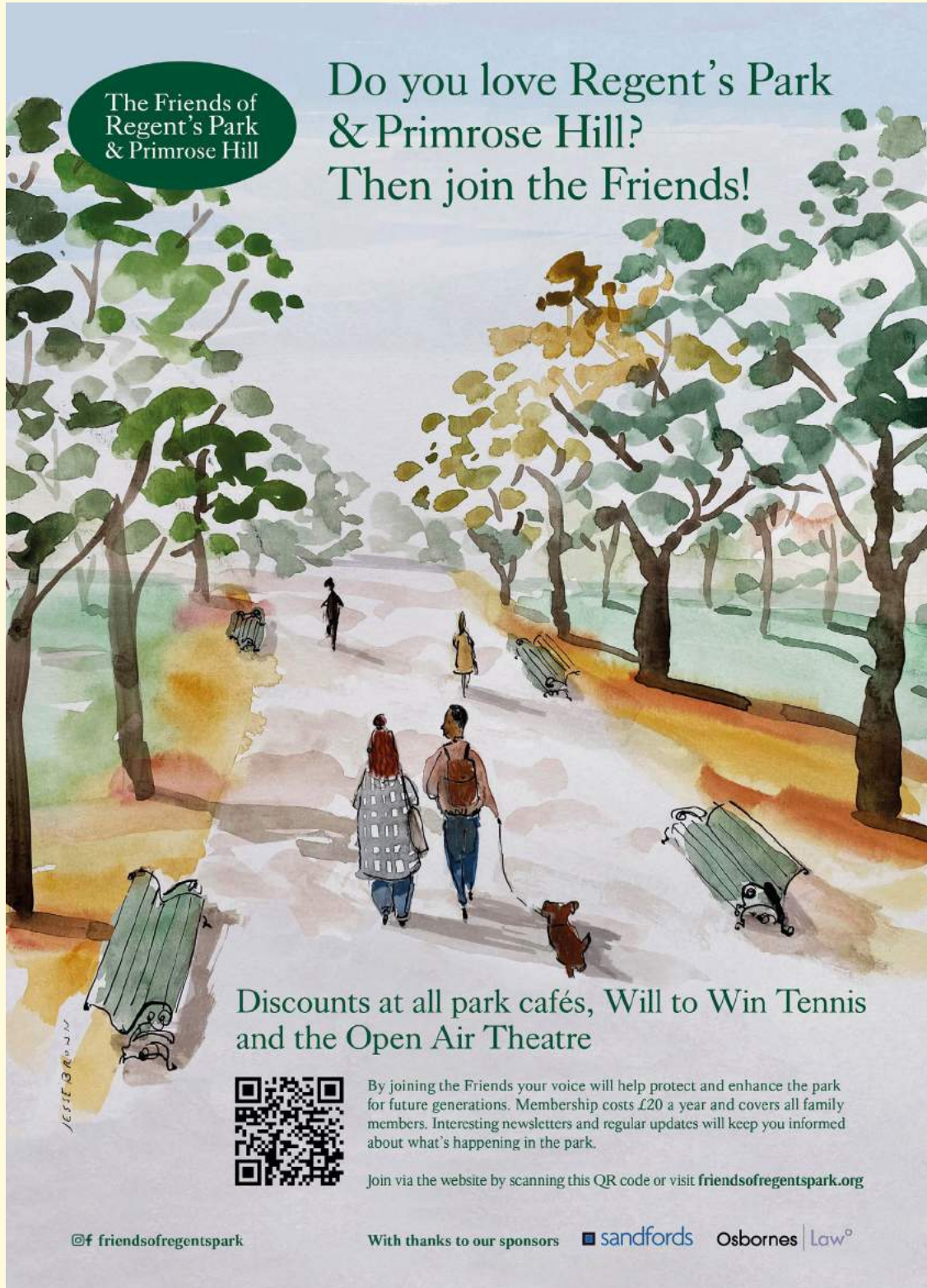


The Friends of
Regent's Park
& Primrose Hill

WINTER 2020

NEWSLETTER No.106



The Friends of
Regent's Park
& Primrose Hill

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& Primrose Hill?
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Discounts at all park cafés, Will to Win Tennis
and the Open Air Theatre

By joining the Friends your voice will help protect and enhance the park for future generations. Membership costs £20 a year and covers all family members. Interesting newsletters and regular updates will keep you informed about what's happening in the park.

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JESSIE BROWN

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FROM THE CHAIR

Mark Elliott, Chairman

I opened our last Newsletter on a sad note as I reported the sudden death of our patron, Judy Hillman. I open this one with happy news of our new patron, Linda Lennon. You will find a profile of her in this newsletter. I have known Linda for many years, and I agree with the frequent press description of her as a 'sunny' person. I am sure she will bring her own brand of sunshine to the Friends.

Our virtual AGM was attended by about 140 members – approximately twice the number we usually had at our church hall meetings. Many of us missed the chance to meet friends, share a glass of wine and catch up on news, so I look forward to returning to church hall meetings next year.

But maybe we should offer both options – come to the hall or log in from home. Let me have your views.

Following a request in Update 14/20 for three volunteers, we were delighted to recruit all three. Andrew Yeomans, a Chartered Accountant, has agreed to

audit our accounts; Jesse Brown, a local artist, offered to help with design work; and Anna Corp volunteered to help with our social media.

Jesse's art has shone a new light on the image of the Friends. His lovely poster is on our front cover and on all the park notice boards. Do please send this poster to your friends and family and invite them to join us.

Here is the link to the poster:
<https://www.friendsofregentspark.org/gallery/posters/>

For commercial reasons, we highlight the discounts that can produce a return on your £20 subscription very quickly, but what we really want are people who love the park to add their voices to ours so that we can have a greater impact.

The Royal Parks Charity lost all their event income in 2020 and faces a difficult financial situation for the next few years. They will need all the help they can get from the Friends. We need to be ready for this challenge.

One of the strong recommendations from our strategic advisor, Biba Hartigan, is that

we should introduce an active social media programme using Instagram, Facebook and later, Twitter. Committee member, Mike Baker, started by posting a photo each day on Instagram and, to date, has posted more than 150 photos.

To build our social media we are pleased to welcome Anna Corp as our new advisor. Anna has a vast experience of websites and social media. She established the British Bird Lovers Facebook page ten years ago, and it now has 96,000 followers! We hope she can take the Friends to such an amazing level.

I continue to receive many e-mails about people breaking park regulations and I welcome each one as they help paint a picture of our members' experience in the park.

I am pleased to report that our new dedicated park policeman, Will Richards, is taking an active approach to the concerns you raise (cycling, joggers, dogs etc). You will see him whizzing around the park on his bike tackling as many of your concerns as possible. You will find Will's profile in this newsletter. Thank you Will.

I wish you all enjoyment in your park, and, hopefully, a COVID and flu-free winter ♦

WELCOME TO LINDA, OUR NEW PATRON

Margaret Elliott

Sad though we all are at the death of our patron, Judy Hillman, we are delighted that Linda Lennon has agreed to become the third patron of the Friends of The Regent's Park and Primrose Hill.

Some of you will have already met Linda when she was the Director of the Crown Estate Paving Commission (CEPC) from 2018 to 2020, and maybe some of you heard her interviewed by Robert Elms for The Listed Londoner on BBC Radio London in 2014, when she said that The Regent's Park was her favourite royal park.

Linda was born in Surrey in 1963 and attended Wallington High School for Girls.

To fund a 'gap year' before university she took a job as an administrative officer for Croydon County Court. Enjoying the work and the promotions, she never went to University, and by 2003 had become Area Director for the 28 London Civil and Family Courts. It was during this time that Linda got to know The Regent's Park well as she worked at the Central London Civil Justice Centre in Park Crescent West for six years. In 2009 Linda was appointed Chief Executive Officer of the Parole Board.

In the olympic year of 2012, Linda was appointed Chief Executive Officer of the Royal Parks, a position she held for three years, and enjoyed very much. During this time, she laid the groundwork for transferring responsibility for the Royal Parks from the Department of Culture, Media and Sport to the Royal Parks Charity that was created in 2017.

In 2015 Boris Johnson, then Mayor of London, appointed her Chief Executive Officer for the Olympic Stadium. Linda's experience at The Royal Parks



and the CEPC, and her association with numerous political figures in local and national government, makes her the perfect person to oversee the Friends. Described as jolly and sunny,

Linda's bubbly character soon makes her a friend of those she meets. Her interests are wide, and varied, so she particularly loves the diversity that The Regent's Park and Primrose Hill offer ♦

THE AGM

Anne-Marie Craven

Our first and let us hope, the last, virtual AGM with around 150 attendees was led by our new Chair, Mark Elliott on 14 October 2020. He introduced the panel members – Nick Biddle (our Park Manager), PC Will Richards (our Park policeman who replaced Richard Taylor), Richard Portnoy (Treasurer and Membership Secretary), Mat Bonomi (Head of 15 Transport & Access, The Royal Parks), Jason Allen (SMC Youthwork – St Mary’s Primrose Hill) and Justin McKie (Chair, Safer Parks panel and The Regent’s Park Cyclists).



The minutes of the 2019 meeting were duly approved. The departing committee members were thanked for their contributions, in particular, Ianthe McWilliams, former Chair, and Stephen Crisp. Mark also fondly mentioned Ivor Kamlsh and Judy Hillman, both of whom had sadly died. He paid special tribute to Judy and announced that Linda Lennon CBE had agreed to become our new patron.

The new committee members – Mark Elliott (Chair), Adrian Jackson (Secretary), Anne-Marie Craven (re-election), Richard Portnoy (Treasurer), Peter Jeffcote, Edward Kellow, Jonathan Brandling-Harris, Michael Baker-Munton, were duly approved.

Jason Allen, Director of SMC (St Mary’s Centre) Youthwork, gave a very moving talk about his work on the project he started 15 years ago, engaging with youngsters aged 12 to 18 suffering from trauma and neglect. The project has adapted to the restrictions of COVID-19 by going online and so, happily, continues.

The Chair outlined the activities, studies, and goals of the Friends over the next few years. He highlighted the strengths of the park but also the lack of a kiosk or visitor centre, the limited volunteer programme and events, not to mention the limited financial reserves compared to other parks’ Friends.

THE Q&A SESSION

Nick Biddle was asked about the reduced opening hours at some of the cafés in the Park and the anti-social behaviour in Primrose Hill, which spiked after the end of lockdown.

Matt Bonomi was asked about the removal of through traffic, problem cyclists and Justin McKie answered stressing his desire for cyclists to be responsible users of the park. On the subject of cycling on footpaths for which there is a penalty if enforced, Will Richards explained that less attention could be paid to this because of the number of other incidents in the park.

The Chair closed the meeting welcoming the new volunteers, Andrew Yeomans, auditor, Jesse Brown, a local artist, who has nobly agreed to step into Ivor’s shoes, and Anna Corp, who will lead the social media campaign.

He thanked members of the committee and the former Chairs and particularly Nick Biddle and his reduced team for maintaining the beauty of the park in these difficult times ♦

MEMBERSHIP STANDS AT JUST UNDER 800 MEMBERS.

Richard Portnoy presented the Treasurer’s report and a summary of the financial position with the balance at the bank on 12 October of £20,800.

Membership stands at just under 800 members.

Mat Bonomi, Head of Transport and Access in the Royal Parks, reported on his work with the Movement Strategy for the Parks, although there has been no trial project in The Regent’s Park. However, the 20mph speed limit has been introduced in all the Royal Parks.

He discussed the scoping study for the Friends’ kiosk which will be deferred to 2022 because of financial reasons.

A detailed marketing strategy was commissioned (see Newsletter Autumn 2020) and there has been much discussion on how to develop a volunteer programme in the Park.

He reported how the Royal Parks have lost 100% of their 2020 event income, which will leave them in a difficult financial position, making the contributions of the Friends as volunteers and fundraisers for park projects especially important.

IN THE PARK

Nick Biddle, Park Manager

These have been the most extraordinary and challenging times. We have lost so much of what we had hoped for this year. Not just the wonderful events cultural and sporting, but much of our income, and with it our capacity to deliver many of the projects in the hoped for time frame; but as The Royal Park Charity we are well placed to face these challenges, confident that we will weather the storm. One benefit of challenging times is that there are valuable lessons to be learned. We have worked more closely together than ever before, both within the Royal Parks and with our contractors and commercial partners. We have had to reset our focus, to keep the parks open and safe for our visitors as well as our staff.

I am delighted with the performance of the team in presenting the park landscape as well as they have over the summer, with spectacular bedding only one of many highlights. The images on The Friends new website are a great testament. And the litter pickers have never worked so hard, especially on Primrose Hill, and to their credit have done so with good spirit.

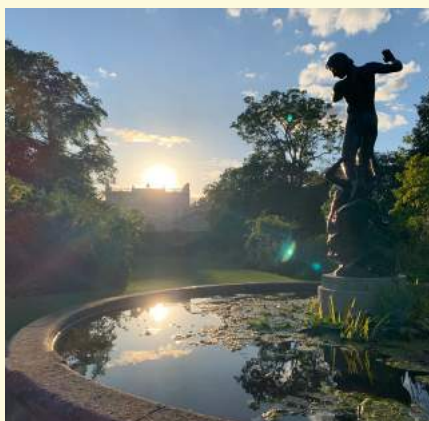
We were delighted to be one of the hundreds of heritage organisations across England to be granted Government funds to help them through the pandemic. For The Regent's Park, as well as making improvements to our toilet facilities, we are at last able to address the way in which we manage our waste. Our current bins were designed for a time when people brought picnic hampers to the park, crockery and cutlery, all of which would go back in the hamper and taken home. It's not like that today! We have trialled different bins and intend to replace much of the current stock with a smaller number of larger bins. As well as increasing capacity we aim to reduce the number of vehicle movements within the park. A static compactor in the leaf yard will assist with this and reduce the number of vehicle movements between the park and the materials recovery facility that processes our waste, ensuring everything that can be recycled is recycled, that nothing goes to landfill; and what cannot be recycled is converted to energy.

We have seen a huge increase in anti-social behaviour across the country since the easing of the first lockdown. For us this has involved large numbers descending on the parks after dark, particularly when marking cultural dates such as Hallowe'en, which was on a scale I've never seen

before, or letting off steam on the last night before the second lockdown, with fireworks and loud music late at night. Primrose Hill has seen the worst of this. The police have committed significant resources to dealing with the issue but at the time of writing we have yet to resolve the problem. We continue to work with the police, local councillors and the London Borough of Camden to tackle the problem as best we can.

On a more positive note, we are absolutely delighted, and I should say somewhat relieved, to have opened the Gloucester Gate playground at long last. After years in the planning and starting on site in late July last year we finally opened the gates at the very beginning of September. We have not yet opened the zip wire or the waterplay, as these may result in localised overcrowding, something that we currently need to be careful to avoid.

I am sincerely grateful to everybody who has worked so hard to keep the parks open, safe and beautiful under these incredibly difficult circumstances. Your Committee have a great vision for how The Friends can add value to the park and I very much look forward to working together as times improve ♦



Photographs by Ed Kellow

POLICING THE ROYAL PARKS – A HUGE CHALLENGE

Mark Elliott

With special focus on The Regent's Park & Primrose Hill (RP&PH). There is much misunderstanding about how The Royal Parks (TRP) are policed. The following are commonly held views:

1. Policing TRP is like policing anywhere else
2. Serious crime does not take place in RP&PH
3. TRP police are an independent police force like the British Transport Police
4. The Park Manager is responsible for enforcing Park regulations
5. Park wardens enforce Park regulations (cycling on footpaths etc)
6. The Park Manager can put up his own signs enforcing Park regulations

NONE of the above is correct

1. POLICING THE ROYAL PARKS

Policing in the Royal Parks dates from 1872 when the Parks Regulation Act created a force of Royal Park Keepers with the powers of police constables within the parks. In 1974 the Parks Regulation (Amendment) Act was passed, and the Royal Park Keepers became the Royal Parks Constabulary (RPC). Following a review in 2003, on 1st April 2004 the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) took responsibility for policing the Royal Parks and formed the Royal Parks Operational Command Unit (OCU) based at the Old Police House in Hyde Park. The early regulations were defined in Parks Regulation Acts 1872–1926 and were significantly updated in the Royal Parks and Other Open Spaces Regulations 1997 <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/1997/1639/contents/made>

Since then, there have been at least seven amendments, the most recent in September 2020 when the 20mph speed limit was introduced. All police in the royal parks must be fully acquainted with these complex regulations, some of which give them more freedom to act than they have under national law.

2. CRIME IN THE PARK

Although rare, serious crime does happen occasionally in the Park. There were 185 Crimes recorded between the 1 July and the 30 September 2020. 112 were distraction thefts, but the types of crime vary.

Police only issue £60 penalty notices for dog fouling, littering and unauthorised cycling on footpaths. They normally give a warning for a first offence and, if a second offence is committed, a court summons. But a court summons can be used for a first offence depending on attitude, level of offence and other factors. On-the-spot cash payment fines are not issued.

For unlicensed music events (UMEs) such as those on Primrose Hill, 'AID' police are drafted in from other parts of London. When the situation on Primrose Hill has been very serious, the Police Territorial Support Group has been called to assist. The park police hand over to the local borough police after 2300hrs and start again at 0700hrs.



3. THE ROYAL PARKS POLICE

Based at the Old Police House in Hyde Park, the Commander is Chief Superintendent Helen Harper and the Senior Leadership Team member is Chief Inspector Simon Brooker. Currently, there are 81 officers.

The Royal Parks police provide coverage for ceremonial events such as Changing of the Guard, Gun Salutes, Guard of honour etc.

Each Royal Park has a dedicated police officer (DPO) and the DPOs report to two Sergeants, currently Sergeant Dan Window for central London and Sergeant Pete Sturgess for Richmond and Bushy parks. They are based at the Old Police House and visit all the Parks on a regular basis. In The

Regent's Park and Primrose Hill the DPO is William (Will) Richards who took over in September from Richard Taylor who retired. Will is permanently based in the park for full day shifts and is supported by daily visits of teams from the Old Police House varying from two to six officers depending on the local situation. Officers work on a three-shift rota: early, mid, and late.

During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, teams of six were regularly seen in RP&PH. Residents and visitors expressed concern that they did not enforce park regulations, but their orders were to focus on ensuring social distancing. Likewise, when raves occurred on Primrose Hill, officers from the Met and Camden Police were assigned to the park. These officers were there for a specific purpose and were not familiar with the Royal Parks Regulations so, to the surprise of residents, did not enforce them.

4. PARK MANAGERS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR ENFORCING PARK REGULATIONS

Royal Parks Managers have no power to enforce park regulations. ONLY the police have the power to do so.

5. PARK WARDENS

Some park residents still think there are Park Wardens who can enforce park regulations. They were abolished in 2004.

TRP has been trialling the use of 'rangers' in Richmond and Greenwich Parks. These volunteers, who are members of their local Friends, wear orange jackets, are trained by TRP and act under their authority. They assist visitors, watch for emergencies, and, if safe to do so, encourage visitors to obey park regulations. The Friends hope to establish a Ranger team in 2021/22

6. THE PARK MANAGER CAN PUT UP HIS OWN SIGNS ENFORCING REGULATIONS

All signs placed in the Royal Parks come from TRP. This includes permanent signs such as 'no dogs allowed' or signposts directing visitors to specific places. Temporary signs, such as those for COVID-19 attached to gates are always supplied by TRP and are standard for all parks. The park manager cannot design and attach his own posters.

What is clear, is that policing The Royal Parks is a highly complex operation. We hope this short summary will help you understand the issues involved ♦

MEET OUR POLICEMAN

Margaret Elliott



Metropolitan Police Officer Will Richards applied to become one of the 60+ police officers assigned to the Royal Parks just over a year ago and is now The Regent's Park and Primrose Hill's dedicated officer.

Before transferring to the Royal Parks, for ten years Will had been a Metropolitan Police Officer in Greenwich and Eltham. Prior to joining the Metropolitan Police, he had spent three years as a Police Community Support Officer (PCSO). Because there is no Police station in The Regent's Park, Will reports for duty in Hyde Park, and then cycles to The Regent's Park and Primrose Hill.

Until he joined the Royal Parks team Will had been very much a South Londoner. He was born in Greenwich and raised in Barnehurst near Bexley, so his only contact with The Regent's Park and Primrose Hill had been visits to the zoo as a boy. Growing up he enjoyed most sports, particularly table tennis, and also hiking and being outdoors. Now living in Erith, Will and his wife Laura have just become proud parents of a son, Lucas.

When Will was asked about his hobbies he included his job, which he really enjoys. Will genuinely wants to have a positive impact on people's lives and likes to see smiles on faces. He hopes members will find him approachable and even-handed, and that they will contact him if they have a problem, or need a helping hand, or some advice.

BIRD NEWS FROM TONY DUCKETT

It has not been the best couple of months for some of the common autumn migrants. Some of the more unusual species were lucky enough to feed in one of the enclosures bordering the open spaces. However, if they wanted to feed on the open grassland areas they were flushed out by the increasing number of dogs and dog-walkers.

The images show some of the visitors who were spotted in the Chat bushes, the Chat enclosure, and the Triangular Pen – the fenced off areas created especially as a safe place for these birds to breed away from the public ♦



1. Lesser Whitethroat found in The Chat Enclosure
2. Stonechat female in the Chat Bush Enclosure, fenced earlier this year
3. Whinchat female in Chat Enclosure
4. Common Redstart female in Chat Enclosure
5. Spotted Flycatcher in Chat Enclosure
6. Meadow Pipit a bird that feeds in long grass, 1 of 2 found in the Triangle Enclosure
7. Chiffchaff in the Chat Enclosure



Clockwise from left:

1. Common garden snails
2. Queen bumblebee
3. Red Admiral butterfly
4. Large black slug
5. Peacock butterfly



SURVIVING THE WINTER – IF YOU ARE A MOTH OR.....

May Webber, Mission Invertebrate Partnership and Community Engagement Officer, The Royal Parks and Charlie Linton

As the evenings draw in and temperatures fall, winter is a tough time for invertebrates living in our Royal Parks. (NB from the editor - invertebrates are creatures without backbone – spiders, moths, bees etc) The cold slows down the muscles of invertebrates making them more susceptible to being hunted and food is in short supply. Fortunately, invertebrates have been on this planet for many millions of years and have adapted to survive the colder months.

SO, WHAT TECHNIQUES DO THEY USE?

Lots of invertebrates have a complex life cycle and will overwinter in different stages, such as an egg or pupae. But some brave species will overwinter as an adult. For example, the very aptly named winter moth (*Operophtera brumata*) can be seen flying even when temperatures are close to zero. However, to survive the harsh conditions, most butterfly and moth species such as the

peacock (*Aglais io*) and small tortoiseshell (*Aglais urticae*) choose to hibernate as an adult, in sheltered spots such as in a park building or shed. Some species will avoid the cold entirely, migrating to countries with warmer climates, returning in spring once nectar sources and the larval foodplant is readily available again.

Similarly, the queens of bumblebees and social wasps survive the winter as adults, foraging on late flowering nectar sources such as ivy flowers, before finding a place to shelter in dense vegetation or under the eaves of roofs. The honeybees (*Apis mellifera*) we have in the park will stay in their hives, huddling around the queen to keep her warm, surviving on honey reserves they made throughout summer.

Other species rely on their freeze tolerance, containing anti-freeze polyhydroxy alcohols in their blood stopping ice crystals forming within their cells. For example, the black slug (*Arion ater*) can survive being partially frozen for short periods of time. Many slugs will remain active if temperatures are above 5°C but will bury themselves underground to find refuge under logs if it gets too cold. Snails also have their own methods of surviving. They find a quiet, sheltered spot and enter a state of decreased physiological activity called torpor, inside their shells, creating a dried film of mucus like a door to cover the opening, helping keep moisture in ♦

WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP INVERTEBRATES SURVIVE THE WINTER?

Unfortunately, with climate change affecting our winters, it is becoming even harder for animals to find enough food and survive the changing temperatures.

Nevertheless, there are small things we can do that have a great impact. Listed below are some of the ways you can help:

- ♦ Over-tidying of gardens and greenspaces can make it difficult for invertebrates to find shelter. Leaving dead flower heads, hollow stems and ivy bushes all provide excellent overwintering spots.
- ♦ If you find an invertebrate active in your home (most likely because of a change in temperature) carefully move it to a cooler place such as a garage, shed or a sheltered spot outdoors.
- ♦ Planting winter-flowering plants, such as snowdrops and hellebores, provides nectar for any brave pollinators venturing outside during milder days.
- ♦ Recording any wildlife you see in winter, using an app like [iRecord](https://www.brc.ac.uk/irecord/) can help scientists better understand the distribution and populations of different species.

SOME SPORTING REMINISCENCES ESPECIALLY THE GOLF AND TENNIS SCHOOL

Hilary Bach

The Regent's Park in the late-19th century was home to several sporting associations, The Royal Toxophilite Society (archery) which met regularly on six acres just off the inner circle where Will to Win has its offices and café near the tennis courts. After almost ninety years in The Regent's Park they were 'expelled' at the request of local residents in 1922, but still meet today near Burnham Beeches.

In 1874 the game of lawn tennis was invented by Major Walter Clopton Wingfield. The All England Croquet Club, founded in 1868, were seeking to expand into the new sport, but their grounds at Worple Road, Wimbledon were too small. It is rumoured that before settling on the current site in Church Road they considered The Regent's Park as a possible venue.



'Holdie' and his swing

In 1920 a young man, Edward Lawrence Holdright (Holdie), acquired a lease from the Reverend Gould of the Baptist College (who had obtained a lease from the Crown), to create a School for Golf and Lawn Tennis. The site was on a narrow strip of land to the west of Macclesfield Bridge, adjacent to the archery ground. Holdie continued to run the school from 1920 until 1970 when he retired. On the

land leased by Holdright there was a shed scheduled for demolition, which he adapted as a golf school and offices. He later built two tennis courts. Among his eminent pupils in the 1920s and 1930s were both the Duke of Windsor and his brother, Prince George, Duke of Kent.

After 50 years, when Ken Thom took over, he employed Howard Richards as tennis coach. Howard remained in the post until the school was disbanded in 2008. Now retired, and living in Primrose Hill, he has been able to recall for us with affection some of his experiences during his 37 years at the school, coaching a wide variety of tennis enthusiasts, and making friends with many local residents and their families who still live in the area.



'Holdie' in relaxed pose

In 1970 Kenneth Thom (an ex Walker Cup player) took over the licence and shortly thereafter built a new clubhouse. A young schoolboy from Marylebone Grammar School came up each morning to roll the courts and make them playable before they were resurfaced. Stuart Goddard paid Ken and Howard a visit some years later with his girlfriend to show her the heavy roller he used to drag over the courts with his 'electric' walk. Stuart Goddard has a successful career in entertainment and is better known as Adam Ant.

André Deutsch, the publisher, used to play with Howard in the very early morning. He was then joined by his aide-de-camp,

Diana Athill, who walked over Primrose Hill from her home, to get a lift with him to work.

Ralph Richardson, then nearly 80, used to appear in a 'massive black helmet' on a 'state-of-the-art motor bike with bare knees protruding from a shabby mac'. He carried his wooden racquet for a session with Howard after performing in the West End the previous night or playing a game of real tennis at Lord's.

Carol Thatcher too was an enthusiastic early morning pupil during the 'Thatcher years'.



Howard and a famous pupil

Perhaps the most memorable of his later pupils was Heather Mills, Sir Paul McCartney's ex-wife. She was a keen tennis enthusiast who took lessons before the loss of her leg in an accident in 1993. She later returned and managed to play with her prosthesis.

Chris Meadows, a professional golfer, replaced Kenneth Thom shortly after the great storm of 1987. Howard recalls that he repaired the damaged pavilion roof, replaced the nets, and made huge improvements to the facilities as well as increasing the membership.

Under sad circumstances in 2008, involving the abortive attempt to build a five-a-side football centre, the lease ran out and the school was closed. The site has now been completely replanted, leaving no sign that the Holdright's school ever existed ♦

The Friends are most grateful to Edward Holdright's granddaughter, a distinguished heart specialist, for access given to the family archives and of course to Howard Richards for his colourful reminiscences.

ZOO NEWS

James Wren,
Fundraising Director, ZSL

It is hard to believe that winter is here, and the country is still in the grip of the coronavirus pandemic. The second lockdown has added further burden to an incredibly tough year for the Zoological Society of London (ZSL) – but inside the peaceful nature haven of ZSL London Zoo, keepers have continued to work hard to ensure that life is normal for the animals.

Many of our residents don't register the difference, but a few have missed the public: Jimmy the gibbon settled for showing off over the boundary fence to walkers in The Regent's Park instead of our visitors, while our inquisitive penguins got special attention from their keepers – and possibly a few extra fish at training time!

There have still been moments of joy at the zoo during these trying times. In September, ITV screened their two-part documentary, London Zoo: An Extraordinary Year, which was filmed at the zoo during lockdown. Millions of people tuned in for a look at life behind our closed gates, with highlights including our vets performing life-saving emergency

surgery on Indi the lioness, and Oni the okapi having an important ultrasound, which took a lot of planning to manage, as the vets and keepers always had to remain two metres apart.

In their dedicated care, Oni gave birth to an adorable calf, Ede, just before the documentary aired – exciting news not only for the ZSL team, but for the global breeding programme for the elusive species, which is threatened by habitat loss and hunting in their native Central Africa.

It's this kind of vital work that we're continuing to ask for support for through our fundraising campaign, backed by Sir David Attenborough.



Becoming a member, buying a gift ticket, ticket to visit or donating at www.zsl.org/donate are all ways that you, our amazing local community, can help support us through this difficult time. And we've got some great Christmas present ideas for animal lovers in the ZSL gift shop, with all proceeds supporting ZSL's work. Check them out at www.shop.zsl.org/.

There is no doubt that 2020 has been a difficult year but I hope that Christmas still brings you all some much-needed festive cheer. It's a time to celebrate family and togetherness, and that's something we've definitely felt in the local community, so once again thank you for all of your support – and here's to a brighter 2021 for us all ♦



MUSICAL TREATS FROM THE ROYAL ACADEMY OF MUSIC

The Royal Academy of Music will be streaming its spring season of events for free on YouTube.

Highlights include a 40th-birthday big band concert for Gwilym Simcock (2 February), Academy favourite Sir Mark Elder conducting Stravinsky and Sibelius (29 January) and the Sainsbury Academy Soloists performing Britten and Elgar (19 February).

Watch from the comfort of your armchair at www.youtube.com/royalacademyofmusic and keep an eye out for full listings announced in December ♦

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