



DO SOMETHING AMAZING TODAY

SPRING & SUMMER 2026

NEWSLETTER NO. 124



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FROM THE CHAIR

Mark Elliott

*Chairman,
Friends of Regent's Park & Primrose Hill*

Since I took on the Chair of the 'Friends' over six years ago in November 2019, the 'Friends', like the UK, has changed a lot. Our main goals have been increasing our membership, getting our members involved in our activities and helping to improve the park.

At the end of 2019 we had about 750 members. Six years later we have over 1400 members, so we have almost doubled our membership. But unlike several of the Royal Parks' Friends groups who offer individual memberships, we offer family membership, so, if the average family is three, we have over 4,000 members.

Getting members involved has also increased dramatically. In 2020, we had only a few events (walks, talks etc.) and a few of our members volunteered at the Bandstand. Thanks to our events manager Viv Ward and his wife Judy, this year the programme that members can enjoy has grown to more than 40 events.

A major event is THE BIG LUNCH to be held this year on Sunday 28 June. This will be our 4th Annual and it gets better year on year. This one will be held in the garden of the Open Air Theatre, and everyone is welcome, so bring your picnic and join the fun. On top of our events programme, Robin Black must find 150 volunteers to be 'greeters' on our Visitor truck 'Rambling Rosie', our Natural History leader Kennedy Cruickshank organises regular wildlife talks and Mike Baker recruits over 300 litter pickers and bulb planters. Added to that, we need event guides, Christmas party helpers, bandstand and music festival volunteers, and soon, people to help out on the Kiosk, located just over the two blue bridges.

What are our future goals? Our constitution is very clear about that:

To promote and encourage the conservation, preservation and improvement of Regent's Park and Primrose Hill ("the Park") to ensure that the Park remains and is enhanced as an area of natural beauty, a woodland habitat for wildlife and an attractive man-made parkland;

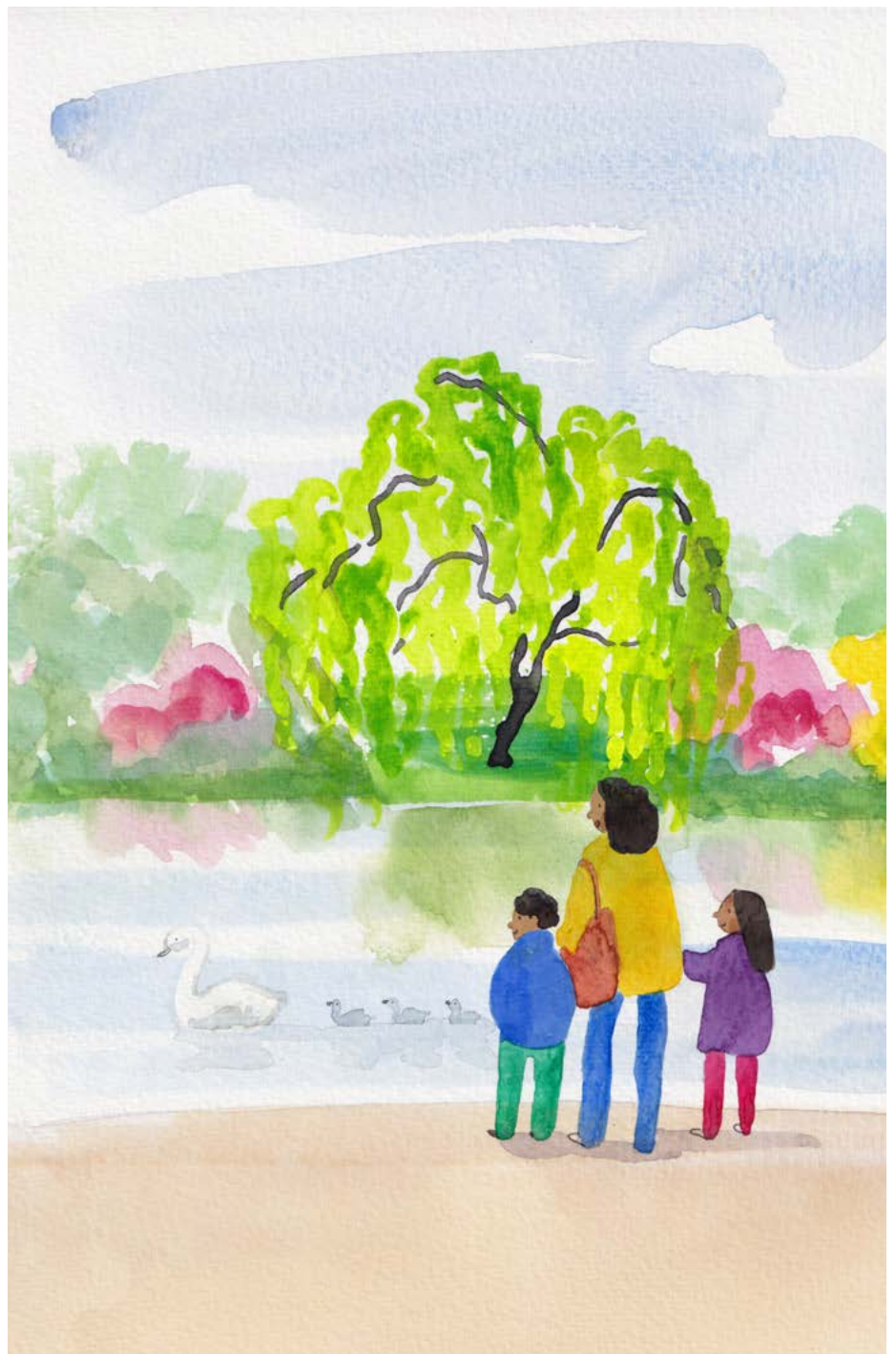


Illustration by Jesse Brown

So, joining the 'Friends' and getting involved in the park is what it is all about. As a goal, getting our family membership over 2,000 (about 6,000 individuals) should be achievable and so should doubling the number of members

who get involved.

Always remember that we are here to benefit our members and the park, so, if you are not a member, then please join and once a member, please **get involved**.

MEET OUR NEW PATRON - WESLEY KERR OBE

It is an honour to be asked to serve as Patron to the Friends. The Regent's Park and Primrose Hill are two of the finest landscapes in the great metropolis of London, a city in a wood, beside a river. London's parks, watercourses and gardens have shaped me. A Windrush baby, I was conceived in Guava Ground, Middlesex, Jamaica but born in Middlesex England close to the River Brent, in Perivale near Greenford. My first proper experience of wildlife was seeing the deer in Bushy Park, and my living history as a boy was wondering and wandering at Hampton Court Palace and around Windsor, which influenced my subsequent careers, with an abiding interest in UK history and expertise on the monarchy.

During my gap year, in student jobs, and as a young adult, I spent time living in Primrose Hill, St John's Wood, and Belsize Park. As I write this in my Kensal Rise eyrie I can see through the trifold back windows above my blossoming garden – the top of Hampstead Heath, The Telecom (Post Office) Tower, which is also visible from the new Queen Elizabeth II Garden which has been my passion project. I can see The Shard too. I turn round and through the balconied front window see the distant acid grasslands of Richmond Park.

It was a privilege to chair the Heritage Lottery Fund London Committee from 2007-2014, to be the capital's 'Heritage Man' as the BBC called me, involved in hundreds of projects in every borough, including one of the biggest investments in parks since Victorian times. Preserving the best of the past and making it fit for us now and for future generations.

In my university studies as an historian, my professional life as journalist and broadcaster, about to celebrate 50 years since I was first on telly, for me it has always been about contemporary history, heritage, arts, culture and telling stories. The Royal Parks are living history, but also fantastic for daily re-creation, giving us oxygen to breathe, storing and sequestering carbon, cooling us in the summer, lifting our spirits. I have been lucky enough to travel the world reporting on everything from politics to plant and garden history. In mid-life I trained as a horticulturist, and I am an elected Member of the Royal Horticultural Society Council. Gardens and gardening, when we have a chance, and of course public parks, are central to our national identity; we must do everything possible to cherish them and keep them accessible.

I recall cycling to City Hall in a huge rainstorm in Spring 2013 to be interviewed for the Royal Parks Board; my smart suit drenched. I cycled to most meetings up to the last Board meeting at Hyde Park in February 2026. Those



Above: Royal Parks Trustee Aurora Antrim and Wesley Kerr planting perennials in the new Queen Elizabeth II Garden.

Left: Linda Lennon, Mark Elliott and Wesley Kerr.

13 years - three as Board Member, nine as DCMS appointed Trustee of the new charity and a final few months as Board Observer have been joyful. It's been a privilege to help run these magnificent parks, to make them more financially sustainable, to secure more pedestrian crossings across the Outer Circle and enable essential repairs for inner London's oldest water passage York Bridge, which dates to the late 18th century. To insource key contracts. To build horticultural skills and help parks plan and plant for the changing climate. To lead on transformative projects restoring and revivifying Brompton Cemetery, recreating the 17th century landscape at Greenwich Park.

The Regent's Park and Primrose Hill are immeasurably precious. Designed but natural, mostly never built on, offering prodigious vistas and home to two universities and a world leading music conservatoire.

The park boasts stately avenues, lakes big and small, prodigious wildlife, a huge array of sporting and children's play facilities. World leading events such as *Taste* and *Frieze* take place here. An incredibly vibrant community of Friends generously doing brilliant voluntary work, responsible for great cultural, heritage and environmental activities.

For me Regent's and Primrose Hill encompass the surrounding cityscape, the garden squares and crescents, the street trees with that designed connection through to St

James's Park, the Grand Junction and Regent's canals, which with the Thames make us part of an island.

We possess almost as many trees as Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens together of remarkable species cultivar and variety. With many tree types fresh to the park populating the new garden, resilient for the climate of dryer warmer springs and summers and wetter winters we look to the future.

We have no actual palaces as in other parks but are blessed with, a remarkable series of palatial surrounding buildings which give an astonishing architectural backdrop, but also create a sense of hortus conclusus, a world of big skies grassland, arboretum.

There is so much to look forward to this Spring after the endless rain of January and February. The beautiful new two-acre garden on the old Nursery site is a great space to complement the interlocking jigsaw of horticulture at the centre of the park. The brilliant horticultural teams have a rolling series of planned improvements that they are considering throughout the parks.

Vincent Van Gogh spent a very formative three years in London from 1873 before he became a fully fledged painter. He adored the Royal Parks and wrote, 'In all parts of the city there are splendid parks with a wealth of flowers, such as I have seen nowhere else.' That is still the case. Long may it continue.



From the HTA Design website: 'At the southern main entrance, visitors will be greeted by a large pond with seating and a pergola, creating a welcoming and serene entry point. The central promenade will be bisected by a meandering path which will lead the visitor through a series of beautiful landscapes. Additionally, a network of small-scale informal paths will allow visitors to wander through the planting and explore the garden further.'
© HTA Design

QUEEN ELIZABETH II GARDEN UPDATE

Emily McGhie

Senior Communications Officer, TRP

In The Regent's Park, work is progressing well on the new garden to commemorate the life of Queen Elizabeth II, and is on track to open to the public on Monday 27 April.

Last year, we were delighted to welcome Fiona Packe as Head Gardener. Fiona brings a wealth of horticultural experience from a diverse career in the UK and abroad. She will lead the establishment and maintenance of the new garden and other key horticultural features across The Regent's Park and Primrose Hill, overseeing a dedicated team of gardeners and volunteers.

Her expertise in climate-resilient planting will be central to shaping this innovative space.

Last autumn, over 200,000 spring bulbs were planted across the site, along with a variety of trees including a magnolia chosen for its climate resilience. The main paths are now complete, and our horticultural team are busy behind the scenes getting everything ready.

The garden will be a lasting tribute to Queen Elizabeth II – a space for reflection, biodiversity, and connection with the natural world. Many of the trees and plants have been carefully chosen for their ability to withstand climatic extremes, ensuring the long-term resilience of the space.

Key features include a central promenade

with an accessible platform over the pond, a wildflower meadow, and a flower garden with species of personal significance to the late Queen.

The project will also deliver a 184% net gain in biodiversity, transforming a redundant brownfield site into a thriving green space. This includes 2,000 square metres of wildflower meadows and over 5,000 square metres of climate-resilient, pollinator-friendly planting.

Our horticultural team are busy putting the finishing touches to the site, and there will be plenty of spring colour for visitors to enjoy. For more updates please visit royalparks.org.uk (shorturl.at/zFiGe).

TREES SURVIVE RELATIVELY CALM WINTER

Matt Steinmann
Abicultural Officer

The winter months have been long, dark and wet but I write on the spring equinox and buds are bursting throughout the park.

Our winter tree works have been ongoing, with works to trees around the new garden having been prioritised to address the altered risk profile of the area (many more people will be around these trees than before). Most recently we have high pollarded an ash adjacent to one of the northern exit paths which was riddled with Shaggy Bracket (the fungal pathogen *Inonotus hispidus* - black fruiting bodies visible in the crown of the tree).

We've not had any significant winter storms and so have not lost any significant trees so far. It's been a wet but relatively calm winter.

The lime avenue in the Italian Gardens has been repruned in the formal box style which was established a few years ago. I'm very pleased with the effect which I believe sits very sympathetically in The Royal Parks' the most formal garden. For the first time we pruned the top of the trees, so the formality is enhanced. We will maintain the hedge at this scale with an annual or biannual re prune.

The removal of deadwood from the London plane trees will follow over the next month or two. The accelerated death and failure of branches caused by the *Massaria* fungi (*Splanchnonema platani* - one of my favourite fungi names!) is addressed by the trees' reinspection - now completed - and the deadwood's removal where it is identified and poses a risk. Of course, as in our management of deadwood in all trees, if we can keep it in the tree safely we do so. Deadwood is valuable habitat.

With regard to tree planting, this year we concentrated on planting for succession of the hawthorns on Primrose Hill. We are



Newly pruned lime trees along the avenue in the Italian Gardens.

experimenting with planting much younger trees which should establish more easily and need less expensive after care. They do however need more protection when young

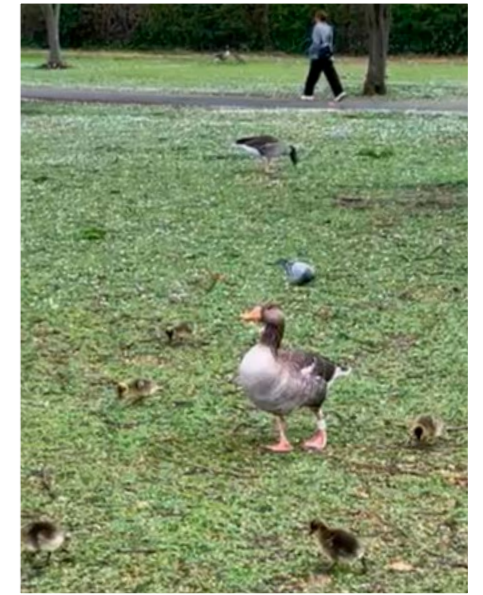
and so you can see them surrounded by baskets across Primrose Hill.

Here's hoping for a spring and summer which do not feature drought!

Seeking Committee Member with Web Design Skills

We are looking for someone to join the Friends committee who has experience working with hands-on designing and maintaining small websites, preferably for a charity or community organisation.

If this interests you, please write to chair@friendsofregentspark.org



Clockwise from top right: Magnificent Kingfisher photo © Magnus Andersson; Greylag goose and goslings, the first of any of the colour-ringed Greylags across the central London Parks this year © Magnus Andersson; New Kingfisher nesting bank © Kennedy Cruickshank.

NATURAL HISTORY NOTES

Kennedy Cruickshank
Natural History Group organiser

Meandering through the misty Park on a late-March early morning, a marvellous find was the elegant new Kingfisher nesting bank (above), cleverly hidden facing the lake water away from passers-by, despite its still earthy top. New grass will soon cover it, close behind the fence on the left side of the path down from the Queen Elizabeth II commemorative garden toward Long Bridge.

Kingfishers have long made nests somewhere, usually unknown, on the lake-side and Magnus Andersson caught the most dramatic bird photo of the year to date (above right) not far from this same site. We shared it in our February update but here it is again shown for its drama.

For the second photo, an inset from a video, the Royal Parks official bird ringer Bill Haines commented: 'This Greylag goose (ring no. U911 on his left foot) is an adult male that

was ringed at the Round Pond in Kensington Gardens on 29/01/2026. Its only other sighting prior to this one was at the Boating Lake at The Regent's Park on 13/02/2026. These are (unsurprisingly) the first goslings of any of our colour-ringed Greylags across the central London Parks this year. Hope they make it.'

It's good to have UK native geese in the Park, and not just the now ubiquitous Canada geese, which were introduced as a present for King Charles II in 1665. These were restricted to a few special collections until the mid-20th century when they escaped, probably during WW2. The Canadas have expanded dramatically in the last 70+ years. Greylags do mix with Canada flocks.

By the time you read this our first bird walk (15 April) will have come and gone and I thank all of you who joined. There is another scheduled for **Tuesday 6 October, 7:30- 9:00 a.m.** If you would like to attend, please book here (frp-photomembers.org/events/copy-of-bird-walk-7th-october-2025) as places are limited and we would love to welcome you.

SAVE THE DATE

The second talk in our Royal College of Physicians (RCP) Series, 'The history of Vitamin C and its presence in plants of both the RCP garden and Regent's Park & Primrose Hill' with Dr Arjun Devanesan, FRCP

Tuesday 12 May, 6:30 p.m.
*Meeting Room
 Regent's Park Offices
 NW1 4NR*

Please confirm by e-mail to wildlife@friendsofregentspark.org

More Natural History Talks will be published in the Newsletter and/or monthly updates throughout the year.

NEWS FROM THE SPORTS HUB

Benjamin Ladipo
Sports Development Officer

It's been a relatively slow winter period at the Hub, mainly due to ongoing poor weather and heavy rainfall, which has unfortunately led to several cancellations.

That said, we've still had a few highlights worth sharing.

At the end of January, ahead of their Champions League fixture against Arsenal, we welcomed a small group of players from Kairat Almaty of the Kazakhstan Premier League, who used the Hub for some light training sessions in preparation for the match.

I thought the Friends might enjoy this

really positive and heartwarming article written by Daniel Floyd from Turning Point, a charity supporting individuals dealing with addiction. The piece (found here: shorturl.at/midNF) highlights the impact of their sessions both in Regent's Park and across the wider organisation.

Lastly, we had a special visit on Saturday 21 March from the U.S. Women's National Team coach, Emma Hayes, who attended a memorial match in honour of her father, one of the founding figures of the youth league. She also took part in presenting medals and trophies to the youth teams, marking the penultimate week of their season. Unfortunately, due to the youth, we could not take any photos but suffice to say it was an event they will never forget.



Benjamin Ladipo with players from Kairat Almaty who trained at the Hub.



Trevor alongside the Grounds Team of the Year, with their award in October 2025.

MEET ROBOTIC LINE MARKER TREVOR

You may have noticed a curious little vehicle buzzing around the sports areas near the hub. The machine you saw is our Tiny Pro X robotic line marking system, which the Park purchased in August last year to support the grounds team across the park.

Says Ben Ladipo, 'It's been a really positive addition. The robot uses GPS

technology to mark out pitches and can mark a full-size adult football pitch in around 30 minutes. This has improved efficiency, allowing our grounds team to focus on other tasks to keep the pitches in good condition. Another big benefit is the accuracy of the line marking, which ensures a quality finish across all pitches.'

'Overall, it's helped us improve the quality of the pitches and how we manage resources across the site, especially during busy periods. The Grounds team have chosen to name the robot "Trevor" in honour of our former line marker, Trevor Powell, who sadly passed away three years ago. Trevor dedicated much of his life to marking pitches for us in the Park.

REGENT'S PARK MUSIC FESTIVAL 2026

Mark Elliott
Chairman,
Regent's Park Music Festival

While many people have heard of the Regent's Park Music Festival, most will have no idea how the festival began in 2016 and how it has evolved.

From its beginning with one concert on the Holme Green bandstand the festival now comprises two parts: FREE concerts on two bandstands – Holme Green (Sundays and Bank Holidays) and the Broad Walk (Saturdays) – and ticketed concerts that feature musical theatre, opera, orchestral works and concerts for families. These take place in the St John's Lodge Garden (the "Secret Garden") where conditions to perform music in the open air are delightful.

Bandstands

We have a list of 150 bands that would like to play in one of the 45 concerts that we book on the two bandstands - the main bandstand on Holme Green where we have Jazz Big Bands, Concert Bands, Brass Bands, and a few choirs (always the Rock Choir who are so popular!). Our Saturday Jazz on the Broad Walk is just for small jazz groups mainly from the London music colleges.

Every year we get requests from new bands, recently from America and sometimes from far reaches of the UK. We have a policy of encouraging young musicians, so the first choice goes to them. We always listen to bands on YouTube and only select bands that meet our standards. For most bands we allow them to play for three years and then we "park" them to make room for others. We like to introduce eight to 10 new bands every year.

Ticketed concerts

In 2023/4 we had the "Secret Garden" series but for 2025 we moved to a marquee near the lake to give us more space. We needed it as our Patron Sir Karl Jenkins CBE kindly allowed us to perform his famous *The Armed Man – A Mass for Peace*. With Crouch End Choir and Aldbourne Brass Band, the world premiere of his Brass Band version was performed – it has since been played in concert halls around the UK. It was a truly memorable experience, as was a Viennese evening in which an orchestra of students from the music colleges was conducted by John Warner, director of the Orchestra for the Earth. John has conducted for us every year since our first *Magical Musical Evening* in 2023. What made our Viennese evening different from the many that are performed, was that each waltz and polka was introduced by the very well-known newsreader and Classic FM introducer



Broadcaster John Suchet interviewed Sir Karl Jenkins CBE and his wife Carol at a 2025 concert.

Sandfords director James Light, left, (sponsor since 2017) with Orchestra for the Earth conductor John Warner and broadcaster John Suchet OBE.



HOLME GREEN BANDSTAND PROGRAMME

June	
Sunday 21	12-2pm: Heroes Band / 3-5pm: Michigan Musicians
Sunday 28	12-2pm: (to be booked) / 3-5pm: London Youth Concert Band
July	
Sunday 5	12-2pm: Rock Choir / 3-5pm: Band of The Essex Yeomanry
Sunday 12	12-2pm: West Virginia University Alumni Band 3-5pm: The Big Swing Big band (S)
Sunday 19	11.15am: Ceremony and Buglers 12-2pm: The Waterloo (Rifles) Army Band 3-5pm: Central Band of the Royal British Legion
Sunday 26	12-2pm: Fulham Brass Band / 3-5pm: Graham Pike Big Band
August	
Sunday 2	12-2pm: All Saints Concert / 3-5pm: KIX Jazz Orchestra (S)
Sunday 9	12-2pm: Lambeth Wind Orchestra / 3-5pm: MOJO Big Band
Sunday 16	12-2pm: London City Brass / 3-5pm: Beckenham Concert Band
Sunday 23	12-2pm: Phoenix Concert Band / 3-5pm: South London Jazz Orchestra (S)
Sunday 30	12-2pm: Belvedere Concert Band / 3-5pm: Sid Bolan Big Band (S)
September	
Monday 3	12-2pm: Harrow Concert Band / 3-5pm: Harmonic Concert Band
Sunday 6	12-2pm: Shepherd Brass Band (York) / 3-5pm: The Panash Steel Orchestra
Sunday 13	12-2pm: Chiltern Hills Brass Band / 3-5pm: Barnes Concert Band
Sunday 20	12-2pm: Richmond Brass Band / 3-5pm: Duke Street Big Band (S)

(S) = Swing Sunday

John Suchet OBE. John has written an excellent book on the Strauss family called *The Last Waltz* and he explained to the audience the history of each item.

This July, 10 to 12, we have another fantastic series of concerts: brilliant musical theatre by graduates of our neighbour, the Royal Academy of Music, opera by the outstanding Pegasus Opera company and our traditional *Magical Musical Evening* with a varied selection of music that captures the pleasure of being in the open air in one of the UK's most beautiful small gardens. For the children, our *Pied Piper and the Secret Garden* includes additional new songs by

the composer Alfie Richards as well as puppetry, and once again we will have an opera class for budding singers.

This year's Bandstand festival will run from 21 June - 20 September. A list of bands that have been booked is attached. Because the mainly student bands that play on the Broad Walk are not booked until early May, this list is only the bands for the Holme Green bandstand. Remember, EVERY bandstand concert is FREE so bring the family, the chairs and a picnic and ENJOY the MUSIC!

Sign up for regular updates, donate or volunteer here: regentsparkmusicfestival.org.uk/

NON-MUSICAL EVENTS 2026 – AN UPDATE

Viv Ward
Events Manager

Those Friends who have chosen to receive the Friends Non-Musical Events programme by post should have received it by the time you read this. If you have not, please email me at events@friendsofregentspark.org and I will send you a copy. Remember to include in your email your full postal address. Alternatively all the events are now on our website, where, as well as a reading a description of the event, you can book (frp-ph-members.org/pages/events/number/2).

Remember, for most of our events places are limited, so the earlier you book, the greater your chance of reserving a place. At the time of writing, the following events are fully booked and have waitlists:

- Spring Tree Walk
- Tour of Hyde Park Super Nursery
- Photography Using Smart Phones
- Crown Estates Paving Commission Guided Walk
- Canal Boat Trip on the Pirate Prince
- Tour of Baker Street Station

One of the new events, *A Celebration of John Constable Walk*, was filled quickly, so I have been able to organise a second identical walk on 23rd July, which still has a few places available. It is called on our website, *A Celebration of John Constable Walk #2*, so if you are interested, book quickly.

Several of our other events are heavily booked, with only a few places still available and, although they are some way off, if you are considering coming, I suggest you sign up soon as they are events which we will not be able to repeat this year. These events are:

- Spring Bird Walk
- Royal College of Physicians Garden Tour
- Chelsea Physic Garden Tour
- Constable Inspired Painting Workshop

There are many new Friends' events this year. I am particularly excited by the two Literary Walks. Those of you who were fortunate enough last year to come on the *Plants, Philanthropists and Physicians Walk* (which incidentally is being repeated this year) will know that the tour was led by a superb communicator. He was so good that my wife and I joined this event twice. I am delighted to tell you that the same leader, Berwyn, is leading these literary walks exploring the place of The Regent's Park and Primrose Hill in literature and their connection with the lives of writers. You might ask, 'Why two literary walks?' The answer is that there was so much material that, if it was all included in one walk, the walk



Bee Walk
10 June

would have lasted for over four hours, which is too much for even our most athletic Friends. Therefore, I split it into two, 2-hour walks.

A new initiative this year is a *Rose Garden SLOW Walk*. Several friends have said to me that they would really enjoy joining a guided walk in The Park but, because they find walking difficult, they were sensitive that they might hinder more able-bodied people, so they were too inhibited to come. I am therefore offering an event tailored specifically for those Friends with mobility problems, so all our Friends can enjoy the Rose Garden when it is at its best. When you book this event, make sure you include telephone number, as I will call you about a week before the walk to ascertain your mobility needs to ensure you can have an enjoyable, stress-free walk.

How many times have you attended the Open Air Theatre, enjoyed a performance and asked yourself, 'How do they do that?' Well, now you have the opportunity to go behind the scenes to find out. On 7 September I have arranged a behind the scenes tour with the Executive Director of The Regent's Park Open Air Theatre, followed by an interval so you can purchase dinner or a pizza. Then enjoy this year's musical, *CATS*, a ticket to which is included in the price of the tour. Places are very limited, so the message is, as always, book now as I cannot repeat this visit.

This year I am pleased to be able to arrange an event for all the family specifically in Primrose Hill. 18 October there will be a *Kite Flying Festival*. Why in October? Well, according to the BBC Weather Service, the windiest months in England are April and

October. We need wind to fly our kites, hence October it is. We are delighted to welcome to this event The London Kite Team, who will during the afternoon give a demonstration of superior kite-flying, whilst we mortals can have fun flying our own kites. If you do not have a kite, there will be a stall offering a range of kites to purchase. Bring a picnic lunch or buy food from the Primrose Hill Café, pray for good sunny, windy weather and have a fun Sunday out with all the family.

Finally, *Chit Chat* continues every Tuesday at The Primrose Hill Café and, now that it is British Summer Time, it meets from 2:30pm to 4:30pm and all Friends are welcome. Benugo kindly donate a hot drink for every participant.

One of our Friends is a mother with a young child and she has asked me if I would organise a weekly get together for parents who have young children like herself, similar to *Chit Chat*. Before I make any arrangements with The Primrose Hill Café, I would like to know if this would be attractive to Friends who are in that situation. If you are interested, please email me on events@friendsofregentspark.org telling me of your interest, what day of the week and what time of day you would prefer.

I hope that you find an event or events that you would like to attend in 2026. Let us hope for good weather this summer, so we can all enjoy the time we spend in The Regent's Park and in Primrose Hill.

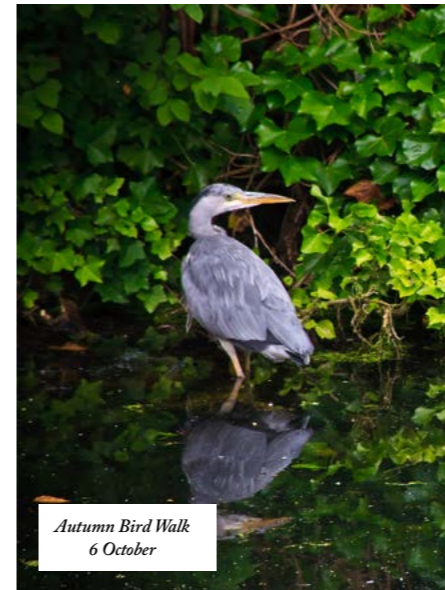
I look forward to welcoming you to our events and please remember, if you have any ideas for future non-musical events, email your suggestions, which are always welcome, to me at events@friendsofregentspark.org.



Rose Garden Walk
20 May



Rose Garden Slow Walk
3 June



Autumn Bird Walk
6 October



Boating on the Lake
18 June & 16 July



Nocturnal Nature Walk
17 September



Mushroom Magic Walk
21 October



Statues & Fountains Walk
12 May



Friends and neighbours gather at a previous Big Lunch, above. This year's event will take place in the Open Air Theatre grounds, inset.

4TH ANNUAL BIG LUNCH, SUNDAY 28 JUNE – SPACE IS LIMITED SO BOOK NOW

This year we are very excited to team up with the Open Air Theatre to stage our 4th Annual Big Lunch. This is a gathering of Friends, neighbours, stakeholders and lovers of our park to gather for an afternoon of food, music, celebration and community in a gorgeous setting within the park. Just book six seats for £60 or £12 for a single seat. The more the merrier although we have a maximum number of places – 300 total so book now to avoid being disappointed.

This year, our theme is Flower Power and it will be all things flowery, bright and beautiful from what you wear to how you decorate your table, to your picnic and our music which will be based on Sounds of the Sixties. So rock your kaftan, get out your peace sign and your beads and put flowers in your hair to embrace this celebration of our abundant park in all its flowery glory.

Within the grounds there are accessible toilets, a bike storage area and food and drink for purchase - cashless only. Seating will be in a variety of areas from a grassy lawn with picnic tables, to bistro tables, and longer tables on the hard surface. Some tables are under cover, some are in the sun.

This is a family affair but sadly, four-legged friends cannot not attend owing to Theatre rules. Assistance animals will be permitted. There will be music, face painting for the kids, the opportunity to purchase non and alcoholic beverages as well as warm drinks, snacks, food and treats to top things up. Ice cream will be on offer too.

Anyone can join in the fun with the purchase of a ticket. It is not just for Friends but for our wider community as well. If you work or study locally, why not book places for you and your colleagues to enjoy a community

event in a stunning setting?

The Big Lunch was an initiative begun by the Eden Project in 2009 to reduce loneliness and isolation and to foster a sense of belonging to a community, whatever that community might be. Generally, it is held on the first weekend in June but we are not always able to choose the date within that time frame owing to other things going on in the park.

June is 'Community Month' and since 2024 more almost 17 million people in the UK took part in a Big Lunch. Of those people, 76% say they are now more likely to get involved in local volunteering. In addition, 75% say they felt more connected to their community because of taking part.

So, what are you waiting for? Places are filling up and we would love to welcome you to the stunning grounds of the Open Air Theatre on Sunday 28 June.

Visit this link to sign up for The Big Lunch now:
frp-ph-members.org/events/category/55-big-lunch

THE CULTURAL PARK



Last year's production of Dream Ballets, photo © Johann Persson

OPEN AIR THEATRE – GET BOOKING NOW!

Regent's Park Open Air Theatre (OAT) has unveiled its 2026 season, the second for artistic director Drew McOnie.

The theatre's 2026 programme opens with the world premiere of *Sherlock Holmes*, a new mystery by Joel Horwood. Continuing the theatre's commitment to dance programming, next up is *A Life in Four Seasons*, Vivaldi's masterpiece reimagined in an electric new dance work directed by Associate Artistic Director Tinuek Craig.

Following that, an Open Air Theatre favourite returns to the Park with a blissful new production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* directed by Atri Banerjee. The season continues with the previously announced brand-new production of Andrew Lloyd

Webber's global sensation, *CATS*, directed and choreographed by Artistic Director Drew McOnie.

The OAT retains its commitment to family programming with *Anansi the Spider* on the Theatre Lawn for ages 4+ and their families, in a Unicorn Theatre and Regent's Park Open Air Theatre production.

Following the success of their inaugural year in 2025, the artist development programmes will run for a second year. These include **Open Room**, an entry-level observership programme for aspiring creatives, **Theatre Dance Lab**, an artist development programme that offers early-career musical theatre choreographers a paid residency culminating in a showcase performance of their work on the main stage;

and **The Treehouse Project** which offers up to six early-career creatives space to develop their craft and shape their practice.

Friends receive a discount at the Open Air Theatre with some Ts and Cs**. Visit our website to learn more and have your membership card ready to show at the box office when booking. friendsofregentspark.org/join-us/

**These concessions are only available when made at the Box Office in person with a valid ID/proof of membership, on shows within two weeks of the performance date. Concession rate: £40 in Bands A & B only. Max of 2 per person to be booked in person only with valid ID/proof or membership. Valid on all shows excluding Monday and Saturday evenings.



Some tempting options from Benugo's new menu at the Bar & Grill. Their outstanding pizza menu has some new additions too.

BENUGO ANNOUNCES NEW CHEF, NEW MENU, NEW VENUE AND CROSS PARK DISCOUNTS

Stephanie Gomes
Assistant General Manager, Benugo, RP & PH

We are delighted to share several exciting developments taking place across Regent's Park and Primrose Hill, all of which reflect our ongoing commitment to enhancing our services and elevating the experience we offer throughout the parks.

To begin, we are proud to announce that the Regent's Park Tennis Courts have now become part of the Benugo family. This marks an important step in expanding our presence within the parks, and we look forward to welcoming you to the venue. Your Friends' discount is fully valid here, allowing you to enjoy great food and refreshments while making the most of these fantastic facilities. We encourage you to visit, explore the space, and experience the warm hospitality our teams are known for.

Building on this momentum, we are pleased to introduce our newly appointed Head Chef, Brian. With seven years of Benugo experience, Brian brings a wealth of knowledge, a passion for culinary excellence, and a renewed commitment to quality across our kitchens. His leadership is already making a positive impact, with a strong focus on creativity, consistency, and the use of seasonal produce. Please feel free to stop by and say hello. He is eager to meet you!

In line with this focus on fresh and exciting

food, we launched our new Spring Menu on 31 March. Designed to showcase the very best of the season, the menu features vibrant flavours, fresh ingredients, and thoughtfully crafted dishes that highlight the essence of spring. We look forward to sharing these new creations with you and hope they will become firm favourites.

Finally, we would like to remind you that your Friends' discount applies across all our park locations, including Regent's Park and Primrose Hill, Hyde Park, St. James's Park, and

CATERING HIGHLIGHTS

Ismeni Stefanidou
General Manager, Benugo, RP & PH

At **Waterside**, we're introducing chicken burgers as a key signature item this season. Over at **Broad Walk**, we'll be serving hot dogs from the kiosk - some of the best we've ever done!

At **The Hub**, we'll be hosting plenty of BBQ events again this year, similar to last season, which were very popular with guests.

The Kiosks will be focusing on sundaes this season, with a Black Forest sundae being one of the highlights.

The Tennis Courts will be reopening at the

Greenwich Park. We encourage you to make the most of this valuable benefit and take the opportunity to experience everything our parks have to offer.

This year we've got some exciting additions across the park. At Primrose Hill, we're focusing on a strong vegan and vegetarian offering, alongside sundaes, mini pizzas, and a pop-up outside for the busy days. We'll also be introducing picnic boxes for the top of the hill, including vegan rolls, frittatas, and other grab-and-go options, perfect for enjoying in the park.

end of April, where we'll be hosting BBQ events and offering filled croissants, pastries, flatbreads, and more.

At **Regent's Park Bar & Kitchen**, some of Chef Brian's standout favourites include the prawn cocktail roll, shakshuka for breakfast, and the melon, feta and pistachio salad.

Across all sites, we're bringing back matcha drinks and iced coffees (a big hit last year), along with an expanded drinks offer including Guinness and a selection of premium wines.

There's a lot to look forward to across all locations. Show your membership card for your 25% discount.

VOLUNTEER



'Rambling Rosie' returns this summer and volunteers are needed to welcome visitors to the Park.

'RAMBLING ROSIE' GETS AROUND – VOLUNTEERING TO OPEN SOON

Robin Black
Newsletter Editor, Van Manager

Last year was our first using our lovely, Citroën van, 'Rambling Rosie' as our visitor information centre to replace a rather tired and torn gazebo tent and table which was positioned June through September near Clarence Gate.

Repurposed from her former role as a food truck, Rosie now sports our trademark dark green livery and is illustrated by our artist and Committee member, Jesse Brown, with florals and figures and messages telling us what the Friends are all about- Volunteering, Learning, Listening, Exploring etc.

Rosie has a large awning to shelter our volunteers from sun and rain and in the case of rain, visitors to the park sometimes huddle under the awning with us but we do sell rain ponchos too.

Under that awning in front of Rosie we have a table bearing information about the Friends, the park, dog walking maps, the music festival and and of course the tear off maps that visitors love to have.

In case you didn't know, we are a charity, so donations are always welcome and many visitors give a donation in return for informed advice, directions and local knowledge that our

volunteers possess and are delighted to share. Many of our visitors speak more than one language and this year we are going to highlight that fact to make our foreign and multilingual visitors feel more welcome.

If you think you could bring something to Rosie and help visitors to the Park get the most out of their visit, please consider volunteering. A good knowledge of the park and its amenities is useful but you will also learn a lot from your fellow volunteers too. We always work in pairs and one of five van managers will be on call every weekend should you encounter any problems or have any questions that you can't resolve with your partner. There are four volunteers required each weekend and Bank Holiday. Morning shifts are from 10-1:30 and afternoon shifts are from 1:30 - 4:30.

The booking area on the website is being re-designed and will open sometime in April. Please check friendsofregentspark.org/the-friends/volunteering/ and book as soon as you can.

We have a comprehensive manual on board Rosie with up-to-date information about events, theatre, boat rentals, Zoo times etc. etc. It is useful if you know how to point people to the toilets, the playgrounds, cafés, the Open Air Theatre, sporting pitches, the nearest tube and

local amenities. If you don't know the answer, your volunteering partner probably will and you will learn something new every week, we guarantee.

This year we will be adding new merchandise for sale that we hope will provide visitors with something to take away that will remind them of their visit to our lovely park. We have greeting cards, postcards, mugs, magnets, keychains and Park Honey too. We hope you will join us this summer on Rosie, learn something and help others enjoy the park as much as we do.

*Become a Friend
TODAY!*

For events and membership information,
visit: friendsofregentspark.org



PARK A HIT ON INSTAGRAM WORLDWIDE – DO YOU FOLLOW US?

Mike Baker
Committee/Litter Picking Organiser

The Friends have had an Instagram account for about five years now, with almost 2,000 pictures posted over time, and roughly the same number of regular followers. We should soon break through the 2,000-follower milestone, with luck.

Posts are generally views of Regent's Park. They cover different aspects of the park – wildlife, plants, sport, sculpture, events, and so on, but mostly they are just nature shots reflecting the changing seasons, which show off the park to great effect. For that reason, we tend to post fewer shots in winter, when the trees are bare and the light is grey, and more in spring, summer and autumn.

As to the sources of the photography, The Royal Parks often post great shots, as do the gardeners themselves. I borrow those shamelessly. Also, photographers with Instagram accounts often pass through Regent's Park and post their work on their own Instagram pages. These photos can be tracked down by searching Instagram using hashtags such as #primrosehill, #regentscanal or #regentspark, and I'll ask for the owners' permission to repost and share. But I probably take most of the photos myself as I walk my dog. Unfortunately, that means fewer pictures of the Inner Circle, the English Gardens and other dog-free zones.

Finally, what about those followers – who are they? The majority are people from all over the world who have visited Regent's Park at some time and want to be reminded of its beauty. An odd thing for me is that fewer than half of followers are Friends of Regent's Park & Primrose Hill, and conversely fewer than half of Friends are followers. I would like to change that, and I encourage all members of the Friends to check out our Instagram page at [instagram.com/friendsofregentspark](https://www.instagram.com/friendsofregentspark). Why not sign up as followers (it's free), and like some posts by clicking on the heart symbol – the more the merrier. Also, if you have terrific hi-res photos of the park that you'd like me to post, feel free to pass them on via my email which is mikebakermunton@gmail.com, and I will post the best of them.



SAVE THE DATES

**Official Opening of the
Commemorative Garden
for Queen Elizabeth II**
Monday 27 April, 2026

Open Air Theatre Season
Saturday 2 May – 12 September 2026
Highlights: *Sherlock Holmes*,
CATS, *Midsummer Night's Dream*,
Anasi the Spider

Taste of London
17-21 June, 2026
*The Regent's Park, Marylebone
Green and environs*

**Volunteering on
Rambling Rosie**
Saturday 20 June –
Sunday 20 September 2026
Clarence Gate and the Broad Walk

**Regent's Park Music Festival
including Volunteering**
Sunday 21 June –
Sunday 20 September 2026

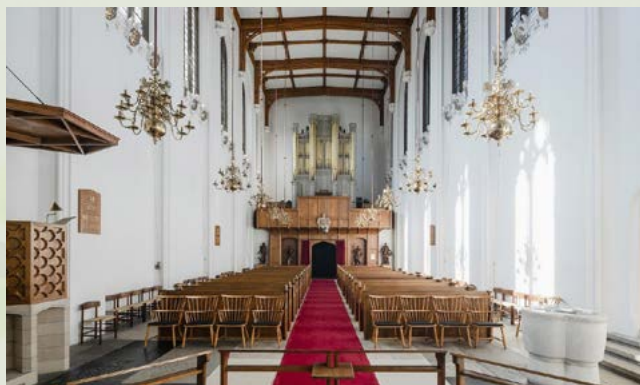
The Big Lunch
Sunday 28 June, 12-4:00 p.m.
Open Air Theatre Grounds

Primrose Hill Closure Times
Friday 3 April until
Sunday 8 November
*The park will be closed from 10pm
until 6am Fridays through Sundays.
24-hour opening remains in place on
weekdays.*

REGULAR MEET UPS

Chit Chat
Summer Hours 2:30 – 4:40 p.m.
Primrose Hill Caf 

Natural History Talks
Tuesdays 6:30 p.m.
*Regent's Park Offices Meeting Room,
Inner Circle NW1 4NR*



The Friends Annual General Meeting
Speaker: Our New Patron Wesley Kerr OBE
Thursday 28 May 2026, 6:30 – 9:00 p.m.

The Danish Church, 4 St. Katharine's Precinct,
on the Outer Circle, London NW1 4HH

*Food, drink and conversation afterwards.
New RP&PH merchandise to view/purchase.*

PARK SAFETY AND ETIQUETTE

*First and foremost, DO enjoy your visit to Regent's Park & Primrose Hill.
There are some simple and reasonable rules to live by to show respect to the Park,
to the nature it supports and to other park users.*

- Leave the park as you found it. Put litter in its place, in a bin or take it with you. Never leave human food and rubbish on the ground for wildlife to consume.
 - Open fires and BBQs are strictly prohibited.
 - Do Not Feed the Birds Please!
They need to forage for themselves.
Feeding them spreads disease and encourages vermin.
 - Only cycle on prescribed routes and be mindful of pedestrians. Obey the 20 mph speed limit and stop at the lights on Inner and Outer circles.
- Pedestrians should be vigilant when crossing roads and look both ways.
 - Never leave your phone on display or unattended on a picnic blanket, a bench or a table for example.
- Consult the dog walking maps to see where your four-footed friends are most welcome. They are posted on park notice boards and maps are available on 'Rambling Rosie' too.

*Enjoy visiting this most special of parks
and leave it as you found it for others to enjoy.*

The Friends of
Regent's Park
& Primrose Hill

GET INTOUCH

Chair: Mark Elliott chair@friendsofregentspark.org

Secretary: Pamela Henry secretary@friendsofregentspark.org

Treasurer: Liz Whittaker treasurer@friendsofregentspark.org

Newsletter: Robin Black newsletter@friendsofregentspark.org

Membership: Jo Faktor membership@friendsofregentspark.org

Events: Vivian Ward events@friendsofregentspark.org

Volunteering: Mike Baker mikebakermunton@gmail.com

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