

# FRIENDS OF HYDE PARK & KENSINGTON GARDENS

[www.friendshpkg.org.uk](http://www.friendshpkg.org.uk)

Issue 50

Founded in 1991 to promote the peace and beauty of the parks

Registered Charity No. 1168319

## Special Issue 2020 Newsletter

### Welcome to our Special Edition

I hope that you have been able to come safely through the lockdown and the unprecedented difficulties caused by the pandemic, and that you and your families are well.

### Ancient and Modern

This newsletter is a one-off publication, combining the original Spring newsletter and the Autumn one. As you read it, you will be able to spot which parts of it were written pre-pandemic, and which have been rewritten to reflect the changed world we're now living in and the effect the crisis has had on our beloved Royal Parks.

### Saints and Sinners

There have been plenty of both during these trying times. I won't spend much time on the Sinners, there were too many of them. They were the ones causing annoyance or worse. Troublesome for the Parks staff, for the police and for you members.

The Saints are a much happier large group to focus on and thank goodness for them.

The Managers are on this list. They dealt with skeleton staffing levels and fast-changing situations from day to day. "Decisions were taken at a frantic pace" said one.

The members of staff dealing with extra tonnes of litter, large gatherings, high level garden maintenance and the growers of thousands of plants from the nursery were all Saints too.

Our Blogger Stars feature elsewhere in the newsletter. Our members have sent beautiful photos and told us how they were managing to find quiet places in both Parks.



*Summer plantings at the Italian Gardens*

### HELP!

Our two editors are retiring when this newsletter goes to press. Is there anyone out there with any experience at all who would be willing to help produce this twice a year publication? We have graphic design assistance. And plenty of keen writers. Please contact [contact@friendshpkg.org.uk](mailto:contact@friendshpkg.org.uk).

Also, and importantly, we are in urgent need of new trustees and helpers.

If you think you could give us some help in any areas which might be useful please get in touch [contact@friendshpkg.org.uk](mailto:contact@friendshpkg.org.uk).

And lastly, if you didn't enjoy the weekly Blog because you didn't get it, it is because we don't have your email address. Let us have this info and you will also get short notice invitations which we hope to be able to put out when we have the all clear. Email: [membership@friendshpkg.org.uk](mailto:membership@friendshpkg.org.uk). There's going to be something good round the corner.

Best wishes to you all,

**Sue Price**

Chairman

### Looking Forward

The complete lack of income from the cancellation of all major events and the many smaller ones and from all the catering and concessions has blown a massive hole in the Royal Parks budgets.

Cuts and other savings are being identified. Our best hope is that we can stay looking good, but we must moderate our expectations. Is there a fairy godmother out there?



# News Round-up from the Parks

**Andy Williams, Manager, Kensington Gardens, and Jason Taylor, Manager, Hyde Park, bring us up to date.**

This year has been a strange one for all of us, to say the least. Who would have thought at the beginning of the year that The Royal Parks (TRP) would be enforcing social distancing rules across the Spring and Summer months due to a global pandemic, that we would be cancelling British Summer Time, and closing North Carriage Drive to allow the army to carry out COVID-19 testing?



*Social distancing in the parks*

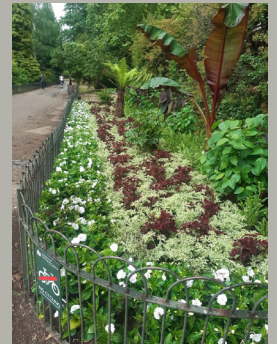
Although it seems strangely clichéd now, this period has been a monumental challenge for TRP with many hurdles along the way. However, as we begin to reflect on the past few months it is safe to say that the two parks have stood strong and proved their resilience. Something both of us, as park managers, are proud to have got through and been a part of. The two parks have never been more valued, and it is a joy to see them being used by so many people. To work in a public green space during the COVID-19 crisis shall certainly be something to remember.

The dynamic and rapid changes seen in the two parks have been quite incredible, and TRP staff and contractors have had to adapt at every corner, adjusting policies and reacting quickly to whatever comes our way.

After the decision was made to enter into lockdown, the two parks were stripped down to their basic functions overnight. Everything from catering, boating, Serpentine Swimming Club, public toilets, playgrounds, personal trainers, volunteering programmes, small events, gun salutes and galleries were closed or ceased. People were only allowed to visit the park for exercise and police would patrol, enforcing Government measures. As COVID-19 cases began to plateau the restrictions began to ease, allowing specific activities to recommence. Catering concessions reopened, but only for takeaway, as well as the tennis courts and bowls. The Serpentine Swimming Club was allowed to reopen but unfortunately had to close again due to social distancing issues. Public toilets are reopening under a phased plan to meet safety requirements for staff and visitors alike.

Most challenges have been shared between Hyde and KG, although some have been more specific to the individual park. Some Joggers not adhering to social distancing rules have proven difficult to manage in Kensington Gardens, while unpredictable protests have taken place in Hyde Park. Of course, both outdoor exercise and the right to protest would normally be acceptable activities, but COVID-19 makes everything much more complicated and difficult to manage.

Although each Park is to an extent managed separately, they all remain part of TRP Charity and therefore any decisions, policies and messaging for Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens has had to remain cohesive and in line with the other parks.



*Plantings in the South Flower Walk*

This has been most apparent in the communication of lockdown rules throughout the parks, although with government advice constantly changing and lacking clarity this has proven a challenge. Preparations were even made for the closure of the parks in the event of a stricter lockdown. As Government advice changed, we adapted our signage and messaging appropriately. Now, as restrictions continue to ease, TRP's communications team have developed a new #summerofkindness campaign, promoting three key messages; 'enjoy the park', 'be kind to others' and 'respect the environment'.

A positive response to COVID-19 has seen our teams come together and work much more collaboratively, providing advice and support for each other. This was particularly evident during daily park manager meetings that were set up from the beginning of lockdown to provide updates and actions for each park in response to emerging issues.



*Display in front of Buckingham Palace in honour of the NHS*

# News Round-up from the Parks

Strong and clear leadership from TRP's Chief Executive, Andrew Scattergood, and the Parks Director, Tom Jarvis, have also been invaluable during difficult decision-making processes. The Executive Committee, which includes both Andrew and Tom, have met daily to provide updates on each department in TRP while developing short and long-term plans. It is from these conferences that we have learnt of the significant financial impact of COVID-19 on the Charity. As a result, capital projects such as the Diana Playground Refurbishment and pirate ship replacement will be reevaluated, as well as the removal of all parks' cyclical landscape improvement budgets.

Not only has the lockdown shown how each of TRP can work together effectively but it has also shown a light on the flexibility, diligence and dedication of each individual member of TRP, OCS (landscape maintenance) and Vinci (facilities maintenance) staff. TRP made the decision early on for all staff, apart from park operation teams, to work from home until it is safe to come back to the office, a date that is still undecided.



*Natural drainage system at the Swale*

In addition to the office and home policies, TRP made the decision at the end of April to enter into the Government's Furlough Scheme, reducing the number of staff working by roughly a third. This proved difficult at first having to adjust roles and share duties, however, along with OCS and Vinci, individuals rose to the challenge. We still do not know exactly when our colleagues will return to work but there is hope for some time in August if social distancing can be implemented.

On top of glorious, if not a little too hot, weather the relaxing of lockdown measures has placed a huge pressure on not just Hyde and Kensington but all green spaces across London. The parks became the default space to relax, socialise and recreate, and this has taken its toll. Our landscape maintenance teams proved vital during these busy and messy periods and we cannot thank them enough for their grit and hard work.



*Deserted under lockdown*

More than ever, the parks have shown how important they are for people's well-being and health and this has been shouted from the rooftops by the media, politicians, and individuals. As TRP staff we have been particularly honoured by all the good wishes and messages sent in by the public, of which many have been from the Friends Group. Hopefully, the increase in appreciation and value of the parks will mean they remain rooted in the landscape of London for millennia to come.

Other positives have been the weekly blog written by our talented Technical Officers, Russell and Patrick, who have provided you all with updates and insights of the two parks. In Hyde we have recently finished the Swale just south of North Carriage Drive, which is a natural drainage system designed to catch water run off from the surrounding area, and in Kensington Gardens and Brompton Cemetery we have been able to allow small groups of volunteers to start gardening again. Thanks to OCS, the spectacular summer bedding is now complete, injecting a rainbow of colour and floral variety into various pockets across the two parks.

The past three months have been tough, but they have also been rewarding, and as we look forward, we hope that things will begin to get back to whatever the new normal is.

Finally, we have already touched upon, how the Hyde and KG staff have adapted to working in new ways, but we both want to finish by saying a huge thank you to The Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens Teams, and in this we include the Grounds Maintenance Teams. Both Teams have pulled together and worked their socks off to ensure that despite the challenges that have been thrown at us, both parks have not only remained open but have continued to be a credit to everyone that works so hard in them.

Stay safe and we hope to see you back in the parks soon.

**Andy and Jason**

# Our Blogger Heroes

Throughout lockdown, weekly then fortnightly, our two technical officers, Russell Stevens (Kensington Gardens) and Patrick Markey-Bell (Hyde Park), have kept us intrigued, informed and entertained with their wide-ranging choice of subjects.

Up until this Herculean task, which they “volunteered” for with managers Jason Taylor and Andrew Williams blessings, they collaborated only in assessing our Parks water quality. Their early blogs were their own choices but later they combined and consulted, and then covered their own angles. Pat said, “I am new to the Royal Parks and so the research was great.” He also said that it had been one of the most enjoyable parts of lockdown.

His favourite blog was the one on trees. Both think there are certainly more topics to be covered.

Pat has joined on a one year contract having completed an MSc at Imperial College on Environmental Technology. His job specification was for a Jack of all Trades, hands-on and in the Parks supporting managers and teams and covering all ground.



*Patrick Markey-Bell*



*Russell Stevens*

Russell has had many years of experience working in different roles and now has his own environmental and ecology projects as well as looking after planting in parts of Kensington Gardens.

In his role as “on call” Wildlife Officer he has noticed a marked increase in calls from well-meaning members of the public including reports of animals miles away from the Park. “People assume that we “own” the animals”!

If you didn’t get these fascinating blogs, which started in early April and were emailed at the weekends by our ever efficient Membership Secretary (Lynden Easton), it is because we don't have your email address! Let us know on [membership@friendshpkg.org.uk](mailto:membership@friendshpkg.org.uk).

**Sue Price**

# Gardening Volunteers

It has now been almost 18 months since I started volunteering in Kensington Gardens South Flower Walk. We have been a group of three volunteers for 12 months and I am pleased to report we now have a new recruit to the South Flower Walk. I met Simon Cox, who has been volunteering in the allotment in Kensington Gardens, at a volunteer's lunch in December last year. We struck up a conversation and I explained what I did in the South Flower Walk. Simon was very interested and asked if we needed extra help and of course I replied, "There is never enough help in this area of the park". Like myself our new recruit joined at a very busy period with autumn leaves consistently falling which means a lot of clearing up. Simon has been a great help, has now become part of our team and is thoroughly enjoying volunteering, as he explains.

"Having semi-retired from a partnership in a large international law firm, while still working as a lawyer I now have more time for a range of other activities.



*Jordan Page, volunteer and member of The Friends; David Stevens, gardener with OCS; Tina; and, Bernard Horowski, gardener with OCS.*



*Simon Cox*

Among these I enjoy volunteering in the Kensington Gardens allotment and the South Flower Walk. While very different, both are great places to volunteer and are havens of fresh air, peace and nature in the centre of London.

It is a privilege to be able to do this work as part of friendly and enthusiastic teams and to make a small contribution to the wonderful Kensington Gardens, and at the same time to learn from the superb professional team new skills which I can apply in my own garden."

In early March we were asked to help plant 5000 snowdrops in the flower bed by The Albert Memorial. However the weather was terrible on the day with such heavy rain that the planting was cancelled until the next day. What a difference a day made! The next day the weather was amazing. Fresh with blue skies and bright sunshine put us all in good spirits to plant 5000 snowdrops that morning. The planting takes place in March and is referred to planting snowdrops "in the green" because the bulbs are planted in leaf which apparently deters squirrels from digging up the bulbs. Two other volunteers and myself planted 1500 bulbs last year, and it was so lovely to see them in flower this year in the early winter months.

JP one of our volunteers who joined last year describes here what she likes so much about the gardening. "Last summer while working in the flower beds on the South Flower Walk I would often find myself surrounded by squirrels and various birds. I guess they knew I was no threat and would remain in close proximity to me as I went about with my work. There was one species of bird that was especially enchanting. I've been told it's the Green Tit. Now and then one of these birds would fly up to me, about a foot from my face. And then it would remain stationary, in the same position in the air like hummingbirds do. It sometimes felt like they were stopping to say hello! And sometimes.... I felt as if I was in an old Disney cartoon with the squirrels leaping around me and the birds hovering or perched near me. It was magical!"

If you are interested to get involved and join our small team of volunteers please contact us via email : [contact@friendshpkg.org.uk](mailto:contact@friendshpkg.org.uk)

**Tina Higginson**

# Out and About with the Friends

*All these events were very much enjoyed by our members and guests during the Autumn and Winter. I'm sure our window boxes and gardens looked wonderful with all that Autumn planting. I'm so sorry that our plans for the whole of this year have had to be abandoned but you can be certain that we will reinstate them as soon as we are able to run an event within the guidelines. We had many of our regular favourites plus one or two very special new ones lined up for you. It'll be very good to get together again in our special Parks and with our generous hosts.*

Sue Price

## Kensington Palace | A Treat for early birds

Many thanks to Kensington Palace director, Sam Owen, and his team who gave us the luxury of a private view of two very popular Queen Victoria themed exhibitions. We were escorted by smart, red-liveried members of staff and given a talk by the curator before wending our way through the galleries to the Pavilion. A beautiful breakfast was laid out ready for use which we fell on (well, I certainly did) while listening to Sam telling us about all the plans and news of developments at Kensington Palace. It was a thoroughly enjoyable start to a November day. Thanks go to everyone in the Historic Royal Palaces team who looked after us so well.



## Lest We Forget Memorial Walk

In glorious autumn sunshine, veteran London guide Andrew Davies led some 25 Friends on a fact-filled and entertaining exploration of some of the varied war memorials at Hyde Park Corner and dotted around the park itself. It was fascinating to get close and hear the story behind the 1925 strangely eroticised Art Deco statue of David vanquishing Goliath, supposedly commemorating the Machine Gun Corps, the Southern Cross Standards which pay tribute to the sacrifice of soldiers from Down Under, and the beautiful white marble RAF memorial. We ended up at the Cavalry monument - an exultant depiction of St George slaying a fearsome dragon complete with Kaiser Wilhelm II's walrus moustache - and conveniently near the Serpentine Bar and Kitchen in time for tea.



## Spring Bedding Sale | Plant Frenzy at the Super Nursery

In November, thanks to the generosity of manager Mike Jones and his helpful staff, the Friends enjoyed the second plant sale this year. Superb quality and interesting surplus plants are sold off at bargain prices to large numbers of eager members and their guests. Our pots, window boxes and gardens must be the best planted in London. Once again our ever resourceful members used a variety of methods to get the plants home safely. Profits go to the Royal Parks Charity and we will miss the RP's Kathryn Whybrow as she was expert at working the till. We are hoping that we will be invited back again in July this year, so hold back on planting, leave a few gaps here and there to be filled with new sale treasures then.



## Winter Wonderland | An Insider's look at London's biggest Winter Attraction

In December, having been kindly invited by Winter Wonderland director, Suzy Griffiths, and her assistant Laura Armstrong, we once again learnt about how this major event is managed. Following a presentation in the VIP Lounge over drinks and mince pies, we set off to the Magical Ice Kingdom. The manager, Chris Halkett, showed us round and explained how the ice sculptures are designed, created and maintained. We moved on to the Ice Sculpting studios to have a crack at sculpting ourselves, guided by expert ice carver, Duncan Hamilton, of Hamilton's Ice Sculpture ([icesculpture.co.uk](http://icesculpture.co.uk)).



A block of clear shiny ice turned rapidly, into a gorgeous swan. We moved on to the Ice Show with exotically-costumed ice dancers taking us on a rapid world tour with Paddington Bear. For those who had enough strength at the end of all this, Speedy Boarding tickets for the Big Wheel were handed out and a group of Friends enjoyed the twinkling lights at dusk high above Hyde Park. It's very generous of the Winter Wonderland team to treat us every year to this very popular event, and for several of our members it's a "must do" pre Christmas treat.

# Obituaries

Many thanks to all the families and friends who gave us these valuable insights into our late members' lives and how they loved the Parks.

## Evelyn Friedlander 1940-2019

Evelyn was a member for 6 years. Her daughter, Noam, writes from the US: Evelyn was an avid lover of both Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens. She lived in a flat which overlooked the Park with a wonderful view. This was short-lived however as the Sir Basil Spence "monstrosity" army barracks blocked her view. This meant she spent even more time in the Parks. Her three daughters and granddaughter all have a deep affection for the Parks as well.



## Terence Mallinson CBE 1929 - 2019

Terence and his wife Anne have been members of the Friends since 1992. They have been very enthusiastic supporters and attended many of our events. Terence had a long and distinguished career in the British timber trade. He was awarded the CBE for services to the UK industry and served as DL for London. His memorial service in February was held in St John's, Hyde Park Crescent. Our thoughts go to Anne, his sons and daughter.

## Professor Martyn Davis

Professor Davis had been a member for 27 years and has left a generous bequest to The Friends. Kay Coombs, a good friend, has written: Professor Martyn Davis died suddenly and peacefully, at the age of 90, on Christmas Day 2019. He lived in Bayswater and Marble Arch for many years. When he was younger he enjoyed inspecting the art works along the Park's railings on Sunday mornings. In later years he would ask friends to push him round the Park in his wheel chair. His legacy was in recognition of the great pleasure he had derived from the Park over so many years.

## Simon Davies 1937-2019

Simon was a member for 18 years. He joined after he became a regular jogger in the early mornings before he went to work in his Covent Garden office. He was chairman of the Hyde Park Estates Association where he and his wife, Sheila, lived from 1993.

## Lynden Easton and Sue Price

### Stephen Waterhouse

Stephen and his wife, Linda, have been members for 28 years. Stephen died in February 2020. Linda writes: Stephen always found Hyde Park to be a wonderful source of recreation, relaxation and inspiration particularly after an overnight trans-Atlantic flight. And in this time of social distancing and isolating at home, I am sure he would hope that others would find the Park to be a beautiful, peaceful respite.

### Caroline Robertson 1955-2020

Caroline was a member since 2000. As a child she spent all her holidays in the countryside in Essex, sailing and riding. She loved nature and wild life. After she retired from her job in the Houses of Parliament she was able to join us for many of our events. She was always good company and a great supporter of The Friends. Sadly she wasn't well and so wasn't able to help as much as she (and we) would have liked. We will miss her very much.



# Update on Membership

The following new members have joined The Friends since the Autumn 2019 Newsletter:

## New Life Members

Mrs Louise Bott  
Miss Adriana Cassandro  
Mrs Ina De  
Mrs Amanda Gardner  
Mrs Mary Godwin  
Ms Bronwyn Jones  
Mrs Nadine Kasuga  
Mrs Marina Stone  
Mr Andrew Stone  
Ms Julia Tjeknavorian  
Miss Jane Walker  
Mrs Rowena Winkler

## Converted to Life Membership

Ms Sarah Caplin  
Mrs Mary Frances Lindstrom

## New Annual Members

Mrs Elizabeth Awit  
Mrs Jane Balazs  
Mr Tim Barlow & Ms Barbara Dunne  
Mrs Laura Beare  
Ms Julie Bell  
Mrs Elza Blankenburgs  
Mrs Dianne Bonnet  
Mr & Mrs Dan & Kathryn Bricken  
Mr Romanos Brihi  
Mr Vasily Bulygin  
Mr & Mrs Ian & Meira Burton  
Miss Fiona Campbell  
Mr John Cuming  
Mr Paul Draper  
Mr Steve Dunlop & Ms Kristina Wallen  
Mrs Sylvia Fei  
Mrs Nicolette French  
Ms Olivia Graham  
Mr & Mrs Roger & Linda Hamilton  
Ms Loraine Hawkins  
Mr Kim Howell & Ms Carol Joseph  
Dr Simon Ives  
Mrs Gillian John  
Mrs Ekaterina Khalupsky  
Mr Jaromir Klupal & Mr Martin Pluhar  
Mr & Mrs Antony & Zarrina Kurtz  
Mrs Mariangela Lori  
Ms June Mangan  
Ms Elizabeth Mansbridge  
Professor Averil Mansfield  
Ms Bernadette McKernan  
Dr. Jeremy Paxman  
Miss Emma Pollard  
Mr Michael Quint  
Mr & Mrs Tony & Carolyn Sceales  
Mrs Netta Shinwell  
Mr Michael Slocombe  
Mr and Mrs Julian & Zehan Verden  
Mr & Mrs Paddy & Claire Williams  
Mr Gary Young  
Mrs Helena Zackariya  
Mrs Claire Zeiger

## As of July 1st 2020 we have:

<b>Total Members</b>	<b>678</b>
<b>Life Members</b>	<b>180</b>
<b>New Annual Members</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>New Life Members</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Corporate Members</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Associate Members</b>	<b>13</b>

## Behind the Trees

Many members are particularly interested in the trees in Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens, a curiosity which has often been sparked by our tree "Walks and Talks" led by expert, Greg Packman. A query from a member about the avenue of silver limes along Jubilee Walk between Kensington Palace and Orme Square Gates led to some mild detective work. Ray Brodie, who recently retired as Manager of Bushy Park and was in the 1980s a tree officer living in a lodge at Orme Square Gate, supplied the answers.

A plaque tells us the trees are a gift from the citizens and Senate of Berlin to the citizens of London. The original avenue of lime trees was badly damaged in the 1987 great storm. 55% were blown down and the remainder had cracks around their bases, so the decision to fell was made on safety grounds. The Mayor of West Berlin was staying in London at the time and witnessed at first hand the devastation caused by the storm. On his return to West Berlin he arranged for the gift of the trees. They were flown by the RAF into Lyneham and transported to Kensington Gardens by the Royal Parks staff. They were planted along Jubilee Walk using ground anchors, so were some of the first trees not to need stakes for support. It is also rare for a plaque to be installed, but this was a special gift to London. Fast forward to earlier this century and the same member was curious about the Wollemi Pine in the Dell in Hyde Park, and then two more which have recently appeared along the South Flower Walk in Kensington Gardens.

For the uninitiated, the Wollemi Pine, or "Dinosaur tree", dates back 200 million years and once formed vast tracts of forest in Australia, New Zealand and Antarctica and was thought to be extinct. In 1994 a tiny stand was discovered in a remote area near Sydney.

About ten years ago the Friends HP&KG donated a Wollemi Pine to Hyde Park to mark the 80th birthday of FHPKG's first chairman Philip Joseph. At a small ceremony this tree was planted in the Dell area which was considered more secure. Fast forward again to this winter and the two trees which appeared on the south and north sides of the South Flower Walk were spotted by the same keen eyes. As it turns out, a volunteer gardener at Brompton Cemetery also volunteers for St Mary Abbots Rehabilitation and Training projects (SMART) in Chelsea and noticed two Wollemi pines in storage there. They had been sitting there since being part of a gold medal garden at RHS Hampton Court Flowers Show in 2016. Mike Jones, Hyde Park Super Nursery Manager, went to inspect them and they were pronounced fit and healthy. Mike purchased them along with some large tree ferns and palms. In technical officer Russell Stevens' words, "It turned out to be a great serendipitous piece of sustainable plant procurement".

**Sue Price with thanks to member David Wright for his keen eyes and to TRP's Russell Stevens, Ray Brodie and Andy Williams for their help in finding the answers**

## Challenges of Household Management

Hello, my name is Ruby and I am a 4 year old French bulldog. I live very conveniently close to Hyde Park.

I will tell you a little bit about Trina who believes she's my owner. I chose her because she needed me. Her husband had been tragically killed on his motorbike and she thought it would be a good idea to have a small companion like me who she could boss around.

Boy was she mistaken! I make her get up at 6.30 every morning, even if it's -2 degrees. I let her know very early on that there would be no wallowing in grief. This was fun time. I meet with all my pals in Hyde Park, we play and play. She meanwhile talks and talks with all these new friends who, let's be honest, I have introduced her to. Everybody who works in the Park whether they are gardeners, police or just people on their way to work have a chance to throw the ball for me. I do have my favourites. They are Simon and Rich, two of the regular policemen, and there is Seamus who cuts and grass and chats to me.



After a while we head down to breakfast. Now this is the good bit. I get loads of tidbits. There are usually seven of my pals here and we all get properly fed. Trina likes these friends which I have made for her so much that sometimes, without me, she meets them in different restaurants in the evenings. And that is all because of me!

We repeat these walks at least another three times during the day in Hyde Park and sometimes in Kensington Gardens. Trina cries less and less since I came along and that does make me happy. I absolutely love my life in the Parks and wouldn't want to live anywhere else, except in the cafe ... maybe. Ruby.

**Sue Price was talking to Ruby and Trina.**

## Anyone for Lunch?

After several months of rebuilding and a major refurbishment the Lido Café has re-opened under the management of Colicci (who also run the Italian Gardens Café as well as the Tom Raffield designed kiosks in Hyde Park). The first thing at the Lido Cafe you will notice is the vast selection of attractive outdoor seating along the Serpentine. A mixture of picnic tables and fixed benches, outdoor sofa style seating with low tables, smaller round tables with individual chairs, and high bars and stools, will give you a view of the water as you enjoy your food and drink.

Step inside and you'll see the building has been transformed into a completely new layout which will end the queues which used to be such a distraction. You'll see a selection of seating and tables and a long open kitchen in a colour scheme which reflects trees, plants and the Serpentine itself. Overhead there are spectacular steam bent wood light pendants (Tom Raffield design again). Three tables on the left as you enter are made from Foresso timber (foresso.co.uk) using upcycled Kensington Gardens beech wood.

If you're there to catch up on a bit of work there's password-free Wi-Fi on offer.

An attractive menu offers a wide choice of breakfasts served until 11 am and proper lunches as well as small bite-sharing plates (excellent quality and delicious we can vouch from an early tasting). There's a wide selection of cakes, cookies and fresh fruit pastries. Soon a kiosk will be opened outside to serve ice cream and coffee and to take food orders. A seasonal pop-up bar for Pimms is planned. It's anticipated that when the days are longer the Lido Café will stay open until about 9pm.

**Sue Price**

# Who cast Peter Pan?

Steve Parlanti has done some serious sleuthing and come up with irrefutable proof that the casting of the famous statue in Kensington Gardens was indeed the work of his great-grandfather.

Until recently, confirming the identity of the art bronze factory responsible for casting not only the much-loved statue of Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens, but also replicas in Brussels, Newfoundland, New Jersey, Liverpool, Perth and Toronto, had been problematic. Other companies had claimed the casting as theirs, so Steve set out to settle the story once and for all, hoping to prove it was the work of his great-grandfather.

As a child, Steve had been told by his father Tony that his grandfather Ercole was responsible for making two famous statues. One was the large golden eagle atop the RAF memorial on London's Embankment (it is signed EJ Parlanti) and the other was Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens.

An article in the Irish Times Pictorial in 1950 recounted the opening of a foundry in Dublin by Conrad Parlanti, Ercole's eldest son and stated that among the well-known large castings made by Ercole Parlanti's foundry was the statue of Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens. However, since the casting was made back in 1912, this was not sufficient proof. Steve continued his research, made further contacts and then, in a publication in Newfoundland called 'The Veteran', in its April 1924 issue, he found an article written by Ercole. In it his great-grandfather explains the complex and intricate 'cire perdue' process used for castings of extremely delicate works and gives the example of his casting of the Peter Pan statue.

Finally, an official document about the Peter Pan statue in Brussels, including photographs of inscriptions on the bronze containing Ercole's signature, confirmed beyond all doubt that the original Peter Pan statue in London and the 6 replicas all over the world, were indeed the work of Steve's great-grandfather.

One last intriguing confirmation came through an interview in 1935 with the widow of Sir George Frampton who had sculpted Peter Pan. In it Lady Frampton explains that sadly children in Sydney would not be able to have a Peter Pan statue in the gardens there, like the one in Perth, as the cast had become too worn and Ercole Parlanti the bronze founder had died.

We congratulate Steve on his successful sleuthing and are grateful to him for sharing this fascinating story with the Friends.

Tessa Singleton

[APRIL, 1924.] THE VETERAN 31

## Bronze Founding

By E. J. PARLANTI

**T**HE Bronze castings of Artistic works (Statues, Statuettes and Architectural or decorative works) require a special technical knowledge not so necessary in the ordinary commercial and engineering castings.

For Art castings two different processes may be used. One is the ordinary Sand process which is used by all Foundries and which is quite suitable for small and heavy pieces of a simple moulding nature, where for instance, undercuts are not so pronounced as to require the sectioning of the model. The moulding, however, of Statuary, even by the sand process, requires a skill on the part of the Founder that only several years of practical experience can attain.

For castings however of extremely delicate works and where the intricacy of the modelling and undercuts requires a more skilful and pliable handling, the method called by the "Cire Perdue" or "Lost Wax Process" is applied.

As this process is less known than the ordinary sand casting, a little superficial account of how it is done is given here:

After the clay model is finished by the Sculptor a waste mould and plaster cast is made from it. This plaster cast is actually the pattern from which the Founder produces the bronze.

A plaster piece mould, or in the case of small works a gelatine mould, is made from the plaster figure. This, being the reverse of the actual work, is used for the production of a wax cast similar to the plaster model originally received by the Founder. In the process of making this wax cast a certain thickness of wax is kept right through the




ROYAL AIR FORCE MEMORIAL  
By Reid Dicks, R.A.

This magnificent Memorial adorns the embankment not far from Westminster, London. The Eagle is seventeen feet high and is constructed from gilded bronze, and was founded by Mr. Parlanti

surface of the work, which thickness is graduated according to the size of the work and eventually forms the actual thickness that the bronze cast must be.

The said wax pattern is then covered with a mixture of powdered burnt clay and plaster of Paris after, of course, the placing of the necessary runners and air vents for the free running of the melted metal. When the mould of this mixture is entirely set, it is placed in a kiln (which has to be built every time according to the size of the mould) and a fire is started. The fire has the double use of baking the mould and melting at the same time the wax pattern encased in it. Part of the wax is run out from a hole left at the bottom of this mould,

32 THE VETERAN [APRIL, 1924.]



PETER PAN

This Masterpiece is by Sir George Frampton, Kt., R.A., and is placed in Kensington Gardens, London. Copies have been sent to Australia and one is now finished for erection at Brussels. The Bronze founding was done by Mr. Parlanti, to whom has been entrusted the bronzing of the Newfoundland National War Memorial.

the rest gets burnt out in the process of baking.

When this baking is over the Founder makes the necessary preparation for the proper packing and securing of the mould prior to the cast. The molten metal is then run from a hole on the top of the mould where the runners are gathered and through that fills the mould up, taking the same place occupied previously by the wax.

After waiting the necessary time for the cooling of the molten metal this mould is broken and the bronze cast is uncovered. After the usual pickling or cleaning the bronze cast is handed to the finishers for the necessary tapping and chasing.

This Wax process has the advantage for the Sculptor of giving him the opportunity of sharpening up details or at times altering and adding parts in the wax pattern prior to the final mould for the bronze cast. Many casts done by this process are so worked in details when in wax that practically each one of them may be considered as an original by itself. Our Foundry for an instance has produced works for Alfred Gilbert, R.A., which have been so elaborately worked out in wax by the Sculptor (as the Statuettes forming part of the Duke of Clarence Memorial in Windsor Castle show) as to be practically an impossibility to reproduce from the present bronzes. The Cire Perdue process, although used in very remote times to the Etruscan, was lost however for centuries and only revived during the Renaissance when such Craftsmasters as Benvenuto Cellini made use of it for the reproduction of their masterpieces. A very good sample of Cellini is shown in his Figure of Perseus in Florence.

Our Works have reproduced in bronze by this process an infinite number of figures by British Sculptors; and during the 30 years or more that our Firm has been established in England a large amount of Statues to the memory of Queen Victoria, King Edward, and Statesmen, and different War Memorials have been executed here in Wax Process as well as Sand. Amongst the War Memorials of the late Great War, for the castings of which we have been responsible, can be mentioned the large Eagle seventeen feet in height forming part of the R. A. F. Memorial in London, the Submarine Memorial on the Embankment, the Prudential Memorial and (one of the latest and best) the Newfoundland National War Memorial which at present is nearing completion.

An hotel manager going along a corridor came across the "boots" on his knees outside a bedroom door busily engaged in cleaning a pair of boots. "John," quoth he, "this is not the place to polish boots; take them downstairs at once!"

"I'm sorry, sir" replied the man, "but there's a gentleman from Aberdeen on the other side of the door a hanging on to the laces."

## Friends' Visit to Serpentine Island

Many of you know Serpentine Island, a small man-made island in the Serpentine close to the two boating houses, which for over 100 years has been used as a breeding area for a wide range of birds. It's always bustling with activity, particularly in spring and summer, and most importantly there is no way for people (or dogs) to cross over to the island, so the birds love the natural environment of the space as well as the safety.

In December last year a major restoration project, Serpentine Island Habitat Improvement, was completed. Clever build of "hedges" from the clearings of overgrowth and scrub were designed to attract smaller birds and insects, and intricately designed floating blocks of growing reeds were restored around the island's edges leaving tiny gaps for smaller waterfowl to slip through into the recesses to nest. All this work and clever design is to deter the large and fast-breeding geese from taking over the Island again and to support the smaller waterfowl which need help to maintain an existence in this competitive environment.



Details of the Serpentine Island Habitat Improvement are available on The Royal Parks website [royalparks.org.uk](http://royalparks.org.uk). Funding was provided by the London Mastaba exhibition by the artist Christo in 2018. Legend has it that JM Barrie made Serpentine Island famous originally in 1904 (he called Birds Island) by featuring it in his best selling "Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens" book, with Peter flying there from the family home but having to return in a thrush's nest! Pictured here are the Friends team visiting the island to see the restoration works together with the Royal Parks management, the island itself, and a grey heron team caring for its young in a tree nest on the island last season.

**Harry Reid and Sue Price with  
(Photos by Harry Reid)**



## Wrong squirrel — mistaken shades of grey

Grey Squirrels get a mixed reception. Their ubiquity lessens their attraction, their sharp little claws and teeth can awaken atavistic fears which are not allayed by the fluffy tails. However, their real crime is not their fault; their real crime is that they are not red squirrels. To those of us lucky enough to have been brought up on Squirrel Nutkin, only the red will do. But why are we overrun by greys and why have the beloved reds taken to the hills? Because Squirrel Nutkin is a wimp, a fussy eater, a shy breeder and, sadly, highly susceptible to squirrel-pox. Surely, we should hail the success of the grey, who is now all over the British Isles after less than 150 years here? Introduced as novelty livestock on grand country estates in the 1870s, the grey squirrel leapt the fence and took over.

It is true they are cousins to rats, but they do not represent a health hazard as rats do. Think adorable chipmunks, rather than rats with good tails. They make cosy nests, dreys, for the two litters produced each year and the mother coos to her kits. Squirrels are basically vegetarian, though if very hungry may prey on smaller wildlife. A major naughtiness is their pleasure in living in our attics and chewing the wiring. It is expensive to deal with and together with the damage done to young trees leads to calls for culls. Prince Charles has apparently suggested the numbers could be kept down by supplying contraceptives in Nutella. These offerings would need to be carefully hidden from small children who would be delighted to find their favourite spread available in the Park.

The best-known comic fact about them is that they bury their food and then forget where. This is unkind; the great majority of the several thousand deposits each squirrel makes are reclaimed, which would seem to indicate an exceptional spatial memory. If they feel watched, they will try and hide behind vegetation to dig and even go so far as to fake a deposit, doing all the digging etc but not planting the nut. This is taken by some scientists to show an intelligence well beyond the ordinary. Grey squirrels do not hibernate, these food banks and our peanut-wielding tourists are necessities of life for them.

A most unusual talent is the squirrel's ability to rotate its ankles on the back feet. This allows the little animal to run down the trunk, while gripping in an uphill direction with its claws. Next time it has paused, head-down, near you, have a look. For me, their antics add greatly to a walk in the Park. And remember, Squirrel Nutkin was a hooligan who came to a bad end.

**Dimity Spiller**

# Olive Groves in the sun tempt our Editor

*In Spring 2014 Tessa, who says she was “leant on heavily by the new Chairman”, produced our first newsletter under her editorship. “But,” she adds “I was keen because I had stopped working full time and was interested in becoming involved with the Parks.” Tessa says that although she had marketing and editorial experience, she had no graphic design knowledge and had to learn by trial and error. She has “grown” the newsletter from four pages with two photographs to the thirteenth edition published on her watch which is a packed twelve pages.*

*She knew that whatever she produced must look inviting and include stories covering a wide range from human interest to technical subjects. A brief riffle through the pages of the Autumn 2019 edition shows she has achieved this, with articles on “Dancing and Bandstand Music” to “Bugs to kill other Bugs”, as well as a wealth of other information and some great photography.*

*Tessa in the Italian Gardens*



*She is proud of how it looks now and says that, although it is quite a large expense for us as the Friends don't have much literature, it promotes our organisation and gets our message across.*

*A digital newsletter was considered, and one attempt made but she thinks (and the trustees all agreed) that a hard copy has value and is appreciated by the membership.*

*She has thoroughly enjoyed learning about the Parks through meeting and interviewing many of the parks' professionals and understanding how they all fit in.*

*Her favourite places? She enjoys the Italian Gardens, the Café and Queen Anne's Alcove and the fantastic planting in that area. She especially loves the tucked away secret world of the Hyde Park Nursery.*

*Although she is not leaving the UK altogether she will be spending much more time in her Italian home. The next project there is the horticultural (or is it arboricultural?) challenge of sorting out a small, very neglected olive grove which she has acquired.*

*We owe her a huge debt of gratitude for producing, twice a year, a magazine which is valued by us all. I mustn't forget, of course, to mention the fact that as a trustee she has rolled up her sleeves on numerous occasions, attended countless meetings and produced posters, membership cards and leaflets without turning a hair and has even leant on heavily, in her turn, some of her friends to help us out.*

*She forgot to mention, which I reminded her of, that she got knocked down by a bicycle on the Hyde Park Broad Walk up by Speakers Corner, was quite badly injured and still bears the scars.*

*She deserves a medal for being volunteer extraordinaire!*



**Sue Price**

## Editorial Reflections

*It's hard to believe that six years have gone by since Sue Price, then newly elected FHPKG Chairman, asked me if I'd consider putting together a new newsletter for the Friends.*

*For me, having grown up in the country, Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens have been a focal point in my life in London and her request seemed to be an appealing combination of something I was interested to know more about (The Royal Parks) and aspects of my earlier professional life (which included editing company magazines). I hadn't bargained for the steep learning curve of actually taking on the layout and presentation of the newsletter, rather than just writing small pieces myself or taking an editorial red pen to someone else's writing. The latter was the easy part - getting to grips with creating a 'look' for the Friends' newsletter was something else.*

*It's been a rewarding experience on all sides and I'll even miss the stress of getting the next newsletter out, up to a point. I've certainly learned a bit about desk-top publishing. More importantly, I've learned a lot about the Parks and how they're run, about the plants and the history of some of them, and most of all I've had the pleasure of getting to know some of the dedicated and knowledgeable people who ensure that the Royal Parks continue to be there as a lifeline, quite literally a breath of fresh air, for all of us who love them.*

*I'll miss the Friends and my fellow trustees, but I'll be spending too much time away from London to be able to continue as an effective member of the group. My thanks to all of you who've made the past years so enjoyable and I wish the Friends, under Sue's tireless chairmanship, a flourishing and expanding future.*

**Tessa Singleton**

## Winter Wonderful!

Upon arrival with my son Paul at Winter Wonderland, our first ride Dr Archibald's Journey in Time – described as a dark, virtual-reality ride – was wonderful but scary when you find yourself up close and personal to a dinosaur!



We then headed for the Bavarian Village where we spent a long time enjoying the delicious food and mulled wine/beer on offer. More rides followed the first of which was the Grand Wheel with spectacular views.

A walk through the Magical Ice Kingdom in sub-zero temperatures was just about bearable but so enjoyable and the Ice Sculptures, including a typical Victorian street scene, were fantastic. We particularly enjoyed this year's theme, Charles Dicken's "A Christmas Carol" with all the detail of Scrooge and the 3 ghosts of Christmas past, present and future so beautifully crafted and cleverly depicted.

We then headed for the Euro Coaster. We began debating as to whether we should attempt what looked like a very exciting and fairly harmless ride and finally decided to join the line. Were we totally fooled? What an experience.... exhilarating, exciting and absolutely terrifying, are hardly the words to describe what turned out to be the best white-knuckle ride ever! One moment slow and steady, then a climb to dizzying heights before being sent crashing towards the ground only to be hauled up once again to even more scary manoeuvres, around bends, and all the time escaping by inches what alarmingly appeared to be certain death!

I really don't know how I survived this particular ride, but what a way to end the evening. Would I do it again? At 82, probably absolute madness, but this gets a certain and most definite Yesss!! (unmissable, but not for the faint-hearted). We couldn't leave Winter Wonderland without a steaming hot drink and churros by the Fire Pit reflecting on the evening, our latest dare-devil experience, and finally composed ourselves for the journey home.

A truly winter wonderful experience!

**Kathy Spanos**

## Mountbatten Christmas Cards

If you send Christmas cards you might like to consider:

**Mountbatten Cards**  
[www.mbcards.co.uk](http://www.mbcards.co.uk)  
[enquiries@mbcards.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@mbcards.co.uk)  
020 8947 2671

These are prints of original paintings of London and her Parks and open spaces.

The Friends HPKG benefit by a donation from the sales if you nominate us as the charity you wish to support.

David Osborne, Director of Mountbatten Cards, presented the Friends with a cheque for £35 which is 25% of the net profits on Christmas cards for which the customer specified The Friends of Hyde Park & Kensington Gardens as their chosen charity.

## Make a donation

### Virgin Money Giving reg charity no 1168319

The Friends have a number of delightful and worthwhile activities where we support the Parks. Recent projects have included the planting of clusters of cyclamen under trees located near to Marble Arch, summer bandstand concerts in the renovated pavilion in Hyde Park and the installation of benches in the meadow area on Buck Hill. The more funds we are able to raise the greater number of ways we can enhance the Park experience for visitors. If you would like to make a donation to the Friends you may do so online at [www.virginmoneygiving.com](http://www.virginmoneygiving.com) or directly via the donate now link on our website [www.friendshpkg.org.uk](http://www.friendshpkg.org.uk)

**Joanna Clark**