

FRIENDS OF HYDE PARK & KENSINGTON GARDENS

www.friendshpkg.org.uk

Issue 49

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

Registered Charity No. 1168319

Autumn 2019 Newsletter

Bandstand Concerts in the Park

Sunday in the Park with ...

...not just George (apologies to Stephen Sondheim) but hundreds of other visitors who were there to enjoy the second annual series of three concerts on the bandstand in Hyde Park in August.

Without generous donations from businesses, members and trustees we wouldn't be able to stage these Sunday afternoon concerts performed by three completely different bands.

The scene was set on August 4th at 3 pm for our first concert. The whole area was meticulously swept and cleared of all the debris brought down by the high winds. Rows of chairs were in place (free for those who wanted to sit and listen) and a classic ice-cream van was stationed close by.

The South London Jazz Orchestra and their upbeat programme were ideally suited to the dancers of Live Band Lindy who not only entertained and impressed the audience, they inspired a good number to stand up and join in the fun. Time flew by.

Following a week of pretty bad weather Sunday August 11th looked much more encouraging and once again the scene was set by late morning 'From Here to Havana', the band for the afternoon, had been doing early sound checks and were already running through short warm-up numbers.



I wondered why a huge space had been left between the dozens of chairs and the bandstand. David Strachan, spokesperson for the band, told me that dancers would definitely be showing up. I had my doubts, it looked terribly empty. Through social media David had contacted every Salsa dance club in London and probably the whole of the South East.

Before 3pm the music struck up, our feet started tapping and a stream of potential dancers rolled in.

We could tell who they were, because, apart from looking fit, there were some wonderful outfits on display. Within a few minutes dancers popped up all over the place and they were seriously impressive. Dear reader, your trustees joining the throng were not quite so athletic but enthusiastic none the less.

All shapes, ages and nationalities danced like mad for a couple of hours. Vows were made to attend classes over the winter, and polite requests for a dance were the order of the day. One wonderful dancer from Imperial College Salsa group told us "We meet every week but we very rarely have a chance to dance to a live band."

And to finish with David Strachan "Thanks again for having us it was certainly our best gig of the year and we had a great time."

Things calmed down a little on Sunday August 18th when the thirty musicians of the Snowdown Colliery Welfare Band staged a programme of widely varied music arranged for this traditional silver band. Songs from the shows, dance music and Beatles numbers spread their silvery notes across the Park and drew in a large and appreciative audience.

The band was formed in 1926 shortly after the opening of the East Kent coal mines. Originally the band consisted entirely of miners, and now includes many family members who have long been associated with the area and its history.



Thanks!

And see you next year for more music and dancing in the Park...

The second year of our Hyde Park Bandstand concerts has only been possible thanks to the organisation of trustee Julian Peach and Hyde Park Events Manager, Kathryn Whybrow, together with support from Hyde Park Manager Jason Taylor. In addition, thank you to the trustees and members who came along to the concerts bringing friends and family with them. It was lovely to see you all.

Can we look forward to another series next year? With your help we do hope so. Funding is most important, either from your own generous donations, or perhaps from your contacts who might be willing to help us with some financial support. And we also look forward to having a dance in August 2020.

We are most grateful to the following for their generous donations:

The Berkeley Hotel

Colicci Ltd

Park Deck Chairs (Nick Kwabi)

Rene Gimpel

John Harkness

Tom Newman

Helen Perkes

Carl Richardson

Plus several other kind donors who wish to remain anonymous.

Sue Price
Julian Peach



Our chairman Sue Price does an expert twirl with trustee Julian Peach

Flower Power Summer

Plant Sale for Members

Following our visit in May, later in June our members were invited back to the Nurseries to buy, at astonishingly low prices, surplus plants from the enormous selection which we had so admired in May. It was a first for us all and the opportunity was seized with alacrity.

Plants were taken away by all means of transport including push-chairs, bicycles, an open-top car, huge numbers of carrier bags and even a hired van (for a member who was replanting his Church garden).

Those Buckingham Palace geraniums proved magnetic, and I was impressed by the very careful selection of plants for colour combinations, shape and size. These were arranged in groupings in corners by members so the perfect collection could be taken home.



Mike Jones and his staff were busy all afternoon answering gardening questions, Kathryn Whybrow, Hyde Park Events Manager wrestled with the e-bay cash register and the plant sale was the idea of Steve Edwards (Events Director Hyde Park). Our immense gratitude to them all and we are hoping that it might be repeated.

More Plant Sales

This time to the general public at the Royal Parks Showcase tent in the British Summer Time concert ground at their free mid-week events.

Trustees and members were selling the plants and doing their best to answer questions. They were at times rushed off their feet calling for frequent re-stocking of the shelves and wrestling with THAT cash register. Trustee Tina Higginson organised a rota of helpers and is already working out how she can run a smoother, slicker, and more professional team operation next year. Any of you members who might like to help? We'd be pleased to hear from you.

Once again we thank Steve Edwards, Kathryn Whybrow, Mike Jones and all the Royal Parks team for their input without which we would not be able to enjoy any of these events.



EcoWarfare in the Nursery - predators and pests

Mike Jones, manager of the Hyde Park Nursery, explains how he and his colleagues combat infestations of all types that threaten their plants, without resorting to pesticides.

On a sunny day at the end of July, the Central Parks Nursery appeared almost empty. The deliveries had been made to the other Parks and the vast area that had housed thousands of plants only a few weeks earlier when the Friends had visited, was virtually denuded of greenery. The only tell-tale signs of the war that Mike and his colleagues had waged through the spring to ensure that all those plants supplied to the Parks were healthy, were a few small white window-envelopes attached to some of the columns in the glasshouses. Those envelopes, now empty, had housed many of the predators introduced to eliminate specific pests.

Aphids, whitefly, mealybug, spider mites, leaf miner are prominent among persistent garden pests that can wreak havoc on the young plants being raised in the Nursery. But in turn these pests all have predators that will destroy them and save the young plant crop.

“The refurbishment and reconstruction of the Nursery three years ago revolutionised the way we wage our eco-war on pests”, says Mike. “All the predators we used to use, which had mostly overwintered in the greenhouses over many years, had their habitat destroyed when the old Nursery was pulled down, and so they left. We had to start from scratch again and introduce new predators.”

Mike, himself a veteran with 27 years’ experience in charge of the Nursery, explained how expertise has been built up over time, through specialist suppliers and the in-depth knowledge of a consultant entomologist, who is able to target precisely which predators to use to protect which plants. “We are fortunate in having so much support”, says Mike, “our entomologist readily shares his expertise with us and with our apprentices. He comes in at the beginning of the year and can spot a pest from 20 metres away!”

“We have an integrated approach, using not only predators but also chemicals that affect only the targeted pests, as well as plants such as garlic, that the pests dislike. Our season is only 20 weeks long, from end March to end July, and we help our predators survive by striking a balance between providing food (the pests) and shelter. We have a few pots of tomatoes and aubergines in each of the glasshouse zones as a sort of mini-hotel for the predators - these are plants they return to in between feeding, that provide cover and the hairy leaves they prefer.”



He adds, “As ever, you learn by your mistakes. A while ago, we found that some of the predators were not effective - they were not heading for the targeted pest. Thanks to our entomologist, we learned that positioning the small bug container envelopes on the wrong side of a column in the greenhouse caused them to lose their sense of orientation. It was a question of the light being in the wrong place - we’re always careful now to attach them on the south side of the column!”

I asked Mike which aspects of his job give him the greatest satisfaction. He replies that working with students and apprentices, the gardeners of the future, is particularly rewarding. Most employees stay in the job for a long time - and many find fulfilment in working in a totally different environment from the one they were in before. He cites the example of one of his colleagues, originally a nursery nurse, who arrived initially as an unpaid volunteer and is now a key member of his staff of 16. “Literally from nursery to Nursery!” he adds.

“I also love the challenge of sourcing some weird and wonderful plants requested by the other Royal Parks, which I may find anywhere in the world, from Hampshire to China.”

Mike concludes our conversation by talking about the Friends. “I’d like to expand our relationship with the Friends. I enjoy your visits to the Nursery - I think taking tours round is my vocation! I am also sure we can develop further the very successful initiative begun this year with the sale of excess plants from the Nursery through the Friends.”

I thanked Mike for his time and promised to relay to our chairman, Sue, his suggestion on expanding plant sales next year. I left with a feeling of well-being - spending an hour or so in that wonderful nursery inside a beautiful park, talking to an expert, is good for the soul.

Tessa Singleton

Readers are welcome to contact Mike with questions related to this article by email: cmike.jones@btinternet.com. However, his biological control suppliers are all commercial and don’t supply the amateur market, so he would not be able to advise on the supply of predators for private gardens.

News Round-up from the Parks

Kensington Gardens

Andy Williams, Park Manager

Green Flag and Green Heritage Awards

I am pleased to report that visits took place and the Gardens again secured both awards. The judges were very fair in their assessment and have provided some useful feedback including some recommendations for action. They are keen that we celebrate how volunteer hours contribute to the park annually, along with seeking further exploration of climate mitigation measures and sustainability.

As Park Manager for Brompton Cemetery I was thrilled that Brompton received its first Green Flag Award this year. This was the first time that we entered the cemetery and achievement was a key objective of the HLF funding. We also secured Green Heritage site status.

Cyclical Landscape Works

We have been allocated £30k in this financial year for small landscape improvement projects. I have allocated the majority to Kensington Gardens. Theresa Short, Assistant Park Manager, will lead work aligned to our Management Plan namely, further landscape improvements to the North Flower Walk, a first phase of restoring the Stone Beds (located at the western end of the South Flower Walk) and for continued tree planting in support of our Avenue's planting strategy. Russell Stevens, Technical Officer, will be leading on bulb, native shrub and ornamental planting at Brompton Cemetery. Russell is also lining up a further phase of coppice and glade creation within the Long Water enclosures.

Sustainability

With the support of TRP's Sustainability Manager I have asked OCS (our landscape maintenance contractor) to undertake an evaluative trial of battery powered equipment. OCS will be recording information against three headline criteria namely Health and Safety (effects on operator), Environmental Impacts and Operation (productivity and functionality). A desktop review of information within the sector will inform the equipment used, and we are looking to benchmark our experiences against others.

Allotment Open Day

This annual free event takes place on Sunday 15th September from 11am – 4pm and is open to all. Replicating the success of previous years, there will be a range of things to see and do including children's activities, expert growing advice, meet the Royal Parks shire horses, learn about the fruit and vegetables grown onsite as well as light refreshments being available.



Open Day at the Allotment

The allotment is one of a number of food growing sites across the TRP estate, others include St James's Park, The Regent's Park, Greenwich Park and Bushy Park. We have a small allocation of core budget and work in partnership with our education team.

Chris Speirs, Allotment Co-ordinator, has actively sought to increase our volunteers base and encourage more engagement with the local community.

Works/Projects

Works to restore the **Two Bears** drinking fountain are underway – specifying and tendering is now complete. The attempted theft caused damage to the plinth and statue. A specialist conservation team, led by TRP Works Department, aim to restore and re-site the fountain this autumn.

Restorative work to the **Queens Anne's Alcove** is lined up for the autumn. A specialist contractor will be on site to commence and complete repairs to the wood panelling and bench seating.

Restoration works to the stone paving around the **Albert Memorial** commenced in early August for a period of 12 weeks or so. The stone paving is being cleaned, joints are being repaired, new stone is replacing old. Access restrictions are in place during these works. Further works to re-gild gates and railings is planned for Summer 2020.



News Round-up from the Parks

Hyde Park

Jason Taylor, Park Manager

As we come into September, with Autumn approaching it's a chance to reflect on the summer that's just been in Hyde Park. Being my second summer in the Park, it has been considerably less frantic, than last year when as well as the summer events we had the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, Christo's Mastaba and the hottest, longest summer on record to contend with.

This summer's weather has brought challenges but at least the hot days of summer were followed by periods of cooler wetter weather, with the driest periods being June and the end of August.

One of many benefits of city parks is how they act as 'heat sinks' dissipating heat, as opposed to the concrete and tarmac which absorbs the heat and releases it over a period of time. On several occasions this summer, as I cycled out of the parks I was amazed at how the surrounding streets were considerably hotter even in the evenings than the park. This is another reason why the Royal Parks are so important to London residents and visitors.

The Hyde Management and Grounds Maintenance Teams have worked exceptionally hard throughout the summer, to present the park to the highest standards. There has been a focus on improving horticultural standards, with particular attention given to the entrances and areas with highest footfall.

The pictorial meadows trial carried out over the last 12 months has worked very well, providing excellent spring colour, especially in the Bee Bed on West Carriage Drive. Next year we will look to extend the flowering season further, by adding additional plants.



Last year's trial was done in conjunction with Professor Nigel Dunnett B.Sc. PhD, at the University of Sheffield, who was responsible for the meadows in the Olympic Park in 2012, amongst others.

The renovation works to the Bandstand and Tool Shed beds that took place over last winter, really made a difference to the quality of the displays this summer. There are several other beds that we will look to renovate in a similar way before the spring.

In late August we removed 23 of the small bins along Serpentine Road and replaced them with 6 larger capacity bins. This was done with a view to improving the efficiency and effectiveness of how we manage litter in this area.

The British Summer Time concerts came and went in July, with the Parade Ground being rested in August ready for The BBC Proms and Radio Two concerts build to start in the first week of September. This BBC event will be quickly followed by Swim Serpentine, and before you know it Winter Wonderland, Christmas and 2020 will be upon us.

One of the highlights of the year for me was the Friends Summer Bandstand Concerts. These free concerts were very well attended and enjoyed by many visitors. The Hyde Park Team and Friends of Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens did a great job organising the concerts together. To me these types of events are exactly what having parks is about.



Following a request from some of the Friends, we are looking to run a volunteer session to work on the Pet Cemetery in the Autumn. Final details are yet to be agreed, but this session will run from 10am-2pm for 5-15 volunteers. If you are interested in joining please contact the volunteer team at volunteering@royalparks.org.uk and they'll keep you updated.

In Hyde Park Team news, I'd like to wish the best of luck to Dave Jordan, Assistant Park Manager, who is taking a one-year career break away from the Park. Pawel Szyrakarczuk, who is currently Technical Officer will be stepping up and covering Dave's role.

Two new apprentices, Asia and Emily, have recently started with the Hyde Park Grounds Maintenance Team. They join 6 others who have successfully been through the apprenticeship scheme.

As winter comes ever closer, I hope that people get the opportunity to come to the park and see everything that it has to offer at this time of the year, whether it be beautiful winter colour, BBC Proms or Winter Wonderland.



Out and about with the Friends

History through Trees



8th May - Driving wind and rain did not deter the 22 stalwart members who followed tree specialist Greg Packman on an absorbing tour, focusing on historical plants mainly in The Dell and the Rose Garden. A particular favourite of Greg's is the Chinese red birch, planted at the Holocaust Memorial, but he showed us a lot more: a Judas tree, a handkerchief tree, a snake bark maple and different types of oak, many planted well over 100 years ago. It was all engrossing

despite the weather - and completely different in focus from the first tree walk I'd attended. Many thanks to Greg, who is sadly leaving the RP - see elsewhere in this newsletter.

Butterfly Transect

18th June - The weather was not promising when we met Dave Jordan (Asst Manager Hyde Park) to look for butterflies, but despite the rain, Dave's enthusiasm kept our small group keen and interested. He explained how butterfly numbers are monitored through transects and how and when to record.



We enjoyed our outing and the subsequent refreshments in the Ranger's Lodge were particularly appreciated. We were sorry to say goodbye to Dave as he takes off on a year's sabbatical, but look forward to his return.

Hyde Park Super Nursery

14th May - We repeated one of our favourite events in mid-May thanks to Manager Mike Jones. 250,000 plants were packed in ready to be distributed round all the Royal Parks.

The Regent's Park Green Man was in fine fettle and the Buckingham Palace geraniums astonished simply by their height and bold colour. Many thanks to Mike for inviting us, and to Rob Dowling (St James's Park Assistant Manager) for helping with the drinks and photography.



Hidden Places and Secret Spaces



25th June - We ended the summer with a fascinating behind the scenes tour of Hyde Park, including taking in a temple to drainage and water provision (behind some public loos),

the Dell inside the gates, the Pets Cemetery and ending in the private treasure of a garden at the Rangers Lodge.

As we marched through the gates, Jason had kept us up to the mark (no shambling!) our

hearts lifted at the sight of a delicious Colicci buffet with plenty of chilled white wine and cool drinks already set up on the garden tables.

Our group not only appreciated all the information Jason was able to give us but also the chance to learn about and discuss plenty of other Hyde Park issues. He had an attentive audience and his research and the miraculous time-keeping were awesome. Thank you Jason.



Update on membership

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

New Life Members

Mrs Iona Bonham-Carter
Mr Charles Bott
Mrs Lindy Drury
Mrs Joan Hill
Mr Chris Rich
Miss Maxine Rylett
Mr Alex Vanselow
Mrs Mia Wilkinson
Ms Julie Young

New Annual Members

Mrs Dorothy Baldwin
Mr Philip Behan
Ms Veronique Bernard
Mr David Josephs &
Ms Holly Bishop
Mr George Cselko
Mr & Mrs R and J-L Dazin
Mr Ala El-Malak
Ms Lynda Finn
Ms Henrietta Flood

As of August 2019 we have:

*TOTAL MEMBERS	656
LIFE MEMBERS	165
NEW MEMBERS	36
of which new Life Members are	9
Corporate members	13
Associate members	13

Could you help, please? We have no addresses/telephone numbers for the following members who are still paying their subscriptions:

1. Mr & Mrs K & M Roskell New members from October 2018
2. Janet Carol Johnson Member since 2017
3. Mrs Frieda Taylor from Cuckfield Since 1992
4. Mr Harry Turner from Deepcut, Surrey Since 2002
5. Mr J M Williams Since 2015

Mrs Julia Gahlin
Mrs Christine Kent
Ms Corinne Lair
Mr James Laurenson
Mrs Winifred Medd
Mr Bryan Feiss & Mr Eli Muraidekh
Mr Greg Packman
Mr & Mrs Harriet & Liam Telfer
Mr & Mrs Roger & Susan Walters
Mrs Carolyn Wilson
Mrs Barbara Woodthorpe-Browne

New Corporate Member

Marble Arch Partnership

Mrs Kay Buxton
Mr Mike Fairmaner

Obituary



Keith Butt MRCVS

1937 - 2019

Keith started his small animal veterinary practice in Kynance Mews in 1963. At once a huge success, he has been the go-to vet for West London and beyond ever since. Animals, however distressed and ill, relaxed when in his hands.

The following personal reminiscence sums up how we all feel.

Tall and handsome, laconic and wise, Keith managed to involve owners and pets in treatment, and always shared his knowledge to ensure the best results.

He enjoyed people and animals equally, and was, almost immediately, everyone's friend.

Putting people in touch with people was one of his great skills.

We knew him from 1976, and there is a deep, Keith-size hole in our lives.

Rex Johansen

Keith was a longstanding member of the Friends and remembered by many members who are dog-owners for his reassuring advice in the Spring 2016 Newsletter on risks of lung worm disease being caught by dogs walking in the Parks. He will be much missed.

Gentleman Roly



I was lucky to meet this dashing, mature gent in the Serpentine Summer Pavilion with his servant, Maxine, one early Autumn morning

Although he claims to be "mature" he is a working Cocker who is actually very busy at the office

every day where he meets and greets and shows clients round properties.

He is a born negotiator and, with his luscious dark wavy hair and melting brown eyes, the clients are putty in his paws.

He tells me he is a lucky hound. He is never on his own but is in a non-stop social whirl and has a large fan club, even having his own table at "The Enterprise" in Walton Street which is his favourite place to eat.

He has his own Instagram Account which is #rolrylett.

Despite his stunning good looks he is no Casanova and sadly can't lay claim to any Mini Me's.

His cruel serf/chauffeuse put a stop to potential puppy families.

Roly holidays out of the Royal Borough with his dog parents Lorraine and Peter who live in a cottage in Putney. He very much enjoys his visits to stay with them as he goes to Richmond Park and Wimbledon, Barnes and Wandsworth Commons for sprinting and walking

He daily, usually very early unless he has been carousing into the early hours when he can't get out of bed, visits Kensington Gardens for his morning constitutional. Then he has a chance to meet his many friends some of whom, he lets slip, are celebs in the literary world.

I am very honoured, I thought, that he was willing to give some of his busy time to me.



Sue Price was talking to Roly and Maxine (aka The Serf)

If you are a member who has a dog with a tale please contact us on contact@friendshpkg.org.uk to arrange a date. Otherwise, sadly, these will be the last snuffles and barks heard from our canine section of the membership.

Notes from the editor This summer we've been blessed with good weather when it really mattered - and that's reflected in our main articles in this issue. We were delighted with the success of the bandstand concerts in August, initiated last year and sponsored by the Friends and we fully intend to repeat them next year. The Open Day at the RP Allotment welcomed many visitors and we intend to participate in the next one. The Friends' visits continue to be well-attended and varied - from tree walks to the Hyde Park Nursery, demand tends to outstrip supply.

We are still on the lookout for more members to volunteer assistance, both in the Parks and in the organisation of the Friends itself. Please get in touch via email to newsletter@friendshpkg.org.uk, if you are interested in giving a hand. And do write to the newsletter if you have opinions and comments to air!

Tessa Singleton, Editor

Christmas Cards

If you send Christmas cards you might like to consider

Mountbatten Cards

W: www.mbcards.co.uk

E: enquiries@mbcards.co.uk

T: 020 8947 2671

These are prints of original paintings of snowy 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. We are grateful to Mountbatten Cards for their support.



KE9 Albert Memorial on a Chilly Evening



KE11 Physical Energy, Kensington Gardens



KE12 Serpentine Bridge, Hyde Park



KE16 Peter Pan

Chairman's Report

It's been a resounding summer..... music rang out from the Bandstand on three successive Sunday afternoons together with dancing, picnicking and a great deal of fun. Once again it was a perfect example of how much we can achieve with help both from you, the members, and from Hyde Park staff: Kathryn, Jason and Steve, as well as much appreciated cleaning support from Dean (from OCS) and from deckchair maestro Nick Kwabi. This co-operation was one example of an encouraging theme running all through the Spring and Summer.

Together we can do itnothing about the 'B' word but with Royal Parks staff's assistance and our trustees we were able to help sell plants at the Nursery, man a stall at the Royal Parks Showcase in the mid-week British Summer Time event and help lead quite large groups of members on some fascinating visits. We delved behind scenes which most of us had no idea existed. Many thanks to all the members of Royal Parks staff who have made so many things possible for us.

Bed and Breakfast forthose busy bees that were in seventh heaven in the early summer in the wild flower-beds at the Bee Hotel. There was a bee-feast on offer from flowers which had been planted the previous year but hadn't made an appearance. When these died back our horticultural expert, Phil Newcombe, put a selection of other wild flowers into the space and these were splendid for a shortish time. The pictorial meadows (all the areas newly dedicated to wild flowers) are on his list to sort out. Phil is also looking at sprucing up projects including the Rose Garden and shrub beds.

Lazy, hazy dayshave been pretty peaceful in the Parks this summer. Although they have both been very busy and the hottest day ever was recorded, visitor numbers were below those attracted by Christo's Mastaba last summer. Improvements have been made to North Flower Walk in Kensington Gardens. If you haven't been up there, it is well worth a visit. New planting has gone into recently cleared flower-beds and masses of dense undergrowth have been removed. The area now looks attractive and safe.

Welcometo new trustee Mary Frances Lindstrom who has already been much in evidence helping at events and writing for this Newsletter. She stepped forward at our AGM and she was appointed to our board at our September meeting.

Tina Higginson is another newish trustee who volunteered at the British Summertime plant sale in 2018 and has been hard at work ever since. We could not function without all of our trustees who work very hard on your behalf. We could still do with more helpers, especially occasionally at events. If you think you could help from time to time, contact details are below and we would be glad to hear from you.

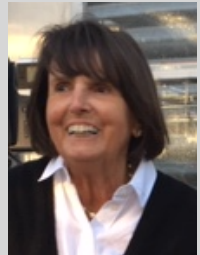
Expandingour membership numbers have satisfactorily slid past the 650 mark and we have about 50 honorary members as well. Gone are the days when we could count our August mailbag on the fingers of one hand. And finally the long anticipated replacement for the kiosk on the Serpentine Bridge was finally completed in early August. It provides a much improved area to enjoy a drink and something to eat. Tables and chairs are set up round the back away from the traffic with views down through the recently cleared and trimmed trees to the water of the Serpentine. Don't forget your membership card when you visit, you will get a 20% discount. I have to confess to an inability to pass by without buying an ice-cream.

Fluttering hankiesmetaphorically waved goodbye to our tree expert, Greg Packman, who many of you will have met. You can read his message in this newsletter. He was made an offer he couldn't refuse (where have we heard that before)? He has promised that he will keep in touch (fan club alert) and lead another tree walk for us, possibly next summer.

Gathering clouds thoughWe do face outside pressures from every direction. From above (Heathrow third runway) which would result in extra overhead aircraft noise, from around in the ever-rising skyline especially in the Paddington area. We need to fight the assumption that the Parks (Hyde Park in particular) is a place where you can stage a demo, and camp while you're at it, smoke and sell cannabis while dumping hundreds of tons of waste all without permission, insurance, or any formal arrangements.

All these kind of activities take place with a total disregard to the costs in staff time it takes to restore the Parks to a decent condition. We need to fight the corner of our two Special Parks and to get back, almost to the beginning of this report: **Together we can do it.**

Sue Price



Photographic Synergy

Paul Shelley, keen photographer and provider of many of the photos for the Friends' publications, meets a kindred spirit.

Mary Frances Lindstrom and her husband, Dave, are recent joiners of the Friends. Chatting with them at the AGM I found that Mary Frances is a keen photographer. She explained that she shoots on black and white film, which itself is unusual nowadays when most people use digital cameras. Not only that, but she also prints her pictures from black and white negatives in a traditional chemical darkroom.

I was intrigued to know more and asked if I could see some of her pictures. We met at the Lido Café and Mary Frances produced a collection of stunning images. All in a small format taken in our two parks. Pictures of grasses, running water, fountains and sculptures.

Mary Frances explained that she became interested in photography twenty years ago at a workshop to learn how to process black and white film/negatives and to print pictures in a darkroom. Over the years she has studied with master printers and taken many art courses and tutorials. She is now in



Mary Frances (Left) & example of her work above



postgraduate study in the history of art and photography. Her pictures are drawn from nature —interpretations of the artistry in nature and the seasons, delicacy of time and elegance of age.

Mary Frances is currently engaged in longer-term studies in Kensington Gardens and Hyde Park. At the same time, she is always working on continuing series in London, for example, looking at the relationship between art and architecture in contemporary urban contexts.

When Mary Frances started in photography her interest was social documentary, which is similar to mine, especially in the parks. This coincided with her early professional career (unrelated to photography) when she spent considerable time in Central and Eastern Europe, Russia and Central Asia in the 1990s. She was never without her camera, and in her free time, she made pictures.

She participated in a joint exhibition in Mongolia in 2004 and was commissioned in 2005 to produce a monograph and exhibition about the post-Soviet transition in Central Asia. From 2007 to 2012 she had several exhibitions of a long-term body of work about the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet empire.

We are all looking forward to seeing more of Mary Frances' work in the future.

It isn't just in the Parks; worldwide, pigeons are probably the commonest bird. They flock to the Parks and Trafalgar Square etc because that is where the most food is to be found.

They may look mindless as they peck about, and attract epithets such as 'flying rats' but both scientists and pigeon handlers can tell you they are anything but empty between the ears. At least one has shown that she will listen only to Radio 3.



London pigeons are mainly feral domestic pigeons, a subset of the Rock Dove. Only the English language uses two words for the same birds, showing our multi-origin language. Pigeon is from old French and dove from German, both describing different aspects of the same bird. Scientists tend to use dove for the smaller varieties, non-scientists tend to call anything with a lot of white a dove. All are from the family Columbidae.

The extraordinary homing instinct has been made use of for hundreds of years, as pigeons are very strong, fast fliers. Both WW1 and WW2 saw pigeons used as messengers. Perhaps the most famous was Cher Ami who flew 12 missions in WW1, culminating in delivering a message that saved 194 men of the 77th Infantry Div. She flew 25 miles despite being shot and losing a leg. For this she was awarded the Croix de Guerre with Palm. WW11 saw 32 pigeons awarded the

Dicken Medal for bravery and they are commemorated in the Animals at War Memorial in Park Lane.

Using their pecking instinct to push buttons, together with food as a reward, pigeons in experiments have shown they can tell the difference between cubist and impressionist paintings, though an inverted Monet did confuse them. Few animals recognise themselves in a mirror but pigeons do, clearly seeing themselves and not trying to find the bird behind the mirror as parrots tend to. This recognition and button pushing combination

culminated in pigeons helping the US Coast guard find capsizes in the 1970s and 1980s. Trained to react to spots of colour, they were put in a bubble under the helicopter and flown over the sea on rescue missions. Their ability to pick out scraps of lifejacket etc was far superior to the human team.

So go on, give them a second look, admire the gloss and sheen and even try to remember that it is good luck to be 'dropped on'.

Greg Packman moves on to new challenges...

Many of you will have enjoyed Greg's wonderfully interesting and accessible tours of trees in both Kensington Gardens and Hyde Park. He has done several for our members and now has a considerable fan club. He was approached with an offer he couldn't refuse but has promised to stay in touch and perhaps even do another walk and talk next summer. We wish him all the best. He has given us an update as he settles into his new role.

"In my new role I am Senior Tree Inspector for the London Borough of Islington, primarily working with external clients. The role came into existence as a way to earn back funding that was lost through budget cuts so the work that I do goes back into funding public realm projects.

So far I have been working with the City of London, Epping Forest, Inner & Middle Temples and Alexandra Palace; the job role gives me greater responsibility and more capacity to work on policies, strategies and management plans. I am enjoying the work as I am going to some fantastic, interesting, and historic locations and the

work is focused on tree health and risk management which is where my specialism lies rather than planning and development work.

I am really enjoying the job so far and know that it is the right decision to have made at this stage for my career but I miss The Royal Parks, both the staff and the parks. Working at a council is a very different work culture!"



Phil talks to Mary Frances Lindstrom about his horticultural work and plans for the Royal Parks

“This is the reason I come to England!” is quite an endorsement of the richness, diversity and innovation in our parks and gardens, yet this was the sentiment shared by a recent visitor in Hyde Park as she enthusiastically photographed wildflowers. Phil Newcombe, Assistant Manager of Hyde Park, had inquired of her interest in the pictorial meadow (colourful flower meadow) which the Park’s management was assessing for its added value in relation to its short blooming time. Phil related this anecdote to me when we met recently in the summer sunshine of the Rangers’ Lodge garden as I expressed my enthusiasm for London’s parks and gardens.



Phil was appointed Assistant Manager of Hyde Park at the beginning of the year, and I was curious to learn his favourite things about the park. I was intrigued when he answered one of his favourite things is observing people’s interaction with the beauty, colours, design and landscape in the park. He says when he sees someone taking a selfie or a photograph, he’s interested to know the reason for this location or subject. He’ll stop and initiate a conversation because as he explained to me, appreciating people’s many and different interactions with the park enables him to “see the park with other eyes.”

Exploring insights into local community and visitor engagement with the park is therefore not only a favoured dynamic of working for the park, but also is fundamental to Phil’s work. Phil defines his responsibilities in the management team broadly as stewardship and protection — stewardship of the rich landscape history and protection of biodiversity in Hyde Park. He emphasises sensible choices for today, for example, refreshing landscapes rather than wholesale changes, and choices which won’t create obstacles in the future.



Phil has extensive experience in many dimensions of horticulture and management, including negotiating the often delicate balance between implementing projects in the present and planning in anticipation of challenges in the future. Phil lived for eighteen months in East Africa where he was invited to advise on sustainable resource allocation and agriculture-dependent livelihoods. He is now completing an RHS master’s degree in horticulture which will consolidate his research and expertise in sustainability and resource (re)utilisation. I noted connections to Phil’s work in Hyde Park. In East Africa climate change is causing disruptions in the seasons with negative consequences for growing cycles. Changes to the seasons here will affect our parks on many levels, including scheduling of activities and events and in visitor numbers. Experiences in mitigating adverse effects of climate change necessarily will inform management’s choices and priorities for Hyde Park.

Our conversation was wide-ranging and thought-provoking. As I thanked Phil for his time and insights, he reiterated to me how much he and the management team value the partnership, collaboration and contributions from the Friends. We welcome Phil to Hyde Park, we share his enthusiasm for the design and beauty of our green spaces, and we’ll look forward to meeting him in the park!

Mary Frances Lindstrom

Update on Concessions

The concessions list for 2020 is printed on a separate page, enclosed with the newsletter.

New Concession

Zoe Birch BSc (Hons) of PhysioMotion Limited is offering the Friends a 20% discount off the cost of the initial appointment.

Zoe is a Chartered Physiotherapist and she and her team (pictured right) also offer home visits.

Contact them at:

PhysioMotion Limited

Virgin Active Kensington

17a Old Court Place

London

W8 4PL

Tel: 020 3422 6655

Email: info@physiomotion.co.uk



Readers' Letters

Comments, opinions and suggestions to the newsletter - write to newsletter@friendshpkg.org.uk

From Jillian Dart - re Butterfly Transect

Thank you so much for arranging the very interesting walk with Dave Jordan yesterday.

Dave certainly gave me a new perspective on invertebrate life in the parks and I was most impressed at his range of expertise. A very nice man, and well able to instill enthusiasm in those of us who have never pursued such areas of interest previously. I wish him well in his "year off".

Regards to all

Jillian

From Carol de Juan - re Plant Sale

Dear Sue

I wanted to say a very big thank you for the wonderful sale of flowers yesterday.

My girlfriend and I bought quite a lot between us.

You may remember we loaded up the open top mini with everything on the back seat and you took photos - I hope they came out ok and are of use for your magazine/website.

Thank you again - we were most impressed especially with Buckingham Palace geraniums.

Regards

Carol

Knightsbridge Business Group

FHPKG Annual General Meeting

*Wednesday 22 April 2020 at 7pm (Doors open at 6.30pm)
at Queen Alexandra's House, Bremner Road, Kensington Gore, SW7 2QT
(by kind permission of the Chairman Adrian Harvey)*

FHPKG Members are welcome to attend

Members' Photos - Caption Challenge

In the Spring newsletter, we published photos sent in by members Harry Reid and Rosa Davies. In this issue, we invite you to send in suggestions of what the two characters in the photo below (another of Harry Reid's) might be saying to each other.

Suggestions by email please to newsletter@friendshpkg.org.uk. Most appealing captions to be published in the Spring 2020 Newsletter.

