

FRIENDS OF HYDE PARK & KENSINGTON GARDENS

SPRING 2015

FOUNDED IN 1991 TO PROMOTE THE PEACE AND BEAUTY OF THE PARKS

ISSUE 40



Spring 2015 Newsletter

News Round-Up from the Parks

Kensington Gardens

Report from Andy Williams, Park Manager

Treeworks

We have been revisiting the Kensington Gardens Tree Strategy first produced in 2010 in order to identify and prioritise planting plans for the next 5-7 years.

As part of this work we identified the Great Bow for major restoration work in order to rectify poor planting/poor specimens undertaken in the late 1980's.

We removed 39 Limes (*Tilia x europaea*). The specific clone used was of poor quality with a weak branching structure. The majority were also planted too deeply which led to poor growth and ultimately these trees will suffer from limb and root failure.

Replacement trees were planted in January 2015 – and will be using the same cultivar used in the most recent adjacent planting in this area namely *Tilia europaea* 'Pallida'. These have a much stronger branching structure which in turn creates a better habit. These trees should catch up with their neighbours in 10-15 years.

We continue to proactively manage the tree population, for example some existing monoliths in the quarters have been further reduced in order to retain as much standing dead and decaying habitat as possible. Our collection of ornamental trees in the amenity grassland near the satellite beds is being expanded, including new Flowering Cherries and Magnolias.

Leaf Clearance

Leaf clearing was completed by Christmas - an important task not only from an aesthetic perspective, but also if left then some leaves can smother parkland grass; particularly London Plane tree leaves that take a long time to decompose.

Leaves are collected and shredded along with other green waste. The composted material is used either as mulch or as a soil conditioner, frequently as an organic top dressing after having deep spiked – this alleviates compaction, improves soil conditions and also drainage.

Projects

1. North Flower Walk We have secured some financial support to undertake a development study into the restoration of this area.

2. South Flower Walk We are out to tender with phase three of the SFW landscape restoration continuing the previous good work undertaken in the last two years. This tranche includes making the western end more welcoming through a realigned entrance, fencing, planting and improved paving and edging details. The works include a further seating area towards the eastern end and new entrance way from the Albert Memorial.

3. Replacement irrigation systems We have received tender returns for replacement irrigation at the SFW and Albert Memorial Lawns and plan to do the work in September 2015.

4. Albert Memorial Lawns Intensive turf renovation works at the Memorial are underway to improve the quality of the grass sward. We have scarified, aerated, top-dressed with rootzone, over sown with a narrow leaved perennial ryegrass, applied an autumn fertiliser and controlled perennial turf weeds.

5. Orme Square Gate and Jubilee Walk We are undertaking a review of this entrance way and walk, noting it is used by pedestrians and authorised vehicles and by unauthorised cyclists and at certain times of the day some conflict can occur. The review will seek to provide us with a range of recommendations to enable us to effectively mitigate hazards in this busy area.

6. Mount Walk We are discussing a range of interventions to try and manage cycle speed on Mount Walk. These may include changes in surface treatments and improved signage.

Toilet and Cleansing Contract

The new provider (Vinci) commenced on 22nd November. Charging will commence in February/March at Marlborough Gate toilets. We are planning a full refurbishment of Mount Gate toilets this winter to bring this block up to the same high standard as Marlborough Gate toilets. There will be no charging at Mount Gate until the refurbishment is completed.



Bear foot in the Park

Paddington enjoys getting out and about

Hyde Park

Report from Steve Edwards, Park Manager

Cycle Super Highway

Discussions with TfL are ongoing. Attention is currently focused on North Carriage Drive and how this road can operate during major events (as a parking/holding area) whilst accommodating the Super Highway.

Winter Wonderland

This passed off well, despite poor weather for some of the time. Particular attention was paid to management of ingress and egress round Hyde Park Corner and north of Hyde Park. Noise levels were down on the previous year.

Rough Sleeping

This has diminished during the winter months. The encampment of persistent rough sleepers, including a group of Roma by Hyde Park Corner Lodge, was removed despite abuse of staff.

White Lining Project

The white and yellow lines in Hyde Park have been refreshed. Many, including those where horses walk, do not last for long, so a regular refresh is vital for areas such as cycling enforcement.

Diana Fountain

The fountain was closed for two weeks in December to allow a pathway to be constructed on the eastern side of the fountain. This area tends to be wet all year round, so the pathway will reduce the need for grass replacement and unsightly rope and pin during the summer.

Bowling Green

The existing Will To Win contract has been extended to end March 2015 and a new contract to start from April.

Parade Ground reinstatement

The work to reinstate the ground was begun in January and will be completed and open fully to the public before Easter.

It's not all pigeons and parakeets...

FHPKG member Dimity Spiller shares her love of birdwatching in the Park

One of the pleasures of the Park for me is the rampant bird life. As I walk through Kensington Gardens the sirens cheep from the trees calling 'stop and look for me'. Real luck would be to spot a treecreeper or nuthatch. We all hear the woodpeckers, but the flash of green is usually a parakeet instead.

Sadly, the Great Crested

Grebes abandoned the Round Pond several years ago but are still looking fabulous on the Long Water. Their chicks take the prize for the noisiest babies but do look adorable being given a lift on dad's back. A relatively new visitor to the Round Pond is the Egyptian Goose, who is splendid in shades of brown and beige with unexpected black and white wings when unfurled. They don't understand the idea of seasons and one pair had brood of 8 goslings in November. Astonishingly all made it out of babyhood. My favourite Round Pond bird is not one of the several water species but the pied wagtail who is so smartly dressed and so busy. However, I think we all look forward to the later Spring and the scream of the swifts and the other aerial acrobats from Africa.

The Tawny Owl is the poster boy for the Park. A pair have nested west of the leaf pile in Kensington Gardens for several years. Mrs Owl gave us a fright by not appearing until well into Spring last year but all was well and a fine brood of owlets was raised. Papa is out and about this year, lets hope all goes well with the family in 2015.

There is an excellent blog on the birds, with up-to-the-minute news, and glimpses of rarities at <http://kensingtongardensandhydeparkbirds.blogspot.co.uk>



Letter from Sue Price, Chairman

In our Spring Newsletter it would be pleasing to report only on the great things about our two wonderful Parks. However I seem for the past few months to have been overwhelmed by campaigns and the need to lobby and get our point of view across to powerful bodies. I am most grateful to all the members of staff of the Royal Parks who help and support us.



Section 15 – East West Cycle Superhighway

I have attended meetings with TfL and have been grateful for the support and significant contribution made by members Julian Peach and committee member René Gimpel, who have attended with me.

Thankfully the proposal is that the route will follow existing roads within Hyde Park. However there has been concern for quite some time about high volumes of speeding cyclists using other shared use paths within both Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens and feeding into the Superhighway. We also know that the signage between Kensington Gardens and Hyde Park is unclear and sometimes seems to give conflicting advice. We are working very closely with members of the Royal Parks' staff.

Funding of the Parks' Police

Leading on from this, and also of great importance to everyone who visits the Royal Parks, is the prospective reduction in police funding. A cut in the funding of the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) will have a knock-on effect on the Royal Parks' Operational Command Unit (OCU). This will result in a reduction in the size of Parks' police force (for all the Royal Parks) which in 2004 numbered 160, is currently 105, and will drop to 77 officers in 2016. At this level it is not viable to maintain a police force across the Royal Parks.

Other models of policing will have to be looked at, perhaps involving special constables, wardens or rangers.

Alison Newcomb, who is in charge of the Westminster OCU which oversees the Parks' OCU, has committed to working with the Royal Parks and all interested stakeholders to produce a viable model to ensure Parks are safe and Parks' regulations are properly enforced.

Again, on the debit side, in addition to complaints about cyclists, we have listened to members' concerns about out of control dogs, dog attacks, beggars, antisocial behaviour and the use of shrubberies and dark areas at night as lavatories or worse, drones (notices up now prohibiting these and model plane flying) inconsiderate Nordic skiers, roller-bladers and skaters.

Let's finish with some positives

The Royal Parks recently commissioned a Visitor Research Survey. The results were published at the end of January. Do have a look at them. They make fascinating reading, especially when you delve into the sections covering Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens. www.royalparks.org.uk/park-management/visitor-research.

Just to tempt you, here are two facts: **there were 77.7 million visitors to the Royal Parks between November 2013 and November 2014, of whom 68 million were pedestrians.**

Linda Lennon, Chief Executive of TRP, has kindly agreed to talk to us at our AGM and will possibly expand on this research.

I look forward to meeting many of you on 25th March at the AGM. We have over the past year seen a very satisfactory increase in our membership numbers. Our events have been popular and well supported and in most cases fully subscribed. Thank you for your support, which encourages your committee to battle on!

I took great pleasure yesterday in noting in Kensington Gardens that the substandard trees in the Great Bow have already been replaced by new trees of a better variety. And in Hyde Park the winter planting, especially in the large urns outside the Lido Café, would not look out of place in a glossy coffee table book.



Sue Price

News of the Friends

Visit to the Hunterian Museum

“War Art and Surgery”

18 November 2014

A group of thirty Friends was privileged to be given a guided tour of the Hunterian Museum at the Royal College of Surgeons, combined with a talk and visit to the special exhibition “War Art and Surgery”, held to commemorate World War I and the reconstructive surgery pioneered by artist/surgeon Henry Tonks. Our group survived the enormous



and sometimes gruesome displays of anatomical specimens and moved on, only slightly paler, to see “War Art and Surgery”.

Historian Dr Sam Alberti, curator of the exhibition, was our guide and we were able to explore the



relationship between war and surgery through the arresting pastel drawings of Henry Tonks, artist and surgeon of World War I, exhibited alongside water colours by artist Julia Midgley, who has recently spent 18 months observing and recording present-day rehabilitation and training at Headley Court.

Membership

We are pleased to report a considerable increase in FHPKG membership over the past 12 months. As at 31 December 2014, the total has risen to 541, of whom 14 are honorary members.

New members since the Autumn Newsletter are as follows:

The Hon. Sarah Joiner*
Mrs Elaine Lyons
Sir Andrew Morritt
Mrs Mary Olivari
Mr Richard Price*
Ms Annie Robinson
Mr Robert Rogers
Mrs Emma Louise Salter
Mrs Sue Silkstone
Mr & Mrs Jane Wallace
Mr Nigel Williams

* denotes life member

Mrs. Elizabeth Aldridge
Lady Susan Barnes
Mr & Mrs Philippe Beaufour
Mrs Ann Dawson
Miss Jeannie Dixon
Mr & Mrs Michael Enright
Miss Anna Fergusson
Mr Daniel Hearsom*
Ms Patricia Hithersay
Mrs Patricia Holland

Calling amateur sleuths!!!

We have 2 new members who have sent in subscriptions by BACS but given no contact details.

- Anna Rosamund Harr
- Joan El Hussein

They therefore have received no membership cards or Newsletters.

If anyone knows either of these ladies, please advise them that FHPKG Membership is anxiously awaiting their contact details. Thank you!

Volunteers' Lunch

4 December 2014



The indefatigable band of volunteers who man the kiosk at Hyde Park Corner, dispensing advice and information and answering questions of every type from visitors to London, were finally able to relax and enjoy themselves over a cheerful pre-Christmas lunch at the Serpentine Bar & Restaurant.

Jennie Cleaver, who organises the volunteers, arranged the get-together, which was much appreciated by all.

Many of the volunteers are FHPKG Friends and Jennie is always on the look-out for new recruits, so if you're interested in finding out what's involved and possibly joining the volunteer group, please email contact@friendshpkg.org.uk

Farewells

Lady Kennet



Liz Kennet, who died on 30 November 2014, aged 91, was an indefatigable champion of myriad causes, from arms control and the protection of the sea to preserving ancient buildings. She lived with her husband Wayland Young, 2nd Lord Kennet, and their six children in the house overlooking Hyde Park where JM Barrie had lived and where he wrote *Peter Pan*.

Liz Kennet and her husband, who was an honorary member of FHPKG, were both heavily involved in local affairs and took a keen interest in the work of the Friends. She wrote several books and was an accomplished water colourist. Her last years were spent in her bedroom looking out over the Park. She sketched the cloudscape to the east at dawn every day until her hands gave out. In 1996, the year in which she became a great-grandmother, she put paid to a burglar in her home by kneeling him in the groin. As a result, her family affectionately dubbed her “Have-a-go great-granny”, a nickname of which she was rather proud.

Tessa Singleton

Jim Spillius

We are sorry to report the death of founder member, Jim Spillius, on 20 September 2014 at the age of 92. For a brief period Jim served as Chairman of the Friends. There is a seat in the Park at the bottom of the Flower Walk in his memory, where he used to sit with his first wife. Many people, including several longstanding Friends, attended the rather strange funeral, which was held at St Sophia's Greek Orthodox Cathedral and at which not a word of English was spoken. Everyone except Kenneth and myself waited in a long queue to embrace a very young and sobbing wife, who I think was Chinese.

Ann Riches



The Hearsum Collection

Saving and sharing 400 years of history of the Royal Parks



A brief history

Built as a one-room mole catcher's cottage around 1750 and enlarged significantly over the following centuries, Pembroke Lodge in Richmond Park seems to have had the knack of inspiring affection in its many illustrious tenants. However by 1997, when the Hearsum family stepped in to save the building and managed to secure a long lease, Pembroke Lodge had been largely derelict for 25 years and was in a sorry state. The research to inform the major restoration works funded and carried out by the Hearsum family revealed that the Park had a unique and fascinating heritage, but also that the material was scattered across many locations.

So in 1997 Daniel Hearsum (pictured above with his son) began bringing the heritage material back to the park and has continued to do so ever since. It is thanks to his

unflinching enthusiasm and energy that the collection which began as an archive of material relating solely to Richmond Park has grown in size and breadth and now encompasses the other Royal Parks.

The Collection

The archive comprises a diverse range of heritage material covering the last four centuries (including antique prints, paintings, maps, postcards, photographs, documents, books and press cuttings). There are over 5,000 items relating to Richmond Park and about 1,300 relating to Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens, and the collection continues to grow. One of Daniel's aims is to show how the Royal Parks and their use have changed over time and major events held in the Parks in the past, such as The 1851 Great Exhibition in Hyde Park, are helping to do this.

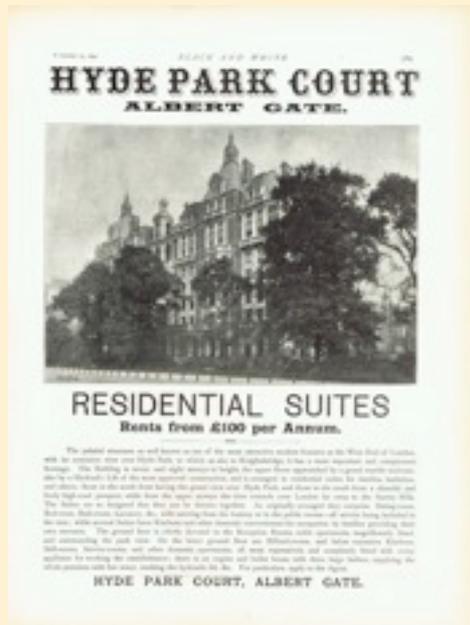
Thanks to the dedicated work of volunteers from the Friends of Richmond Park, including a landscape historian, a museum curator, a librarian and an IT specialist, the collection is being catalogued and preserved. The diverse items from over 400 years of history tell stories of kings and queens, prime ministers and other notables, the impact of two world wars, changing patterns of sport and recreation, including the Olympics in 1948 and 2012 and connections with visitors from around the world.

Plans for the Future

The collection is currently stored in unsatisfactory accommodation in Pembroke Lodge and cannot be made accessible to the general public, but this is about to change. Plans are well advanced for a new purpose-built Heritage Pavilion located in the vicinity of Pembroke Lodge to provide safe storage and to allow access to all.

Richmond Park has been a much loved and frequented amenity for centuries and its popularity continues to grow, attracting some 3.5 million visitors each year. Combine these numbers with a delicate eco system of unique biodiversity and the potential harm is vast. The visitors centre will provide information on the Park's ecology and biodiversity and aim to encourage more sustainable and responsible use of the Park to ensure its protection for future generations.

The proposal for the new Pavilion has full support from interested local and national bodies and is currently going through the planning process and its opening is planned for 2017. For more information on the Hearsum Collection, visit



<http://hearsumcollection.org.uk/>



Tessa Singleton

Friends of The Friends...

We chat to people whose daily working lives are closely associated with the Royal Parks

Andy Williams *Park Manager Kensington Gardens and Brompton Cemetery*



Andy's job entails management of the two spaces, with about 80% of his time being allocated to Kensington Gardens. He has been with the Royal Parks since 2007 – Regents Park up to April 2014 and Kensington Gardens since then.

Andrew was inspired to go into horticulture by working near Bristol on his grandfather's market garden as a lad. He loved working there and handling the tomatoes gave him his green fingers. He left school to work in the market garden and then moved

into the domestic landscaping sector in Bristol.

In 1999 he and his wife upped sticks and moved to Reading so that he could study landscape management at Reading University. He self-funded this by selling his house – a brave move which paid dividends in the long run.

Managing Kensington Gardens is an excellent fit for Andy. It is a Grade I historic garden which is managed differently from other Parks. There are, for example, no licences granted for sporting events.

Andrew tells me new ideas are being formulated to enhance the North Flower Walk by the Italian Garden. Historically this was the garden of the old Bayswater House and is an area that needs attention to attract and encourage visitors to divert towards it from the main north path.



Andrew makes sure that he takes a good walk around the Park every week to see how visitors are enjoying the space, spotting things that are working well and other points that need attention. Its position as an international attraction with some of London's most celebrated monuments is always present in his mind. He poses the question: "Is there a more magnificent memorial than the Albert Memorial anywhere in London?"

His favourite vista in the Park is from the upper floors of Kensington Palace over the plateau of the Round Pond and the Broad Walk. Andy explains that from here you get a sense of what Charles Bridgeman was trying to achieve when he designed the original landscape.

This is clearly a very big job in the world of horticulture and park management. So how does Andy relax? He has three teenage children, so that takes a lot of his time. But he manages to look after his allotment, growing vegetables for the family table and apples for his homemade cider. The ties to the West Country are obviously still strong.

Running with his dog helps Andy keep fit and he is hoping to compete in his third London Marathon this year. Running also helps him make decisions and find solutions, while gasping for breath. Decision making is clearly one of his strengths as he was very certain of his answers to the Quick Fire options.

Before that a family holiday in Cornwall is planned and for the first time the oldest son is staying behind at home. Good luck on that one, Andrew! We wish him all the best for continued success at Kensington Gardens.

Quick-fire questions

Q *Trainers or hiking boots?*

A "Trainers"

Q *Frosty winter or sunny summer day?*

A "Frosty winter - it gives you a feeling of drama"

Q *Wildflower meadow or herbaceous border?*

A "Wildflower meadow"

Q *Pork pie or pizza?*

A "Definitely pizza"

Q *Stately home or cliff walk?*

A "Cliff walk"

Q *Moorland hike or forest stroll?*

A "Moorland hike"

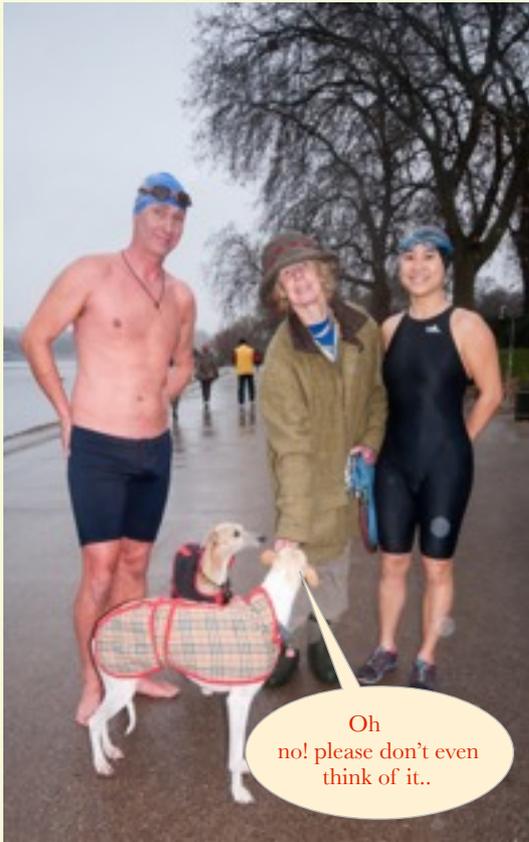
Q *Dinner round the table or picnic on the grass?*

A "Picnic on the grass"



Dog days in the Park

Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens are a source of pleasure and distraction for thousands of dogs and their owners, whose ages, temperaments, demands and pleasures vary widely. We continue our regular series of canine interviews.



I am a resident of Belgravia. I was born in Belgravia 13 years ago. This is my land, as is Belgrave Square which is my smaller estate, and as are my Kent estates where I like to pursue country sports at weekends. I very successfully hunt rabbits there and although I'd like to continue to practise my hunting skills on my London land, the "antis" seem to get upset when I have a go at the grey squirrels.

Unfortunately life in Central London has its dangers and when I was younger and in Belgrave Square, I was attacked by a Staffordshire cross-bred bull terrier. It was attempted murder, and with half of my side and back torn open, my life hung in the balance for days. Luckily I was taken to a very good surgeon (who I understand has since become a TV celebrity) and he saved my life. Naturally, I have the resources to be able to access such highly skilled attention.

My name is Echo and I wear a Burberry when I run over my acres. Sadly, because of the attack, I was unable to have my own family so I adopted a niece, Artemis. "Missie" is a very flighty one, but she seems to be appealing to everyone as she courts attention at every opportunity. We both hate water, whippets are really desert dogs. Unfortunately, our housekeeper/chauffeuse, Jennie, does not go along with this point of view and seems to love it. We have no control over her when she decides to fling herself in the Serpentine.



I'm terribly worried that today, not a good day at all, she may have plans and is being very chatty to Emily and John who are wearing nothing but their costumes. Has she, under her tweed clothes got her own costume on too? We dread occasions like this and wait for her on the bank as far away as possible. But because I believe in the old school of good manners, I feel it my duty to escort Jennie along the boardwalk into the water and then bring her back again when the torture is over.

Report by Echo, with the help of Sue Price

Vital Statistics

Results of recent visitor research carried out by The Royal Parks

There were an estimated 77.7million visits to the Royal Parks during 2013/14 with satisfaction rates at 98 per cent, according to official figures released at the end of January. A survey conducted by independent researchers Ipsos MORI shows that almost every visitor questioned (98%) rated the quality of the parks as either excellent or good.

The research, which was carried out over several different seasonal periods in London's eight Royal Parks, provides a fascinating insight into how and why visitors are using the 5,000 acres of historic parkland. As well as the overall quality of the parks, 92 per cent of visitors rated the tidiness and cleanliness of the parks as excellent or good and 96 per cent gave the same rating to the quality of the natural environment. One of the highest results related to safety, with 99 per cent of visitors saying they felt very or quite safe in the parks.

While most visitors to the parks came from the UK (71 per cent), of those visiting from abroad the greatest proportion came from Asia at 16 per cent. Overall, the majority of visitors, at 37 per cent, said they arrived on foot, others arrived by car, public transport, bike or coach.



Linda Lennon CBE, The Royal Parks' chief executive, said: "Understanding how many visitors are coming to our parks and what their priorities are is invaluable information for us as guardians of these unique spaces. It allows us to plan effectively, ensure our resources are used in the right way and maintain the balance between users of the parks and the need to sustain the natural and wildlife environment."

"This research has provided some real gems of information, and while our 98 per cent satisfaction rate is superb, we must not be complacent. The challenge for The Royal Parks is to maintain these high standards at a time of increasing financial pressures."

The majority of park users at 68 per cent also support the idea of a limited number of paid ticketed events if the money was used to maintain the Royal Parks. Currently, the Parks' biggest self-generated income comes from hosting events such as the hugely successful Winter Wonderland held annually in Hyde Park.

Linda Lennon said: "These excellent results are down to the hard work of the dedicated teams of staff, supporters, volunteers and partners who work throughout the year to ensure our parks continue to have a special place in the UK's heart. I'm proud to lead such a strong, successful team which has real passion for the parks."

The Ipsos MORI survey results can be found on The Royal Parks' website at www.royalparks.org.uk, as well as individual research reports for each park.

Restaurant Review

Breakfast at the Lido Café

It is a very dull, drizzly November early morning in Hyde Park. It's only just after 8 am and daylight is struggling to put in an appearance.

The Park, however, is a hive of activity. Not just dogs being walked, but a little pig on a lead has just trotted by looking for all the world like a snouty kind of rough haired terrier.

There's military fitness being given by personal trainers for the toffs who don't like the mass approach. Horses are being ridden by smartly turned out civilians, standing in for the military and soldiers looking highly visible in day-glo jackets.

The dark Serpentine water is broken by swimming club members with strong white arms thrashing up and down the bobble-enclosed area or boldly striking out beyond its confines.

It's now 8.10 am and over the Serpentine and reflected in the water are the lights of the Lido Café. If you can't enjoy a "Full English" in these circumstances, when can you? The Pavilion looks welcoming at this comparatively early hour. It opens at 8 am and in the winter when the days are short, closes at 4 pm.

Inside, in a pool of light, the welcome is warm even if the air temperature is a little less so. This lovely Pavilion is an old one with windows right down to the floor all along one side. Keeping your coat on is a small price to pay for being able to sit at water level a few yards away from those previously mentioned thrashing arms.

The long bar is decorated with two huge containers of real live orchids and cornus twigs. No objections are made to our photographer for standing on a chair to take a picture.



Several people are nicely set up inside working on iPads or laptops (turns out to be a management meeting). There is no background music, so it is pleasantly peaceful and my companion and I are served pretty quickly.

The "Full English" breakfast at £ 8.15 consists of:

- 1 sausage*
- 1 field mushroom*
- ½ tomato*
- 2 bacon rashers*
- 1 fried egg*
- 1 ramekin of baked beans*
- 1 slice of granary*
- 1 pat of butter in foil*

served on a warm plate.

We add a freshly squeezed orange juice and cappuccinos and just manage to hold off the granola, yoghurt and honey, although this on other occasions has been delicious and sustaining.

The members' discount was very welcome too.

Full up and much revived we fly back across Kensington Gardens and pass on lunch that day.

Sue Price

Would any member like to write a restaurant, café, kiosk or playground review for the newsletter, from either Hyde Park or Kensington Gardens? Do you have views on other aspects of the Parks you'd like to express? Please submit them to newsletter editor Tessa Singleton by email to newsletter@friendshpkg.org.uk All contributions gratefully received!

Concessions for the Friends

The concessions available for FHPKG members were listed on the back page of the Autumn Newsletter and can now be seen on the website (www.friendshpkg.org.uk) under the heading Member Discounts. Friends may take advantage of the discounts listed on the website by presenting a current, personal membership card.



Urban Meadow & Café Bar



Serpentine Bar & Kitchen

If you come across any discrepancies in the concessions listed, please advise us via email (contact@friendshpkg.org.uk) and we encourage you to make full use of the discounts negotiated by committee member Tessa Kilgour, as they can make a considerable difference to your bill! Both the establishments shown here offer a 20% discount on food and beverages. We will be looking to add more member benefits over the coming months with other organisations offering services around and close to Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens.

Annual General Meeting

Wednesday 25 March 2015 at 7pm (doors open at 6.30pm)

at

49 Queensgate Terrace, SW7 5PN, by kind permission of Sir Vernon and Lady Ellis.

John Curtis will speak on "The Journey at Ventnor Botanic Gardens and the emerging role of modern botany".

Linda Lennon, Chief Executive of The Royal Parks, will give an update on Royal Parks' news.

There will be a drinks reception at the end of the meeting

This is a Members Only event and all members are welcome to attend. As the AGM is being held at a private home, notice of attendance would be helpful, both for security and catering numbers, by email to events@friendshpkg.org.uk or by post to Tina Raymond, Friends HPKG, Old Police House, Hyde Park, London W2 2UH

Readers' Letters

Letters from members are welcomed, but unfortunately due to lack of space, it is not always possible to publish them in full.

1) Public inconvenience in and near the Royal Parks?

From: **Charmian Hayward**

Sent: Tuesday, January 27, 2015 2:24 PM

To: contact@friendshpkg.org.uk

Subject: ***FYI Two things that happened on Sunday ... near Hyde Park and inside Hyde Park***

For your information -

1) For the second day running I noticed a pathetic looking man seated on a small suitcase in the alleyway off the Brompton Road leading up to Knightsbridge. A security officer from the building opposite was politely asking him to move on. I felt sorry for the beggar and gave him a bank note as he was standing up to leave. The security officer came up to me and said "Madam you would be better to give your money to a children's charity, as this man is part of a "gang" who have assembled in large numbers (up to 150 have been seen on CCTV outside the pub at around 0700am with a leader) - we have had to move them on". A friend told me that one evening she had seen about 25 men lying with blankets in the underpass under Park Lane.

I felt foolish for having been taken in by this man. Later I was returning home and saw the same "beggar" with the suitcase walking along to South Kensington. Later that afternoon a shop keeper in South Kensington informed me that similar beggars go to the banks and send quite a bit of money abroad.

2) Recently, I was walking in Kensington Gardens and my chihuahua ran towards a tree and started eating something brown. I scolded her, called her over and we continued our walk. On our return home I gave the chihuahua 2 x charcoal tablets, as I was concerned she might have eaten poisoned food. Sarah, our dog walker, told me it was probably human excrement. Apparently dogs gravitate towards it, many of the trees near the edge of the park are contaminated by it, and the problem is much worse during the summer months when there are concerts. It appears that people either sleep in the park overnight when the public lavatories are closed, or they just defecate in the park near the roads.

I have no solution to offer. Could humans be treated like dog owners and told to "bag it and bin it" or could the Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, go public and provide FREE BAGS for humans using the park in this way? I know that in Canada in the national parks, there are specific protocols for dealing with human excrement and keeping the landscape unsoiled. Maybe the Canadians can help - their signage and methods are usually well thought out and they might be able to advise the Mayor on how to solve this unpleasant problem.

2) Extracts from members' responses to TfL cycling consultation on East-West Superhighway

From: **Julian Peach**

Date: 9 November 2014 15:01:40 GMT

To: consultations@tfl.gov.uk

Subject: ***East-West Superhighway (Hyde Park and General)***

As an enthusiastic London cyclist for the past forty years, I welcome many aspects of the proposals. Likewise as an equally enthusiastic pedestrian. I'm not so sure, however, about the "Superhighway" name. It smacks of speed-freak cycling - very much NOT the kind of cycling that TfL now wants to encourage.

My principal concern here, however, is with the proposed Hyde Park section. The purpose of this is to provide a road-route for cyclists THROUGH the Park. But it is bound also to mean more cyclists on paths, designated or

otherwise, IN the Park itself. This increase in the number of cyclists IN the Park can hardly be in the interests of other Park users. Actual accidents may be few. But incidents - the vast majority of them unreported - will increase with the number of cyclists. Increased friction, agitation, and stress can seriously impact on the relaxed pleasure people take in walking in the Park - to the point where some may well become less inclined to go there at all.

Any attempt to mitigate/control the situation - improved signing, more enforcement, etc - is bound to involve the Parks and the Police in extra expenditure. To the extent that the need for such expenditure results from the Superhighway, it should in all fairness be funded from the TfL's budget as part of the Superhighway's costs. (My understanding is that neither the Parks nor the Police have any extra money available.)

From: **Amanda Feeny**

Date: Wed, 01 Oct 2014 16:04:47 +0100

To: contact@friendshpkg.org.uk

Subject: ***Mayor's proposal for a Cycling Superhighway***

As a regular cyclist in Hyde Park and a Friend, I would like to mention that many of the people - indeed the majority - who cycle along the shared cycle paths in the Park do so with great pleasure and are extremely mindful of the other users. Just because there are some who abuse the system I hope this will not lead to drastic action against those of us who respect others. It is analogous to dog walkers who refuse to pick up their dog mess whereas the majority do, it only takes a few to give a very false impression. As someone without a dog I am left with the impression that much of my precious park is one big dog lavatory and I certainly wouldn't walk in any of the long grass anymore. No doubt this is a false impression but so is that against the majority of the cyclists.

Yes there are inconsiderate cyclists, but I hope that any lobbying that is done on behalf of the Friends to introduce measures against cyclists will be towards tolerance of all users. Many of us cycle rather than use our cars thereby contributing to the reduction of the overwhelming pollution in London which is causing young babies to be born with smaller lungs than in the past. It is often forgotten what a valuable contribution is made to the air quality by cyclists.

From: **Ian Richardson**

Date: 14 February 2014 12:19:31 GMT

To: cycle@royalparks.gsi.gov.uk

Subject: ***The Mayor's Cycling Vision for London***

I write as a Londoner who has been cycling in London for not far short of 35 years. There certainly are aspects of the document that I welcome - the wider use of contra-flow cycling on one-way streets is something I have been advocating for years. Improving cycling at the expense of motorists has in general my considerable sympathy.

This having been said, I am also someone who loves to get around London on foot. And as I read it, the document is depressingly noteworthy for its almost total disregard for the possible/likely negative impact of increasing the number of cyclists on pedestrians who, indeed, barely get a look-in.

The Mayor in his introduction says he wants to "reduce conflict between other vehicles and cyclists". Nothing at all about reducing the all too frequent conflict between cyclists and pedestrians.

The document also makes no reference whatsoever to the obvious fact that the more cyclists there are, the greater the need to ensure they abide by the rules of the road. And, most importantly from a pedestrian's point of view, with the rules of the path and the pavement.

The document expresses a wish to change the culture of cycling in London. The aspect of London cycling culture that bothers people most is that of those cyclists who seem indifferent to the rights and needs of other road-users - notably but not exclusively pedestrians. The quickest way to change this would be to enforce the law so that cyclists who flout the law would have at least the possibility of not getting away with it.