

FRIENDS OF HYDE PARK & KENSINGTON GARDENS

www.friendshpkg.org.uk

AUTUMN 2018

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

ISSUE 47

Autumn 2018 Newsletter

Hyde Park welcomes a new manager

Jason Taylor takes up the challenge

Jason Taylor arrived in late May and, following a hand-over period with interim manager Andy Williams, took up the reins a month later towards the end of June. So Jason's introduction to Hyde Park has been one of the most hectic times in the Park's history and also during a most challenging summer for heat and drought.

His background in parks is well established as he was Parks and Leisure Manager in Maidstone for its thirty-five borough council open spaces.

He looked after a golf course, a leisure centre plus working with the Crabtree Estate which, among other things, has an open air museum in one of the parks.

His main focus in recent years has been on health and wellbeing and how our parks and open spaces can help deliver the benefits of fitness to parks users.

He has only had three months at Hyde Park so it's early days, but he says that he finds everything about Hyde Park is intense and full-on. He thinks his main challenges are the logistics and getting to understand how all the Hyde Park teams work together.

He says he has a good team, and is beginning to get to know the place and people, and who to ask. He is learning about how Major Events run, although this is not part of his job

and has set himself the target of knowing how everything works within a year.

His challenges as far as the Park is concerned are to better manage the meadows, to have a fresh look at the Rose Garden (which members will probably know is looking a bit overgrown at the moment) and to work with his team in creating, then delivering, a ten-year management plan.

Although he has not yet had much time to pick favourites, he told me he really likes the Dell and the planting above it at the back of the Serpentine Bar and Kitchen. And he particularly likes the view from here looking west to Kensington.

For him, he feels the Events are the biggest challenge. They are a real step up as

he was used to a single yearly event catering for 30,000 people.

He loves the way the Parks make a difference to people's lives.

Certainly, Hyde Park will make a big difference to his life and we welcome him with very best wishes and expect that he will come to know and love Hyde Park as much as we do.



Sue Price

News Round-up from the Parks

Kensington Gardens

Theresa Short, Interim Park Manager

Firstly Andy and I have continued in our changed roles with Andy as Park Manager for Brompton Cemetery and I remaining the Interim Park Manager for Kensington Gardens. These arrangements will remain in place until end of January 2019.

Parkland Management

Preparing for the leafing season. This process involves collection, unloading in the Leaf Pen for composting, shredding and screening to make a excellent soil conditioner for topdressing our parkland areas. Meadowland cutting has been carried out and refuge areas have been left for invertebrates to overwinter in.

Now the weather is cooler parkland renovation work will include overseeding areas that have suffered following the hot, dry summer. Tree planting this winter will concentrate on replacing dead trees and new additions. Tree losses amongst our newly planted Plane and Lime trees on Lancaster Walk will be not be evident until spring 2019 so a condition survey will be carried out then.

South Flower Walk: Seasonal Planting

As the weather changes and frosts arrive, the summer bedding displays will be changed to more cold tolerant varieties. Wallflowers, Polyanthus and spring bulbs such as Tulips, Alliums and Snowdrops will be planted in mid to late October in readiness for the spring 2019 display. Volunteers have joined the landscape management team to helping with tending the new mixed / herbaceous beds by the Albert memorial.



Ecology and social responsibility

Winter projects are being planned now to include the next phase of coppicing and wildlife habitat creation in the Longwater sanctuary, adjacent to Peacock Walk.

Working in partnership with Bloomberg, Buck Hill meadow continues to be managed in a more traditional way using Shire horses to cut the grass. Hand raking helps to remove the cuttings, but also aids seeds dispersal across the site.

Events and Activities

The Royal Parks Half Marathon will take place on 14 October. Please note that cycle routes and some pedestrian gates will be closed on the day. The two year works project at the Orangery is planned to commence from early winter 2018.

The Allotment

The open day in the allotment was held on 16 September and was a great success, especially with the children enjoying the entertainment provided by the Shire horses, the petting zoo and Charlie the clown amongst others.

Closing times

As the days draw in, the gardens will be closing earlier throughout the winter months. Please be aware of closing times displayed in notice boards around the gardens. Closing times go back with the clocks, so the park closing time will go back to 16.45pm from the 28 October.

Theresa Short 10300 061 2173

TShort@royalparks.org.uk

Hyde Park

Jason Taylor, Park Manager

As always, with Hyde Park it's been a full on summer of events, and these will continue until the end of the year. The British Summer Time (BST) concerts, featuring the likes of Roger Waters and Paul Simon got the season off to a great start in early June. As I write this the BBC Proms and Radio 2 'Festival in a Day' are de-rigging, no sooner is this off site then it's time for Swim Serpentine, closely followed by the Royal Parks Half Marathon; and then Winter Wonderland starts in mid-November to see us into 2019. Whilst these events present challenges, they bring many new faces from around the world to Hyde Park, who I hope, go away spreading the word about how wonderful London and The Royal Parks are.



The new event on the programme this year was the fantastic

bandstand season put on by the Friends of Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens. I know from talking to both musicians and spectators at the concerts, just how much everyone enjoyed them. One gentleman told me that this was the first time he had seen a brass band in Hyde Park since the 1970's. I really hope that this is just the first of the Summer Band Stand Seasons and look forward to working with the Friends on this going forward.



The other special event in the Park for 2018 was Christo's Mastaba which has been on the Serpentine for the summer. This has evoked many different opinions, but love it or hate it, it has definitely brought many new visitors to the park.

The big story of the summer was the summer itself. It appeared that Hyde Park was constantly in the media with pictures showing the scorched grass. I'm pleased to say that the grass is now mostly green again, although the long-term impact on the trees may take slightly longer to determine.

A few new things that you'll see in Hyde Park over the coming months include the updating of the maps in the notice boards to reflect changes in the park, the catering kiosks across the park are being replaced with purpose built units. This is being done in several phases, the first of which will begin in November with all work being completed by spring. During October interpretational signage is being installed at Speakers Corner, which will give information to visitors not only on the history of this iconic area, but also how they can follow in the footsteps of the likes of Karl Marx and George Orwell.

As well as new signage, Speakers Corner will also benefit from the planting of cyclamen under the trees. The funding for this was given by the Friends group and the tubers will be planted by volunteers. This should provide a carpet of flowers in late winter/early spring, which will come back every year.

Work is about to begin on the Hyde Park 10 Year Management Plan. This document will help to steer the development of the park for the next 10 Years. The Friends group and other stake holders will have an opportunity to be part of this process through a number of consultation events that will be arranged. Some are predicting that because of the hot summer, the autumn colour on the trees will be spectacular this year. I hope that you get the opportunity to get out and enjoy this superb display.

Jason Taylor | 0300 061 2103
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Hyde Park Bandstand Concerts

sponsored by the Friends



The Friends' first foray into sponsoring an event to support the Royal Parks was a great success. The Hyde Park Bandstand, recently restored to its former glory, stood empty and silent - until, that is, the Friends stepped in and approached the Royal Parks with an offer to sponsor a series of concerts.

The three bandstand concerts this summer were a pilot scheme and took place on successive Sunday afternoons in August surpassed expectations, and were hugely enjoyed by the many members of the public who came to listen.

Congratulations are in order to all those who were involved with these concerts. There was a good turnout, excellent music and ice creams on hand. Trustees of the FriendsHPKG did a fine job of putting out chairs and handing out Friends leaflets. Some were received by courteous Japanese tourists, so who knows from where we might get new members! A dad with small children in tow and a baby in a rucksack plus another rucksack staggered into the front row with both hands full of 99 ices.

Trustee Simon Walton who attended the first concert, writes "The Cubans put on a fantastic show and we thought that it could not get any better.

However, the South London Jazz Orchestra were simply spectacular. They mostly played familiar pieces to which the dancers put on a really great performance and got lots of public involved.

There were a lot of deckchairs and they were fully occupied throughout both concerts and there were many many people standing and watching

Without a doubt the audience was absolutely delighted and enjoyed every minute. We were able to talk to quite a few people when dishing out the leaflets. There was a permanent queue outside the ice cream van and I should think he had record takings."

Based on the positive experience of the three pilot concerts, there is strong support to hold a larger number of concerts in the bandstand in 2019. The Royal Parks staff involved, the general public who attended and the bands themselves all want to "do it again"! We will keep you informed.

The three bands that performed this year are:

The South London Jazz Orchestra

www.sljo.org.uk

The Snowdown Colliery Welfare Band

www.snowdownband.org

The South London Symphonic Winds

www.slswo.org.uk

and we're reliably informed that they'd all like to come back to Hyde Park and play again next year.

Many thanks to FHPKG trustee Julian Peach, who organised the events and liaised both with the Royal Parks and the bands, and to the other trustees who helped out on the three days.

Tessa Singleton

Update on membership

The following new members have joined The Friends since the Spring 2018

Newsletter:

New Life Members

Mrs Kim Buckland
Mr & Mrs Leigh & Helena Collins
Mr Bob Jessett
Mrs Sally Lykiardopulo

New Annual Members

Ms Arvinder Ahuja
Mrs Shirey Brihi
Ms Sarah Caplin
Mr & Mrs Emmanuel & Anne-Cecile Clair
Professor John Cosgrove
Mrs Liz Ellerton
Mrs Virginia Grey
Mrs Tina Higginson
Mr & Mrs Christopher & Gwenda Hordern
Miss Roberta Horsman
Mrs Zahra & Alizey Husain
Mr David Jeffreys
Mr & Mrs Christopher & Janice Kohut
Mrs Angela Lambert
Mrs Anne & Emma Levinson
Miss Alison Mould
Mrs Linda Parker
Mr Syed Pirzada
Mrs Rosalind Ranson
Ms S O'Malley & Mr Sandra & Sadim Sadek

Mr and Mrs Tom and Julie Schnell
Mr & Ms William & Katherine Schnoor
Mrs Patty & John Taylor
Mr David White
Mr Gareth Williams
Ms Valeria Yakutovich

As of September 2018 we have:

TOTAL MEMBERS 646

LIFE MEMBERS 154

NEW MEMBERS 38

Corporate members 12

Associate members 13

NOTE! Do you have any details of members below, whose Spring newsletters were returned to us:

Mr & Mrs Leon Sassoon, 2 Alford Street, London W1Y 5PT
Mrs Frieda Taylor, Pelham House, London Road, Cuckfield, West Sussex
Mr Robert J Moreland. Address was Westminster City Hall
Mr Harry Turner, formerly of Deepcut, Surrey

OBITUARIES

David Smith died in March, a member since 1996. He became a Life member in 2014 continuing to make substantial annual donations. A wonderful long term supporter of The Friends.

David Mizen died in May, a member with his wife Jill since 2004. They have been most generous members and Jill an active supporter, attending many of our events. Jill wrote that "Though he was very interested in what the Society did and enjoyed hearing about it all from me, in the latter years he was plagued either by a hip or a knee. He was diagnosed with cancer in July last year. However he was able to stay at home which was much less stressful."

Lynden Easton

The Al Bidda Park, Doha Sue and Richard Price catch up with an old friend

Members will remember how sorry we were to say goodbye to Hyde Park manager, Rob Dowling, in early January when he left to take up an exciting new job in Al Bidda Park in Doha.

He has sent regular updates since then and we had the great pleasure of a short visit in April. The park is the same size as Hyde Park and stretches along the coastline, though it doesn't have water frontage.

Although the design was already in place Rob arrived in the middle of major building works and had to supervise the logistics of very large planting schemes.



Rob Dowling in his new park

are dotted all over the park and are very popular. Large family picnics are, just as in Hyde Park, the order of the day.

All the things one would expect from a major city park are there: children's play areas, sports facilities, a soft-surface jogging track all round the perimeter, underground car parking – and several very grand first-aid centres. The final touches were being put to cafes and other concessions. Many differently planted areas with their own characteristics were taking shape.

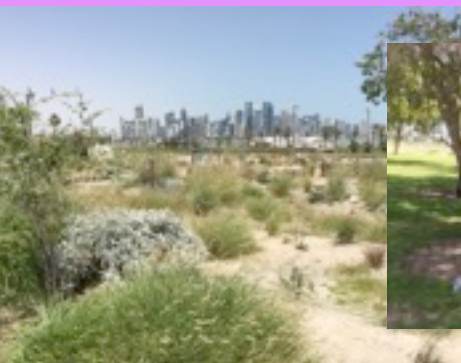
Central to it all is a massive national flagpole on a plinth, reached by a flight of steps. The backdrop to the whole park is an impressive downtown city skyline.

The hard surfaces are extensive and with the extreme climate these have to do the work of softer equivalent areas in London. There are Mughal water features and fountains. Irrigation is by grey water, there being no point in using desalinated water for it simply to soak straight back into the sea. Unexpectedly, there are acres of lush lawns and shady trees.

Our favourite is the Wadi area where Rob has introduced native planting. Here, there are the sorts of plants that one might expect to see in the desert and a wide variety of them are thriving. He is hoping that local schools will visit and the children learn about their native flora. With these interesting plants doing so well the seed-heads they are producing are attracting clouds of small birds. The park no longer needs its taped birdsong relayed from speakers rigged up in the trees.

It's a challenging environment to work in. Temperatures in the summer and even through to September are in the high forties, and even 50C, with high humidity too.

We would recommend that, if you are on a flight where you can take a stopover, it is an extremely interesting place to visit and the guided tour of the park is not to be missed.



Al Bidda has not yet had its official opening, although it is imminent. Despite this it has already become an immensely popular place for both Qatari families and expats. It was good to be able to talk with quite a few of the latter when we played golf (not in the park!).

Rob gave us a tour on a quiet Friday morning when most of the population was at prayer. However, there were already some family members arriving to set up in favourite shady spots under trees and close to the BBQs. These

Chairman's Report

What a summer it's been! The heat and drought had a major impact on our two Parks and we can expect that there will be associated ongoing problems. Despite having a reliable supply of water for irrigation from a bore hole some areas have suffered.

Luckily, the top quality turf ('Lay and Play') planted on the Old Football Pitches in Hyde Park following the destruction of the surface by the parking for the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting has survived pretty well. Irrigation was extended to this area when it was newly laid in the early summer and this has helped.

During the hottest days the Parks, except for the Lido, were surprisingly quiet. In the late afternoons and evenings, however, visitors poured in and the picnics took off. Coping with the waste from these, and especially after the hectic weekends, has been a logistical nightmare. It's a shame to see large wheelie bins at the end of all the benches in the busy areas and even larger, huge black four-wheel, bins dotted around too. Sadly, sometimes these are located in the middle of expanses of grass. Until a better solution is arrived at this is, unfortunately, the way we are now. Of course, as the weather cools the problem will recede.

Mastaba, love it or hate it, has drawn in massive publicity and a TV programme on BBC4. It will start to be dismantled within a week of writing, and this will be partly by crushing the 7,500 oil drums on site. This method has the advantage of reducing the number of lorry movements. We look forward to seeing the benefits promised to Hyde Park as a return for hosting the installation over the summer.

The Serpentine Gallery Pavilion was a haven of quiet and cool with a little shallow water glimmering in reflection on the ceiling. Thanks to the Serpentine Gallery for hosting members there at an early morning curated talk and visit to the Christo show over coffee and biscuits. It was much appreciated.

Although Hyde Park is looking a bit bashed in places Kensington Gardens has managed to keep the new planting along the South Flower Walk and around the Albert Memorial looking glorious, with the humming of bees positively loud, along with the clicking of cameras.

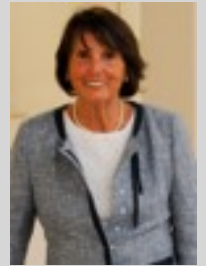
We all very much appreciated the opportunities which staff from both Parks very kindly gave us to get behind the scenes and learn more about our Parks. It was a great pleasure to meet so many of you at these events, which were very well supported.

Our membership continues to grow encouragingly and so we hope the word is getting out among friends and neighbours.

You, the members, have helped the Friends to achieve a first this summer. We supported, both financially and physically, a series of three concerts on Sundays in August on the Hyde Park bandstand. They are covered elsewhere in the Newsletter. I will just say that they were all different bands, all hugely enjoyable and very much appreciated by the audiences, which were mostly made up of visitors to London. This is exactly the purpose for which this beautiful bandstand was designed.

As I write, Swim Serpentine is taking place to be followed by the Half Marathon so there is plenty still going on.

Congratulations to all the hard working trustees and helpers, without whom there would be nothing like the Friends of Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens organisation that we have come to know and enjoy.



Sue Price

Thank you all.

Three cheers for our indefatigable chairman!

Sue Price's fellow trustees feel it is time to applaud her energy, wisdom and humour in carrying out her role as chairman of the Friends of Hyde Park & Kensington Gardens. We want to recognise her achievements and share our appreciation with you all. Since she became chairman 5 years ago, membership has increased by approx 70% (450 in 2013 to 640 now), FHPKG has become a charity and our finances are in a much healthier state. In fact, we are now in a position to support the Royal Parks by sponsoring initiatives like the cyclamen planting in the spring and the Bandstand Concerts this summer. Her efforts to encourage the involvement of members with a greater number of events and much improved communications have all contributed to the increased relevance of the Friends. She is also an active participant in the many meetings involving the Royal Parks and their stakeholders, representing the views of the general public in relation to their use of the Royal Parks.

Thank you, Sue!

AGM Queen Alexandra's House

11 April 2018

Once more the Chairman Adrian Harvey, and Principal Anet Brown were kind enough to invite us back to QAH for our AGM, offering in addition a chance for new visitors to see the important tiled walls in the downstairs dining rooms.



AGM 2018 general view

Proceedings were opened by chairman Sue Price and the well-attended meeting was addressed by guest speaker Loyd Grossman CBE, Chairman of the Royal Parks. His presentation and those of other representatives of both Parks led to a lively Question and Answer session. The evening was rounded off with a drinks reception.



FHPKG Chair Sue Price with the Lord Mayors of Kensington (L) and Westminster (R)

Out and about with the Friends

Sue Heywood and Sue Price report

For the love of trees

The June heatwave did not deter a sizeable group of Friends, who enjoyed a special walk in Kensington Gardens with arboriculturist Greg Packman (featured in the Spring 2018 Newsletter), who took us on a tour of veteran and rare trees in Kensington Gardens and showed us how these are managed and how planning for the future is ongoing. Kensington Gardens has a large collection of aged rarities, unlike Hyde Park, which lost most of its trees around Oliver Cromwell's time. We finished in the beautifully planted store yard in Kensington Gardens where mostly the wine was passed over in favour of long, cool, elderflower drinks. Many thanks to Greg especially and to all the Kensington Gardens team who suggested, and then helped us set up this event.



Dave does this every week on fine days between about May and September and feeds the results into a national register. The Friends were notified about this special event by email - and if we don't have your email address you need to let us have it; otherwise you might miss out in future. We went to several hidden places on this route and benefited from a talk by specialists at the Look Out Centre. I felt I had increased my level of knowledge about butterflies by about one hundred percent and can now hold forth on 'transects'. Many thanks to Dave for his patience, his instruction - and for his enthusiasm too. He very kindly said that he'd repeat the exercise next year if we are interested. Yes please!

Hyde Park Super-nursery

In May we had a second visit to the acres of new glasshouses tucked away in Hyde Park. This was the first time we were able to appreciate them filled with gorgeous flowering plants and greenery ready to send out to all the Royal Parks. Mike Jones, the Nursery Manager, was a superb host and guide. We got closely acquainted with a 'green man', and rather too close to a stag beetle which, when I was carefully trying to move him to safety, rather churlishly latched on to my finger with such strong mandibles that he drew blood. During the run up to THE wedding Mike became a star as he was growing a selection of flowers for the Chapel Royal, Windsor. He appeared on various TV channels and in the press. As always we enjoyed a glass of chilled wine amongst the flowers at the end, and look forward to a return visit next year.

Friends enjoy a Morning at the Museum

Last May a select group of the Friends gathered for coffee in the richly decorated café at the Victoria and Albert Museum, before setting off on a fascinating tour of the British Galleries with Jane Reddish, a longstanding and expert museum guide. One unexpected highlight was the eccentric life size sculpture of Bashar, a Newfoundland dog, created in 1832-34. Bashar was the beloved pet of the Earl of Derby and his magisterial portrait in marble and semi-precious stones was destined for a prominent place in the Earl's Park Lane home. Thanks to Jane's wit and wide knowledge of the objects on view, the FHPKG group learned a lot and thoroughly enjoyed their visit.



Butterflies

On two extremely hot middays in July Assistant Hyde Park Manager, David Jordan, volunteered to take small groups of Friends on a 'butterfly transect' to, he said, learn with him what this monitoring exercise is all about. It seemed to me, though, that he was already an expert and none of us knew much at all. We were to walk slowly and steadily on a set route in Hyde Park, taking about 45 minutes and logging/identifying every butterfly we saw within a few metres of our route.



British Summer Time Midweek Events

Members may not realise that when the big concert season is in full swing in July, the Parade Ground in Hyde Park is open freely to the public in between the weekend concerts. All sorts of interesting events take place there including, this year, a Royal Parks Showcase under a canvas canopy. Several trustees helped 'man' the stall assisting selling marvellous plants from the Royal Parks' nursery, chatting to the visitors, handing out Friends flyers and generally having a nice time. Visitors came and went in a steady flow, and on the day I was on duty we enjoyed a magnificent RAF fly-past directly overhead - certainly an action packed afternoon. Perhaps next year you too will visit, and treat yourself to a geranium, cosmos or nicotiana - all at bargain prices.



Sue Heywood and Sue Price

PC Steve Barnes has his say

For many of our members Steve is already a familiar face. His is a tall, imposing presence in our two Parks and his bicycle enables him to cut across the off-piste cyclists as they use footpaths to speed on their daily commute.

And for those of us who attend the AGM, his report to us is a fascinating insight into what he sees on his rounds and his views on the state of behaviour in the Parks. When I met Steve for a cup of tea I had the usual sort of interview in mind. Very quickly however, we relaxed into a free flowing conversation which, while recognising that there is a lot of 'bad stuff' going on, ended by leaving me feeling reassured that the world is not a bad place. I was reminded that we are amazingly lucky to have the Parks as our green spaces with magnificent trees around us.

I started by asking Steve what the main problems are that he finds himself addressing. He tells me that being a mediator between parties and, always being accused of favouritism and partiality are the most challenging. This is getting worse and, possibly, social media is to blame. Screens are being stared at all the time.

He prefers a conciliatory approach, goes in with a smile and offers a handshake. He says it defuses the situation instantly. 'If you go in high, there's nowhere to go.

However, go in with a positive spin and it works'. Steve does not believe anyone is an out and out villain: 'you don't know what their circumstances are'.

We then talked about 'bike storming' as an example. These are led by an ex-gang leader who has grown up. These events involve hundreds of riders, and are quite terrifying, but to stop them you'd need an army of police. However, with their 'knives down, wheels up' motto they are now

working with the police and organising escorts. They arrange massive rides all over London, with the Parks on their routes. They do their thing and then leave. Last year there was a ride with over one thousand youths and there was not one crime reported. 'It's worth working with the community as it is, and riding has got to be better than knifing and stabbing'.

'I'm a glass half full type of person' he tells me: 'the best tool anyone can have is influence - how you work with people and', he adds, 'an acorn has oak tree potential'.

Steve's connection with the Parks go way back. His father was a police officer who joined the force in 1946, having been stationed in Hyde Park as a seventeen year old in the army. Now his police officer son is coming over to the Parks. He jokingly describes him as a 'mini me' as he is one foot shorter than Steve.



Steve practises meditation and yoga. He's also a musician and was a wild life artist before joining the police. He is a Druid and believes that flora and fauna have an important part to play in our lives. He has an option to retire in three years time and wants to go on to do life coaching with youths.

He has a rule of thumb when you speak: 'be truthful, helpful, inspiring, necessary and kind.' His philosophy is to live simply. He says everybody is a philosopher and can learn to see and learn to listen.

I said goodbye to Steve and thanked him, and left the Park

garden where we had had our tea, feeling calmer and a lot better for having had this very unusual 'interview'.

Thank you, Steve, from all of us, for playing such an important part in our Parks.

Sue Price

Restoration! Brompton Cemetery Revisited

Some Friends may recall visiting Brompton Cemetery a few years ago, when the focus was on some of the interesting and quirky monuments and memorials. Fast forward to June this year, and we were treated to a tour led by Nigel Thorne, the architectural engineer who has masterminded a remarkable renewal of the cemetery's infrastructure.

The Heritage Lottery funded project to regenerate and restore Brompton Cemetery has been supervised by Nigel Thorne. This stage was nearly complete when he took us on a tour. We were lucky to have the chance to listen to an insider's view of what had been achieved,



what is still needed and how a sustainable future can be ensured. The scale of the project was awesome and some members recalled how badly neglected the cemetery had become in the late 20th Century. I'm not sure if I believe the member who in the 1970's, she assured me, had to distract her children from seeing the bones scattered about by grave robbers. We ended at the splendid new café at the North Gate entrance and looked enviously at the state of the art offices provided for the Friends of Brompton Cemetery.

We are very grateful to Nigel for spending his morning with us and for an exemplary job in explaining the challenging and complex task undertaken and successfully delivered by his team.

Sue Heywood and Sue Price

Award-winning photography by Paul Shelley

Paul Shelley is the accredited photographer for the Friends and the bulk of the pictures that appear in the FHPKG newsletters and on the website are taken by him. He is always ready to spring into action to record events in the Parks and also kindly provides his photos for the newsletter unencumbered by copyright, a generous gesture much appreciated by the editor.



Asked about his connection with the Royal Parks, Paul replies, "I love the parks. There's always something to see and photograph, particularly early morning. Best of all is sunrise, just after the park opens, even if it's a bit of a trek from Woodford - it's worth it!"



Tessa Singleton caught up with him at the Italian Gardens Café and asked him about his life-long love of photography and his recent award from the City of London & Cripplegate Photographic Society (www.cityandcripplegate-ps.org). The club was founded in 1899 and is one of the most highly regarded photography groups in London.

Having been interested in photography from childhood, Paul first went to the society 4 years ago as a visitor, and met members with a wide range of photography experience, skills and interests; from a few professionals to talented amateurs to people just starting out with photography as their hobby. Paul felt immediately at home and decided to join.

The Society runs themed competitions quarterly, with external judges awarding points which accumulate over the twelve months. Paul topped the annual score sheet and won first prize in the 2017/2018 competition. He was presented with his trophy at the Society's AGM in May.

Paul says that he came from behind to win, thanks to the theme of "Food" for the final quarter, where his pictures of oysters and a pub lunch clearly pleased the judges and gained him vital extra points - see below.



And how does he feel about the impact of phone cameras on photography?

"I-phones have transformed everyone's ability to take photos, but they don't compare with what you can achieve with 'real' cameras. When I was a child, you had to buy a film for your camera. It made you careful not to waste photos because of the cost. There's renewed interest in film now, maybe just as a reaction to our throwaway consumer society."

And what about future photographic ambitions? Paul replies, "I want to be more creative, gain more confidence, improve my handling of light. My current project is to go once a month into The Dell and

take a photo in exactly the same place each time, so that gradually I record the changes of seasons, light, weather and build an image of The Dell over a whole year."



And finally? "I'd really like to encourage more FHPKG members to take photos in Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens, that can be featured in the newsletter (*Editor agrees*). I'm happy to be the focal point on this and receive entries from members!"

Members interested in submitting photos for possible publication in a future issue of the FHPKG Newsletter can contact Paul at paulshelley.net@gmail.com

Tessa Singleton

Update on Volunteers

Chris Speirs - Kensington Gardens Allotment manager interviewed by Joanna Clark

JJ: Did you have an urban or country upbringing?

CS: I grew up on the north coast of Ireland in a small town called Portstewart, a few miles along the coast from the Giants Causeway. The landscape is dramatic, cliffs, beaches, sand dunes and usually winds, waves and rolling weather systems coming on off the Atlantic.

JJ: What was the first encounter which sparked your interest in nature?

CS: We lived right by the sea, so I spent my childhood playing in rock pools, crabbing, and fishing off the beach with friends late into the summer nights. I was born fascinated by all living creatures, starting with insects and developing a love of birds as a child. I'd draw and paint birds from my early years and in primary school I still remember being visited in class by an Irish wolf hound that towered over me. In my teenage years we had a large garden, so I'd always have garden chores, weeding, cutting the lawns, trimming the privet hedges and it was fair to say it was not my favourite pastime. My parents still live in the same house and I now love helping in the garden, tending to the orchard, coppicing, planting and most of all harvesting the produce.

JJ: What is the best thing about your job?

CS: I love being outdoors in nature and could easily spend hours mesmerised by watching butterflies and bees or scouring the coast for fossils. But even more so I love sharing the experience with others, exploring, foraging and making good food together. I spent the first part of my career office bound and my back really suffered. I had to undergo a lot of physio, but what I found I really needed was to be active. I feel so lucky to have a job that allows me to be outdoors and active.



JJ: And the worst?

CS: For me one of the worst things as a grower is to see crops fail after all the love and attention you have given them. This summer has seen record breaking temperatures and very little rain and our gardens and growing spaces have struggled to cope. In the future, with climate change, the native insects, pollinators and wildlife that enable our gardens to thrive will not all be able to adapt.

JJ: Do you have any advice about growing at home?

CS: Grow something you love to eat and start small. I personally focus on perennials at home, because they keep giving year after year, are easy to propagate and clone. We have lots of perennial herbs, such as bay, mints, rosemary and plants such as lemon verbena, lots of fruiting shrubs and a few fruit trees.

JJ: Can anyone volunteer to work in the KG allotment and who do they contact?

CS: The garden has been cared for by a dedicated team of volunteers who do an amazing job. This ensures the garden can be open to visitors every day between 9am and 5pm and we now have open volunteers days on Mondays from 11am to 1pm where people interested in volunteering can drop in and get involved. We are also starting twilight gardening from 6pm-7.30pm on Mondays in August and September, so we'd love it if you could join us. We'll be publishing all the dates on the website, so watch this space. <https://www.royalparks.org.uk/parks/kensington-gardens/things-to-see-and-do/gardens-and-landscapes/the-allotment-in-kensington-gardens>

Joanna Clark (JJ)

I volunteer in Kensington Gardens -

Eileen Menzies recounts her experience



I volunteered in June 2017. It took a while to get started – a foot operation and bureaucracy intervened – but in January 2018 I started my role as weeder in the Flower Walk. I was given gloves and a pair of secateurs and boots were ordered. When they arrived they were large and unyielding but very welcome. I was slightly dismayed to be asked how many days I would come but still appeared to be welcome when I said hours. 2018 has had the full range of weathers, I did not work in the snowy week, but weakened in the very hot weather, and drought. I started early and usually managed little more than an hour.

As I am really very ignorant, I would tell myself that a weed is only a plant in the wrong place and tended to leave some things which the more experienced might have removed. I tried always to pull up the root but this meant sometimes that one endangered the plants nearby although I worked on weeds woven around the plants. Once the bedding plants were in full flower, reaching and identifying the weeds was also a problem.

Although bent double most of the time, I am aware of walkers with dogs and without; with babies and without; many people walking to work, many on their mobiles totally unaware of the joys around them, some conducting business meetings as they walked. Once three men came up the Walk and as they neared me one was saying: "we have to

remember the younger generation is less consumerist..." "And a very good thing too" I interjected. Three heads turned, they smiled and walked on.

There are many tourists and many comments on how beautiful it all is. I smile and say "Thank you, I take no credit I am just a volunteer weeder but the gardeners work very hard and do a wonderful job".

I take advantage of my volunteer status and do not turn up if others things intervene but it is a great pleasure to see what I achieve – it may be very little in truth – but I am also an ambassador for Kensington Gardens and happy to be so.

Not much about gardening in this report. Indeed, but I am just a weeder.

Eileen Menzies

Update on the volunteers at The Kiosk -

dispensing guidance and information to Park visitors. Patrick Read reports:

A busy summer with many people seeking directions to the concerts and other events in the Park, plus Christo's Mastaba floating on the Serpentine. With such intensely hot days, we have been fortunate with the Kiosk being in the shade of the old maple trees. The volunteer numbers have increased with two new ladies joining us. We had a jolly lunch in July to welcome the newcomers and it went very well.

Wilbur: a dog about town



Good morning I am very pleased to meet you both. I am here with Angela and Physical Energy is one of my favourite places in Kensington Gardens. I will have to interrupt our conversation from time to time as I dart off to make the acquaintance of all these passers by. I love meeting them all.

My name is Wilbur Lambert and am a middle aged gentleman West Highland Terrier.

I am very responsible and very hard working; in fact I have two jobs. I could teach a thing or two to some of these wild, unruly dogs who tear around frantically or just flop about at home all day.

My office job is a serious undertaking. I travel to work (which is at a very famous and well respected economics publication) by tube, bus or train. I don't mind which and I never make any trouble on our journey. I have to admit I don't do much of the proof reading but everybody in the office seems very pleased to see me and they make a fuss of me. I like being with Angela, and I can recommend it as being a very pleasant way to spend the day.

My other job is one that I feel I must do, and do properly as I think I ought to put something back into the community. I go every week to visit elderly residents in a care home in Ladbroke Road, and they seem really pleased just to have me sit on their laps. I know they are enjoying it despite them being not great ones for conversations.

Plenty of people who bump into me when I am out and about recognise me as the 'dog in the window' (please not 'doggy'). I live in Hillgate Street in a house with a bay window and I take up my position there, looking out at



passers by who often smile at me. If only they could have seen me when I was in my Black Tie for our New Year party. Though I say it myself I think I looked very smart indeed.

Wilbur was interviewed by Sue Price, sang for the public and was photographed with Angela by Paul Shelley

The Serpentine Gallery and Christo's Mastaba

Tina Raymond reports

I picked up the email - invitation from the Serpentine Gallery to the Curator's talk on Christo's Barrels and Mastaba on 18th July - sent on Monday 16th at 22.36 received by me at 7.45 am on 17th - I immediately booked - hot drinks in the Pavilion from 8.30 and Melissa the Curator would start her talk at 9.00am.

On my arrival greeted by Joseph who showed me where to get my 'hot drink' and I was immediately invited to join Janine a member of HPKG closely followed by another member. We sat at a table in the pavilion and were able to appreciate the light coming through the structure and the reflection of everything (people - tables and chairs) in the mirrored ceiling plus watching someone walking in the water with her camera until she realised her sandals were getting wet!!!



We were taken into the gallery about 40 in all - I have to admit I left the group after the introduction and perused the gallery and exhibits on my own followed by a visit to the Mastaba in the Serpentine. I had heard complaints from swimmers that they were always in shadow which I could appreciate. A most exciting outing at the last minute!



News update on FHPKG concessions and offers

Full details of all concessions are enclosed on a separate sheet with the newsletter

New!

Chucs Serpentine Restaurant

Four Friends of Hyde Park & Kensington Gardens enjoyed a delightful walk through the park followed by dinner at Chucs Serpentine restaurant on a fine summer evening. The interior of the Zaha Hadid building is almost more beautiful than the exterior, making maximum use of light and views of the park. The restaurant has had a wonderful and sympathetic recent refit, the chairs are exceedingly comfortable.



I am happy to report that the staff were charming and service excellent. Our shared bruschetta starters were delicious followed by sea bream and pasta mains, all very good. The tiramisu was delicious and coffee perfect.

There could have been a greater selection of wines under £40; we had a pleasant Sicilian white wine and a Chilean Merlot which improved over the evening. Of course with our Friends' 15% discount, the bill was good value. The restaurant has an excellent ambience and we could all recommend you go there. It is particularly attractive on summer evenings when the light is delightful.

The restaurant is open for breakfast, lunch and dinner. There is parking opposite. We walked there and took a taxi home afterwards.

Joanna Clark

FHPKG members benefit from a 15% discount on all drinks and meals, on presentation of a current membership card.

www.chucsrestaurants.com/serpentine

Tel. 020 7298 7552

New!



Gallery 19 is situated at 19 Kensington Court Place, Kensington, London W8 5Bf

www.gallery19.com

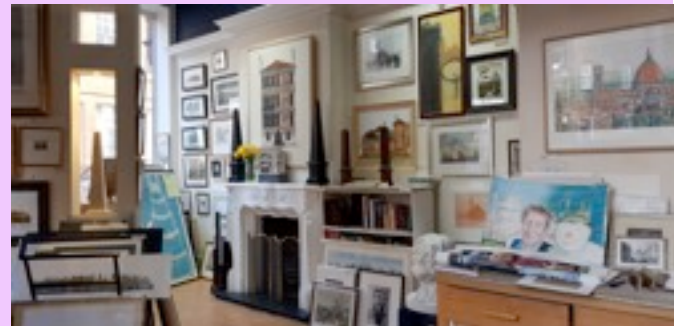
Tel. 020 7937 7222

info@gallery19.com

The gallery offers FHPKG members a 10% discount on all framing

Gallery 19 was established in 1995 by artist Gordon French as an Architectural Art Gallery

and Picture Framing business. It offers bespoke picture framing, hand finished with traditional methods of gilding, veneering and paint finish. There is an extensive choice of mouldings, which can be adapted to fit your requirements. Artworks on paper can be mounted onto hard surfaces and we have existing relationships with paint and paper conservationists. We are proud of our reputation for old fashioned customer service, high quality, creative framing and our range of services includes everything from framing original paintings, prints, posters, children's drawing, mirrors and any type of memorabilia.



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.



Readers' Letters

Comments and opinions received from members

Hyde Park Nursery visit

From Joanna Page

Dear Sue,

A little belated but no less heartfelt, this comes as a huge thank you for organising the visit to the Royal Parks Nursery - it was fascinating, the contents beautiful and Mike was full of breath-taking technical information on how the whole place worked. A spectacular visit and hugely enjoyed. Thank you very much.

All good wishes

Joanna

From David Pollock

Dear Sue,

Just to thank you so much for organising such a brilliant evening; it really was truly memorable and our guest, Charlotte StJohnston, can't wait to try and sign up for membership.

Thanks so much again -- and we do hope you're not suffering from the cockroach's attack!

With warmest regards,

David

Editor's HP cycling incident

From Dimity Spiller

Excellent newsletter but I am so sorry about your horrid accident. You are quite right about behaviour on the shared paths, especially when it is so busy, as at Christmas. As a cyclist I cringe over the speedsters.

From Haydn Dickenson, (Secretary of the Bayswater Road Artists Association, FHPKG Corporate Members)

I was very concerned to read in the latest edition of your newsletter, of the injuries you sustained when a cyclist collided with you.

On the Bayswater Exhibition also, we are very perturbed by the behaviour of a large number of cyclists which is regularly both reckless and illegal.

I read that your shocking accident occurred on a shared path, where undoubtedly more stringent controls must be implemented. Furthermore, illegal cycling is rife, both inside the Royal Parks and along the footway of the Bayswater Road. On our Sunday Exhibition, 'Boris Bikes' constantly speed along the pavement, often two or more abreast. One of our elderly artists was recently knocked down by a cyclist and thrown against the stone wall. The cyclist did not stop and offer help, merely shouted behind her "I braked, I braked". When artists ask people to dismount, a torrent of abuse is usually received. Westminster Council are completely disinterested.

Equally prevalent is illegal cycling inside the Park at the Marlborough Gate entrance, where there is both a sign set in the stone footway and a sandwich board placed, expressly forbidding cycling. Neither are heeded, and policing of the regulations never occurs.

At BRAA we do wish you a speedy and full recovery.

Kind regards,

Haydn

(Editor's Note: Thank you, I'm fully recovered and the scars have faded!)

From Hilary Younger

Dear Tessa,

So sorry to read about your accident. How truly horrid. I agree with you about bikes. They need to develop respect for those around. I am fed up with nearly being destroyed as I cross over Launceston Place. Their refusal to have a bell, use their voice or whatever as a warning is unforgivable. Also, they often exceed the speed limit and no-one ventures a word.

At our last Res Assoc AGM, the florist at the top of Launceston Place told us of the abuse and threats she receives from cyclists as she crosses the road to load her van. One of them even came into her shop and threatened her and yet there seems no way of stopping this abuse. She was genuinely terrified.

Like you I am pro bike but pro some rules & regs. Many of them act as if they are superior beings. They are so plugged into themselves that they forget there is a real world around them.

So glad to hear you are better but it must have been a scary experience which isn't easy to forget.

Yet again a good newsletter. Look forward to seeing you at one event or another.

Hilary

Winter Wonderland

From Joe Ogden

Dear Tessa,

Thank you for another informative and entertaining newsletter. It's so full of good stuff I'm still digesting it.

As you'll see below I share the group's enthusiasm for Winter Wonderland. I suspect my suggestion has been made before and there's a contractual reason or some such that it can't be implemented. Still, there's nothing to be lost by trying!

Best wishes and glad the recovery has gone well,

Joe Ogden

TO: PWR Info

SUBJECT: Re: Winter Wonderland congratulations

Dear Suzi,

Since I wrote this in 2013 it's got better and better every year and this year was the best ever. I particularly appreciated that it was so self-contained that I had trouble finding my way out. That's a good thing! It felt like its own magical place.

I'm writing this time to beg you to give even more people even more pleasure by starting and finishing it a week later. The first week in January has become a virtual holiday with people looking for fun places to take the kids whereas in November people are at work, kids are at school, everybody's knee deep in Xmas preparations and they don't have the time or inclination to do things like WW. The rides and stalls would benefit too. It was rather sad seeing the throngs milling in the park while WW was being dismantled.

Kind regards,

Joe Ogden

And finally, a postscript from the Editor...

This is the first time we've published feedback from our members, so we'll be interested to know what you think - please contact us via email to newsletter@friendshpkg.org.uk. Due to space constraints, the Concessions List is now a separate sheet enclosed with the newsletter (it may be handier to consult).

You will note the emphasis on volunteers in this issue - we would welcome more, to help in the Parks, like Eileen Menzies, or the Kensington Gardens Allotment, or the Volunteer Kiosk. The trustees would also appreciate hearing from any members with IT/Social Media/Graphic Design skills with time to spare. Any keen photographers are welcome to submit photos taken in the Parks to Paul Shelley. I hope you enjoy this issue - and we look forward to hearing from you.

Tessa Singleton