CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

WELCOME

Seasons Greetings to all our Members.

Saying this reminds me that it was two years ago this month that the first membership application forms were sent out to potential Guild Members. Apart from the founding committee, our first fully paid up member was Stephen White – a former TRP apprentice and now Principal Lecturer in Garden Design at Sparsholt College.

Since Steve’s completed application form dropped through the letterbox, membership numbers have grown to almost 300!

It is with this kind of support and a generous donation from event organiser, Mantaplan Ltd, that the Guild has been able to launch its first award to a Royal Parks Apprentice (see panel below).

It is, of course, important that the Guild membership continues to grow and to that end members Sid Sullivan and Dave Ivison, with help from their partners, set up and ‘manned’ our first “trade stand” at the Richmond Park Open Day to publicize the work of the Guild and encourage those who have been involved with the Royal Parks to join us.

Our second AGM, in September, was a great success and I was very pleased to note members’ complimentary remarks about the quality of the Guild newsletter – the work of our Editor, Graham Clarke, plus of course his team of contributors who are mostly Members themselves.

The AGM and Last Night of the Proms extravaganza was our final event of 2008, but thoughts are already turning to the events programme for 2009 and I am pleased to say that the new season of visits begins with a trip to Windsor Great Park and Valley Gardens on Saturday, May 2nd 2009. Further details will come in the New Year, but make sure you put the date in your diary now.

Finally, I wish everyone a very Happy Christmas, and I hope to meet up with many of you in 2009.

Mike Fitt

ZOE BASHAM is the first Royal Parks' Apprentice to win the Royal Parks Guild 'Apprentice of the Year Award'. Zoe, 21, who is based in Greenwich Park and works for landscape maintenance provider Turfsoil Ltd, was judged to be the person who has most benefited from her first year on the three-year programme. Zoe said: "This was a complete shock and I'm delighted. I now have something important to live up to."

GROW, The Royal Parks' Apprenticeship Programme was re-launched in 2007, when 10 apprentices were taken on for three years of learning and practical experience. Another 10 started this autumn, and from next year there will be 30 apprentices working in The Royal Parks.

Peter Hughes, Horticultural Landscape Development Officer for TRP said: "I am delighted that Zoe has received this award and that she has taken so much from the scheme. It is a true reflection of the commitment she has shown, both to her work and to her college studies."

Mike Fitt, one of the assessors for the Award, said: "Zoe has been an outstanding apprentice, and after just one year she has reached a high standard of competence and practical ability. I am sure she will have a great future in amenity horticulture. There are still two years to go before her apprenticeship period is completed, so she has now set the benchmark for her fellow apprentices to reach. It's an exciting period for Zoe, and The Royal Parks Apprenticeship Programme."

John Newton, Chairman of Turfsoil said: "We are delighted that Zoe has won this most prestigious award. She has been a model employee and fully justified the ongoing support that Turfsoil has been pleased to provide to The Royal Parks Apprenticeship Scheme."

LEFT: Zoe Basham (centre) receives her award at a special ceremony hosted by the Worshipful Company of Gardens during their Autumn Court Dinner held at Drapers' Hall in the City of London in late October. Also in the picture are: The Master of The Worshipful Company of Gardeners; Christine Cohen OBE, who presented the award and TRPG Chairman Mike Fitt OBE

PEOPLE...

Congratulations to RPG members
Matthew Appleby and Jennifer Adams OBE.

Matthew (pictured) is the Deputy Editor of Horticulture Week and was named Trade Journalist of The Year, at the recent Garden Media Guild Awards.

Meanwhile at the Horticulture Week Annual Awards, RPG member and treasurer Jennifer was presented with the Lifetime Achievement Award for her contribution to amenity horticulture during her long career, first the London Borough of Wandsworth, then at TRP and most recently at the City of London.

Congratulations to both of you!
The 2008 Annual general meeting of the Royal Parks Guild was a Technicolor sight to behold. Perfectly located as it is, on the edge of the Serpentine Lake in Hyde Park, the sparkling new Bluebird boathouse provided a wonderful venue. Lightly varnished timber beams with large, sliding, patio-style doors established an air of modernity and the people gathered within were happily drawing on their wealth of experience, telling stories of days gone by. There were, without doubt many thousands of work and life years’ experience cumulatively nestled within those four walls.

The new building also did its bit to step back in time, however, bedecked as it was in patriotic Union Flags, gaily representing the BBC’s Last Night of the Proms, which was occurring simultaneously on the adjacent Parade Ground. Later in the evening there as an on-screen Proms viewing for those with a penchant for waving Union Flags and dressing in silly attire – one of the authors of this article holds his up to be counted among them (top picture)!

RPG member and broadcaster Ed ‘Stewpot’ Stewart, who was also present for the event, led the way with some very fine singing!

The evening began, however, with an introduction by our compere for the evening, RPG Chair Mike Fitt. We were provided with an outline of the Guild’s goals for the year ahead and then a series of excellent presentations by the Guild Committee members, colourfully illustrated with slides and video footage. After the formal meeting, there was an opportunity for Guild members to mingle over food and drink, exchange stories and develop new contacts and friends.

This beautiful solar shuttle boat made a couple of trips in the fading light thanks to the generosity of Peter Scott (our host for the evening) and his crew. It must be said, there’s nothing quite like sipping a fine wine, floating on the Serpentine, lights reflecting off the water’s surface and the sound of laughter and earnest discussion quietly fading in to the background.

How could such a superb evening be finished off with anything other than a fine firework display, courtesy of the BBC to mark the end of the Prom season?

So it is only left to say, ‘Roll on next year’...though we’re not sure how it could possibly be bettered!
WHERE ARE THEY NOW?.......... 

Former TRP Chief Executive William Weston writes about his time since he left the parks

At the end of the track was a long stone building – a 1760s grade II listed watermill and miller’s cottage.

We had wanted to get away from it all, but this really was isolated. Our nearest neighbour, the sheep farmer, lives about half a mile away, and there are only four other properties in our entire post-code (the old North Riding of Yorkshire (County Durham). It’s handy for Darlington on the east coast line, and only an hour from Newcastle, York, Leeds and Carlisle.

Barnard Castle, a very historic and attractive small market town, is just 4 miles distant, and right on the borders of the Yorkshire Dales National Park and the North Pennines AONB (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty).

Sustainability
The Mill, which takes up 60% of the building, included all the listed historic mill machinery. To ensure it would earn its keep we decided to turn it into a ‘green’ holiday cottage, retaining and working around the historic features.

We wanted to make The Mill fully sustainable, and getting involved in the ‘green’ agenda at TRP had been good training. The project involved installing a very thick insulation slab in the pitched roof of The Mill, extra insulation in all the loft spaces, removing the dry lining and replacing with insulated dry lining to all first floor walls, replacing all the doors and windows with double glazed custom built new ones (fortunately they were not a listing issue, having already been replaced earlier).

We dug up the paddock and installed a NIBE heat pump with 40% under-floor heating – not too easy in an old house – and 60% extra sized radiators. We added solar water panels to pre-heat the stored water. We are nearly at balance of supply and demand in the winter and in a healthy surplus the rest of the year. Over the year we are just at balance overall.

Work-wise I am involved with a range of projects from regeneration to culture and recreation. I travel throughout the Yorkshire Dales as a Member of the Dales National Park Authority, and country-wide with my work and as a Non-Executive Director of the Forestry Commission England Committee. However, I’m always happy to return to our rural idyll at The Mill.

- The cottage has a 4-star rating and a Green Tourism Gold Award. It’s a great if you like walking, bird watching and beautiful remote countryside, and want to stay in an unusual historic building. And of course the hosts are warm and friendly!
Website: www.brignallmill.co.uk

YOUNG GARDENERS ONLINE
AT ROYAL PARKS WEBSITE

A new on-line resource for young gardeners has been launched on the Royal Parks website.

The site (www.royalparks.org.uk/young gardeners) has been created by a 13-year-old editor and team of volunteers, and features projects such as growing your own herb garden.

It is hoped that parents will encourage young members of their family to get involved in gardening, and possibly make suggestions for the site and add some of their photos to the on-line photo gallery.
The Man with 200,000 Uncertainties

By Leonard Vigers

Of all the people whose job it is to prepare London for the Coronation next year, none can surely face more uncertainties than Mr. William Hepburn, Superintendent of the Central Royal Parks.

For under his guidance must come the hundreds of thousands of flowers to grace our parks and official buildings—and in particular the processional route leading to the crowning of a Queen.

It will almost be like the planning of a military operation with timing the most important factor. England’s unpredictable weather may ruin all their efforts. There must be a gradual building up of forces against the day: nothing must be committed too soon or left too late; and ample reserves must be at hand to answer any casualties.

At his headquarters in Hyde Park, I learned something of what, perhaps, is Mr. Hepburn’s biggest task in his thirty years in the Royal Parks. Under the sloping roofs of his greenhouses I saw the early preparations; rows upon rows of plants being put forth from their roots and green leaves.

Mr. Hepburn, a genial, white-haired Scot, has to grow 200,000 blooms needed for the Coronation, in addition to the tens of thousands of tulips, geraniums, polyanthus, hydrangeas and the host of other flowers which annually he propagates for the parks and Whitehall window boxes.

Every inch of the four and a half acres of glass and cold frame at Hyde Park will be pressed into use, as well as the glass houses and open beds for hardy plants at Richmond. He is preparing for any sort of weather—“I have known sharp frosts in early June—and enough reserves to make good the flowers which, due to the vagaries of our climate, may fall short of their prime too soon or fail to reach it in time.

Mr. Hepburn is praying for a minimum of fog this winter, and he does not want heavy falls of snow which would undo the work of clearing beds.

Just how the flowers are to be displayed in the parks and along the route has yet to be decided, but Mr. Hepburn and his staff are tackling a dozen other jobs for the Coronation: trimming the trees along The Mall and elsewhere before the stands go up; laying out lawns and borders in the new Government office block in Whitehall; cleaning the lake in St. James’s Park.

From now until Coronation Day Mr. Hepburn and his men will be hard at work. Those who know him and his staff say all will be well on the day.

Spring magic in the Royal Parks—by Mr Hepburn

Flowers to make the gloom of January fade into unreality will lay a joyous carpet across the Royal Parks of London this spring. For Mr. William Hepburn, 63-year-old Superintendent of Central Parks, and a team of 623 gardeners have just completed the biggest planting operation they have ever tackled—in readiness for the Coronation.

In Regent’s Park, Kensington Gardens, Hyde Park, and St. James’s Park they have planted 45,000 tulips, 30,000 wallflowers, and 33,000 daffodils, as well as many thousands of forget-me-nots, polyanthus, and other varieties. The most important bed—one in the Victoria Memorial Palace which will be seen in coloured newspapers and on television—has been filled with 50,000 bright red City of Haarlem tulips. And the daffodil border along the Mall has been reinforced by hundreds of new bulbs.

Window-boxes

Each day Mr. Hepburn, a slight, grey-haired Scot, has a parade of his gardeners “to see that his carefully worked out colour plan was being followed exactly.” The window-boxes, which will be partially obscured by stands, have been planted with daffodils and tulips for the spring, to be followed by wallflowers, cinerarias, and hydrangeas—then geraniums.

W. J. Hepburn

White-haired William John Hepburn is superintendent of the Central Royal Parks and, until almost the last moment before the Coronation procession, this Scottish gardener and his men will be setting out floral displays.

June does not offer the same risk of hard frost that preceded the visit of President Aurier of France. On that occasion Hepburn and his gardeners worked all night to put in the Whitehall window-boxes.

Coronation time comes just a little late for spring flowers and just a little early for summer ones. Another of Hepburn’s problems is finding national flowers to represent different parts of the Commonwealth in the Parliament Square gardens.

Coronation seats erected in front of Buckingham Palace mean that no tulips can be planted this spring, but Hepburn has 26,000 scarlet geraniums ready to fill the beds when the scaffolding is removed in mid-July.

More than 200,000 extra plants will be needed by the Central Royal Parks this year. With annuums, the Hepburn method is to grow them singly in pots ready for planting out. In this way he obtains fine bushy plants that give a better show than overcrowded seedlings.

W. J. Hepburn will plan the Coronation flowers

Talk

An energetic sixty-year-old woman will be making final arrangements soon for London’s floral display during Coronation week.

Mrs. Spry, the expert chosen to advise Mr. David John, chairman of the Metropolitan Parks and Gardens Committee, has visited the greenhouses in the Royal Parks, and has received all the new plants and plants in pots.

From the greenhouses will come the massed blooms used in concentrated blazes of colour at intervals along the route, like the Duke of York’s Steps, the screen at Hyde Park Corner, and the bandstand screen.

Colours

They will bring colour and beauty to other spots, too. Mrs. Spry and those working with her, among them the Superintendent of the Central Parks, Mr. Hepburn, plan to highlight the main entrance to the War Office, and the Treasury windows, the quadrilateral in Parliament Square, and the entrance to the Annex.

When you meet those handling the flowers on that route it is impossible not to be affected by their enthusiasm and vitality.

Memorable

Mrs. Spry can see London already in a blaze of red, blue, yellow and white massed flowers that she hopes will be even more memorable than the display at the last Coronation.

What flowers are being used in this colour scheme? Red will be provided by geranium, verbena, salvia, alliums, drummonds, azaleas and rhododendrons, and gold by clumps of celosia, chrysanthemum and calliandra.

Contrasts

Banks of blue will come from larkspur, delphiniums, petunias, hydrangeas and lobelia, contrasted with white marguerite, gladioli, and anemone.

The last Coronation there was a huge blue-and-gold floral crown at Admiral Arch surrounded by banks of flowers. This time Constance Spry has plans on these lines as well and has designed special containers and baskets as well as stands where large displays will be grouped.
The Royal Parks Constabulary Museum

Former RPC Officer and Guild Member Dave Bragg explains how this fascinating archive museum came to be...

When I first joined the RPC at about 30 years of age, my knowledge of the Royal Parks was little. I had heard of them, of course. I had visited a few of them. But I had never realised that they were where the history of London was being carried out...on a daily basis.

Policing the Royal Parks, whether on foot or vehicle patrol, or dog handling, gave me an insight into the many different uses to which the Parks are put every day. There may be security required for Royalty...there could be State visits...there could be large events (such as demonstrations, concerts or the London Marathon)...and don’t forget local residents using the spaces every day, and visitors from countries all over the world.

I quickly found out that the Royal Parks were a lot more than just parks.

During conversations with fellow officers I discovered that many collected memorabilia of the RPC: badges, buttons, caps...all sorts of items, and from each park. Someone said we should have a museum ‘or something’, and I said they should start now! The answer came back: “We don’t know what to do, and don’t have the time anyway!”

Eventually I said: “If I look into it and start a museum, will you help me?” This time the answer came back: “Yes”, and good support followed.

A letter went off to the Chief Officer Peter Gilbert, and in 1989 permission was granted. Notes went off to all Inspectors and Sergeants informing them of the Museum, and a request that all RPC books and documentation be forwarded to the museum when finished with. This was duly done and over the years a store of artefacts and documents were collected. A display of items was shown at the Training Centre, firstly at Bushy Park and then Richmond Park. This continued until about 2005, just before authority for policing the Royal Parks changed from the RPC to the Metropolitan Police.

Items appeared from various officers covering many Royal Park incidents over the years. These included the tragic time in the 19th century when the ice broke on the lake in The Regent’s Park, causing many skaters to drown; the “Gunpowder Boat Explosion” on the Regent’s Canal (again in the 19th century); and more recently from the very first London Marathon, which started at Greenwich Park.

The RPC Museum collection is now stored and displayed at White Lodge, Bushy Park, with thanks to Park Superintendent Ray Brodie.

Nice to see the Plaque. To see the Plaque – Nice!

It isn’t always easy to read the faded inscription on the above plaque, situated in a shrubbery in Kensington Gardens. It says:

“William Forsyth 1737-1804 Superintendent of these Gardens gave his name to the beautiful genus Forsythia, specimens of which adorn this site”

Forsyth was famous for building the first rock garden in Britain (at the Chelsea Physic Garden), using stone from the Tower of London, and lava brought by Sir Jospeh Banks from Iceland. He also concocted a ‘plaster’, which he claimed could cure diseased trees, and he was the eldest of the seven founder members of the Royal Horticultural Society.

Rumour has it the he is the ancestor of one Bruce Forsyth – but this needs research to be confirmed. Can you see any likeness?
IN THE last instalment I wrote about joining the Royal Parks after the war, and becoming a mounted keeper in Richmond Park.

I REMEMBER that the superintendent at Richmond was George Thompson, and he had a horse. When Joe Fisher, his counterpart at Hampton Court heard of this, he decided he too should have one. ‘Gambit’ was a 16-hand 2-inch, fleabitten grey gelding – and the Metropolitan Police at Imber Court had been trying to cast him on the grounds that he was too highly strung (in other words, they could do nothing with him).

JOE FISHER bought Gambit for himself. On his first ride he left the Stock Yard, and the horse bolted down Lime Avenue towards the Diana Fountain. Fisher was thrown off, and he fractured his femur. He spent a month in hospital, and never rode again. Gambit was then given to me as my patrol horse, and he turned out to be the best patrol horse I have ever ridden.

IN 1961 I was promoted to Sergeant and transferred to Hampton Court and Bushy Park. My family and I moved into No. 3 Upper Lodge Mews, and here we lived for more than 20 years. Bushy had two patrol horses stabled at the Stock Yard, so I was still able to ride. My Inspector was Bill Greatrex who had been an RSM in the Royal Scots Fusiliers.

ONE DAY in late 1962, the Bailiff’s office went into panic mode. The Americans had Camp Griffith, their huge wartime base in Bushy Park, and they suddenly decided to pull out. There was a real fear that squatters, who were problematic at the time, would move in, so a hurried plan was formulated. I was placed in charge of a detachment of 20 uniformed officers drawn from the other Royal Parks, to take over the camp’s security.

OF COURSE, I had passed the entrance to the camp at Sandy Lane on numerous occasions, but had never been inside. I remember that each night there had been a large number of young women walking from Kingston, Hampton Wick and Teddington, all heading for the camp! And at Christmas time the camp roads were always lined with Christmas trees all lit up — no expense was spared!

ON THE morning of the handover, I arrived on my own and expected all sorts of formalities. Instead, a US military policemen threw me the gate keys and said: “It’s all yours, Bud,” jumped into a Jeep, and was gone.

THE CAMP was like a small, deserted village, with permanent brick buildings with every possible amenity. There was vast living accommodation and offices, various messes and clubs, a gymnasium, and a full-sized all-weather running track. The cinema and theatre was the real thing, and I am told that Glenn Miller and his Band played there. I thought of the British equivalent to this — a hut with a few wooden chairs!

THERE WERE also a couple of schools in the camp. American children from Ruislip and surrounding areas used to be bussed in to be educated there. It was all very eerie, patrolling the empty classrooms at night!

I THINK I was at the camp for three or four months, after which the security was taken over by an outside firm. It was a long time before demolition commenced, however. Richmond Council made a strong representation to keep some of the buildings but the bailiff, Major Hobkirk MC, was having none of it. He did bow to Christopher Chataway MP (the former Olympic gold medallist) who had requested that the American running track was retained for use by local children. However, I never saw anyone running on it, and it was soon vandalised and had to be taken up!
Richmond Park Open Day

On what was a beautiful late summer's day, the Guild's events team (our first 'gig') joined The Royal Parks open day at Richmond Park. It was also the debut of the new 'Guild' stand, aimed at enrolling new members, and it was strategically placed between the Royal Parks and the Royal Parks Foundation's stands.

The Open Day turned into a busy day, with lots of families coming along, showing plenty of interest in the Guild and particularly the photographs of the Royal Park's 'past'.

We were also able to hand out our new Membership leaflet, which by early afternoon had all been taken and so a second print run was deemed necessary!

During the day we enrolled several new members, some even paying cash! All in all it was a most interesting day and a very successful start to our efforts to increase Guild membership – and making the general public aware of our presence was an added bonus.

Sidney Sullivan

It's all change for The Royal Parks' buildings (or at least some of them)!

NEW USES are now being explored for the Magazine in Kensington Gardens and the Nursery in Hyde Park, which have been identified for potential redevelopment under licence. The project forms part of the Better Buildings Programme, designed to make more effective use of park buildings, by generating revenue to improve and enhance the facilities of the Parks and the services provided to visitors. Eight Royal Parks' lodges have been refurbished for short-term residential lettings under the scheme.

The Magazine (pictured) currently provides office space for the Kensington Park team, who could be relocated within existing park buildings; the rest is used for storage and some parts are empty.

The Nursery site is now used for growing plants and as a distribution centre for the Parks' bedding plants. Currently around 40% of plants are grown offsite and this could potentially be increased.

The Magazine and the Nursery may be appropriate for a wide variety of different uses subject to planning and listed building consent. Property agents Knight Frank have been appointed to seek Submissions of Interest for proposals which comply with the Parks' objectives, and are in keeping with the character and landscape of the park setting. If it is then decided to progress a particular option, a standard tender process will be adopted to select an appropriate partner.

This is a significant change to the Royal Parks' culture, and by some people (Guild members included) it will be regrettable one. However, TRP considers it a necessary move, particularly at a time when central funding is under real scrutiny. The Guild will watch this programme with interest, and report any developments to Members.

Shires in the City!

The Royal Parks' shire horses have been busy recently delivering compost from Kensington Gardens to Victoria Tower Gardens. Jed and Forte are the only heavy horses still working in London and they are more environmentally friendly, more economical, and far more attractive than a tractor!

National Maritime Museum

The NMM in Greenwich Park is aiming to develop a major new wing, and it has recently received a major boost with £5m from the Heritage Lottery Fund. This, together with a gift of £20m from international shipping magnate Sammy Ofer, sets the project firmly on track to open in 2012.

The new wing will have a major south entrance, creating access to the Museum from the Park and the Royal Observatory.
NEW FULL MEMBERS
Barrs, Mrs Sheila AEO Bushy Park 1994-2001, and link to ‘Trailblazers’ (ExA)
Biddle, Nick Park Manager, Regents Park (CurS)
Bickers, John Nursery Manager, Regents Park (ExA)
Blak, Rowan (ExA) Hyde Park 1996-2000
Buckle, John (CurC) – Involved through Works Contractors
Creese, David OLC Apprentice in 1965, linked to TRP Apprenticeship Scheme (PA)
Drozd, Ms Monica Boating concession, Hyde Park (CurC)
Ellis, Dave Asst Park Manager St. James’s Park (CurS)
Flitch, Mrs Margarette Former member of Friends of Richmond Park and walk leader (PA)
Green, Leroy Works contractor for Royal Parks (Taylor Woodrow) (CurC)
Green, Steve Richmond Park since 1993, now Team Leader Shire Horse Team (ExS/TC)
Grey, Nic Military connections with TRP (PA)
Hewlett, Mrs Jan Long-time involvement with TRP wildlife conservation initiatives (PA)
Kitching, Ashley Works contractor for Royal Parks (Taylor Woodrow) (CurC)
O’Connor, Marlon Former apprentice now working with park’s contractor (ExA)
Rodman, Martin 1988-1991 Greenwich, 1992-95 Hyde Park under ‘Serco’ (ExA)
Stockdale, Adrian Regents Park Centre Co-ordinator for Capel Manor College (PA)
Sygrave, Roger Link through Capel Manor (PA)
Tweedle, John Open Spaces Manager, Westminster City Council; local authority links (PA)
Wheatley, Ms Diana Volunteer Holly Lodge Centre & Consultant to TRP (PA)

NEW ASSOCIATE MEMBER
Partner of Mrs. Margrethte Flitch; Richmond Park (PA)

THE WINNING ROYAL PARKS
On the first page of this Newsletter we mentioned that RPG Committee Member Jennifer Adams OBE received the Lifetime Achievement Award at the Horticulture Week Awards. At the same ceremony – the ‘Oscars’ of the landscape and amenity sector – The Royal Parks picked up two other prestigious trophies:

MOST OUTSTANDING COMMITMENT TO TRAINING
The re-launch of the Royal Parks Apprenticeship Scheme in 2007 followed a two-year review, which recommended a fully funded and resourced three-year scheme for 10 freshers annually.

Dedicated co-ordinators would support the apprentices, who would undertake a careful blend of on-the-job work and classroom studies, leading to academic qualifications. TRP teamed up with Capel Manor College to support training, and together they struck a finely tuned professional and cultural balance in the first year.

And this has been recognised with the Horticulture Week award for the Most Outstanding Commitment to Training.

THE PARTNERING AWARD
This award was given to The Royal Parks and Enterprise Partnership, for their work at St James’s Park. Since 1995 the two bodies have been the driving force behind effective management at the park. Its proximity to Buckingham Palace, and several stakeholder groups (such as the Churchill Museum and Cabinet War Rooms), means that the park comes under incredible scrutiny, and the partnership always rises to the occasion.

Michael Stone 1944-2008
We are sad to report that former Royal Parks apprentice Michael Stone has died at the age of 63. He had been Head Water Gardener at Longstock Park Water Garden, Hampshire, for 22 years.

A practical man, Michael spent three years at a building college before accepting a place on the RP apprenticeship scheme. This was in the early 1960s, and he was in the same year as RPG Committee Member Paul Akers who remembers him well.

Michael spent 15 years as Head Gardener in Buckinghamshire, and in 1983 joined Longstock’s 2.6ha garden. Michael retired in 2004 and took up a three-year BA course in fine art to progress his love of sculpture. In 2005, he became a recipient of an RHS Associate of Honour in recognition of his experience and knowledge in the world of water gardening. Our condolences go to Michael’s family, and to all who knew him.

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