A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO YOU ALL. 2012 was a year to remember from The Queen’s Diamond Jubilee to the highly successful Olympics & Paralympics, in which many of the Royal Parks played a significant role. The weather went from biblical drought, with the issuing of hosepipe bans, followed by the 2nd wettest year on record! Throughout this year of weather extremes, preparation and staging of these two once-in-a-lifetime events continued, driven forward by an army of staff, contractors and volunteers, supported by the emergency services and armed forces.

This newsletter has been a little delayed in order to include some of the events, stories and memories from some of those involved in these headline grabbing events and, in the end, led to the production of a separate souvenir edition, which I hope you will enjoy reading. The Royal Parks Landscape Maintenance Contractors have sponsored this special Supplement and we are very grateful for their support.

Following the dismantling of the Olympic infrastructure, I was in London walking through Hyde Park just as Winter Wonderland was being erected, a slightly surreal feeling as I surveyed the landscape through the smoke of a King’s Troop Gun Salute (left), and reflected on the history and scale of events staged in the parks over the centuries.

The Royal Parks Guild events calendar is in preparation and several interesting trips have been put together, including a visit to a “lost” Royal Park (dates to be finalised).

In closing, the Committee wish to thank all our members for supporting the Guild, particularly those who volunteered over the year, including our allotment stalwarts.

Mike Pitt

OAKFIELD SCHOOL, ISLE OF WIGHT
With the support of the Guild and in celebration of the Diamond Jubilee, children from Oakfield School on the Isle of Wight visited St. James’s Park to collect red geraniums to plant in the Jubilee Flower Beds they had designed on Ryde Seafront. Pictured here is St James’ Park Manager Mark Wasilewski, with the children.

TERCENTENARY GATE IN RICHMOND PARK
New gates, called The Way, were donated by the family of the late environmentalist Edward Goldsmith; the design by artist-blacksmith, Joshua De Lisle, was fashioned in the shape of oak branches. The new gates are on the edge of Sidmouth Woods and viewed from King Henry’s Mound. They are a fantastic frame for this protected vista to St. Paul’s Cathedral in the City of London.
New landscaping and gardens have reconnected Kensington Gardens and Hyde Park to Kensington Palace. Landscape architect Todd Longstaffe-Gowan reports

THE GARDENS at Kensington Palace have been re-presented as part of a £12m project to transform the Palace and its surroundings. The new gardens, designed by myself and James Fox, make the Palace more welcoming and accessible to visitors and the community of Kensington and Chelsea. Also, they have once more restored Kensington Palace to the heart of the 625 acres that constitute Kensington Gardens and Hyde Park.

These changes have been made through the collaboration of Historic Royal Palaces, The Royal Parks, English Heritage, Historic Royal Palaces Access Group, John Simpson Architects and Todd Longstaffe-Gowan Landscape Design. Until recently, Kensington Palace was virtually invisible – an unloved royal backwater, set behind forbidding railings, heavily embowered with shrubs and trees, and the approach to the front door was too many potential visitors so confused and labyrinthine that few attempted to persevere.

Among the most important achievements of the Kensington Project has been to move the public entrance from the north to the east front of the palace, where it is more visible and welcoming to the millions of souls who cross the Broad Walk every year. No less important has been the removal of great swathes of clutter – including benches, dustbins, security railings, trees and shrubberies – to recover important and expansive 18th century views over Kensington Gardens.

The aims of the new gardens were simple: to create a more coherent and dignified setting for the palace, to recover important historic views to and from the garden, and to reconnect the palace to the neighbouring park. The new 10-acre Royal gardens build upon, and complement the bold ‘unaffected Englishness’ of Royal gardener Charles Bridgeman’s early 18th century landscape.

The building of our new east gardens, has involved extensive earthworks: 7,000 cu. m of soil were excavated to form a gently-sloping ramp between the new Palace entrance and the raised level of the Broad Walk. Two new gravelled walks were put on the slope, as well as series of grass terraces studied with playfully clipped yew sentinels.

The uppermost terrace of this ‘Palace Lawn’ forms a verdant plinth for the gleaming white marble statue of Queen Victoria. This statue, now encompassed by an octagonal reflecting pool, was sculpted by her daughter Princess Louise, and erected in 1889 as a tribute to the Queen’s generosity in opening the gardens and the palace to the public.

Our landscape scheme has been informed by a detailed analysis of the long and complex history of the development of the palace and its setting. It does not, however, represent an historical recreation of an earlier phase. The landscape improvements that took place at Kensington between 1689 and 1735 have had the greatest influence on our ultimate design.

A little of the history
William III and Mary II: They got the ball rolling in 1689 with the purchase of Nottingham House, a modest suburban villa on the western edge of Hyde Park. Shortly afterwards the Queen gave the first of several orders to encroach upon the park to enlarge the palace gardens. Here were created embroidered parterres, a mount, bowling green, banqueting house, wilderness gardens, and a menagerie filled with curious wild fowl, tortoises, snakes, and ‘tygers’.

Queen Anne: From 1702, she was also keen to make her mark, creating a new sunken garden north of the palace, as well as raising an orangery, and a large alcove.

Queen Caroline (consort of George II): The most imaginative and enduring contributions to the gardens were, however, made by Queen Caroline. An ardent supporter of the fashion for a more ‘natural style’ of gardening, the Queen and her co-conspirator, the Royal gardener Charles Bridgeman, created a landscape of plain nobility – one which pleased and amazed by its ‘well judg’d Vistos’, its long tree-lined and serpentine walks, and its impressive waterworks, including the Round Pond and the Serpentine.

This was the last thorough remodelling of the gardens until our recent efforts (one of the only positive changes was the creation of the Orangery Lawn and the Sunken Garden in 1908).

From the 1760s to the recent past they were colonised and subdivided by the palace’s ‘grace-and-favour’ inhabitants (members of the Royal family and their household), and were even used as a nursery ground by the Royal Parks.
Mildred’s memories

Mildred Elkins, through her father’s work as a park keeper, has a personal connection with several Royal Parks – and a mass of wonderful memories as well. Barbara Fitt reports

Mildred’s mother, Jan Beaud, met Walter Weldon (Mildred’s future stepfather) in Regents Park in the early 1930’s where he was a park keeper. Walter moved to Bushy Park from 1940—1949, and they all lived in Canon Gate Lodge.

In 1939, before war broke out, Mildred was evacuated to Henley on Thames but moved back in 1941 to live at Canon Gate Lodge with her parents. Having arrived by bus from Paddington Station and not knowing where to go, Mildred walked down Chestnut Avenue. She was amazed by the massive herd of deer she came across! Then she was to discover that ‘home’ was in fact two separate lodges: she had to cross from one to the other at night to go to bed (with an umbrella if it was raining!).

Mildred would cycle to and from work through Hampton Court Gate. The USA’s SHAWE Headquarters camp canteen was nearby, and her mother kept chickens and would swap cake and eggs for butter, sugar, etc. Mildred also remembers some wonderful dances, and she went to a Glenn Miller Concert, saw Joe Lewis box, and also saw General Eisenhower in his car.

“The Yanks,” she says, “were gentlemen.” Mildred nearly went to America with a Military Policeman. He was then stationed in France, but left Mildred a plastic heart and his military whistle as keepsakes. Her father wrote a poem about this: “Sad the day they had to part, but he left behind a good glass heart. Now when she doesn’t get an epistle, she rubs the heart and blows the whistle.” The young man did return, but Mildred decided America was not for her. Today she is glad she did not go.

There were a lot of bomb craters around, and when she was out in the park she would jump into one for safety. She would hear ‘doodlebugs’ overhead and hide under the table – even though there was an air raid shelter outside. The bombings were terrible and on one occasion Mildred was in her bedroom on her own in one Lodge and felt so frightened she panicked, and walked to the other Lodge, with a bundle of clothes on her head for protection! The next morning she found a large piece of shrapnel embedded in the Lodge wall, which had just missed her.

On 6th August 1948 Mildred married the son of gatekeeper Bert Elkins, who lived at Teddington Gate Lodge.

Mildred’s stepfather Walter then moved to Marble Arch Gate Lodge, and on the day of the Queen’s Coronation Mildred’s mother prepared a meal for 30+ people, family and friends. They all watched the parade from the balcony of the Lodge. A friend was spotted below, and mother suggested they throw a sheet over to him in the crowd, and pull him up onto the balcony! Mildred recalls this being a good laugh – a very wet but wonderful day.

Walter moved to Queensgate later in the 1950s, and lived there until his retirement in his 70s.

New memorial to Bomber Command

The Royal Parks Guild contacted Mildred to ask if she would like to attend the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee Wild London event being held in Richmond Park on 15th May, and also for her to join the line up to be introduced to Her Majesty. Guild Chairman Mike Fitt introduced Mildred to the Queen, and retold the story of her watching the Coronation from the balcony of the Gate Lodge at Marble Arch. Mildred was delighted to have been able to attend, and said that it had been a very special day.

The new RAF Bomber Command memorial was unveiled by the Queen in July last year. The memorial commemorates the loss of 55,557 airmen who died, 8,400 wounded and 9,838 taken prisoner in WWII, and was designed by sculptor Philip Jackson and architect Liam O’Connor. What a magnificent memorial taking pride of place at the junction of London’s Green Park and Hyde Park Corner.
The first of the Guild's 2012 Awards were presented at The Apprentice Celebration event, hosted by The Royal Parks at The Garden Museum, Lambeth on Friday 28th September. Speeches and Presentations were accompanied by a reception. Linda Lennon, CEO for The Royal Parks, and Mike Fitt, Chairman of The Guild, made presentations to this year's 1st, 2nd and 3rd Year Apprentices. It was also agreed this year to present a Special Award to an apprentice who has achieved most, against all the odds.

ROBERT KIRKHAM
1st Year Award
Richmond Park, Fountains

JAMES PARKER
2nd Year Award
St James's Park, Enterprise plc

LUKE PAYNE
3rd Year Award
Bushy Park, Fountains

THE GEORGE COOKE AWARD 2012
LUKE PAYNE

The George Cooke Award is the Guild's premier award, given to an apprentice for overall achievement during the three years of their apprenticeship.

OFFICIAL CITATION: Luke worked hard over the three years of his apprenticeship and, despite other distractions (a new baby being one of them), his determination to complete the apprenticeship successfully was clearly evident. During this time, whilst working at Bushy Park for his employer, Fountains, he became a valued member of the team and as his horticultural knowledge grew he was keen to share it with younger apprentices and help them progress. He is to be commended on achieving this premier award.

The George Cooke Award winner, Luke Payne, receives his award from the Master of The Worshipful Company of Gardeners, Rex Thornborough, at their Autumn Court Dinner held at The Haberdasher's Hall in the City of London on Tues 13th November, 2012
THE ROYAL PARKS GUILD
LUNCHEON RECEPTION AND
AWARD CEREMONY 2012

Venue: The Hub, Regent’s Park   Date: 10th December 2012

THE WILDLIFE CONSERVATION AWARD

Sponsored by The Deer Study & Resource Centre with support from Robert Holmes

The recipient was PIPPA HYDE, in recognition of her outstanding and dedicated contribution to the conservation of wildlife in London’s Royal Parks, particularly Bushy Park.

CITATION: “Pippa’s commitment to Bushy Park as a volunteer, dedicated to protecting this special place, shines through not only as Chair of the Bushy Park Wildlife Group for many years but for her work on the Friends of Bushy Park committee since its formation in 1990 and was Vice Chair from 1997-2003”.

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

The recipients of the 2012 Lifetime Achievement Awards were Ray Allen and John Bickers, in recognition of their long service and dedicated support of The Royal Parks, and in maintaining the high standards of quality and traditions expected of these internationally important parks, gardens and estates. The awards were presented by retired Royal Parks Bailiff Ashley Stephenson LVO (who himself completed 36 years’ service) and current CEO Linda Lennon CBE.

John Bickers started in Regents Park in the early 1970’s as an Apprentice. He met his wife Christine, who worked in Queen Mary’s Rose Garden, and are seen here with their two sons Martin and Robert. John has spent most of his time in Regents Park and is now Supervisor of the Regent’s Park nursery site, working for Merediths.

Ray Allen started working for The Royal Parks in 1957 and has clocked up 55 years’ service. Ray is known as the unofficial custodian of Bushy Park, and as a walking encyclopaedia of information on not only things above ground but also underground! Ray’s stories and historical knowledge of Bushy Park would fill a book.

We are grateful to our sponsors for the day: Mike Lucy, Director, Company of Cooks; Mike Jones of Merediths, and the Friends of Regents Park. A big thank you also must go to Jill Osledger (Active Sports Manager, The Hub), Katie Fluester (Company of Cooks), Andy Williams (Asst. Park Manager, Regents Park) and Veolia for their help in organising the day.
Isabella Plantation

The Royal Parks was awarded nearly £1.5m of lottery money in July 2012 to be used in these world famous gardens.

The grant will enable the construction of a network of fully accessible paths, a toilet block and shelter. Funding will also enable education, community and volunteer activities to continue along with the creation of two 18-month apprentice placements.

Meanwhile, a new irrigation system will use water harvested from the park’s natural supply. Also off-grid heating and lighting systems will be introduced. Locally grown wood will be used to generate power.

Richmond Park Pond and Streams Conservation Programme and Appeal

The Friends of Richmond Park, The Richmond Park Wildlife Group and The Royal Parks Agency have launched a Conservation Programme and Appeal to improve the ponds and streams of Richmond Park.

The two most visible areas of waters are Pen Ponds and Beverley Brook, but there are about 30 smaller ponds. Beverley Brook is named after the beavers that flourished there in Medieval times – the “beaver’s ley”. Pen Ponds originated in the early 17th century by draining a boggy area, and were extended in the 18th and 19th centuries to extract gravel.

The first projects are Jubilee Pond, Ham Gate, Ham Dip Ponds and Martin’s Pond, all in urgent need of improvement. They have become clogged with silt, their banks eroded, and the water clouded and invaded by weeds. The Martin’s Pond ditch will be opened up down to Robin Hood Gate, to create a better wildlife habitat.

Adam’s Pond, named after Rt. Hon. William Adam, High Commissioner for Scotland in the Reign of George IV, was restored in 2007. Dann’s Pond, named after Alfred Dann, gamekeeper in the 1870’s, is being cleared to create a home for the great crested newt. The work will take place over the next two to three years.

The cost of all projects will be £2-300,000. The Friends and the Park’s Visitor Centre is providing £40-£50,000 from the sale of the Friends’ two books – The Guide to Richmond Park and Family Trails.

The conservation charity, Healthy Planet is also a significant donor.

How can you help? Please give to the Ponds and Streams Appeal – online at www.frp.org.uk/ponds or by cheque to the Friends’ Treasurer, David McLaughlin, at Ponds & Streams Appeal, 5 Crescent Rd, Kingston KT2 7RD.
NEW TRPG MEMBERS

ExA = Ex-APPRENTICE
ExS = Ex-STAFF
CurC = CURRENT CONTRACTOR
CurS = CURRENT STAFF
PA = ASSOCIATED WITH TRP

NEW FULL MEMBERS

Davison, Michael
Friend of Friends of Richmond Park, Guided Walk Leader and volunteer at the Royal Parks Visitor Centre in Richmond Park. PA

Allen, John
Chef at The Greenwich Café in Greenwich Park. CurC

Allen, Susan
Wife of John Allen. PA

Ball, Tony
Director of SES, company that has provided security for many major events in TRP since 1986. PA

Bishop, Sandra L.
(née Goodman), gardener Hyde Park 1986-89, then gardener for Clarence House and St James’s Palace, and part-time gardener at Buckingham Palace 1989-93. ExS

Buttery, Colin
Deputy CEO & Director of Parks, The Royal Parks. CurS

Clarke, Dennis
Head of Park’s Services, The Royal Parks. CurS

Kleinig, Simon
TRP volunteer walks leader. PA

Lam, Sally
TRP volunteer since 2009. PA

Lyle, Juliet
Member of Thorny Island Society and Friends of St James’s & The Green Park. PA

Michell, Iain
Worked at Hampton Court from 1975-1996. ExS

Savill, Adam
Former Royal Parks Apprentice, 2009-12. ExA

PEOPLE...

Gill Hinson - Congratulations to Guild member Gill (left) who received an MBE for services to Higher Education and to Teacher Education, in the Queen’s Birthday Honours. Most of us know Gill as one of the drivers of the vintage buses.

Mark Wasilewski - Congratulations also to Mark, Manager at St James’s Park, who received an MVO in the Queen’s Birthday Honours. What a year it has been for Mark, with St James’s being part of the Diamond Jubilee events, the London Marathon, Trooping the Colour, and the venue for the London 2012 Games Beach Volleyball and Olympic Parade...to name a few!

Doug Reynolds - (left) We would like to congratulate Doug, who has just received an MBE in the New Year’s Honours List. The recipient of the Royal Parks Guild 2011 Lifetime Achievement Award, Doug is also the former Chairman, and now Vice President, of the Friends of Richmond Park.

Roy Sanderson - (right) We would like to send all our good wishes to Roy, and his continued road to recovery following a serious illness.

ALSO TO:

Nigel Keane - We would like to wish Nigel a long and happy retirement, following his many years’ service with The Royal Parks Police. AND Jim Smith - Best wishes to Jim, who celebrated his 85th birthday on 4th August last year.

SNIPPETS

LOOKING BACK: ANNIVERSARIES OF 2012

25TH
Anniversary of The Great Storm, in the middle of October 1987, when thousands of trees were blown down in The Royal Parks during the hours of darkness.

70TH
Anniversary marking the death of the first US Air Force Officer killed in Europe, following America’s entry into World War II. The name of the officer concerned, Lt Col Townsend Griffiss was to be given to the American Base in Bushy Park which was then called Camp Griffiss, later to become headquarters to the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (known as SHAEF).

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