

Preserving our park

for future generations

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ruskin PARK

QUARTERLY FREE NEWSLETTER | SPRING 2011 | friendsofruskinpark@gmail.com

parklife

Spring has finally sprung!

Enjoy our special membership and volunteering edition. Your donations make a real difference.

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Photo by David Ferguson

BECOME A FRIEND AND HELP OUR PARK | VOLUNTEER AND GET INVOLVED

Chair's report

by Doug Gillies

This spring issue is a bigger membership and volunteer special edition. Please renew your membership to help support your park through what look like tough financial times ahead.

Lambeth Council set their budget in February with reduced funding for parks across the borough.

This will mean cuts to services, including no longer funding the Park Rangers, who help reduce crime and arranged events in many of the borough's parks including Ruskin Park. This is a serious blow and will undoubtedly leave a gap, which Friends groups and Safer Neighbourhood teams, the latter themselves under funding pressures, cannot fill alone.

The Lambeth Parks and Greenspaces Forum, which I attend, held meetings with Byron Miller, interim Head of Parks and Councillor Nosegbe, responsible for parks, to discuss the budget implications. Making savings of £650,000 on the Veolia park maintenance contract could mean reducing the numbers of staff, or staff time in the park so they cover only basic functions like clearing up litter and dog mess it may mean a reduction in staff with horticultural expertise and making staff more mobile between parks. Final decisions have not yet been made on all aspects of the plans, but we all will have to work within these new constraints to make the best of the situation, working with Lambeth Council and doing what we can in the park to assist.

It is your park too and we need your help. Volunteering is essential to enable the Friends to operate and care for the park. This is so

important now for organising events and activities. For example, in the absence of the Park Rangers, who have organised for several years the popular Egg Hunt at Easter time, we will need additional volunteers, otherwise that event will not happen. Volunteers are also needed to assist the Committee to plan and hold other events like the annual summer fete. We would like to do more, as London offers a lot more initiatives, but will only be able to if more people volunteer. Renewing your current or lapsed membership or joining the Friends for the first time will this year entitle you to a new Membership Pack. See the feature on page 5 to join us and make a difference.

Thank you to those of you who voted for the stable block as the nomination for Lambeth's Your Choice award in the £75,000 category for money for repairs. Sadly, ours was not the winning bid.

We now need help from anyone with successful experience of sourcing or completing funding applications to assist us to find funds to repair the stable block. So if you have these skills please get in touch.

We requested replacement park benches around the old bowling green from the local Councillor's Ward Purse 2010, but no funding

IN THE PARK...

- *We have secured funding from landfill tax to plant the old bowling green original design including the two herbaceous borders.*
- *The rose beds will be replanted shortly, funded by the Ward Purse 2009.*
- *Network Rail did some maintenance that needed access to the park. They made a donation of £500 as a thank you.*
- *Green Flag 2011 preparations begin.*
- *We received 50 free small trees (saplings), which were planted on the February volunteer morning.*

was given. However, from our own funds and generous donations, we have been able to purchase four new 6-foot benches, part of a range of garden furniture from Verne Enterprises, Her Majesty's Prison Service, The Verne in Dorset. These benches have been built and finished by prisoners as part of a rehabilitation scheme that aims to help equip offenders with practical skills, productive occupation and experience that could, in turn, lead on to their future employment and help prevent reoffending.

For the first time we have produced a Ruskin Views Calendar 2011 from pictures sent to the

calendar competition. A few remaining calendars are still available at the reduced price of £3.50 (was £5). Copies can be ordered by contacting us at the usual email address.

We have been working hard over the winter to bring you a Ruskin Park website at www.ruskinpark.co.uk which will be ready soon. We will also be reviewing the management and tree plans for the park.

A buzzy partnership

by Robert Tunmore

A partnership between South West London and The Maudsley NHS Trust (SLAM), The Ruskin Park Community Garden Project and The Friends of Ruskin Park has secured funding to set up a 'nectar bar', a project to involve service users from SLAM.

SLAM Members' Council's Bids Scheme 'Make me Smile Again' awarded the maximum amount of £750 for the scheme.

The nectar bar will include a range of wild flowers that will attract beneficial insects such as honey bees and butterflies which will also improve pollination of plants all over the park. The project will also include hedging for wildlife, with a range of native plants such as Hazel, Hawthorn, Wild Privet, Dog Rose, Crab Apple and Blackberry. These will attract other insects, and their fruits and seeds will provide food for the wild bird population in the park.

Inet Strydom, Activities Co-ordinator at South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust

Community Link Centre said:

"This is great news. Service users from the Community Link Centre have been asking for a gardening group at the Centre. Now they will benefit from the project by being involved in therapeutic gardening within a supportive community setting. It will mean getting some exercise and fresh air, learning new skills and gaining confidence. Being part of the Ruskin Park Community Garden project will help with social engagement too, our service users will be encouraged to take an active part in the planning and documenting of the project. All these things are important for good mental health and wellbeing."

The Ruskin Park Community Garden aims to educate and involve the local community around sustainable planting with a focus on growing vegetables and taking care of the environment. The space in Ruskin Park, opposite the Maudsley hospital, is ideally suitable for a weekly group for both in-patients and out-patients.

The aim is to plant a 'nectar bar' in spring 2011. The therapeutic benefits of gardening are well-

known as it gives people an opportunity to be close to the cycle of nature and reap the fruit of their labour. As this is a community garden, service users who participate in the group will be joining a thriving community organisation in which they can become more widely involved as they recover.

www.slam.nhs.uk/wellbeing-garden.aspx



Photo by Doug Gillies

Ruskin Park Community Garden



by Therese Stowell

After a productive autumn and a fairly quiet winter, we are looking forward to spring at the community garden.

A volunteer has created a detailed planting plan that involves a four year crop rotation with some companion planting. We are going to grow a broad range of vegetables, including some of the trickier ones like celery. In February we had a seed planting day, with volunteers taking home the seed containers to grow on windowsills until they're ready to go into the ground.

We are very excited to be getting a beehive this spring. We have a group of volunteers who have been taking beekeeping courses and a mentor with decades of beekeeping experience. Our purpose in keeping bees is helping the bees to survive; gathering honey will only be done if there's excess.

We celebrated the harvest with a feast in September. We cooked and ate what we grew: potato, green bean, sugar snap pea and beetroot green salad with mint, roasted squash with three different

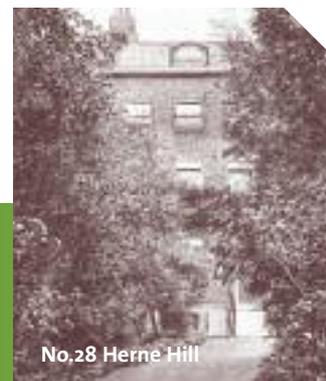
dressings, grated beetroot, fried green tomatoes. Everyone brought a dish of something local to share as well. We put our new picnic tables to good use in a fitting celebration of what we've achieved.

In November we planted the fruit beds – raspberries, gooseberries, red, white and black currants and rhubarb.

We held an introduction to permaculture day in December and used permaculture principles to design the wildlife area. Patients from the Maudsley Hospital will help with planting up the area, which will include hedging and wildflowers. The Maudsley won a grant to fund the planting, with help from us and Robert Tunmore from the Friends of Ruskin Park.

For information on dig days, please visit the web site www.ruskinparkcommunitygarden.org.

Most local people will know that Ruskin Park is named after John Ruskin, the grounds and gardens of his former home making up part of Ruskin Park as we know it. He was born on Feb 8th 1819 and moved to the area when he was 4 years old.



No.28 Herne Hill



Ruskiniana

by Robert Tunmore

The landscape must have looked very different in his day. W G Collingwood writes in his biography "The Life of John Ruskin":

"In the next year (1823) they quitted the town for a suburban home. The spot they chose was in rural Dulwich, on Herne Hill, a long offshoot of the Surrey downs; low, and yet commanding green fields and scattered houses in the foreground, with rich undulating country to the south, and looking across London toward Windsor and Harrow. It is all built up now; but their house (the present No 28) must have been as secluded as any in a country village. The suburbs were, of course, once country villages, and as pleasant in their old-fashioned comfort. There were ample

gardens front and rear, well stocked with fruit and flowers – quite an Eden for a little boy, and all the more that the fruit of it was forbidden...."

Later Collingwood describes how as a young man in his 20s 'John Ruskin 'worked from his study looking out upon the quiet meadow and grazing cows of Denmark Hill.

If you enjoy a glass of sherry, it may be of interest to know that John Ruskin's father – also John Ruskin - made his fortune through the sherry trade, importing the fortified wine from Spain.

To learn more about John Ruskin, The Carnegie Library has a range of literature written by and about the man and his life.



by Alistair Wardell

The annual Big Draw took place on Saturday 9th Oct. This increasingly popular event gives children (and some adults!) the opportunity to get creative with chalks.

From the Children's Playground to the Community Gardens and up and around the Pond, footpaths were covered with a variety of designs and drawings. Music on the Bandstand provided background entertainment and delicious cakes were sold

by the Community Greenhouses to raise funds for a Bee Project. The event, organised by Park Ranger Diane Nash and Park Support Officer Lara Bonici was supported by the Friends of Ruskin Park who supplied the chalk and volunteers.

Utility Company Park Works



You may have noticed that there is cable laying work taking place in our park. The work was scrutinised and agreed before it began by the utility company and the Park Manager Lee Hills.

EDF are laying a new cable from Denmark Hill to the site at Bengeworth Road. This will cross through the park from the Denmark Hill gate to the paddling pool. This will cause a fair bit of disruption, involving digging up the park and removing some trees. Once the work is completed money will be provided by the utility company to ensure that any damage is repaired and agreed trees replaced.

Join us!

Spring is here again and it's the time of year for renewal, not least of your membership of the Friends of Ruskin Park.

Your donations make a real difference.



by Hilary Payne

During this past year our lovely Green Flag park has been the venue for public events such as the summer fête, the Easter egg hunt, bandstand concerts and the Big Draw.

It also holds many more personal memories for local people, such as sledding in the snow, picnicking on warm summer evenings, playing football on the sports field, splashing in the paddling pool and climbing up the rigging on the playground, or just sitting and enjoying the view. The Park Rangers organised and ran two events with the support of The Friends of Ruskin Park. Your membership fees bought the resources for these events. All this and your practical support help to make the park a safe and attractive place for everyone to enjoy throughout the year. Now without the Park Rangers we need your help and support more than ever.

With your money we are able to buy new trees, park benches, produce publicity materials and run the big events. We also greatly appreciate any little bit of your time that you are able to give to our park.

Could you spare some time to:

- Spend an hour helping on a stall at a public event?
- Help organise our annual Summer Fête, 25 June 2011?
- Get a breath of fresh air and exercise while gardening at our monthly volunteer mornings? (first Saturday of each month)

- Deliver some newsletters to local homes?
- Bring your experience of sourcing and applying for funds to help with the conversion of the stable block into a café and community centre which remains a priority this year?

Let us know on the membership form if you have any particular skills or experience you would be willing to offer to the Friends and we will be in touch.

Our membership has grown considerably in the last few years. The more members we have, the stronger is our voice when we negotiate with Lambeth Council and other bodies with a stake in the park.

What you get with your membership:

All members will receive a Guide to Ruskin Park and a Friends of Ruskin Park window sticker.

Do join or renew your membership now, and see if you can get one friend or neighbour to join as well. Every bit helps. We look forward to hearing from you!



Volunteering means a lot to us and is good for you too!

Offering just a little of your time each month can be fun and rewarding in many ways. With cuts this year affecting support for the park, volunteering is now more important than ever to help deliver our events and projects for the coming year. Here are a few things to help you decide to make a difference.

- Assist the Committee plan and hold events, projects and initiatives,
- Help us identify and successfully apply for funding to repair and renovate the stable block,
- Help care for and improve our park doing monthly gardening at a time when Lambeth may provide less cover for this,
- Help us ensure we retain our Green Flag award,
- Contribute towards keeping our park looking good and safe,
- Improve biodiversity,
- Educate you and park users about the park and park issues,
- Allow you to play a part in your local community giving you a sense of ownership & pride,
- Help grow food in the Community Garden,
- Have a sociable time meeting other volunteers from the local area, and
- Improve your health and well being, e.g. some gardening can be a light workout.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

I/We would like to become member(s) of the Friends of Ruskin Park.

New Membership Renewal Membership

Name(s):

Address:

Postcode:

Home telephone:

Mobile:

Email:

Skills/experience that might benefit the Friends, e.g. fundraising, funding applications, newsletter articles, events organisation:

Interests (things that interest you about the park or being a friend):

Are you happy for us to contact you by email regarding the above?

Yes

No

Membership Fees:

- Membership runs from 1 April to 31 March of each year.
- Households £7.50
- Single person £5
- Additional donations would be gratefully received.
- Cash payments should be made in person to
5 Anderton Close, off Champion Hill
(Do not send cash in the post)
- Cheques should be made payable to "The Friends of
Ruskin Park" and posted to the address below

Payment Method and Amount:

I/we am paying:

£

+ optional donation of:

£

Total donation of:

£

Cheque

Cash *(for payments in person)*

Would you like to receive
our quarterly newsletter?

Local delivery

Email

No thanks

Signed:

Date:

Membership Secretary, Friends of Ruskin Park,
5 Anderton Close, off Champion Hill, London SE5 8BU.



10 year tree strategy

by Mary Kidd

During a walk in the park by Mary Kidd, our Vice Chair, Lee Hills, Park Manager, and Dave Paul, Lambeth's Tree Coordinator, the park's tree stock was reviewed. Trees were identified to be felled due to age or disease, some of which had already been identified as needing attention. These are the ones with the Lambeth tree felling notices on them.

Dave Paul has helpfully agreed to assist us in planning a long term Tree Strategy for Ruskin Park. The current strategy ends during 2011. The new ten year strategy will include provision for treating dangerous and diseased trees, including felling and replacement, as required.

Many of Ruskin's trees are coming to the end of their lives, having been planted up to a hundred years ago. It will take careful planning to ensure they are replaced appropriately, taking account of all influencing factors, e.g. the effects of climate change and what maintenance will be available in future.

Agreement has been reached on the following:

- The ash will stay along the sports field sides parallel to Herne Hill Road/Denmark Hill, but will be replaced with, as yet undecided, species along the edges parallel to Ferndene/ Finsen Roads. Lee and Dave may consider different species of oak.
- to continue planting sweet chestnut to replace the diseased horse chestnut avenue,
- to plant two lime trees to fill in gaps and possibly more along the path from the shelter up toward Ferndene Road,

- to plant a second walnut tree close to the first one, beside the large turkey oak near the Finsen Road gate. This will help produce more nuts.

- to replace the felled laburnum on the path from the shelter down to the paddling pool.

The aim is to keep Ruskin Park as the flagship arboretum for the Borough, with over forty species of different trees in the park.

If you have any questions or suggestions about the Tree Strategy or thoughts on replacing the sports field ash please contact us.

Marking the sports field centenary...



by Robert Tunmore

Thanks to the kind donation towards spring bulbs from Joyce Bellamy and the Metropolitan Public Gardens Association, which Lambeth Parks also supported, the Friends were able to hold a bulb planting day back in November.

A plethora of planting

The crocus bulbs are now in bloom along the Ferndene Road perimeter of the sports field and we have some lovely purple allium globes to look forward to when they come into bloom around the bandstand later in the spring. This generous contribution marked 100 years of the sports field extension in 1910 and will help improve the area around the playing field.

In January, The Friends of Ruskin Park held a volunteer day to plant 50 saplings donated through "The Big Tree Plant" by BTCV and Keep Britain Tidy. Veolia helped plant the remaining 10 as we ran out of time! These are now growing along the edge of the sports field parallel to Herne Hill Road. Young oak and rowan trees were also planted along the back of the new pond, with silver birch saplings set among the spring bulbs opposite the 1 O'Clock Club. New cherry trees were planted as a companion for the existing ones at the Ferndene Road side of the stable block.

"The Big Tree Plant" is part of the Government's new national tree planting campaign, where Keep Britain Tidy has teamed up with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and BTCV to plant 100,000 trees across England. This will be a great achievement for the environmental sector across the country and will make a positive impact on the landscape of Ruskin Park.

To learn more visit <http://thebigtreeplant.direct.gov.uk>

Photo by James Petts



Calendar photo competition

The winners of the calendar photo competition in November were: James Petts, Tom Burt, John Steedman, Lorenzo Zorzanello, Isobel Bennett, Mary Kidd and Doug Gillies

This photo of the band stand in the snow was taken by James Petts. We have used some of the other winners' photos in this edition

Coming up...

Easter Egg Hunt

Hopefully we can hold this event on Saturday 30 April in the afternoon. It will only go ahead if we get enough volunteers to replace the Park Ranger support we would normally have.

The Salvation Army Concert

The Salvation Army are not able to provide an Easter service at the bandstand this year, but we are looking at a possible summer Songs of Praise in the Park.

Summer Concerts

We are checking with Lambeth if a summer series of bandstand concerts is possible in 2011.

Fete Community Stalls

Our Summer Fete will be held on Saturday 25 June. If your community or voluntary group/organisation would like a stall around the bandstand, please phone Lara on 07958 028275.

Volunteer days

Got some spare time at weekends? We meet on the first Saturday of every month at the stable block, 10am for 2 hours. Turn up to join in.

Useful numbers...

Parks Manager – Lee Hills & Park Rangers
020 7926 9000

Membership information
Hilary Payne 020 7733 6910

Friends Committee

Chair – Doug Gillies
Vice Chair – Mary Kidd
Treasurer – Mark Ewing
Membership Secretary – Hilary Payne
Secretary – Ben Thomas
Newsletter Editor – Robert Tunmore
Events Assistant – Bob Goodrick
Funding Co-ordinator – Tim Jones
Co-opted committee members:
Lara Mifsud-Bonici

Got any stories?

If you have any articles, pictures or feedback you would like to include in future editions, then please email them to friends@ruskinpark@gmail.com

THE CAMBRIA

A LOT MORE THAN JUST YOUR LOCAL



- Music Monday with a Meal Deal
- Thursday Quiz Night with Cash Prizes
- Available for parties
- Great Roasts every Sunday
- Free WI-FI & Baby Changing

Upstairs@theCambria:

Two beautifully refurbished rooms available FREE of hire charge. For weddings, Birthdays or any occasion that requires a touch of Glamour. Please Contact us for more information.



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