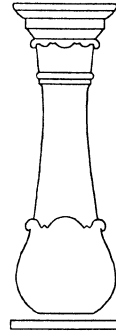


VALENTINES PARK CONSERVATIONISTS' NEWSLETTER

Honorary Vice Presidents: Mike Gapes MP Ted Fawcett OBE



Issue no. 11 February/March 2002

Hedera - Ivy

by Margaret Elvin



The Regency Border

What perfect weather we had for planting the border back in November, and what a lovely event the day turned out to be. The Conservationists really came together, displaying all sorts of skills which made the day such a success.

All those members who participated in the project, carrying out tasks from digging and planting to cake making, kettle-boiling and tea-pouring, deserve a big 'thank you' for all their hard work. Well done everybody; we can all be proud of the result.

We have some great pictures of the day which will be on display at our Annual General Meeting at Valentines Mansion on 7 April, and our summer social, *Regency Revisited*, will focus on the border. Please see our Events Diary on the back page for further details.

I look forward to seeing you at these, or one of our many other events.

Stephen Smith

Membership renewals

By now, all those of you who need to renew your subscriptions, in order to remain members of the VPC for this year, should have received a letter from me regarding this. Anyone who joined towards the end of 2001 should not have been contacted, as their later subscription covers them for 2002. I shall be pleased to receive any outstanding subscriptions from those wishing to renew their membership, and this can be done either by post or at our AGM on 7 April. I greatly thank members who have already sent me their fees, and have thus demonstrated their continuing support for our organisation.

Margaret Elvin

**How it was II:
More recollections of a head gardener**

Among the papers kindly made available to us by Mr Frank Brean, head gardener at Valentines in the 1960s and '70s, is an article from a late-60s edition of the *Ilford Recorder*, reporting on the park's Central Nurseries. These were used not only for the propagation of plants for the park, but to meet other commitments throughout the borough:

'Six greenhouses at different temperatures house a multitude of flowers, ready to be put into ornamental beds in the park. But not all are destined for the gardens. One greenhouse has an array of tropical plants used at private functions, unlikely exotic specimens such as banana trees and stag's horns. Row upon row of boxes of bedding plants could be seen in one of the greenhouses. In one year over 11,000 geraniums were used in the park grounds.'

The number of plants raised by the park's staff in these greenhouses and used in the locality are indeed staggering, as the following list, taken from a report by Mr Rolls, Parks Superintendent at the time, shows:

Annuals	120,000
Geraniums	35,000
Chrysanthemums ...	15,000
Wallflowers	75,000
Begonias	10,000
Penstemons	12,000
Polyanthus	15,000
Foliage plants	5,000

Also amongst Mr Brean's papers is a summer bedding scheme for the flower beds in Clayhall

Park, where he was head gardener before moving to Valentines. This scheme used approximately 12,500 plants and included 21 varieties of fuchsia and 18 different geranium varieties, which shows that it wasn't just quantity that mattered in such planting schemes, but quality and variety too.

It has been a great pleasure to peruse these papers, especially Mr Brean's working notes for the day-to-day running of the park. They are meticulously written, very professional, and show a manager with his finger on every aspect of the work, and a high degree of personal involvement with the staff: Each task is allocated to a name, and there is a sense of total dedication to the job and pride in the park. I'm sure this is what will be needed again for the future restoration of Valentines.

Janet Plimmer

The original Ilford Horticultural Society

I was intrigued to read in the last VPC newsletter of an Ilford Horticultural Society formed after World War II with the aid of the Parks Department, which held its main summer show in Valentines Park. It certainly wasn't the first, as my father, George Lockwood, was the Honorary Secretary of the Ilford Horticultural Society from 1910 to 1914. He left a still-earlier minute book, which I deposited with the Redbridge Local History Collection some years ago.

This book shows that the society was already up and running by 1902. In those days its summer shows were being held in the part of Valentines Park still owned by the Ingleby family and later, in 1910, by the Town Planning and Garden Cities Ltd. The show on 14 July 1904 attracted 5,000 visitors. Three marquees, the largest 120 feet long, accommodated the flower show. Most of the classes were for amateur exhibitors, but the judges were invited professionals, including Mrs Ingleby's own gardener, Mr Taylor.

Two bands were engaged to play in the grounds, one a military band from the 2nd Middlesex Yeomanry, the other a Boys Band with 40 young musicians from an East London Training School. 300 chairs were provided for visitors watching the afternoon performances, which included tug-of-war between teams from local schools, displays by a gymnastic team of 42 boys and an instructor, and May Day games by girls from Dr Barnardo's homes. In the evening the Albion Pierrot Troupe entertained. Refreshments included six gallons of ale and two bottles of whisky - the latter no doubt for the entertainment of vice-presidents and honoured guests.

My father had a bad time in 1913: his first wife died and he nearly succumbed to pneumonia. At the end of the year the horticultural society members presented him with a beautiful table-clock with Westminster chimes 'as a mark of esteem' - it still graces our sideboard. The 1914 summer show took place in July in Christchurch Road School, but then the First World War broke out and I don't know what happened to the society afterwards. My father was not longer concerned because he moved to Goodmayes at the end of the war, and transferred his allegiance to the Seven Kings and Goodmayes Horticultural Society, of which he was a stalwart supporter throughout my childhood. They held their shows in Seven Kings Recreation Ground.

At Ilford he had become a specialist in the cultivation of violas - even pansies (which I secretly preferred) were 'too fancy' in his eyes. He won a great many prizes; but show violas were delicate creatures with many enemies, and required a good deal of attention. Eventually my mother read him an ultimatum, and he went over to the propagation of michaelmas daises, and contented himself with judging violas grown by other enthusiasts.

I grew up with flower shows marking the seasons. For several days before the chosen Saturday the house - particularly the cellar - would fill with bloom and foliage cut and assembled from back garden and allotment. On the day, a hired car would arrive after breakfast

to convey my father, submerged in carefully wrapped bunches of flowers, to the show ground; my mother, who specialised in table decorations and bread-making, would follow.

I would be left in charge of family friends, and taken up to the show ground once 'arranging' was almost finished and the tents were being cleared of exhibitors prior to the judging. Some people would still be gathering remnants of foliage and cut stems from the grass between tables; some making final adjustments to vases or smoothing a petal with a camel hair brush, yet others lingering to gaze critically upon other competitors' exhibits. But as long as I live I shall never forget the overpowering scent of fresh flowers as the big marquee quietened, glowing with colour under light diffusing through rippling canvas.

Herbert Hope Lockwood

Our Annual General Meeting

This will be held at Valentines Mansion on Sunday 7 April 2002, from 2.30-4.30pm. After a review of our progress during 2001, refreshments will be served, and followed by a presentation on *Charles Raymond and his Garden*, by Georgina Green.

Following an adventurous early life, during which he travelled widely, Charles Raymond became very prosperous, and used his extensive contacts to gather a surprisingly unusual collection at Valentines, where he lived between 1754 and 1778, and which as a result became a notable place to visit. We are pleased that one of our members, local historian and experienced researcher Georgina Green, has agreed to share with us her recent findings about this fascinating individual.

Christine Fairfax

EVENTS DIARY

Saturday 23 March

General maintenance work on the Old English Garden and mansion borders. Helpers welcome for any amount of time between 10.30am-12.30pm. Meet OEG.

Sunday 7 April - Annual General Meeting

Followed by *Charles Raymond and his Garden*, a presentation by local historian Georgina Green on the traveller and collector who lived at Valentines from 1754 to 1778.

Valentines Mansion, 2.30-4.30pm. Minutes and agenda will be issued beforehand. *Members and guests only.*

Saturday 14 April

Birdwatching with Peter Hopkins. A walk to observe the many birds nesting in the park at this time of year. Meet 9.00am by the Aviary. The walk should last about an hour and a half

Saturday 27 April

Work on the Old English Garden and mansion borders. Helpers welcome any time between 10.30-12.30. Meet OEG.

Saturday 18 May

Jubilee Year May Fair. Valentines Mansion, 10.00am-5.00pm. Organised by the Friends of Valentines Mansion.

VPC members will be conducting guided tours of the park and gardens close to the mansion throughout the day.

Saturday 25 May

Work on the Old English Garden and mansion borders. Help welcome at any time between 10.30-12.30. Meet OEG.

Sunday 9 June

Regency Revisited. 3.00-5.00pm, under the mulberry trees by the aviary. A summer tea party, with a guided tour of Valentines Mansion's east border, which was renovated by VPC members last November, using plants and planting schemes popular in the Regency period. *Members and guests only.*

Saturday 29 June and Saturday 27 July

Work on the Old English Garden and mansion borders, 10.30-12.30. Meet OEG.

For further details of these events please contact Stephen Smith (020 8554 _____), Christine Fairfax (8551 _____) or David Lane (8554 _____)

FRIENDS OF VALENTINES MANSION QUIZ NIGHT

Saturday 6 April

At the Redbridge Institute of Adult Education, Gaysham Avenue, Gants Hill. Arrive 7.15 for 7.45pm start.

Tickets £6.50, to include chicken and chips *or* fish and chips supper (bring your own drinks).

Tickets *must* be bought in advance (no purchase on the night). Please make cheques payable to *Friends of Valentines Mansion*, indicate choice of chicken or fish supper per person, and enclose SAE with remittance.

For tickets or further information contact:

*Mrs Margaret Teggin, 31 Strafford Avenue
Clayhall, Ilford, Essex. IG5 0TJ*

Tel: 020 8550 9056

VPC CONTACTS

Chairman

Stephen Smith - 020 8554 _____

Secretary

Christine Fairfax - 020 8551 _____

Treasurer

Gill Faul - 01992 _____

Membership Secretary

Margaret Elvin - 020 8554 4843

Press & Publicity

David Lane - 020 8554 _____

Newsletter Editorial

Karen Lane - 020 8554 _____