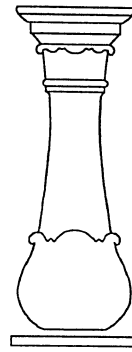


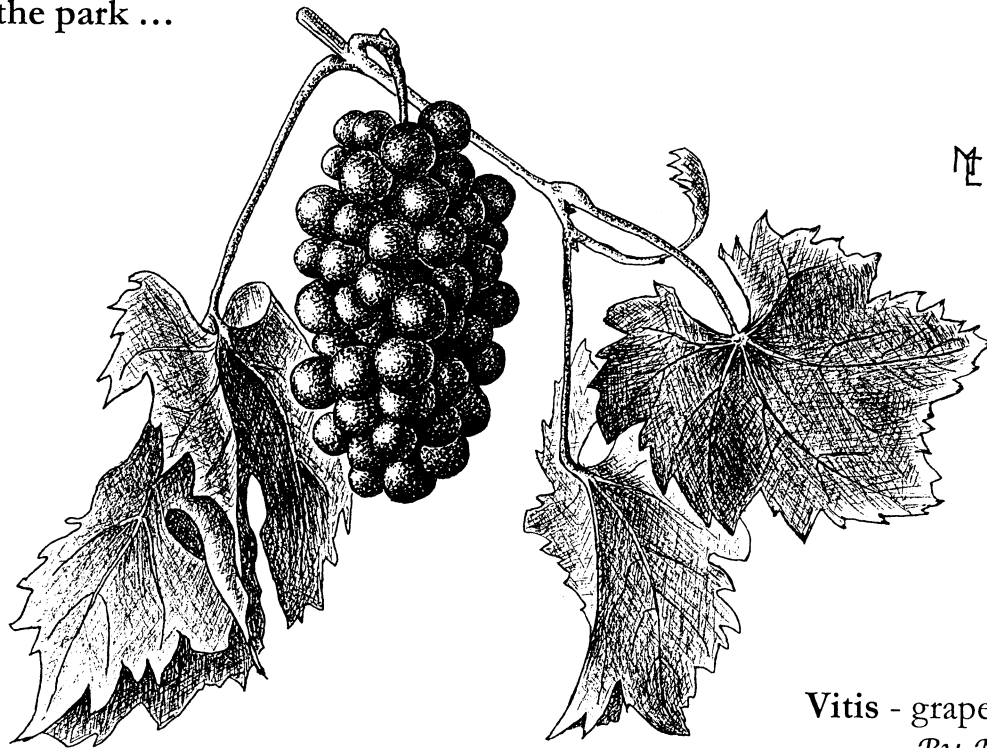
# VALENTINES PARK CONSERVATIONISTS NEWSLETTER

Honorary Vice Presidents: Mike Gapes MP Ted Fawcett OBE



Issue no. 16 November 2003

Seen in the park ...



Vitis - grape vine  
By Margaret Elvin

## Valentines' miniature railway

*A couple of readers have responded to Peter Butt's recollections, in our last newsletter, of the miniature railway in Valentines Park. David Robinson writes:*

I was so pleased Peter Butt recalled the children's railway alongside the Cranbrook stream. We must be the same age, both being born in 1939. I would have dated the railway to about 1945, but perhaps the late 1940s is more realistic: Could such a luxury exist in wartime? It later vanished like a dream.

*And Roger Backhouse adds:*

A former resident of the area, Peter Jonas, remembers a railway in the park. He thinks it ran in the summer holidays only and was operated by the Ilford and West Essex Model Railway Club, who have a base next to Chadwell Heath station.

Tony Beard of Billericay, who has the club's

archive, says that unfortunately the records are lacking, but he has a dim recollection that the club ran a locomotive in the park during the late '40s. He is aware of a film called *Playing Trains* which was shot around this time, and which is now available as part of a VHS tape called *Miniature Line Memories* by Railfans. A brief sequence, around five seconds long, may show Valentines Park, though the location is difficult to identify with certainty.

The railway was likely to have been 7¼ inch or 10¼ inch gauge, as these would be more suitable for a portable ground level track. A 12 inch gauge [as suggested by Peter Butt in his article] is unusual for a miniature railway.

*Many thanks to David Robinson, and Roger Backhouse for additional information on Valentines' hitherto 'forgotten feature'.*

## Visit to Audley End

It is a pleasure to report on the success of our visit to Audley End in August. Although the day was hot, so many trees offered their shade, and the coolness of the house made viewing comfortable.

Our chairman, Stephen Smith, imparted his knowledge of the Parterre garden, which was a delight of colour, and brought us up to date regarding the organic Kitchen Garden. This was first established in the 1730s and is now maintained by the Henry Doubleday Research Association, with all kinds of vegetables, fruit, flowers and trees.

The afternoon afforded us the additional pleasure of hearing the rehearsals for a 'last night of the proms'-style concert being held in the grounds of Audley End. What a pity our day had to end at 5.00pm, and we couldn't stay on to listen to the beautiful music, with an evening picnic and bottle of wine! Ah well, we can't have everything!

We plan to have another outing in 2004, perhaps to Colchester and Beth Chatto's garden. We will keep you posted.

*Dinah Mullineux*

*David Lane adds:*

*It's easy! Want to visit Audley End or catch up on the restoration work at Copped Hall? Well, it's easy isn't it? Just sign up for one of the VPC visits, show up at the meeting point, get in the coach or find your car-share, and it's done.*

*Of course, like anything else which seems easy and simple and which works, it takes a lot of effort and organisation - much of it unknown and unseen. So congratulations and thanks to Dinah Mullineux and Janet Plimmer, whose hard work made our summer visits such a success.*

*Despite the heat, everyone who came on our visits had a very enjoyable time exploring the formal splendours of the house and gardens at Audley End and, in contrast, the ruins and restoration work at Copped Hall. Inevitably, given the VPC's fondness for tea and cakes, the refreshment pavilions at both estates were thoroughly explored too! Where are you taking us next year?!*

## The trees of Valentines Park V

At the eastern end of the Long Water is a Swamp Cypress (*Taxodium Distichum*). This tree is native to the south-eastern part of the United States, and was introduced to Britain in 1640. Related to the Redwood, it can grow to 130 feet tall and its trunk to 10 feet in diameter. It is deciduous, with feathery foliage which turns a brilliant yellow in autumn before it falls, and inch-long cones, although these disintegrate when they fall from the tree. As its name implies, it thrives in moist soil or ponds. In this country it is regarded as an ornamental tree, but in southern Europe it is also grown for its timber.

Nearby, in the grassed area, a little way off the Mayors' Avenue, is a very different looking tree, a London Plane (*Platanus Lybrida*), a species which can grow to a great height and girth. It is considered to be a natural hybrid of the Oriental and American Planes which originated at Oxford in 1670. It is now widely distributed throughout central Europe. The trunk is mottled, as the bark peels off in large flakes, which helps the tree cope with the polluted atmosphere of urban areas. This tree can be found all over London, and it is thought that those growing in Lincoln's Inn Fields are some of the oldest in the capital.

*Janet Plimmer*

### Membership renewals

Apart from those who joined the VPC on or after 1 October this year, membership lapses on 31 December 2003. If you wish to renew your membership for 2004, please complete the enclosed slip and return it to me with your subscription - unchanged at £6.00, or £3.50 unwaged - and any donation to our Restoration Fund which you might wish to make. All will be most gratefully received. The VPC committee thanks you for your interest and assistance during the year, and hopes that this will continue: much has been accomplished but much is yet to be done.

*Margaret Elvin*

## EVENTS DIARY

### Hot jazz on a cold night

Many of you will recall enthusiastically tapping your feet and clapping your hands to the lively sound of *Who Else For Jazz?* on a warm, sunny Sunday in June this year. Now, in the depths of winter, the popular quartet is returning to Valentines Mansion for an evening of further heart-warming sounds. So if you need a pick-me-up after the end of the festive season, book your tickets for 8.00pm on Saturday 24 January 2004 for *Who Else For Jazz?* - and get moving to the beat!

*Margaret Elvin*

### Saturday 22 November

*Victoriana at Valentines.* 7.30 for 8.00pm start. Organised by the Friends of Valentines Mansion. A programme of music and verse at Valentines Mansion on St. Cecilia's Day, by MisCellany.

Mary Martin and Claudia Meldon will present a light-hearted entertainment of prose, poetry and sketches, with music by Len Charles (baritone) and Ann Ross (mezzo-soprano).

Tickets £10 (includes admission, wine and buffet) in advance only. Places limited, so please book early, using the enclosed form. For further details please contact Julie Bradley on (020) 8554

### Saturday 29 November

*Putting the borders to bed.* Tidy-up and winter preparation of the Regency Border, Old English Garden and Rose Temple beds. Helpers welcome at any time between 10.30am-1.00pm. Meet OEG.

### Sunday 28 December

*Winter bird walk,* 2.00-3.00pm. Shake off that post-Christmas sluggishness with some gentle exercise and fresh air on this Sunday afternoon bird-watching walk. Local ornithologist Peter Hopkins will be on hand to identify and talk about the many species of bird that over-winter in Valentines Park. Meet 2.00pm by the Pavilion café.

### Saturday 24 January 2004

*Jazz at the Mansion.* 8.00-10.30pm. Hot jazz on a cold night: a welcome return for the popular swing quartet *Who Else For Jazz?* following their successful debut at Valentines Mansion as part of the Midsummer Music Fest last June.

Tickets £6 (concessions £5) in advance only, with light refreshments extra on the night. Please feel

free to bring a bottle! Places limited, so please book early, using the enclosed form. For further details please contact Margaret Elvin on (020) 8554

### Sunday 15 February

*Birdwatching with Peter Hopkins.* 8.30-10.00am. Peter will be leading one of his popular Sunday morning walks, looking at the park's resident and migrant birds at a time of day when they are active and numerous. Meet 8.30am by the Pavilion café.

### Saturday 28 February

General maintenance work in the Old English Garden, Regency Border and Rose Temple, 10.30-1.00pm. Helpers always welcome. Meet OEG.

### Sunday 14 March

*A spring walk through Valentines.* A guided tour by Stephen Smith, taking in the early flowering plants, as well as anticipating the season to come. Meet 3.00pm by the Pavilion café. The walk will last about 45 minutes.

### Saturday 27 March

Re-stocking the beds and general maintenance work in the Old English Garden, Regency Border and Rose Temple, 10.30-1.00pm. Meet OEG.

### Sunday 25 April

*Annual General Meeting.* 2.30-4.30pm. A date for your diary. A short business meeting will be followed by refreshments and a presentation by a guest speaker. Please see our next newsletter, due out in early March 2004, for further details.

#### VPC Chairman

Stephen Smith - 020 8554

#### Secretary

Christine Fairfax - 020 8551

#### Treasurer

Gill Faul - 01992

#### Membership Secretary

Margaret Elvin - 020 8554

#### Press & Publicity

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#### Catering & Events

Dinah Mullineux - 020 8252

#### Newsletter Editorial

Karen Lane - 020 8554