

# VALENTINES PARK CONSERVATIONISTS NEWSLETTER



Issue No. 2

April 1999

## *Dear Members & Supporters*

Since our inaugural newsletter in January, we have carried out many activities in support of achieving our objectives. These included the Winter Programme of activities, the inevitable bureaucracy of meetings & paperwork and the campaigning particularly in relation to Valentines Mansion.

I am delighted that Mike Gapes MP for Ilford South and Ted Fawcett of the Garden History Society have accepted our invitation to be Honorary Vice Presidents.

It is encouraging to note that Valentines Park Conservationists (VPC) has about 60 members currently. New members from all walks of life are welcome. Membership fee is £5 *per annum* or £3 for concessionary members. Please contact our membership secretary, James Edgoose on 0181 518 4719 for further information.

I am sure we can all enjoy some of Redbridge Council's scheduled celebrations for Valentines Park's Centenary. Of course, all are most welcome to participate in our Spring Programme of events. Our secretary, Christine Fairfax on \_\_\_\_\_ can provide further details.

*Ujitha de Zoysa*

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## A Winter Interest Walk

On Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> January, a bitterly cold day, 25 intrepid walkers met at the Pavilion Café for our first event.

Stephen Smith led us across the Glade identifying the specimen trees by their winter skeletons and pointing out the old field boundary hedges with their oaks. Crossing the 'Ha Ha' rustic bridge into the formal gardens near the Mansion, we admired the lavender blue flowers of the clumps of Iris unguicularis.

We walked round the Long Canal Water where Stephen showed the 18<sup>th</sup> century viewpoints to the Grottoes and the Rose Garden, when a distinctive light coloured pigeon flew from behind him to alight on his hand. We looked at the American Gardens and reached the Cedar of Lebanon tree when Stephen was startled by the same distinctive pigeon perching on his hand! It was some time before we all stopped laughing.

Walking by the streams and the line of Alders, we were pleased to see five song thrushes pecking in the grass on the playing field.

We hastened to the pavilion for hot drinks, to thaw out.

*Christine Fairfax*

## The Future of Valentines Mansion

On the 18<sup>th</sup> February Redbridge Council's Environment (Planning) Sub-committee considered a planning application from Cranbrook Residents Association (CRA) to change the use of Valentines Mansion. The ground & first floors to community uses (including catering facilities), the ground floor dairy wing to be a day nursery for children and the second floor to three self contained flats. Some of us attended the Council chamber to support this and listen to the debate.

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### Future of Valentines Mansion - continued from page 1

We believe some responsible residents in the Mansion would help protect the gardens from vandalism and a thriving community involvement would stimulate interest in the Park. The planned conference facilities would make an ideal base for our talks and working parties regarding the historical, horticultural and wildlife aspects of the park landscape. We were very pleased that planning approval was granted to CRA's application.

The Council also commissioned a feasibility study to explore a range of possible community uses for the Mansion.

A citizens jury met from 9-12<sup>th</sup> March '99 in order to consider the Mansion's future. On the 11<sup>th</sup> March, speakers representing CRA and VPC had the opportunity of addressing the jury. Peter Wright also spoke representing five local history societies. They all presented a strong case for the CRA's plan. The jury must ensure the scheme is financially sustainable in the long term. When their report is available shortly, councillors will finally decide the Mansion's fate.

*Christine Fairfax*

### Old English Garden - Remedial Work

As planned, on 27<sup>th</sup> February, a group of twelve volunteers, led by Stephen, carried out some serious tidying up in the Old English Garden.

The rain held off and with assorted tools, paths were weeded and raked; beds were weeded and aerated; dead and burnt out climbers and shrubs were removed from the central area around the wrought iron support. This support is in need of repair before it can be replanted. An estimate for this work has been obtained and given to the Council officer with responsibility for it. This will of course be subject to approval by English Heritage, as it is quite probably a listed structure.

Finally, cuttings from the original box hedge were taken and these are now being propagated at Capel Manor and Gunnersbury horticultural sites for us to use at a later date.

The age range of the group of volunteers was varied and the walled garden was a wonderfully peaceful place to be for two hours on a Saturday morning. I am certain that everyone enjoyed themselves and we look forward to the next work session.

*Rita Coleman*

### Land Consultants Presentation

Redbridge Council were advised to obtain a detailed professional survey to enable them to submit an application for Heritage Lottery Funding (HLF) towards the cost of restoring Valentines Park's historic landscape.

Having submitted an application, the Land Use Consultants (LUC) arranged to present their proposals to the public on the 20<sup>th</sup> February in Valentines High School hall. Residents were invited to examine the plan set out on display boards and complete a questionnaire to express their views. Richard Hannay (Principal of LUC) led a walk in the Park answering questions. LUC are enthusiastic about the Park's significance as a Rococco Landscape.

The display boards containing LUC's presentation have now been set out in Gants Hill Library. Do see them if you can. LUC will produce a detailed report of their proposals. We are expecting it sometime in April. They have suggested a project for us within the restoration. The Rose Garden near the Mansion may contain some varieties of interesting old roses. These would have value within the historic landscape and be worth identifying and propagating. VPC are pursuing this matter with interest.

*Christine Fairfax*

### Valentines Park Conservationists Committee

Stephen Smith	Chair	Christine Fairfax	Secretary
Paul Coleman	Treasurer	Rita Coleman	Press Officer
James Edgoose	Membership Secretary	Ujitha de Zoysa	Newsletter Editor

## Our Spring Programme

<u>Theme</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Place</u>
Wildlife Walk	24 <sup>th</sup> April	10:00-12:00	Aviary (Mansion End)
Early Summer Work	29 <sup>th</sup> April	10:30-13:30	Old English Garden
Rose Identification	26th June	10:30-13:30	Rose Garden (Mansion End)

The above programme is for Spring and early Summer. We start with a walk led by Bruce Taggart who manages the Countryside Studies and Arboricultural Courses at Capel Manor. I hope we will be able to look at the historic and ecological aspects of the Park and get some ideas for future planting. The work in the Old English Garden should be just as fulfilling as on previous occasions and hopefully in better weather.

In June, I hope we will be able to identify and log the species of roses in the Victorian rose garden next to the Old English Garden.

I look forward to seeing you on these Saturdays.

*Stephen Smith*

## London Borough of Redbridge Valentines Park Centenary Celebrations

Event	Details	Date
Easter Egg Hunt	Drop in art tent with artists running workshops plus a theatre show	4 <sup>th</sup> April
Taking Tea	Museum workshop for children	6 <sup>th</sup> April & 8 <sup>th</sup> April
Put Yourself In The Picture	Museum workshop using portraits from Valentines Mansion	1 <sup>st</sup> May & 4 <sup>th</sup> Aug
Parnhams Fun Fair		6 <sup>th</sup> May
Exhibition On Valentines House & Grounds	Museum event at Central Library	20 <sup>th</sup> May–30 <sup>th</sup> Sep
Green Fair		30 <sup>th</sup> May
Fun Run	Redbridge Show	12-13 <sup>th</sup> June
Football Competition	Redbridge Show	12-13 <sup>th</sup> June
Karate Exhibition & Demonstration	Redbridge Show	12-13 <sup>th</sup> June
<i>Craft Fair *</i>		10-11 <sup>th</sup> July
Valentines Park Family Activity Walk	Museum event (evening)	27 <sup>th</sup> July
Bands In The Park & Open Air Theatre		July
Playscheme		July/August
Children's Show & Workshops *	Running alongside playscheme	July/August
Iford Recorder 3v3 Basketball Tournament		8 <sup>th</sup> August
Valentines Park Family Activity Walk	Museum event (evening)	11 <sup>th</sup> & 24 <sup>th</sup> Aug
Bonds Fun Fair		2-6 <sup>th</sup> September
Centenary Celebrations Fireworks *		16 <sup>th</sup> September
Centenary Event *	Fun fair & craft fair	18 <sup>th</sup> September
Circus*		TBA

\* *Unconfirmed Event*