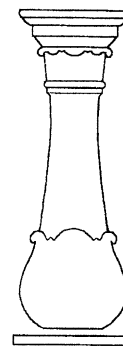


VALENTINES PARK CONSERVATIONISTS NEWSLETTER

Honorary Vice Presidents: Mike Gapes MP Ted Fawcett OBE



www.valentinespark.org.uk

Issue no. 20 March 2005

Chairman's notes

This year's AGM will be held on 10 April from 2.30-4.30pm in Valentines Mansion, and I hope many members will be able to attend. The AGM will take its usual form of a short business meeting to review current projects and the year's events, followed by tea and cakes and then a presentation. This year, I shall be taking the stand again to bring you up to date with plans for the park's restoration.

On that note, many thanks for the support so many of you showed when we recently raised our voice over our lack of inclusion in the restoration process so far. I'm pleased to say that we seem to have turned the corner and now have a series of meetings with the council scheduled, when we will be able to represent members' views.

Bert Lockwood's passing was sad news for the Conservationists. Bert was one of our earliest members and both he and his wife Dorothy were very supportive of the group when we were finding our feet. Bert's knowledge and love of the park and its mansion were far reaching. It reminds me of how important it is, especially as the restoration project gathers pace, that we tap into our collective experience and expertise and translate this into something that is practical for the park's future.

Stephen Smith

Coach trip to Mottisfont Abbey

Another year has flown by and we are preparing for this summer's visit to Mottisfont Abbey, near Romsey in Hampshire. The original building was a priory founded in 1201 by William Briwere, advisor to Richard the Lionheart, King John and Henry III. After the Dissolution (1536-40) the priory was acquired by William Lord Sandys, who converted it into a house. In 1934 the house was bought by Gilbert Russell, a descendant of William Briwere. His wife gave the estate to the National Trust in 1957. The abbey contains an interesting collection

of 19th and 20th century pictures, and a drawing room decorated in *trompe l'oeil* fantasy style.

This is the property that our vice president Ted Fawcett recommended we visit for its famous rose gardens, which house the national collection of over 350 types of old-fashioned roses. As June is the rose flowering month we should experience the full beauty of their colour and perfume. There are also 50 acres of landscaped grounds, with sweeping lawns, magnificent trees and tranquil woodland walks along the river Test. There is a restaurant, kitchen café and gift shop, and plants for sale.

Saturday 18 June is the day of our visit. The coach leaves Clarence Avenue, Gants Hill at 8.30am and Mottisfont at 5.00pm, with coffee stops on route. Tickets are £16 (£10 for National Trust members) for the cost of the coach and entry to the abbey and gardens. Please book by 30 April using the enclosed form, and include a deposit of £6 per ticket (non-refundable unless the ticket can be resold). The balance will be collected on the coach on the day. Please make cheques payable to *Valentines Park Conservationists* and send to me at

Dinah Mullineux

Membership renewals

If you would like to continue your VPC membership in 2005 but have yet to renew your subscription, please forward this to me at

or pay

at our AGM on 10 April. Otherwise, your details will be removed from our membership list at the end of April. New members who joined on or after 1 October 2004 are exempt from this.

The VPC committee is very grateful for the subscriptions we have received, for the generous donations to our Restoration Fund, and for the support given by members past and present.

Margaret Elvin

Wildflower meadows

The borough's Nature Conservation Team and the Environment Partnership are leading a pilot project to reintroduce wildflower meadows in two Redbridge parks - Goodmayes, and Ray Park at Woodford Green.

The aim is to create a meadow in Ray Park in March 2005, and that each year it will grow tall grasses and wild flowers from March to July. These will then be cut and kept to a height of about four inches for the rest of the year. Paths will be created so that visitors can walk through the meadow and enjoy the flowers at close range.

To begin the work, professional contractors will scarify the ground, and then volunteers can help sow the grass and flower seeds. The VPC is interested in this scheme as we hope that wild flower areas will be created in Valentines, and some members will be helping with the seeding at Ray Park to see how this is done.

The sowing has been arranged for the school Easter holidays so that families, amongst others, can participate. If you would like to take part, meet in the Ray Park car park, Snakes Lane East, Woodford Green at 10.30am on Wednesday 30 March.

Christine Fairfax

The trees of Valentines Park IX

Many people have commented on the Honey Locust (*Gleditsia triacanthus*) growing on the lawn on the south side of the mansion, facing Emerson Road, as this year it produced a huge quantity of seed pods. These red-brown pods can be up to ten inches long and one inch wide, and as someone remarked, at dusk they looked like scores of bats hanging from the branches.

The Honey Locust is a deciduous tree, with fans of pinnate leaves comprising many small leaflets. It has a smooth bark, with three-branched spines two to six inches long growing on the trunk and older branches, and small greenish flowers which grow in clusters. Closely related to the Judas Tree (see *The trees of Valentines Park VIII*, VPCN 19, Nov 2004), it is native to eastern North America, and is a warmth-loving species which does best in southern Europe.

The stately Atlantic Cedar (*Cedrus atlantica glauca*), with its bluish foliage, stands near the mansion's conservatory bed and Regency border. This species grows naturally in the mountains of Algeria and

Morocco, and as it needs more warmth it is less cultivated in Europe than the Cedar of Lebanon. The example in Valentines was probably planted soon after the gardens and parkland came under the council's care, as it is not present in a 1912 photograph of the mansion.

Janet Plimmer

We were very sorry to learn of the death in early November of local historian and VPC member Herbert Hope Lockwood. Mr Lockwood took great interest in the activities of the Conservationists and attended many of our events. We are particularly grateful for his allowing us to sell his book 'The Inspiration of Valentines' and keep the profits for spending on our restoration and planting projects. He will be greatly missed by the VPC and the many other groups and organisations he so unstintingly supported throughout the years.

Colour-coded trees

Recently, the trunks of some of the park's trees near the mansion and in the wilderness area by the Long Canal were marked with large blobs of red, orange and yellow paint.

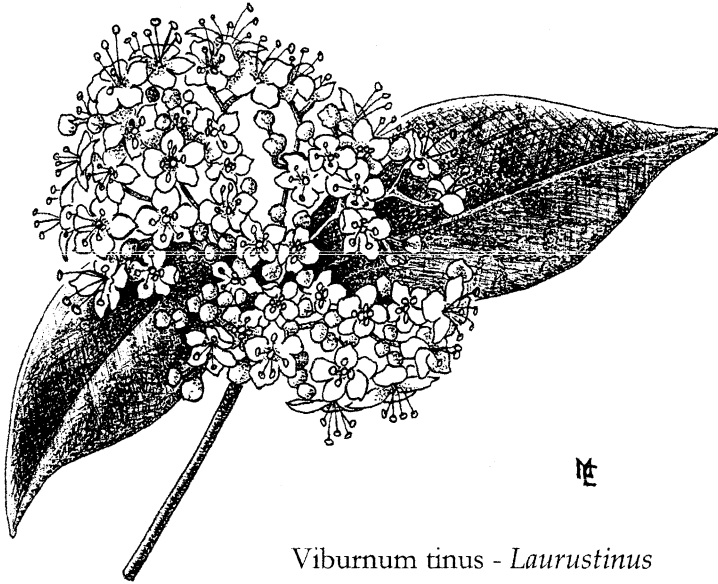
These blobs relate to a tree survey undertaken in preparation for Heritage Lottery Funded restoration work. Red blobs indicate that some trees will be removed to create room for the replanting of features such as the Bishop's Walk avenue of yews. Others will be felled because they may cause damage to brickwork, or are modern species planted in areas scheduled to contain more historic types. Orange and yellow blobs indicate that the trees require various kinds of pruning.

These activities should be explained by the park's managers during public consultations to be held this summer. After this, the finally agreed tree work will take place from October 2005 to January 2006.

The VPC is keen to participate in the consultation process, to ensure that all tree felling and pruning is suitable and regards the needs of wildlife. I have a copy of the tree survey maps and will be pleased to discuss the proposed work with anyone who would like further information. Other members of the VPC committee will also note your views if you are unable to attend the summer consultations.

Christine Fairfax

Seen in the park ...



Viburnum tinus - Laurustinus

by Margaret Elvin

Valentines' Ecology Management Plan

Thanks to the Area 7 wards committee, who provided discretionary funding, and to liaison with the borough's Nature Conservation Team leaders, we were able to commission the consultants Land Management Limited (LML) to prepare an Ecology Management Plan for the park.

In 2003 several specialist consultants surveyed the park's flora and fauna, with VPC members participating in moth-trapping and bat surveys. Local ornithologist Peter Hopkins was already monitoring bird species in the park, and so supplied comprehensive details of these, plus breeding status and water bird counts throughout the year. One of the park keepers, Martin Plumb, notices a great deal as he tours the park, and also supplied much data.

As well as collating this wildlife information, LML summarised the restoration proposals contained in documents prepared for Stage 2 of the Heritage Lottery Fund bid. These proposals already included plans to improve the water quality of the park's lakes and streams and marginal plantings, and there is much accord between these proposals and the ones put forward in LML's Ecology Management Plan. There are a few discrepancies, but we hope to resolve these in forthcoming discussions.

LML's plan includes capital improvements such as planting extra trees and hedges and creating wild flower meadows. Other proposals include leaving dead wood in designated areas, to create habitats

for insects and invertebrates, thus providing more food sources for birds and mammals. The plan will also serve as a working document for the park's maintenance, by contractors and volunteers alike, for up to ten years, with a review after five.

The VPC will present an overview of LML's Ecology Management Plan at our AGM in April, and we have a few copies of the plan available for loan to members. If you would like to borrow one of these please contact me on (020) 8551

Christine Fairfax

In mid-February I was walking my dog Barney in the park when I met another dog owner, who said he'd just seen two people apparently collecting ivy-covered logs in black plastic bags. He hadn't reported the incident to the park keepers, as he hadn't seen the people taking plants or causing damage. Around the same time, one of the new benches near Emerson Road 'disappeared'.

Can I stress that it is very important that incidents are reported. If you can't find a park keeper you can call Parkswatch on (020) 8708 3095 and ask for information to be passed to park staff.

Julie Bradley
Parkswatch volunteer

Hedge the Edge weekend

We are very grateful to the many VPC members who participated in our Hedge the Edge project, and enabled us to complete all the digging, planting and mulching most efficiently. It was definitely a case of many hands making light work, as we planted 280 whips (saplings) by the Emerson Road railings and spread 80 sacks of mulch in just a few hours over the weekend of 27 and 28 November. The refreshments team, led by Cherry and Alan Hooker, opened the mansion for us, and their plentiful catering was much appreciated.

So far the plants have not been vandalised, but we have a few spare whips in case some need replacing, and we will need to water the plants during summer dry spells to ensure they establish well. When hosing is necessary we usually meet for about an hour around 6.00-7.00pm and work in teams of at least three, so that we can move and monitor the hoses effectively. If you would like to join the watering rota, please contact me on (020) 8551

Christine Fairfax

EVENTS DIARY

Wednesday 30 April

Creating a wildflower meadow. Meet 10.30am, Ray Park car park, Snakes Lane East, Woodford Green. Volunteers welcome to help sow seeds for what will become the park's wildflower meadow.

Saturday 2 April

Spring maintenance and restocking of the Old English Garden, Regency border and Rose temple. Helpers always welcome any time between 10.30am-1.00pm. Meet by the Old English Garden.

Sunday 10 April 2005

The VPC's Annual General Meeting. Valentines Mansion, 2.30-4.30pm. A short business meeting, followed by refreshments. Chairman Stephen Smith will then present the proposals for the park's restoration using the £3 million Heritage Lottery Fund grant which was awarded last summer.

Tuesday 12 April

Roses and Companion Plants. A presentation by rose expert Margaret Stewart, for the Ilford National Trust group. 8.00pm, St Andrews Church Hall, The Drive, Ilford.

Sunday 24 April

Birdwatching with Peter Hopkins. Peter leads a walk to look at some of the spring migrants and resident species that should be in the park at this time of year. 8.30-10.30am. Meet by the Pavilion café.

Saturday 30 April

Spring maintenance and replanting in the Old English Garden, Regency border and Rose temple. Help welcome any time between 10.30am-1.00pm. Meet by the Old English Garden.

Saturday 14 May

May Fair. Valentines Mansion, 10.00am-5.00pm. Organised by the Friends of Valentines Mansion. Walks, talks, live music, children's activities, refreshments and stalls, including the VPC's merchandise, display and information stall. Admission: £1 adults, under 12s free.

Saturday 28 May

General maintenance work in the Old English Garden, Regency border and Rose temple. 10.30am-1.00pm. Meet by the OEG.

Sunday 29 May

Redbridge Green Fair. Melbourne Field, Valentines Park, 11.30am-7.00pm. Displays, live music, food and drink, entertainers, children's activities and stalls, including the VPC's merchandise, display and information stall. Admission free.

Saturday 18 June

Coach trip to Mottisfont Abbey and Gardens. Coach leave Clarence Avenue, Gants Hill at 8.30am sharp. Tickets £16 each (National Trust members £10). Please purchase in advance (£6 deposit per ticket, remainder payable on the day) from Mrs Dinah Mullineux,

, using the enclosed form.

Saturday 25 June

General maintenance work in the Old English Garden, Regency border and Rose temple. Helpers always welcome, 10.30am-1.00pm. Meet by the OEG.

Sunday 17 July

A Picturesque Legacy. Stephen Smith leads another of his popular Sunday afternoon walks, looking at some of the landscape features - such as lakes, tree groupings and the Wash - which were created at Valentines in the early 1800s and still exist today. The walk should last about an hour. Meet 3.00pm by the Pavilion café.

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