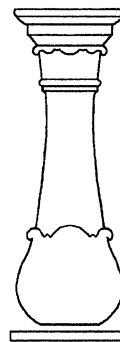


VALENTINES PARK CONSERVATIONISTS NEWSLETTER

Honorary Vice Presidents: Mike Gapes MP Ted Fawcett OBE



www.valentinespark.org.uk

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A picturesque legacy

It's some time since I led a walk around the southern end of Valentines, so I thought I'd rectify this by concentrating on the Ilford side of the park for this summer's VPC walk.

The area around the boating lake features two main layers of historic design: the late Victorian municipal park with its bandstand and refreshment pavilion; and the earlier 19th century 'picturesque' landscape. It's this earlier landscape that we'll be exploring. Centring on the lake, it features clumps of trees, shelterbelt shrubberies and picturesque design elements that were popular in the period around the Napoleonic Wars.

We'll meet at the pavilion at 3.00pm on Sunday 17 July and spend about an hour rediscovering this often overlooked layer of Valentines' earlier history. Let's hope for a fine afternoon.

Stephen Smith

A journey to the Antarctic

The Antarctic is one of the last great wildernesses left in the world. As a pre-Christmas treat, come and learn more about it from an illustrated talk being given by Roger Slade between 3.00-5.00pm in Valentines Mansion on Sunday 6 November.

Roger, who grew up in Ilford, has over the last three years visited the Antarctic as a tourist and then as a lecturer and member of a Russian boat crew escorting other tourists around the area's seas.

During his talk, illustrated by his own wonderful slides, Roger will take us on a journey, visiting the Falkland Islands, South Georgia and the Antarctic Peninsula. As we travel, we'll learn about these unique landscapes, and their icebergs, wildlife and weather, and consider the issues of global warming, the impact of tourism on the area, the Antarctic's precious, fragile environment, and the international treaty that seeks to protect this. Roger will

intersperse this with anecdotes about life on board the boat and the wide variety of people he met.

Tickets for the afternoon are £3.50 each (£2.50 for concessions), covering both admission and interval refreshments. Please book in advance, using the enclosed form, for what promises to be a very informative and entertaining event.

Margaret Elvin

Autumn planting project

At a recent meeting between the VPC and Redbridge's Leisure Services we looked at the possibility of carrying out a planting project in the Wash area of the park, which would meet the aims of both the restoration proposals for Valentines and the recently published ecological report.

The area of The Wash, an historically important part of Ilford, does have a run down feel, but its potential for relatively quick returns from careful planting makes it a good spot to focus on.

We will need to work closely with Gary Meeds, the park's new project manager, but hope to plant a number of native specie trees, shrubs and bulbs.

Each of our 'big hit' projects have so far been based at the mansion end of the park, one good reason for this being the access to shelter and the relative ease with which hot drinks, etc, can be provided. However, we are investigating the possibility of using the old boat house as a base for our activities over this particular weekend.

The project has been set for the mornings of the 26 and 27 November, so please put this weekend in your diaries and hope for dry weather.

We'll let you know of firmer details nearer the time. See you there!

Stephen Smith

Please see our Events Diary on the back page for further details - Ed.

Visit to Mottisfont Abbey

Many thanks to Events secretaries Dinah Mullineux and Janet Plimmer for organising another superb coach trip, this time to Mottisfont Abbey in Hampshire in June. Once again we enjoyed brilliant sunshine, and once again there was plenty to see and do.

The Walled Rose Garden proved popular, with over 350 varieties of roses in full bloom, and some shady riverside and woodland walks offered a cool alternative on a hot day. Inside the Abbey, now a country house under the stewardship of the National Trust, the Whistler Room was most memorable: close inspection revealed that the ornate plasterwork on the walls and ceilings, and the folds and embroidery of the curtains, were in fact paintings, made by the artist Rex Whistler in 1938-9. But even close to, the surfaces shimmered with a now-you-see-it, now-you-don't three dimensional quality - a true trompe-oel effect.

Thanks once again to Dinah and Janet for their time and efforts spent in arranging the trip, and we hope there's another next summer.

Karen Lane

We would like to welcome Lee Scott, MP for Ilford North, as one of our newest members. Mr Scott was one of several people who joined the VPC as a result of visiting our stalls at the May Fair in Valentines Mansion and the Redbridge Green Fair. We hope that he and other new members enjoy being part of our friendly, active organisation, and we look forward to seeing them, as well as our longer-standing supporters, at some of the many events we run throughout the year.

One step forward ...

Our relationship with the council's Leisure Services department have improved dramatically over the last few months. The VPC committee is now having regular monthly meetings with council officers and at last our ideas are being worked into the park's restoration plan. We are hoping that we will have an even greater impact on this when Gary Meeds, the park restoration project manager, starts work in early July. We hope to meet Gary towards the end of July and will be pushing for a visit to the park to explain some of our ideas.

So that's the step forward - here's the two steps back ...

The latest threat to the park comes from the council's Planning department. Although planners

are obliged to consult people affected by new developments, it seems that they are not required to consult with groups such as the VPC. Informing us about developments which may affect the park isn't a tremendous job and would be in line with the council's policies on consultation and community involvement. But up to now this hasn't happened.

The results of this oversight became obvious when we found out about Valentines High School's plans for building a multi-sports court alongside the Bishop's Walk, just days before the proposals were due to be discussed by the Regulatory Committee and weeks after the time for formal responses had passed. Although all councillors on this committee were sent an email detailing our objections, they still passed the plans. The result is that the Bishop's Walk will lose its open view across the school fields, and will no longer be a quiet, pleasant place to relax in. To try to prevent things like this happening again, we contacted the Planning department and asked to be consulted on future developments close to the park. We have since received a letter from Redbridge council assuring us that the VPC will be consulted on proposed developments from now on.

We have also seen the plans for the restoration of the area surrounding the mansion, and feel they are unsatisfactory. However good the architects may be at building restoration, it seems they know little about historic landscapes. We will be taking this up with Nigel Burch, who is overseeing the restoration proposals, and hope to get the more inappropriate ideas (such as a sculpture court set in resin-bonded gravel, a feature wholly unsuited to this historic area of the park) removed. We will also be asking that the architects limit their imaginations to the mansion and that all parts of the park are covered by the park restoration plan.

Please contact me or any other member of the committee if you would like more information about any of these matters.

David Lane

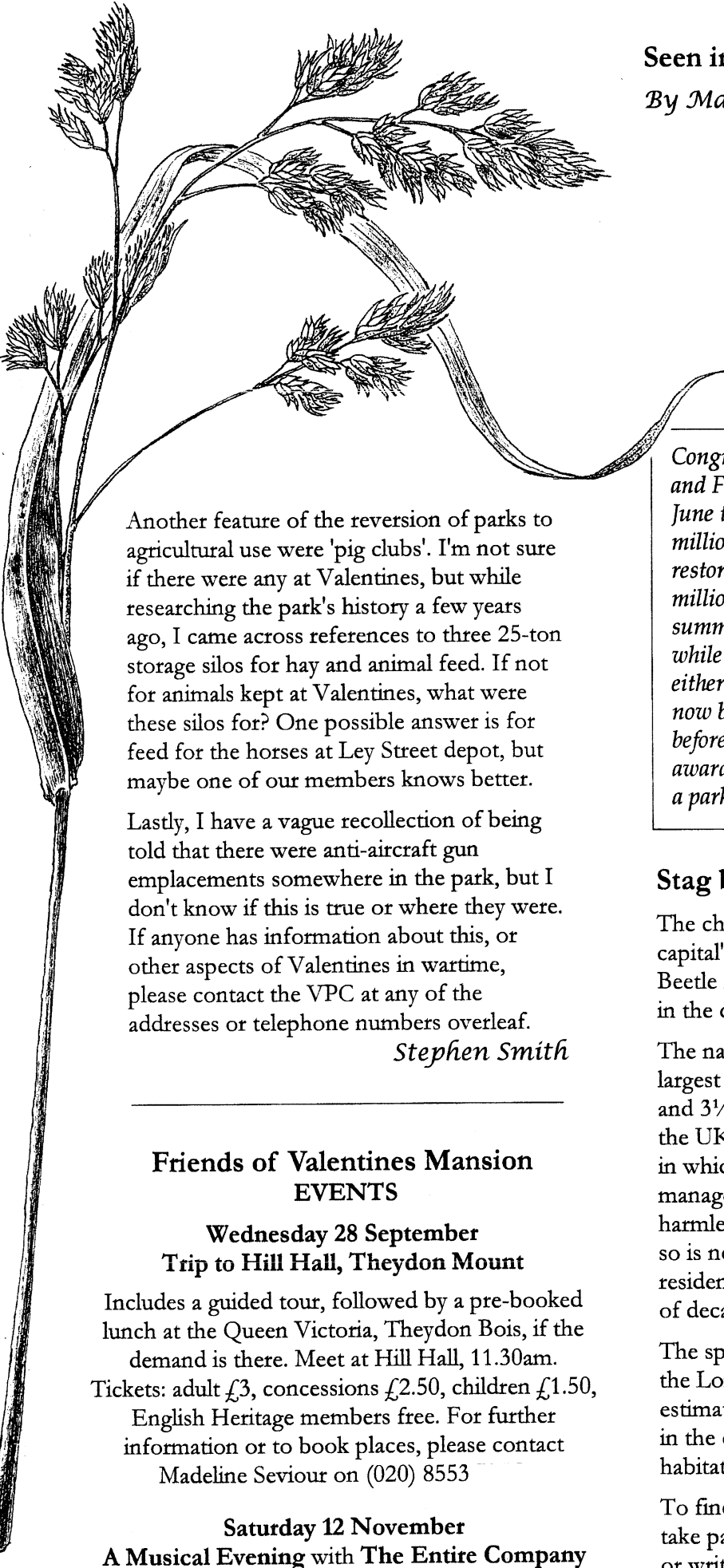
Valentines in wartime

Wartime memories have been particularly poignant during this year's marking of the 60th anniversaries of various low and high points of World War II.

An important and often forgotten part played on the Home Front was the keeping of allotments, produce from which provided a vital supplement to the weekly ration. Valentines was no exception and both my grandfathers had plots, one in Melbourne Field and the other in Pageant Field, not far from the shelter on the park's Perth Road boundary, the base for his evening work as an ARP warden.

Seen in the park - Wild grass in The Wash

By Margaret Elvin



Another feature of the reversion of parks to agricultural use were 'pig clubs'. I'm not sure if there were any at Valentines, but while researching the park's history a few years ago, I came across references to three 25-ton storage silos for hay and animal feed. If not for animals kept at Valentines, what were these silos for? One possible answer is for feed for the horses at Ley Street depot, but maybe one of our members knows better.

Lastly, I have a vague recollection of being told that there were anti-aircraft gun emplacements somewhere in the park, but I don't know if this is true or where they were. If anyone has information about this, or other aspects of Valentines in wartime, please contact the VPC at any of the addresses or telephone numbers overleaf.

Stephen Smith

Friends of Valentines Mansion EVENTS

Wednesday 28 September

Trip to Hill Hall, Theydon Mount

Includes a guided tour, followed by a pre-booked lunch at the Queen Victoria, Theydon Bois, if the demand is there. Meet at Hill Hall, 11.30am.

Tickets: adult £3, concessions £2.50, children £1.50,

English Heritage members free. For further information or to book places, please contact Madeline Seviour on (020) 8553

Saturday 12 November

A Musical Evening with The Entire Company

Valentines High School, 7.30pm.

For further information please contact Georgina Green on (020) 8500

Congratulations to the Valentines Mansion Trust and Friends of Valentines Mansion, who learnt in June that Redbridge council had been awarded £2 million from the Heritage Lottery Fund for the restoration of the mansion. This follows the £3 million HLF award granted to the council last summer for the restoration of the park. It will be a while before we see any major improvements to either the park or the mansion, as projects must now be carefully planned, scrutinised and costed before restoration can begin. However, these awards should ensure that eventually we will have a park and mansion we can once again be proud of.

Stag beetle survey

The charity London Wildlife Trust is asking the capital's residents to take part in the London Stag Beetle Hunt, the largest-ever survey of these insects in the city.

The nationally endangered stag beetle is Britain's largest ground-living beetle, growing to between 2" and 3¼" (5-8cm) long. It is rapidly declining across the UK as a result of the clearance of dead wood - in which the larvae live for up to seven years - in managed woodland and parks. It is completely harmless to humans, and does not eat live wood, so is not a horticultural pest. Rather, the larvae's residence in dead wood helps speed up the process of decay which returns nutrients to the soil.

The species is relatively common in London, but the London Wildlife Trust needs an up to date estimate of the number and spread of stag beetles in the capital so that it can help improve the insect's habitats, thus helping to protect it for the future.

To find out more about stag beetles and how to take part in the survey, visit www.wildlondon.org.uk, or write to the London Wildlife Trust, Ground Floor, Skyline House, 200 Union Street, London SE1 0LW, or phone (020) 7803 4289.

Karen Lane

EVENTS DIARY

Sunday 17 July

A Picturesque Legacy. Stephen Smith leads another of his Sunday afternoon walks, looking at some of the landscape features 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.

Saturday 23 July

Wildlife Gardening Workshop. Half-day event at Valentines Mansion, organised by the London Borough of Redbridge. Admission free, refreshments provided. To book a place and for further details please call Nicola Tsoukatos on (020) 8708

Saturday 17 & Sunday 18 September

London Open House. Valentines Mansion will be open to the public from 10.00am-5.00pm on both days. The Friends of Valentines Mansion will be selling refreshments, and VPC members will be running our merchandise and information stall. Admission free.

Friday 23 September

Bat watching walk. Organised by London Borough Redbridge Nature Conservation team. Meet at 6.45pm by the main Emerson Road entrance to the park. Please bring a torch, and an ultrasonic bat detector if you have one.

Wednesday 26 October

The Rose Gardens of Paris. Talk by rose expert Margaret Stewart, organised by the Ilford Horticultural Society. 8.00pm, Fulwell Cross Library, Barkingside. Admission £1.50.

Sunday 6 November

A Journey to the Antarctic. An illustrated talk by Roger Slade. Valentines Mansion, 3.00-5.00pm. Tickets for admission and interval refreshments: £3.50 (concessions £2.50). Please buy in advance, using the enclosed form. For further details contact Margaret Elvin on (020) 8554

The VPC will be getting the mansion ready for Roger's talk on Friday 4 November from 10.30am-1.00pm. If you would like to help with this please contact Margaret Elvin for further details.

Sunday 13 November

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

Saturday 26 & Sunday 27 November

In The Wash weekend. This year's autumn planting project is to plant native woodland species in The Wash area of Valentines Park, opposite The Drive. Please come for as much time as you can spare between 10.00am-1.00pm on one or both days, for this, our annual 'social' horticultural event. Free refreshments for all, which we hope to offer in the boathouse, giving everyone a rare opportunity to see inside this old building. Meet by the boathouse (nearest park entrances: Cranbrook Rd, Ilford end).

REGULAR VPC WORK DAYS

General maintenance and seasonal work in the Old English Garden, Regency Border and Rose Temple on the last Saturday of each month. Helpers always welcome for any amount of time between 10.30am-1.00pm. Meet by the Old English Garden.

Forthcoming dates:

Saturday 30 July 2005 **Saturday 27 August**
Saturday 24 September **Saturday 29 October**

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Gill Stuart - 01992

Membership Secretary

Margaret Elvin - (020) 8554

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