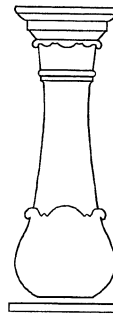


# VALENTINES PARK CONSERVATIONISTS NEWSLETTER

Honorary Vice Presidents: Mike Gapes MP Ted Fawcett OBE



[www.valentinespark.org.uk](http://www.valentinespark.org.uk)

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## Our AGM

This year's meeting on 9 April was again very well attended, which helped demonstrate the keen level of interest we have in the restoration and proposed improvements to our park. Gary Meeds presented an outline of the council's restoration scheme and this was warmly welcomed by members, many of whom took the opportunity to ask thoughtful and sometimes searching questions. A number of members' questions focused on our expectations for the park after the lottery grant has been spent, and on how maintenance will be upgraded to stop it degenerating into such a poor state again, and how security might be improved.

Gary could of course provided no single answer to these questions, which I'm sure will remain on the agenda well into the future. The management plan currently being worked on for the restored park will provide part of the answer and act as a blueprint for the future head gardener or manager, but the support and vigilance of the park's users will be key. Our own group's role remains an important one, but it's something we will need to hone in the coming months to ensure that we can integrate our own activities into the park's more formal management.

Lastly, I hope I managed at the AGM to say thank you to all those who worked so hard last year - I certainly meant to. And thanks also to Gary for speaking this year.

*Stephen Smith*

## Summer and autumn events

We have some interesting events planned for the coming months.

Firstly, on *Saturday 12 August* we'll be visiting Barrier Park, on the north bank of the Thames overlooking the Thames Flood Barrier. This is London's first new major public park for over 50 years, and designers, architects and horticulturalists have worked together to create a bright modern space at the heart of the Royal Docks regeneration area.

We'll meet at Gants Hill station at 1.45pm, to catch Central Line and Docklands trains to Pontoon Dock

station, which adjoins the park. Barrier Park contains an excellent café, and we plan to break for refreshments during our visit to what the Daily Telegraph has called 'a garden for the 21st century'.

Secondly, our big planting project this year will take place on *Saturday 28 and Sunday 29 October*, when we'll be planting bulbs and perennials along the path which runs beside the old pitch-and-putt golf course, from the Perth Road entrance opposite Lynton Crescent to the end of the Bishop's Walk. The aim is to turn what is currently a rather lacklustre pathway into a welcoming and colourful route into the park. We also plan to make the event a social occasion, and to this end, Dinah, Janet and the team will be offering their excellent refreshments in Valentines Mansion for all helpers on both days.

Lastly, following his informative and entertaining presentation at the mansion last year, photographer, lecturer and geographer Roger Slade makes a welcome return on *Sunday 19 November*, to talk about his visits to the Antarctic. His theme this time will be on the continent's environment, and will be illustrated by a new set of computerised slides showing some of the glaciers, landscapes and wildlife of this unique and fascinating landmass. Tickets for Roger's last talk sold out quickly, so to be sure of a seat please book early, using the enclosed form.

For further details of these and other events please see our Diary on the back page.

*Karen Lane*

## Redbridge Parks Police

On 1 June I was invited to attend the launch of the Redbridge Parks Police Service at the Town Hall. The 13 officers of this new service have been sworn in as constables at Redbridge Magistrates' Court, are warranted to enforce by-laws, and have the power of arrest. Since 5 June they have been patrolling the borough's parks in vehicles, on motor- and pedal cycles, and on foot, and are always in uniform. If you wish to report anything to the Parks Police, phone the dedicated number 07904 640 042 - I have been assured that your call will be answered in person.

*Julie Bradley*

## Sorry, did you say KPIs?

KPI is one of those TLAs (three letter acronyms) much loved by managers and people who give money to worthy causes - like Valentines Park. So we decided, in consultation with Gary Meeds, to draw up a list of possible 'Key Performance Indicators' to provide some measures for the success of the park's restoration. Our suggestions for KPIs come in two flavours, bad and good: that is, what are the worst things about the park as it is now, and what changes will show that the restoration plan has worked? When asked for their ideas for KPIs, people who attended our AGM on 9 April listed just under 80 bad things about the park and just over 100 things that need to change for a successful restoration.

Interpreting data like this is always a bit tricky, but having said that, the following table shows the percentage of people who mentioned the 'bad' and 'good' things - the numbers don't add up to 100% as the categories aren't mutually exclusive.

### Bad things about the park

Crime/anti-social and selfish behaviour	44%
(includes graffiti and vandalism - 14% and litter/rubbish - 11%)	
Neglect/decay	29%
(includes waterways - 21%)	
Poor planting/horticulture/maintenance	14%
Poor amenities/facilities	10%

### Things to change/improve (good things)

Amenities/facilities	22%
Planting/horticulture	19%
Restoration of historic features	15%
Security	14%
Waterways	13%
Staffing	10%
Maintenance	10%
Community involvement	9%

If we could create an average VPC member, then his or her view of the park based on this data could be summarised as: 'The park doesn't feel very safe - there's a lot of graffiti and vandalism - and the place looks run down and uncared for. There's a fair amount of litter about and a lot of mess left by people feeding the Canada geese - not to mention the mess the geese leave! And the lakes and ponds are awful. Overall, the planting and borders - apart from the annual beds - are rather poor, and there's a lack of facilities, especially toilets. To make the park better, it needs more amenities and facilities, such as better signs, longer café opening hours, more loos, more seats and shelters, and more welcoming entrances. More varied planting - especially to promote bio-diversity - and restoration of the historic features and waterways would help a lot. And the

park needs more staff and maintenance, better security, and the involvement of local people to make sure these things happen'.

Or, as one person who contributed to the survey put it, 'Valentines Park. Oh, that's a lovely, pretty, colourful, interesting place'. Who could disagree with that as a summary of what we want for the park?

*David Lane*

## Valentines' miniature railway - the mystery continues

Regular readers may remember that a couple of years ago, we ran a series of articles on Valentines' miniature passenger railway. Despite some discussion, the questions of exactly when and where this railway ran were never fully answered. However, a few weeks ago I received the following e-mail from VPC member Roger Backhouse:

*Historian Ian Dowling's book, Valentines Park, Ilford: A Century of History, says that in 1943 'The model railway proposed in 1938 was again offered as an attraction for children during the 'Holidays and Home' programme, which was run throughout the country during the summer months. The railway unfortunately had an engine failure prior to the August Bank Holiday and the owner, despite every effort, could not provide a replacement engine in good running order'.*

*So I think this is one definitive answer - but even this doesn't tell us who ran it and where it was located. However, a temporary track could have been laid almost anywhere.*

Roger has therefore discovered that the railway certainly ran in 1943, at least for a while. Any further information on this most forgotten feature of Valentines Park will be welcome.

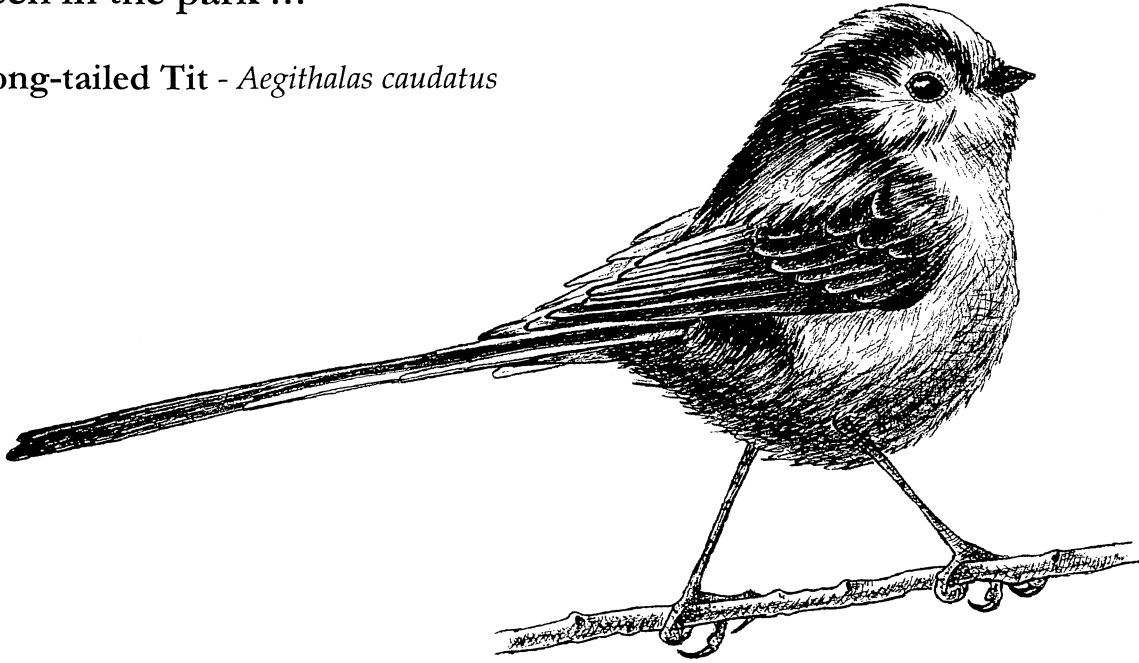
*Karen Lane*

*Popular swing quartet Who Else For Jazz? gave another of their highly entertaining performances at Valentines Mansion on Saturday 17 June. The band's selection of jazz classics was well received by a lively audience who cheered and whooped in appreciation after many numbers, and even showed its own collective talent in heartily singing along to the band's rendition of Pennies from Heaven - one of several highlights of the evening.*

*Jazz fans may like to know that the band's next local appearance will be at St Barnabas Church, Browning Road, Manor Park, on Saturday 9 September. Please contact Gerald Elwin on (020) 8554 for tickets and further information.*

## Seen in the park ...

### Long-tailed Tit - *Aegithalas caudatus*



♫

*By Margaret Elvin*

### Council liaison

Our liaison meetings with the council have continued to be both productive and informative. The VPC has commented on plans for the park's landscaping, including the tree strategy, restoration of the waterways and islands, and the repair and restoration of the walls, dovecote and other structures in the area by the mansion. The meetings are now very much about the details of the park's restoration - an encouraging sign that work should be starting soon.

At the last liaison meeting, we were able to put some of our ideas and views directly to Richard Hannay from Land Use Consultants, who will be overseeing the restoration work. This meeting was especially useful as it gave everyone a chance to debate and discuss in some detail plans for different parts of the park. The willingness of everyone to listen to other views and, more importantly, change their own was very encouraging and good for the park.

As the start of the park's restoration work gets closer and things start to happen in the 'real' Valentines of trees, shrubs, lakes and grottoes, rather than the 'virtual' Valentines of reports, maps and plans, we hope to provide more practical input to the restoration process. We shall be keeping a watchful eye on developments in the park during the next few months to make sure work is carried out as planned - and if it isn't, we'll make sure the council know!

At the last meeting, we also received an assurance

that we'll be consulted over those aspects of the mansion's restoration which affect the park. Good news, given the success of the restoration bid for the mansion. We shall of course work with our colleagues, the Friends of Valentines Mansion, on this.

As always, if you have any comments, concerns or questions about the park's restoration or the liaison group meetings, please contact me or any other committee member (details overleaf).

*David Lane*

### News from the May Fair

Thanks to everyone who came to the VPC stall to say hello at the May Fair at Valentines Mansion on 20 May. We sold a good number of our Christmas cards and notelets, so thanks also to all who bought them.

We would also like to thank member Lydia Hanscomb, who has donated some photos taken in the 1980s of the mulberry trees near the mansion. She also kindly lent us some postcards to copy and add to our collection, and we should have these ready for viewing soon.

If anyone has photographs, pictures or other documents relating to the park or mansion which they would like to donate or lend us, please contact a member of the VPC committee. All items will be very gratefully received.

*Julie Bradley*

## EVENTS DIARY

### Saturday 29 July

Maintenance work in the Old English Garden, Regency Border and Rose Garden. Helpers always welcome for any amount of time between 10.30am-1.00pm. Meet by the Old English Garden.

### Saturday 12 August

*Visit to Barrier Park, Silvertown.* Overlooking the River Thames, this is the first large-scale public park to be created in London for over 50 years. Meet in the foyer of Gants Hill tube station at 1.45pm for train journeys to Pontoon Dock station, which adjoins the park. Entrance to the park is free, but allow for travelling and refreshment expenses.

### Saturday 26 August

Late summer maintenance work in the OEG, Regency Border and Rose Garden. 10.30am-1.00pm. Meet OEG. Helpers always welcome.

### Saturday 16 and Sunday 17 September

*London Open House weekend.* Valentines Mansion will be open to the public from 10.00am-5.00pm on both days, and the VPC merchandise and information stall will be one of the many attractions within the house. If you would like to help run our stall for any amount of time on either day or both, please contact Karen Lane on (020) 8554

### Saturday 30 September

Early autumn work in the OEG, Regency Border and Rose Garden. 10.30am-1.00pm. Meet OEG. Help always welcome.

### Saturday 30 September

*An Evening with Reg Wheeler and Friends.* Valentines Mansion, 7.30pm. An entertainment organised by the Friends of Valentines Mansion. Tickets £10 (for admission, a glass of wine and light refreshments) from John and Audrey Manuel on (020) 8554

### Saturday 28 and Sunday 29 October

*Planting a Pathway.* This year's grand autumn project and outdoor social event is to plant a border of bulbs and perennials along the path that runs from Perth Road (opposite Lynton Crescent) to the end of the Bishop's Walk, beside the old pitch-and-putt golf course. Helpers welcome for any amount of time between 10.30am-1.00pm on both days. Meet by the Regency Border, Valentines Mansion, at 10.30am,

or join us at either end of the path after that. Free refreshments for all in Valentines Mansion after the planting on both days.

### Sunday 19 November

*A Return to the Antarctic.* Valentines Mansion, 3.00-5.00pm. Following his successful sell-out presentation at the mansion last year, photographer, lecturer and geographer Roger Slade returns to give another illustrated talk on his visits to Antarctica. To be sure of a seat please book early, using the enclosed form. Tickets £3.50, concessions £2.50.

On Friday 17 November, the VPC will be preparing the mansion for Roger's talk. This involves some light cleaning and tidying, putting out chairs, and dressing the room up a little. If you would like to help with this for any amount of time between 10.30am-1.00pm please contact Margaret Elvin on (020) 8554

### Sunday 26 November

*Winter migrant birdwatching with Peter Hopkins.* 8.30-10.30am. Meet by the Pavilion café. Peter hopes his walk will include a sighting of 'Valentino', the Mediterranean Gull, who should have returned for his seventh winter in the park. Peter has discovered that Valentino spends the summer in Antwerp and the whole of the winter in Valentines, apparently never having flown to any other part of the UK: one of the many avian visitors who should be in the park at this time of year.

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