

# VALENTINES PARK CONSERVATIONISTS NEWSLETTER

Hon Vice Presidents: Mike Gapes MP Ted Fawcett OBE

Issue No. 3

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## **Dear Members & Supporters**

Our Spring quarter activities have been a success with most of our membership participating in one or the other of the programmes organised. Membership continues to grow and it would be good to have 100 members by the end of this millennium. One way of attaining this may be to bring a friend to our Centenary Celebration on the 9<sup>th</sup> of September (see Summer Programme on page3). Of course new members are welcome at all times. Membership fee is £5 *per annum* or £3 for concessionary members.

The following articles will speak for themselves of our achievements and I hope you enjoy reading them. We look forward to seeing you at one our forthcoming events. Our secretary, Christine Fairfax on \_\_\_\_\_ can provide further details.

## **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

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## **A Spring Wildlife Walk**

We met Bruce Taggart, a lecturer in Ecology at Capel Manor, at the Old English Garden on Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> of April. As Bruce led us towards the walled garden, two wrens were singing loudly to defend their adjacent breeding territories. He suggested a bird survey of the Park to be undertaken in Spring by counting the singing male wrens. The great value of our mature holly & Ivy to birds & butterflies and the importance of standing dead trees for invertebrates, fungi & birds were highlighted.

He described some possible long term projects, such as,

- providing some unobtrusive piles of logs and hanging nest boxes in quiet places ;
- pollarding some of the overhanging willows around the Fish Pond to let in light and then planting suitable marginal plants to reduce silting from soil erosion and help the water fowl;
- arranging a more varied grass mowing regime in some areas such as parts of the Glade, where wildflowers could be established in longer grass;

Our attention was drawn to the plight of a duck with nine ducklings, where they were vulnerable to passing dogs. We carried the ducklings to the Fish Pond, followed by their mother who was protesting anxiously. She seemed content when they were all swimming close together.

Bruce was concerned to see Japanese Knotweed growing in the watercourse between the Canal and the Fish Pond. As several grey squirrels approached us boldly, he thought their numbers a menace to our trees and songbirds and suggested that people refrain from feeding them.

He thought we are very fortunate to have such a beautiful and varied Park.

*Christine Fairfax*

### **Old English Garden - Remedial Work**

On Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> of May, a group of conservationists met in the Old English Garden for a practical session; to administer some tender loving care to the area. We undertook some weeding and tidying in the rose garden and planted up the central bed in the English Garden.

In view of the poor condition of the central support structure, we decided upon an annual planting scheme, until such time as the necessary repairs can be made.

After preparing the soil, we planted morning glory, tobacco plants and sweet peas. A torrential storm the following day caused us some concern, and indeed we had to undertake some repairs to the plants and supporting strings on subsequent days. At the time of writing, the plants are holding their own and we look forward to a colourful and scented display later in the Summer. Redbridge Council has provided an interpretation notice and I recommend a visit if you are in the vicinity of the Park to watch its progress.

I am happy to be able to report that the broken seat has at last been removed and the forsythia wall shrub which had been badly damaged by fire has been cut down, giving the garden a more cared for appearance.

Once again, several hours were spent happily and constructively in this beautiful space amongst good company. What a privilege !

*Rita Coleman*

### **The Rose Garden**

Within the restoration plan for the historic gardens, Land Use Consultants suggested a project for us in the Rose Garden near the mansion. Research has indicated that this rose garden was set out about 1860 and may still contain some interesting varieties of old roses which would be particularly valuable in the historic landscape and worth propagating.

Redbridge Council managers have informed us that the bedding roses were replaced with modern varieties in recent years,

*continued in next column*

### **The Rose Garden – continued from previous column**

so we have confined our attention to the climbing/rambling roses which are trained over wrought iron hoops and arches and along the 'Ha Ha' bordering the Terrace. During May & June, we labelled each root stock with a letter and number reference and noted their positions on a sketch plan. We can now monitor the roses, record their performance and the name of any varieties which are identified.

We contacted Peter Beales a well known grower of classic roses, who has also written reference books. He offered to help with any propagation required. We are very fortunate that the Royal National Rose Society (RNRS) were able to help us by recommending our project to Margaret Stewart, a rose lover & expert who has grown and exhibited roses for many years, undertaking work for the RNRS and their Gardens of the Rose, at Chiswell Green near St Albans. She has visited Valentines Park several times, taking photographs and noting many details including fragrances. Margaret has already been able to compile a list of some varieties of roses which she has identified.

Many varieties date from a replanting carried out in the 1920's and another in the late 1940's to early 50's following neglect during the war years. At present, the roses carry a lot of dead wood due to lack of pruning and some along the 'Ha Ha' compete with tree seedlings and ivy. In spite of adversity many have achieved a magnificent show over recent weeks. I have been enthralled by the Phyllis Bide rose (1923).

We plan dead heading, to encourage late Summer flowering, continued monitoring and selection of roses for propagating or removal. Margaret advises that careful pruning and feeding should encourage good regeneration of many of the most beautiful roses in spite of their age. Expertise is evident in the way they were originally trained over hoops & wires and it is a great privilege to have these living reminders of past gardeners. Margaret has kindly agreed to present a talk with slides for us at an indoor meeting in the Autumn.

Should any members or their friends have a particular interest in roses and wish to help with this project, please contact me on \_\_\_\_\_

*Christine Fairfax*

## Our Summer Programme

<u>Theme</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Place</u>
Victoria Park Visit	31 <sup>st</sup> July	11:00am	Café - Grove Road
Summer Pruning	28 <sup>th</sup> August	10:30am	Old English Garden
Centenary Celebration	9 <sup>th</sup> September	07:45pm	Gloucester Room – Central Library
Bulb Planting	25 <sup>th</sup> September	10:30am	Old English Garden

We continue into the Summer on the same format as before with a walk and then practical sessions in the following two months. The July walk, however, is a little different. Instead of Valentines Park, we have chosen to look at a park that has already been the subject of a major restoration scheme. Victoria Park in the East End has an interesting history and was an early model for public parks that sprang up throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Doreen Kendall of the Friends of Victoria Park has offered to show us around and I am sure this will be a great opportunity for us to learn from the experiences of a group at another park. **We plan to meet in the Café in the park that is on the left as you enter the park from the Grove Rd entrance.** We are arranging car sharing. So if you have a spare seat or would like a lift, please contact Christine on [redacted]. The Café serves food, but Doreen warns that it is quite expensive. So it might be an idea to bring a packed lunch.

We are arranging another event for which we would like your full support, our own Park Centenary Celebrations to be held on 9/9/99. It should be a relaxed evening with a guest speaker and a glass of wine. Dr Laura Williams of Redbridge Museum Service has agreed to take part and I am sure we will give her a warm welcome.

**Stephen Smith**

### London Borough of Redbridge Valentines Park Centenary Celebrations

Event	Details	Date
Exhibition On Valentines House & Grounds	Museum event at Central Library	20th May - 20th September
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
Ilford Recorder 3v3 Basketball Tournament		8 <sup>th</sup> August
Valentines Park Family Activity Walk	Museum event (evening)	9 <sup>th</sup> & 24 <sup>th</sup> August
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

### Brief News

#### **Park Watch:**

We are very pleased that Redbridge Council's Leisure Committee councillors, Council officers and the officers of Ilford Police Station were joining forces in launching the Park Watch scheme with the aim of reducing crime and vandalism in the Park. Members will no doubt have noticed that posters are displayed at all Park entrances alerting park users to a 24 hour hotline number (0181 478 9071), to report any incidents as soon as possible.

#### **Land Use Consultants Report:**

As at the end of June, the first draft of the detailed survey of the Park is still awaited. When this is received, priorities will need to be agreed before Redbridge Council is in a position to submit an application for Heritage Lottery funding towards the cost of restoring the Park's historic landscape.

#### **Future of Valentines Mansion:**

Following the citizens' jury report, Redbridge Council held an Extraordinary Strategy Committee meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> July. Members of Valentines Park Conservationists and Cranbrook Residents' Association attended and expressed their views. The Strategy Committee decided to hand over the management of the mansion to a community association in the form of a charitable trust. This is a pleasing result.