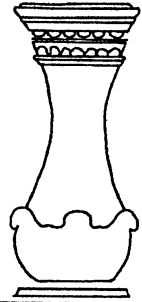


VALENTINES PARK CONSERVATIONISTS NEWSLETTER



Hon Vice Presidents: Mike Gapes MP Ted Fawcett OBE

Issue No. 5

January 2000

Dear Members & Supporters

All the best for the new year and let us hope that some of the younger Valentines Park enthusiasts would be around for the Park's bicentennial celebration !

We sincerely thank James Edgoose for his valuable time & work as our membership secretary since the beginning of VPC and an increasing membership. We warmly welcome Margaret Elvin, our proposed membership secretary, to the VPC committee. We are pleased that inflation and a change of millennium & membership secretary have *not* led to an increase in the membership rates. Membership renewals are due for the new calendar year.

The most important event in our continuing Winter programme is our very first Annual General Meeting. Please note the change of date and venue (see p.3) and inform others who may not know. All our members and friends will be most welcome and we hope to make it an interesting evening with a minimum of formalities to allow maximum time for our guest speaker.

Ujitha de Zoysa

Birdwatching in the Park

Despite the 4th December's bitter cold, a compact group of children and adults, including an expert local historian, joined Peter Hopkins, a keen and knowledgeable birdwatcher, for his tour around Valentines Park observing different birds and their habitats.

Sharing binoculars and Peter's more powerful telescope enabled us to enjoy clear views of a number of birds. One of the lakes provided us with a sighting of a female shoveler duck, distinctive for its large bill. Being a shyer variety of bird than the more common ones we saw on the lake, i.e. coot, moorhen, mute swan, canada goose, mallard and tufted ducks, it was sheltering by the overhang of an island whilst quietly resting on the water.

On an open grassland area, we observed different species of gulls in Winter plumage – black-headed (mainly), herring, common and lesser black-backed – searching for food. Peter explained that the herring gull stamping its large webbed feet on the ground (called 'padding') was doing so to attract worms to the surface. So, it wasn't trying to keep warm like us!

Amongst the tall alder trees around the dried-up Cranbrook area, we discovered a flock of brightly coloured goldfinches. We watched them dropping down to bathe in the puddles & wet leaves that had gathered in the brook's gully, in order to keep their feathers in good condition. Peter informed us that kingfishers had been identified in the Park in the past and had been thrilled recently to glimpse one himself, after many years of looking.

By the end of our enjoyable walk and the spotting of other bird varieties, we had gained much from Peter's experience and we were grateful for his time. Some of us continued our discussions of the Park and its wildlife, in the warmth of the pavilion. We look forward to further guided walks.

Margaret Elvin

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Valentines Park Restoration Plan

We were grateful that quite a few members, twenty in all, were able to express their interest in the Park by attending the meeting in the town hall on 1st December 1999, when Redbridge Council's Leisure Committee considered the restoration plan and received a presentation from Max Askew of Land Use Consultants regarding their report. In October, our VPC committee and its chairman were sent a draft copy of the report and given the opportunity to make detailed comments. Although we have not to date received a copy of the final version, we understand several of our points have been included.

The meeting was transferred from Committee Room 1 to the main Council Chamber in order to accommodate all the people attending. In concluding his presentation Max mentioned that a visiting official from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) had been excited by the unique combination of unaltered, if neglected, 18th, 19th and 20th century features of the Park. After several positive comments and queries about features which are already in a critical condition, the councillors agreed the proposed scheme in principle and authorised officers to prepare a detailed bid for the HLF. The bid will be put forward in the medium term planning process to obtain Leisure Committee's match funding contribution. After £150,000 from the Partnership & Development Fund, the bid requires £652,000 to be raised over four years from the Leisure Capital programme. The total of £802,000, will provide the local 25% of the overall estimated cost of £3,210,000 for the full restoration as presently proposed. To obtain approval for the 75% remainder funding from the HLF requires a two stage application process, in view of the large sum involved, and this will take some time.

The Committee also agreed to consider, as required, in the longer term, the Income Funding implications arising from a recommendation for alterations to the grounds maintenance specification. The changes are necessary in order to help ensure a higher quality of work complements the restored features and that the contractors responsible have the horticultural capabilities to achieve the desired standards.

We were pleased that the committee agreed these proposals. However, a desire to restore the Park as

continued in next column

Restoration Plan – continued from previous column

something for their grandchildren, will require councillors maintaining a sustained commitment over several years budgeting agreement sessions of the full council, when this project will be competing for funding against other pressing claims. The first such session will be in March but funding would first be required in the 2001 budget.

We hope to encourage present and successive councillors to see the scheme through to completion, and the foundation of a strong maintenance provision. They should envisage an exciting potential for the restored Valentines Park, not just as a beautiful heritage from the past or a haven for wildlife, but also where people will learn to relate to and understand and appreciate the natural world within the urban pressures of life.

Christine Fairfax

Letters:

We would really appreciate this opportunity to raise our profile among your members, clearly people who already have an interest in local history. To this end, I wonder if I might begin by highlighting a couple of points. Firstly, we are putting together a 1930's kitchen room set to form an important part of the Museum's displays, and are still on the look-out for a few items we would like to source locally, ideally. The main requirement is a 1930's kitchen cabinet with a drop down enamel work surface, preferably 'Hygena'. We also need a movable metal copper used for clothes washing. If anyone knows where we might track these down, I'd love to hear. Packaging from the period, in the form of packets, tins, bottles etc would also be most welcome. Secondly, please note that Museum staff are happy to give illustrated talks to local groups who would like to find out more about the Museum..

I noticed a letter from a young reader in your last newsletter asking about events for children in relation to the Park. You might like to know that the Museum have developed a family/ children's trail exploring features of the grounds around the house. We ran three sessions of these during the last Summer school holidays, which were very well-received, and plan to do so again next year. People on our mailing list receive details of all events in advance, and are therefore able to book early! Names and addresses can be posted, phoned, or e-mailed through to us:

Redbridge Museum Service, Central Library, Clements Road, Ilford IG1 1EA.. Tel: (020) 8478 9423

Laura.Williams@redbridge.gov.uk

Our Winter/Spring Programme

<u>EVENT</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>TIME</u>	<u>PLACE</u>
Bird Walk – to view Winter migrants and nest sites	5 th February	Saturday 10:30 -12:30 (approx)	Aviary near Old English Garden
Rose pruning and tidy Old English Garden *	26 th February	“ “	Old English Garden & Rose Garden
Bulb Walk – to view and photograph Spring bulbs	25 th March	“ “	Aviary near Old English Garden
Gardening – spread horse manure under roses *	29 th April	“ “	Old English Garden & Rose Garden
Bird Walk – to view Summer visitors & monitor nesting	27 th May	“ “	Aviary near Old English Garden

* Other work sessions will be arranged mid week and Sundays at shorter notice, those interested in helping should contact our secretary on (020) 8551 1563 for details.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

*We would be pleased to have your company
On Thursday 10th February 2000
from 7:45pm to 10pm at the Conference Room
in Kenneth More Theatre, Oakfield Road, Ilford.*

After the formalities and opportunity for members comments, our guest speaker will be Margaret Stewart, a Vice President of the Royal National Rose Society, who has been advising us regarding identification of the climbing roses in the Old Rose Garden. Her illustrated talk, entitled “The Rose Gardens of Paris”, will show the wonderful effects which may be achieved with climbing roses and provide us with inspiration for Valentines Park.

I would like to renew membership/join Valentines Park Conservationists.
I enclose a cheque for £5/£3 (concessions) made payable to Valentines Park Conservationists.

Name:

Address & Postcode:

Tel:

E-mail:

My particular interests are: Walks / Talks / Hands on work / History / Wildlife / Architecture /
Other (please specify):

I can offer help with: Gardening / Admin / Publicity/ Other (please specify):

Send to: VPC (Members)