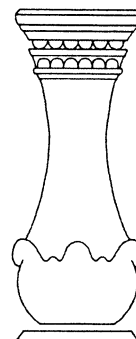


VALENTINES PARK CONSERVATIONISTS NEWSLETTER

Honorary Vice Presidents: Mike Gapes Ted Fawcett OBE



Issue no. 9 June 2001

Birdwatching in the park, 8 April 2001

Thanks to the VPC for once again inviting me to lead a Bird Walk around the park, this time letting the birds do the talking (well, singing). The weather was clear and bright, so the 8.30am start didn't seem quite so bad, and off we hopped, sparrow-like eyes and ears peeled.

We heard fine examples of great tit and blue tit song, greenfinches and chaffinches gave classic virtuoso performances, blackbirds fluted beautifully, 'Britain's favourite bird' - the robin - gloried in that honour, and an obliging green woodpecker called (or 'yaffled') right on cue; but the smallest bird of the day, the wren, sang loudest and longest. That this tiny ball of brown feathers could blast out a tune with such power without the aid of an amplifier surprised everyone.

The highlights of the day for me, though, were a pair of sparrowhawks in display flight high above our heads, and a split-second sighting of a swallow flying to its breeding ground. This was a park 'first' for me, bringing my Valentines 'bird list' up to 71 species, so thank you again, and thanks also to everyone who shared the walk with me.

Peter Hopkins

Valentines Mansion news

The Valentines Mansion Steering Group (VMSG) formally presented their Business Plan to members of the council on 28 March and 25 April 2001. The councillors then had the opportunity to raise queries in a question-and-answer session.

The VMSG expressed concern that any delays in the council's considerations and decision making could prejudice their opportunities for obtaining funding for the mansion's restoration. We are now very pleased that the following motion was agreed at a meeting of the full council on 17 May 2001, after many councillors were favourably impressed by attending the mansion's May Fair on 12 May:

'This Council welcomes the business plan for the Valentines Mansion, produced by the Valentines Mansion Steering Group (VMSG).

This Council believes that the business plan provides the basis for the best way forward for the future use of a restored building which will benefit all sections of the community.

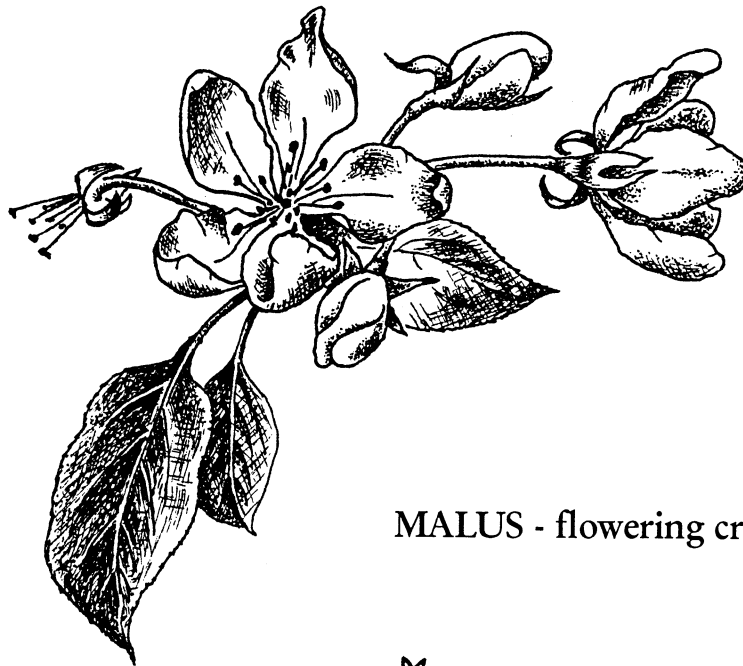
The Council recognises that the Stage 1 application for a Heritage Lottery Fund grant needs to be submitted by the Council in co-operation with the VMSG by November.

Cabinet is therefore instructed to proceed with the work necessary for this application to meet the November deadline, including a detailed appraisal of the business plan.

Council accepts the proposal in the business plan to grant a lease to a charitable trust to safeguard the future of the Mansion (in line with the decision of the former Corporate Resources Sub-Committee), but recognises that further decisions will be required to define the exact nature of the partnership between the trust and the Council in preparation for the Stage 2 bid.'

Christine Fairfax

Seen in the park ...



MALUS - flowering crab apple



by Margaret Elvin

‘The Park Today’

This is a new project designed to create a 'database' of all the things that can be seen or found in the park - from the smallest insect, up to the mansion and the canal and other lakes. A bit ambitious perhaps, but certainly do-able. Unlike our practical work, this is something for members who prefer the dust of libraries and archives to the dirt of flowerbeds and hoeing.

These is an ideal project for members who want to satisfy their curiosity about some aspect of, say, the park's history or wildlife, and see the results of their work made available to others. Examples might include researching 'The Men of the Trees', the planting of the Mayors' Walk, or listing the park's bird-life throughout the year.

If you would like more information about this project, please contact me on 020 8554 or at david.lane@

David Lane

Did you know ...

That the alternative name for the Rose Garden at Valentines is *The Rosery*, and not *Rosary*, as I and no doubt many others thought? Although both spellings are generally acceptable, the gardener and horticultural journalist William Earley, who was responsible for maintaining the Valentines Mansion gardens in the 1870s, always referred to the area as *The Rosery*.

As Mr Earley played such a large part in shaping the gardens that we see today, it seems a fitting tribute to conserve his spelling, along with what remains of his work in the park.

Ed.

(with thanks to Stephen Smith for much of this information)

EVENTS DIARY

The Big Dig

We had an excellent turn out for our AGM on 18 March, and during the business part of the meeting had time not only to reflect on our achievements of the past year, but also to discuss plans for our contribution to the restoration of the park.

One of our many achievements has been the successful application to the new Area Seven Committee for a grant towards the cost of replanting the east border of the mansion. Having commissioned a professional to redesign the bed in a Regency style, our major contribution will be to carry out soil preparation, and then to plant up the new scheme.

With this in mind we have planned a series of activity days in September, under the general heading of 'The Big Dig'. Our aim over four weekends is to double-dig the east bed, incorporating sufficient organic matter to get the plants off to a flying start. We hope to start the work off by inviting various celebrities to open the first spit, and aim to have the digging finished for the planting in October.

We need to organise the digging sessions particularly well in order to ensure a safe site and good quality of work. Please do sign up for a morning or afternoon if you can, for what will prove to be a big contribution to the restoration of the park.

Stephen Smith

Course at Valentines Mansion

Plans are now in hand for our chairman Stephen Smith to run a Royal Horticultural Society certificate course at the mansion, beginning this autumn. The sessions will be on Tuesdays, morning and afternoon. We will be providing more details later on, but in the meantime anyone interested in the course can contact Stephen on (020) 8554

Christine Fairfax

Sunday 17 June

Strawberries, Roses and Mysteries.

3.00-5.00pm, under the mulberry trees by the Aviary. A picnic with optional quiz and/or short guided walk around the mansion. Margaret Stewart, a vice president of the Royal National Rose Society, will also lead an informal tour of the Rose Garden. *Members and guests only.*

Saturday 30 June

Work in the Old English and/or Rose Gardens, 10.30-12.30. Meet OEG.

Sunday 15 July

A Picturesque Promenade: Guided walk by Stephen Smith. Meet 3.00pm by the Pavilion. The walk should last about 45 minutes.

Sunday 29 July

The Big Dig: Introductory session, 3.00-4.00pm, Valentines Mansion. Refreshments provided. Please see enclosed sheet for further details.

Saturday 8 & Sunday 9 September

The Big Dig. Bed preparation on the east side of the mansion, 10.30am-3.30pm, this and every weekend up to and including 29/30 September. Please bring your own tools and refreshments - see enclosed sheet for further details.

Sunday 21 October

Autumn birdwatching with Peter Hopkins.
Meet 8.30am by the Pavilion.

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