# The Friends of Holland Park Autumn 2013



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flp

The Mounted Police, formed in 1760, are the oldest part of the Metropolitan Police, but duties and training have changed enormously in 250 years. Finding the right temperament in a horse and then carrying out training for each individual animal is a rigorous process. Once ready for action, the horse needs to be capable of performing in many challenging situations, often with large crowds.

The story of the Met.'s mounted division is fascinating. They no longer have to deal with highwaymen but they do play an important role in managing football crowds.

Our speaker, Inspector Danny Butler of the Hammersmith Division, has experience in many

Thursday, 24 October, 7pm in the Orangery



Mounted police in the park

park.

aspects of what is involved in making sure these wonderful horses help to keep our borough safe. From training at Imber Court to deployment of the animals on active duty, Inspector Butler has plenty of tales to tell and is very happy to answer your questions. He has also worked as part of the Notting Hill team, so knows Holland Park well and confirms that both horses and police love their rides through our

Tickets, priced at £12 to include wine and Janice Miles' delicious canapés, may be obtained using the enclosed order form which is also downloadable from our website.

#### Ian Thomson

Ian Thomson, who died on 26 June, joined the Friends of Holland Park in 1983 and was elected a trustee in 1988. A year later he became secretary. His duties as such were mainly to take minutes of committee meetings but he did much more. He was essentially a practical man and was keen to use the resources that he controlled as manager of an upmarket block of flats for the benefit of the Friends. His cavernous basements were at our service for storage of boxes of literature which was much appreciated by the rest of the trustees who had only limited space. He also organised reliable craftsmen who had worked for him and who designed and built stands and screens which we still use annually for the Friends' art exhibition.

Ian's love of Holland Park was founded on his enthusiasm for its birds. He came to know us through his attendance at monthly bird walks led by experienced RSPB members who had been found by the Friends. When in 1992 the second of these moved out of London, Ian took over the leading. He was well qualified to do this having the sharpest of eyes to spot avian movement, and the ability to show others where it was. In 1992 he moved to Scotland to look after an elderly relative, and we thought sadly that we had lost him. Within a couple of months however the relative died and luckily Ian had not sold his London flat so was able to return to it. By then we had found another secretary but were delighted to welcome Ian back as Bird Walk Leader which he continued to be for over twenty years. He was allowed August off but otherwise hardly missed a walk in all that time. For two or three years we gave him a dozen bottles of wine at Christmas as a thank you but then he asked us to stop

as he did not want to be further rewarded for what he enjoyed doing. One of Ian's most endearing qualities was that, however long he had been leading the walks, his enjoyment of the birds of the park remained undiminished. In November last year, on the monthly walk, he was thrilled to spot a tree creeper, the first to be seen in the park for many years.

He was delighted to be able to share his pleasure with the group he was leading. One of our members, who had only previously known a wren from a farthing coin – the price of a gob stopper in his youth – was delighted to discover, when he came on one of Ian's early walks, that the bird was real, was plentiful in Holland Park and could be identified by its song even when invisible. That member became one of Ian's most regular followers.

Ian only resigned from leading three weeks before his death and even then gave us to think that it was because of his wife Helen's needs rather than his own. A whole generation of bird watchers are grateful to him for his commitment and the pleasure he brought us.

Rhoddy Wood

The cover photo of a vine (Vitis coignetiae) and a hybrid black poplar in the Wildlife Enclosure was taken by your editor on 27.10.2012





- The Friends donated £2,700 for seven picnic tables now located at the south-east corner of the sports ground, a site which allows visitors to view the Commonwealth Copse of interesting trees.
- We found a company that makes gates that are both robust and attractive and, jointly with the park's Ecology team, have briefed them to create a design for a pair of gates that will prevent unauthorised access to the Wildlife Enclosure. The bottom part of the gate will be panelled in oak, while the top will be inset with metal filigree work depicting birds, plants and small mammals – those regularly seen in the enclosure. Such beautiful gates will not be cheap, but this is a good use of The Friends' funds as they will be expertly crafted and should last for many years.
- The new Ecology Centre alongside the Adventure Playground is due to open on 19 September with appropriate features such as a compacted mud wall and larch cladding. It offers greatly improved facilities for teaching,



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www.jackson-stops.com 14 Portland Road Holland Park W11 4LA a reception area and open space to promote awareness and understanding of biodiversity. Toilets, accessible by all users of the playground, will be included – something the Friends have been asking for over several years.

- Investigations have re-opened into whether there is an affordable way of adding a sound baffle to the ceiling of the Holland Park café so that one can enjoy a cup of coffee and be able to hear what one's companions have to say.
- The Friends and the Borough have continued discussions with the developers of The Design Museum in the old Commonwealth Institute building. At some point our iconic 18th-century French iron gates at the Earls Court Road exit will disappear to be conserved, and the leaf detail that has broken off will be replaced. This expert work will be funded by an agreement between the park and the developers.
- After receiving many complaints, the park's management built a York-stone path across the North Lawn to cross the winter mire created by a previously undiscovered spring. You might have thought the gaps needed weeding but the little plants are in fact fragrant herbs which will grow to release their scent as people walk or wheel pushchairs over them.

Jennie Kettlewell, 28 August 2013

#### Holland House and the Opera

At the end of 2013 the Council will be lodging a planning application for the 2014 opera season's temporary structures around Holland House. You will remember that The Friends succeeded in reducing the time the canopy is in place to  $6\frac{1}{2}$ months from the 12, then 8, months applied for. Since that time, FHP has been in dialogue with the Council to explore both whether the 6<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> months can be reduced to our preferred 5 months, and also what options exist for reducing the impact of the opera's ancillary buildings. English Heritage is supporting the discussion in line with their published view on consideration for the setting of a Grade 1 listed building. We hope to update you before the planning application is lodged. The Friends are not against the opera itself but wish to see its impact on the park significantly reduced.



You might have noticed that over the years Holland Park, in common with the rest of the UK, has seen progressively fewer butterflies. So I was curious to know what Tim Freed could show us on this walk on 6 July, one of the ones sponsored by the Friends. In fact, Tim had worked hard to prepare for his audience. The previous night he had set up two moth traps which use mercury-vapour light to



Common White Wave

attract the moths which enter by a tunnel and then rest on egg trays. This meant that Tim had to return to the trap at 5.30am to make sure the blackbirds did not feast on the trapped moths. Tim put the more



Fan-foot

interesting ones into individual transparent tubes and released the rest or made sure they were out of reach of marauding birds.



Сотта



Maiden's Blush So when eleven adults and four children were led to the traps in the Oak Enclosure there was plenty to see. One by one, Tim passed the tubes around before naming the occupants and later releasing them. The children were delighted, and their enthusiasm spread to the adults so that we were all reaching eagerly for the next specimen. The great majority were micro moths; these are distinguished from the macros by size but there is no rigid dividing line and some families of micros include a few larger ones which become honorary micros. Tim explained that we had hit the right date for micros - they had emerged with the recent advent of warm weather but had not yet burnt up with too much heat.

A list of the ninety species seen (ten of which were new to Holland Park) will be sent to anyone who asks and sends an s.a.e. to Rhoddy Wood. Meanwhile here are the common names of some moths we saw: Common White Wave ('like a wedding dress' said a small girl), Brimstone Moth (not to be confused with the butterfly of the same name), Triple Brown Spot, Green Oak Tortrix, Blue-bordered Carpet, Foxglove Pug, Maiden's Blush and Fan-foot. Descriptive and a little poetic also.

Not many butterflies had been noticed while we examined the moths. A few Large Whites had flown by and pairs of Speckled Woods danced in shafts of sunlight. Tim explained this was not a mating display but a territorial conflict which follows the intrusion of a second insect into an area already occupied. Research has shown that it is always the first butterfly in residence which wins, and the second one flies off to try his luck elsewhere.



Green Oak Tortrix

After a mesmerizing hour and a half the children left and the remaining adults went off to the Arboretum on the other side of Acer Walk. Here the most



Blue-bordered Carpet

colourful butterfly was a Comma, and two more were seen in the Wildlife Reserve. These must have enjoyed the hot weather as more were observed four weeks later.



Speckled Wood

It is good to know that Holland Park still hosts moths and butterflies. *Rhoddy Wood* 



It has been estimated that 95% of wild-flower meadowland has been lost in this country, and many native wild flowers are in decline. The Borough's Ecology team are doing their bit to conserve meadowland, an important habitat for birds, small mammals and insects. The park has two long-standing woodland meadow areas, one in the Arboretum and the second in the Oak Enclosure – either side of Acer Walk. Over the years these areas had been left to form dense undergrowth, punctuated with self-seeded trees, that neither looked attractive nor did justice to the interesting tree species in the enclosures. At some point these woodland meadows were registered



Arboretum, Spring 2011

to the west of Acer Walk. Having learned from the first experience of pigs, it was recognised that more than three piglets were needed if the nettles, as well as the brambles, were to be adequately controlled, so six weaned piglets arrived and went about their task with relish.

Now we had wild flowers in both the Arboretum and Oak Enclosure, but nature does not stand still and, in spring 2013, the Ecology team had to decide on the best means of encouraging sustainability and more diverse meadow species by reducing the nettles that were reappearing. Wild flowers prefer nutrient-poor soil, while nettles like rich soil, so the long grass had

to be removed before it rotted down and enriched the ground. Options were considered and discussed. More

pigs? They had done their job of removing the roots and we now needed to control the tall growth. Sheep or goats? They crop too close to the ground to sustain green sward. Cattle? They feed by tearing at the long grass and nettles (they



Longhorn in the Arboretum

cannot bite as they only have front teeth on their lower jaw), effectively removing all the tall growth before it stifles the wild flowers' chance of success.

So, in July 2013, two Longhorn cows arrived with their autumn-born calves to graze, first in the Arboretum and then in the Oak Enclosure. Longhorns are a British native breed, known to be good general

grazers and, where other cattle might turn up their noses, the Longhorn digs in if encouraged. Another benefit is that they are suitably docile with people and would not get stressed by curious Holland Park visitors. Timing is important because they need to graze after the grasses and wild flowers have set and dispersed



Corn Marigold

seed, but before the grass has started to collapse back into the ground. The plan was for the Longhorns to be in the park for ten weeks, but a check at the end of

with the Rural Payments Agency, the implication being that the spaces must be conserved as meadows within DEFRA guidelines.

The first stage in returning the areas to meadow status

and nutrients with the relatively unusual trees

such as Zelkova, Scots

Pine, Golden Poplar, Kentucky Coffee Tree and

go and put all their energy

Pigs are excellent

'snoutivators' and like to dig up their

preferred snacks of

roots and earthworms,

while spurning wild-

flower bulbs which

might get chipped

but not terminally

damaged. They did



Corn Cockle

into creating an impenetrable prickly mesh that was never going to be hospitable to a meadow. The Ecology team could have sent in mechanical rotavators but chose the more ecologically sound solution of pigs, with a British Saddleback sow and her three piglets arriving in 2010 with a job to do in the Arboretum.



Pigs in the park 2010

their job, and we were rewarded with a healthy crop of wild flowers in the spring of 2011. Later that year, pigs were back in the park, this time in the Oak Enclosure



August showed they were fast workers and had already completed their task, so they returned to their farm home in Hertfordshire. The effect of the cows is easy to see. The long growth has gone and new green shoots are appearing in the Arboretum, the cows' first site on arrival. Removal of the year's top growth,

after the seeds have been

dispersed, will allow wild

flowers to flourish which,

in turn, attract pollinators

like bees and butterflies. We

Common Poppy

should also see an increase in the diversity of wild flowers.

Meadows need continuing management, so what can we expect to happen next? The Ecology team will assess the emerging vegetation to check the seed stock held in the soil before they make a decision. The areas might get some help by reseeding of woodland meadow grass and colourful wild flowers such as Corn Cockle (*Agrostemma githago*), Corn Chamomile (*Anthemis arvensis*), Cornflower (*Centaurea cyanus*), Corn Marigold (*Chrysanthemum segetum*) and the Common Poppy (*Papaver rhoeas*). As indicated by their

names, these species are commonly found in corn fields and appreciate the disturbance of annual ploughing. They will undoubtedly look pretty in our meadows but, without ground disturbance, they will need reseeding each year. The media tell us that there is a resurgence of interest in creating wildflower meadows, and we



Cornflower

should be pleased that the Borough's Ecology team is setting a good example in Holland Park.

Text and illustrations by Jennie Kettlewell

About half of Holland Park is covered by park, pavement & public property.

# We cover the rest.

HOLLAND PARK'S SPECIALIST AGENT 13 Addison Avenue, Holland Park, London W11 4QS Tel: 020 7602 2352 FAX: 020 7603 1217 EMAIL: enquiries@johnwilcox.co.uk www.johnwilcox.co.uk

#### Christmas Cards



This year's new card is painted by Catherine Masterman who last year produced the highly successful card showing the front of Holland House as seen when the opera buildings are not erected. Now we have a view of the Belvedere with the adjacent arches framing a distant view of the tower of Holland House.



The Belvedere and arches

If you send your order to 21 Kenton Court the minimum order is 10 cards, and we will deliver free within our newsletter hand-delivery area but have to charge postage of £1.40 per 10 cards beyond that. If you order from Mountbatten Cards directly, delivery is free to most West and Central London postcodes but is £5 if outside that area, or the order is for

less than £30. Overprinted cards must be ordered from Mountbatten. In either case envelopes are included, and there are discounts of 5% on 100 cards, 10% on 200 and 15% on 300. We hope that you will all nominate FHP as the recipient of the charity donation from Mountbatten of 25% of the profits but you are free to choose any charity.

#### Christmas Concert

Sunday, 8 December is definitely a date for your diary, as this is when we will again be welcoming the Tallis Chamber Choir and their musical director Philip Simms for their annual carol concert in the Orangery at 7.30pm. As always we advise early booking as the concert is usually sold out. Tickets are £17, to include wine and canapés, and these can be obtained using the enclosed order form, which is also downloadable from our website.

## Crab Apple Jelly

Once again we are wondering whether there will be a supply of crab apples this year. It has to be said that they have never failed to the extent that there could be no jelly, though last year did involve

determined searching. Your secretary will check her favourite trees in October and suggests that you ring 020 7602 0304 from 21 October to enquire about progress. It



should be noted that the talk on police horses is on the 24 October, and any jars not yet spoken for will be brought to this for sale.

We will also be selling

mixed packs of old designs, at a reduced price (£6 instead of £7.50 for 10) which are always popular. Typically these will contain one small card (98 x 152 mm) and nine large (152 x 197mm) in three different designs. Supplies are limited and you are advised to order early though there might be some extra with less variety. There is also a large choice of London views in the brochure and an even wider selection on the website (www.mbcards.co.uk).



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#### Urban Survival



Imagine being stranded deep in the wilderness for the night. What things would you need to do and find to survive the long hours before rescue? That was the challenge a group of 8-12 year-olds faced this summer in a special holiday activity session called 'Survival Day'.

The children were first challenged to search for clues using maps in the Holland Park wildlife area which served for the day as our pretend wilderness or a desert island. Through exploring the woods the children found a set of four survival quiz cards which asked the group to consider factors like how they would find food, water and shelter from the woods.

The importance of finding fresh drinking water was discussed, the best way we thought would be to filter and distil the pond water. Imaginative woodland menus were devised by the children with food items ranging from wild strawberries to roast waterfowl and potted squirrel. Ways of making a fire and catching animals were talked about but no actual trapping or tasting was allowed. The dangers of eating unknown and potentially poisonous berries or fungi like yew or deathcap was explained as well.

Splitting into teams of four or five the group then made shelters against trees out of branches, brush and fallen leaves. The shelter had to be big enough for all the team potentially to sleep in for their pretend night in the woods, and sturdy enough to protect the groups from the elements. Although focusing on survival, some groups added homely features like doorbells and even a chandelier. After all this construction the group headed back to have their lunch in the Ecology Centre. The final activity of the day was whittling. This traditional woodland craft involves using bush knives to carve wood into a variety of objects. After a safety talk the children made their own wooden tools to take home with them.



Building shelters

The session was great fun and, we hope, will help inspire the next Ray Mears or Bear Grylls. It was one of three special sessions for older children run over the summer. In another, called 'Guess Who', the children were animal detectives looking at the signs and clues that wildlife sometimes leave behind. Dissecting owl pellets and making animal footprint plaster casts were two of the activities covered in this session.

Our final session was a Mini-Bioblitz, and here the children were tasked with identifying as many plant and animal species in the wildlife area as possible. All the different habitats

including the pond were surveyed. A huge range of species from a mighty hybrid black poplar *[featured on the cover of this newsletter]* to a minute springtail were identified and recorded by the group.

We have just finished a busy summer programme of children's activities and hope to develop more sessions for older children in the near future. We

will also run our popular twohour holiday workshops for the younger children. Our next set of activities will be in the October half term and will take place in our brand new Ecology Centre located by the playground. If you know of any children who



Surveying the pond

might wish to attend please feel free to contact us. *[See 'Dates for your Diary' for contact details.]* 

Trevor Bowyer, Forest School Officer

#### Pimm's in the Park



On 10 July, under a cloudless sky and surrounded by lovely trees, flowers, and in the company of a white duck and a moorhen, we enjoyed our first dry Pimm's party for three years (dry as far as the weather was concerned). We were again in the garden of the youth hostel, by kind permission of manager Sally Martyn-Johns. Occasionally the music of Donizetti drifted across from an opera rehearsal to add atmosphere to the proceedings. We were



Pimm's in the youth hostel garden

delighted to welcome what must have been a record number of special guests: the Mayor, Charles Williams,

Councillors Tim Ahern, Deborah Collinson, Rock Feilding-Mellen, Warwick Lightfoot, Marie-Therese Rossi, as well as Barrie Maclaurin (Parks Manager), Inspector Mike Rumble (Parks Police), Ben Binnell (Quadron Manager) and Leanne Brisland (Ecology Centre Manager). Once again the Friends' trustees had been busy in the hostel kitchen preparing the Pimm's, and Jackie's ample canapés

must have filled with regret those who were going on to dinner.

#### Moorhens and Mallards 2013

We had an unusually high number of juvenile moorhens that stayed over the winter, but most had gone by the end of March when our first resident pair nested on Kyoto. Something unfortunately made them desert their nest



after about a month but they tried again and in mid-July three chicks appeared. At the time of writing they were still there as fairly mature juveniles. The Lord Holland's Pond pair produced a brood of six in the last week in May which was a welcome change from their usual late start and delayed parenthood. These too were present and nearly mature by the beginning of September. A second nest was built at the beginning of June but seemed to be barely used. On Wildlife possibly eight chicks hatched about mid-May of which six survived to near-maturity at the time of writing. An adult pair (possibly 'stayers' from last year) have been on and around the Iris Garden Pond but it is uncertain whether they produced any young.

Adult mallards were present as early as the beginning of March and as usual the drakes outnumbered the ducks. Adult numbers dwindled but eight ducklings appeared on Wildlife on 1 June, moving next day to Lord Holland's Pond by which time there was one duckling fewer. These seven matured and had left by the last week in August. At the beginning of July six freshly-hatched ducklings appeared on the Iris Garden Pond. After a few days they were down to four, and by the middle of the month had moved to Kyoto, to be reduced to three a few days later where fortunately these grew to maturity.

Michael Martyn-Johns tells me that the YHA moorhens have not done well this year. The reason seems to be that the resident fat duck (which some readers might remember from two years ago on Kyoto) gave them unwanted attention when they nested (twice) in pots rather than on their usual island site. In neither case were any chicks hatched but on a third occasion three chicks hatched of which one has survived.

No two years are the same but this one can be counted overall as reasonably successful.



All FHP events in the diary are printed in **bold**. The Friends are determined that our Bird and Nature Walks (BNW) will continue although, sadly, Ian Thomson is no longer with us. While we look for a permanent leader with the requisite skills and commitment, the walks will be led by varying regulars. We will have strolls through the park looking at birds, plants, butterflies and park management of current interest. There is no charge and all are welcome without booking. Meet at Lord Holland's statue at 9am on the first Saturday of each month. No dogs, please, as even well behaved ones on leads disturb the wildlife. We recommend you bring binoculars if you can.

Events organised by the Ecology Service of RBK&C are listed as 'ES', some of which are sponsored by FHP where indicated. Unless otherwise stated the meeting place is outside the Ecology Centre in the stable yard. Some must be booked, in which case please call 020 7938 8186 or e-mail ecology.centre@rbkc.gov.uk. There is a charge for those marked £.

The Holland Park Conservation Volunteers sessions are on every third Saturday of the month. For more information call 020 8762 0322 or visit www.groundwork.org.uk/london

Sat 5 Oct	BNW	
Sat 5 Oct	ES. Nature photography creative skills workshop. Must book. £	10am-4pm
Sat 12 Oct	ES. Autumn Wildlife Area Open Day. Drop in at wildlife area	12-4pm
Sat 19 Oct	Autumn Tree Walk with Alan Harrington. Stable yard	11am-1pm
Thurs 24 Oct	Metropolitan Police Horses (see p.3), in the Orangery, £12	7pm
Sat 26 Oct	ES. Fungi foray (sponsored). Must book	2pm
28 Oct-1 Nov	ES. Half-term holiday activities for children. Must book. £	
Sat 2 Nov	BNW	
Sat 7 Dec	BNW	
Sun 8 Dec	Christmas Concert: Tallis Chamber Choir (see p.8), in the Orangery, £17	7.30pm

#### Your Committee

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