



*The Friends of Holland Park*  
*Autumn 2016*



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## Christmas Concert

Sunday, 4 December, at 7.30pm in the Orangery

We are coming up to that time again when we need to book seats for the most popular Friends event of the year, the carol concert: an evening of outstandingly performed carols from various countries, and readings to make us ponder or laugh, rounded off with wine and delicious canapés. Tickets, at £20, can be ordered on the enclosed order form, which can also be downloaded from our website.

## The Birds of Holland Park



Thursday, 27 October 2016, at 7pm in the Orangery

There is still time to book for our autumn talk on birds given by ornithologist David Darrell-Lambert, Chairman of the London Natural History Society's Ornithological Section, and familiar with Holland Park, having carried out bird surveys and led walks there. He is a great teller of bird tales, and will also be showing us some of his lovely photos. Tickets are £15, to include wine and Janice Miles' scrumptious canapés. To order these, please use the enclosed order form, which can also be downloaded from our website.

## Enjoying Nature in Holland Park

For those of us who live in its neighbourhood, and for others too who visit, Holland Park is a defining presence. A small park by the standards of London, it embodies a unique blend of formal and



*Goldfinch*

informal garden, and woodland.

Its founders and subsequent managers have enriched it with trees and shrubs from around the world, but its woodland and wooded meadows retain the essence of the English countryside.



*Blackbird with a worm*

Retained also is the wildlife that goes with such a diverse habitat, and it is a real pleasure for visitors to follow the park's seasons, and experience its sights and sounds. As part of the Ecology Programme, The Friends of Holland Park organise and lead morning forays for people interested in birds, and nature generally, on the first Saturday of every month. The Friends also sponsor special events in the Ecology Programme: tree walks, early-morning appreciation of a spring bird dawn chorus, bat walks, lectures on various aspects of botany and ecology. The Ecology team also runs a very active education programme that



*Sparrowhawk*

makes valuable use of the quite exceptional Ecology Centre, in giving urban-based children an authentic experience of nature.

During the monthly Nature Walks, which include visits to the enclosed wildlife area, there are chances of seeing some of the



*Green woodpecker carving a new hole*

60-plus bird species recorded in the park. The photographs of a few of these, taken in the park, provide a foretaste of the possibilities. On these walks, The Friends of Holland Park discuss the birds as well as the park's botany, and can update you on plans for developments within the park and its surroundings.

*Text and photos: Tasso Leventis*





*Design Museum shop*

## Design Museum

The museum shop is now open for business and the museum itself will be fully open for visitors from 24 November. After many years of building and development, we will at last be able to enjoy the benefits of our new neighbour. In the last newsletter we said we hoped that visitor enthusiasm would not put undue pressure on the south of the park and its fragile grass. We remain concerned but have been offered the chance for discussion on this subject with directors of the museum.

## Hostel

Some of you may have noticed on the RBK&C Planning website that the owners of the Safestay hostel lodged an application for a full alcohol and entertainment licence. After much debate the application was withdrawn.

## New Police in Parks team

Inspector Mike Rumble reports that the Parks Police team have been joined by three new Sergeants. Rob Spry served with the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) for 30 years, latterly as Inspector at the Wandsworth Custody Suite. Robin Gallacher returns to the Parks Police after service as a Detective Sergeant in the

MPS, having last served in Holland Park in the 1990s. Robin will job-share with Helen Tilbury who has been promoted to Sergeant after almost 20 years with the unit. We look forward to meeting them as they work to keep the park safe.

## Signage

At last the new signage is being installed in the park. After much debate, your trustees are pleased that the choice was elegant, grey finger posts, as you see in the photo. If you already know your way about the park, you hardly notice them. If you are looking for direction, they are easy to find and follow – as already observed in the park. The information boards will be installed shortly, near to entrances, in equally elegant style.



*New signpost in the park*



**Mural conservation**

Visitors to the park often stop to look in appreciation at Mao Wen Biao’s impressive mural along the arcade to the south of the Iris Garden. The painting has stood up well to inclement weather and curious fingers, but not without a little help. Every few years Mao checks over the surface of the paintwork, cleans and touches up where necessary and then applies a new protective coating. At the end of August he could be found working away, and commented that the hot, sunny weather was ideal, as paint dried quickly. We are grateful to Mao for the wonderfully evocative painting and for his care of it.



*Mural in the arcade*

**Mini recycling centre**

For many years there has been a mini recycling centre inside the Abbotsbury Road car park entrance to Holland Park. Bins are provided for specific types of recycling. Local misunderstandings mean large, non-recyclable items (mattresses, furniture, etc.) are often dumped beside the bins and have to be cleared away by busy Quadron staff. When challenged politely, people often say something like ‘I thought this was a council place for dumping unwanted items and I’ve been using it as such for many years.’ Please note: *these bins are for recyclable items only.*

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We often get questions about the pigs and cows that arrive in the Arboretum and Oak Enclosure meadows some years. This year there will be no grazing animals. This is because there is little grass but a great many nettles. Nettles are great for pollinators, but animals do not much appreciate them as food. Predominance of nettles occurs when soil nutrient levels are high (all those cow pats!) and the solution is that the growth will be manually cut and removed rather than grazed. Next year the situation will be re-assessed and, who knows, we might have pigs, cows or sheep.



*Wildlife Area gates with pond behind*

Work will start on renovation of the Wildlife Area pond at the end of September. You might have noticed that the water has looked a little murky for a while and the only permanent remedy is to drain and completely re-line the pond: a sizeable

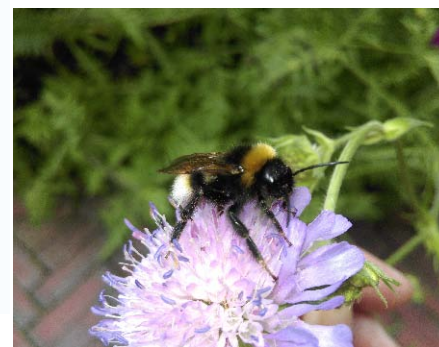
task. We understand that water, wildlife and plants will be transferred, for the duration of the works, to the raised concrete ponds in the Oak Enclosure.

Once the pond is pristine once again, the new Wildlife Area gates can be installed. They have been commissioned and paid for by The Friends, working with Ecology, Park Management and the Parks Police. More on the gates in the winter issue.

## Ten Fascinating Facts about Bumblebees

1. Bumblebees evolved from bees originating in the Himalayas.
2. They can cope with extremely cold temperatures when hibernating because they have glycerol in their blood to stop it freezing.
3. They have the biggest muscle on their back proportionate to any other animal. This means they can vibrate rapidly in order to raise their temperature by up to 15°C.
4. Both honey bees and bumblebees are social. Honey bees live mainly in farmed colonies of up to 50,000 workers, while wild bumblebee colonies have up to 400 workers.
5. Bumblebees live an annual life cycle. Most die at the end of the year, with only the queens surviving through the winter by hibernating underground, to start new colonies in the spring.
6. They hibernate on north-facing slopes. South slopes get the early sun which might tempt the bees out too early and before the air is warm enough.
7. A bumblebee can only fly for 40 minutes on a 'full tank' of pollen and nectar before it runs out of 'fuel' and has to re-load.

8. Bumblebees have five eyes: two big compound eyes to see their surroundings, and three small eyes on the top of the head to sense light.



*Gypsy cuckoo bee*

9. When you look at a bumblebee close up it will react to the smell of your breath. It will probably fly straight at your face and twice round your head to work out what you are, before flying off to leave you in peace.
10. Bumblebees are the only insect in the UK that can pollinate tomatoes.

These, and many more fascinating facts, were explained by Allan Watson from the Bumblebee Conservation Trust when he gave a talk, sponsored by The Friends, in Holland Park's Ecology Centre on 21 July. [www.bumblebeeconservation.org](http://www.bumblebeeconservation.org)

*Jennie Kettlewell  
Photo by Helen Dickinson, Bumblebee Conservation Trust*

The Friends were glad to sponsor another fungi foray led, on 24 October 2015, by Dr Mark Spencer of the Natural History Museum. It was a dull and dampish day but too little rain had fallen earlier to produce any great variety of fungi. Luckily Dr Spencer has the gift of making every foray different and interesting.

Why are fungi important to wildlife? Their fruiting bodies, the bits we see, provide food for beetles and insects that in turn support mammals and birds and so support biodiversity. More widely recognised is their ability to break down dead substances and thus recycle nutrients. Did you realise there are about 3,000 larger species in the UK, and some of them are very specialised? There is one group that break down the lignum in wood, leaving the cellulose as a stringy substance, and another group that break down the cellulose leaving the lignum in squarish blocks. Most fungi live off dead material but even those that attack living organisms have their virtues: the dreaded honey fungus attacks mostly stressed trees, and in a forest leads to clearings that allow for natural regeneration. Fungi hold territory like many animals and will initiate chemical warfare if they come up against a rival.



*Rhodotus palmatus* (Wrinkled peach)

No one should think they are an expert in identification after a single foray to the extent of deciding which are edible or poisonous, but here are some methods that might be useful. Smell: pleasant smells like

almond or aniseed are probably good while chemical, TCP, ammonia, stale-cabbage or rotten smells are probably bad. Taste: it is surprisingly safe, with a specimen that you know approximately, to chew a small piece, provided it is then spat out.

Do the spores escape through pores or from between gills? If gills, are they free (not attached to the shank) or attached at right angles or decurrent, running down the shanks for varying lengths? Texture might be hard, firm, rubbery, or jelly-like. (The bright white marshmallow-like objects found on a previous Nature Walk were probably slime moulds, not fungi.) The shanks might be tough or brittle and easily splitting. Bruising might show red or yellow. Ink caps are so called because, as they break down, they ooze a black liquid that is attractive to flies and so aids dispersion of the spores.

Groups of fruiting bodies usually belong to one organism. If they are in a straight line it is called trooping and might well be following a tree root. A fairy ring occurs when one spore lands



*Amanita muscaria* (Magic mushroom or Fly agaric)

and, not knowing in which direction there might be food, sends out mycorrhiza in long thin threads to search in all directions. When enough food has accumulated, fruiting bodies are sent up simultaneously in a circle, but by then the inner circle of soil has been exhausted, so the mycorrhiza continue outwards. The whole circle is one plant, and an estimate of its age can be made by measuring the diameter. Some are thought to be 3,000 years old.

Of the species we saw, which were the most memorable? For this writer they were three: a single shabby 'Magic mushroom', not native to this country but naturalised. It will make you unpleasantly ill as well as giving you a high. A Wrinkled peach, *Rhodotus palmatus*, which both looks and smells like a peach. We only found one tiny one but often Holland Park has many big ones and can be one of the best sites in London for this. A *Tapinella*, five inches across, asymmetric like an oyster mushroom and with long decurrent gills. This is a new record for Holland Park and is only known from three other sites in London. Long may Holland Park continue to harbour such natural treasures.

*Rhoddy Wood*



*Psilocybe semilanceata* (Magic mushroom)

*The next Fungi Foray: 5 November (see Dates for your Diary).*



*This piece is very largely based on a newspaper article by Barbara Denny in the Kensington News and Post of 11 July 1980. She wrote it after having heard Mrs Ilma Westwood (née Collins) give a talk to The Friends of Holland Park in Kensington Town Hall.*

On 6 July 1939 a grand ball was held at Holland House: its last. The hundreds of guests included King Georg VI and Queen Elizabeth, Queen Ena of Spain (the youngest granddaughter of Queen Victoria), Prince Frederick of Prussia, the Maharajah of Jaipur, American ambassador Joe Kennedy, Noël Coward and Deborah Mitford (later Duchess of Devonshire). It was the debutante ball for the Hon. Rosalind Cubitt, later to be the Hon. Rosalind Maud Shand and mother of Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall. So many cars delivered their guests that it took them each an hour from the High Street up the drive to the house. It rained all evening so that the floodlit terraces and formal gardens had to be viewed through the Swannery ballroom windows. All the chandeliers were lit with candles, so the ballroom must have been unpleasantly warm.

From the age of 14 to 16 Ilma Collins was employed as sixth housemaid at Holland House, until the outbreak of the Second World War. A baize door strictly divided the house from the



*Ilma with the butler, in the grounds of Holland House*

servants' quarters, so she did not lay eyes on her employers, the Earl and Countess of Ilchester, until the ball of July 1939.

'We saw the Earl lead the Queen on to the Swannery floor, with the King leading the Countess. There were flowers everywhere, the house was floodlit outside, and a band was playing in the Orangery. The smell of jasmine filled the air. The scene was unforgettable; the house was restored to all its former glory, just for one last night. As young as I was, I felt a great sadness as I watched, but I wanted to imprint upon my mind this particular night with Holland House all lit up and dressed up for the occasion, which turned out to be its last fling.' She loved the house. 'To walk through its doors was not to walk into a stuffy stately atmosphere; you were in a warm welcoming home, full of light and laughter; even the apricot-coloured brickwork was warmer than the crisp cold greys of most of the houses around.'

On her first day, aged barely 14, her father brought her to meet the housekeeper. 'I fell in love with Holland House at first sight. We went to the tradesmen's entrance in Melbury Walk and walked up the little drive to be let in at the kitchen entrance by the odd-job man. We were shown into the housekeeper's room, and a very tall gaunt figure came to meet us: Mrs Cowan. She was dressed in a long black frock, and had grey hair with not a strand out



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of place. It was a cosy room, with a copper kettle singing on the hob, an open fire and a small range for cooking. All the living rooms for staff were in the semi-basement. They were bare but cosy, with plenty of light.’ She was told that she would earn 7/6d a week with full board and lodging, that she would have one half day off a week and another half day on alternate Sundays, two weeks holiday in the summer ‘with 15 shillings board wages as a bonus’. She was given two uniforms: one for mornings and one for afternoons.

Mrs Cowan had to see the Countess every morning to learn which family members and guests were staying, and to sort out the menus. Over elevenses she, the butler and the cook would then have their meeting to plan the day. The full staff were in residence during the season only. When the family were staying in their country home, Melbury House in Dorset (at Easter and Christmas, for instance), the only staff left in Kensington were the housekeeper, the housemaids, two odd-job men, the gardeners and the chauffeur – the men living in the lodge cottages and the coach house so that Ilma rarely encountered them. The butler, his six footmen, the cook, the nanny, scullery maids, ladies’ maids and valet were needed in the country. ‘Just as important as the visiting guests were the ladies’ maids and valets they brought with them. If you could please their servants, the house had a good name, so we lesser mortals were sent to give their rooms an extra polish and make sure there was no dust around, not a crease in their pillow slips and no finger-marks on the brass. The nurseries were on the second floor; we were only allowed to clean the corridors there. Nanny ruled the second floor over the nursery maids and the nursery footman. All the food was sent straight up there from the kitchen by a lift called the dumb waiter, and all the serving and washing up was kept separate in a lovely little kitchen in their domain; the laundering and ironing of the children’s clothes was done there as well. None of us would dare venture there when Nanny was around. It was like a secret society. When the word went round that Nanny had taken the children out, we housemaids could then nip up and clean the corridors and the staff bathroom before she was due back.’

Ilma had to get up at 6 o’clock every morning (7 o’clock on Sundays). ‘My first job was to light the housemaids’ room fire, then tidy and dust the rooms. Then I’d collect a copper kettle filled with hot water and a cup of tea placed outside the kitchens – no one was allowed ever to enter the kitchens. I would pelt up the wooden spiral staircase to the second floor and tiptoe past the nurseries to Mrs Cowan’s bedroom. I’d knock and enter, empty the used water from the washbasin into the matching rose-garlanded pail, give the basin a quick wipe over and put the copper kettle in it, arranging a towel over it to keep it warm. I would then tell Mrs Cowan it was 6.30 a.m. and it was a lovely morning and all was well.’ Then the housemaids were allowed a cup of tea, but breakfast (porridge, bread, butter and marmalade)

would not be until 9 a.m. by which time the fires on the ground floor had to be dealt with. The houseman and the footman lifted the heavy wooden logs, and it was also the men who polished the wooden floors with bees’ wax. ‘The rooms on the ground floor had lovely big carpets with beautiful shining mellow wood surrounds. The furniture was also very lovely, dating from both the Stuart and Tudor periods, all very ornate. It was never cleaned with anything but beeswax and turps and a lot of elbow grease. When we were very busy during the season we would just use a leather and some vinegar to take off the dust, not that there was much: we lived in the middle of a country park, and there was no passing traffic. There was some very old central heating around the floorboards by the outside walls, but the



*Ilma (centre) with friends  
on the roof of Holland House, summer 1939*

house was surprisingly warm really, considering its size.’ At the back of the house were four wooden spiral staircases that had to be scrubbed with hot water containing soda crystals, and green soap. Having no rubber gloves in those days meant that the maids’ hands suffered.

After breakfast Ilma would help clean the staff quarters while the senior housemaids cleaned the family’s bedrooms. The latter all had their own bathrooms, but the most modern was that of the Earl’s second son, the Hon. John Fox Strangways; Ilma once got a glimpse of its ‘all cream fitted carpet – quite unheard of in the rest of Holland House’. This son had a habit of coming home late having forgotten his key so that he had to throw stones at the butler’s window.



As well as cleaning the housekeeper's room, Ilma's work often took her to the library and small inner library. 'The inner library had paintings standing on easels, looking as though the artists had left them just a week or so ago. The window glass was etched with the signatures of famous visitors.' The Gilt Room impressed her so much that she maintained that none of the stately rooms she had later visited in Austria and Bavaria could match it, with its magnificent chandeliers, shining floor and beautiful delicate porcelain. 'There was a huge mirror screen, so that light was reflected at every turn. They say there was blood on the priest hole by the fireplace, and yes – a ghost.'

Ilma's lunch was in the servants' hall, and the seating order was kept strictly according to seniority. There were also rules about where the staff ate: the juniors in the servants' hall, the kitchen staff in a separate room, and the butler, housekeeper and head cook in the steward's room, these three going as far as dressing for dinner each evening. In the afternoons all the linen had to be sorted, and checked for repairs. At 4 p.m. there was a cup of tea after which the staff were free until 6 p.m. when hot water had again to be carried up to the rooms. After the servants' meal at 7 p.m. the grates had to be cleaned again and, once the family were at dinner, fresh water had to be taken up to the bedrooms and all the washbasins emptied. 'We would then turn the beds down and put slippers and nightdresses ready and, with a final tidy-up of the fires, come down to the servants' hall where we could listen to the wireless until 9.30 p.m. Then the final hot-water kettles had to be taken up, and hot-water bottles in the winter. The bedrooms had cream wooden shutters but these were hardly ever closed as the rooms were not overlooked. By

10.30 we were more than ready for bed, but Mrs Cowan was very fair, and if we worked hard she would reward us with time off on slacker days. But we always had to be back at 10 p.m. sharp from our afternoons off.'

Life was not all drudgery by any means: the junior servants got up to pranks together – boys and girls alike: 'It was like a great big happy family, really, below stairs, although the older ones kept a stern eye on the young ones.' Ilma remembered seeing *King Kong* at the recently built Kensington Kinema, as the Odeon in the High Street was then called; and there was a seat reserved for Holland House at the Queen's Hall, so Ilma was able to go to a Prom occasionally.

The gardeners were extremely busy weeding, mowing, planting, and they provided the house with a constant supply of vegetables, herbs and flowers. 'When the family was in residence the great staircase was a picture to behold.'

A few weeks after the final royal ball at Holland House, war was declared. A barrage balloon and its crew had just arrived in the grounds; the crew and the Earl joined the staff in the butler's pantry to listen to the declaration of war on the wireless. By then most of the family and staff had left for the country, and the Earl had arranged for the peacocks to be sent on soon 'to preserve the line'. Ilma had spoken with the Earl for the first time a short while before, when everything was being packed up. Ilma had had to go to the Miniature Room to give the Earl a hand. The latter wished her good morning and asked her name. She gave it, feeling terribly over-awed by the tall, quiet gentleman. Minutes later he asked her how much money she had in her purse. When she replied, 'Seven and sixpence, Sir', he astonished her by saying, 'Ilma, would you believe it if I told you it's more than I have? No, Ilma, you have money but I have nothing but heirlooms.'

Ilma left service at Holland House a few days into the war. The staff who were leaving marked the occasion with a dressing-up party, and Ilma was photographed along with two friends on the roof of the house. Two years later she was serving in the ATS. After Holland House was bombed in September 1940 she saw a picture in a newspaper of the Earl looking at his library in ruins. 'I felt so sad for him as he loved his library dearly. I can remember seeing him take some books from library shelves, using the iron spiral stairs, and then sit with them at one of the desks, as so many of his ancestors would have done.'

Joy Puritz

Family photos kindly provided by Ilma's daughter, Barbara Sweet



*The bombed library*



Thank you for taking the opportunity to have your say when the landscape design options were open to public consultation during July. We await the formal report on your responses, but our impression from members' feedback to trustees is that the plan for the approach road attracted little major criticism once it had been explained, and neither did the design for the surfacing of the terrace. Specific points were mentioned for both, and we hope that those are included in the report.

We heard little comment about the ramp access, other than, 'if that's the only place that is feasible, then let's make it look a little "softer" '. There was, however, concern about the apparent removal of trees on the green space above the ramp. While it would be nice to glimpse a view of the East Wing of Holland House from the road, that is all it needs to be: a glimpse between the trees.

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## Crab Apple Jelly



*Crab apples*

Let us hope that the rain of June and the heat of August will have led to the mellow fruitfulness of September. Rhoddy will be carrying out her usual search of park and hedgerows for bitter wild green crabs which metamorphose into tangy red jelly.

Do ring 020 7602 0304 to check on her progress and place your orders.

The real problem was the design shown for the café, and it was thought by many to be a retrograde step. The comment we heard most often was that the design shown made the café look sterile, and that it had lost its Holland Park character. A further concern was that the open frontage would allow dogs to run in from the dogs-off-lead area, and children to run out onto the road.

The landscape architects, Camlin Lonsdale, have to date listened carefully to feedback, and shown a willingness to work with stakeholders to find a solution fitting for the park. We look forward to further discussions and anticipate that we will find a way around the issues that will work for current and future café-users. Stakeholders need to feel that they can be supportive of the plans that are put forward for planning consent later in the year.

*Jennie Kettlewell*

## Pimm's in the Park



*Pimm's in the marquee*

On the cloudless evening of 18 July at least three score and ten of the Friends and their guests enjoyed a 'Pimm's in the Park with a View' this year, thanks to the generosity of Michael Volpe, General Director of Opera Holland Park. He allowed FHP to use the marquee overlooking the Dutch Garden on an opera-free day. It even had a covered balcony so that one could be indoors or out, come rain or shine. Councillors and Council officers were well represented among the guests, and Council Leader Nick Paget-Brown, having been held up at a long committee meeting, arrived in time to make a short speech after FHP Chairman, Jennie Kettlewell, had publicly thanked Mr Volpe.



*Pimm's in the marquee*



This year Clare Weatherill has produced another of her popular designs now showing Holland House from the beginning of the Acer Walk with the hellebores seasonally in leaf. It is winter, so the house is not obscured by the opera tents. We will hold a ready supply of these in both the standard 152mm x 197mm format at £9.50 the pack of ten, and the small 118mm x 168mm at £7.50. We will also make up mixed packs of old designs of Holland Park at £6.50, which will include eight big and two small in at least five different designs, and no more than two of each design. These can all be very quickly delivered: the mixed packs from the date of you reading this and the new ones from early November. If your newsletter



*Holland House from Acer Walk, by Clare Weatherill*

is hand delivered (no stamp) our delivery is free, but beyond that we have to charge an additional £1.50 per 10 cards. There are a number of other designs illustrated in the enclosed catalogue and on the website [www.mbcards.co.uk](http://www.mbcards.co.uk). We appreciate it if you also order these through us as we get

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## Earls Court Walk



*Jennie Kettlewell*

*West of the walk by the museum*

In autumn 2015 the grass on the East side of the Earls Court Walk was re-seeded with tough, shade-tolerant grass. It struggles with heavy foot fall but has stayed green and can be judged a success. Now it is the turn of the grass on the West side to be hydro-seeded. In preparation the trees will be lightly crown-thinned to let through more light and give the new grass a chance. We have asked that two 'notable' trees in the area (single-leaved ash and pagoda tree) are exempt from crown-thinning so that the tree lovers amongst us can still reach the leaves to study and appreciate.

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Many of you have commented on how fine the Earls Court gates look now that they have been beautifully restored and are back in place. They do indeed look splendid.

The 3rd Lord Holland had the gates brought over from Belgium in 1836. The arrangement of the gate panels is 18th-century French, and the whole would appear to be a pair of fine French 18th-century gates, acquired in poor condition in the 19th century, restored and extended in the early 20th century, and equipped for their present position with new overthrow and railings to match.

The few leaves that remained before this recent restoration probably formed part of the original gates, as do the basic iron sections. The copper leaves, the baron's coronet and the adjacent railings, belong to the 20th century.

At the start of the current century, the gates were again in a sorry state. Leaves and other bits had fallen off, but fortunately some of these had been picked up, stored and eventually taken off site for safekeeping, in 1999. The Friends knew that the bits were being held by Topp & Co., and they pushed for repair of

the gates, but the high cost delayed action – until this year. Funding was eventually made available through the 106 Agreement with the Commonwealth Institute developers.



Topp & Co.

*Topp & Co. cleaning a gate*

On 6 January 2016, Topp & Co., who are experts in bespoke architectural metalwork, carefully detached the gates and took them to their workshop in a large hangar on a disused airfield in North Yorkshire. That was where the painstaking task of restoration began. For the next six months skilled craftsmen worked on what they describe as a giant jigsaw, with several buckets of retrieved items, mostly leaves and scrolls, to fit together. They used their original condition-survey images from 1999, and historical records, to restore the gates as closely as possible to the state they were in when originally installed in Holland Park.

The restoration work involved completely stripping the paint, then carefully removing all the leaves so that the framework could be thoroughly cleaned and made rust free, before assessing the work needed to make the frame sound. Any heavily corroded or missing scrollwork was restored or replaced using genuine wrought iron, hammer and anvil. The leaves were



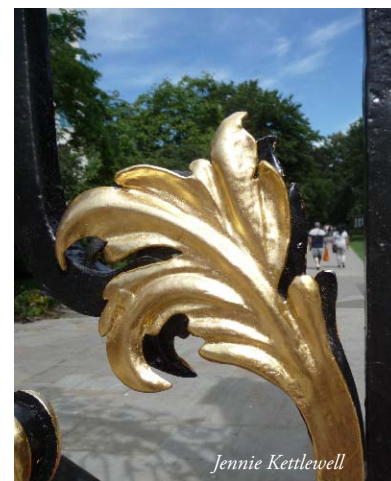
Joy Puritz

*The restored Earls Court gates*

individually assessed and repaired when possible. Missing leaves were replaced in copper, using traditional skills. After final reassembly the gates were painted and then gilded using 780 sheets of 23½ carat gold.

The gates were delivered back to the park and fitted in place on 14 July, with the people from Topp & Co. who re-installed the gates, looking justifiably proud of their work. Our iconic gates look very elegant: the gold gleams and the full intricate design is once again on show. Being practical, the Parks Police were able to satisfy themselves that the old keys still work.

Now the surrounding brickwork will receive some much needed repair work, so that the entire entrance will look elegant by the time the Design Museum opens in November this year.



Jennie Kettlewell

*Detail of a gate*

*Jennie Kettlewell and Rhoddy Wood*





## Your Committee

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**President** Sir Angus Stirling

**Chairman and Acting Treasurer** Jennie Kettlewell

**Secretary** Rhoddy Wood

**Assistant Treasurer** Simon Lindesay-Bethune

**Events Organiser** Graham Franklin

**Editor and Minutes Secretary** Joy Puritz

**Park Observer** Andy Walker

**Art Exhibition** Sandra French

**Website** Nicholas Hopkins

**Publicity** Nigel Brockmann

**[www.thefriendsofhollandpark.org](http://www.thefriendsofhollandpark.org)**

*The Friends of Holland Park is registered as a charity, No. 281348*

### OUR ADVERTISERS

That we are able to produce this quarterly newsletter for members is in no small measure thanks to the continued support of our advertisers. We are most grateful to them all and would ask you to show your thanks by supporting them, please.



All FHP events in the diary are printed in bold. The Friends' Nature Walks (NW, formerly BNW) are continuing to be led by varying regulars while we look for a new permanent leader with the requisite skills and commitment. We will have a one-and-a-half-hour stroll 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 outside the café 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 in the Ecology Centre near the Adventure Playground. Some must be booked, in which case please call 020 7938 8186 or e-mail [ecology.centre@rbkc.gov.uk](mailto:ecology.centre@rbkc.gov.uk). There is a charge for those marked £.

Sat 1 Oct	<b>NW</b>	
Sat 8 Oct	ES. Celebration of Science. Open Day. Drop in at Wildlife Area	12 noon-4pm
Sat 15 Oct	<b>Autumn tree walk.</b> Dr Alan Harrington. Meet in Stable Yard	11am-1pm
Sat 22 Oct	ES. Apple Pressing Open Day. Drop in at the Ecology Centre	11am-4pm
Mon 24 - Fri 28 Oct	ES. Half-term holiday children's activities. Must book. £	
Thurs 27 Oct	<b>The Birds of Holland Park</b> , in the Orangery, £15 ( <i>see p.3</i> )	7pm
Fri 28 Oct	ES. Children's Night Safari. Must book. £	4.30-6pm
Sat 5 Nov	<b>NW</b>	
Sat 5 Nov	ES. Fungi Foray (Sponsored). Must book	2-4pm
Sat 3 Dec	<b>NW</b>	
Sat 4 Dec	<b>Christmas Concert:</b> Tallis Chamber Choir in the Orangery, £20 ( <i>see p.3</i> )	7.30pm



*The cover photo was taken by your editor on Acer Walk last November*



**The Carter Jonas team were absolutely fantastic with our recent house sale. We were extremely well looked after and they made the entire experience stress free and we soon realised we were in very good and trustworthy hands.**

**Holland Park & Notting Hill**  
020 7371 1111  
hollandpark@carterjonas.co.uk

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