

# Valentines Park Conservationists

Hon. Vice Presidents: Ted Fawcett, OBE; Mike Gapes, MP



## DIARY

**Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> May:** Bird Walk.  
Meet 10:30am, Aviary.

**Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> June:**  
'Strawberries & Roses', 2-4pm  
Mansion Rose Garden.

**SUNDAY 30<sup>th</sup> July:** Tree Walk.  
Meet 2:30pm, Aviary.

**Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> August:** Work  
Mansion Rose Garden and Old  
English Garden, 10:30am

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## GUEST EDITORIAL

Getting up on Saturday mornings has never been one of my strengths and I admit I'm feeling jealous because I'm missing all the progress at Valentines. It is superb that a new group has made such an impact on the park and its supporters already. My contribution has been more behind the scenes helping with some paper-based projects, but imagining the park as I write and enjoying learning a little about history and parks. VPC has captured many people's imaginations and there is much to be involved in and much to reward the volunteer.

Colin Newman

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## AGM 2000

Our AGM was held at the Kenneth More Theatre on Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> February. The formalities of electing the committee and adopting the

constitution were soon dealt with.

Next followed an address by **Mike Gapes MP**, one of our Vice Presidents. Mike commented that voluntary organisations often tended to lose momentum, yet *Valentines Park Conservationists* is going from strength to strength. He added that 58 million lottery tickets are sold in his Ilford South constituency each year compared to the national average of 36 million. We felt that this should spur us on in seeking lottery grants to restore the park and the Mansion, receiving some return for this outlay!

Mike's attendance was greatly appreciated: we know how much in demand he is. He came "hot foot" from 'The House' to be with us.

The main event of the evening was our rose expert **Margaret Stewart's** slide presentation, *Rose Gardens of Paris*. The audience very much enjoyed the excellent presentation and enlightening commentary.

Finally, we raffled a specially commissioned watercolour of a park scene by local artist **Ken Forrest**. Our Hon. Secretary **Christine Fairfax** was our lucky winner. (No fix - honest!).

Our thanks to Ken and all who contributed and attended this

enjoyable and successful evening.

Rita Coleman

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## THE ROSARY (Mansion Rose Garden)

Anyone taking a walk through *The Rosary* (near the Mansion) should notice the recent improvements. We have removed the thicket of dead from most of the climbing roses, shortened over-extended, unstable old wood and tied in some of the new growth. On 29<sup>th</sup> April an energetic team dug over and weeded the compacted soil, fertilised each rose and mulched with heavy horse manure. We hope the roses will show renewed vigour as we monitor them this summer.

Last summer we found that some of the roses, notably the magnificent *Phyllis Bide* (on the haha) bloomed continuously from May to November. Others carried repeat flushes, while a few "older" types, such as the beautiful white (unknown) multiflora type, merely bloomed in June-July.

We hope that Margaret Stewart (see AGM report above) will help us again this year and that we will identify some more varieties.

In addition to the scheduled Saturday morning work, some of us have been forming ad hoc work-parties on Sundays or weekdays. In December we planted *City of Oxford* tulips (surplus bulbs kindly donated by Redbridge Council) in the centre

of the Rose Garden. The vibrant red shade, with golden centres, made a brilliant focal point for the normally rather bare spring Rose Garden.

This work is a preliminary to the restoration, when supports and wires will be removed, old roses re-trained and necessary removals and replanting done.

**If you are interested in the Rosary, please volunteer to help with pruning, rose-watching, photography, note-taking and other activities.**

Please join us on Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> June for our *Rose Appreciation Strawberry Picnic*. Strawberries and cream and cold drinks will be provided, but please bring anything else you may need.

Christine Fairfax

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## BIRDS

On 27<sup>th</sup> May we will view the various nest-boxes that we placed in *The Wilderness* and *American Gardens* last winter, and also see the many woodland and waterfowl species nesting around the park. Recently, **Peter Hopkins** has been showing us where to look to see various species feeding: it is amazing how much more can be seen under expert guidance. I am looking forward to seeing whether the Great Crested and Little Grebes are still there.

**Please join us, bringing binoculars if you can.**

Christine Fairfax

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## AVE ATQUE VALE

Thanks are due to Paul Coleman, James Edgoose and Ujitha de Zoysa for their hard work in our important first year. **Margaret Elvin** has helpfully taken on the job of Membership Secretary, and **Jill Faul** is our new Treasurer. **Paul Coleman**, our former Treasurer remains on the committee. We still need someone, though, to edit the newsletter: Ujitha can provide a template, if needed, so the job really amounts to a bit of typing.

Stephen Smith

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## TALE OF A TREE

It all started earlier this year with Geoffrey Smith saying in his column in *Garden News* magazine, that he had never come across a "bundle tree". A friend had raised the topic with him and he was appealing to his readers for information.

Knowing that there was an excellent specimen in Wanstead Park, and having talked to Stephen Smith, we replied to Geoffrey with details of Humphry Repton's early 19<sup>th</sup> Century planting of the "Bundle" or "Picturesque" tree in Reservoir Wood. Eight to ten saplings were planted together in a hole and fused together as they

grew, forming the giant specimen we see today.

In due time, Geoffrey Smith replied, thanking us for our information and we thought that was the end of the matter.

We have since then received, a letter from Lord Harewood, saying that he was the instigator of the search for Repton's "Bundle" trees, as he is trying to identify similar trees on his estate in Yorkshire. He asked Geoffrey Smith, who passed our letter on to him!

We hope to pass on more information to Lord Harewood - if anyone happens to have a photo of the Wanstead Park tree, we'd be pleased to know.

John & Janet Plimmer

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## SUBS

Many thanks to all those who have paid their subs for 2000. A few, however, are still outstanding. Please send your cheque ("Valentines Park Conservationists") for £5 (£3 concessions) to our new Membership Secretary very soon.

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## CONTACTS

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