



**DULWICH
PARK
FRIENDS**



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Autumn 2016

Dear Member,

Dig the Park - Saturday 5th November from 10am-1pm: 16,000 bluebell bulbs - we need your help!

Please come and join the next Dig the Park initiative on 5th November, when we will be planting native bluebells in the American Garden, amongst the rhododendrons.

There are 16,000 bulbs to plant, so all hands are needed on deck! Little ones under supervision are welcome.

You may have noticed the considerable amount of clearance that has taken place in this area, the result of a series of team efforts over the last year or two (including corporate community support, jobseekers and the Friends). Bluebells should provide a stunning addition to this space, in advance of the rhododendrons themselves coming in to bloom.



Some members may be aware of concerns that natives are under threat from foreign migrants - nothing to do with a particular perspective on Brexit, but English Heritage is highlighting cross-pollination of native bluebells with hybrids from abroad, especially Spain. That is why our Head Gardener, Gerry Kelsey, has chosen *Hyacinthoides non-scripta* (typically found in woodlands) as the native species to be planted.

This is exactly what English Heritage is encouraging people to do, countrywide. If you'd like to read more about cross-pollination, and find out how 'on trend' we are at the Friends, see: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-37674872>

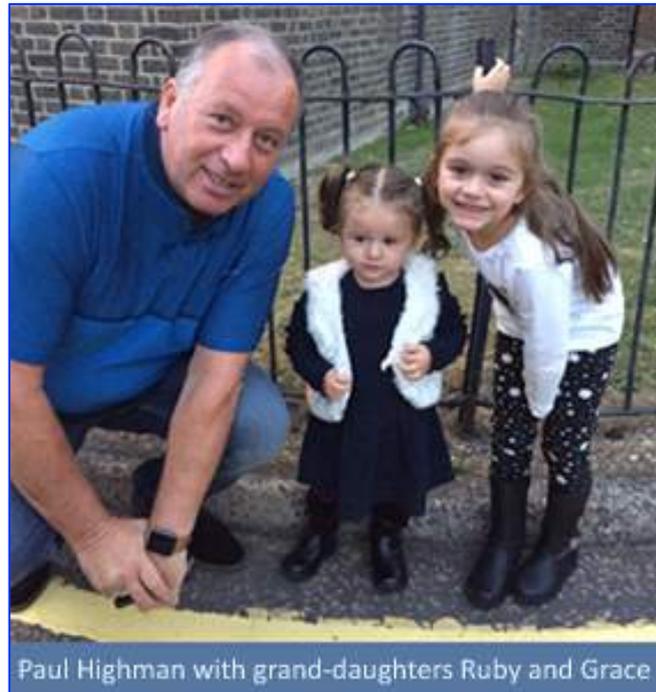
We will meet at the café at 10am, or join us in the American Garden later. Please wear stout shoes and gardening gloves if you have them – we have a few spares.

All change at the top – park manager Paul Highman leaves after thirty-four years’ service to Southwark Council

Paul Highman is well known to many of you. His connection with Southwark parks has endured for thirty-four years – and, with our park, for almost ten years as manager.

The Friends have enjoyed a hugely positive working relationship with Paul. Sadly for all of us, he has taken voluntary redundancy, as Southwark Council ‘restructure’ their parks’ management.

Those of us who love Dulwich Park owe a huge debt to Paul, as is apparent from the story he tells in a **special supplement** at the end of this newsletter.



Paul Highman with grand-daughters Ruby and Grace

We must also mention the annual Dulwich Park Fair, which simply would not have happened without Paul’s energy and commitment. We are making him an honorary life member of the Friends. He promises to return from time to time to help with ‘Dig the Park’ and generally support our efforts. We all wish him happiness and fulfilment in the next phase of his life.

Will Walpole, who also has responsibility for Peckham Rye Park, succeeds Paul as manager. Will is well acquainted with members of the Friends’ committee (he used to work in Dulwich Park) and we have already begun developing what we are confident will be a fruitful relationship.

The Friends’ response to the ‘Future of Parks’ Select Committee Inquiry

As previously trailed, there is an inquiry into public parks to examine the impact of reduced local authority budgets on parks and open spaces and consider concerns that their existence is under threat. Dulwich Park Friends made a formal submission, a copy of which is separately appended to the email sending this newsletter.

Pavilion Café – a fond farewell to Tarka and Domani, as new operator begins 1st November

After fifteen years running the Pavilion Café, sisters Tarka and Domani are leaving their park business to concentrate on *Otter*, the bistro café they opened in West Norwood last year (definitely worth a visit – see more info here: <https://www.zomato.com/london/otter-bistro-west-norwood>).

As Tarka puts it:

“After 15 years at Pavilion Café, Domani and I are going to find it very strange not to be there any more. We will certainly miss it.

We are going to miss all the lovely people that have made it so great over our 15 years. We started out in an unloved and outdated café and turned it into, not only a thriving community café but hopefully a welcoming environment for everyone. That was our aim and we hope we came close to achieving that. Thank you in particular to Dulwich Park Friends who over the years have kindly supported our endeavours and efforts through thick and thin. It suddenly feels like no time at all.

We’re looking forward to saying goodbye and thank you on the 30th October.”



The new proprietors are the Colicci family, who already have an established catering business operating in parks – their website is here: <http://colicci.co.uk>

Rob Colicci writes:

“We are absolutely delighted to have been selected by Southwark Council as the successful tenderer to operate the Dulwich Park Cafe. The park is beautiful, friendly & very welcoming and we aim to translate this in to our plans for the cafe giving it a 'home from home' feeling to 'families' in the broadest sense.

We are a family business and have been operating park cafes and kiosks for over 20 years. We take our role within our respective communities very seriously, and are very proud to have established great relationships with our customers and clients alike.

Our plans for Dulwich Cafe are to revamp the internal space, allowing for a more artisanal approach to food and creating a well-rounded customer experience through menu, style and design. We take over the facility on 1st November and will run the cafe as normal until circa Jan/Feb when we plan on undergoing our full refurbishment. We forecast the cafe to be shut for around 6-8 weeks for build works, however, will ensure all our customers can still grab coffees, cakes, sandwiches and bacon rolls from a mobile unit that will be placed outside the cafe for the duration of the build.

We're a very approachable company and would welcome any feedback and suggestions, so please feel free to email me directly on <mailto:rob@colicci.co.uk>.

Will keep you updated on progress.”

Our local MP joins Dulwich parkrun

Having first run Dulwich parkrun on 1st October of this year - international parkrun day (being the twelfth anniversary of the inaugural parkrun in Bushey Park) - our local MP Helen Hayes returned for more on 15th and 22nd October (see pic, right). ‘parkrun’ is like that – once bitten, forever smitten. It’s a run, not a race – you can walk it if you want! All are cheered in at the finish. You can sign up – once only needed – here: <https://www.parkrun.org.uk>



Cleaner, Greener Safer – applications invited: any ideas?

Southwark Council is inviting applications for their ‘Cleaner, Greener Safer’ programme. If you have any ideas for improvements within the park that might be appropriate for one of these grants, do let us know – more information here: http://www.southwark.gov.uk/info/200256/cleaner_greener_safer - applications have to be submitted by 31st October.

The Friends will be applying for:

- a cradle nest swing for the playground which can be used by disabled and able-bodied children
- funds for Dig the Park initiatives (for plants, bulbs etc.)
- three ‘shared route’ signs to encourage cyclists to respect the 5mph speed limit in the park.

Tree walk in Dulwich Park – 29th October 11am-1.30pm

The South London Botanical Institute has organised a guided tree walk in Dulwich Park on 29th October, starting at 11am by the Court Lane gate. Tickets can be booked here:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/tree-walk-dulwich-park-tickets-27755209579>

Rosebery Lodge – meeting rooms for hire

A reminder that Rosebery Lodge is now in active use, with two smart meeting rooms available for hire at a modest £5/hr. Contact Diana McInnes on 020 8693 6313 or email membership@dulwichsociety.com.

If you would like more details about any of the items in this newsletter, or have issues about the park you would like to raise, please call Emily Montague on 07800 765338.

Dulwich Park Friends



Early blooms in the wildflower meadow by village copse

Paul Highman's story

I started working for London Borough of Southwark in July 1982. My first job was as apprentice gardener based at Belair Park. After a couple of months I was hooked on gardening and learning as much as possible about the subject.

I stayed at Belair park for roughly 7 years and in this time I had been going to college to learn as much as I could, but to also better my career with Southwark Council. During this time I progressed through the ranks from apprentice gardener to a head gardener. Not content with just staying within that field, I also trained to be a head groundsman, a park keeper as well as an instructor on tractor-mounted machinery.

From there I took on the role as charge-hand onto Foreman in a very short time. Unfortunately this was short lived due to restructures and huge cut backs.

In 1988, I transferred to being a mobile warden based out of Spa Road depot where I worked within the Dulwich operational area. Wardens were soon replaced by Rangers. I was placed within Dulwich Park as a Park ranger and it was from here that my love and passion for Dulwich Park began. As a ranger my main duties included litter collection to locking unlocking the park, enforcement and organising and running events.

In 1990 I was fortunate enough to have the opportunity to jointly manage a project that would change a main part of an area in Dulwich Park, which was called the sensory garden located next to the cafe. I worked closely with Rosie Thornton, the previous Dulwich Park manager, where we were given an opportunity to put a plan and design together to present to Thames water and Southwark's Parks manager.

This was at a time when there was a lot of pressure on companies, including councils, to become more sustainable and to look at reducing the amount of water usage. With this in mind Rosie and I put a brief and a design together, to build the first drought tolerant garden to be built in a public park. We presented this firstly to Thames water who were very supportive of the idea and awarded us £5K, which was then match funded by Southwark's parks manager. We then presented this to the Dulwich Park Friends who were also very supportive of the plans.

We worked with the Friends and local schools to build the garden and I can honestly say it was one of my proudest moments on the opening day of the garden, which was transformed from a run down area to a demonstration garden area for all to use and see - and emerge into what is now a wonderful place to sit and reflect on one's thoughts for the day. After this project lots more followed on with the great help and support of the Friends.

In 2000 I applied for a Senior rangers post located at Dulwich Park, unfortunately I was unsuccessful for this post and it was awarded to Rosie Thornton who went on to become the Dulwich Park Manager. It was not all bad news for me, I was awarded a Senior ranger post which was located at Southwark Park. It was at this Park I went on to learn more about the history of Southwark's Parks. I was very interested in the heritage of the parks and especially Southwark Park, which was Southwark's oldest, opened in 1869 along with Finsbury Park. I was very fortunate to again have a very supportive 'friends of' group.

From meeting with the friends it became apparent that they wanted to make big improvements to the park and try to bring back some of its heritage planting schemes - well, that was my cue to bring my love of gardening back into use. I started to plan and design carpet-bedding designs for the park which were once an every year occurrence during Victorian times.

In 2001 I was involved in putting a bid into the Heritage Lottery Fund. Southwark Park was awarded £2.9 million to refurbish the Park, which included a replica bandstand, recreation of the oval cricket ground, increase of the lake back to its original size, new pathways, lighting, wildlife garden. I really really enjoyed being the manager and being part of these major changes.

In 2001, I applied for a Green Flag for Southwark Park; this was the first time any of Southwark's parks had entered in for this award. I was so proud we were awarded Southwark's first ever Green Flag; since that day I wanted to become a Green Flag judge. I went off to be trained and in 2002 became a qualified Judge and since then Southwark has gone on to being awarded 25 green flags, a remarkable achievement and I'm proud to have been part of that.

In 2007 I was given the opportunity to manage Southwark Park and Dulwich Park due to staff restructures, it soon became apparent that Dulwich Park required more than just a temporary manager and 5 months later I was asked to take over as Full time manager.

I have really enjoyed managing Dulwich and being able to implement many changes and introduce many new features throughout the Park. It has been an absolute pleasure to work closely with the Friends, who commit their time for the benefit of the park and the park users. I would like to say a huge big thank you to you all, for making it not only a pleasure to work with you all but also for making my role so much easier.

Just a few changes that have happened at Dulwich I have helped to introduce include: the very successful vegetable garden at Rosebery Lodge which is all down to the continued and excellent volunteers that manage the area, Whippersnappers moving into College Lodge, London probationary service involvement, Bluebird boats, new planted areas, landscape improvements, bulb areas and wildflower meadows.

I have also had the pleasure of being party to some awards for Southwark and Dulwich Park: Bali award, Britain in Bloom, Dulwich in Bloom, Green Flag awards, and a special mention in the Queen Mother's birthday awards for environmental improvements.

I would also like to add none of this would have been possible without the support of the Friends, parks services, my team - which includes Robert Roach, Ciro Delucia, and the excellent gardening team. A huge big thank you to you all.

Some controversial and challenges past, present and future: flood works project, the barrier, car parking enforcement, changing times ahead.

The hardest decision for me came in 2016 when for the right reasons for myself I decided it was time for me to hang up my manager's cap after 34 years of service to Southwark's Parks, and take voluntary redundancy. After a lot of debate and talking with my family and friends, I took the decision to leave.

What now? Well, after leaving at the end of September, I have decided to take some well deserved rest, I have been travelling to Dubai, New York in November, plenty of time with my family and friends including my grand children, Ruby and Grace, watching Northampton Saints rugby and loads of golf. I have also started to judge some of Britain's best beaches for Blue Flag.

I know I will probably crave working in the landscaping and environment, so watch this space, I'm sure our paths will cross again at some point. I hope I will be back to judge Dulwich for Green Flag in the not so distant future. Until then I wanted to say a thank you to you all, and to Dulwich Park for

being a huge part of my life, who would have thought at the age of 10 coming to Dulwich Park during my school holiday, that I would some day go on to manage such a wonderful open space?

Paul Highman

22nd October 2016