

# FRIENDS OF BATTERSEA PARK REVIEW

Issue 130  
Spring 2025



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# Review

Spring 2025

Editor Frances Radcliffe  
Production Lydia Jones



[friendsofbatterseapark.org](http://friendsofbatterseapark.org)

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There are significant changes ahead which will inevitably be unwelcome to Enable Leisure and Culture who have managed Battersea Park and other open spaces in Wandsworth for many years. The Council has decided, as of course it has every right to do, to take back strategic responsibility for biodiversity, management of the ground maintenance and arboriculture contacts, all tree officers and strategic management of sports and leisure. This involves transferring 14 staff from Enable to the Council. In addition, the Enable contract has been renewed for three years (with an option for two further years) rather than the five years that might have been expected. In a separate exercise, the ground maintenance contract currently held by Continental Landscapes has been transferred to Krinkels UK. How much difference all this will make to the care and management of Battersea Park is an open question. Many of those involved will be the exact same people who were previously working for Enable or Continental Landscapes. Nevertheless, these changes make it particularly important for the Friends, collectively and individually, to champion the best possible management of the Park. If you see something that isn't right, please raise it with the Council, Enable or the Friends.

Two Trustees, Peta May Law and Inge Darling, who have run the barbecue so brilliantly, are stepping down at this year's AGM. We are in need of more Trustees.

Please would all Friends consider whether they might be able to take on this role or whether they have a talented friend who has some spare time and who would be able to make a contribution to our wonderful Park. As a first step, simply email [secretary@friendsofbatterseapark.org](mailto:secretary@friendsofbatterseapark.org)

This is an appeal to Friends, particularly those of you living within easy reach of the Park, to put yourself forward as a Trustee. As well as a love of and interest in the Park, you need to have energy and enthusiasm and a willingness to be involved in the various activities we undertake, or help behind the scenes with administration or publicity.

On page 17, you will find the last of Annabel Stein's unique restaurant reviews. Never a dull word! Annabel's first review was in 2011, when she wrote about San Gennaro, The Mason's Arms and Holy Cow. Since then she has eaten, at her own or the golfer's expense, in 110 establishments. Friends have much enjoyed Annabel's sparky reviews. She has persuaded her elder daughter Jessica to write an article for this summer's issue which is excellent news, but we need someone to take over Annabel's role. Are you that person? Please get in touch at [hello@friendsofbatterseapark.org](mailto:hello@friendsofbatterseapark.org) if you could take on Annabel's mantle on a regular, or even irregular, basis. Meanwhile, many thanks go to Annabel.

The next Friends event is our Spring Lunchtime Lecture by Alex Laird on herbs, spices and their uses in cookery and medicine, see page 18 for details.

Enjoy the Park!

**Cover Image:** Lakeside view on 17 February 2025 photographed by Angela Roden

### Friends' Contacts

**Enquiries:** Secretary  
FoBP  
1 Vicarage Crescent,  
SW11 3LP  
[info@friendsofbatterseapark.org](mailto:info@friendsofbatterseapark.org)

**Letters:** Editor, Friends' Review  
12 Primrose Mansions,  
Prince of Wales Drive  
London SW11 4ED

**Review:** [hello@friendsofbatterseapark.org](mailto:hello@friendsofbatterseapark.org)

**Advertising:** 07771 520113

**Membership:** [membership@friendsofbatterseapark.org](mailto:membership@friendsofbatterseapark.org)

**X / Twitter:** @batterseapark

### Park Contacts

**Park Office:** Staff Yard  
Battersea Park  
SW11 4NJ  
020 3959 0076  
[parks@enablelc.org](mailto:parks@enablelc.org)

**Park Events:** [enablelc.org](http://enablelc.org)  
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### Parks Police

[parkspolice@wandsworth.gov.uk](mailto:parkspolice@wandsworth.gov.uk)

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## Enable Contract

As noted in the last issue of Review, Wandsworth Council has proposed significant changes to its contract with Enable Leisure and Culture which expires on 31 March 2025 with provision to extend for up to a further five years at the Council's discretion.

At its meeting in September 2024, the Council's Executive approved the recommendations of its Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee that 10 staff be transferred from Enable to the Council from 1 April 2025. The Council would take over from Enable the strategic management of biodiversity policy (1 post); management of the ground maintenance contract (2 posts); management of the arboriculture contract (6 posts) and strategic management of sport and leisure (1 post). There would be further work to develop an extension proposal to be considered by the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee in November.

The Executive agreed with its Environment Committee on 9 December that one further biodiversity officer and three sports development officers will be transferred to the Council on 1 April and that there will be a three year contract extension until 31 March 2028 at an improved concession value to the Council with the provision to extend for up to two further years at the Council's discretion.

The justification given for these changes is that they 'strengthen the Council's strategic control of these service areas and more clearly define the division between operational and strategic responsibilities between Enable and the Council'.

Friends and Management Advisory Committees for open spaces in Wandsworth remain unconvinced

that these changes are necessary.

For more information provided at the Greenspaces Meeting in January, see page 10.

## Parkrun

See Sara Milne's article on page 14.

## Cascades and Sculptures

Progress has been slow.

The first meeting of the Cascades Project Steering Group is on 28 February, too late for a report in this issue. Martin Graham is representing the Friends.

Enable, the Council and the Friends all agree that Henry Moore's Three Standing Figures and Eric Kennington's War Memorial should be cleaned this year. Possible contractors have been identified but the logistics are proving slow to arrange. There is also an agreed outstanding need to put Barbara Hepworth's Single Form (Memorial) on a plinth.

## Swans

Exciting news! The swans are nesting. Please do not disturb them.

After last year's failed attempt by our new female, hopes are high that there will be a successful hatch of cygnets this year.

## Russell Page Garden Yews and Borders

In November, Grant Orchard from Sussex Topiary and Hedges spent two days trimming the topiary yews in the Russell Page Garden. The cost was £825, funded by the Friends. It is always a delight to see recently trimmed topiary, especially on a frosty morning.

The lower borders on the north side, where roses were failing, have been replanted with a wide range of herbaceous and other plants. Thanks go to Sara Milne and Peta May Law for



inspiring this initiative and working with Enable on the planting plan. When it is possible to see how these plants fare in what are undoubtedly difficult growing conditions, the aim is then to begin work on the south side.

## Winter Garden

Dan Pearson's annual visit took place on 9 January. It is now some 15 years since his original design was implemented. The Winter Garden was looking particularly good and lush. Various additional plants were recommended. Most were due to arrive on 26 February but the Friends and Thrive have already put in five



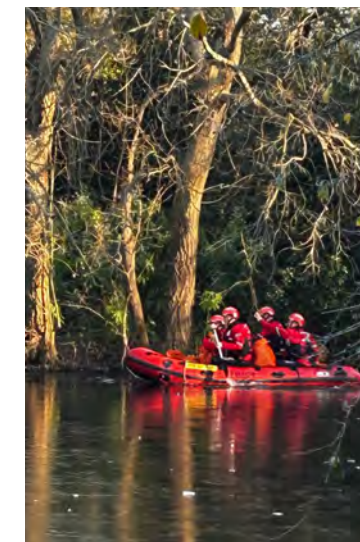
daphne and five quince, the latter planted by Thrive on a glorious sunny day, see photo. The Friends will as usual pay for all the new plants for the Winter Garden.

Some temporary fencing will be installed soon to protect the borders where they are being worn away.

A small group of Friends are in the Winter Garden every Wednesday morning at 10am, mostly weeding. It's fun and therapeutic! More volunteers are urgently needed. Tools will be provided; just bring a pair of gardening gloves. Everyone welcome! If you can, email [fhradcliffe@gmail.com](mailto:fhradcliffe@gmail.com) so that we know to expect you.

## New Hybrid Strawberry Tree

On 5 December, the new hybrid strawberry tree purchased by the Friends with a generous donation of £655 from Brian Shipman and his fellow students was planted on the west side of East Carriage Drive, just south of the Pear Tree Café. The tree was planted to celebrate and commemorate the 50th anniversary of the graduation of the students of the BA Town Planning Course at the London South Bank Polytechnic. The course was initially based at the Chesterton Annex on Battersea Park Road.



This was a happy event with everyone in good spirits and very pleased that Paramount Plants had substituted a more substantial, high quality tree for the one originally ordered.

The arrival of a new hybrid strawberry tree is fortunate because the existing tree on the north side of the Lake is badly damaged and has a hollow trunk. It cannot last much longer.

## Winter Drama

A colourful reminder that winter will soon be over: firemen were called to rescue a dog that had gone onto the ice on the Lake on 14 January. The dog escaped by itself but they successfully rescued its owner who had followed it.

## London Borough of Culture Opening Event

This event for up to 3,000 people will take place on Saturday 26 April from 1pm – 7pm in the area between and east of the Vista Steps and the Fountains Pool. It will be the first major public event for Wandsworth's London Borough of Culture 2025 programme, inviting local communities to come together to celebrate dance, music and movement, from ballet to folk, jazz to salsa and more. The layout will include a main performance stage, interactive dance workshop tents and a silent disco area.

There will be a range of food and drink stalls in the pleasure garden area next to the fountains. Enable say that 'festivities will culminate in a breathtaking finale, featuring up to 200 talented local performers from across the borough, with a group participation moment where the entire audience will be invited to join in'.

Set up will begin on Tuesday 22 April. Take down should be completed on Monday 28 April. Parkrun will go ahead as usual on Saturday morning.



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Sara Milne **(Horticulture)**  
Briony Newman **(Social Media)**  
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Annabel Stein **(Membership)**



between Formula E and Wandsworth Council to an early end. There were races in 2015 and 2016 but not in subsequent years.

**Battersea Cascades – a reflection on cutting-edge technology**

Tim Webb, Director of London Parks and Gardens has recently written a thought provoking article about the Cascades and cutting-edge technology in the last paper copy of the organisation’s magazine. (Should we move on in the same way to digital copies only?). He points out that Victorian Londoners must have been amazed at seeing such an enormous green space full of ‘exotic succulents, water cascades and lakes’. Even a service building like the Pump House was designed to look impressive. It housed the steam engine used to pump water for the Cascades: water pouring over artificial rocks into the Lake designed by James Pulham II. The Cascades dried up when coal was diverted for the war effort. Tim’s point is that while ‘Victorian London thrived on the industrial revolution, it is the digital tech revolution that

is now spearheading quiet change in our parks and gardens’.

The plan is for the Cascades to be powered by clean energy, Pulhamite rock recipes are being digitally analysed so that the cracked rocks can be restored, and there are other digital mapping solutions.

Tim notes that this year, Chelsea Flower Show will have an AI powered garden which, through sensors e.g. buried in the soil or attached to plants, will be able to tell those looking after it that it needs watering or cutting back.

London Parks and Gardens has also had presentations from tech companies using legitimate anonymous movement data from mobile phones which can identify the age of those visiting parks, where they are going and how long they are staying: all useful information which may help to manage parks and gardens in future.

**STOP PRESS** – On 22 February, the start of Parkrun was moved from the Bandstand to the Boules Area on West Carriage Drive.



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**Jamie Jackson – Editor’s note**

Please see Sophie Campbell’s obituary on page 16 and this further photograph of Jamie with a terrier (not Irish) which captures his charm so well. If you are feeling a bit down and in need of inspiration, you will always be pleased that you visited Jamie’s website [jamesjacksonbooks.com](http://jamesjacksonbooks.com) and spent seven minutes watching the short documentary which includes Jamie walking in the Park and describing with hilarity an incident in a supermarket.

Jamie’s Daily Mail article on his father is also well worth reading [dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1287844/He-hunted-tigers-got-Goering-drunk-gave-son-hug](http://dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1287844/He-hunted-tigers-got-Goering-drunk-gave-son-hug)

Jamie will be remembered too for the pivotal role that he played in bringing the five year contract



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# Tall Conifers in Battersea Park

Brian Livingstone and Clive Freedman

Battersea Park hosts over 20 species of conifer, including seven species of Pine. Among the tallest conifers are the Dawn Redwood (*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*<sup>1</sup>) and the Bald Cypress or Swamp Cypress (*Taxodium distichum*<sup>2</sup>), which we will discuss in this article. We also have specimens of the Coast Redwood, *Sequoia sempervirens* (for example on the grass east of the Hepworth statue) and the Giant Sequoia, also known as a Wellingtonia, *Sequoiadendron giganteum* (for example a group of three on the grass south of the east end of the Rosery car park, and east of the Pear Tree Café). Both of these species are from the West Coast of the USA.

At first glance the leaves of the Dawn Redwood and the Bald Cypress look similar. Both are deciduous conifers with leaves which are pinnately divided into short straight leaflets. As we will explain, there are differences which can be seen on closer examination.

## Dawn Redwood (fig. 1)

The Dawn Redwood was unknown to botanists until the 1940s.<sup>3</sup> The species quite possibly once formed extensive forests in the river valleys of Eastern Sichuan, in Western China, before farmers arrived there a few hundred years ago. By the time Professor Kan, a botanist and forester, first saw one in 1941, they were surviving in separated groves surrounded by agriculture and being cut for timber. During World War II and the subsequent Chinese civil war collection of specimens was at considerable risk. Also in 1941, a Japanese palaeobotanist saw fossilised leaves and cones which he realised belonged to an unnamed species which he assumed to be extinct. These fossils dated from 2-3 million years ago, but earlier ones have since been found in Manchuria from around 30-50 million years ago. It was not until 1946 that another

botanist, Professor Hu, recognised that Professor Kan's tree matched the fossilised leaves and cones which had been seen in Japan. There are some trees surviving in China from before the 1940s (as late as 2007 the original tree seen by Prof. Kan was one of them), and some have been replanted, but like many species their survival in the wild, in this case in a heavily farmed area, is uncertain despite their being protected. In 1948 Prof. Kan and a colleague gave the species the name by which it is known today.

The discovery of this 'living fossil' made the species into a celebrity. Seeds were distributed from China and USA. They were propagated and extensively planted in Europe in the late 1940s and they grow rapidly. The trees on the grass north-west of the Tea Terrace probably date from 1951, after the Festival of Britain.

Although 'Metasequoia' means 'altered Sequoia', it has more features in common with the Bald Cypress. The structure of the leaves divided into leaflets is similar but with the difference that the leaves of the Dawn Redwood are attached opposite to each other on the shoots while, if you look carefully, those of Bald Cypress are attached slightly offset or alternate to those on the opposite side (fig. 3a).

### Opposite and Alternate forms of attachment



Also, the leaves are a richer green than those of the Bald Cypress. Both species stand in the grass between the Tea Terrace and the fountains, so you can easily compare the two. There are others on the west side of the Ladies Pond (with a label showing the species and the number '2') and beside the lake near the Three Standing Figures.

Metasequoia has pollen and seed cones on the same trees (monoecious). The pollen cones are similar to the Bald Cypress and hang in long clusters (fig. 4a). The seed cones are solitary forming at the ends of shoots (fig. 5a). They are rather barrel-shaped, measuring 2cm across. Like the Bald Cypress, they mature over winter and shed seeds after a year. Trees are propagated from seed.

## Bald Cypress or Swamp Cypress (fig. 2)

The alternative English names respectively reflect that this conifer is deciduous, becoming 'bald' by dropping its attractive orange-brown autumn leaves in winter to form a carpet, and that it can grow in very waterlogged ground.

The natural home of these trees is the eastern side of the USA, in a wide climate range from Texas to New Jersey. They were brought to Britain in the first half of the 17th century. Some of the largest specimens in Britain may date from then. Selective breeding and planting since then has produced a lot of variety in the shape of individual trees.

As mentioned above, on close examination the leaflets can be seen to be slightly alternate (fig. 3b). Fig. 6 shows the orange-brown autumn leaves.

The trees are often dioecious (separate male or female), but in the Park many are monoecious. The male flowers are stubby purplish catkins that are borne in drooping clusters on the leafless branches of winter (fig. 4b). They release pollen in the spring. The female seed-cones are spherical and quite small (1-3cm diameter, fig. 5b), and they may be on separate trees. They start off green but become brown and break open to release the seeds in late winter. In tree nurseries they are propagated from seeds, but we have

not seen any self-seeded trees in the Park. The seeds are only viable for less than a year and need to germinate in damp but not saturated soil.

Some of our 20 or so Bald Cypress can be seen on the grass east of the fountains. Others can be seen in the Subtropical Garden and in the wet ground bordering the Ladies Pond and the boating lake. One at the west end of the Ladies Pond has a label showing the name and the number '3'. In wet ground these trees sometimes produce up-growths from their roots ('knees') – fig 7. Their function is debated, but they probably absorb air and coincidentally cause silt to accumulate, thus building up the lake bank and the tree's support.

At <https://www.treesofbatterseapark.org> you can access an interactive map which shows the locations in Battersea Park of trees and shrubs of interest in particular months of the year. To discuss these trees or other trees and shrubs in Battersea Park, contact [batterseaparktreewatchers@btinternet.com](mailto:batterseaparktreewatchers@btinternet.com).

<sup>1</sup> "glyptostoboides" means like the conifer *Glyptostrobus* or Chinese Water Fir.

<sup>2</sup> *Taxodium* means "like Yew" because the leaves appear similar, *distichum* means "in two rows" referring to the leaflets.

<sup>3</sup> A detailed account of the discovery is at <https://www.treesandshrubsonline.org/articles/metasequoia/metasequoia-glyptostroboides/>, and Prof. Hu's own account is in *How Metasequoia, the "Living Fossil," Was Discovered in China* - Arnold Arboretum | Arnold Arboretum (harvard.edu).

**Fig. 1** Dawn Redwoods on the grass north-west of the Tea Terrace kiosk

**Fig. 2** Bald Cypress on the grass east of the Fountains Pond

**Fig. 3 (a)** Opposite leaves of Dawn Redwood, and **(b)** alternate leaves of Bald Cypress

**Fig. 4** Pollen cones of **(a)** Dawn Redwood, and **(b)** Bald Cypress

**Fig. 5** Seed cones of **(a)** Dawn Redwood, and **(b)** Bald Cypress

**Fig. 6** Autumn colour of Bald Cypress in the Subtropical Garden

**Fig 7** Bald cypress 'knees' at Leonardslee Gardens





# Wandsworth Greenspaces Meeting

Kate Bock, Chairman

I represented the Friends at the Wandsworth Greenspaces Meeting in January. This forum brings together Council representatives, Friends and Management Advisory Committees from open spaces and Enable to discuss the future of our borough's parks and open spaces. The meeting provided valuable insights into the evolving role of park management and biodiversity planning—both of which directly impact Battersea Park.

## Park Maintenance: A New Contractor and What It Means for Us

A key discussion point was the restructuring of the grounds maintenance contract, now awarded to Krinkels UK, which replaced Continental Landscapes on

24 February. While this transition aims to enhance efficiency, concerns were raised about the role of Friends groups in monitoring park conditions. It was acknowledged that Friends groups serve as the 'eyes and ears' of their parks, providing invaluable local knowledge. A formalised feedback process is in development, ensuring Friends can report maintenance issues directly and track responses.

For Battersea Park, this raises questions about how well the new contractor will maintain key areas, from formal gardens to natural habitats. Your Committee will monitor the impact and update members accordingly.

## Biodiversity and Conservation: A Growing Focus

Biodiversity was also high on the agenda, with discussions surrounding the forthcoming Borough Biodiversity Action Plan. The Council aims to extend conservation efforts beyond public open spaces, encouraging wildlife-friendly practices in private gardens and institutional spaces. While this is an exciting initiative, clarity is still needed on how existing biodiversity efforts in Battersea Park

will be affected.

There was also debate over whether Enable should retain more biodiversity responsibilities rather than transferring them to the Council. We will be pressing for details on how the changes will impact rewilding initiatives, pollinator-friendly planting, and habitat management in our Park.

## Ensuring our Voices are Heard

The meeting reinforced the need for clearer lines of communication between Friends groups, Wandsworth Council, and Krinkels UK. While the Council has committed to maintaining open dialogue, it remains uncertain whether Friends groups will gain direct access to reporting systems used by the contractor.

Additionally, there is growing support for an annual Friends & Stakeholders Forum, where groups like ours can formally raise concerns and contribute to shaping green space policies. It is essential that the Friends of Battersea Park are represented in these discussions.

## Get Involved

As changes to park maintenance and biodiversity planning unfold, it is essential for Friends to remain engaged. We encourage you to share feedback on how these developments are affecting the Park. Whether you notice improvements, areas of concern, or have ideas to contribute, your voice matters. Email [info@friendsofbatterseapark.org](mailto:info@friendsofbatterseapark.org)

The Friends remain committed to advocating for our Park's preservation and improvement, ensuring that it continues to thrive as a space for wildlife and the community. We will keep members updated as discussions progress and will push for clear, transparent communication with the Council.

# Citizen Science Volunteering

Valerie Selby, Enable, Biodiversity and Parks Development Manager

At the start of a new year people's thoughts often turn to acquiring new skills or participating in new activities. I am keen to tap into this and to explain the various ways in which Friends can volunteer to enhance Battersea Park for heritage and biodiversity in 2025 and beyond.

## Heritage

Friends will be aware that development funding of £654,757 has been awarded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund to restore fully the Park's Cascades by repairing damage to the Pulhamite, reinstating power supplies and reinvigorating heritage planting. Martin Graham is representing the Friends on the project's Steering Group. Do contact him via [info@friendsofbatterseapark.org](mailto:info@friendsofbatterseapark.org) if you have any insights or information that you think could benefit the project or if you would like to be involved in this restoration.

## Visitors and what they do

As part of the Cascades project, we will be organising visitor surveys in the Park, as well as some drop-in sessions outside it, to understand how people generally use the Park, what activities they participate in, and how often (if ever!) they visit the Cascades. Please email [batterseaheritage@enablelc.org](mailto:batterseaheritage@enablelc.org) if you might be interested in helping by talking to people in the Park or helping with the drop-in sessions. As the surveys are likely to take place on different days and at different times, we hope to be able to accommodate volunteers' existing commitments.

## Citizen Science

Our Citizen Science Officer will be creating a range of volunteer opportunities to be offered as part of the second phase of the Cascades project in 2026. Projects delivered last year at other sites included establishing a bat monitoring transect



and monitoring amphibians, as well as carrying out surveys of plants and invertebrates. If you would like to find out how you could be involved, drop a line to [biodiversity@enablelc.org](mailto:biodiversity@enablelc.org). These activities are likely to require a regular, usually monthly, commitment and the constraints will vary from species to species with some requiring you to undertake surveys only in specific weather conditions and others requiring you to be about when the creatures in question are prevalent e.g. bat transects happen after dusk. A few surveys are seasonal so if you have limited availability they might suit you better.

## Practical habitat management

We are keen to explore your appetite for volunteering in a 'hands on and getting grubby' kind of way. At both Wandsworth and Tooting Commons, we offer a monthly volunteering session where work has included

creating a bark chip pathway through a woodland, clearing encroaching scrub from the amphibian pools, creating stag beetle loggeries and new planting to improve the foraging opportunities for bats. If you think that you would like to join in similar activity in Battersea Park do get in touch at [biodiversity@enablelc.org](mailto:biodiversity@enablelc.org) so we can gauge how many people are keen to find out more.

During 2024, Enable's Parks Team was ably assisted by over 400 hours of volunteering which supported a better understanding of the species and habitats in Wandsworth and a further 285 hours of volunteering which delivered careful management of sensitive habitats and the creation of new routes providing access to nature. If you want to be part of this groundswell of action, please get in touch. We look forward to meeting you in 2025!



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# Winter Wonders



**Top left:** Dogwood close to the Rosery Gate on 3 January

**Top right:** Winter-flowering Cherry west of the Children's Zoo on 6 December

**Bottom left:** Glastonbury Thorn (Hawthorn) 40m yards west of Macduff Gate on 3 January

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# Parkrun Update

Sara Milne

Parkrun reaches its six-month anniversary in April this year, and although the Council has promised to hold a review at that time, early indicators are that it's here to stay in Battersea Park - which is good news and bad news.

Good news in that it has proved a popular location for runners and enables fans and followers to add it to their list of Parkrun Tourist Destinations. It has quickly become the most high-profile venue in the Parkrun portfolio and boasts the highest attendance figures of any Parkrun in the UK - whilst helping to promote an active lifestyle and sense

of wellbeing.

Bad news in that although it forms part of the Council's Wandsworth Moves Together strategy, aiming to provide better opportunities for residents to get active, a large percentage of runners taking part in the Battersea Park Parkrun are not local residents, and do not live in Wandsworth or even in London. And whilst attempts are made each Saturday by organisers and marshals to keep runners to the tarmac areas and paths, some of them still persist in walking or running over the grass.

There are continuing problems with the starting location by the Bandstand

where some 1,200 runners congregate each weekend (this may rise to around 2,000 in spring and summer). It makes Central Avenue impassable and inaccessible to any other Park users and a review of the starting arrangements is something that needs to be carried out with some urgency.

The Parkrun family is a tight-knit community brimming with positivity and energy that is a delight to see and be part of - but the lack of empathy or respect that some runners show for this much-loved green space, by trampling on grass areas or disregarding marshalling requests, is difficult to understand.



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# Autumn Lunchtime Lecture on Predatory Birds

Nicola Howard



Tawny Owl

recovered. Sparrowhawks prey only in areas where there are many small birds. Gamekeepers used to persecute buzzards, which are often to be found near or in woodlands, but we could see from the maps that their distribution is now immense, covering the whole east of the UK.

Red kites were almost extinct until the 1990s when they were very successfully re-introduced to the Chilterns. Their distribution is now in most of the south east, though they can also be spotted in Nottinghamshire and Northumberland and elsewhere. Red kites' talons and beaks are not strong so they are not avid predators but are useful scavengers; they are much more likely to clear up dead lambs than to kill them. Shakespeare described them stealing underwear or 'lesser linens' from washing lines.

Peregrine falcons also suffered from the use of DDT but their distribution now covers the whole of South East England. Their prey often includes feral pigeons and now parakeets. For their nest sites, they favour a sheer very high fall with ledges. There are over sixty pairs in London, including one which nests on one of the towers of Battersea Power Station. We learnt that the Battersea female is now 14 years old and has not had any young for two or three years. Falcons 'peregrinate': some of the London birds originally fledged in Chichester and Southampton.

Ospreys are fish-eating birds who were so persecuted that by the end of 1960s, they were only to be found in Scotland. By the first decade of the 2000s, thanks to a re-introduction programme, ospreys are found all over the UK. They are migratory birds that fly to West Africa in the

John Birkett, our enthusiastic speaker at our lecture at St Saviour's church in Battersea Park Road, is not a professional ornithologist but modestly described himself as 'just a volunteer' for his local Croydon RSPB. John illustrated his talk on predatory birds not only with wonderful photographs but also with recordings of their calls. He clarified that the word 'predatory' was imprecise in that many birds, for example robins, cormorants and fly catchers, are also predatory in the sense that they eat live animals or insects.

As he described the individual birds, John showed us two maps, one relating to 1968-70, the other to 2008-11, to compare the spread and density of that particular bird's population in the British Isles.

We learnt that kestrels take to nest boxes. Sparrowhawks soar around looking for prey; they suffered greatly from the use of the now banned pesticide DDT in the 1960s and 1970s but thankfully, numbers, as with most of the birds of prey, have

winter. By opening their hide at their Scottish centre at Loch Garten to the public, the RSPB encourages people to think of the osprey as a bird to be preserved rather than hunted. Not surprisingly, salmon and trout farms object to their proliferation. Once ospreys have caught a fish, they will move it round in their claws so that it is stream-lined for flight excellence!

Hen harriers live in upland areas and favour grouse moors. This is one predatory bird whose numbers are still decreasing due to persecution by gamekeepers.

On the trajectory map of a young white-tailed eagle, we were able to appreciate how far and wide they travel all over Britain.

Barn owls often also hunt by day. Their call is a screech. They can have up to 5 or 6 chicks but the weakest can become fodder for their siblings. Nesting boxes are often put up for barn owls, but then occupied by tawnies. Tawny owls can be found in Battersea Park and their chicks can sometimes be seen 'branching' (moving from branch to branch) during the day. The familiar 'twit twoo' is made by the female 'ke-wick' (twit) sound followed by the male 'hoo-hoo' (twoo) response. Unlike native barn and tawny owls, the little owl was introduced in the 1700s. Short-eared owls are not site-specific: they move around, for example from Norway to Ireland. The 'ears' on a long-eared owl are just tufts of feathers. Owls move their heads in their distinctive way as they try to pick up sounds emanating from their prey. Long-eared owls are thinly spread across the UK and migrate. Snowy owls live only in the Shetland Islands and St Kilda. Eagle owls can be as much as three feet high and are probably descendants of birds that have escaped from falconers.

This was a particularly enjoyable lecture!



# Jamie Heitz Jackson

28th November 1962 - 18th October 2024

Sophie Campbell



old when his sons were born. He sounds a towering and glamorous figure; a successful biochemist and big game hunter, he worked for the MoD and lived in Claridge's during the War.

Their mother, Lucy, still lively in her 90s, is the author of many books on movement and fitness and founded the Irish Terrier Association (the love of Jamie's life was certainly Libby, one of the family's many Irish terriers).

Lucy's second husband and the boys' adored stepfather was obstetrician and gynaecologist Ian Jackson, a brilliant surgeon, who was dropped into Normandy on D-day with the 3rd Parachute Regiment, the Red Devils.

The twins had an idyllic childhood, first in Hampstead, where Boo recalls donkey rides on the Heath, and then in St John's Wood. At around five years old, they were diagnosed with a rare inherited eye condition called retinitis pigmentosa, which would lead to complete blindness by their 50s.

Lucy fought to get them into mainstream education. They went to Cheam prep school and then Wellington College, where their interests were totally different: Boo was into sports, Jamie was academic, though drove his schoolmasters mad by concentrating only on things that interested him. Jamie read politics at the University of Bristol, was called to the Bar, but never practised, at Inner Temple, and with blindness fast encroaching found his metier as an author, writing fast-paced and prescient thrillers, which became more historical over time. His first book, *Dead Headers*, got a rave review from Frederick Forsyth, who

remained a loyal friend.

In recent years he co-hosted a podcast with his friend Tom Assheton, characteristically entitled *Bloody Violent History*, which reached almost 100 episodes before they brought it to an end. It's still up, have a listen.

Over the 25 years or so that Jamie left his flat on Alexandra Avenue to make a circuit of the Park - twice a day, sometimes more, always the same route - he made friends (and the odd enemy) with gusto. He knew all the Park gossip, loved meeting people's dogs, doubly so if Irish terriers, and relished snow, spring crocuses, falling leaves and especially hot sun.

He must have heard thousands of hours of people's conversation: their loves and losses ('You're well out of that one'), their joys and anxieties ('You're such a worry-wort'), their pomposities and idiocies (occasionally repeated later, with great relish) and, best of all, their funny stories, which would trigger gales of delighted laughter and an unconscious half-step back, one hand curled in front of his mouth, as if he were about to cough.

Jamie was a brilliant raconteur with extraordinary recall, a great walking companion and giver of punchy, if not always entirely welcome, advice. He had hundreds of friends but was intensely private, was pugnacious and kind, hilarious and exasperating, sensationally politically incorrect and naturally empathetic - above all, he had an unwavering moral compass.

Battersea Park - and life, in fact - will be quieter and sadder without him.

*Jamie's family plan to put a bench or tree in the park in Jamie's memory; anyone interested in donating please email [Julian@visionbridge.org.uk](mailto:Julian@visionbridge.org.uk).*

<https://jamesjacksonbooks.com;>  
<https://bloodyviolenthistory.com;>  
<https://irishterrierassociation.co.uk>

# The Rise of the Coffee Shop

Annabel B Stein

Sometimes when I walk around Battersea, I remember my salad days when I would arrange to meet friends for a chatter and natter over coffee with perhaps something light to eat. But not in SW11 - then we'd drive or take the 19 bus to either a department store or one of the various cake shops in Chelsea or Knightsbridge.

Now there would be no need to travel across the river. Thanks to the enlarged and impressive Battersea Campus of the Royal College of Art, with its 1,300 students and local student accommodation, we have Collegiate Battersea! Take Parkgate Road for instance where RCA is based. At No 13, **Parker Cafe** has taken over from the clothes shop with pastries now the window attraction. At No 49, **District**, previously an estate agent, is now part of an Australian chain of coffee shops with an all-day brunch culture and incidentally there's another branch in Nine Elms (near Waitrose). **Prince Albert**, on the corner of Parkgate Road and Albert Bridge Road, is a significant gastro pub and has been in situ since 1866. These welcoming establishments, plus the various eateries around the corner, make for a serious but informal café society just south of Battersea Bridge, and interesting too are the patrons with a mix of computer users i.e. those 'working from home', tutors and students, a few laptop-free locals and the occasional oddball, more often just me!

There is a different vibe along Battersea Park Road. **Mahali Bakery** at No 24 was recently opened by two pastry chefs originally from Australia in what was once Lloyds Bank then a firm of solicitors. As I'd watched the renovations taking place, I was first through the door when it opened being keen to see the transformation and to sample their wares. To compliment my coffee made from freshly roasted beans, I selected a ginger brulee

(rich and scrumptious) (£9.00) which I devoured whilst sitting on a wooden window bench watching the cakes, breads and croissants being made. I also observed the number of young customers who buzzed in, bought a selection of pastries, then buzzed out. In the end I reckoned many were students, perhaps living in Urbanest Battersea (300 student studios opposite Battersea Dogs and Cats Home), or in one of the student halls or residences around the American Embassy - all with links to UCL, RCA, LSE etc. Mahali's cakes would certainly make a change from supermarket ones, as indeed would Mahali's special bags of coffee beans. The other end of Battersea Park Road and Battersea High Street also house an array of casual cafes.

**Mahali Bakery**, 24 Battersea Park Road, SW11 4HY. Shut Mon, Tues & Wed. Open 7.00 am - 4.00pm on Thur, Fri, Sat & Sun.

Chelsea still retains its café culture, with at least three recent openings in the King's Road adding to the plethora of choice! **Blank Street Coffee** at No 67, an addition to the USA and Manchester branches, **Coffee Bread & Olive Oil** at No 126 and **Hagen Espresso Bar** at No 151, one of many branches dotted around London. From memory, the previous occupiers of these three premises were two clothes shops and one jeweller. Chelsea locals are supplemented by tourists, shoppers, and exhibition goers, so it is no wonder these places keep proliferating. Interestingly though, on the various days I've been in SW3, the cafes were full of people merrily munching and chatting away with only a few computer users.

Coffee shops aside, I'd always been smitten by the roof garden atop the white circular building which houses **Vardo** in Duke of York Square. I've never eaten there, being put off by



the long lines to get in, with many people simply queuing for a coffee. However having persuaded the golfer to join me for lunch, this time I booked. From the smallish and unusual menu, the golfer being a lover of all things Indian, chose the roasted seabass fillet with green tomato Malabar curry and coconut (£35), while I took the Japanese route and chose a bowl of aubergine, rice, daikon (a type of super-sized radish), sesame carrots, and to give it a lift, a chilli-ish sauce (£18.50). We skipped pudding but added a packet of 'No boundaries muscovado, vanilla nougat and forest fruits' from their range of speciality Caravan Coffees (£8.50) to the bill. My wait was well rewarded! Incidentally, in case your Romani is a little rusty, 'vardo' can mean a 'caravan', and with its use of worldwide ingredients, we thought it was most aptly named by the Caravan Restaurant chain.

**Vardo**, 9 Duke of York Square, Chelsea SW3 4LY. 020 7101 1199. Open every day from 9.00am. Closed Mon 9.30pm; Tues-Thurs and Sun 10pm; and Fri - Sat 10.30pm.

Finally, as this is my last article, I'd like to close by hoping that a few of the places I've mentioned over the years have been or will be enjoyed. Thank you for reading and happy dining!



Events

MAR	<b>Thursday 12 to Sunday 16</b> Battersea Evolution	<b>Affordable Art Fair</b>
	<b>Monday 17</b> Lunch from 12.30 Lecture 1.15 to 2.15pm St Saviour's Church 351 Battersea Park Road SW11 4LH <i>Book at <a href="http://friendsofbatterseapark.org/events">friendsofbatterseapark.org/events</a></i>	<b>The Friends' Spring Lunchtime Lecture</b> Alex Laird on herbs & spices and their uses in the cookery & medical worlds. £7.00 and a pre-ordered lunch @ £6.00. <i>Queries to <a href="mailto:info@friendsofbatterseapark.org">info@friendsofbatterseapark.org</a> or 020 7622 5199</i>
APR	<b>Weekends 5-6. 12-13, 18-21</b> Children's Zoo	<b>Easter Crafts, Games and Activities</b> Over three weekends
	<b>Saturday 26</b> Fountains area 1 to 7pm	<b>Wandsworth Borough of Culture Launch Event</b> Celebration of dance, music & movement
MAY	<b>Tuesday 6 to Sunday 11</b> Battersea Evolution	<b>The Decorative Fair</b> See advertisement on back page
	<b>Monday 20 to Saturday 24</b>	<b>Chelsea Flower Show week so car parks busy</b>
	<b>Saturday 24 to Sunday 1 June</b> Children's Zoo	<b>20th Anniversary Festival</b> To celebrate the Zoo's re-opening in 2005
JUN	<b>Tuesday 3</b> Bowling Green 6pm to 9pm <i>Book at <a href="http://friendsofbatterseapark.org/events">friendsofbatterseapark.org/events</a></i>	<b>Friends' 18th Annual Barbecue</b> Live music and free children's activities. Tickets £22 adults, £10 for children aged 5-16, under 5s free. Priority booking for Friends until May 1 when general booking opens and prices rise. <i>Enquiries: <a href="mailto:secretary@friendsofbatterseapark.org">secretary@friendsofbatterseapark.org</a></i>
	<b>Wednesday 4</b> 4pm to 10pm from Bandstand	<b>Race for Life for Cancer Research</b> 1,000 runners
	<b>Saturday 14</b> Peace Pagoda 2pm – 5pm	<b>Annual Ceremony with Buddhist Traditions.</b> Messages, speeches, devotional music, tea
	<b>Wednesday 25</b> Old English Garden 6pm to 7.30pm <i>Book at <a href="http://friendsofbatterseapark.org/events">friendsofbatterseapark.org/events</a></i>	<b>Drinks Party for Friends</b> Invitation enclosed £5 tickets include first drink
	<b>Saturday 21 and Sunday 22</b> Bandstand 10.30 to 8.30pm	<b>Summer in Battersea Park</b> Live Music
	<b>Saturday 28 and Sunday 29</b> Bowling Green	<b>Summer in Battersea Park</b> Children's Activities

JUL	<b>Wednesday 2 &amp; Thursday 3</b> Car Parks close at 5pm Race begins 6.45pm	<b>J P Morgan Challenge</b> Beware 10,000 runners each night
	<b>Saturday 12</b>	<b>Summer in Battersea Park</b>
	<b>Sunday 13</b> Bowling Green	<b>Battersea Park Dog Show.</b> All dogs welcome. The Friends' prize for the best trick
	<b>Sunday 13</b> Meet just inside Rosery Gate at 2pm. £5 on the day	<b>Guided Walk on Sculptures in the Park</b> for Wandsworth Heritage Festival. <i>Email <a href="mailto:fhradcliffe@gmail.com">fhradcliffe@gmail.com</a> to book</i>
AUG	23 - 25	<b>Bank Holiday Concerts</b>
NOV	<b>Monday 10</b> 12.30 at St Saviour's Church	<b>The Friends' Autumn Lunchtime Lecture</b> Sculpture in Battersea Park
REGULAR EVENTS	<b>Wednesdays</b> 10am – 11	<b>Walk Wandsworth</b> Meet at pedestrian gate by Albert Bridge. Contact <i><a href="mailto:activelifestyles@enable.com">activelifestyles@enable.com</a></i>
	<b>Wednesdays</b> 10am – 12.30pm	<b>Winter Garden</b> Contact <i><a href="mailto:fhradcliffe@gmail.com">fhradcliffe@gmail.com</a></i> to confirm gardening is taking place and book in
	<b>Saturdays</b> 9am	<b>Parkrun</b>
	<b>Sundays</b> 9am	<b>Junior Parkrun</b>

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