



THE SOUTH PARKER

Issue no 41

Spring 2020

HOW DID FRIENDS OF SOUTH PARK GARDENS START?

During the early part of the 20th Century South Park Gardens existed as a pleasure ground for the residents who lived in the streets surrounding the newly-built railway station. Concerts were held in the bandstand and up to seven full-time gardeners maintained flower beds, a decorative arbor that ran the length of a pathway and a large rockery. A park keeper waving his stick chased anyone who dared to walk on the grass. There were 'indecent scribbings' on the walls of the Edwardian toilets according to minutes of Council meetings taken at the time.



In the 1990s the Gardens had deteriorated badly with cracked and uneven tarmac paths and a chain link fence that was constantly torn down. Broken glass littered the paths after nights of revelry and the flower beds were left empty. Then the Council decided to save money by no longer locking Merton's parks. This was the last straw for the local community.

A petition was launched and residents from the roads bordering the Gardens spoke at a Council meeting. A compromise was reached and the Council agreed to continue to lock the Gardens at night if residents unlocked the gates in the morning.

After being involved in the locking campaign one resident decided to try to get the Gardens listed with English Heritage. He spent two years searching through Council records, identifying key features of the Gardens such as the serpentine path design, trough and fountain that warranted listing status. The Victorian Society supported an application to obtain Grade 2 listing which was eventually granted by English Heritage.

By the beginning of the 21st Century the Gardens looked desolate with nowhere for people to sit apart from on a few broken benches. Something had to be done to restore the Gardens to their former glory. A couple of residents circulated a questionnaire to the surrounding houses. Another resident organised a meeting and at the beginning of 2002 the Friends of South Park Gardens was formed.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

AGM - **POSTPONED**

Our AGM will be on Thursday 26 March at 7:30 pm in the Garden Pavilion, and we hope you can join us there. You will need to be a member to attend, so don't delay in completing your membership application.

Meet the Trustees - **POSTPONED**

On Sunday 29 March (11:30 am - 1:30 pm) we are holding a "Meet the Trustees" drop in session in the Garden Pavilion. Come along and get to know the Trustees, as well as learn more about Membership, the Park and volunteering opportunities. Everyone welcome. Tea and coffee will be provided.

Easter Egg Hunt - **CANCELLED**

The Easter Egg Hunt, always popular and sells out fast, takes place this year on Sunday, 5 April 3:00 pm. Again watch out for more details over the next few weeks.

Summer Picnic - **UNDER REVIEW**

The Annual Summer Picnic is set for Sunday 14 June - please come along, enjoy the Park and listen to the sublime sounds of The Melodians. Refreshments will be served, tea/coffee and cakes will be available and the Gardening Club will again be selling some seedlings and other more established plants. If you can help with growing some seedlings or have other cuttings/plants we can sell on the stall, any contributions are welcomed.

Fireworks & Bonfire

As mentioned in the membership section, the Annual Fireworks and Bonfire (yes we still hope to be able to have just a small one) takes place on Saturday 7 November. Again, this is a Members only event.

PARK UPDATE

Many of you will have seen the notices around the park regarding new opening times.

NEW SOUTH PARK GARDENS OPENING TIMES

EFFECTIVE 1 JANUARY 2020



Friends of South Park Gardens and the London Borough of Merton Council have been extremely fortunate to have had a volunteer to open the gates of South Park Gardens every day at 0630 for the last 10 years. Unfortunately, this volunteer is no longer able to continue beyond the end of 2019.

Merton Council, through its park contractor idverde, carries out locking/unlocking for all the relevant parks across the Borough.

South Park Gardens will now be included in this schedule.

As from 1 January 2020, new park opening hours will be introduced. These times are dependent on the order of opening for all the parks in the Borough. The hours are expected to be as follows:

0800 on weekdays, Monday to Friday

0900 on weekends, Saturday & Sunday

We recognise this may cause some inconvenience.

However, if you are keen and able to help with opening the park at an earlier time, or could organise a rota, please get in touch with us at friendsofsouthparkgardens@gmail.com.

In this newsletter, we would like to record our huge thanks and appreciation to our long standing volunteer, Loftus - who has opened the park early in the mornings for more than 10 years. To give you some idea of the task. With four gates to open each day, he has, accompanied by his beloved pet dogs, opened the gates of South Park Gardens in excess of 12,000 times. A marvellous achievement. The Trustees presented him with a small gift at the annual Volunteers drinks party in early January. Here's a pic.



We are pleased to report that since our appeal for volunteers some South Park residents have got together and we are hoping to start a rota soon for opening the park earlier - further news will be posted. If you can help share the load and help the community, please do step forward, by emailing the Friends who can connect you.

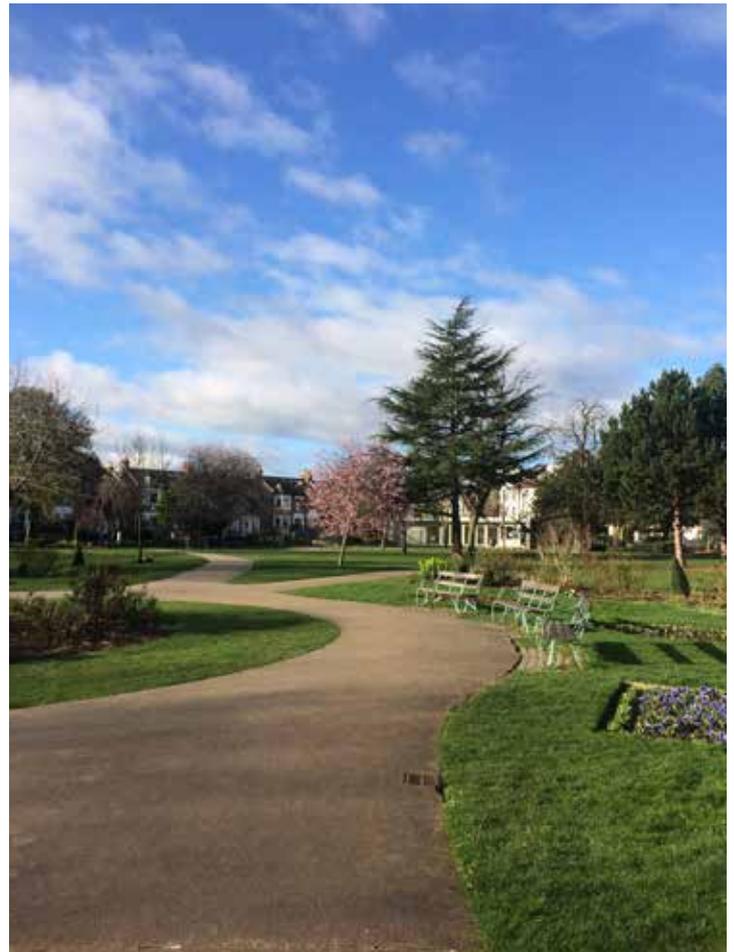
MEMBERSHIP

Our 2020 membership year is now open. Membership costs just £5 per household (£5.27 via PayPal) and lasts for the full calendar year, January - December 2020.

If you would like to join, please complete a 2020 Membership Application form here, and also on the website. Both the payment and the application form are needed to complete the application for membership. It's important that the application name and payment name are the same, however if they are different, please notify the Friends.

We will send a further email out to all current members. This year we would ask all memberships to be renewed by 30 April 2020.

Our Annual Fireworks event is only open for ticket purchases from members - full details will be available about the process and ticket release in September. As in previous years, tickets will only be available for purchase online.



Springtime blossom in the park

WHAT TO DO IF YOU SEE SOMETHING WHICH TROUBLES YOU

South Park Gardens is a public space. It's very popular with locals using the park to exercise, dog walk, play or simply sit and enjoy the surroundings. We know that what is acceptable behaviour to a set of individuals may not be acceptable to others. So if something bothers you and it's not an emergency, please send a note to the Friends on the email on this newsletter. If it is an emergency, please contact Merton Council or the Police:

London Borough of Merton

Monday to Friday 0900-1700 020 8274 4901
Out of hours 020 8543 9750

Police Contact Numbers

Non-Emergency - call 101
Emergency - call 999

ELECTRIC SCOOTERS

We've recently received questions about the use of electric scooters in the park and below is Merton Council's response:

"Merton Council considers that, electric scooters are not permitted in the Gardens.

The relevant bylaws are available on the Council's website at:

<https://www.merton.gov.uk/leisure-recreation-and-culture/parks-and-open-spaces/parks-and-recreation-grounds/park-bylaws>

Vehicles

6. (i) No person shall, without reasonable excuse, ride or drive a cycle, motor cycle, motor vehicle, or any lawful right or privilege, bring or cause to be brought into the pleasure ground any cattle, sheep, goats, or pigs or any beast of draught or burden.

Responsible elements of the scooter industry generally make the clear point that such electric vehicles are not permitted on the public highway or public footways and that, otherwise, users need to have the permission of landowner to use them. The Council has confirmed that it has not been approached about this activity at all and would not grant permission if it was.



VOLUNTEERS

During the course of 2019, well over 130 individuals volunteered to help make South Park Gardens the special place it is and central to the heart of our community. The Friends of South Park Gardens cannot operate without people who give their time, knowledge and expertise without payment. None of the Volunteers nor Trustees receive payment for their services to the Committee and management of the park. So a big thank you to everyone who has given their time over the past year from all the Trustees and wider community.



The volunteers we have are hugely committed and roles range from Duke of Edinburgh participants, who clean the railings and litter pick, as part of that programme; stewards at events; caterers; bar people; gardeners; risk managers - essential for all our public events; newsletter delivery; gazebo experts; fence makers etc. We often give a shout out to people to step forward, particularly for the fireworks event which needs more than 100 people to help. Anytime you can give, large or small is always appreciated - so do step forward if you can and dip your toe in the water... it is always a good time. it's a great way of getting know more people in the area too.

THE GARDENING CLUB

The South Park Gardens gardening club meets on Sundays between 10 and 12. This is a lovely way to enjoy the gardens!! We are currently in planning mode which includes creating a wildflower meadow outside the Garden Pavilion. There are great raised beds behind the Garden Pavilion where we are starting to grow our own plants for the gardens. We held a very successful plant stall at the summer picnic last year and plan to do so again this year. There is no need to be a gardening expert. All welcome, young and older!



KIOSK UPDATE

It has been a difficult winter for Chris at Bliss in the Park kiosk due to recurrent bad weather. Unsurprisingly, constant heavy rain and grey skies have kept people from venturing out and the kiosk has often had to remain closed.

There are various costs involved in running the kiosk such as rent, water, electricity, equipment rental and the purchase of food, drink and other supplies. Chris also needs to support herself with the income generated from sales. However, she is not just someone who serves up delicious and high quality drinks and snacks. Chris plays an important part in our park community.

Under the terms of her lease with the Council she is responsible for maintaining the toilets when the kiosk is open. Chris also helps the Friends with room hire in the Pavilion and volunteers at our events. Her presence helps to make the park a friendly and safe place.

Please support the kiosk as often as you can and encourage your friends and neighbours to do so. If you have any suggestions as to how we might encourage more people to use the kiosk, please email us.

Regular Coffee	£2.80
Small Coffee	£2.50
Child's Hot Chocolate	£2.50
Child's Smoothie	£1.80
Child's Juice	£1.25
Smoothies	£4.00

BLISS IN THE PARK
ENJOY THESE DISCOUNTS TODAY!

50% Off Banana Porridge

Regular Coffee 2nd Half Price

Present this coupon and get 1 banana porridge half price! Offer valid until April 30th 2020. Present this coupon to Chris MON - FRI.

Order two Regular coffees and get the 2nd for half price! Offer valid until April 30th 2020. Present this coupon to Chris MON - FRI.

blissinthepark@gmail.com

GARDEN PAVILION

The Garden Pavilion is a community space available to hire for community and commercial activities (no parties though). Examples of the regular sessions include: art classes, yoga, tai chi, reading groups, craft sessions, language classes, traditional music, baking group. The Trinity Ward Local Councillor, Paul Kohler also uses the space for his monthly surgery.

The Garden Pavilion is proving very popular with nearly 600 individual bookings in 2019. That represents an increase of nearly 60% on the previous year. Peak months were October and November; with 70 bookings each (an average of more than two per day).

The varied use of the Garden Pavilion is further proof that South Park Gardens is at the heart of the community. It is affordable to rent (£3 per hour for a community group; £18 per hour for a commercial activity) and availability can be checked via the website (under Events Calendar). Contact the Friends via the email address below.

ELLISONS

We are delighted to announce that Ellisons will continue to sponsor Friends of South Park Gardens in 2020.



They are also pleased to announce an exclusive offer to members of 'Friends of South Park Gardens':

10% discount off our standard Sales, Lettings fees.

Please contact our Wimbledon office for a free valuation on **020 8944 9494** or wimbledon@ellisons.uk.com.