

DUN RLAN PARK NEWS

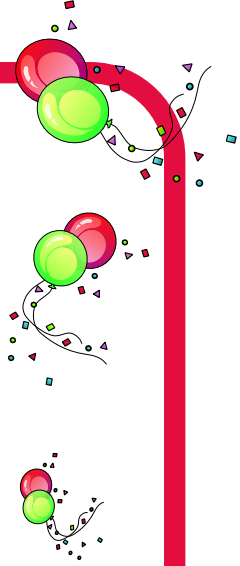
PETER REYNOLD'S MEMORIAL SUMMERHOUSE COMPLETED



This evocative photograph taken by Agnes Ridge shows the Summerhouse at it's best. Bathed in autumn sunlight, reflected in the tranquil waters of the lower pond and framed by trees - a fitting Memorial to our founder.

With best wishes

for a



HAPPY CHRISTMAS & 2008

from the Chairman and Committee



who request the pleasure of the company of all

Friends of Dunorlan Park

to our traditional

New Year "Drinks & Nibbles"



to be held once again at 12 Camden Hill

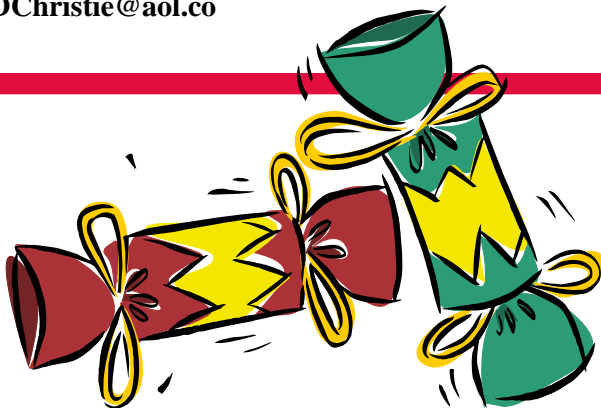
from 6 to 8.30 p.m. on Friday 11th January 2008

RSVP to Robin Christie

12 Camden Hill, Tunbridge Wells, TN2 4TJ

01892 527662

RobinDChristie@aol.co



NEWSLETTER DISTRIBUTION: We are trying to cut down on printing costs by emailing out the newsletter to those of you who can, and would like to, receive it in pdf format. If you are on email, and have not yet let Robin Christie know that you would like to subscribe to this option - please do. Not only does it make life a bit easier for us - but it also means you get to see the newsletter in glorious technicolour

THE LAST 'VIEW FROM THE CHAIR' OF 2007

BY RUTH BAKER

As the year draws to a close, we look back with a modest sense of achievement. Apart from a brilliant April, the summer was chilly and unreliable, but the Friends have had a good summer season. The honours for this are due in particular to three members of our own Committee, Robin, Diana and Norman. Robin, despite his very busy schedule, has worked with tireless persistence to see our memorial to Peter Reynolds through from start to finish. He found our talented carpenter, Kevin, to make the beautiful summerhouse from solid English oak. When the project stalled right at the beginning, Diana stepped forward to take charge of the organising the drawings needed for the planning application. The result of their combined diligence is a summerhouse that sits very gracefully at the foot of the cascade, just below the tree ferns.

By a happy coincidence I came across a photograph in a past issue of the RHS Garden Magazine: a Summerhouse, almost exactly the same as the one we have erected, stands proud on the hillside of a garden in Dunedin in New Zealand. It may be a jot fanciful to imagine that the Tasmanian Henry Reed had seen this summerhouse and commissioned his summerhouse as a copy, but be that as it may, the photograph is confirmation that our Summerhouse is thoroughly in keeping with an Antipodean connection !!!

The summer house was to have been opened officially at our annual picnic in the park. To this end the picnic was postponed until September, the latest date we dared to risk the weather. Unfortunately the commemorative plaque was still not ready and several key people were unable to attend including Kevin who constructed it ! Moreover the cascade was not working and a muddy pool had formed a swamp in front of the summerhouse, detracting considerably from its ambience. At this point Norman stood forth to rescue the situation. He transplanted the picnic from its usual site on the grass beside the cascade and ensconced us high on the hillside beside the Temple. He also gave us a short talk about the history of the Temple as we luxuriated beside it. Maureen (Reynolds) and all the members of her family came to the picnic which was to have been in honour of Peter. We felt very grateful that they came as planned and shared with us a very happy occasion. We intend now to have the official opening of the Summerhouse in May 2008 as the centerpiece of the AGM. We hope that Peter's family will be able to join us again then. I hope too that as many of you as possible will be there to welcome them, as we remember and honour our founder.



Norman regaling the gathered 'picnic-goers' with a history of the Temple !

Richard has also pulled his weight on the Committee, using his other hat, as a Friend of Bedgebury Pinetum, he has been investigating for us the possibility of using the Bedgebury labeling machine to make name plates for some of our important trees, which are featuring in the new Tree Trail Leaflet. We are very grateful for this inspired idea.

Robin and Marion have once again invited us to hold the Christmas and New Year party at their home on the second Friday in January 2008. We look forward to that. We feel rather humble that the continued progress of the Friends depends on so few generous and committed people. It would be good to think that the New year will bring forward some enthusiastic young blood to join us. We can but hope!! Meanwhile a very happy Christmas to you all.



Peter's family gathered at Peter's Summerhouse

UPDATE FROM TUNBRIDGE WELLS BOROUGH COUNCIL

Tree enthusiasts and novices will enjoy the new Dunorlan Park Tree Trail leaflet now available in the café. Written and photographed by Peter Gawthrop, volunteer and Friend of Dunorlan Park, the leaflet includes a 'Questions and Answers' section about 12 of the park's most notable trees. Very many thanks to Peter for his hard work. The next stage of the Tree Trail will see appropriately designed labels placed (out of reach), in key trees. This will be a joint project with the Friends of Bedgebury.

The Bench Donation Scheme has been a resounding success. So much so that the park has nearly reached its seating capacity and the scheme is being scaled down. For the many people who wish to make donations, a new Shrub Donation Scheme is being introduced which will run in parallel with the Tree Donation Scheme. This scheme will hopefully enable Tony to have a small, steady supply of choice specimen shrubs for the park. Recent tree donations include three oaks and some Stone Pines (*Pinus pinea*) - the latter from Bedgebury.

A new, low box hedge is to be planted at the front edge of the terrace to replace the stone balls. This will complement the box around the seasonal beds, define the terrace edge and prevent Tony's team from regularly having to recover and reinstate the balls.

Monitoring of the damp levels in the Grecian Temple continues. Our expert team have advised that the internal painting is carried forward to 2008, giving additional time over a second winter to ensure conditions are favourable.

A big 'Welcome back' to Lizzie Assar. Lizzie started her horticultural career as a volunteer in Dunorlan and after a spell in Calverley Grounds has returned to Dunorlan as Team Leader. Lizzie is also studying for an RHS Level 2 Certificate in Horticulture at Hadlow College and couldn't be in a better place to gain expert knowledge and experience.

Dear friends of dunorland park.
Thankyou for letting us use your park.
We had a lovely day pond dipping,
bug-hunting and sketching.
We had a picnic and played
games. We relly enjoyed ourselves

St Augustine's Primary School visited our Park in the summer and clearly had a lovely time judging by the delightful "thank-you" letter we received - thank you St Augustine's and thank you for the lovely drawing by George Rutt featuring the lake, boathouse, boats, ducks and trees and is that possibly Tony Ewins in the middle ???!



REPORT FROM TONY EWINS OUR HEAD GARDENER

Nearly another year in Dunorlan goes by and this year has had its good points and bad points, though I am happy to say that, overall, it's been an excellent year. As we all know spring and early summer was very wet, this though was hugely beneficial for plant growth. The wisteria on the terrace in spring again was superb with its wonderful scented flowers, many of the shrubs such as Rhododendrons, young Camellia's flowered superbly. Some of our new small trees are beginning to flower well, next spring come and look at our Styrax's and Halesia near the stream area, and look next spring for the first flowering (if not frosted) of our Paulownia, the foxglove tree growing in the long border near the old Monkey Puzzle stump. The summer has been tough going with weed control and grass growth, in places this was difficult to keep up with but overall we just kept up with the majority of the beds. We had a mass flowering of the Evening primrose in the avenue border, lovely to see but not really there so we hope we can use them elsewhere. Autumn has again been stop-start for us with heavy periods of rain, leaf raking has been hard work this year, and the leaves are larger and prolific, probably from the rain early in the year.

We are now going into our tree planting time, we have a selection of native and non native. The native trees we are planting will be to replace some of the old Oaks, Beech and Pines when they die, we like to try and be one step ahead but be aware of not over planting the park.

Our work this winter will be mulching most beds and improving the top pond area where this year our clumps of spotted orchid increased to ten flowers. We also started work on our wild flower swathe with Kent High Weald Project group, which went really well and we all look forward to next year to see what flowers in the bog area.

They are also coming in soon to start planting some native shrubs, if anybody would like to help with planting and bramble removal, information will be in the park or contact the Friends. I would like to thank our volunteers who do sterling work for us and the lads from Oaklands School for their work too. We had some other excellent volunteer days this year, the groups involved helped us hugely to do projects which we could never have done, so a big thanks too you all. Dunorlan is a beautiful park and all the staff involved here will do their best to keep it looking as lovely as it is looking on this cold but clear blue sky day.

Staffing at Dunorlan has changed this year; we have two new members, Lawson who has been here about four months and Lizzie who work voluntarily here, then worked in the Calverley grounds and now is here. They are both new to horticulture and wish to work within this field. They are both employed by English Landscapes who have enrolled them into evening class at Hadlow College where they are both doing the RHS horticulture course. Please say hello if you see them in the park.

Please remember if anybody would still like to donate Snowdrops next spring, we would be more than happy to still increase our plantings.



Our bad points this year has been our Bredon gravel paths in certain areas, with the torrential rains we have had I am surprised all paths have not ended up in the lake. We are looking at getting at least two paths re-laid with other material and the topping of old paths done soon.

We are still having problems with the water pump for the cascade (slowing down) and leaks in the small pool by the stepping stones; we have tried to correct these issues with a new pump and local clay. Both of these have failed, so we are getting the new pump re-tested and a matting material for the leaks. We hope to have sorted this by the start of next year.

ALSO: Tony has planted some Cyclamen hederifolium corms behind the Summerhouse and to the left of the Cascade under the Hemlock tree which should flower next autumn and spread over time. The Friends donated the corms funded from our Snowdrop Fund.



WASSAIL AND LINGUISTICS BY RICHARD GOSLING



"Here we come a wassailing among the leaves so green..." {The Derbyshire Wassail.} Why are the leaves so green in midwinter? When we talk about the greenwood, we don't mean the evergreen trees, but the trees that will go green in Summer. The Novello Book of Carols has a variant, "We've been a while a wandering amongst the leaves so green..." which may provide the clue: the carol was originally only half of a song, the other half of which would be sung on St George's Day or May Day. Sir James George Frazer in *The Golden Bough* records the following: "In the North of England it was formerly the custom for young people to rise a little after midnight on the morning of the first of May, and go out with music and the blowing of horns into the woods, where they broke branches and adorned them with nosegays and crowns of flowers.....At Abingdon in Berkshire young people formerly went about in groups on May morning, singing a carol... 'We've been rambling all the night and sometime of this day...' This is basically the same carol and could even be sung to the same tune. Vaughn Williams, a great collector of English folk music, has a hymn in the same style 'Hail thee, Festival Day' which is meant to apply to various days of the Church year.

"Our Wassail cup is made of the rosemary tree, And so is your beer of the best barley..." {The Derbyshire Wassail.} I have been singing this carol for about 60 years, and I have only now realised that there must be some mistake, or else the rosemary tree is a different plant from a rosemary bush. I have a rosemary bush over 20 years old in my garden, and although it is woody neither the branches nor the stem could be made into a drinking cup. Besides that, the next words "And so" imply that this is a particularly good cup to match the beer, whereas rosemary wood would have a bad flavour.

There is an alternative version, "We have got a little purse of stretching leather skin; we want a little of your money to line it well within", but The Oxford Book of Carols, I think rightly, suggests that this version was for use by a church choir. Apparently, versions of this carol go back to at least the reign of Charles I. The Novello Book of Carols, however, has the variant "We've got a little purse made of leathern ratchin skin.." I have not found 'ratchin' in a dictionary, but if the root is ratchet rather than rat it should mean 'stretched'.

The Gloucester Wassail has "our toast it is white and our ale it is brown; Our bowl it is made of the white maple tree; With the wassailing bowl we'll drink unto thee." I am baffled by white toast, unless it means toast made from white bread, but I am sure that this is the right tree and the right symbolism. The October ale, brewed from the new harvest, was



17 Century Wassail Cup

drunk at Christmas time, and a pristine white bowl would have been a suitable receptacle. The Somersetshire Wassail has 'a white ashen tree' which is the same symbolism and if ashen means 'ash-coloured' might be the same article.

The maple tree, *Acer campestre*, was used for bowls and platters before the introduction of sycamore. Apart from being white wood it had other advantages for the peasant. Those who have heard of Forest Law in the days of Robin Hood will know that forest trees, particularly oak, beech and elm, had royal protection. What they may not know is that when the Forest Law was modified under Henry III, trees did not revert to common ownership, but belonged to the ownership of the local estate or abbey. Other, lesser trees, such as ash and hazel were under the management of the tenant farmer. But *Acer campestre* is neuter in Latin, while all native trees to the Romans were feminine, and therefore as long as Latin was used in law cases it would not have counted as a tree but as a shrub, and could be considered as a communal resource. Another advantage is that the wood is considered good for carving, so you would not need special tools to make a bowl.

I have to admit that there were exceptions to the rule. Spinneys, copses and hedges had different norms. A spinney (*spinae*) was for the benefit of game: to the extent that it provided 'deer fruit', such as haws, sloes and blackberries it was the property of the king or nobleman who had hunting rights, but with regard to lesser game such as rabbits the rules varied. Abbeys, strangely enough, were pretty mean about keeping their 'warrens', but there was a reason. Benedictine monks were not supposed to eat meat, but they were allowed to eat fish, and by a legal fiction some monasteries classified white meat as fish. I presume that it is a hangover from those times that recipes for

rabbit sometimes start by blanching the meat. So a bush in a spinney may become a tree.

A copse, or rather the wood in the copse, belonged to the tenant farmer who was coppicing it, and Field Maple was often coppiced, though I don't know why: perhaps for firewood. However, the effect of coppicing must have been to make the shortened trunks or stools thicken up. I suspect that the larger bowls and platters must have derived from some such process.

I think that tradition rather than law governed the hedgerow, as it still does today. I have never heard of a farmer stopping the public from gathering elderberries, rowan berries, sloes and blackberries from his hedge, though I suspect he could do if he were mean enough. My father believed that anyone had a right to cut from the hedge adjoining a public highway an ashplant (a walking stick made of ash) or a hazel switch for driving cattle. Again, I am extremely dubious that there was ever a law about it, though it stands to reason that sometimes pedlars must have needed a new stick in their journeys, and that cattle drovers got through a fair number of switches in a drive.

A drinking-cup of maple had a special name, mazer; and so I am wondering whether "rosemary tree" is a mondegreen for "real mazer tree" or some similar phrase.



A modern Wassail Cup turned from sycamore

You will see from our Events Calendar on the back page that we have managed to entice Kay Keeton, a Friend of Sheffield Botanic Gardens (FSBG), 'down south' to give us a talk on Robert Marnock in a joint meeting with the Civic Society. She is an informed and lively speaker and passionate about Marnock, so it will be a good event, and in preparation we publish here a copy of an article Kay wrote for the FSBG Newsletter a year or so ago (hence some of the slightly out of date references !!).

Robert marnock the 21st century man

I don't remember the exact time that a passing interest in the designer of Sheffield Botanical Gardens, Mr. Robert Marnock, became an all embracing passion. My first introduction to the name was the Marnock garden that was named after him in the Botanical Gardens by The Friends to celebrate the 150th anniversary of Sheffield Botanical Gardens. This garden was laid out in 1988, and stands behind the beautiful gates that were designed by the late Mr. Arthur Drought one of the founder members of FOBS.

When I became a Tour guide for the Botanical Gardens, I had to study a lot, and learn about the history of the garden. This, of course, included finding out more about Robert Marnock, and his design principals. The Botanical Gardens have always been one of my favourite gardens (even when it was in a poor state). I have always loved the grandness of the entrance arch, when you enter from the busy Clarkhouse road, and you step down into 'Victorian splendour'. The formality of the promenade, the splendid glasshouses complemented by fancy flowerbeds and urns, completely off set by the winding paths, that take you deep into the Garden, to view some of the most splendid trees in the area.

Another great influence on my path for more knowledge was Arroll Winning, our President, who by the time I became interested, had already done a great deal of research into his fellow countryman. Without his knowledge and inspiration I would not be writing this article.

The more I found out about Robert Marnock, the more I realised that here was a very clever and popular man of his time, and yet by some fluke in the writing of history he has been lost in the mist of time. I have found references, time and time again to his popularity with his fellow man, and 'a loved figure arousing affection wherever he went, and

much respected'. When he left Sheffield in 1840 to become the first curator of the Royal Botanic Society's garden at Regents Park, he was highly sought after to design gardens for the rich and famous. The list of gardens is becoming endless as I delve more and more into archives all over the country.

Much of my research has been made easier by the use of the World Wide Web, and contacts made by email. A great deal of information can be found locally, at the Sheffield Archives, and Sheffield local studies library. One of my greatest thrills was to read the five volumes of the Floricultural magazines held in the library. This was Robert Marnock's first attempts at publishing, and they are superb. The illustrations are of the best quality, and the writings, although appearing 'old fashioned', gave me an insight into this man's imaginative and energetic mind. While he was in Sheffield he became involved in many other projects, and he returned time and time again, to do more design work for Wostenholm at Kenwood, Oakes Park for the sculpture Sir Francis Chantrey, Weston Park, High Hazels Park, Sheffield General Cemetery and Storth Oaks at Ranmoor. He also worked on individual gardens at Spring Leigh for Henry Car Booth, and many of the tree lined roads of Cherry Tree and Sharrow.



Robert Marnock

A desire to find out all I could about this 19th century garden designer, has taken me all over England, and a little of Scotland. I have had the immense privilege of meeting and speaking to some very interesting people. It has been a great pleasure to find that they too have an interest in Robert Marnock, and the gardens that he designed so long ago. I think it is a great credit to the man that these gardens still exist, and are being restored one by one.

My first visit was only just up the road at Bretton Hall, now the Yorkshire Sculpture Park. It is known that Robert worked there from about 1825 until he came to Sheffield. He worked for Diana Beaumont who was herself a very keen gardener. Unfortunately I was not able to find out a great deal even though Cyril Pearce has done a great deal on the Bretton Archives, and I understand that there was a rose garden plan which had been lost!!! Nevertheless, I was thrilled to be shown around Bretton Hall, and to see the splendour of its interior. I fancy Robert met and married his wife Ann while he worked here, but I have yet to prove that. She was a Yorkshire lass from Great Driffield.

On from there, last summer while on holiday on our narrow boat we just happened to be on the canal at Warwick, so we just had to visit the rose garden at Warwick castle! To anyone who is in that vicinity during June or July this is a garden not to be missed. Robert Marnock designed the rose garden and peacock garden in 1868. Over the years it was developed into a tennis court, and it was only after the original Marnock plans were found in the 1980's, that the garden has been recreated exactly to the original design. It was opened in July 1986 by the late Princess of Wales. In 1892 it was described as 'a charming and secluded rosary, also a piece of Marnock's work, and it is well worthy of him'.. Well I will agree with all that.

Many of Marnock's gardens are to be found in the south east, and two that are being or have been restored are in East Sussex and Kent. Our autumn holiday was taken in this area, also to include Gravetye Manor, Leigh Place, Tonbridge and Marnock's home while he lived in Tunbridge Wells (in retirement) Braeside. The two gardens/parks we visited were Alexandra Park, Hastings, and Dunorlan Park, Tunbridge Wells.

Alexandra Park was Marnock's last public work in England, and it was laid out in 1878, when he was already an elderly gentleman. It is a 120 acre site with 30 champion trees. As with many open, public spaces Alexandra Park was in need of some work. Hastings Borough Council started up the Friends of the Park to coincide with the start of the HLF Project in 1999, and they have developed immensely since then. When we visited in the November the park was still in the 'restoration phase', but when we re-visited in April of this year the park looked wonderful. They are very proud that it is a Marnock garden, and it was very exciting to hear that during the restoration the original Marnock plans were discovered in the basement of the old Borough Engineers offices, and in perfect condition. The Grand re-opening was a 'grand' affair with the celebrity television personality Charlie Dimmock

doing the honours. (The park was originally opened by the Prince and Princess of Wales in 1882). I have to say I was very impressed by her, when she didn't just shovel a small amount of soil into a hole to plant a tree, but actually set to, and planted three trees, and a holly - the Marnock holly, of course!! The weather was very kind to Hastings, and the townspeople came out in their swarms. I know the organisers, particularly, Peter Mead, and the Friends, were very pleased with the success, and an estimated 15,000 people enjoyed the day.

Dunorlan Park, in Tunbridge Wells, started its life in a slightly different way. It was the private garden of a Mr. Henry Reed who was born in Doncaster in 1806. At the age of 20 he emigrated to Tasmania, made a fortune, and returned to England in the late 1850's, and built a grand house and garden. Robert Marnock was commissioned to design the garden. The gardens are arranged around an existing stream and pond, which were reshaped and beautified. There are two lakes. The lake feeds the waterfall, and a stream leads to the fountain. The house and garden were badly misused during the second world war, and in 1946 the council acquired Dunorlan and it was opened as a public park. Although it soon became a popular and well-maintained park, there were never the resources to carry out a full restoration. In 1997 the Friends of Dunorlan Park were set up, and they now have over 350 members. Restoration commenced in 2003 with Heritage lottery funding, and is due to be completed in the spring of 2005. It has recently been placed in the English Heritage Register of Parks and Gardens of historic importance, and is a fine example of the work of Robert Marnock in the richness of its planting and design.

To get to the roots of this man, I felt I had to go to his birthplace, so this summer we took a short holiday up into Aberdeenshire. Never having been to this part of the British Isles, I was overwhelmed by the beauty of the countryside. We visited the small hamlet, Kinnelar (near Kintore), where I know Marnock was born, the second son of a crofter/forester. Robert would have had a good education at the local school in Kintore (still to be standing), and possibly from there he would have gone to train at one of the large houses thereabouts. My research, at this point, as rather dried up, but I have high hopes that I will get help from the archives at Aberdeen University, or Mr. John Marnock, one of Robert Marnock's descendants. We went on to visit Crathie, and the little church where the Queen worships, and where Robert spent many happy summers here in the Highlands. The church where he would have worshiped has long gone, but you may still see the walls around the grave yard, the new church being built by Queen Victoria.

Included in my visits have been trips to London to visit the RHS Lindley Library, Regents Park, to see the original Marnock Garden, and Kensal Green cemetery, where Marnock is buried. A great deal of work is yet to be done, and I have trips to London arranged for the autumn. Unfortunately, many of the publications I wish to read are only to be found in London. There are a long, long list of gardens I would like to visit, and papers in various archives I would like to read, so I think it will keep me busy for some time.

Kay Keeton, Sheffield

EARLY REFERENCE TO OUR CHALYBEATE SPRING !

One of our members, Brian Aves, found the following reference to a Chalybeate Spring (which is clearly ours) in a copy of "English Homes and Villages" published 98 years ago and which he had borrowed from the British Library:

"Chalybeate Springs were also to be found in a little dell to the right of the road leading from Tunbridge Wells to Pembury. Here the water still rises rapidly into a stone basin, in the centre of a circular excavation about ten feet in diameter and six or eight feet deep, which is bricked round, and with the remains of stone steps leading down to the basin at the bottom. This spring, therefore, has clearly been, at some time, made use of as a medical remedy".

It seems that even 98 years ago the steps down to our spring were old !!!



A SNIPPET

On a mid-October Friday an illicit 'rave in Dunorlan Park' was foiled when eagle-eyed Lee, driving past the park, noticed a large group of boys and girls climbing over the fence into the park - on investigation he estimated there were about 200 of them in the park partying. The police were alerted but when they manifested the gathering scattered to points of the compass with few being apprehended !! No real harm done, except that Jerry, the Saturday park keeper had to spend a couple of hours clearing up broken glass, bottles, cans and rubbish !!



MORE SNIPPETS

There are one or two issues which are causing your Committee concern and we are arranging one of our periodic Update/Progress meetings with TWBC to discuss them. One of the main issues is the state of the Cascade, it has not been flowing for some time now - As Tony reported there is a problem with the pump. Given that the Friends contribution to the restoration was focussed on the cascade, and Peter Reynolds Memorial Summerhouse is located by the cascade, it is clearly very important to us that the cascade is functioning properly.

SUNRISE SENIOR LIVING - UPDATE

Sunrise Senior Living are, we understand, in the process of putting together the next iteration of their proposals which, we are advised should address the concerns expressed by the your Committee over their previous submission. At the time of writing this newsletter the new proposals have yet to be made public. WATCH THIS SPACE !!!!

BAYHALL ROAD LIME AVENUE

As reported in the last newsletter Richard Coombs has inspected the Limes along Bayhall Road, the report appeared to be thorough and balanced and the conclusions not unreasonable.

Peter Every, TWBC Parks Technical Officer has advised us as follows: *"..... It is recommended (in the report) that four tree's are removed within 12 months (No's 1233, 1234, 1235, 1238) with two of the trees removed immediately (1235 & 1238). All these trees are located close together and will leave a considerable gap in the line, a further four trees are been recommended for short term retention however there is a risk these trees may decline further within the timescale resulting further losses to the line."*

The two trees 1235 and 1238 have now been felled and time will tell how the removal of other trees will affect the visual impact and amenity value of the avenue, but as Philip Clarkson-Webb observed in our last newsletter - old avenues often have gaps!

An E-MAIL from Clare Hardy (which we copied to TWBC for their information).

Hello Robin,

I know this subject is a big headache for you and comes up again and again in the Courier. I emailed you a while ago when I heard dogs might be banned from the park, and you reassured me this would not be the case. I am a dog owner and rely quite heavily on Dunorlan as a safe place to walk my dogs, though to be honest, I am as fearful as any non-dog owner of dangerous dogs being loose in the park, particularly as one of my dogs recently had an eye operation and I have to be careful she is not attacked. (I also have to be careful of undergrowth which is why I favour Dunorlan at the moment, as it is open, so less likely to damage her injured eye.)

The main issue is to protect people, wildfowl and other dogs from dangerous dogs and irresponsible owners, and this should be the duty of the ground staff. A friend of mine was banned from the park some years ago as other dog walkers complained about her dog, which was GSD-cross and quite boisterous, but there are clearly far worse offenders than this dog, which mine got on well with. I'm sure it must be possible for the staff to identify and eject dangerous breeds or dogs that are clearly not under control.

I believe that there are no plans to ban dogs from the fields at the back of the park, but the issue is over whether they should be on leads in the ornamental areas. I can see the point of this, even though I would be affected, as one of my two dogs walks off the lead. The other suggestion I would like to make is to ban dogs from the park (except perhaps the rough ground and events field) between the hours of 11am and 3pm, to give families the chance to take young children there without encountering a dog, and to eat their lunch in peace. Another suggestion would be to ban dogs at weekends, but allow unrestricted access during the week.

As ever, it is the few who are making life difficult for the rest, however I see your need to come up with some sort of compromise.

Kind regards,

Clare Hardy
24 August 2007

Contacts

Chairman	Ruth Baker	Friars Coach House, Matfield, TN12 7LG	722406
Vice Chair	Richard Gosling	4 Delves Avenue, TW RN2 5DR	546899
Vice Chair & Events & Activities Coordinator	Norman Collings	Peterstone, 5 Sandrock Road, TN2 3PX E-mail: sn.collings@dsl.pipex.co.uk	523451
Hon.Sec/ Newsletter Ed.	Diana Lamb	70 Woodside Road, Rusthall, TW TN4 8PZ E-mail: diana.lamb@dha-landscape.co.uk	541875
Treasurer/Membership	Robin Christie	12 Camden Hill, TW TN2 4TJ E-mail: RobinDChristie@aol.com	527662
Committee Member	Dr Ian Beavis		523007
Newsletter Delivery Coordinator & Committee Member	Valerie Storey	Christmas Cottage, 23B Berkeley Road, TN1 1YR	526404
Head Gardener	Tony Ewins	email: tewins.dunorlan@hotmail.co.uk	Mobile Number 0777 5561507

Tunbridge Wells
BOROUGH COUNCIL

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