

FRIENDS OF DUNORLAN PARK



WINTER 2020 NEWSLETTER

**THE FRIENDS OF DUNORLAN PARK COMMITTEE WISH YOU
ALL A PEACEFUL AND SAFE CHRISTMAS & NEW YEAR**

**ARE YOU LOOKING FOR SOMETHING THAT LITTLE BIT DIFFERENT TO GET FOR A
FAMILY MEMBER OR FRIEND THIS CHRISTMAS?
WHAT ABOUT A VOUCHER FOR A YEAR'S SUBSCRIPTION
TO FRIENDS OF DUNORLAN PARK?**

**THIS WOULD ENTITLE THE RECIPIENT TO FREE ENTRY AT FRIENDS' EVENTS SUCH
AS THE SUMMER PICNIC, BAT WALKS, TREE WALK, FUNGAL FORAY, NEW YEAR
DRINKS & NIBBLES, A QUARTERLY COLOURFUL & INFORMATIVE NEWSLETTER
AND MUCH MORE....**

**FOR AN INDIVIDUAL THE COST IS £7 A YEAR
FOR A COUPLE OR FAMILY (of any size) THE COST IS £12 A YEAR
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REMEMBERING OUR PARK'S MEMORIAL BENCHES

This bench was donated by students and teachers of West Kent College in January 2006 *'In memory of the bravest friend whom we only had 5 weeks to share life with **Aymen Bouzguenda**'* from his fellow students and teachers.



"My strength still remains. I am able to cope for on this day when my friend has been taken, I look to the heavens, I've not been forsaken. The sun darts back and forth inbetween clusters of clouds. Yet few shadows are seen for their shining through is a hope which will brighten and fade all the sorrow. My burden will lighten"

Ken Harman's widow Judy told me that the bench was put in Dunorlan Park as it was a favourite park, used many times for dog-walking and, when their children were small, hours were spent picnicking, catching tadpoles and sledging from the statue to the fountain in the snow. They now visit the bench and take flowers on his birthday which the grandchildren enjoy. Ken was a keen sportsman, playing football for local teams in his youth and, latterly, cricket became his great love, playing for Hawkenbury amongst other teams. Judy said: *It's a comfort sitting on his bench in such a lovely setting.*



The bench was added to Dunorlan Park to commemorate the **Sorooptimist International of Tunbridge Wells and District's Diamond Jubilee 26-10-06**. As one of 3,000 clubs worldwide, Tunbridge Wells Sorooptimists are committed to improving the lives of women and girls. The club was founded in 1946 and past presidents have included at least four mayors and head teachers. Their work includes hands on service, fundraising for national and international projects,

awareness-raising and lobbying. They support local charities and have helped with refurbishing a local women's refuge. Their meetings are monthly, to listen to an invited speaker, followed by a club meeting. In 2021 the Tunbridge Wells Club will be 75 years old and they will be looking to plant a tree in Dunorlan Park to add to the landscape enjoyed by many in the local community.

The Friends of Dunorlan Park started in 1996 and was officially launched as a charity in April 1997. The Friends are every bit as important now as they were back in the early days and, since the restoration in 2003/4, they ensure the continued wellbeing of the park. Not only supporting and promoting the park, but also responding to the challenges presented by the pressures from economic constraints, heavy and varied use and inappropriate boundary development. To this end, the Friends of Dunorlan Park are committed to a series of aims and objectives which underpin all activities.





Donated by Richard, David, Katie & Max in September 2007 "in memory of **Sue** our loving wife and mother. So strong, so proud, so brave - treasured memories. She took her candle into another room we can not find, but we know she was here because of all the happiness she left".

Bench donated by Julie Levack in November 2006. "To celebrate the birth of our beautiful daughters **Abigail Butterfly**, March 2003 and **Arielle Eden**, March 2004. We love you so much"



This bench was donated by Tunbridge Wells and District Social Club for the Blind on the 27th March 2003 in memory of **Alice Pickles** who was a well-loved member and catering manager for the Social Club from 1980 to March 1990, when she relinquished her post due to failing sight.

MY APOLOGIES - from Joan, editor

In the Autumn Newsletter I included a bench in memory of Nettle and Badger which I believed had been donated by Jo Kent. This is not the case and I do apologise for my error. The bench was, in fact, in memory of two Staffordshire Bull Terriers and was erected by Janet Valentine who has now sadly passed away. My error was pointed out by a friend of Janet, Catherine Thomas who says: "I used to go dog walking with her and distinctly remember having to wait whilst they (the dogs) tugged at each end of a deceased rabbit they had found - there was no way we could distract them!..... so they were unforgettable for me. Nettle was the mother of Badger. Janet's last bull terrier was called Pumpkin!" Thank you for pointing out my error Catherine and, again, my apologies.

SUN WORSHIPPERS IN OUR PARK - and no, not the human kind!



Common lizards, Slow Worms (yes, it's a lizard, not a worm) and Sand Lizards like to soak up the sun on a bank or woodland edge and these are also the best places to go hunting. They are never far from cover so can dive into hiding if danger lurks. High summer is the best time to spot them as when the season turns to autumn, they go into hibernation and not reappear until the spring sunshine encourages them out again.



There are over 2,500 known species of lizards worldwide, but here in the UK, we have just these three representatives.



Did you know? Feathers are unique to birds and their dinosaur ancestors! Forming a beautiful display they are not only a vivid show of individuality but provide many other uses crucial to a bird's survival. Feathers are not only to provide the art of flight, but also provide warmth through thermal insulation and waterproofing, and they are also a great way to attract a partner and warn off predators. The feather is not as simple as it looks, it actually consists of five main parts - the Vane, the Rachis, Barb, Afterfeather and the hollow shaft. A microstructure of interlocking components enables the feather to



carry out its role. Not every feather is the same either, there are seven main types - the down feather, tail feather, wing, contour, bristle, semi plume and filoplume. It's very important when looking after birds that we ensure we pay particular attention to this crucial part of the bird. Tail guards can be provided for buzzards, this ensures they do not damage their important rudder, providing baths for waterfowl to ensure they preen and remain



waterproof. With some species, such as the swift, the feathers need to be 100% pristine to ensure their safe passage back to Africa. **The joys of plumology! Keep an eye out for them in the park....**

WHAT A HOOT!



If you listen carefully, the hooting of owls in our park can be heard, especially at dusk or during the night. We don't see owls much during daylight hours as they spend their time camouflaged against the tree trunks, but they're definitely there! The park rings with the call of tawny owls all year, especially from late summer into autumn, when the young leave to find their own territories.

It's a myth that owls can turn their heads 360 degrees!

They can actually turn their necks 135 degrees in either direction, which gives them 270 degrees of total movement.

Instead of spherical eyeballs, owls have 'eye tubes' which go back far into their skulls - which means their eyes are fixed in place so they have to turn their heads to see. The size of their eyes helps them see in the dark, and they're far-sighted which means they can spot prey from yards away. Up close,



everything to them is blurry. They have super-powered hearing



which means they can hear prey under leaves, soil, dirt, just about anywhere.

Unlike most birds, owls make virtually no noise when they fly. They have special feathers which break turbulence into smaller currents, which reduces sound. They are masters of camouflage!

Many owls sleep in broad daylight, but the colours and markings on their feathers helps them blend in with their surroundings.

WHICH YEAR WAS THIS???

In this year, Neil Faraday at Invicta FM said:

“When you hear that your local council has spent £2.8 million doing up your local park, your first reaction is: ‘Oh my god! How could they?’ How on earth could they have spent so much money tarding up a park? Surely it’s just some grass, a few trees and a couple of hundred bedding plants! **How wrong I was!!** I went for a walk around Dunorlan Park in Tunbridge Wells the other day and it has to be the first time in ages that I have been well and truly gobsmacked. Talk about putting something back for future generations - it looks amazing. I was in awe as I strolled around.”

Answer on the last page



CHRISTMAS FAVOURITE(S)

There is plenty of it in our park and it sums up Christmas. Good old holly! The rich glossy dark green leaves look good throughout winter and what is a plum pudding without a sprig of holly on the top? In times past, evergreen foliage was brought indoors during the winter as a decoration for the house. Its berries are an important source of food for birds such as redwings and thrushes. Speaking of birds, remember to leave them out a Christmas treat - a bit of mince pie or fruit cake would go down very well!



FOREVER LOVED AND MISSED



Norman Arthur Matchett

January 25 1922 to July 14 2020 - will be forever remembered as the 'Boatman' in Dunorlan Park.

In 1940, Norman joined the Local Defence Volunteers, later called the Home Guard, and his duties included manning the top of the tower at Dunorlan House, recording when German bombers flew overhead towards London.

Norman joined the RAF in 1940 and served until VJ Day in 1945. His rank is not known but he served as a rigger on the Beaufighter planes in Africa, the Middle East, Egypt, Sri Lanka/Ceylon and finally in Burma. His service number was 1272499 and his regiment was Airforce 144. It's believed he volunteered for

dispatches so there may be another regiment number, but this is unknown.

After the war, Norman started his 'love affair' with Dunorlan in 1947 when he joined forces with his brother Ron and they bought a redundant Second World War trailer for £20 and set up a



canteen. In 1952, they 'upgraded' by building a wooden hut serving as a café. Two years later they started hiring out boats from a 'tin hut' by the side of the lake with a fleet of 10 boats! In the 1960s, during decent weather, they had a large brown Indian tent by the kiosk in which they sold teas. The Fire Brigade also used the lake to train and test

equipment, and the lake itself was an emergency water supply!

In June 1964 a newspaper headline announced '**Row-boats to rescue.**

Animals saved in heaviest rain for six years'. Rowing boats normally used by holiday-makers in Dunorlan Park were used to rescue livestock when torrential rain flooded Bardenmill Farm, Speldhurst during the early hours of Friday morning. Norman and his brother Ron received a call from Assistant Divisional Officer Wyles of Tunbridge Wells Fire Brigade at 1am and immediately collected four boats at Dunorlan. The Fire Brigade took them to Bardenmill Farm. Mr Wyles



praised the brothers for their cooperation, through which most of the livestock was saved from drowning.

An article in the Courier, dated September 18 1998, showed the headline as '**Brothers notch up 50 years at lake**'. "It's hard to imagine Dunorlan Park without rowing boats, but impossible to think of the boats without Norman and Ron Matchett who have hired them out for the last 50 years. The brothers still use the original steel trumpet to call in the boats and have kept the 1948 price board which shows canoe hire for a shilling."

In 2002 there were doubts about the business when the park was closed for refurbishment but, as Norman told me: "We returned and continued to offer the service for everyone."

When I was chatting to him back in 2018 and asked what he liked about being the Boatman, he said: "It's always a thrill to see children going out in a boat for the first time. They come back feeling 6ft tall. It's a lovely thing". I also asked him how people differ who go out on the boats. His reply was: "We don't treat anyone differently. Treat all with respect, posh or not so posh, as that's very important."

Norman told me he had a great team working for him on the boats and couldn't do it without them. Now that Norman is no longer with us, his son Peter has taken over the reins and I suspect he feels just the same.

I would like to wish Peter and his team all the very best for the future as, in the words of the Courier, it's hard to imagine Dunorlan Park without rowing boats and, hopefully, they will live on through Peter and the Matchett name!



AN UPDATE FROM KASIA AT TWBC

Autumn is a great time to admire the beauty of the trees - it is also time for their health check.

In recent weeks, tree specialists visited Dunorlan Park to do checks and treatments to two old trees in the park, the Café Oak and the ancient Yew.



At the start of September, Harraway Trees team performed the 'PICUS' and Resistograph testing on the old English Oak tree next to the café. The tree appears to be of good health, looking at the density of foliage in crown, however we noticed fungal fruiting bodies of *Ganoderma* on the north and east sides of the base and it prompted us to carry out the testing. *Ganoderma resinaceum* fungus is a common cause of white-rot in mature Oak trees. The investigation has confirmed the presence of decay in the north east part of the stem cross section; however

other parts appear unaffected at present and the tree is unlikely to be in a hazardous condition. Mr Harraway advised us to carry out precautionary crown reduction in height by approximately 3 metres and to repeat an evaluation of decay in the lower stem in 2 - 3 years.

Testing explained:

The PICUS Sonic Tomograph is used to investigate the internal condition of a tree via sound waves. A series of nails are installed around the tree at the measuring plane where visual inspections have identified weaknesses requiring further investigation. These nails become the



measuring points and are used to send or receive sound waves.

The IML Resistograph PD400 measures the drilling resistance of a very fine drill bit (to a maximum depth of 40cm). Significant drops in drilling resistance are indicative of decay.



In late September, a specialist from Goroots the Hydroseeding & Decompaction Company attended to our ancient Yew tree below the terrace. The Yew is well loved by the park users and children love to climb it. All the love and attention is causing compaction of the ground which

is not good for the tree. Goroots team used a Terravent machine to de-compact the ground. It is a way of breaking up any soil layers which are preventing the exchange of air and moisture within the root zone. A 22mm hollow probe is inserted to the ground. Once at the required depth, the probe is connected to a high-pressure gas source (Nitrogen Bottles) and a blast of gas is released through the

holes at the bottom of the probe. This treatment to the Yew was completed by adding 'tree saver' to the root zone - a rejuvenating mixture of beneficial stimulants and fungi.



We have received special certificates of recognition from the RHS and South & South East in Bloom for our work in keeping the park running and the town blooming throughout the Covid outbreak

A FEW WORDS FROM THE CHAIR

I hope our members and other friends are managing as difficult times continue and I hope you are able to enjoy Christmas although probably in some reduced form.

The two Bat Walks, organised by our committee's secretary Judy Guest, were both successful and the highlight was standing by the boathouse watching the bats skimming over the lake in search of their supper!

We did manage to enjoy our socially distanced Fungal Foray with Keith Palmer in spite of the weather. Fifteen people started the walk and, two hours later, six finished! We found and identified a wide range of fungi as shown by the pictures in Keith's article later in this issue.

We will not be able to organise our Drinks and Nibbles Party in early January and this is a great shame. We are, however, looking optimistically to 2021 and we are discussing with the Royal Tunbridge Wells Round Table the idea of a special Easter Egg Hunt, partly to offset the disappointment of their firework display being cancelled for only the second time in its 63 year history. The article on the next page refers.

Especially with shopping being difficult at the time of writing, you may be interested in the idea, featured on the front page, of giving Friends' membership vouchers to your friends this Christmas at a cost of only £7 for an individual and £12 for a couple or a family.



Many of us will be using the services of Amazon to buy Christmas presents and other supplies. The Friends have now joined Amazon Smile and we invite you to do your shopping via Amazon Smile in order for the Friends to receive 0.5% of everything you spend. There is no cost to you and the range of products available to you on Amazon remains exactly the same.

All you have to do is:

- Always log on to www.smile.amazon.co.uk instead of your usual log on
- The first time you log on in this way, please choose the Friends as your favourite charity. The easiest way to do this is to simply type in our Charity Commission number which is **1063715**. You need only do this once as the system will recognise you and your favourite charity next and every time you log in via Amazon Smile
- If you are currently using Amazon via a web link, saved in a favourites file, please delete that and replace it with the Amazon Smile web link as above.

I would like to wish all our members a very happy Christmas and I hope that we will banish Covid in 2021 so that we can resume our usual activities.

Best wishes,

Peter Russell, Chair of Friends of Dunorlan Park





POSSIBLE EVENTS FOR 2021



ROUND TABLE EASTER EGG HUNT - hopefully in April



The Royal Tunbridge Wells Round Table are hoping to organise an Easter Egg Hunt in the park just before Easter next year (Easter Day is Sunday April 4th) and Dunorlan Friends will host. Details are yet to be finalised but look out in the media and on social media for plans.



LIFEBOAT EXTRAVAGANZA COMING NEXT SUMMER (hopefully!)



It's hoped that the Royal Tunbridge Wells Branch of the RNLI will be able to hold an event on, and by, Dunorlan lake sometime during the summer months next year. Model lifeboats will be displayed sailing on the lake and there will be stalls selling RNLI souvenirs, books and many other items to raise funds for the RNLI. There will also be a bucket collection in the park with all collectors wearing high-viz tabards showing the RNLI logo. Look out for future details in the media and on social media.

ROYAL NATIONAL LIFEBOAT INSTITUTION

The Friends are cautiously hopeful that our regular events will be able to take place next year but only time will tell. The Summer Picnic; Bat Walks; Fungal Foray; Tree Walk and, of course the AGM are all under consideration as are the events agreed by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, such as Pub In The Park; Soapbox Race; Race For Life and the Round Table's Firework display.

As we all know, everything hangs in the balance now so we just have to think positive and keep our fingers crossed. We will, of course, keep you updated, on the Friends' Facebook page and also through the local media.

KEITH'S FUNGAL FORAY - by Keith Palmer

The annual Fungal Foray in the park had, remarkably, been given the go-ahead by the local authorities as being exempt from the rule-of-six on the grounds of being an outside educational event. On the day, the number attending was not far short of 20. Conditions were damp and at times drizzly but the main surge of wind and heavy rain thankfully held off until the evening.



There were unusually no children on today's walk but the adults present proved equally adept at finding fungi of interest that had eluded me. The route followed was the traditional one, along the path to the fountain and then up the slope and returning by the side of the lake. The recent rains will have aided the development of fungi which are, as I explained, the fruiting bodies of fungal threads (mycelium) growing underground and mostly unseen. As fruits they contain the wherewithal for continuing the species, namely seeds, or in the case of fungi,

microscopic spores which are only visible in the mass as when you see the inside of a puff ball or earth ball or when you make a spore print.

This can be done by placing a fresh mushroom or toadstool cap on some paper covered by a bowl and leave it overnight. By



morning spores will have fallen from the cap to leave a wheel-like pattern on the paper; however it is necessary to take into account the colour of the cap underside (the gills) and use paper which is contrasting. White spores falling onto white paper will give a disappointing effect!

Shaggy ink-caps were not in their usual place near the car park but Common ink-caps were soon seen nearby and later we found a few Shaggys elsewhere in the park. Earth Balls were demonstrated showing the mass of dark grey spores inside the split fruiting body and later we were able to contrast that with the white spongy marsh mallow-

textured mass inside a fresh specimen before the spores had darkened and matured. Brown roll-rims were unusually abundant throughout including some giant specimens, growing in association with Birch trees or on the liberally sprinkled wood chips. Growing at the base of an Oak tree a fungus that looked a bit like the Brown roll-rim but with a much longer stem proved a senior moment for me who had suddenly forgotten its

name. it was in fact the Spectacular ustgill as I recalled just as soon as everyone had left the scene!

Rubbery-smelling Stinking

Dapperlings were found but we searched in vain for any bracket fungi growing shelf-like out from tree trunks. Poison Pies were noted (the clue is in the name), Deceivers too and some nice Brown Birch Boletes with black-speckled stems. I was somewhat disappointed with the rather low diversity of fungi given the recent wet weather but in general the afternoon was much enjoyed by those attending and perhaps particularly so by those who were new to fungi.



A very nice comment from Maisie following the Foray: "I am so excited that you have organised a mushroom walk! We had such a nice day on Saturday - I feel very inspired mushroom hunting! I will be signing up to join the Friends."

ARMISTICE DAY IN VICTORIA CROSS GROVE



A poignant commemoration was held in Dunorlan Park's Victoria Cross Grove, by the Memorial Sculpture, on Wednesday November 11th. The Royal British Legion Tunbridge Wells Branch's chairman John Cohen, who is also one of our committee members,



has arranged the ceremony at the Sculpture for some years and this year was no exception.

After a few words from John, buglers Jon Vanns and Simon Taylor from TS Brilliant, played the Last Post whilst RBL Standard Bearer Duncan Sage lowered the Standard. This was followed by a two minute silence. Reveille then sounded after which Mayor Cllr Joy Podbury laid a wreath by the



Sculpture.

There was also a wreath already there from the 1st Battalion of the Gurkha Rifles and a single small wooden cross with 'Thank You' printed on it. Both very poignant.

The weather stayed dry, thankfully, and about a dozen members of the public arrived to pay their respects.



THANK YOU FOR KEEPING IN TOUCH WE REALLY APPRECIATE YOUR FEEDBACK



Here are just a few contributions from our wonderful supporters:

Sara emailed to say: "The newsletter is simply fabulous. Well done you". *Thank you Sara but, as always, it's a team effort.*

Diana emailed: "Lovely newsletter full of great stuff - thank you so much". *Many thanks Diana, glad you enjoyed it.*

Valerie C emailed: "A very big thank you for the presentation of newsletter plus the very interesting, well chosen variety of topics. One photo image was particularly brilliant...the variety of dandelions and subtle use of colour frame to enhance the

shot. You have a very keen eye and an excellent camera!" *Very kind comments indeed Valerie, especially from a Graduate Royal Academy of Arts, but I have to say I didn't take the photo. I will, however, take credit for the colour frame!*

Angela S called me to say: "Considering so many events have been cancelled this year, the newsletter is still great reading and the article on the birds I particularly enjoyed". *Thank you Angela. Have to say I'm rarely short of something to include as the park is so diverse.*

AND FINALLY, JUST FOR A GIGGLE.....
Can you work out what these items are in a park or garden? Answers below



GRUBBUS SIZZLUS.....
DRINKUS MANHATTALAN.....
JUNKIUS STORIA.....
TUBBULUS BUBBLUS.....
SCOOPUS MUCKERUS...

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Answers:

What year was this? Restoration was completed in 2004
 And finally... barbecue picnic area garden shed hot tub spade

