



THE
ROYAL
PARKS

volunteeringnews

Season's Greetings! Thank you all for your hard work this year!

As 2009 draws to a close, we look forward to another productive year in 2010 with the continuation and expansion of our education and community engagement programme, a new volunteer training schedule, which will be circulated early next year, and more editions of the Volunteering News with your articles and experiences of volunteering for The Royal Parks. Please submit your ideas for the next edition as soon as possible.

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The colour of springtime is in the flowers, the colour of winter is in the imagination. ~Ward Elliot Hour~

RICHMOND PARK

THE ROYAL PARKS SHIRE HORSES VOLUNTEER - CARMINE BRUDENELL

I first became a volunteer at Richmond Park for the Richmond Beetle Group. I was aware of the Shire horses, based at Holly Lodge, though, and one day asked Assistant Park Manager Adam Curtis if I could help with them. I have had a passion for horses since I was a teenager and used to help out with the many Shire horses at Young's brewery, until it closed. I started volunteering with The Royal Parks' horses at 6.30am on a cold February morning two and a half years ago. That day I helped water, feed and groom the horses, muck out three stables, and spent several hours clearing part of the park of ponticum, which is toxic for horses. It was a long, physically demanding day but I loved it. I am now a

regular at the yard and the one and only volunteer with the Royal Parks Shire Horse Team, assisting full time horsemen Steve Green and Sandra Croxall.

companions Billy and Massey. I have forged friendships with all the horses and when the time comes for one to go it's heartbreaking.



Carmine Brudenell with Jed and Forte

When I first came to the yard there were three horses, Jed, Forte and Gaymer. Sadly Gaymer and, most recently, Forte have passed on and Jed now has two new

Sometimes the horses may be called upon to appear at local community events as well as take part in parades and shows further afield. At these events, I plait the horses'

manes and tails in the traditional way. I learned this skill from a friend who works with the Fuller's brewery Shire horses and I have practised to perfect it. The horses have appeared at weddings, made several TV and radio appearances, and have also met royalty. I met Princess Alexandra when Jed and Forte, Steve and I took part in the naming of a horse ride after her. She genuinely admired the horses, as most people do when they meet them, and Jed and Forte were thoroughly spoiled that day with a present of posh Chantenay carrots from the royal kitchen!

Heavy horses were introduced to help manage the Park in 1993, after an absence of

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RICHMOND AND GREENWICH PARKS

FUNGI TRAINING IN RICHMOND PARK

WORDS: LESLEY KETTLE (HYDE PARK AND KENSINGTON GARDENS VOLUNTEER)

PHOTOS: AMANDA BROWN (ST. JAMES'S PARK VOLUNTEER)

Who would have thought that fungi could be fun? (Okay, there will be no jokes about fun guys here!) Those of us who attended the Fungi Training day at the Holly Lodge Centre in Richmond Park on Thursday 17 September were treated to a truly inspirational event run by Head of Ecology Dr Nigel Reeve, starting with a presentation stuffed full of amazing facts about the Fungi Kingdom.

Did you know that there are 70,000 known species of fungi, but it is possible that there are nearer 1.5 million in total? No, I didn't either until that day. And did you know that one of those species has learnt to live in and break down kerosene, the fuel used in aircraft? Something else to worry about for those who are scared of flying! I wonder what Charles Darwin would have made of that?

I wish Darwin could have been with us that day, when, after a welcome sandwich lunch, we ventured out into a rather drizzly afternoon to try to find just a few of the 400 species that we know inhabit Richmond Park. We soon recovered from the slightly troubling advice about searching for ticks when we got home, in the unlikely event that we pick up one carrying

Lyme Disease. (Unlikely but possible and we all know the importance of health and safety!) So we tucked our trousers into our socks, took a deep breath and set off into the undergrowth.

We spotted many of the specimens we were hoping for and there were whoops of joy when we found green elfcup (*Chlorociboria aeruginascens*), a fungi that stains wood a blue-green colour. That's what I meant about fun! We all now know the difference between Ascomycota and Basidiomycota, and walks in the Parks will never be the same again. My only regret is that we didn't find any "magic" mushrooms, but as they carry a hefty fine for just being in possession, that may not be a bad thing, and I will therefore not be sharing any information about what they look like should I find one...



Lacquered bracket (*Ganoderma resinaceum*)



Dead man's fingers (*Xylaria polymorpha*)



Volunteers searching for fungi in Richmond Park



Artist's Bracket (*Ganoderma applanatum*)

FUNGI TRAINING IN GREENWICH PARK

PHOTOS: NIGEL REEVE (HEAD OF ECOLOGY)



Charcoal burner (*Russula cyanoxantha*)



Volunteers searching for fungi in Greenwich Park

HYDE PARK AND KENSINGTON GARDENS

REFLECTIONS ON VOLUNTEERING IN HYDE PARK SUMMER 2009

BY ALEXA "LEX" STEELE INTERN FROM PEPPERDINE UNIVERSITY, USA

Before interning under Nick Lane at The Royal Parks, I had no idea what to expect. Even when boarding my plane to go to London, I wasn't sure if I would even be able to intern since there were delays with my background check. Thankfully everything worked out and I spent one month participating in some unique activities.

My four weeks with Nick flew by so quickly that it was hard to take in all I was learning at once. Since I've had time to digest everything I came away with, I can say definitively that my experience was priceless. I now have a respect for all it takes to keep Hyde Park thriving. I've also gained a newfound acceptance of creepy crawly creatures to boot!

I'd like to give a big "Thank you!" to Nick, the office staff, and, of course, all the volunteers I was lucky enough to work with. Thank you for making my experience at The Parks so special.

SOME OF MY FAVOURITE MOMENTS

Working with children as they tell me with such interest and excitement about the minibeasts they'd pond-dipped or discovered under logs.

Winning the battle over minibeasts against the "evil" prowling robin seemed like such a triumph!

Nick acting as my tour guide at Brompton Cemetery before sitting in on the quarterly meeting. Since I'd never really been to a cemetery before, it was a bit spooky to be peeking into the catacombs and stepping in the overgrown maze between tombstones. What I enjoyed most about that day was seeing how passionate the Friends of Brompton are about their archives.

Afternoons in the office with music from the nearby Peter Pan production drifting in. Unfortunately, I was not able to see the show for myself, but I became very familiar with the score by the time my month was over. Lucky for me, I found the music soothing.

Tagging along on both the Walking with Giants and Plant Hunters guided walks were great opportunities to not only offer my help and assistance to The Parks, but to learn a great deal about Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens. I urge anyone who is interested in the walks to participate. They're such fun and provide a positive environment to meet new people with similar interests.

Listening to fellow volunteer Dave talk about water boatmen in such a fascinating way as to depict them as little monsters straight out of a horror film—slurping up their prey through a beak on their bellies!

Being chased around by a 5-year-old little girl holding a spider in a pot. Seeing a girl in her tiny all-girls school uniform proudly displaying the spider she caught when I was terrified at worst and merely squeamish at best humbled me.

Nick and I both working diligently while listening to Disney songs blasting through his speakers. Two adults bonding over old Disney music can easily brighten even the greyest of days.

Most of all, I loved watching the school children interact with Hyde Park, seeing them giggle and laugh when Nick gave his dog safety talks, and giving them a round of applause before their journey home.

ST JAMES'S PARK

After another busy year on the St James's Park allotment, it has now closed its gates to the public and the task of clearing the site and returning it to its original state has begun. After two years of working in partnership with The Churchill Museum (in both 2007 and 2008), The Royal Parks ran the project alone this year and succeeded in continuing the fine volunteer and community engagement work associated with the project since its inception.

A big thank you must be extended to the volunteers who worked alongside the St James's Park and Education teams throughout the summer in delivering the project. Like so many of the projects run throughout The Parks, the success of the allotment is indebted to the man hours and hard work that each volunteer donates. The work of volunteers this year has been multi-faceted and has included helping to physically maintain the site, assisting with the delivery of the education

Farewell to the Allotment by Andy Nisbet

programme and donating their time for our special events such as the RHS Dig Together Day and Harvest Festival. So THANK YOU to all those who have contributed.

Although 2009 is the final year that the allotment will be housed in its current location in St James's Park there are plans for similar projects in Kensington Gardens and Regents Park. So, for any of you who are interested in tilling, sowing and harvesting in future years – watch this space!!!

ALLOTMENT



VOLUNTEERS

VOLUNTEER AWAY DAY TO KEW GARDENS

Words by Lesley Kettle. Photos by Lesley Kettle and Nick Lane



Two coach-loads of volunteers and staff enjoyed a memorable day out at Kew Gardens on 1st September. Their staff laid on hot drinks, biscuits and cakes on arrival, followed by an engaging and comprehensive presentation on the work of the Royal Botanic Gardens and the vital role played by their team of around 500 volunteers.



Some of those volunteers joined the gathering in the Jodrell Lecture Theatre to offer a choice of guided walks on different themes and of differing lengths. There was something to suit everyone's interests and abilities including a climb up to the dizzying heights of the new Xstrata Treetop Walkway. Everyone set off on their chosen walk, dodging one or two heavy showers in an otherwise bright day, and those with a head for heights and strong knees were rewarded with stunning views across the Gardens and beyond from the Walkway's 18 metre height, in the tree canopy. After an energy-replenishing lunch in one of the cafes, everyone again set off to see more of the gardens before clambering back on the coaches.



I know I'm speaking for all the volunteers in saying a huge thanks to Jen Estwick for such a well-organised and enjoyable day and for the added value of luncheon vouchers!



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thirty-nine years. They have several advantages over machinery-use in the park as they cause much less ground damage to the wildlife-rich grassland than a tractor and are much more environmentally friendly.

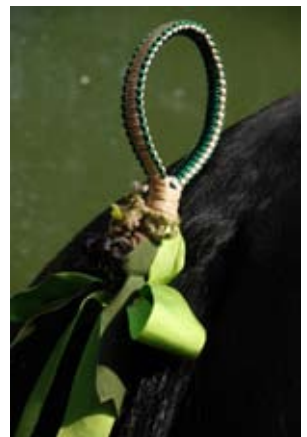
Their work consists of road verge cutting, bracken rolling, chain harrowing, timber extraction and general carting duties, and I can harness the horses and put them to the relevant vehicle they will be using on any given day. Although I do not drive

the Royal Parks Shires, I have had experience of driving heavy horses at other establishments.

The Royal Parks Shires are not pets, they are working horses, and although normally good natured they are still animals and therefore unpredictable. Given the fact that they each weigh just under a ton, health and safety is paramount. The yard has strict rules and you have to work as a team and know what to do in case of an emergency. You never stop learning something new about these beautiful animals and I am continually gaining

knowledge from people that have been around heavy horses for decades. However relevant equine qualifications may be, the teachers and examiners will always be the horses themselves.

Jed's Tail



THE ROYAL PARKS

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