

THE ISABELLA PLANTATION

60TH BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION AUGUST 2013

Activity Report

INTRODUCTION

The Isabella Plantation celebrated the sixtieth anniversary between 16th August and 30th August 2013. A programme of events was put in place, aiming to bring new visitors to the Plantation and to engage a wide range of local people. The programme was managed and delivered on the lawn to the south of Peg's Pond, where a 7 metre yurt was installed. Not only did the yurt offer shelter from rain, a storage space for materials and equipment, but it also served as an attraction in its own right, drawing members of the public to look at what was going on and ask about the project.

FRIDAY 16TH AUGUST, GUIDED WALK

Launching the 60th Anniversary celebrations was a joint event hosted in association with the London Borough of Richmond-upon-Thames Garden Festival. A guided walk led by Assistant Park Manager, Jo Scrivener provided a chance for people to find out about both the Isabella plants and the Access Project.

Participant Totals

Adults	Children	BME	PWD	Total
17	0	2	0	17

MONDAY, 19TH AUGUST HOLLY LODGE ARTS

Sarah Parsloe, Arts therapist from the Holly Lodge Centre, ran an open arts workshop outside the yurt. 11 of the Holly Lodge's Centre users, with learning and/or physical disabilities, participated in a series of workshop activities making prints and paper Azaleas. These were used to bedeck the yurt for the rest of the week. A large banner spelling I-S-A B-E-L-L-A on flags was produced, and also decorated the yurt

The work produced was attractive and significantly themed towards the nature of the Plantation. There was a very high demand on Sarah's attention, to interact with multiple groups of extremely diverse abilities. She was supported by 7 volunteers from Holly Lodge Centre, but was effectively the only arts practitioner available to help produce the art-work. This split focus was problematic, though very well accommodated by her.

During the day 57 Plantation visitors collected leaflets and engaged in discussion about the project.

Participant Totals

Adults	Children	BME	PWD	Total
6	27	10	11	33

TUESDAY, 20TH AUGUST STORY TELLING

Three story-telling sessions took place in the glade adjacent to the yurt. These were aimed at younger children, and were led by Anne Johnson, with support from 2 volunteers. Following the story-telling event, the children and their carers were taken on a walk through the Plantation, and then came back to the yurt to produce

drawings and artwork on themes suggested by the event. The children were mostly very young, 3-6 years. They produced some work with great enthusiasm but the work was not robust enough to withstand the rigours of exhibition outdoors.

During the day 25 Plantation visitors collected leaflets and engaged in discussion about the project.

Participant Totals

Adults	Children	BME	PWD	Total
4	12	5	0	16

WEDNESDAY, 21st AUGUST COMMUNITY ARTS

Community Artists Jo and Richard Farrington spent all day in the yurt working with members of the public on screen-prints. The work was conceived to help enable input into the design for signage in the Plantation, to be produced by Richard.

Participant Totals

Adults	Children	BME	PWD	Total
50	34	22	7	84

THURSDAY, 22nd AUGUST GUIDED WALKS

After 3 glorious days of sun and warmth, Thursday was sodden, grey and rained torrentially. As a consequence, the guided walks, introducing the public to the history and development of the plantation, were very sparsely attended. Ruth Hayhurst, a historian who had developed the material for the walks and trained a number of volunteers in delivering them, pressed ahead, but numbers were low.

It is difficult to assess the effectiveness of this activity, since it was to all intents and purposes washed out. It provided a useful 'dry run' for two volunteers.

Participant Totals

Adults	Children	BME	PWD	Total
3	0	0	0	3

FRIDAY, 23rd AUGUST TEDDY BEARS' PICNIC

Ginger Cat Theatre Group set up a variety of arts activities on the lawn, on another hot and sunny day. They hosted a Teddy Bear's Picnic, and a lot of effort was made to draw attendance from young children.

This event was used to trial the take-up of a shuttle service running from Roehampton Gate to the Plantation. With partners The Holly Lodge Centre a mini bus ran this route at half-hourly intervals from 10.00am until 4.30 pm. 58 members of the public took advantage of this service, including 6 people with disability, and 25 from BME background. This was used to trial the transport strategy, and a further report on this aspect will be appended. The service was used by two nurseries from Roehampton, who would not otherwise have been able to attend the event, and by 25 older Roehampton residents not participating in the activity but who had not been able to access the plantation for over 10 years due to the distance from the estate..

Participant Totals

Adults	Children	BME	PWD	Total
27	71	11	1	98

SATURDAY & SUNDAY, 24th & 25th AUGUST EXHIBITION

The yurt provided a venue for a number of exhibitions; the Friends of Richmond Park put up an interactive stall allowing varied explorations of Park artefacts, and offered history and information; an exhibition of photographs and drawings of Isabella by pupils of Grey Court School was mounted; photographs by Ron Teague and Joyce Bing were exhibited; and the Royal Parks mounted exhibitions relating to the history and development of the Isabella Plantation, details of the work completed and the works to be initiated, and a slide exhibit of some of the plants in the Plantation.

The Holly Lodge Centre also had a stand illustrating the activities of the centre. 7 volunteers from the Friends of Richmond Park attended on each of the two days. On Saturday there was torrential rain, severely limiting numbers and lasting all day, and on Sunday the rain was lighter and eased in the afternoon so there was a substantial increase in visitors. The yurt was water-tight, and those gathered inside stayed reasonably dry, but the damp humid atmosphere caused the mountings on the photographs to come apart. Most of the exhibits were laminated, and withstood the conditions well.

Participant Totals

Adults	Children	BME	PWD	Total
97	235	52	9	332

MONDAY, 26th AUGUST GINGER CAT THEATRE

Ginger Cat Theatre returned and offered games and drama workshops to the children visiting on a sunny Bank Holiday Monday. The exhibition was continued on the history of the Isabella. There was also a change in that the illustrations of the Isabella improvement project were installed on the external area of the yurt. They were water proofed and so stayed on the side of the yurt until the closing. This enabled a number of visitors to understand what the project was trying to achieve and was a really useful way of continuing the conversations after the activities had concluded.

Participant Totals

Adults	Children	BME	PWD	Total
118	128	61	0	246

TUESDAY, 27th AUGUST GUIDED WALKS

A much sunnier day, three guided walks were offered, led by 3 Isabella Plantation volunteers. This was a useful trial run for a programme of walks to be initiated in spring.

Participant Totals

Adults	Children	BME	PWD	Total
18	0	2	0	18

WEDNESDAY, 28th AUGUST STORY TELLING

The final day of the celebration saw the return of the story-telling sessions, with Anne Johnson leading and two volunteers assisting with the associated workshop.

The yurt was dismantled and taken off site again attracting a huge amount of interest with passers by asking when the next events would take place. The Plantation was restored to its former state that evening apart from some damage to grass which would regenerate very quickly there was no visible signs that the yurt was on site.

Participant Totals

Adults	Children	BME	PWD	Total
28	68	9	0	96

FRIDAY 30TH AUGUST GUIDED WALK

Isabella gardener Dick Farr rounded off the anniversary events with one of his longstanding and popular guided walks with a 60-year twist.

Participant Totals

Adults	Children	BME	PWD	Total
10	0	0	0	10

ON THE RECORD

On the 4 days over the bank holiday weekend 2 historians from the 'On the Record' project attended the site and conducted interviews with individuals who visited the project or who were passing by Pegs Pond. Their objective was to collect and capture memories and historical experiences from members of the public. They carried out 29 interviews involving 65 people and have catalogued all of the content. They gained permissions from the participants for the future use of the memories in the development of the web resources and for the Social History project.

CONCLUSION

Over the ten days of the celebration, there were 1,093 visitors to the site, 591 children and 502 adults. There were 168 hours of volunteer time contributed, and of the 1,093 visitors, 174 were from a BME background, and 28 were people with disabilities.

This event was successful in reaching its target audience of 1000 visitors despite a feeling from the organising group that publicity for the event could have been better. It also broadly achieved its aim of attracting new users and a wide range of local people to the Plantation. Many of the activities were focused particularly on family based activity, which not only attracted large numbers of children but also a noticeably high number from BME backgrounds. The arts based events produced a wide range of material which will help inform the design of activity based signage created by the Project's public artist and will also contribute to a final exhibition which we hope will attract more new users to the Plantation. The transport trial made a significant contribution to the Teddy Bears Picnic day attracting two nursery groups and a large number of older people from the more deprived Roehampton Estate, who would not of visited the Plantation otherwise. This result further strengthens the need to explore assisted transport to the Plantation. The fortnight of events also saw a welcome and significant contribution from existing partner organisations namely The Holly Lodge Centre and The Friends of Richmond Park. The event also helped to launch of the aural history project with assistance from On The Record and an archive appeal which will be added as content to the IPAP website.