

Greenwich Park's future revealed

Early in 2020, The Royal Parks were awarded a grant of £4.5m from the National Lottery Heritage Fund to undertake the 'Greenwich Park Revealed' project. After four years of planning, Jane Sidell of Historic England and Graham Dear, the Park Manager, reveal the plans and we revisit Greenwich Park articles on the Layers of London website.

Greenwich Park is at the heart of the Maritime Greenwich World Heritage site, and is among the most protected historic landscapes in London, being a Grade I registered park and garden. It contains three scheduled monuments, a variety of listed buildings – it is also part of an archaeological priority area. A Roman temple and Saxon barrow cemetery are evidence of the pre-medieval use, but it was with Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester in the 15th century, that the beginnings of what we see today were formed. He was granted the land, and enclosed a hunting park, built a lodge, and the rest is history.

The medieval riverside mansion of Bella Court was succeeded by Greenwich Palace, and then by the Queen's House. After the Restoration of Charles II, the landscape architect André Le Nôtre, designer of the formal gardens of Versailles, was commissioned to create a landscape fit for the Queen's House, which is located at the edge of the modern park. Many physical traces of this baroque landscape, as laid out in 1665, still survive, but they are highly degraded.

One of the most exciting aspects of the *Greenwich Park Revealed* project is the investigation, conservation and restoration of the earthworks. This will not be without controversy – restoration is not something lightly undertaken – and it has taken extensive research, consultation and fear of total loss of the features which has led to the proposals, which are supported by Historic England.

Greenwich Park is hugely popular with locals and visitors alike, and the project will bring back some of the early grandeur, and provide new facilities and interpretation for the future. It will also provide many opportunities while it is underway. A community archaeologist will be recruited for three years, and their role will involve fieldwork on the capital works, for instance the careful removal of a path within the barrow cemetery. The community archaeologist will be instrumental in providing new interpretation, and they will also run some community excavations, following the recent successful excavations led by Graham Keevill. It promises to be a superb project

and demonstrates the clear commitment of The Royal Parks to their heritage as well as their future.

Greenwich Park's Roman past reviewed

Greenwich Park was sited 5 miles (8km) from *Londinium* on the line of Roman Watling Street, which ran from the Kent coast. The Roman temple complex, a landmark for travellers, stood alone on a hill-top with the main Roman road re-routed near to it. Numerous Roman coins, an arm fragment from a statue of Diana the Huntress and fragmentary inscriptions indicate that the temple was in continuous use from AD 100–400.

Excavation articles, published by *London Archaeologist*, are now part of the Layers of London Project. There the site has been mapped and provides links to online articles at the ADS. The three articles for Greenwich Park¹ have been given a short introductory summary by two volunteers working on the project, Wendy Rudge and John Walledge, previously part of the Museum of London Archive team of volunteers.

1. H Sheldon & B Yule 'Excavation in Greenwich Park 1978–79' *London Archaeol* **3** (12) (1979), 311–17. Layers of London, <http://tinyurl.com/y7rv3or6> [accessed 18 Apr 2020]; B Wallower 'Roman temple complex in Greenwich Park? Part 1' *London Archaeol* **10** (2) (2002), 47–54. Layers of London record 10964, <http://tinyurl.com/ybzkqjvw> [accessed 18 Apr 2020]; B Wallower 'Roman temple complex in Greenwich Park? Part 2' *London Archaeol* **10** (3) (2002), 76–81. Layers of London record 10988, <http://tinyurl.com/y72kj229> [accessed 18 Apr 2020].



ABOVE: The more recent excavation of the Old Keeper's Cottage, Greenwich Park (Mark Stevenson)

BELOW: The past excavation of Roman temple remains (GMA99, Museum of London Archaeological Archive)

