

U3A Bikers Bushy Park in the rain Friday 4th June 2021

Yesterday was a fine day and the forecast for tomorrow is for warm sunshine. But for today the forecast was for rain – and rain it did for the whole 4½ hours we were out on the ride.

The meeting point was on the bridge at Clapham Junction Station opposite Platform 11 in time to catch the 10.21 train to Teddington, a journey of about 25 minutes. Once there the eight of us were keen to get moving and declined the suggestion that we should stop at a local café - with the promise of the excellent refreshments available in **Bushy Park** itself.

The route along Park Road brought us to the busy A313 Hampton Road where we had to deal with traffic for the three-quarters of a mile before the turn off.

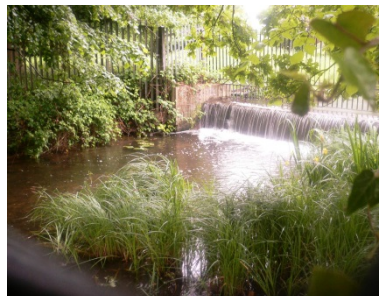
For the record it was NOT Blandford Road, nor Bushy Gate Gardens, that takes us to the park. It was Laurel Road that leads to the entrance to Bushy Park!



Entering the Park, Peter lead us to the **Upper Lodge Water Gardens** where we locked up our cycles before taking a walk in the rain around the gardens, obeying the “Keep off the grass” signs. This was a formal garden set out on a grand scale and dating from 1710, centred on the oval pool. It had disappeared by 1800 but was restored in 2000.



The Upper Pool



Longford River and cascade



Ornamental cascade

The Upper and Lower pools are connected by an ornamental cascade.

Across the adjacent bridge we could see the 1710 Brewhouse built for Charles Montague, the 1st Earl of Halifax.

The bridge crosses a diversionary stream from the Longford River with a seven-step cascade. Today it was carrying a good flow of water.

There was more here to be investigated but the poor weather discouraged further exploration on this occasion.



Brewhouse

On the route through the park we passed the gates with view up the long drive and the manicured grounds of Upper Lodge.



On the way to Bushy House we stopped to observe a small herd of stags (at a distance of at least 50 metres, as the notices requested); these were “in velvet”, the antlers covered with a type of skin with blood vessels and nerves that regenerates every year as the deer grow new ones.



Bushy House



Lunch break

A short ride brought us to the café for a refreshment break and welcome shelter from the rain. The café was busy; it is school half-term, after all.

On the way to the exit we passed the Hampton Wick gate and stopped to look at the information board about Timothy Bennett,

Bennett was a shoemaker who in 1752 challenged Lord Halifax, the ranger of Bushy Park, on the right of public access to the park, and won his case! Time and the weather were against us and so we saved a visit to the nearby Diana Fountain (the goddess, not the Princess) until another day.





Once we had reached a decision on which way we were heading (!) and recovered our bikes, we left the park through the Chestnut Avenue gate.

A short ride took us back to Teddington Station. As we arrived, so did our train, and in some haste we all boarded and were on our way back to Clapham Junction, looking forward to getting home and a change out of some wet clothing!

In spite of the rain the group enjoyed the ride and learned a lot about this park, and were looking forward to another visit soon.

Acknowledgments: The Royal Parks website; Wikipedia

Riders: Jane Evans, Gisela Robinson, Felicity Henderson, Antony Robertson, Andrew Burke, John Clements, Peter Saunders, Martin Dale, David Rosenfeld

Distance: 7 miles from Teddington Station

Ride leader: Peter Saunders

Report and photos by John Clements, 5th June 2021

Upper Lodge Water Gardens

This Baroque-style collection of pools, cascades, basins and a canal disappeared beneath undergrowth and silt through the twentieth century. The gardens were largely forgotten until a major restoration programme brought them back to their former glory.

One of the hidden treasures of Bushy Park is the Water Gardens which were built for private use by Charles Montague, the 1st Earl of Halifax, in 1710. Montague was a poet, statesman and friend of Isaac Newton, and had been the park ranger since 1687.

An interesting feature of the Gardens is a two-storey redbrick building, which was installed as part of Montague's original landscaping project. This Grade II listed structure was a brewhouse, providing beer to the household in nearby Upper Lodge – alcohol was safer to drink than water at the time. It is thought that cereal grain for the brewing process was grown in fields to the south of the Gardens. The Water Gardens went on to play a unique role in twentieth-century events. During the First World War wooden buildings were erected to form an encampment for Canadian troops, while the Upper Lodge was used as a hospital. Later, swimming pools were provided here as part of an open-air school for impoverished East End boys with respiratory diseases.

During the Second World War, the site was used as a US barracks. It was then taken over by the Ministry of Defence and played a significant role in the development of Cold War defence technology.

The area fell into disrepair and remained closed to the public until a major restoration programme returned them to their former glory. The Water Gardens reopened in 2010, and visitors can now enjoy this tranquil spot just as much as the 1st Earl Halifax did over 300 years ago.

Restoring the Upper Lodge Water Gardens

Restoration plans began in the 1990s, with research by the Friends of Bushy and Home Parks, and the discovery by Sir Roy Strong of an eighteenth-century painting of the gardens.

The gardens later became the centrepiece of a Bushy Park improvement project, with additional funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Crown Estate and other supporters.

The restoration included: desilting and returning the ponds to their original shape and depth; A new water engineering system to restore the direct connection to the Longford River; rebuilding the badly-damaged southern flank cascade wall, and reincorporating original stonework and bricks into the new structure; restoring the cascade and northern flank wall; reconstructing the original stoop basins and alcoves; new landscaping and footpaths completed the transformation of the gardens.

Welcome to
THE WATER GARDENS



In 1710, the Water Gardens extended almost 1 km across the whole width of the north-western section of the park from Pantile Bridge at Hampton Hill to the outlet of the Long Canal close to Teddington Common (on the eastern boundary and close to the National Physical Laboratory).



As the aerial photograph shows, this was a formal landscape on a grand scale. The layout is centred on an oval pool, which was sited directly in front of Upper Lodge, but had disappeared by 1800. It was restored in 2000. The restored Upper and Lower pools form the core of the Gardens to the west of the Lodge, with the ornamental cascade connecting them.

The pattern of these ponds was repeated in the Long Canal to the east beyond the Lodge. The head of the Canal was partly filled in 1947.

Dug in 1638, the Longford River, which is fed from the River Colne, pours directly into the Upper pool. In 1953 the Admiralty diverted the main river channel with penstock sluices to control flows into the pools. This diversion channel includes a seven-step cascade, and is seen from the bridge over to the Brewhouse. The restored Brewhouse is an original 1710 building of the Earl's creation.

The size and architectural quality of the Brewhouse is reflective of Halifax's role as keeper of the parks. Given that the brewing was to be carried out on a semi-industrial scale, the resulting building was designed to be sufficiently grand in scale to ensure its visibility from Upper Lodge. For this reason it is believed that the Brewhouse was incorporated as an element in the landscape rather than simply as building for the production of beer.

The occupation of the site through lease by the Crown Estate to the Admiralty brought about substantial change. A substantial number of buildings were constructed in the grounds for research purposes including that of the Rotunda, housing the rotating beam channel for testing torpedoes. The gear wheel has been salvaged and is displayed as a monument outside the Water Gardens in Groom's Paddock to the east of Upper Lodge.



Images courtesy of The National Archives, New Orleans Museum

THE ROYAL PARKS

The National Lottery

Bushy Park

The area now known as Bushy Park has been settled for at least the past 4,000 years: the earliest archaeological records found on the site date back to the Bronze Age. When Henry VIII appropriated Hampton Court Palace from Cardinal Thomas Wolsey in 1529, the King named three parks that make up modern-day Bushy Park: Hare Warren, Middle Park and Bushy Park. Henry established them as deer-hunting grounds for his own use.

Later monarchy added a number of features, including the Longford River, a 19-km canal built on the orders of Charles I to provide water to Hampton Court, and the park's ponds. Chestnut Avenue, was constructed: this is the main route which runs from Park Road in Teddington to the Lion Gate entrance to Hampton Court Palace. The avenue and the Arethusa 'Diana' Fountain were designed by Sir Christopher Wren as a grand approach to Hampton Court Palace.

The Park Ranger is an honorary position and includes residence at Bushy House. Previous holders include King William IV, while Duke of Clarence (1797–1830), who appointed his consort Queen Adelaide so that she could remain at Bushy House after his death. After her death the position was left vacant and fell into disuse.

During World War I, Bushy Park housed the King's Canadian Hospital, and between the wars there was a camp for undernourished children.

During World War II, General Dwight D. Eisenhower planned the D-Day landings from Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF) at Camp Griffiss in the Park. A memorial by Carlos Rey dedicated to the Allied troops who fell on D-Day now marks the spot where General Eisenhower's tent stood. The nearby Eisenhower House is named in the General's honour, and Shaef Gate is named after SHAEF.

From May 1942 temporary buildings on the north-east of the park, codenamed Widewing, hosted the headquarters of the US Eighth Air Force under Generals Carl Spaatz and, later, Ira Eaker. Spaatz went on to command the US Army Air Forces throughout the European Theatre of Operations and in early 1944 became commander of the newly formed US Strategic Air Forces (USSTAF) in Europe at Widewing.