

## U3A Bikers

### To Bushy Park and Hampton Court Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2022

There were thirteen of us as we headed for Bushy Park with the weather conditions very much in tune with the autumn equinox.

We assembled at the meeting point, on the bridge at Clapham Junction Station opposite Platform 11 in time to catch the train to Teddington, arriving there some 30 minutes later. Here we are, just leaving the station with a step-free exit to Station Road



A very short ride took us up to busy Broad street and our coffee stop. This was Gosia's Café and Deli where the group occupied almost all the space.

One of the group, Niesje, was delighted to find that amongst the wonderful display of pastries was Pastel nata, or Portuguese tarts, and I can report that these were delicious!

Along Hampton Road we paused for a few minutes outside the site of the National Physical Laboratory where Peter Sanders had worked.



Denise reminded of its other famous employee, Alan Turing, who played an important role in breaking the German Enigma Code in World War II.

Here too was designed the atomic clock and it was here that packet switching was pioneered; we all use this, it is the primary basis for data communications in computer networks worldwide.

Continuing along Hampton Road we arrived at the Chestnut Avenue entrance to **Bushy Park** where a sign advised us that a deer cull was in operation.

However, this was only at night, after the park was closed.



After a right turn we started a circuit of the park in a counter-clockwise direction and so arrived at the Water Garden where we locked up our cycles before taking a walk around the Upper Pool.

Originally built for Charles Montagu, 1st Earl of Halifax between 1709 and 1715 when he was ranger of Bushy Park and lived in Upper Lodge, they fell into disuse over the years, but partly restored in the early 21st century and opened to the public in 2009.

On each side of the ornamental cascade which tumbles over the five steps was an entrance to a tunnel (now removed) which ran behind it. However, on closer examination we saw that the tunnel was blocked by boarding and each "entrance" was actually a *trompe d'oeil*.

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 and Lower Pools are connected by the cascade.

To side of the Upper Pool is a bridge from which we could see the 1710 Brewhouse, built for Charles Montague..

The bridge itself crosses a diversionary stream from the Longford River with a seven-step cascade.

At the end of the Lower Pool were the locked gates of the Upper Lodge, a fine building with a long drive and manicured grounds.; we has passed the front of it earlier

The next destination in the park was the Woodland Gardens, with a bridge over the same diversionary stream, and lakes and abandoned buildings. It made for a very pleasant tranquil walk.





From here it was on to the lunch stop at a café, the *Pheasantry*. Here, by prior arrangement, we met Peter who had arrived by car, thanks to his ever-helpful housekeeper, Isobel.

It was in fact Peter's birthday and one of the group had in anticipation brought along an apple tart which was duly shared around. And of course our congratulations to Peter, together with a rendition of "Happy Birthday"!



Lunch eaten and after an au revoir to Peter we set out to circle the park. Then John, leading the ride, surprised us all and decided to depart from the paved surface on to a path through the bracken!

This may have been to increase the opportunities to see the deer, and we were not disappointed, some sitting in the grass.

One, a fallow deer, was seen having a dip in Leg of Mutton Pond (named for its shape), and close by was a heron on the bank of the nearby stream.





We paused by the **Diana Fountain** and Denise gave us some information about it.

She told us that more recently it had been suggested by the Park authorities that the figure is of *Arethusa*, one of the Nereids, who herself was transformed by Artemis (Diana to the Romans) into a fountain.

We left the park at the Chestnut Avenue Gate and cycled past the entrance to Hampton Court Palace, to join the Thames Path, following the sweep of the river around the Palace and its golf course.

We paused to admire the great gates which gave access to the river from the Palace.



I was somewhat amused by the canal boat moored nearby by the name of “Going Nowhere”!

The path brought us to the Hampton Wick entrance to Bushy Park and to the information board about Timothy Bennett, shoemaker of Hampton Wick in the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century. 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!



We entered the Park and followed the path back to the Chestnut Avenue entrance, retracing our steps back to Teddington Station to catch the busy train back to Clapham Junction, the end of a very interesting outing. Thank you John and Denise!

**Acknowledgments:** The Royal Parks website; Wikipedia

**Distance:** 13 miles from Teddington Station .. **Riders:** Andrew & Mary, Ann, Chris, Denise & John, Gisela, Jane, John, Judy, Martin, Niesje, Valerie.

*Ride leaders: Denise and John Davies*

*Report by John Clements, 25<sup>th</sup> September 2021.*

*Photos by Niesje de Boer and John Clements*

## NOTES

### The history of the Diana Fountain

Designed in 1637 by Hubert Le Sueur at the request of King Charles I for his wife Henrietta Maria, this bronze statue of a goddess (sometimes described as Arethusa) is set on a marble and stone fountain, surrounded by bronzes of four boys, four water nymphs and four shells. Le Sueur submitted an invoice for £200 for the statue.

The fountain was moved to the Privy Garden of Hampton Court in 1656. In 1713 the fountain and statue were moved to Bushy Park, to the middle of Chestnut Avenue, designed by Sir Christopher Wren, where it still stands today.

The fountain was restored in 2009 as part of the Bushy Park Restoration Project. The exact weight and height of the statue (2.38m tall and 924kg) were confirmed when it was moved for restoration. During restoration, a stone was uncovered on the base of the statue for the first time. It had a crown and the date AR 1712 (AR for Anne Regis) and would have been added when the fountain and statue were installed in the basin.

### The 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.

#### **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.