

*The Friends of Holland Park  
Autumn 2015*





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## Christmas Carol Concert

Sunday, 6 December, at 7.30pm in the Orangery

We are sure that you are all looking forward to this highlight of our year and, for some, the first taste of Christmas 2015. The Tallis Chamber Choir and their conductor, Philip Simms, will be performing a great variety of beautiful carols interspersed with seasonal readings. Their choice of programme and their musical standard seem to get better each time they visit us; and do not forget the icing on the cake: wine and Janice Miles' exquisite canapés. Tickets, at £20, can be ordered on the enclosed order form which can also be downloaded from our website. We would encourage you to order soon, as this is our most popular event.

## The Beauty and Wonder of Trees



Tuesday, 27 October, 7pm in the Orangery

There is still time to book for our autumn talk on trees, which will be given by expert Hugh Johnson. Hugh loves trees of all kinds, exotic or native, including our own in the park where he is a regular visitor. He is the author of *The International Book of Trees*, was for many years Editorial Director of the RHS journal, *The Garden*, and writes *Tradescant's Diary* which appears online and in *Hortus* magazine. Tickets are £15, to include wine and Janice Miles' delicious canapés. To book please use the order form enclosed with this newsletter, or download it from our website.

## Prickly Plants Recruited

The lure of the Wildlife Enclosure has proved too tempting for some who have ignored the notices and hopped over the fence to gain unauthorised entry. Groups of people where they are not meant to be can damage ground cover and deter wildlife. The Friends suggested planting prickly shrubs along the fence line to act as a deterrent and reduce the number of times Parks Police are called out to explain to people that they have breached the park bye-laws. The prickly plants have been ordered and should prove a pretty sight as they grow and twist naturally around the edges of the enclosure. The Friends have agreed to fund the purchase of a suitably large number of:

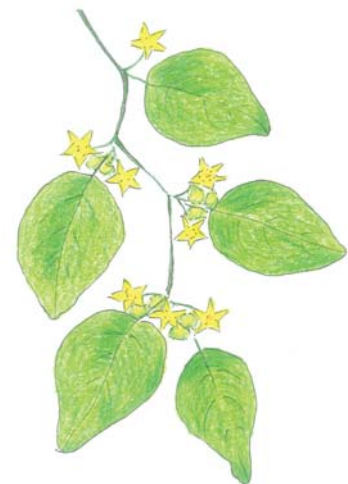
- *Ilex aquifolium* (Holly)
- *Pyracantha* 'Orange Glow' (Firethorn)
- *Ruscus aculeatus* (Butcher's Broom)
- *Mahonia x media* 'Charity' and *Mahonia lomariifolia*
- *Euonymus europaeus* 'Red Cascade' (Spindle)
- *Crataegus monogyna* 'Biflora' (Hawthorn)
- *Rosa arvensis* (Field rose) and *Rosa canina* (Dog rose)
- *Humulus lupulus* 'Aureus' (Golden hop)
- *Prunus spinosa* (Blackthorn or Sloe)
- *Poncirus trifoliata* (Japanese bitter orange)
- *Colletia hystrix*
- *Paliurus spina-christi* (Christ's thorn)
- *Rhamnus cathartica* (Common buckthorn)

Visit them in spring and see how many you can recognise.

*Text and drawings: Jennie Kettlewell*



*Rosa canina*



*Paliurus spina-christi*



*Rhamnus cathartica*





*Earls Court gates*

### Earls Court gates

If the beautifully intricate gates at the Earls Court entrance to the park disappear over the next few months, there is nothing sinister afoot. Dating from the 18th century, these gates are believed to be a fine piece of French ironwork with clever adaptations over the years. They were brought, in poor condition, from Belgium by the third Lord Holland, and erected in their current position in 1836 with new overthrow and railings to match. Since that time they have taken a battering, bits have broken off and other parts been damaged. Fortunately The Friends knew where the missing ornaments could be found and worked with Park Management to revive an earlier plan to get the gates repaired. Wheels occasionally grind very slowly and it is only now that the Council has it in its sights to send the gates 'to hospital' for specialist conservation work. This delicate task will take some time, but it is expected that the gates will be back in place in all their new found glory in time for the opening of The Design Museum in late 2016.



*Earls Court Walk*

### Earls Court Walk

The grass under the big trees either side of the path from Kensington High Street up to Holland House tends to be sparse and muddy, especially in winter. Tree surgeons have recently thinned the canopies of the most dense and low-

hanging trees to allow more light through to the grass beneath. That, together with planting of a tough, shade-tolerant grass will, we hope, stand a better chance of surviving the very heavy footfall, and providing us with an attractive green sward.

### The Holland House site

The dialogue continues about what can be done to open the Holland House terrace for longer each year than is possible with the opera tents. In spite of many meetings, a suitable solution has not yet been found, but now the debate has opened up to consider creative alternatives to the tents that could be of benefit to the park, while providing facilities for Opera Holland Park in summer. One option was 'de-mountable' buildings that would be left in place year round, providing that good views of Holland House are not blocked outside the opera season, the buildings are appropriate to their Grade-I-listed setting and that winter usage is such that there is no additional noise, litter, traffic or signage. If a feasible solution is found, we have been assured that there will be full public consultation. Getting this right is taking time, so park visitors and Opera Holland Park will be stuck with the white tents for 2016, for which the usual planning consent will be required. By the time you read this, Opera Holland Park might have passed from Council to private ownership, operating under a licence granted by RBK&C.



*Sports field*

### Sports field

You might have noticed that the sports field is closed. It is not expected to open again until at least mid-October. This is to allow it to recover from the very heavy use it has to endure, and provide an opportunity to re-turf it and let the new turf take before all those budding David Beckhams return.

### The hostel

After undergoing an extensive refurbishment, the hostel is once again taking bookings. Re-cladding of the Casson building is completed, and the much-improved interiors have capacity for 380 beds accommodated by better use of space and removal of the kitchens. There will be no restaurant on site but there will be a breakfast room, bar, pool room and roof terrace. As under the previous management, there will be no access to the park once it is locked for the night, and the night entrance to the hostel will be via Holland Walk. The Friends have asked that the signage is appropriate in size and design to the Grade-I-listed setting of Holland House.



**Wildlife Enclosure restoration**

The Borough Ecology team run very popular activities for children to learn about our local flora and fauna. Bookings have increased and now it is time to make sure young enthusiasts stick to the path in the Wildlife Enclosure and cause as little disturbance as possible to the environment. The main path within the enclosure is being marked out,



Jennie Kettlewell

*Pegging in the Wildlife Enclosure*

using wood from fallen trees in the park, nearby boroughs and brought in by the tree surgeon companies used by the Council. Once the path is completed, the intention is to add dead hedging and shrubs to reduce off-path wandering. Dead hedging is a 'hedge' built with dead brushwood, secured between wood pegs. A couple of areas have been over used, are consequently barren and will be replanted to re-establish the flora and provide a habitat for the wildlife which the children come to see. The path work is being carried out by corporate volunteers, so far involving enthusiastic groups from Lloyds, Google and Burberry, plus a small but very keen group of teenagers from a housing association. As you can imagine, it takes considerable organisation both to book the volunteer groups and to oversee the work carried out by people who mostly spend their days sitting behind a desk. This task falls to Quadron's Corporate Development Manager, Andrew Kauffman, and it seems he is doing an excellent job. Groundwork have also helped through their Task Force for Nature scheme which runs a volunteer day in Holland Park every third Saturday of the month [see Dates for Your Diary].



Jennie Kettlewell

*Longhorn in the park*

**Cows**

The Longhorns visited us in August for a few weeks, in order to mow our meadows again: the Arboretum and the Oak Enclosure. This time it was Nimbus and Neija, but the one pictured did not tell us which she was. (Perhaps Nimbus brought us the rain.)




Joy Puritz

*Chairman Jennie Kettlewell introducing the Mayor of RBK&C, Cllr Robert Freeman, at our Pimm's party in the Orangery on 14 July*

**Crab Apple Jelly**


The annual questions arise: will the trees be laden or resting? Will they have fallen to *anno domini*, winter storms or the woodman's axe? Or what undiscovered ones might there be hiding behind a hitherto unexplored bend? Until we have the answers we cannot say whether there will be crab apple jelly for sale this year, though we live in hope. Intelligence of new trees is always welcome but remember that red fruit that looks so pretty in our gardens is too sweet to give the jelly its unique tang. Rather we want the tiny greeny apples that come on the wild trees and taste so bitter that they dry your mouth. Do ring Rhoddy on 020 7602 0304 after 1 October to discover what is available.



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This was one of the series of events arranged by Ecology and sponsored by the Friends. It was very popular and had about 40 attending.

Bill started by considering whether the rose-ringed parakeet is friend or foe but showing that our reactions are to some extent a matter of personal taste. You can say it is colourful or gaudy, exotic or foreign, easy to locate or noisy, intelligent or devious. There are, however, two accusations that demand closer examination.

The first is their appetite. They are omnivorous and can be thousands strong, and if a large flock descends on an orchard or wheat field the results can be devastating for the grower. They are normally protected under the Wildlife Act of 1981 but that act does allow for a licence to kill to be issued in a defined area where the species is doing commercial damage. As far as Bill knows, the only licences issued have been to protect apple orchards in Kent. On an altogether lesser scale, it can be observed that smaller birds will not go to feeders when

parakeets are on them, and feeders designed to frustrate larger birds like pigeons are not proof against the wily parakeet.

Secondly are the related matters of their spread and the possibility of their overwhelming native species by theft of their nesting sites. Surveys done in alternate years showed a steady increase in the number of quadrats within Greater London where they are present until there were only a few empty quadrats towards the north east. But the last two

surveys showed first a small drop and then an evening out of numbers, so it is possible that the population has plateaued. This fits with your Secretary's anecdotal observations that the number seen simultaneously in Holland Park rose gradually to a maximum of five but is now more often three. (But see below.) Strikingly the records almost entirely stop at the M25 except for a few

in Birmingham and one or two other cities. This agrees with records of introduced populations in other European countries that are confined to built-up areas. Why this is so is a matter of conjecture as truly wild populations are found all over India and in a coast-to-coast swathe from West Africa to Kenya. It might be that the key to their distribution in Europe is their appetite: humans leave much waste, grow ornamental berries and put out bird food. So, within London, are we liable to have our native birds out-competed for nesting sites? Parakeets are hole-nesters and need to use existing holes. Their size requirement is precise: large enough to allow the adult bird entry but as small as possible to keep out predators. Green woodpecker holes are too large. Great spotted woodpecker holes are the right size but the woodpeckers nest earlier\* and are therefore in occupation when the parakeets are home hunting. Woodpeckers in Holland Park have been seen fighting off parakeets, and Bill confirmed this was common. Nuthatches can use holes that are too large for them by plastering up the entrances with mud. Parakeets, though unable to enlarge holes in wood, can chip off some of the nuthatches' mud and so acquire a hole of the correct size. There is some evidence that they do so in the Netherlands so they might reduce the number of London nuthatches – not that nuthatches much like the cities anyway. It is likely that many of the parakeet nests are in man-made structures.

Bill introduced Nettie who had done a thesis on the parakeets based in Wormwood Scrubs. The roost there is in some low trees in the middle of grassland, and the birds gather each evening in smaller groups in the trees surrounding the grass. *(contd)*

\*According to the RSPB parakeets sometimes nest as early as January.

**Parakeet Facts**

Natives of N. and S. India, W. Africa to Kenya and Sudan  
 4 subspecies distinguishable by DNA  
 London population might be 35,000  
 2 distinct introductions: Thanet and Heathrow  
 Both a mix of N. and S. India subspecies  
 Length of life: 30 years in captivity  
 7 is the maximum recorded in the wild but probably more  
 Breeding: first at 2/3 years, 2/4 eggs  
 Incubation: 22/24 days, fledge 40/50 days

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To many people, a beetle is a beetle, but if they had to name one that was a little different, they might suggest a stag beetle, *Lucanus cervus*. To find out something more about them, Ecology invited Laura Bowyer from the Conservation Trust for Endangered Species to give a talk in the series sponsored by the Friends.

Are they endangered? In Europe they appear to be declining fast, so in 1998 the Trust organised a public stag hunt with wide publicity, and compared the results with a survey in 1966. Although there is a feeling that fewer beetles are being seen, they are glad to report that the number of 10-km squares where the beetles were present had only declined slightly, and the squares which were lost were peripheral ones, well away from their British heartland which is the south east and especially London. Suburban gardens seem to suit them best (or is it just that there are more people to see them?) but the centre of urban areas less so. There is a record for Holland Park though not for Kensington Gardens or Hyde Park, so once again our park is the nearest park to the centre of London that retains an aspect of wildlife.

The Conservation Trust has held an annual count since 1998 and can see little change. There are only limited opportunities to see them even when present because of their life cycle. Eggs

are laid underground in the autumn and near a food source for the larvae that eat rotten wood. The wood needs to be buried, so logs are better placed in upright stacks each of which is half below ground. The larvae might be able to use logs above ground if they are covered by a thick layer of creepers or other plants that keep the light out. Even wood chips are edible but the amount of food present determines the rate at which the larvae grow so they might need anything from two to five years underground until they are large enough to form an orange-sized cocoon in the autumn. Once they have hatched out in May with their typical 'stag horns' they are unable to eat solid food though they can sip juices as in ripe fruit. The antlers are modified lower jaws and, as with deer, are used to fight competing males. They need a warm evening to heat up enough to fly from a post so as to disperse and find females. Most males live only a few weeks though a few might last until autumn, as most females do. In either case the adult form is only a small proportion of the insect's life, thus not affording many opportunities for it to be seen.



FIG. 7. — *Lucanus cervus* var. *abreusianus* Planet. Male telodonte. Syrie (n° 91).

*Lucanus cervus*  
[www.glaphyridae.com](http://www.glaphyridae.com)

Do let us know if you see one in Holland Park, or better, send us a picture. But leave it where it is or, if you have to move it for its own safety, do so for as short a distance as possible.

*Rhoddy Wood*

## Parakeet Talk and Walk (contd)

This means that they fly into the roost much lower than usual, bringing them within reach of mist nets. So Nettie ringed a good number but none have so far been recovered. She thought this was partly because once trapped they were intelligent enough not to be caught a second time, and partly because their beaks were strong enough to remove the rings. Instead she tried marking feathers with a paint spray that is harmless to birds, but then it wore off within a few days. Not much knowledge has been gained by research on parakeets, partly because of the difficulties found by Nettie and maybe also a disinclination among birders to take the foreigners seriously. So for the moment we can only rest with the generality that parakeets might make less difference to our native birds than one would guess from their numbers and high visibility.

At the end of the talk Bill led us out to the area near the tennis courts. He appeared to have timed it precisely: as we got there a few parakeets were flying round the big plane tree but as we watched with mounting excitement they were joined by more and more until there were at least fifty. Bill explained that they were gathering from all directions to fly on to roost in Wormwood Scrubs and this was one of the pre-pre-pre roosts and happened nightly. Most of us had never seen it.



*Parakeet at one of the park's feeders*

So let's enjoy our parakeets for their colour and be glad that we have Holland Park to host them.

*Text and photo: Rhoddy Wood*

One of the benefits of being a member of The Friends is the 'Friends & Neighbours' programme, which allows members a discount on purchases from businesses local to Holland Park – our Neighbours. So far eleven Neighbours have joined the scheme. Do visit them. We will be giving you a flavour of a few of them from time to time.



*Valentina*

### Valentina

This thriving family business offers an authentic Italian experience in its Notting Hill restaurant and deli. The owner travels to Italy to source the best produce, which is evident in a regularly changing menu, and the coffee is good. Manager, William Amaral, is proud of the team's friendly service that keeps customers coming back. Open for breakfast, lunch, dinner, coffee and pastries, 7 days a week at 145 Notting Hill Gate, tel. 020 7702 1181. **Offer:** 10% off restaurant and deli purchases.



*Russell's*

### Russell's

Russell's plant nursery has been on this site for over 100 years and is a local institution. The plants for sale change with the season and you can find unusual gems among the more recognisable trees, shrubs and annuals. The staff show real interest and are great on advice, from what to plant to how to plant it and what treatment it needs to survive. They also sell cut flowers and house plants.

78-80 Earls Court Rd, tel. 020 7937 0481. **Offer:** 10% on all purchases in the nursery and flower shop.



*Jennie Kettlewell*

*Holland Park Café*

### Holland Park Café

Well used by visitors to the park, this café serves light meals, snacks, hot and cold drinks, sandwiches and pastries. It is very pleasant to sit on the terrace on a sunny evening, watching the more energetic rushing around the sports field. Customers include mums and dads with young children, chess players, park visitors from all over the world and a few people earnestly taking advantage of the free WiFi to catch up on e-mails. Just north of the Ilchester Gate, in Holland Park, tel. 020 7602 6156. **Offer:** 10% on all purchases over £10.



*Kensington Close Health Club & Spa*

### Kensington Close Health Club & Spa

There is a choice of relaxing treatments in the spa, an invigorating swim in the pool, exercise classes, or a workout in the gym. They claim to have the largest swimming pool in Kensington (18m) and swimming is not only fun but is one of the best forms of exercise. Some health clubs can be daunting but this one is not and has friendly and helpful staff. Tel. 0844 770 2322. **Offer:** £72 p.m. for min of 3 months. No joining fee. 20% discount in hotel restaurant.

**Other participants** in the scheme are Gallery 19, Lipp, Gelato Mio, Kensington Place, Miles & Miles, Il Portico, Hollands Wine Bar and Jeroboams. More information is on our website.



Over 350 years the great families of Holland House planted their estate in the prevailing style of the time. Records show that clumps of fashionable, imported exotic species such as American oaks were planted in the mid-18th century. Around the same time twenty beech trees and 'some very pretty acacias' were brought from Sussex to add to the impressive array of large trees in the park. When Lord Ilchester inherited the estate in 1874 he set about some serious tree planting, and it is likely many of the now mature trees in Holland Park date from this time.

When the London County Council bought the estate in 1952 and turned it into a public park, the LCC park manager continued the tradition of tree planting, and his records show a huge number of trees being received by the park. Presumably he had a landscape plan for trees but I am not aware there has been an overall plan since that time.

The Friends have given trees over the years, as have other generous donors. What is missing is a long-term plan (trees think in 30 to 100-year time frames) to plant in a way that takes account of what we want the park to look like, and also to give

each tree the best chance of survival. Park Management agrees, but it is a sizeable task and might require the help of experts. The Friends look forward to working with Park Management and contributing both experience and resource.

In the tradition of collecting exotic and beautiful trees, we can still boast some rare species in the park, but they are disappearing at an alarming rate. In the last few years, rarities we have lost are a Toothed Azzara, Lebanon Oak, Cork Oak, Weeping Pyrenean Oak, Chestnut-leaved Oak, two Judas trees, Chinese Sycopsis, Manna Ash, Amur Maple, Cut-leaved Alder, Mimosa, and a Golden Ash. The pretty Pink Siris by the Orangery is very sick, it looks as if the splendid Keaki by the Earls Court gates is dead, and the Medlar-leaved Oak could do with some help.

The Friends feel the tradition of planting exotic and beautiful trees in the park should be re-instated and be part of a much-needed long-term plan. There are many who would gladly donate trees.

*Text and photo: Jennie Kettlewell*



*Plaque in the Dutch Garden*

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*Trumpet vines next to the Belvedere*

You might have noticed some exotic vines near to The Belvedere. These are Holland Park's thriving collection of *Campsis* (Trumpet Vine) that was started a few years ago when Cllr Paget-Brown suggested that the Borough should collect species of a plant with potential as a national collection. The Parks Manager at that time, Barrie Maclaurin, wisely chose a type of plant with few species so that managing the collection would not be too onerous. He then called for a record-keeper from among The Friends. My hobby is botany so I volunteered. Holland Park's Head Gardener, Ian Fleming, has planted a number of *Campsis grandiflora*, *C. radicans*, *C. x Tagliabuana*

'Mme Galen', and all but the odd natural casualty are flourishing.

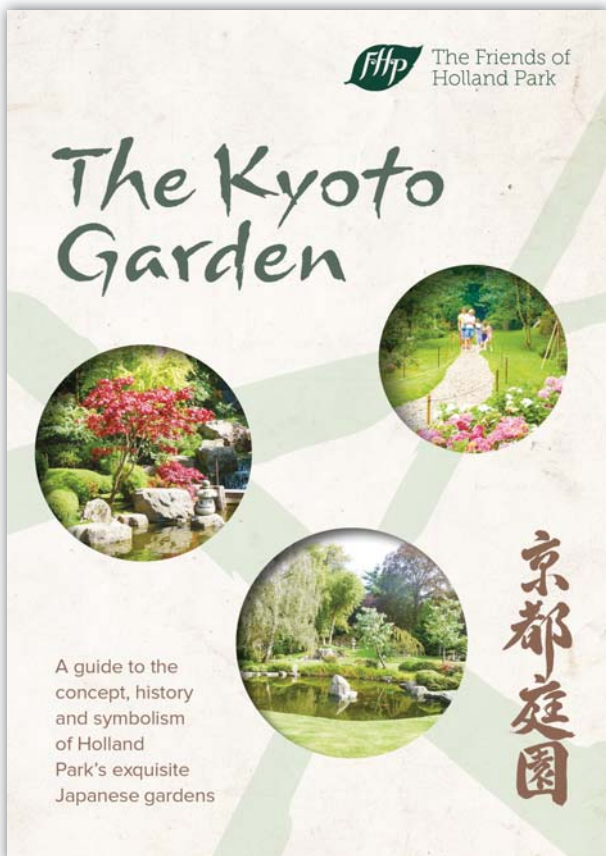
The National Plant Collection scheme is run by Plant Heritage in order to protect stocks of plant species in the British Isles and to record their origins and historical and cultural importance. The intention to apply for a collection has been accepted, but holding a National Plant Collection is a significant undertaking, so full registration has not yet been applied for. Each individual plant needs its own 'accession number' and a record of its 'biography'.



The plants can be found growing up the arch pillars to the west of the Dutch Garden, up the arch pillars to the south of the Iris Garden and there are two plants on the north wall of the Belvedere Restaurant. The orange flower trumpets are exotic, and the leaves feathery. Go and have a look.

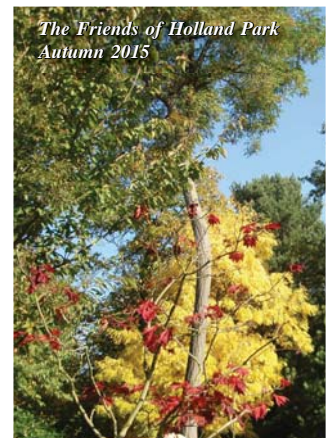
*Text and photos: Jennie Kettlewell*

## New Guide to the Kyoto Garden



It has been a long time coming but we are nearly there and expect to have copies of the new guide available from the end of September. You can order a copy by means of the order form enclosed, or you can buy a copy from the Park Office in the Stable Yard. The price is £4 for the 20-page booklet, complete with map and details of all the features in the Kyoto and Fukushima Gardens.

*The cover photo was taken in the Kyoto Garden by your editor in October 2008*



*The Friends of Holland Park  
Autumn 2015*



All FHP events in the diary are printed in **bold**. The Friends' Bird and Nature Walks (BNW) are continuing to be led by varying regulars while we look for a new permanent leader with the requisite skills and commitment. We will have strolls through the park looking at birds, plants, butterflies and park management of current interest. There is no charge and all are welcome without booking. Meet outside the café at 9am on the first Saturday of each month. No dogs, please, as even well behaved ones on leads disturb the wildlife. We recommend you bring binoculars if you can.

Events organised by the Ecology Service of RBK&C are listed as 'ES', some of which are sponsored by FHP where indicated. Unless otherwise stated the meeting place is in the new Ecology Centre near the Adventure Playground. Some must be booked, in which case please call 020 7938 8186 or e-mail [ecology.centre@rbkc.gov.uk](mailto:ecology.centre@rbkc.gov.uk). There is a charge for those marked £.

Task Force 4 Nature volunteer days (for adults) are every third Saturday of the month from 10.30am to 3.30pm (except in December when it is the second Saturday); meet outside the café. This is your chance to make new friends while getting healthy outdoor exercise: digging, chopping and planting in the wilder parts of the park. Tea, gloves, tools and instructions provided. Further information from the Ecology Centre (contact details above).

Sat 3 Oct	<b>BNW</b>	
Sat 3 Oct	ES. Open Day: Pond Survey. Drop in at the wildlife area.	12 noon-4pm
Sat 17 Oct	<b>Autumn Tree Walk</b> with Alan Harrington. Meet by the Stable Yard.	11am-1pm
Sat 17 Oct	ES. Apple Pressing Open Day. Drop in at the Ecology Centre.	12 noon-4pm
Sat 24 Oct	ES. Fungi Foray (sponsored). Must book.	2-4pm
Mon 26 – Fri 30 Oct	ES. Half-term holiday children's activities. Must book. £	
Tues 27 Oct	<b>The Beauty and Wonder of Trees</b> (see p.3), in the Orangery, £15.	7pm
Fri 30 Oct	ES. Children's Night Safari in Holland Park. Must book. £	4.30-6.30pm
Sat 7 Nov	<b>BNW</b>	
Sat 21 Nov	ES. Feed the Birds Open Day. Drop in at the Ecology Centre.	12 noon-4pm
Sat 5 Dec	<b>BNW</b>	
Sun 6 Dec	<b>Christmas Concert:</b> Tallis Chamber Choir (see p.3), in the Orangery, £20.	7.30pm

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