

CHARLTON PARKS REMINISCENCE PROJECT



website: www.charltonparks.co.uk

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CHARLTON PARKS REMINISCENCE PROJECT



INTRODUCTION

The Charlton Parks Reminiscence Project (CPRP) has been exploring local history by talking to people about their memories of the parks (once part of the Maryon-Wilson Family Estate) researching their history and topography and collecting stories and reminiscences about each one: Hornfair, Charlton, Maryon Wilson and Maryon Parks, Gilberts Pit and Barrier Park.

The Project resulted from conversations amongst Charlton groups as to how people's love of the Charlton Parks could best be recorded and how more people could be encouraged to help ensure their good health and use. The project, running from April 2011 to December 2012, has been funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund - Your Heritage programme, and by a contribution from The Viscount Gough.

These parks have been given by or purchased from the Maryon-Wilson Estate, and are maintained for the people of the Royal Borough of Greenwich by the Parks and Open Spaces Department of the Borough. Over recent years local people have formed 'Friends of the Parks' groups who encourage their use and volunteer to take part in their care and development. It is their dedication and enthusiasm that

inspired the project and sustained it and they are represented on the Steering Group by: Roden Richards, Charlton Society; Gill Cooper and Felicity Young, Friends of Charlton House; Hazel Greig-Midlane, Friends of Charlton Park; Tim Anderson, Gulle Stubbs and Paul Breen, Friends of Maryon & Maryon Wilson Parks; together with Greenwich Mural Workshop.

The Project records fun and games in the parks, the plants and animals, leisure and sports and the healing in nature, as well as famous events and beautiful objects. We hope these observations will ignite a passion to know more of our local history, to know how it has shaped the landscape and how it has shaped us, and that it will deepen our pleasure in our places and spaces and our sense of ownership.

We have also looked at changes to the estate through maps, books and newspapers, photographs, drawings and postcards to bring the past to life, adding history to the words of our contributors. Maybe this booklet will guide you to our website which says much more, and which, being interactive, will continue to grow with contributions of ideas and memories and continue to delight us with gems about ecology, history and humanity – and increase our love and use of our parks!

Twenty volunteers including secondary school pupils were trained in the skills of interviewing and digital recording by British Library oral history teacher, Rib Davis. Carol Kenna of Greenwich Mural Workshop, the project's co-ordinator, organised the interview and research programme and edited the collected materials to be displayed on the website. Stuart Evans of 'Creative Process' designed an interactive website to publish the stories and provide a resource for local schools and researchers, and trained Rib and Carol to edit and maintain the website over the next five years.

Three public exhibitions of the story of the parks were held as the Project progressed, presenting each stage of its collected research and personal interviews. The third of these was a two week exhibition, the culmination of our work, shown in June and July 2012 in Charlton House. It also celebrated the grand launch of the CPRP website.

Over 60 local people recorded stories, gave written contributions or mementos, and 24 volunteers also gave generously of their time. Our partners were Greenwich Council Parks department, Greenwich Heritage Centre and The Royal Artillery at Firepower. Teachers and pupils of Charlton Manor, Cherry Orchard, Sherington, Thorntree and Woodhill primary schools and The John Roan secondary school made important contributions. To all these people and organisations: 'This project. is theirs'.

MARYON PARK



Maryon Park in the early 1900's

Maryon Park has steep and wooded sides to the south and west leading down to a large flat field with tennis courts and spaces for games, including football. On the east side is a wooded hill, Cox's Mount, with a grassy top, and to the north is the playground, which accounts for the Park's local name - 'swing park'.

"In 1889 Sir Thomas Maryon Wilson 10th Bt presented 12 acres of land to the LCC to become Maryon Park. It was the site of a worked out chalk, sand and gravel pit, including Cox's Mount." *John Smith's: The History of Charlton, 1970*

This was how the London Daily News greeted the opening of the park:

"The new park which has been given to the inhabitants of Plumstead and Woolwich by Sir S. Maryon-Wilson was formally opened on Saturday afternoon, under circumstances which were not altogether cheerful. Some preparations had been made to celebrate the event by the people of Old Charlton, but the banners which were stretched across the line of the route and hung from many of the windows looked hopelessly forlorn in the pitiless rain. A string of carriages containing the local magnates were drawn up outside the railway station awaiting the arrival of Sir John Lubbock, who was to take over the park from the donor on behalf of the London County Council. When all was ready the procession moved off, headed by a body of bandmen, who showed by the vigour of their performance a determination to make the best of the situation.

A drive of a mile or so brought the visitors to the park, which is an odd-looking place, not unlike a quarry, except the sides are grass-grown instead of being bare. It

lies in the hollow, just behind the Woolwich Dockyard, and is surrounded by hills which will form a delightful recreation ground for children in the summer time.”

In 1895 the Maryon-Wilson Estates gave one third of an acre more land for the formation of an open air children’s gymnasium with an additional entrance in the Lower Woolwich Road, and the following year a handsome iron bandstand replacing the 3-year old rustic one was also erected, and over £4000 spent in general improvements, including a keeper’s lodge and toilets. In 1909 after further gifts and purchases from the Estate, there were many improvements, and the park, apart along with regular band concerts, became the venue for the first London County Council Open-Air Theatre.

Between 1925 and 1934 land from the worked-out Charlton pits was purchased by the London County Council, bringing the park up to its present size of thirty acres, enabling the construction of the steep steps and a new entrance from Thorntree Road at the south end of the park.



The ‘swing park’

Connie Raper remembers the ‘swing park’.

When we were children we used to go in the swings and all that. It was lovely but, as we got older the boys were in one playground and the girls were in another. There was a very strict supervisor in the swings. She was a very nice person but she was very, very strict. You weren’t allowed to go too high on the swings. And the boys used to stand on the swings and go, you know, and she used to be out after them. “Get down, get down. No standing on the swings.” she was very, very strict. She had to be, because the boys were like bullies. She had a nice little room. The girls’ playground was down there and the boys’ playground was up higher. She had her little room on the boys’ playground, so us girls used to have to walk up about five steps to get to her. Oh, yes. It was lovely.

Suzi in Maryon Park, who lived on the Woolwich Road.

We would have probably started off at Woolwich Road and gone into the playground and we'd have spent time there, you know, on the swings and going from the sort of little swings to the bigger swings and being a bit daring. My favourite was the rocking horse thing that went backwards and forwards. They don't have anything like that nowadays, do they? Nice, sort of gentle one, that just goes back and forward not up and down and tilting all over the place. I didn't like the slides. Then there was a sort of bungalow bit where the attendants used to look out and make sure everyone was ok, and must have had a first-aid bit in there. Then there was the toilets. Oh, and the merry-go-round thing as well. That was quite fun. We'd spend some time there and then we used to walk up and then over that bridge. There's a little bridge there. Then you'd see the tennis courts. We used to look for the places that were in the film 'Blow Up'.

There was the ice cream parlour place and a little secret garden and my Aunt Doris used to take me there, me and my little sister. Got some little seats there and lots of roses; it was just nice and quiet and it was out of the way of all the people picnicking or playing ball and things like that. Compulsory to have an ice cream, of course. Then there were toilets and a little house thing just as you're going out of that bit. So, you know, we knew it like the back of our hands.

Ron Roffey remembers dance bands during the War.

I was nine when the war broke out but I remember those dances. I must have been about thirteen at that time, but I do distinctly remember, and they were so well attended, and the number of people that were dancing! It was a real congregation of people, you know, at the far end of Maryon Park, where the head park-keeper had a lovely house, a beautiful house. Next to his house were the toilets and then there was this great paved area with this lovely bandstand in the middle. Beautifully constructed and on the other side, opposite the house, there was a public shelter, like you see at the seaside, with benches that people could sit at, and then all around the edge of the putting green like a sweep, a segment of a circle, there were all the seats. You know, the metal seats that people sit on. They're wooden-slatted and elderly people or the people that didn't want to dance sat there all around, and some people sat along the path by the putting green just listening to the music.

It was modern music. You're talking about World War Two stuff, you know. Not quite 'In The Mood' but all the modern, the American stuff that came in, and of course, in those days there was the old-fashioned stuff for the older ones, like the Waltz and the Valeta. But as it was in wartime of course, it brought people out. It enlivened their lives as it were, you know. But no, it was quite something.



Maryon Park lodge and bandstand

The film ‘Blow Up’ was made in Maryon Park in 1966

Linda Walker had her lunch interrupted.

At the bottom entrance to the park, the one with the tennis courts, there was a little shop on the left and when Blow Up was being filmed they turned it into an antique shop, the little shop which sold biscuits, groceries. As I was walking up the road to go and eat my sandwiches I was jostled by all these people. I thought, “What the hell’s going on?” I turned round – you jostling me – I could see they were all luvvies, darling and stuff like that. I just turned round and I thought, “Shit, that is Vanessa Redgrave!” It was amazing to see the film after that happened. I’ve seen the film twice – they had a screening in the park last year - screening in the park – brought it all back to me! I’ve been going to that park for years with my children.”

Paul Tiffen remembers a bit of a shemozzle.

I was talking to some guys up near the top lawn and the gates were open – the double gates there – and a white Rolls Royce drove in and David Hemmings was driving and Antonioni was with him. And the foreman at the time, Les Cooper, he was a book man, he went by the book.”You can’t bring that car in here. You can’t

drive around. This is not a public... take it out.” And there was a bit of a shemozzle there. I didn’t see the finale of it but I remember David Hemmings coming and this white Rolls Royce is actually in the film.

Paul Stephens makes mischief during the filming.

We climbed up to the top of Maryon Park, where there’s a green at the top, where they filmed the dead body in the park. Now, what happened was, we got behind the chestnut fencing while they were filming it and they cut a big branch down and stuck it in the middle of the green. And I do believe the man’s name was Ronan O’Casey. So they asked Ronan to go and lay down behind the tree to act as the dead body while they took still pictures. And us, being very naughty schoolchildren... when he lay down, they said, “Ronan, lay down,” we were shouting out, “Okay, Ronan. You can get up now!” So Ronan got up and they were shouting and screaming, “Why are you getting up?” He said, “You told me to get up.” They said, “We didn’t,” because they were quite a long way away from him and he could only hear us. So they asked him to lay down again. So he lay down again. They said, “Right, we’re shooting.” We said, “Ronan, you can get up now.” So Ronan got up again. By this time the photographers and Ronan realised it wasn’t them shouting it out so we got chased round the park about three times!

Paul Martin comments on relatively recent changes to use of Maryon Park.

Has it changed how it’s used? I’ve been here twelve years now. There’s been more of an influx of migrants into the area so over the weekends, in the summer, it’s become more multi-cultural. There’s much more eastern European families and Africans. So I’ve seen that really increase, which is lovely. Different cultures using the park, particularly of a weekend.

Do they use the park in a different way, east European and African people?

They’re absolutely fine. Eastern European is predominantly male and it’s football-based. On a Saturday or a Sunday, when the weather’s really nice, I bet there’s as many as eighty around the bottom green there. So it’s quite intimidating but they’re absolutely fine. And they’re very respectful towards me. There’s different religions as well. Muslims and Asian families using the park more, which is great. It’s a real multi-cultural setting in the summer. Ethnic backgrounds, you know. It’s lovely.

Ann Foster recalls a romance.

When my sister was fifteen, she met her husband. She met him because we still always used to go up the park, not actually to maybe meet boyfriends but we would go up there because it was mixed, boys and girls. My sister went in there one day and she said to me, “See that boy over there talking to that man by the putting green?” She said, “He looks nice. I’m going to go over and talk to him.” So I said, “Are you sure, because the park could be shutting soon.” She said, “Yeah, I’ll be

OK.” So I came home with the other girls and the boys and then my sister turned up about an hour later and she had this boy in tow. Come in. “Oh, Mum,” she said,. “This is Graham. I’ve just met him up the park and he’s brought me home because he was worried that I had to walk alone because Ann had already gone.” Mum thanked him very much and he said, “Could I please take your daughter out?” And my Mum said, “Well, she is still at school. She’s only fifteen.” And he said, “But I will take good care of her because I’m twenty-two and he said, “I’ve been in the RAF and I know she will come to no harm.” So Mum said, “OK. That’s fine.” And she said to me, “It’s a shame you can’t meet someone like him.”

So I said to Sue, “How comes you got him to bring you home?” So she said, “I just said to the park-keeper, ‘What’s the time?’” And he said what it was and he said, “We’ll be shutting in a minute.” Well, my sister knew that, and then Graham had said, “Well, how far have you got to go?” And that was it. Then as soon as my sister left school, at sixteen, she got married and moved to Devon. Fifty years later she’s still married. But my sister put her eyes on him and she made up her mind.

Rose Savinson remembers her children playing.

I don’t know that they did play that much unaccompanied. I think I was there most of the time but, certainly, we used to use the bottom park, Maryon Park, most because it was right by the house and my earliest memories are the swing park. It had big swings and little swings and an area that was designed for small children separated from the older ones. There was things like the railway line and sitting and looking over and waiting for the trains, and the trains used to all hoot as they went past. That’s where they learnt to ride their first bikes, ideal because you’d got that big expanse of green where the tennis courts are and a huge path that goes all the way round so that I could watch them from afar and they could take off on their bikes and do the circuit. So that was really great.



Maryon Park cafe

Chris Hennings remembers working in the teashop.

I was born in Charlton so I know the parks very well. I used to go to Maryon Park an awful lot. It was only a short walk from home. We used to play in the swing park all the time. It wasn't like now. It was very dangerous with concrete floors and there was lots of bumps and grazes. There was only a few things to play on but we seemed to manage to spend most of our day there. There was a little house in the park. There was a lady living there who happened to be my cousin's mother-in-law. We could always manage to get a drink from her or a plaster when we fell over.

As I got older we used to play tennis in the park and – 1963 or '64 – my friend had a job in the little cafe in the park. She went on holiday. Anyway, I took over her job and at that time, they were building the Morris Walk Estate so I used to be very busy of a morning making bacon sandwiches and rolls for all the workmen and great big mugs of tea. It was quite exciting, especially for me who was quite young. Irish, they were Irish. In the afternoons it always used to be mums, young mums bringing their children in. I expect we sold a few sweets. Kids used to come in and a few of the elderly residents. But I can remember it being a very, very happy summer. I used to love working there and I feel very sad when I go by there now.

COX'S MOUNT



A postcard showing Lower Charlton and the Thames from Cox's Mount about 1800

The postcard shows New Charlton and Charlton Vale. The typical 'School Board for London' is Maryon Park School, opened in 1896. The road running towards the river is Hardens Manor Way with the 'Lad of the Village', a three storey public house about half way down on the left. The pub was renamed 'Thames Barrier

Arms' after the Thames Barrier opened in 1983. It now houses a vets practice. The large factory on the riverside is Siemens Brothers Telegraph Works. Behind the factory can be seen the masts of the training ship 'Warspite'.

Early records have shown that Cox's Mount was formerly used as a semaphore station in communication with the one at Shooters Hill. The Mount and the surrounding area was acquired on a short lease in 1838 from the Lord of the Manor by a gentleman named Cox who lived at 5 Charlton Terrace, for 'cultivation and recreation', who erected a summerhouse on the summit, planted poplars and invited friends to come and view ships passing on the Thames.

From 1845 for 15 years, the Admiralty rented Cox's Mount from Sir Thomas Maryon-Wilson for 4s per annum as a station for correcting ships' compasses, but by 1866 the Mount was in use as a Coastguard station. Later a bonfire was held on it to mark Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1891. By the late 1920s the mount had been reduced by erosion, due to children sliding down it. It was fenced off and became overgrown with trees and shrubs. During World War II it was used as a lookout point by the Home Guard." *From John Smith's History of Charlton, 1970.*

Ron Roffey remembers getting into Cox's Mount.

Well, some of my friends that went to Maryon Park Schools, of course, all lived on the Woolwich Road. So travelling from school going towards Greenwich were those tall houses that were three storeys, and a lot of the children who went to those schools lived there; and of course, those houses backed on to Cox's Mount, and they went all the way along to Charlton Lane, Holy Trinity Church. As you walked along towards Greenwich there was some houses and then a garage, that seemed to do repairs, halfway along from school, and then there were houses and all of them backed onto Cox's Mount and lots of them had a wall that kept them – that stopped, you know, at the end of their gardens; and behind there was a flat area at the bottom of Cox's Mount. Sand, of course, that must have been about - I suppose - fifty or sixty yards long, and about twenty-five feet wide, and we used that as a football pitch.

So we had access to Cox's Mount via some of the children that lived in those houses. But of course we had also another entrance – we could get in through the church. There were railings around the church and there was a railing from the side of the church to the first house and there was one of the metal spikes missing so we used to squeeze through there, go through the church gardens and then hop over the spiked fence from the church to Cox's Mount and we were there. So we had all sorts of ways of doing things.



Charlton sandpits

GILBERT'S PIT

Gilberts Pit is a small wooded park with a steep sandy cliff on its east side. Its shape has been created by human settlement and activity dating back to the iron age, and the earthworks constructed at that time are believed to have provided the original site of the Charlton settlement. It was designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest in 1985. Iron tools were found, and Roman coins and Bronze Age fragments which are now displayed at the Greenwich Heritage Centre. It is separated from Maryon Park by a prominent ridge, at the northern end of which are the remnants of home guard trenches which were used during the Second World War as lookout posts.

The series of layers on the faces of the cliffside show beds of strata, some of them important for their fossils of plant, sponge, mollusk, fish and reptile remains. Sand was in great demand for all sorts of processes during the industrial revolution and the pits were being worked commercially until 1889, the year the Spencer family presented the area of the worked out mineral pits to the LCC, which later became Maryon Park. Gilberts Pit was purchased by the LCC in 1930.

David Sneeth digs for ammonites.

The sand pit up top, hop over the fence – those days no grass, clear sand - all you gotta do is dig into the slope, the ammonites are all there, no other fossils. Bottom of the hill was a mine cart track and rusty old mine cart - ammonites all over the place!

Ron Roffey recalls playing there.

Gilbert's Pit was over the other side that ran behind Pound Park Road and up Charlton Lane. Of course, that was great because we used to not only play football but we used to dig, make camps in there and dig into the side of the hill. When I think about Health and Safety now, I mean some of these things just fell in because the sand was so fine. You know, there was the danger of being... but it never occurred to us! We just dug into the side of the hill and made a little camp in there.

Frances Ward remembers Gilbert's Pit in the 1980s.

When Rachel was little, about six, seven or eight we used to have a day out. We'd take the bus to Charlton Village, walk down through the parks, go to the animal farm, have a picnic; and the highlight was to end up at the cliff face at the bottom, overlooking the river, looking for fossils. Today you are not allowed as it is an SSSI. But 30 years ago we took spoons and a sieve and just dug out stuff, all kinds of things, mostly shells, shark's teeth – a really special celebration! At that time the tennis courts were not exactly derelict but open, you just walked in. If I had the energy, we brought tennis racquets and stuff; I would play Rachel or she had a friend and they would play a game – it was a day out.

I do have very fond memories of those parks, very fond memories indeed. More recently, my husband and I do a lot of bird watching there. The bird life is fantastic, amazing. We've seen all 3 woodpeckers there, green, greater-spotted and lesser-spotted plus all the nice woodland birds, long-tailed tits, finches, all that kind of thing. So still take a picnic because we like it. It's become a day out.

Sand seems to have been always commercially mined for the building of London's suburbs. Local source of sand, like living on a gold mine. That's what Gilbert's Pit is all about – commercial land. It's part of the Manor, so the Maryon Wilson family would have had a financial interest from a very early date. Wouldn't do the running themselves, too grand – would lease it out, or let it out. Aah, sand! Yes – money! And people went for it. Taken up on the river to wherever it was being sold. I find it surprising because if you think about it, it's quite a long trek from here to the river, not 5 minutes. We have got pictures here, at Greenwich Heritage Centre, of the little trolley things coming down from the pit being loaded into much bigger trolleys, and pulled by horses down to the river on little railways lines. I think that's where the profit lay – although a long way from the river, sand was valuable to the building trade, worth making that effort, laying the railway line. It was very fine sand. Years ago, I read, in earlier days, it was used to sand floors – before carpets, stone floors – sprinkle on floor and bush it up and that took up all the grease. Charlton sand was used for that.

MARYON WILSON PARK



Hanging Wood and Lane, probably in 1901

Maryon Wilson Park comprises a remnant of what was once an ancient woodland called Hanging Wood, a name derived from its association with the execution of highwaymen and footpads. *A newspaper account in 1732 says:* “On Sunday morning, the Reverend Mr. Richardson, who keeps school at Lewisham, going to preach at Woolwich, was attacked by a footpad in Hanging Wood, who robbed him of a guinea (leaving him but two pence) and then made off”. Alternatively the ‘hanging’ may derive from the Old English ‘hangra’, meaning a wooded slope.

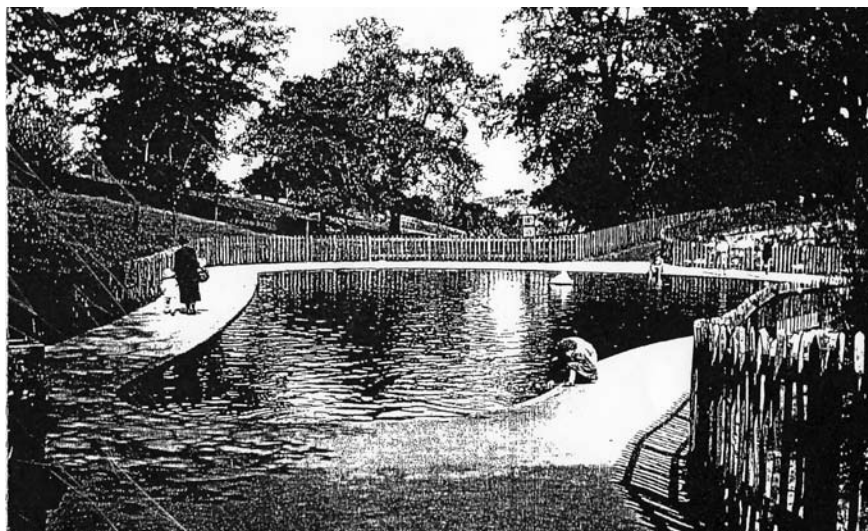
Lysons in his 1796 ‘Environs of London’ writes more positively: There are in character about ninety acres of woodland called Hanging Wood, belonging to the Lord of the Manor, through which there is a very pleasant walk to Woolwich. The wood, the variety of uneven ground, and the occasional view of the river, contribute to make the neighbourhood remarkably picturesque.

In 1767 the wood became part of the grounds of Maryon-Wilson family who held it until 1924, when thirty two acres of Hanging Wood was given to the L.C.C. for the use and enjoyment of the public, and the LCC accepted it, agreeing to lay out the land to retain its rural character. This later became known as Maryon Wilson Park.

It was opened in July 1926 by Sir George Hume JP MP, chairman of the L.C.C., and later Sir Spencer Maryon-Wilson presented the L.C.C. with a small herd of deer. As a result the Park has always been associated with the presence of animals and is sometimes known locally as the Animal Park. Today the Park is home to deer, sheep, goats, a petting park with a pig, ducks, geese, chicken and peacocks, and the horses belonging to The Riding for the Disabled in Charlton Park.

May Wellard recalls picnics and paddling in Maryon Wilson Park the 1920s.

It was just a lot of lush grass, as I can remember, and trees and hawthorn is the main thing I can remember, there was so much hawthorn there. They were the bushes that you'd go tearing around. I can't remember the games that we did, chasing round and round and, of course, girls would cluster in little small groups and gossip. And a feeling of freedom just to run and play games - and being able to run pell-mell down a hill was a wonderful experience. Another thing you could have in that park was an old wooden box on pram wheels and that could hare down! It was just hills and trees. I think it's like very much like it is now. I believe there were quite a lot of cress beds and it was really very, very marshy. I remember my sister losing her shoe because we went into the marshes and her shoe came off and couldn't find it.



Maryon Wilson Park pond

Well, we moved from Greenwich from a two-roomed flat, with my parents and three children; and we moved into this three-bedroom house, which was a council house, under the re-housing of people who needed re-housing. At that time the park was surrounded by railings but it wasn't yet open to the public. My mother helped us over the railings onto the other side and she would hand through a jug of tea and some sandwiches. Although we had a garden it wasn't the same. We could have a picnic in the park and I felt that it was our very own park because there was nobody else there.

As time elapsed there were lots and lots of buttercups and practically every jam jar in the house was filled with buttercups, because where can you just pick flowers to your delight? I think it was 1926 that the council opened the park and it was the MP, Sir George Hume, and he was there and we heard that there was going to be

a paddling pool there. Lots and lots of mothers and excited children and they had towels under their arms! I can't remember what he said but just the excitement; and the gate was opened and we all charged down the paths down to this paddling pool. It was an amazing experience because you'd only ever walked in water in a bath! It was so exciting. It was about this time when all the hawthorn was out and it was absolutely fantastic. And, eventually, you heard a park keeper who came, "All out, all out," and his bell was ringing and you didn't want to be shut in the park because it was a different place at night. There were owls and so you quickly came out.

Grace Hills remembers the simplicity of playing during the War.

You took a jam jar and you went out with it because Maryon Wilson particularly has a lot of little streams, so you went for tadpoles, tiddlers or anything like that. Girls as well as boys, you know. And, yes, quite often, shall I say, you probably took your shoes off and walked along the stream or something like that, you know. Tucked your socks in your shoes. Wiped your feet when you came out if it wasn't hot or anything... hot enough to let them just dry on the grass.

The Bread Pudding Jumper.

Betty: I always remember.... the one memory that sticks out with me and Maryon Wilson Park was, my mum was a great knitter and she used to have this little 'Woman's Weekly' and her patterns always came out of there and we were going to the park and we woke up that morning – we could smell this lovely smell of bread pudding. She'd been up really early putting bread pudding in the oven to take with us. Got us all ready and we went down, straight to the paddling pool. And that was lovely, wasn't it, because it was enclosed, wasn't it? It had all bushes and railings round it and seats in there and the grass. And we went straight in the pool. We had nothing to play with, did we, but we just stayed in that pool for hours.

Elsie: Just made your own enjoyment, yeah.

Betty: Came out, we was gonna have our lunch and she just started getting the things out of her bag and she'd taken her knitting with her (as she always did) and the bread pudding had leaked. She'd only got greaseproof paper.

Elsie: Not onto the knitting?

Betty: Through to the pattern. Her knitting was alright but through to the pattern. When she opened it it was covered in grease, you know? She goes, "Oh, my pattern!" And it was all open work, and from that day on that was called 'the bread pudding jumper.' She managed to finish it. Whenever she put it on we'd say, "Oh, the bread pudding jumper, Mum."

Connie Raper remembers the 'Pond Park'.

Gran used to give us a bottle of tea or water, whatever she had there, and some bread and that wrapped up in newspaper. We used to walk down the park but,

before we ever got to the park, our bread and our drink had all finished - all gone! We didn't wait to get to the park with that. It just used to go. But it was lovely when we was kids.

When we used to get into the pond the boys used to have their trousers down to their knees and so used to tuck them up and us girls used to tuck our dresses in our knickers. Of course, you can guess, we used to get soaking wet. I would never go out into the middle. I was too frightened of going out into the middle of the pond but the boys and all that, they used to. I'll never forget one day we went into this pond and there was a boy come. Oh, he was so posh! He'd got a pair of swimming trunks but they'd been knitted. Of course, when he got in the water what happened? They grew. They nearly fell off of him. Of course, we all laughed at that. Funny that was.

I bet he didn't laugh, did he?

No, poor little love. I don't suppose he did.



In 1950 a number of Exmoor ponies were donated by Miss Etherington.

“Wild Horses in London. Three wild Exmoor ponies which are to live in Maryon Wilson park, at Thorntree Road, Woolwich, have arrived there via King's Cross station from Scotland. The ponies were accompanied by Miss M.G.Etherington, who has presented them, part of a herd which has been running on the Lammermuir Hills at Kidshielnugh for the past two years. The Exmoor breed is believed to be the original British horse”.

Suzi Burrige remembers walking up to the animal park.

I was born at 450 Woolwich Road, as were all my family. My nan and her family and my mum and her family and most of them lived with us at 450. We were a big family, as my cousins lived with us and my aunts and uncles. They were big properties. So Maryon Park and Maryon Wilson Deer Park were our back garden really. Maryon Wilson Deer Park was my favourite place to be, and I used to go to Thorntree School as well, so we used to just nip over there.

Deer and sheep are fascinating to me. There were lots of little chicks and chickens as well, that used to come out of the wire. They used to skip through and I remember I used to really worry about them being out and not being in their pen. I don't really remember other – oh, the pigs. The pigs have been there forever I think, and the goats. Oh, the Peacocks! They're very noisy, aren't they? My birthday, being in June, I usually get a gang of people, we bring up our little garden chairs and take a picnic up there. I've done it with friends from church, done it with family. Yeah, I mean, I do just cling to the animal park.

Cyclocross.

Cyclo cross is a type of cycle racing covering several laps of a course of about three kilometers, featuring pavements, wood trails, grass and steep hills. For over twenty years the Maryon Wilson circuit was one of the paramount events in the whole of the London League calendar. Fifteen cycling clubs took part and five professional teams, and it was supported by Greenwich Sports Council, organised by Peter Haswell's club 'V.C. Elan' and sponsored by Paul Mephram's company 'Harry Perry Cycles.'

Paul and Peter talk about the history of Cyclo Cross in the Park.

Peter: We decided to promote Cyclo Cross in London and went to the British Sports Council, but they were a bit unsure, not knowing anything about it. Finally we settled on Maryon Wilson Park which turned out to be the perfect venue - you know, it just went from strength to strength. It was very much a 'come and try' sport. You could just enter on the line, and it was a combination of cycling and running. Where it got too hard to ride you'd shoulder your bike and run on these - like up steps and things, which was ideal in Maryon Wilson Park. It had something of everything there to offer the riders – fast sections and very hilly pieces.

Paul: Peter and I would both organise the events. It would obviously be the elite riders, the professionals, the top amateurs and the also-rans and then you'd have, maybe, the juniors, the schoolboys and what you could call the under-ten age group. So there would be races throughout the whole of the day.



Cyclo cross racing in Maryon Wilson Park

The whole event was covered by members of the clubs in those days. The council supported, sponsored us! gave us two trophies – The Greenwich Trophy for the main race and the Junior Trophy. We'd run a lot of championships in the park. 1983 was the Vets National Championship, which is only one step down from the out-and-out National Championship and we also ran the South of England Championship as well.

George Burton remembers a deer retaliating.

They had red deer, magnificent red deer in that enclosure. The big stag had been there for years and years. They called him Old Bill because he'd been there so long. I went round there one day when there was a lot of commotion going on. Some kids or youths had got into the enclosure and started chasing the deer and he attacked them, charged them and hit them with his antlers; one of them was hurt. Soon after that they took the red deer out and brought back the fallow deer, which is much smaller and much more gentle.

Catherine Tongue remembers bats in Maryon Wilson Park.

After a brief explanation about how to use a bat detector, we set off to find out if there were bats in the park. Small bats like pipistrelles are likely to be found close to animals, where there will be a source of insect food and they are also likely to be

found in wooded areas. As we walked downhill between the animal pens towards the wooded areas the bat detectors were registering frequencies for a long period of time and pipistrelles could be seen flying around between the trees. It was amazing how many bats there were and how active they were.

Jill Austen talks about taking school children to the park.

We still come up here a lot. Last autumn with a class – you collect so much especially this time of the year, acorns, conkers. I'm often surprised how few children are taken to the park and are familiar with the parks. They maybe walk through. I don't think they are aware of what they are looking at. It's a class, you talk to them and take them to a particular tree or an area and they see it in a different light.

It's largely environmental – depends on the age group and what part of the curriculum you are looking at. The youngest – to look at and experience an open space – see what grows and what wildlife you can see, take things back to the classroom – fruits, nuts and fallen leaves; also experience another place that is so close, but unlike the streets where they live – concrete. Our school doesn't have a blade of grass. There's no opportunity to sit on the grass and pull a blade of grass up. Our children especially love coming to the parks, relish it, call it a big trip, bring packed lunches even if it's for only an hour or so. When I had a reception class we decided we would make a regular termly visit to the park and photograph it at different points in the year so you would see the same tree – look at its lovely colours, looking at new growth. Same place, looks different. Sometimes it's the emotional thing. How you are in your self. It's different in shorts and t-shirts, different from scarves and gloves and winter coats. Try to do that each term 'cause you could walk there. For older children, they go for other reasons. Key Stage 2 – use of open space, how it's arranged, what's there, the design of the playground. They design their own playground.

Edna Anderson and Claire Mullord talk about the campaign to save the animals after a council proposal to remove them.

Edna: Well, we first heard through Charlton Champion, which is a local website, and then the chair of the Friends – my husband – wrote to the News Shopper and when the council saw our response, and then John Fahy phoned us up and asked if he could come to our next meeting. Then he told us officially and congratulated us for finding out before they'd told us, basically. And then he told us that the animal park would close in April 2012 unless there was alternative funding found.

Claire: Well, as soon as I heard - it was literally in Thorntree School playground. A teacher telling me that the park might close. And because my daughter and my husband walked to school through it every single day it's a big part of our lives

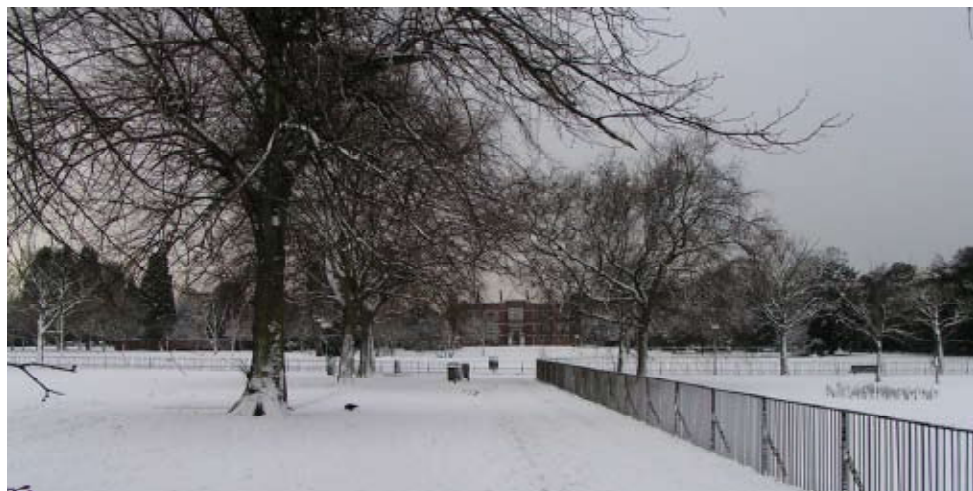
and I was furious. I was outraged. I teach citizenship, that's part of my job, so I've spent the last three years telling people how to run campaigns and do it, so I just took what I teach every day and put it into practice. The first thing I did was go onto Facebook and start a group to let people know what was happening, and just to see who was out there that cared. It wasn't even a petition at that point. It was just a Facebook page called a cause, and people could just say 'Yes, I support this cause of saving the animals of Maryon Wilson Park.' It just snowballed.



Edna talks about the Buggy protest.

It was one of the mothers, who has now become in the forefront of it. I met her down in Maryon Park one day, "I want to do something about this," she said, "I'm thinking about a wall of buggies as a protest. - everybody who's got a buggy to come and circle the fence and then to present the petition." And we got, oh, it was about fifty people to come and circle the pen!

CHARLTON PARK



Charlton Park is large and open. From Charlton House with its formal gardens it flows as a great field eastwards for six hundred metres, trees lining its perimeter. *This was how J. J. Sexby saw it in 1898.*

“The gardens show traces of all the many owners, and in spite of the growth of London and its attendant drawbacks, they are still charming. The house stands in about 150 acres of undulating deer park, with some fine old trees, an avenue of English elms on the east, and one of horse-chestnuts forming the approach on the west.”

The first we hear of the park is at about the same time as the construction of Charlton House in 1612, “a red brick wall was built enclosing a park of approximately 100 acres.” The earliest plan is that of John Rocque in 1741, which shows the house on Charlton Green, next to the church and hamlet.

Placing the house on an earth dais allowed good views of the patterned formal gardens from the windows of the principal rooms and is a typical feature of the early 17th century. This suggests that the existing terraces and the walls around the formal gardens to the south of the house are original, and would probably have included some kind of knot garden and kitchen garden.

On the village green in front of Charlton House the often rowdy Horn Fair was held on St. Luke’s day (18th October), described by Sandby in 1781 as a “disorderly annual fair or rather rout... with women on that day out vying the men”. In 1825, Sir Thomas Maryon-Wilson, unhappy with the “indecent character” of this fair, succeeded in moving it to Fairfield (a short distance to the north) and enclosing the

village green as his own. For this reason, the arch, which was the original gateway to Charlton House, now curiously stands in the middle of the front lawn.

In 1840, the garden in front of the house was “formerly thickly enblossomed in yew trees which have been headed down, but would be better removed,” and we are told of the garden being in a poor state of neglect. During this time, military reviews, polo matches, fetes and parties were “almost a daily event.” The Ha Ha was constructed in 1847, but only the northern section remains separating the park from the house and pleasure gardens.



*Charlton House
aerial view,
possibly 1948*

On either side of the lawn which stretches from the house up to the Ha Ha, there were informal belts of trees and shrubs planted in a bold and free style, with winding paths running through, which occasionally opened up at points of interest. Species mentioned are rhododendrons and giant aucubas in great luxuriance. In this part an ancient avenue of yews is mentioned “which is supposed to have been in existence long before the present mansion was built. According to Evelyn there was a fine row of evergreen cypresses then growing there, but all have disappeared save a solitary specimen,” and mention is made of an over-mature robinia pseudo-acacia covered in “Traveller’s Joy”, clematis, and also foxgloves, other “old fashioned plants,” and the well known horse chestnut, whose branches had rooted themselves and grown into mature specimens.

The Ordnance survey map of 1896 shows a cricket ground to the far east of the park across from Charlton cemetery. Subsequently Sir Spencer Maryon-Wilson, a lover of outdoor sports, added four tennis courts, two croquet lawns and a polo field to the earlier the fives court in the park.



Royal Artillery Garrison in Charlton Park in 1915

During the First World War, and until 1923, part of the park was used as an army remount and training ground which left the place in a deplorable condition. In the period after the War, the rising cost of living and wages made Charlton House and Estate an impractical proposition for Sir Spencer Maryon-Wilson to continue. The outgoings far outstripped any income. In June 1925, the Greenwich Borough Council purchased Charlton House, Park and Estate, comprising 108 acres, for £60,000. About 43 more acres were transferred to the L.C.C. in 1926 for £22,250. Contrary to expectations when turning the park into sports-fields, the soil was light and flinty and thousands of tons of top spit earth and filling material had to be put down to provide good drainage. Over £15,000 was finally spent in laying out the park, levelling and finally seeding the grass, erecting dressing rooms and conveniences.

The park, with eighteen grass tennis courts, putting green, an athletic area with cinder running track and space for many football and cricket pitches, was officially opened on July 13th 1929. The following year, modern baths and shower units for both sexes were installed in the pavilion/dressing rooms, and by February 1931, a refreshment hut was erected nearby at a cost of £240.

Prior to the outbreak of the Second World War, trenches were hastily dug in the park as a deterrent to enemy parachuters or landing aircraft. Large areas were requisitioned for growing food, and some four acres were set aside for temporary buildings to be erected to house bombed-out families. In the spring of 1942, the Greenwich Borough Council introduced a "Holidays at Home" scheme and camping was allowed in the grounds, and several tons of iron railings, removed from the perimeter for the national war effort, were only replaced in 1955.

The cinder running track cost around £2,000 to construct in 1929, and was the scene of many athletic records. In 1969 it underwent conversion to conform to metric and international standards, and to improve the bends, which had been a constant source of concern to the athletes. The same year, a single storey building containing changing rooms and shower baths was built to the east of the running track for the convenience of players using the cricket and football pitches. The track was removed around 2000 to make way for a floodlit rugby training field. The changing rooms are unused, but an adventure playground and accommodation for the One O' Clock Club (for young children), sited next to it, flourishes.



Charlton House Mulberry Tree

Barbara Whitaker remembers feeding her silkworms.

I had silkworms and my family said, ‘You’ve got to feed them on mulberry leaves.’ I was about ten. So I used to go and pick the mulberry leaves off the tree in Charlton Park. Used to feel terribly guilty and thinking that, you know, the park keeper was going to come and say, “What are you doing?” Because I knew then that it was the oldest, the first mulberry tree ever planted in England. I don’t know whether that was true. And there was a little plaque at that time and a sort of enclosure round it, but low and I used to take the mulberry leaves for my silkworms.

What did you do with the silkworms? Did they make silk?

Well, you sort of rear them. I used to keep caterpillars and newts and things like that. I wasn’t a child who liked dolls or anything and, in those days, children collected things and had them indoors rather than sort of go and study them in the wild, which you would now. If you really wanted the silkworms for the silk, once they made a cocoon you had to take the silk then, before the moths came out. And I never wanted to do that so, as a result, I had lots of moths, and then they mated and had thousands of eggs, and in the end, you know, it was a childish thing that probably went on for a few months.

MEMORIES OF SPORT IN CHARLTON PARK

Tennis was revived in Charlton Park in 1928 and continued until the 1980's. Putting, too, was a popular activity for families, next to the lawn tennis courts and the café. Near too, was the Charlton Park Rugby Football Club, which played in the Park from 1920 until 1932.

Steve Smythe remembers Charlton Park in the 1980s.

There was a cinder track where the outdoor gym is now and on Tuesday evening they used to get over 50 people, young people. I was in my 20s but they had teenagers and a really vibrant and well-attended running session. So for about the next couple of years I used to come up here every Tuesday night and do some fanatical training round the track. Also we had one-lappers, which happens to be one lap of the outside of Charlton Park... then you'd jog up the footpath in the middle... about a mile.



100 yards race on the cinder track in Charlton Park

Ron Allison recalls thirty years of training in the Park with his wife Joan.

I joined Cambridge Harriers when I was fourteen, I think it was. This was 1956. when I started going out with my wife – she was only fifteen at the time – and she was just started training. She got selected at internationals and selected to run for Great Britain at the Mexico Olympics. She was too good for the girls she was running with and not good enough for the lads. So I said to her I'd do my training with her. So, yeah, that's how I got into running.

Ron Roffey sees Sydney Wooderson, once world record holder for the mile.

When I was at school we used enter athletic competitions – athletic matches and so on – and I used to run in the relay so I used to do a little bit of training on the

running track when Cambridge Harriers were there and I can remember Joan and I going up to see Sydney Wooderson, who ran for Blackheath, running in the mile, and the people are all around the railings. And Sydney with his glasses, you know; Slim little man trotting around.

Steve Smythe recalls training his son in the snow.

When it snowed in the winter of 2010, on a dark evening he insisted we come out to Charlton Park to play football and what I remember about that day is that we were out playing football in the dark, in the snow, and Manchester United cancelled their match because of the snow and I said to myself. “That’s dedication you know.” Eighteen months and he’s out training in the dark in the snow.

Bernard Ashley describes a special match.

As part of ILEA, we just knew that we could use the park, we just knew that on a Wednesday and a Friday afternoon we walked the boys round for football. I mean, what you could do then! I walked sixty boys round on my own! There was one time when there was a late minute cancellation of some game and Mick Murphy said, “There’s a game. Do you think you can bring some players round?” So I said, “Yes, I’ll get a team together.” So I got a team together which was three-quarter boys, the others girls. He said, “Bring as many subs as you want.” We couldn’t find shorts for everybody and in the end some of the boys ended up wearing netball skirts! We went round and Woodhill arrived. They came running out like Liverpool, tall, very fit. We lined up. By half-time, I think, we were about 9-0 down and I said, “I want to make some substitutions.” He said, “Don’t bother, Bernard. Put ’em all on.” So they played eleven against twenty and still won. I’ll never forget that day!

Paul Stephens remembers football and pies.

I do remember playing my first game of cricket, for my father’s team which was called Triangle, when I was about fourteen years old, in Charlton Park, with my brother Peter. It was such a great space to play football and cricket on. After every game, we used to have a cup of tea and an Individual fruit pie, especially the blackcurrant ones. (*Laughter*) It was all part of the diet, you see? Because you knew that you were going to get your Individual fruit pie.

Baljinder Singh Sidhu talks about the Sikh school games.

It gives in pleasure especially to see women, children, girls, boys mixing together in every race. And the main feature is that the losers also get prizes. The sports activities include football, from six to eighteen. And then we have the kabaddi matches, which is a game originated from India Punjab. Then we have the athletic events. Even the losers are encouraged to participate and the majority of the games, including the races, come from India as well. Women take equal part, even in

football and everywhere, even in activities like pulling the tug. So the activities start early in the morning, at nine o'clock. So people enjoy – all kinds of people, all types of people -you see, white, black, Chinese, Asian. It's no difference. Anybody is welcome, any outsiders, any visitors, we invite them. "Come, have a free drink and have food, have fun!" Even I took part, at the age of seventy, in two races. Hundred metre races and I won!

Mal Gallagher, Park Ranger, recorded whilst walking through Charlton Park.

When I first started on the parks this is one of the first parks I worked in and here we used to have seven tennis courts and a putting green. We used to have a hockey pitch here and it was very well used. And, also, you'd got the running track, which Cambridge Harriers used to train on. They've moved down to Sutcliffe Park now. They moved about - I suppose over ten years now, so now the running track isn't really used. None of this is used as it used to be. I can remember at school – I used to go to school down the road at St. Austin's – and we always used to have our sports day up here. The whole school would come up and we had a proper running track but it's all grassed over now.

Who would have used the hockey pitch?

We used to get a lot of hockey teams up here. You'd get people playing regular of a weekend and then, once a year, they used to have a big hockey festival. Used to get a lot of the Asian teams, because they're big in hockey, the Indians, and also we'd get them from all over the country. They'd come down. It was a really big festival. It was held over two days, on a Saturday and a Sunday. And we'd have about two or three pitches and you'd get thousands of people in here coming to watch, and it used to be a really good weekend.



National Hockey Tournament, Charlton Park

Charlton Park Riding for the Disabled School

In 1973 a teacher at Charlton Park School (now Charlton Park Academy) suggested creating an RDA group, and a parent volunteered her help and her pony. In 1974 it was formed, led by Liz McDermott, a physiotherapist at the school. In 1976 the



group moved into the premises that had once been occupied by the One O'clock Club at the east end of the park, which gave them a safe enclosed riding area and a sand surface to ride in. The school is now open five days a week for riding sessions, and children from a number of schools take riding lessons, some of whom who have been attending for a number of years, each one supported by staff. The volunteers undertake the care of the ponies: Ted, Honey, a chestnut Haflinger bred in Holland, and Tiny Tim a Shetland pony, and Arthur - a horse by 1 inch – collecting them from the stables in Maryon Wilson Park, grooming, feeding and watering them and working with the children.

Collecting the ponies from the stables

Joan Healy remembers the Open Air School.

I went to Charlton Park Open Air School and I think I was about eight years old. I'd come from a large family and we'd had T.B., and I was classed as a delicate child so I'd lost quite a lot of schooling. I went to the open air school because they thought that kind of outdoor schooling would help, and it obviously did because here I am as fit as anything at sixty-four.

Well, we'd get there at nine o'clock, picked up by coach. There was the big, main hall and we'd go in, and then we'd have breakfast and then assembly. Then lessons, Maths or English, and then dinner. We did a lot of gardening and were encouraged to be sporty, but mainly we had the same kind of lessons that you would get in an ordinary school. Then just before four we had tea, and also we did have a sleep in the afternoon. They had funny sort of canvas beds that you lie on. We hated it.

There was a lot of asthmatics. I remember there was a boy there who had polio and there was another girl who had quite an effect on me because she was quite disabled, but we became really firm friends. I used to stick up for her and then one day we

were all in assembly and she'd died, and I couldn't believe it. Dorothy, she'd died. Yeah, she'd had some heart problem and she just sort of died in her sleep. That was quite an effect on me - you don't get all this counselling and all this - you know - like when things happen. Yeah, there was a few that never really made old bones. There were a few children there that wouldn't have been working-class, They would have been middle-class. Lived in Blackheath and that, but we all rubbed along.

Jim Free describes the café in Charlton Park.

Tell me about the café – you regarded it as a treat?

It was at the time – six or seven years old – a big treat, couple of times - for being good at the dentist. 'Alright we'll go to the café!' It had some tables, chairs, a breakfast bar, like a counter with stools. I remember sitting on them, hooked up, used get an ice cream soda with a dollop of ice cream. Tell you the other thing, you don't see it now: used to have a teapot with 2 spouts – rows of cups, plop, plop, plop go round cups, used to fascinate me. It looked old 50 years ago, built as a café.

Mavis Best on the slave trade.

It was in 2007. The government wanted to recognise the slave trade and the impact on this country. We got engaged with some people who were campaigning and we were invited to a meeting to discuss appreciation of our sadness of what had actually happened, and it was called, 'Set Us Free.' And the Queen was there, Prince Philip, and the relative of Wilberforce was also there, and the Archbishop of York came and spoke. It was good to have that to mark it, but it was nothing specific and there were some people saying that there should be an apology to the Caribbean community for slavery, because all that we needed was to acknowledge that it had happened. So I then thought we would plant a tree, but it was only after we got back we discussed it, and I said, "Charlton Park would be the best place. The Peace Garden would be a good place to do it." And then, because we're on the committee at Charlton House we took it to the committee and it was agreed that we could plant a tree. *Editors note: The tree is actually in the Pond Garden.*



The Pond Garden

HORNFAIR PARK



Hornfair park is the most southerly of our six and the youngest, opening as Charlton Playing Fields in 1936 but renamed Hornfair in 1948. It is a large park, with formal gardens and plenty of areas for different activities; swimming at the Lido, bike riding on the BMX track, basketball, bowling, hard court tennis; for football there are four full-size pitches, and there is also a playground for children of all ages.

In 1926 Hornfair Park was purchased by the London County Council from the Maryon-Wilson family, and 1935 the land not required for housing was given to the L.C.C. Parks department for a sum of £12,000 for a public park. A further £19,000 was spent on landscaping and providing facilities.

Phyllis Flynn remembers the bowling green.

I didn't go to the Lido 'cause I don't like swimming but what I did like doing was watching people playing bowls in the bowling club, which my husband and I joined later. At the time I never dreamed I would be doing it meself years later. The whole family used to go over and watch.

Were you any good?

Wasn't bad at all. Bit wibbly-wobbly when I first started doing it. I used to think I'd never get that all the way down there but when you've had a bit of practice you can do that.

We had competition days usually at weekends or game of triples or rings. Triples with 3 woods, rings with just the 2. A wood is the bowl itself, bowling ball – quite heavy, comes in various sizes, depends on size of the hand. I used to have a double 0 or 0.

What would you wear?

Special outfits. Weekdays – white tops, grey skirts or trousers. Weekends all white and you had blazers and little hats for the women and gear for when it rains, put over your ordinary clothes.

Do you remember winning?

Yes we did win a few times. The group I was in, we had our winning days. We did quite well a few times over, quite proud of that really.



A bowls tournament in Hornfair park

Pet's Corner.

The Greenwich Phantom posted this rather downbeat comment in 2009:

“Not even people who visit Hornfair Park regularly necessarily know about this place.

Charlton Pet Cemetery seems to have been at its zenith in the 1930s – when, I’m guessing, so was the Lido. Memorials are carved with all the sincerity as for human loved ones, notable as being of the furry variety, only because in the 1920s and 30s there weren’t too many people in Charlton called Chu-Chu, Ickety Man and Ming Zee.

It must have been a charming corner of the park, and I’m guessing that about 10-15 years ago, someone thought it could be charming again. What I’m assuming were, by that point, badly-overgrown graves, were ripped up and a little patio made from the headstones; with cherry trees overhanging some rather sinister looking low concrete benches. Around the edge, headstones line beds with a few shrubs dotted around them, populated with ground elder and brambles. I found memorials to much-loved pets – Mike, Rex, Floss, Roy, Mickey, Buntie – cracked and forgotten.”

The Lido.

On 6th May 1939 Charlton Lido was opened in the park, built for the L.C.C. by local firm Thomas & Edge of Woolwich for £28,000. It was the last and smallest of the four Lidos built by the L.C.C. in the late 1930’s, the others being at Parliament Hill, Brockwell Park and Victoria Park. The lido concept had developed continuously



At the Lido main pool

in London from the swimming lakes in public parks during Victorian times. They all had symmetrical wings of undercover changing cubicles for males and females. The water was filtered, aerated and sterilised. Diving boards and slides were provided. Increasing space was dedicated to the leisure uses of these places, with facilities such as cafes and sun bathing areas gaining increasing prominence. A feature introduced for the first time in Lidos erected by the Council, was the inclusion of a Children's Pool, measuring 66 ft. by 20 ft, with steps down at each end running the full width of the pool, which is 2 ft. deep at each end and 2 ft. 6 in. in the centre.

Grace Hills recalls the Assistant at the Lido.

And then we might also walk on to Hornfair - I still call it the Lydo. I know officially it's the Lido but I still call it the Lydo. And also there was then a paddling pool by that, and when it was hot that was where quite a lot of us went up. You just went in, you just took your shoes or sandals off and you just splashed about in the paddling pool.

What I do remember, there was this splendid, absolutely splendid lady. I still think of her, with a cross-over overall. Do you know what I mean? And I think she must have had it on all the time. You see, it was good because, after all, kids can drown in even a few inches of water, and you weren't aware of her but if something happened, you slipped and crashed down, and there'd be an 'Owww!' And she would be there and have a look at you, and mop up your knee or whatever it was, and decided

you needed a plaster and, if you'd been a brave soldier, you'd probably get a little sweetie, a dab of Germolene - cleaned and the plaster put on, and you'd then go back round and round again. When you got home and mum would say, "What's that?" And you'd say, 'I slipped and fell over,' and she was quite happy because somebody was there. I don't honestly remember anything serious happening.

Rita Yardley remembers taking her children to the Lido.

When the children were little they went to Charlton Manor School.

This was in the sixties?

Yes. Just along the road was the Lido and the paddling pool so I used to push up from where I lived to the school, with one in the pram and pick up the other two. In the pram would be a towel and costumes to go paddling in the paddling pool, our bottle of drink and some sandwiches, because they were always starving when



they came out of school. We walked along to the paddling pool and they got undressed and had their paddle. When we'd finished we'd go through into a large field where they could play football and we had our drinks and eats and then we just all put everything in the pram and came home.

So did you do that every day when the Lido was open?

Oh, no. Just every now and again. No, it's something different rather than picking them up and going straight home and then they go out to play and perhaps getting up into mischief. I felt that it was better to do it that way than have it annoy the neighbours, so to speak.

Joyce Snipp remembers walking through the park.



We went up in the afternoon after lunch – we'd stay there till four or half-past, come home, ready to get the evening meal ready. We'd just say, "Oh, shall we go up the park today?" We had a pram in the early days so the pram had to be pushed up the hill from here, and we'd go to the paddling pool, and I can remember walking through Hornfair Park. It was a nice walk with the flowerbeds either side, a fountain and a centre piece, and then we'd walk round to the paddling pool. It wasn't very deep, I should imagine about six or eight inches deep. But all the kids were there and there was a lady looking after everything, to make sure things went ok.

Hornfair park gardens

Ian Snipp remembers the Lido being very different from later.

I guess I was about eleven or twelve years old in 1972, and, basically, we used to spend most of the summer holidays up there; it wasn't a lot of money to get in. We'd go least four times a week during the six weeks holiday and it was just a meeting place for all your friends. I loved swimming. Of course, back in them days, you didn't have the Health and Safety rules. They had a big diving board - must have been at least twenty/thirty feet high that you could jump, run, dive off - anything you wanted. I think there was a lifeguard there. They had water-chutes.

So anything like that when you're a kid is really exciting, isn't it? I mean, they're not allowed to do things like that these days. They had a café up the end with two fountains. You weren't allowed to take things in, but we used to sneak our

sandwiches in. You went to the changing rooms and then you took all your clothes up to the counter, and you put them in these big baskets and they'd give you a tag, but you could take your bag in, and you could stick your sandwiches and a bottle of drink in there and take it in because you'd say, 'Oh, I've got me towel in there'

It looked like an old Victorian hospital in the changing rooms. You know, it was always dark and dingy and had a really horrible smell. You know, damp, musty - like a cellar kind of smell. It was a turquoise blue. And as you walked in it was very imposing, the place where you paid to get in. Like it had turnstiles. They were these big things like you get at a football ground. You know, all the bars. When we were very young - we could slide underneath those and get in for nothing. So what you'd do? - you'd all chip in and pay for one of your mates to pay to go in, then he'd go round to the exit and you'd push your bags through to him, and then we'd all slide under.

Greenwich BMX Club.

The BMX Club, created as part of Greenwich Council's 'Playground to Podium' legacy programme, is based at the large and exciting, newly opened track in Hornfair Park and serves all the local area.

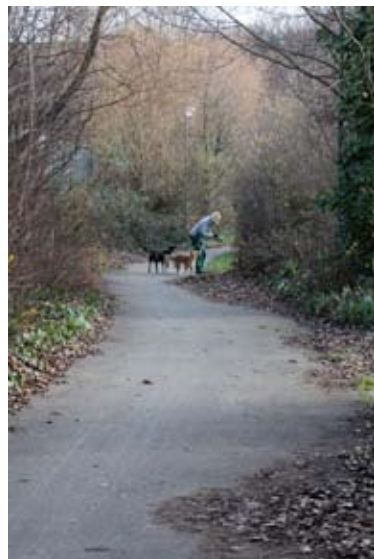
It is affiliated to British Cycling and is led by volunteers who run sessions every Saturday morning.

British Cycling coaches train pupils in local schools.



BARRIER GARDENS

Barrier Gardens is a long and narrow park, part of the Green Chain Walk, a pretty path and spinney leading from the Woolwich Road towards the Thames Barrier. Once occupied by the Siemens factory, Greenwich Council identified the land as derelict in the mid-eighties and bought it to turn into a park. Mike Tanti of the architecture department designed the new landscaping with beds of native trees, shrubs and amenity grassed areas.



Woolwich Road is recalled by Brenda.

I was born at the Woolwich Home for Mothers and Babies, Wood Street, Woolwich, which actually closed in 1984. Most all my life up until 1989 I lived at 648 Woolwich Road. My father was born just two doors away at 644 Woolwich Road, and my mother was born in Mirfield Street, which runs between Eastmoor Street and Westmoor Street, very near what is now the Thames Barrier.

The terrace consisted of three storey houses originally built for the directors of Siemens, a cable factory situated on the south bank of the Thames, and at the bottom of Hardens Manorway. The upstairs were very Victorian, with lovely fireplaces, coving and cornices. The ground floor originally was for the servants, and as a child I remember that both the front and back rooms of the ground floor had a cooking range at the fireplace. I had many relatives living along the terrace, aunts, uncles and cousins.

The houses to the north of Maryon Park backed on to Cox Mount. There was the 'big hill' and the 'little hill', and as a child I played on the green in front of these two 'hills', and also running about over them. Behind the 'big hill' were sand pits, which during the 1700's were dug out by prisoners from the prison ship that were on the River Thames. I ended up buying the house with my husband and raised two children there.

During the 80's there was talk of demolishing the houses. I ended up chairing a campaign, not necessarily to stop this happening but to try to find out WHEN it would happen. There was so little information being given to us, but we were all suffering from the effect of this blight over our properties. There was no way any of us could sell.

The Ash and Silk Wall, a monumental glass structure.

The art-work was made by the sculptor Vong Phaophanit for the new Barrier Gardens. He chose glass because he wanted to reflect the area – to catch the cars, the warehouses, and the nearby auto wrecking yards, too. He put salmon-pink silk beneath the glass panels on one side, and wood ash under the other, because they mean different things to people from different educational and cultural backgrounds. “I knew from the beginning,” Vong said, “that it would be a problem. But I didn’t want to accept that the idea that art shouldn’t be in a bad area, nor that it should just be about making people happy.” It was opened in Barrier Gardens in 1993 by the chairman of the Arts Council and was attacked continually; finally dismantled and taken away in 1996.

Bob Harris chair of Leisure Services remembers the Ash and Silk Wall

A fantastic piece of work, and when I saw it, it worked just right, the interplay with that sort of light coming through. It was trashed, not because of what it was, but what it represented - “here’s something that the council has put here.” Which was so terribly sad.



Bee Orchids in Barrier Gardens by Rosemary Charnock, June 2009.

Mimicking the distinctive outline of a bee, the bee orchid is possibly the UK’s most distinctively recognisable orchid. It is predominantly found on sunny, well-drained grasslands low in nutrients, although it is known to grow on heavier clay soil.

WORKING IN THE PARKS



Lee Beasley remembers a problem with some bikers in Hornfair Park.

I got a call and it was about motorbikes. There was some kids on motorbikes in the middle of the field. I was on my own and I needed to do something about it. I walked over to the kids in the middle of the large field at the bottom and as I did they sort of moved away. I picked up their can of petrol and I called one of them over and they started! Have you ever seen ‘Apache Dawn’ or something like that? – where they circle the camp. And they were circling me on these motorbikes, screaming expletives at me. They followed me all the way down the park but they didn’t have enough courage to come close enough to get it. I just thought, ‘Well, it’s like the Wild West,’ like an old western, you know. Bizarre, a bizarre thing!

Tony Dyson – Maryon Wilson Park.

Well, this is my moan. If you walk down through the deer park, pass the deer on the right and the ducks on the left, coming from this end, there used to be a lovely triangle there where azaleas used to grow in the spring, and it was very pretty and rhododendrons behind them, and that’s been allowed to go. And I really think, even with cutting back staff, it doesn’t take much just to keep that lovely little triangle going, and now that’s overtaken by brambles. I don’t go in the park anymore. I used to love that park.

Lee Beasley – Parks Department.

We had a chestnut and a beech go over in the last five years in Charlton Park, and we’ve actually left the trunks in situ for habitat creation and just general natural play and they’ve been very well received. They just need the minimum of management to make sure they’re safe, something we wouldn’t have done twenty years ago, and that’s definitely a change in parks management, to encourage bio-diversity and allow natural habitats to develop. Leaving dead, standing timber, or even dead

fallen timber, is something we'll do.

You've done that in Maryon Wilson.

Yeah, Maryon Wilson, lots, lots of encroachment of grasslands, and the woodlands has been allowed to just move around a little bit and develop. So we've got all sorts of mature woodland and maturing woodland, and then the grasslands – quality grasslands as well.

Paul Tiffen, once warden for Maryon Wilson Park, describes a typical day.

Could you give us an outline of a typical day working in the animal park?

Well, I'd start at 7.30. We'd open up the yard, go straight into where the small animals were kept, checking that they're ok. Then get the feed ready for the outside animals – always fed those first because they're out in the elements. So I'd go round, check the fencing, check the animals visually, feed them. Go round all the pens and making sure that everything was okay and the streams weren't blocked and that sort of thing. Feed the goats first and the deer and the sheep - with the sheep, of course, there was all the chickens and ducks and pea fowl - and then round to the ponies. So, feed the ponies, and then up to feed the small animals in the yard.

After break it would be picking up pony poo and things that wanted doing, checking over or repairing, nailing up, raking leaves or clearing the streams. There's all sorts of jobs. They're so numerous I can't even remember them now! After lunch-time, carry on in that same sort of vein and, middle of the afternoon, start feeding up again. Going round checking the animals, making sure the fencing's okay. Wind up with the inside animals, feed them all up. Doing any cleaning that was necessary. Prepare the food for the morning, of course, so that I'm ready to head out again. That's a sort of typical day... hopefully. And that would be the end of the day. 4.30.



Clearing up after the hurricane in 1987

CHARLTON HOUSE



In Philipott's 'Survey of Kent' of 1659 the house 'Immediately to the south of the church is the seat of the lord of the manor of Charlton which was first given by William the Conqueror to his half-brother Odo, Bishop of Bayeux, from whom it passed - six hundred years later - to Sir Adam Newton, Dean of Durham, tutor to Henry, Prince of Wales. He commissioned the building of Charlton House which Evelyn described as "a faire house built for Prince Henry," and one whose prospect is "one of the most noble in the world for city, river, ships, meadows, hill, woods, and all other amenities." In 1789 the manor had passed to the Maryon-Wilson family, who lived in the house over succeeding generations until it was purchased by the London County Council in 1926.

Phyllis Flynn remembers the library in Charlton House.

We used to like going into Charlton House – They used to open it to the public every so often sometimes in the summer so we went in there a few times. We used to go in the library - used to go in there quite regularly to borrow books and have a look round. Great big rooms upstairs, grand, no furniture or anything, decorations, old fire places. And we used to go in the Rose Garden, to the back of Charlton House. Me mother and I used to go in there quite frequently to enjoy sitting there in the sunshine.

Jean Humphreys remembers the Museum in the House.

When the museum was first opened there were wild birds in there - all stuffed birds but a good collection if you liked that sort of thing and, of course, the Victorians did.

When the building had been taken over by the local authority, they kept this in the house?

Yes, and you could go in up that nice staircase. That was something. I used to enjoy that. But these keepers - of course they weren't really pleased to see a little mob of children and I think we used to play them up rather. We weren't very good children.

What did you do?

Well, I suppose we called out to them - they would appear on the terrace to see that we were behaving ourselves and we would run and hide and then we'd run somewhere else and eventually we would go away. Give them a bit more peace!



Charlton House Terrace in 1909

Horn Fair.

In the year 1268, there was a grant from the crown for a weekly market to be held at this place on Monday, and an annual fair, for three days, on the eve, the day, and morrow of the Trinity. Philipott, who wrote in 1659, speaks of the market as then not long since discontinued; "the fair," says he, "is not disused, but kept yearly on St. Luke's Day; and called Horn-fair, by reason of the great plenty of all sorts of winding horns and cups, and other vessels of horn there brought to be sold." The fair was formerly celebrated by a burlesque procession, which passed from Deptford, through Greenwich, to Charlton; each person wearing some ornament of horn upon his head. The Fair originally granted for May/June to 'Christianise' the period of pagan fertility celebrations was moved to St Luke's Day later to connect the waving about of horns to the Ox, and still called Horn Fair, continues to be celebrated.

Douglas Adams remembers Horn Fair and Morris Dancing

As a musician, who could play for most teams, that's why my knowledge of which parks I played in is a bit sketchy. The only one I remember was – clear knowledge – is behind Charlton House, as part of the Horn Fair celebrations. Later lots of other groups thought it would be good to have Morris dancers along and, at the time in the 70s, we were very community-oriented – as long as there was a good pub nearby and we could collect money as well! So we did a lot more of those events.



Horn Fair

I was quite excited by the revival of the Horn Fair and I persuaded Blackheath, when it was revived, to go along, but it had lost all of its pizzazz really. I think the procession wasn't allowed to go on the road anymore, so it had to go on the pavement and around the front of Charlton House and then to the back. In that time – that's the eighties – we danced with Blackheath Morris at quite a lot at events. There are very good women musicians there which, at the time, we were trying to encourage, because most women's teams have men musicians, and we were trying to encourage the girls to get involved. I used to enjoy Charlton House events. I remember going to play once at a Mauritian event, which was marvelous for the food and their music. I think they might have coincided, and I can tell you there are people who were active at the time, who might know better. The most important one's now called Cathy Elvin. But she was a great driving force behind a lot of these things, and famously she was known as 'Big Cath.'

I was always keen to show off that we were local people, doing local things that anyone could join in with, and that was more of the ethos at the time. You know, that this isn't as it's portrayed so often – you've got to be very fit. It's quite dangerous if you don't practice. The sticks really hurt if they don't meet!

PARKS FRIENDS GROUPS

The origins of the local community Park Friends group can be traced back twenty years ago to when 'The Friends of Maryon Wilson Park' was formed as a local protest group, which successfully opposed the council's plans to turn Maryon Wilson Park's historic deer enclosure and animal zoo enclosures into an Urban Farm.

Similar 'Friends of Parks' organisations were active in the 1980s, especially during the period of cuts in council services, as pressure groups. Councils initially regarded them as a nuisance, eventually encouraged groups to be constituted as council sponsored organisations of volunteers helping the upkeep of the parks and helping with events.

The Friends of Maryon Park and Maryon Wilson Park have been helping to care for the two parks, and two green open spaces, Gilbert's Pit and Barrier Gardens, They have their own website, regularly clear the parks of litter, run a stall at open days, publish cards and calendars, apply for grants and keep a watchful eye on the parks. They achieved the installing of secure fencing for the animals and established paths in a wooded area in Maryon Wilson Park. In 2012, the Friends started a Food Growing Project next to Maryon Park, and gained a grant for an educational Tree Walk leaflet with an informative tree website for schools and intelligent phone apps for walkers.

A new political storm arrived in November 2011 when the council announced that it was withdrawing funding from its own Animal Centre and historic deer enclosure in Maryon Wilson Park, the children's petting zoo. Local residents formed a campaign called STAMP, Save The Animals in Maryon Wilson Park, Facebook and Internet petitions were set up, the press and local digital media took a strong interest and there were many other initiatives. Members of the Friends became very active in the campaign. A 3,500-signature petition was submitted to the council in April 2012 and another 4,000 signatures in October 2012 - one of the biggest petitions ever presented to the council.

The council responded by first setting up a working party, to find ways of saving the Animal Centre, and then forming a limited company to enable the setting up of a Charity to run Maryon Wilson Animal Park. Members of the Friends are expected to be involved in the Charity, not just to volunteer help improve local parks, but this time to help save and run council amenities. It is doubtful if members of the Friends welcome this turn of events. The dichotomy between Park Friends groups as pressure groups and as voluntary add-on organizations has become even more focused than 20 years ago.

VOLUNTEERS

This project has only been possible through the enthusiastic contributions made by local people who have volunteered their time to undertake research, conduct interviews, sort through their home photographs to add to the website or act as stewards for the three events and exhibition.

So thank you to Edna Anderson, Timothy Anderson, Jill Austen, Paul Breen, Sheila Dobner, Iris Dove, Patricia Field, Jim Free, Liz Green, Hazel Greig-Midlane, John Greig-Midlane, Nathan Lobb, Stephen Lobb, Liz Logan, Mandy and Peter, Derek Penfold, Andy Potts, Barbara Pryn, Diana Rimel, Rosemary Savinson, Liz Somerville, Peter Somerville, Gulle Stubbs, Lauraine Wilson, The John Roan School staff and pupils – Mr. Roddy Wilson, Charlotte, Edward, Haydn, Jamie, Jenny, Katy, Kelsey, Leighvi, Mia, Robbie, Susie, Tilly. Also John Roan year 8 pupils – Anh, Bethan, Bethan 2, Charlotte, Demelza, Edith, Elizabeth, Favour, Greta, Isabelle, Kelly and Tom.

INTERVIEWS

The following people who live or work in Charlton have contributed written stories, articles and interviews, and by giving their permission to publish the interviews have helped make this project possible.

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PHOTOGRAPHS

By kind permission of Tim Anderson; Eileen Evans; Jim Free; Greenwich Heritage Centre; Country Life; Hazel Greig Midlane; Carol Kenna; London Metropolitan Archives; Gulle Stubbs; Paul Tiffen; Royal Artillery, Firepower; Vong Phaophanit; Felicity Young.

BIBLIOGRAPHY For this please look on our website. www.charlton-parks.co.uk

CHRONOLOGY OF MARYON-WILSON CHARLTON ESTATE AND PARKS

- 50-250: Roman Settlement in vicinity of Maryon Park. (excavated 1870-1920)
- 1066: William the Conqueror bestows the Manor of Charlton to his half brother, Odo Bishop of Bayeux, later passed to Robert Bloett. Popular myth suggests that men of Charlton help embroider the Bayeux tapestry.
- 1093: Manor of Charlton given to the Monastery of St. Saviour, Bermondsey by Robert Bloett, Bishop of Lincoln.
- 1525: Charlton Manor surrendered to the Crown due to the dissolution of the monasteries.
- 1603: James 1 (James VI of Scotland) sells Charlton Manor to John Erskine for £2000.
- 1607: Adam Newton, tutor to Prince Henry, acquires Charlton Manor site for £4,500.
- 1607-1612: Charlton House built. First mulberry tree in England planted in grounds 1609.
- 1630: Summer House built. Attributed to Inigo Jones.
- 1657: Charlton House bought by Sir William Ducie.
- 1680: Sir William Langhorne, an East India merchant is in residence.
- 1715: Langhorne's nephew, Sir John Conyers inherits the estate.
- 1745: John Roque's plan shows Charlton House surrounded by formal gardens to the north, east and south.
- 1765-67: Some of the formal gardens have disappeared and a serpentine walk runs the length of the yew avenue, and the semi-circular driveway is installed.
- 1767-1923: Maryon-Wilson family in residence.
- 1822: Roman stone chest imported by Sir Thomas Maryon-Wilson, placed in the gardens until the house was sold.
- 1825: Village Green enclosed and added to Charlton House Grounds.
- 1847: The Ha-Ha dividing the gardens from the park is constructed.
- 1870: Sir John Maryon-Wilson (9th Baronet) inherits the estate.
- 1877: Extension added to south side of Charlton House by Norman Shaw. Charlton Sand-pits presented to the LCC, one of which becomes Maryon Park.
- 1889: Maryon Park, opened by the LCC and Sir Spencer Maryon-Wilson in 1890.
- 1895: Land donated for an open-air gymnasium in Maryon Park. A decorative bandstand was built in 1896
- 1898: Sir Spencer Maryon-Wilson laid tennis courts, croquet lawns and a polo field in Charlton House grounds.
- 1909: Maryon Park extended. Further extensions were made in 1925 and 1929
- 1914-1918: Charlton House used as a Red Cross hospital, whilst the family lived in the nursery. Part of the grounds used by the Royal Artillery.
- 1925: Metropolitan Borough of Greenwich bought Charlton House and 108 acres of the grounds, allocating 43 acres for sports provision, forming Charlton Park.
- 1926: Hanging Wood presented to LCC to form Maryon Wilson Park, opened in 1926. The Maryon-Wilson family donate a herd of Deer.
- 1929: Charlton Park opened to the public.
- 1935: Hornfair Park opened
- 1939: Charlton (Hornfair) Lido opened.
- 1945: Charlton House opened as a community centre
- 1973: Hornfair Festival revived



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