

## In this issue >>>

*Project Update*  
*Volunteering Opportunities*  
*Quarter in Review*  
*Hidden Heritage*  
*Lockdown Activity Idea*



A Quarterly Insight into the Victoria Park Project

Issue #2  
Winter



# Victoria Park Ashford



## Volunteering News >>>

### Remote Working Roles Available

*Covid restrictions continue to affect our volunteering programme but with our conservation volunteers currently grounded we have some remote working roles available*

Our partners at KSCP have been doing amazing work so far with the team and you are welcome to continue applying in order to receive relevant training and be kept in the loop. In the meantime we are still looking for more remote tour guides and virtual workshop leaders. If you are interested in hearing more, please go the the website for info.

**Further volunteering roles to be launched this summer!**



### *New mural breathes life into building!*

*Back in November paint began to appear on the back of the nursery block walls, but this was no random graffiti, but a mural commissioned to brighten up your daily walks through a potentially difficult winter.*

Our Youth Involvement Coordinator Nicola fills us in on the story. 'The main building in the park is due to be developed later on in the Victoria Park project, however in the meantime it was looking tired, uninviting and didn't fit with the landscape of the park. It was a great opportunity to provide a unique canvas for local artists Hello Murals to create a piece of public art to engage and inspire the local community while also giving them something to be proud of. This was the first stage in developing the arts offering within the park which will later include an extension of the sculpture trail, more mural opportunities, musical features, and creative workshops.'

Artists Hello Murals add, 'The wall provided by Ashford Borough Council had a lot of potential! The plain brick wall was a bit of an eye sore whilst taking a panoramic view of the park. We decided to continue the natural flow of the park because of how the tree's offset behind the wall. We painted a stag as a homage to the lost stag statues in the park fountain.' 'One of our priorities while painting a mural like this, is that people feel safe and take ownership of the work. The general public were all very friendly and supportive while we worked and the best part of it was when two dogs started barking at the stag!' Come and visit the mural and share your selfies with us on our social media!

Quarter in Review >>>

# Story Writing Competition Captures Imagination

*Back in November a second Lockdown was announced. Working on a story writing competition to run each summer, we decided to launch early and run a shortened version of the competition for people to engage whilst being stuck at home.*

Volunteer and Community Engagement Officer Vicky Fannon takes up the tale.

'The project originally had a story element for families which needed to be adapted to be delivered within the

new restrictions we found ourselves under. Park and Write was born and was in development for delivery in summer 2021. When a second lockdown was announced we were looking for park related activities we could deliver to give people ways to engage with Victoria Park whether they could be there in person or not. We decided to launch a shortened version of Park and Write and link it to our stag mystery. It really seemed to connect with people and we had 40 entries across all age categories. The quality of stories was really high and gave our judges a real challenge. They selected the top three in



each category and those stories are now being made into video readings for the Victoria Park YouTube channel. We'd like to extend a massive thanks to all who got involved. We're still working on a summer delivery for the next competition so keep your eyes on our webpages and social media for more information.'

Make sure you check out the Victoria Park YouTube channel for all of our videos from tutorials to stories!

Coming soon >>>

*Our Spring Edition will be out in April!*

Quarter in Review >>>

## Stag Mystery reaches new heights!

*We've been investigating the mystery of the stags of Victoria Park and asked the public to help us narrow down the timeline of when they disappeared.*

Volunteer and Community Engagement Officer Vicky Fannon explains.

'Initially we were hoping to get an idea of the exact year that the stags were removed to help us with our research through official records. We had no idea it would inspire people to search for the stags themselves! This activity has taken us on an amazing journey that is now filling in blanks on where the stags were potentially made and their journey before Olantigh House. The Mystery of the Stags began as a way of launching our memory logging activity for the project. We had fantastic support from BBC Radio Kent and Meridian News which really helped spread the word. As well as the memories that came in we started receiving photographs of other stags from across the country. The most popular was that of Bowood House (pictured right) who got in contact

with us after receiving a number of enquiries. The website will be updated in the coming months with our findings and where we go next, but I would like to thank everyone who got involved and helped us out. We have no doubt that the stags will continue to feature throughout the project and hope that we get to the bottom of the mystery once and for all!'



## Follow Us>

 Victoria Park Ashford

 VictoriaParkABC

 VictoriaParkABC

 VictoriaParkAshford

 Victoria Park Ashford

Email: [VictoriaPark@ashford.gov.uk](mailto:VictoriaPark@ashford.gov.uk)

## Friends of Victoria Park

If you're interested in becoming a Friend of the park, please look at the website: [victoriaparkashford.uk/](http://victoriaparkashford.uk/)

# Hidden Heritage: The Bandstand

*This project has really shone a light on the history of the park, including some of the more forgotten elements of its past. Here we explore The Bandstand.*

According to research, following the council's acquisition of Victoria Park from the Jemmett brothers in 1898, band concerts were already underway by May 1900 using a temporary trestle and plank structure. In the following month, the chairman of the Baths and Recreation Committee, Mr Hancock, offered to provide a permanent bandstand which was soon under construction and came into use in April 1901. It was lit by a centre light and six columns erected outside the stand. Band concerts were one of the major features of the park from then until after the Second World War. With the major exception of the Hubert Fountain and its immediate setting, the Edwardian park was largely complete by 1903.



In that year, the entrance gates, bandstand and shelters were repainted and new or additional toilets were planned. Band concerts were so popular that a 100ft-diameter enclosure was placed around the bandstand. Additional lighting was provided. An amusements committee was formed and additional chairs were purchased. An oblique aerial photograph taken from the northeast in April 1929 clearly shows the bandstand within its fenced enclosure as a prominent feature. An image of the park in 1947 shows the bandstand still in place and articles suggest regular band concerts continued until 1949, but were then abandoned. Ordnance survey maps show that up to 1962, the bandstand was still in situ. The next available resource was a map from 1974 which showed that the bandstand had been demolished. The exact nature of when it was removed is not in our current archives and will make up part of our research work as the project progresses. If you have any thoughts about hidden heritage you'd like to see explored, or you have memories to share, get in contact with us at [Victoriapark@ashford.gov.uk](mailto:Victoriapark@ashford.gov.uk)



## 'Coming Soon: Arbor Day!

In our previous newsletter we highlighted an event held in the park back in the early 1900's called Arbor Day. This day was a celebration of the trees of the park and saw them being planted and dedicated throughout the day. We're going to develop our own version of Arbor Day to run in the park each year. Due to likely restrictions, 2021 will see the first Arbor Day being delivered digitally, with games, activities and the dedication and planting of a tree in the park. This will take place in the May Bank Holiday with the exact date to be announced in our Spring Newsletter in April.

If you have any suggestions or comments on this, please contact: [victoria.fannon@ashford.gov.uk](mailto:victoria.fannon@ashford.gov.uk)

## 'Coming Soon: Return of Barklife!

Due to popular demand, August will see the return of 'Barklife', our online dog show! Keep your eyes peeled for more information on entering in the next newsletter!

## Quarter in Review >>>

### Victoria Park Youth Council Launched



We successfully held our first VPYC Victoria Park youth council meeting in December, it was great to hear the opinions and ideas of local young people. We are still looking for enthusiastic young people aged 12- 25 that would like to join. The project team would especially like to recruit young people that have an interest in social media, art, play, fitness and vehicles such as scooters, skateboards, rollerskates and bikes.

Joining VPYC is a volunteering opportunity that can help young people to build their experience and CV. There will be opportunities to develop skills in communication, decision making, working with others, working in the community and possibly even planning events and activities. Young people can even use their time with VPYC to register volunteering hours with different award programmes (such as Duke of Edinburgh Award), their school, college or university (dependent of the rules of the programme they wish to register the hours with).

Young people can join VPYC at any time during the Victoria Park Project, meetings are held monthly. For more information about VPYC or how to join, please contact our Youth Involvement Coordinator Nicola at [Nicola.priest@ashford.gov.uk](mailto:Nicola.priest@ashford.gov.uk)

## Social Media Update

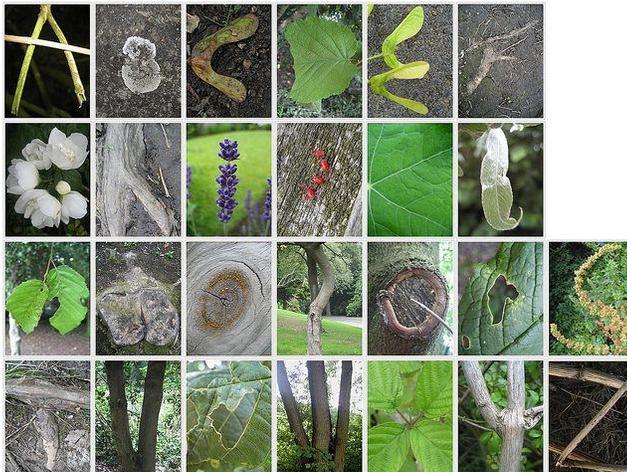
Our social media presence has increased throughout the first year of the project. Our regular features include the Wednesday Weekly Arts Challenge and Fitness Fridays. Our YouTube channel also hosts a variety of interesting pieces including craft tutorials for individuals or families to try. We even have a TikTok channel! Why not take a look!



# NATURE'S NOTEBOOK

## THE A-Z OF NATURE IN VICTORIA AND WATERCRESS PARKS

- What you need:** A camera (the one on your phone will be fine)  
Access to a computer (to download and edit images)
- What to do:** Explore Victoria Park and Watercress Fields and, in no particular order, capture images of nature that can illustrate the alphabet. Some letters will be easy like A for acorns or autumn, Z will be more challenging but could be a photograph of something shaped like Z or...?
- When:** As soon as you are ready to start. You might even want to make this a seasonal challenge and do it in spring, summer, autumn and winter!
- What then:** Once you've taken as many photos as you want then it's time to get creative with editing and presentation. Create your own unique A-Z and send it in to us, so we can share it on Victoria Park's Facebook and Instagram sites\*.



**\*How to share:** Email to [Victoria.Fannon@ashford.gov.uk](mailto:Victoria.Fannon@ashford.gov.uk)

Your file will be quite large, so send using a free file sharing site like Objective Connect or We Transfer. If you have a photographic question Email: [diane.comley@kent.gov.uk](mailto:diane.comley@kent.gov.uk)

There are several free application software packages available to help you compile images, (Fotojet/Canva/Fotor/PhotPpad/Pizap). Have a look and see what you prefer.



# ***WE NEED NATURE NATURE NEEDS YOU!***



## **Join the VICTORIA PARK CONSERVATION VOLUNTEERS**

all welcome over 16 years old

*Meet people, get active, enjoy the outdoors and make a difference.*

*There will be an introduction to the different kinds of habitat and wildlife that can be found in the parks.*

*Talks and workshops will be given by professionals on some of the many different species of flora and fauna that can be found here.*

*Help manage and create space for nature to thrive and for people to enjoy.*



### **THE CONSERVATION TASKS**

- 5 tasks spread out over the year - dates to be confirmed
- Tools will be provided with a tool talk on safe use of different equipment
- Each task will start with a short talk on the work and how it benefits specific species or biodiversity in general
- Tasks days will start at 9:30 and finish around 3:30 (with breaks of course!)
- All you need is your own packed lunch, refreshments, sturdy footwear, waterproofs and a love of the outdoors.



**To find out more and sign up to be a volunteer contact:**

Diane Comley from the Kentish Stour Countryside Partnership

Email: [diane.comley@kent.gov.uk](mailto:diane.comley@kent.gov.uk) or [victoria.fannon@ashford.gov.uk](mailto:victoria.fannon@ashford.gov.uk)

Telephone: 03000 410900 (leave a message if no answer)

