



Press Release

30 November 2004

Naughty nights in London parks

If you're thinking of any outdoor adventures this Christmas, or you suddenly decide to get sexy by The Serpentine or red-hot in Green Park.... Get a room!

A file "exposed" as part of Archive Awareness Campaign highlights Hyde Park as the capital's top spot for prostitution, indecent behaviour and male importuning throughout the swinging sixties. In 1962 61 cases of prostitution, 181 of "indecent behaviour" and 27 of male importuning were reported in the central London park.

The file, held at The National Archives in Kew, shows that the park authorities kept a record of the goings on in all London parks. Of particular interest to the authorities was Hyde Park, which was monitored daily and results written up on a weekly basis.

Katie Norgrove, Policy and Development Officer at the National Council on Archives said, "Everything you ever wanted to know about indecent behaviour in London's green bits is in this file. And the complaints made by members of the public illustrate the outrage people felt at these outdoor exploits. It really is a fascinating read and shows how archives throw up the most colourful documents!"

The file also contains correspondence demonstrating the public outrage caused by such indecent behaviour:

"For God's sake get this mess cleaned up" wrote one disgusted schoolteacher to the Home Secretary in August 1961, "and insist on park keepers who do their job and clear away this public offence and indecency, otherwise they are just open-air brothel keepers."

Another complainant declared, "What goes on in the public parks of London is a scandal and a disgrace!"

Primrose Hill and St James' Park are also highlighted as hot spots for lewd behaviour throughout the decade. In 1961 30 arrests were made on Primrose Hill of which 27 led to convictions.

Park authorities reacted to complaints with some amusement. The bailiff of the Royal Parks commented that the number of cases of indecent behaviour were not very high in 1967 considering how mild the winter had been! But don't expect to get off too lightly - even back in the summer of love park keepers were under "Standing instructions to discourage all kinds of unseemly behaviour" in London parks.

This is just one of thousands of documents highlighted for Archive Awareness Campaign which sees 470 events taking place this autumn. To find an Archive Awareness Campaign event near you or to discover more about the UK's archives visit www.archiveawareness.com

Notes to editors

- 480 events are taking place across the UK this autumn for Archive Awareness Campaign, which aims to reveal the treasures of the archives. The campaign, run by partners the National Council on Archives, the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council and The National Archives, is now in its second year.

For more information about Archive Awareness Campaign please visit www.archiveawareness.com or contact Lucy Fulton, Archive Awareness Campaign Officer at The National Archives Tel: 020 8392 5237 Email: lucy.fulton@nationalarchives.gov.uk

The National Archives, Kew, www.nationalarchives.gov.uk has one of the largest archival collections in the world, spanning 1000 years of British history, from Domesday Book to newly released government papers. The free museum and research rooms in Kew, west London, are open to the public 6 days a week.