

Deer in the City

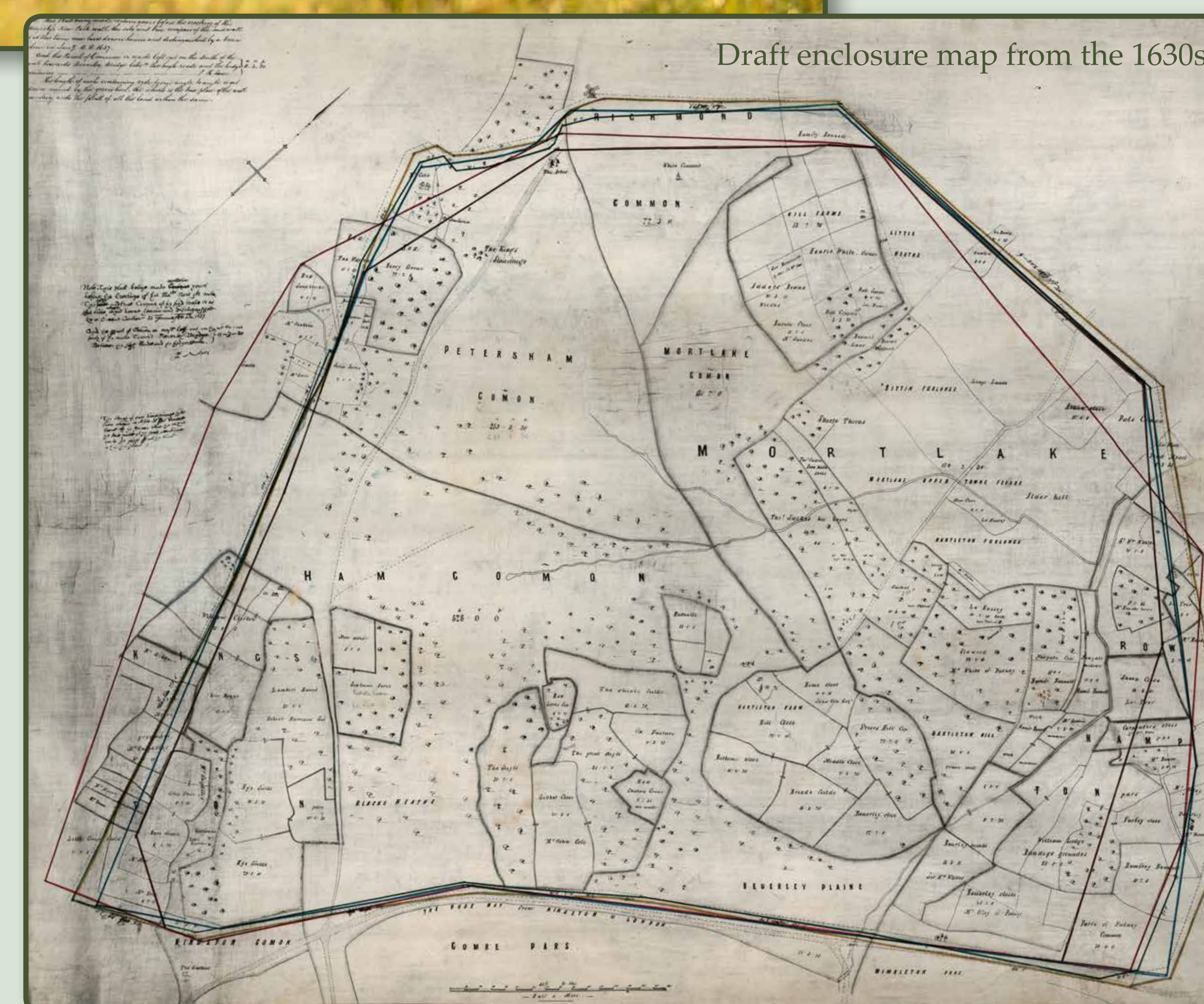
This exhibition, mounted by the Hearsum Collection and supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund, looks at how deer have been an essential part of Richmond Park since its creation, and their remarkable survival in the growing urban landscape of London over the last 400 years.



During the 1630s Charles I enclosed Richmond Park for deer hunting



The aristocratic pastime of deer hunting goes back centuries



Buying the land and enclosing it with a wall was essential to preserve deer herds but unpopular with locals

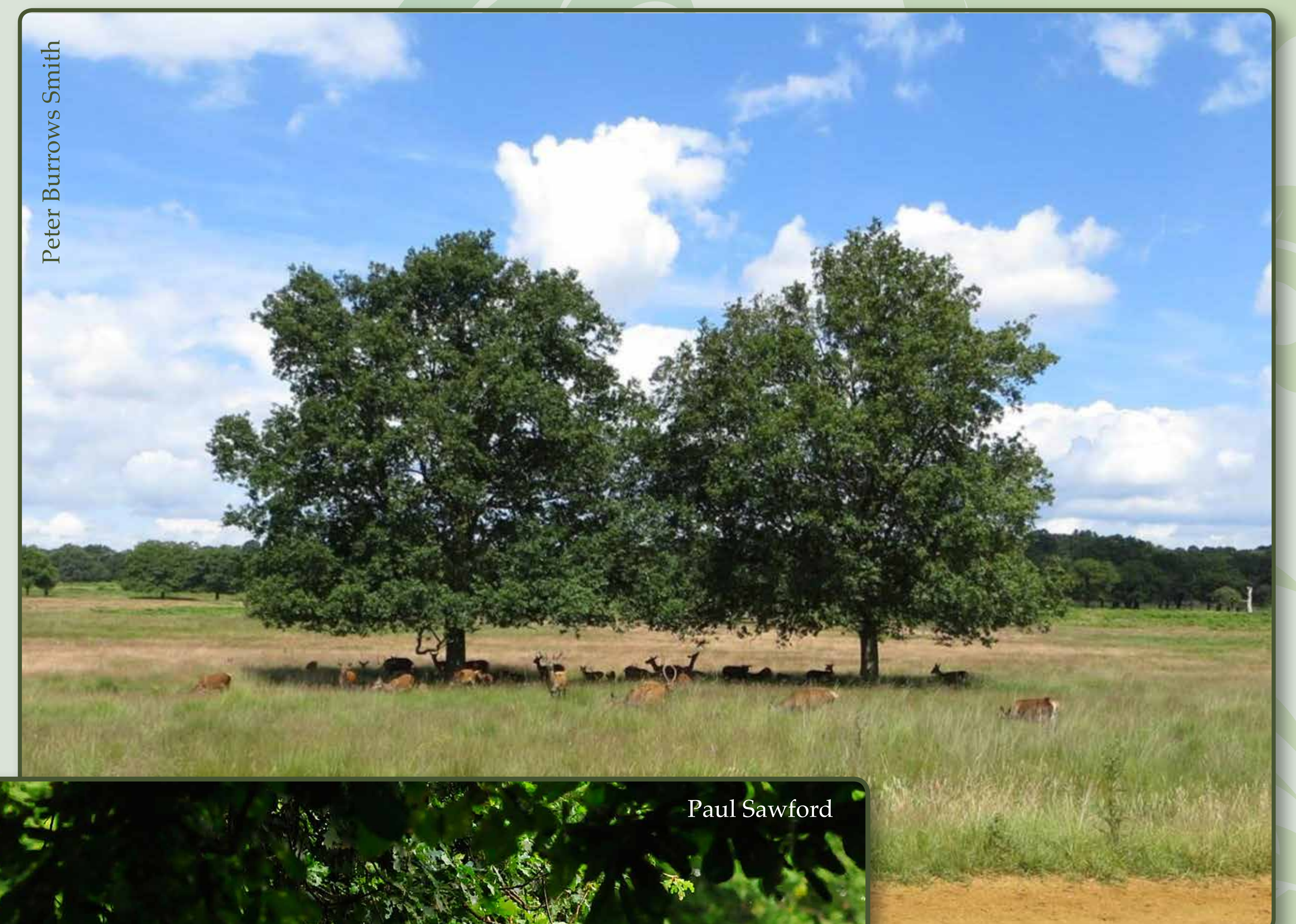
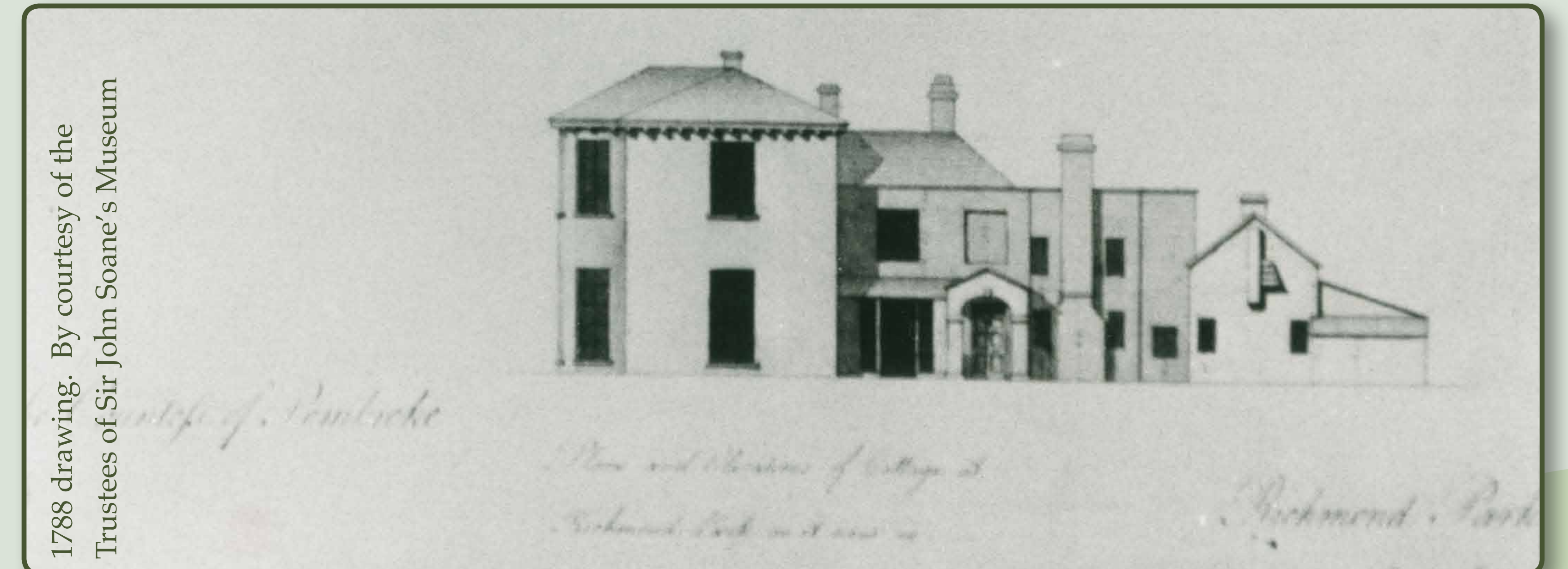
How the deer have shaped the Park

Within the boundary wall, the landscape and historic buildings reflect the presence of the deer.

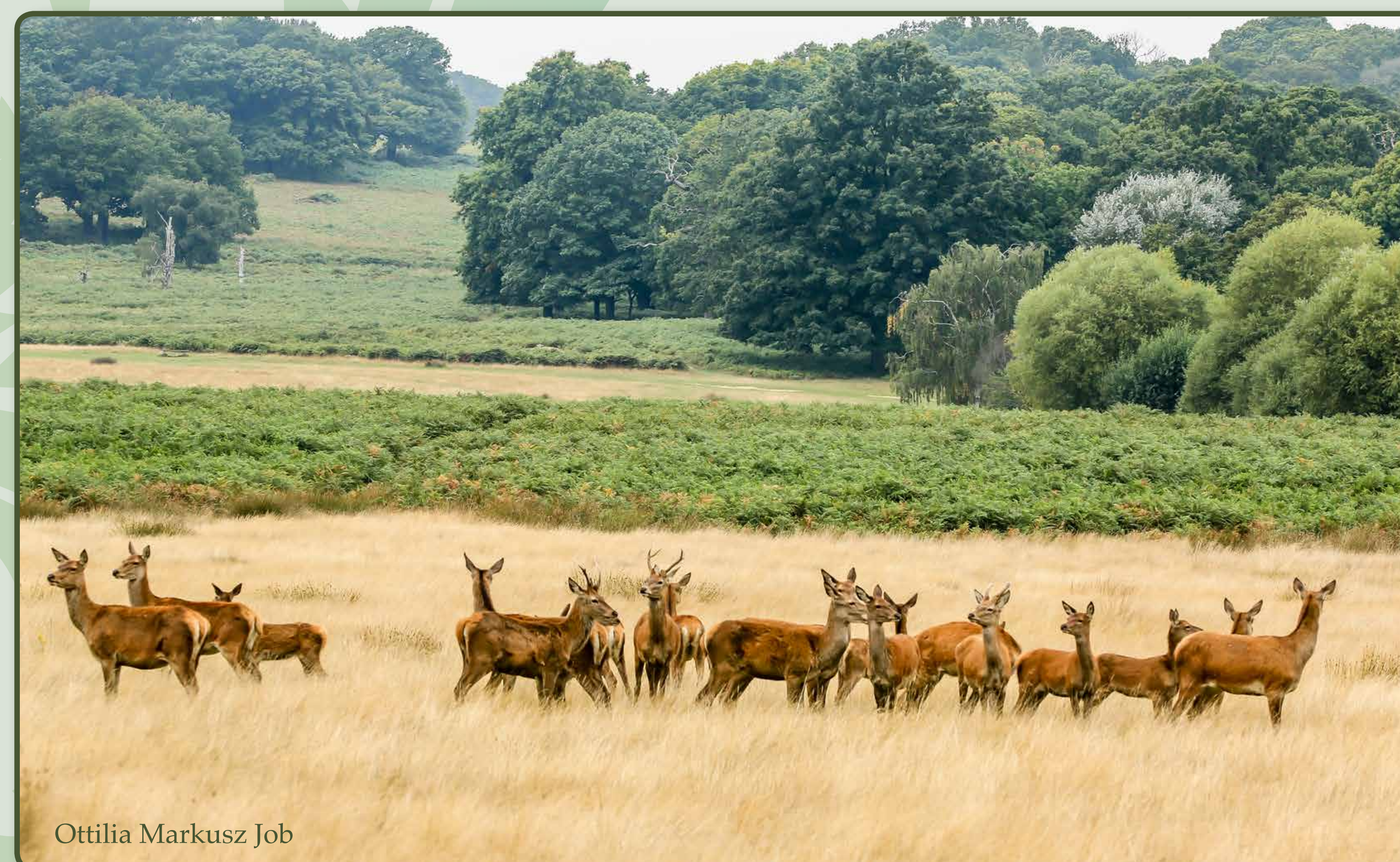


White Lodge, now home to the Royal Ballet School, was founded as a royal hunting lodge in the 1720s.

Hunting on horseback can be a hazardous pursuit, made worse by molehills underfoot, so a mole catcher was installed in the Park in a cottage which in Georgian times was enlarged to become Pembroke Lodge.



For centuries the deer have grazed the Park in a way which maintains open grassland. But for the deer the Park would revert to woodland, like the area outside Ham Gate.



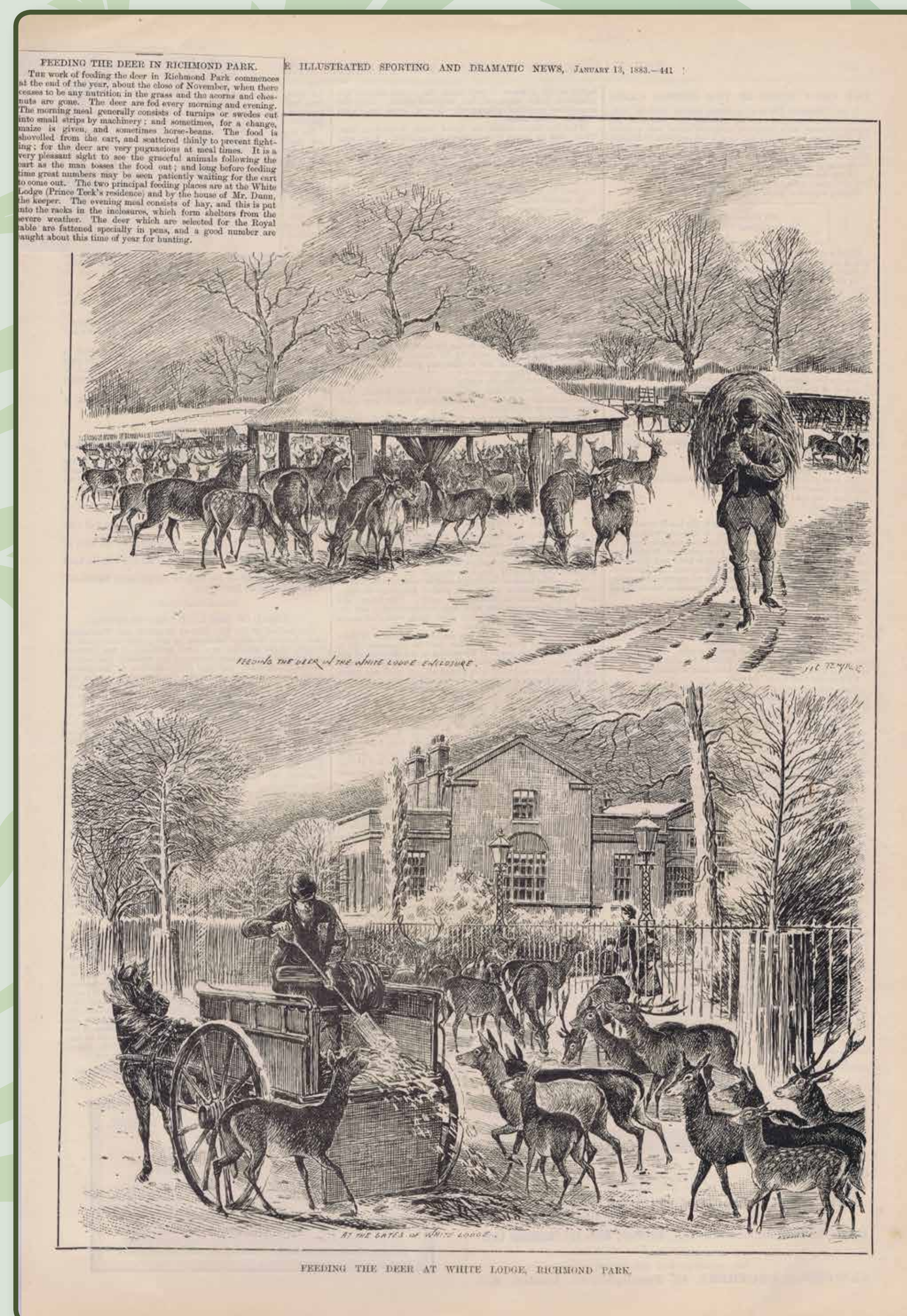
The deer eat the lower branches and foliage of the trees to create a distinctive browse-line.

How the deer have survived over four centuries

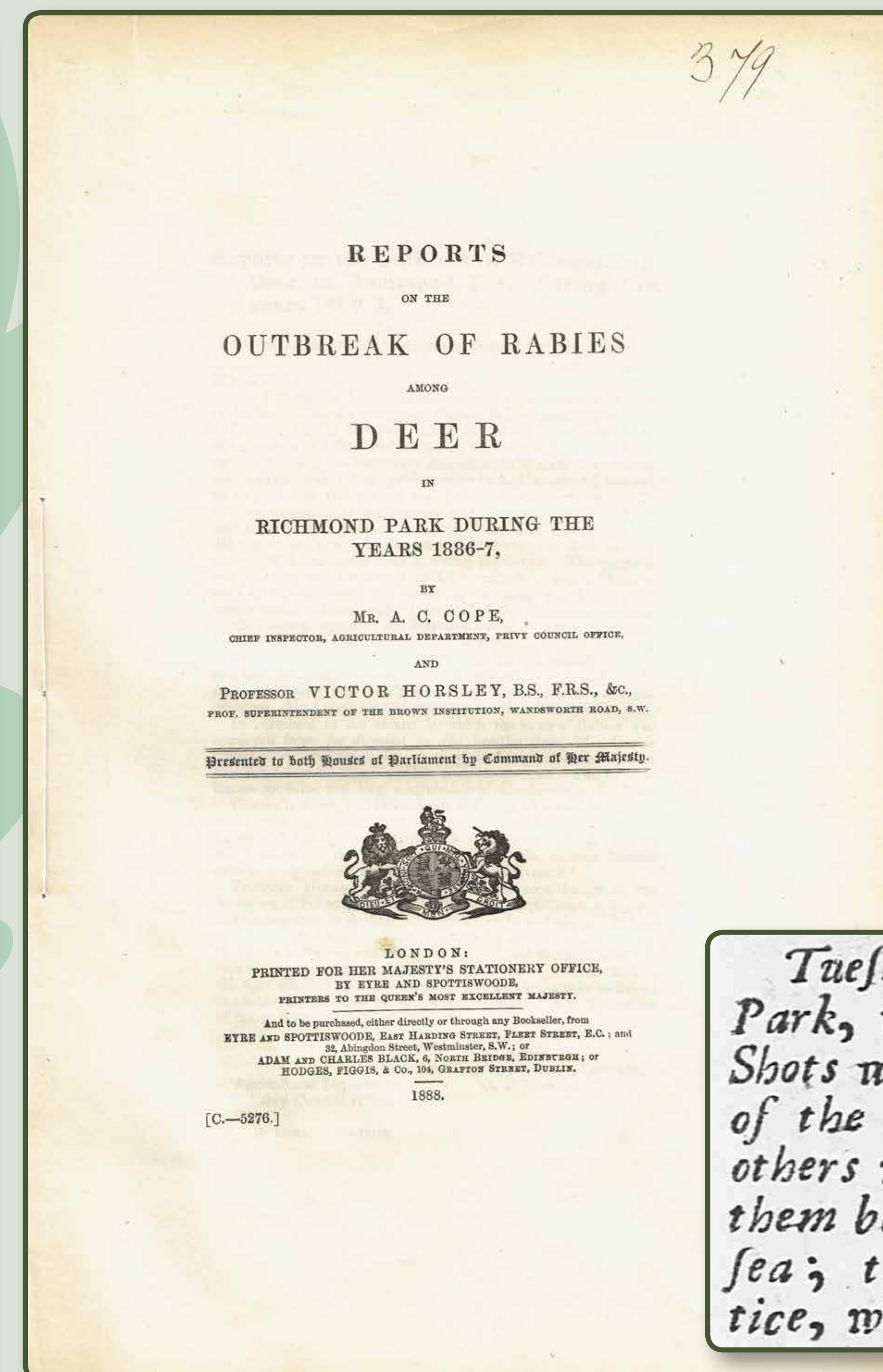
Since its creation Richmond Park has been actively managed as a deer park, initially for hunting, sometimes for venison supply, and more recently as an important nature reserve in an area engulfed by urban sprawl.

Since the 17th century the size of the Red and Fallow deer herds has fluctuated with numbers ranging from over 2,000 animals to some 80 in 1945. Threats to the survival of the deer have included over-hunting, poaching, and disease.

With good management, including winter feeding and the occasional introduction of outside bloodstock, the herds are thriving today.



Winter feeding in the 19th Century



Outbreak of disease in the 1880s



Action by The Royal Parks protected the deer from the risk of Foot and Mouth disease in 2001.

Tuesday Night last, four Persons attempting to steal the Deer in Richmond New-Park, were attack'd by the Keepers, on which issued a sharp Encounter, and many Shots were exchanged on both Sides; at last the Deer Stealers returning to get out of the Park, one of them was shot dead as he was climbing over the Wall, two others who stayed to hide the dead Body under a Bush were apprehended; one of them being wounded in the Leg, and last Night were committed to the Marshalsea; the Fourth made his Escape, one of those apprehended is a Baker's Apprentice, who run away from his Master a Fortnight since.

An account of a violent poaching incident in 1724

The deer today

Richmond Park is home to some 300 Fallow deer and 300 Red deer.

Fallow bucks and Red stags start growing their distinctive antlers in the spring, and shed them at the end of winter each year.

Fallow buck



Red deer are indigenous to Britain and are the country's largest land mammals. Fallow deer were originally introduced by the Romans. The deer live to around 12 years old in the Park.

Red stag



The life cycle of deer in the Park begins with the young being born mainly in June, hidden by their mothers amongst the bracken and long grass.



The deer eat grass, tree foliage and broad-leaved plants. In the winter this is supplemented by 320kg of nuts, maize and hay every night.



The 'rut' (breeding season) is from September to November, when the deer are more aggressive.

For future generations

Visitor numbers to the Park have increased from 2.6m in 1996 to 5.5m in 2014, leading to many pressures on the well-being of the deer.

Wild deer have been a feature of Richmond Park for hundreds of years, and we are working together to ensure that this historic experience can continue to be enjoyed by all. We hope you will help.

Buzz Pictures / Alamy



Increasing numbers of cars and cyclists in the Park pose a threat to the deer. When the 20 mph speed limit was introduced in 2004 the number of deer fatalities fell by 70%. The limit applies to cars and cyclists.



Pedestrians and dog owners can help by keeping at least 50m away from the deer.



Litter found in the stomachs of deer. It cannot be digested and leads to starvation.



Over 400 years our enjoyment of the deer has changed - from crossbow to camera lens - but as wild animals they should still be treated with respect and given the space they deserve.

The Hearsam Collection collects and preserves the unique heritage of Richmond Park for all to enjoy.

For more information go to www.hearsumcollection.org.uk

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The Deer in the City project is organised in partnership with The Friends of Richmond Park and The Royal Parks.

