



PRESS RELEASE

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CRICKET FANS CELEBRATE SURPRISE NEWS AS "THE ASHES" ARE PUT UP FOR AUCTION

"THE ASHES" ARE COMING TO LONDON WHOEVER WINS THE FINAL TEST, IT WAS ANNOUNCED TODAY

The Ashes will definitely be coming to England this autumn – whatever the outcome of tomorrow's final Test match at The Oval, it was announced today.

As England's cricket heroes prepare to do battle, it emerged that The Ashes will be auctioned at a special fundraising dinner to be held in London tomorrow, Thursday 8 September. Some of society's biggest names, plus hard-hitters from the corporate world, are expected to join the VIP gathering to bid for this once-in-a-lifetime lot.

The Ashes being bid for are not, however, the famous set of burnt bails, dating from a match at The Oval in 1882. Instead, they are three special commemorative Ash Trees, which are to be planted on Cumberland Green in London's Regent's Park in a unique ceremony.

The Royal Parks Foundation is behind the move, which will raise money for the capital's eight Royal Parks, which include Regent's Park and Hyde Park.

Nicholas Bonham, whose family established Bonham's Auction House will be in charge of the auction. Bidding for The Ashes is expected to be fierce – with a keen sense of rivalry, honour and patriotism influencing those taking part.

In the saleroom, the bidders will be asked to declare their allegiance for either England or Australia.

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If England win The Ashes, then The Ash Trees in the Park will go to the highest bidder backing England. If however, Australia win the Test match, the trees will go to the highest Australian bidder. The trees will then be named after that person.

Sara Lom, Director of the Royal Parks Foundation, said today: "The nation has been gripped by this fantastic game of cricket and, to celebrate this epic fixture and to spur on both teams, we felt it was only right and proper that we should do something to commemorate this tremendous sporting occasion.

"The Royal Parks Foundation has, for some time, been planning a fundraising dinner to raise money and support for The Royal Parks, in particular for our community sports programme in Regent's Park – central London's largest outdoor sports area.

"We decided to offer as a lot at our annual auction three ash trees, which usually survive to a ripe old age of 250 years. Whoever buys them will obviously not live for as long as the trees. But it will give them an opportunity to have their name remembered for a few more centuries!

"Whoever buys the trees will be able to tell their family and friends that they did their bit to support The Royal Parks – and, equally importantly, helped to commemorate one of the most famous cricket series in recent times."

- Ends -

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Notes to the Editor:

1. The winner's name, whether corporate or individual, will be commemorated on a special plaque, set into the ground in the vicinity of the ash trees for at least 15 years. (Design and wording to be agreed between the bidder and The Royal Parks Foundation.) The winner will also be invited to a special photocall and planting ceremony and will benefit from a complimentary corporate membership of The Royal Parks Foundation.

2. Cricket fans can enjoy a big-screen relay of The Ashes live from The Oval if they visit Marylebone Green in Regent's Park on Saturday 10 and Sunday 11 September. This is a free event.
3. Cricket stumps are normally made from high quality ash wood, which is valued for its strength and elasticity.
4. Latin name for the Ash Tree is *Fraxinus excelsior*. The ash is a native UK species, which has been growing here since the end of the last Ice Age.
5. Regent's Park is central London's largest outdoor sports facility (90 acres of pitches)
6. The Royal Parks Foundation's Patron, HRH The Prince of Wales, opened a new pavilion "The Hub" in the Park in April this year. Regent's Park has also recently benefited from the restoration of 5 adult cricket pitches and 1 junior cricket pitch.
7. England last won The Ashes in 1987.
8. The Royal Parks Foundation is a Registered Charity no. 1097545.