

Friends of Selsdon Wood



Working to improve our wood

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Chairman's May Newsletter



The fine weather in April has made Spring advance rapidly this year. The bluebells are almost over when last year they were in full flush at this time. Birds are nesting earlier - early arrivals like **Blackcap** and **Chiffchaff** may have young, and some resident species may even be on to their second families. However, migration does not come to a sudden stop and interesting species might turn up at any time. **Golden Oriole** and **Wood warbler** have been recorded in the woods at this time of the year several times in the past. They are usually detected by their distinctive voices, unlikely to be mistaken for anything else.

Many of the British butterflies will be on the wing. Amongst the early fliers which can still be seen in June are the **Brimstone** and **Orange-tip butterflies** (which is having a bumper year) and with luck you might find the **Green Hairstreak** with its bright green underwing. All of which were spotted on our May 1st Work Day in the Gorses.

Early Purple orchids and **White Helleborines** (pictured) are in flower.

50th & 75th Anniversary of the official opening of Selsdon Wood as a National Trust Reserve & Bird Sanctuary.

This photograph, taken on June 5th 1986, shows The Lord Mayor of London, Sir Allan Davies joined by the Mayor of Croydon, Councillor Peter MacDonald and the Southern Regional Director of the National Trust, Mr David Mussen in the ceremonial planting of four oak trees to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the official opening of Selsdon Wood as a National Trust Nature Reserve.

We intend to purchase a plaque to celebrate the 50th Anniversary. This will be placed on one of the oak trees that were planted in 1986 in the South corner of David's Crook.

Photo by kind permission of Croydon, Local Studies Library.



In my March Newsletter I said that we hoped to plan the dedication of a new **Memorial Information Board**. However, despite the support of the National Trust Croydon & District for the project and the approval of Croydon Council to its design and position, the project was not given the necessary approval by the National Trust Surrey Hills. Sadly for all, this project has been abandoned for now. Hopefully, in the future when better economic times return it can be reviewed perhaps with the help of private sponsorship.

To mark the 75th anniversary of the official opening, we are arranging a Charcoal Making & Working Woodland Weekend 3rd / 4th & 5th June

with Guided Woodland Walks starting at the car park and culminating at the kiln, Refreshments & Barbeque.

The plan is to install a charcoal burning kiln in our coppice area at the junction of Leafy Grove and Stevens Walk. Our programme is:

1. Friday 3rd from 12 noon - install the kiln, cut timber to size and load the kiln.
2. Saturday 4th from 10 – erect information & refreshment tent.
11.30 - fire the kiln and attend it through the night.
6 – start barbeque.

3. Sunday 5th at 11.30 – start unloading the kiln.

Charcoal should be available for purchase.

Guided Woodland Walks ending at the kiln - for approximately 1 hour.

From the car park - Sat commencing 11.15 and 1.30. Sun commencing 11 and 1.30.

In addition we will have an information tent onsite – Saturday and Sunday from 11.30.

If we are to make a success of this event we need your help – loading or unloading the kiln or attending our walks. Bring your friends - if the weather is fine bring a picnic to the Great Field nearby.



Workday Update

As mentioned in the April Newsletter we have planted 260 bird friendly trees and shrubs in the **Jubilee Plantation**.

These included silver birch, elder, field maple, wild service, hazel, wild cherry, spindle, guelder rose, wild rose, blackthorn and dogwood. In spite of the drought we have had few die so far. Normally, the gate to this sanctuary will be locked to protect the new growth and wildlife.

In addition to the work in the Jubilee Plantation, the Friends have continued coppicing their own plot by Leafy Grove, cleared seedling ash from the Centenary Plantation and have repaired and installed 5 benches that had been uprooted, vandalised or whose legs had rotted. We had salvaged new legs from old posts that had been replaced on the red & green walking routes. We are very grateful that 2 of these were shaped to size for us by East Surrey Woodturners.



David and John working on the benches in April 2011.

They also erected name boards for the Jubilee Plantation and the Centenary Plantations.

David and John would like to say how encouraged they are by the compliments paid by people who have seen them working in the wood. But they were a little discouraged when they heard that 23 people had not renewed their membership of the FSW this year.

Work days: June 5th is now incorporated into the Charcoal Making & Working Woodland Weekend & July 3rd. Meet at 10am in Selsdon Wood car park off Old Farleigh Road. You work for as long as suits you and choose jobs to suit your strength. Tools are provided but please bring a drink and food if you feel you need them. If you need more information contact Ted on 020-8651 0558 or e-mail: forsythted@aol.com

We do need more help!

Surely there are a few people out there who could give up a few hours in a month to help? Why not just turn up and see what we are doing and see if you could help. We could do so much more.

Coming jobs – keeping benches & seats clear of brambles etc, 'bashing' the bracken and bramble before it overwhelms the new gorse.

Guided Walks

Spring Bird Walk led by Ernie Thomason on Sunday April 17th attracted a good turnout. Birds were the main target, largely identified by their songs or calls, including many Robins, Blackcaps and Chiffchaffs. Willow Warblers do not always appear in the woods nowadays so we were pleased to discover two singing in the area where Rob Sowter has been restoring hazel coppice along The Wend. The regrowing Hazel may now be in a state to attract nesting Willow Warblers and Chiffchaffs, both of which nest on or near the ground. In Middle Gorse a Great Spotted Woodpecker had earlier been seen at a nest hole in a Birch tree but was

not present when we looked at it. We usually take the opportunity to keep an eye on the plants which are coming up and found Common Figwort in places where we did not realise they grew. There was an abundance of Blackthorn blossom shown in the photo above.

Unfortunately, after most people had left the car park, a sparrow hawk circled overhead with its diagnostic flap, flap, flap, glide flight

Bluebell Walk May 1st Ernie Thomason (Croydon Council Ranger) was our leader on a beautifully sunny day for a walk in the country. There were about 19 in the party, including a family with two young children - quite auspicious for this weekend as one was called Kate! Ernie took the group on quite a long meandering route through the wood. Bluebells were very much in evidence everywhere, but Ernie was able to show many other common and unusual species. Amongst them - Cuckoo pint, Cuckoo flower, Dock, Germander speedwell, Holly (There are male & female Holly trees.), Greater stitchwort, Periwinkle, Toothwort, Primrose, Figwort and Bugle.

Around half-way the youngest of our walkers left us for their picnic but they had said they had been pleasantly surprised by the delights of Selsdon Wood and would come again.

The group stopped by a Friends Working Party in the Gorse area. David Malins explained how they were cutting bracken and bramble to help the gorse seedlings that had sprung up after the felling of the crowded unsafe larch plantation. He hoped that they might join the FSW and come to help the Friends.

Ernie then went on to find more flowers -Yellow archangel, Foxgloves (not yet in flower), Early purple orchids and Herb Paris (our logo). The walk finished in the car park at about 1.30pm. A few people stayed to look at more of the main bluebell areas.

Everyone seemed to enjoy the walk and had learned something about English wildflowers or an area that they had not known before. It was good to see people not just from the immediate locality - there were visitors from Beckenham, Norwood and East Croydon - and several took leaflets about FSW and said they would contact the FSW email for more information as they were very impressed by what they had seen of the work of the FSW today (the signs and the work activities) and by what they had heard of FSW future plans.

Guided walks – Meet at Old Farleigh Road car park.

Saturday June 25th 10am 'Summer Bird Walk' with London Natural History Society. Led by a Croydon Park Ranger in conjunction with the Friends.

Sunday July 17th 11am - 'Discover Butterflies' led by Malcolm Bridge

Our walks are slow and easy, lasting about 2 hours.



Members meetings

May 23rd & June 27th.

All are from 8 to 10pm in The Forum, Forestdale.

Selsdon Wood Photographic competition.



Please don't forget our 2011 Selsdon Wood Photographic competition and as last year we welcome photographs of plants, wildlife, people enjoying the wood or the natural scenery. Signs of life could be on the ground, in the air, in the canopy – anything that you think visitors will enjoy seeing when we display the photographs at this year's **Open Day on September 4th**. See a Comma on David's cap!

Final Thoughts

Hopefully, we have encouraged you to come and join us on a future event, be it our Charcoal Making & Working Woodland Weekend over June 3/4/5 or our Summer Bird Walk on Saturday 25th June. You could also take part in our Photographic Competition.