

Friends of Selsdon Wood

Working to improve our wood



Chair's Annual Report to the AGM - 7th January 2013

It has been a good year for the FSW although not such a good year for Selsdon Wood as too much rain at the wrong time meant fewer flowers butterflies and fruits. However, that will make us appreciate them all the more in the coming year.

I shall structure this report with regard to the aims of our group as stated in the constitution.

Aim 1) To ensure that Selsdon wood is maintained for the benefit of the flora and fauna so that no one species shall threaten the survival of another and for the enjoyment and well being of the public

- a. The bulk of the regular maintenance, such as the clearance of areas around benches, is carried out on workdays and these have been well attended. Maintenance work also involves some occasional activity such as removal of fallen branches blocking paths and the reporting (to the Council) of hazardous or fallen trees that are too large for us to deal with. We have been pleased with the recent response of the Council, as most issues reported in the past 6 months have been addressed. Council contractors also responded promptly when, on two occasions, we reported burnt out vehicles. Both were removed within a few days.
- b. However, one outstanding problem is the fence adjoining the bridleway to the north of the wood, which was broken by thieves who stole the telephone cables at the start of the year. The repair work is too extensive for us to undertake and the Council has agreed to take it on. We have been told that it has been put out to tender but no work has been done to date.
- c. Another long-standing maintenance issue beyond our capabilities concerns the toilets which are in poor condition and were not connected to the water supply when we wished to use them for the Jubilee planting and school visits. We have approached the Council but funds are not available for any work on this.
- d. Twenty-three new name boards for paths and plantations and seven new bird boxes were purchased and installed. There are now 80 name boards in total throughout the woods. Two new plaques were also erected to provide interest to visitors in the form of information about the Jubilee and Centenary Plantations.
- e. There have been no signs so far of Ash Die Back disease in Selsdon Wood but we are maintaining vigilance. We understand that young trees are at greatest risk so we are pleased to report that there were no Ash whips in the Jubilee planting and the few Ash whips planted earlier in the year were removed and destroyed.

Aim 2) To carry out programmes of practical work, especially sustainable conservation and restoration work

- a. The coppicing in the FSW area at the top of Langford's Way has been the main ongoing programme of practical work undertaken on most workdays. Some of the wood from this was used for the Charcoal Burning in May. A few lessons were learned which will inform future events of this nature. Thank you to Rob Sowter and to all involved. The event was not very effective as a money raiser as only £20 was raised from donations on the day.
- b. The highly successful Jubilee project contributed to both Aim 2 and Aim 3. Friends prepared the ground for the planting of 60 new trees (Rowan, Holly, Hazel, Cherry, Dogwood and Rose) in celebration of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, which was carried out by a group of Brownies and rainbows on 3rd March 2012. A full report of this event is available on the website and has also been filed on the Jubilee Woods Project of the Woodland Trust.

Aim 3) To educate volunteers of all ages in the principles and practices of nature conservation and encourage the public interest in Selsdon Wood

- a. Our eight guided walks have been well attended and all the presenters have provisionally agreed to come back in 2013 when we plan to run a similar programme. On behalf of the FSW, thanks to all our external group leaders (Meike Weiser, Malcolm Jennings, Malcolm Bridge, Roger Hawkins and Jane McLauchlin). Jane supplied a list of all the fungi seen on the walk she led on 14th October which has been published on the website. Unfortunately the list of species identified on the Minibeast Hunt on 22nd August seems to have been lost. We shall make an effort to ensure that this does not happen next year.
- b. The newsletters for FSW members are much appreciated and when we reviewed whether to continue them the consensus was that a properly produced and illustrated newsletter is much preferred to a plain email message.

- c. We produce three main leaflets (Application, General Information, Red & Green Walks) and a couple of small display stands have been purchased to display these to best advantage in the Selsdon Library and at events.
- d. As in previous years we have provided articles for the Selsdon Gazette and Forestdale Link. In July we were invited by Rachel Millard to contribute a 400-word piece for the Community Voice column in the Croydon Advertiser and we submitted copy (at short notice) for publication in August, October and December. There are plans to set up a rota of column contributors and we have agreed to be included on this.
- e. The annual Photo Competition has been an effective way of raising public interest in the wood. Fifty photographs were displayed for judging at Open Day and the winners received prizes in the form of vouchers donated by Snappy Snaps. Full details including all shortlisted photographs and details of the winners are available on the FSW website. The photographs from this and previous years' competitions were also used on two separate occasions in Selsdon Library as part of a general display on the work of the Friends.
- f. The History section of the website has been enriched by the research of Cecile Griggs who has looked into the background of Col. Wood. On behalf of the FSW many thanks to her for her fascinating report. Thanks too to Ted Frith for his article on the history of the wood also now published on our website.
- g. There has been much development of the rest of the website which is now a rich source of information about the flora and fauna of the wood as well as being a public record of the work of the Friends and a notice board for all information. There are many downloadable forms and leaflets including those mentioned in c above and also:- Coppicing Guidelines; Maps; Charcoal Burn; 25 Things to See; and Tree Spotters Guides.
- h. Liaison with local schools has included a guided walk for children from Forestdale (led by Meike Weiser) and accompaniment of walks organised by staff and parents at Courtwood School. We helped with the planning of a visit by the Quest Academy but disappointingly received no feedback after the event. We are also participating in a yearlong project with Greenvale School involving groups of children walking each half term with introductory sessions in school on the weeks before the walk. We hope to develop further online resources to support this during the coming year.

Aim 4) To act as a forum for discussion on issues that may affect the aims and activities

- a. Monthly meetings rarely attract many members beyond the core team but this does have the advantage of keeping them tight.
- b. The website provides a forum with a wider reach and we have published letters about dog behaviour and other issues of concern to those using the woods. There is also a section for recent sightings of flora and fauna.
- c. The FSW have maintained liaison with other local groups through the ACCS and we made a donation of £50 to the ACCS toward printing costs for the *Green Croydon for All* booklet.

Aim 5) To raise money as necessary for the carrying out of its work

- a. As in previous years, Open Day was a fruitful money raiser, netting over £200.
- b. A new gazebo was purchased this summer and set up on Open Day closest to the entrance to present visitors with an immediate focus on the FSW. It was very effective in that many new members joined on the day raising total membership to over 100 for the first time.
- c. A new venture this year was the 2013 calendar - available for a donation of £5. This has been popular (80 copies were supplied) and raised £100.
- d. Another new venture has been the supply of logs, mainly from the coppice site - a bagful is available for a small donation of £4. Our thanks go to Neale Fox who has agreed to coordinate this for us as the project is proving another good money raiser.

Conclusion

We have had a busy and successful year and I have much enjoyed my first term in the role of Chair. My thanks to all members of the management group for their commitment to the FSW and for all the work they have done to keep the show on the road. In my first draft of this report I put individual thanks in each of the above items, which resulted in a document that was an extra half page in length. It just goes to show how much you all do 😊