

Friends of Selsdon Wood



Working to improve our wood

Chair's Annual Report to the AGM - 21st March 2016

In 2015 the small band of active Friends ran a varied programme of walks and volunteers worked on site on more than 16 days – including the Open Day on Sunday 13th September. Accounts of all our 2015 activities are archived on the website. As last 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. Summer workdays focus on regular maintenance, such as the clearance of areas around benches. Maintenance work also involves some occasional activity such as replacing fallen route marker posts, removal of branches blocking paths and the reporting (to the Council) of hazardous or fallen trees that are too large for us to deal with.
- b. The main Winter workday activity involved thinning out Sycamores on Greenhill Way, a continuation of the work started in 2014. Work was initially carried out on the north-eastern side of the path, in an area known as the Maruja Dale Plantation, later moving to the other side. A dead hedge was created beside the path. We had a new volunteer - JS. a 14yr old doing work towards a Duke of Edinburgh Award. We were able to sign a document to acknowledge his contribution after he had attended on several occasions. We also tackled substantial wild clematis growth both in this area and in the Jubilee Plantation. Thanks to Ted Forsyth, our workdays organiser, and to all the other volunteers for their dedicated efforts.
- c. The refurbishment of the Council Information boards at six of the entrances to the wood, which was started in 2014, was completed this year. Many thanks to David Malins who designed and coordinated this project and to Neale Fox, Jim Dunning, Sid Potter and all others who helped with the refurbishment.
- d. We trimmed back bushes at the car park, to allow cars to park without damage. A large ivy-covered bush was cut back, as were several Laurels. The grass along the edge of the bushes was trimmed back and a thick coating of crushed leaf litter was scraped and brushed from the tarmac.
- e. Following the successful February litter pick in Court Wood, we were approached by a local Beavers group interested in participating in something similar. We organised an event in the early evening of 30th September 2015 in the Fox Shaw area. Around 30 children attended and we had prepared badges for them, which were much appreciated. Time was found to extend the collection to public footpath 515, which is part of the London Loop and Vanguard Way. A big thank you to Diana Walters and the 5th Selsdon and Addington Beavers group and to Tracey Bellamy and the Croydon Clean and Green Team for all their support.
- f. In spite of the vigorous cutting back last winter, the Centenary Plantation was very thick with Ash saplings and brambles by the end of the summer. Malcolm Bridge and Ted Forsyth of the FSW did the job this time spending a couple of days in there with a brush cutter with a special curved blade finishing the work on 22nd November 2015.
- g. There have still been no signs so far of Ash Die Back disease in Selsdon Wood but we are maintaining vigilance.

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

- a. A major project this year was the installation of benches at various sites throughout the wood. During the month of April five new benches were installed in the wood by the FSW. Two were to replace old benches that were rotten and three were dedicated benches in new locations. The latter comprised benches dedicated to the memory of woodsman Rob Sowter and to Janet Bickerstaff (a founder member of the FSW), both presented by the FSW, and a bench for G G Lewis presented by his friends and family. A further 3 dedicated benches were installed in the autumn of 2015 to commemorate the lives of Michael Boyd, Vera May Cannon and Jan Stupes Martin. All were presented by the families of the deceased. Full details can be found on the Seats page of the website. Many thanks to David Malins who organised the project, to Alan Bushnell and his son John who did most of the heavy digging, to Ashley

Green (Leader of 17th Purley Scouts), his son Nathan & friend Ken Jackson (Leader of 1st Selsdon & Addington Scouts) who assisted with the installation and to Tim Lloyd who fitted the plaques.

- b. The Selsdon Wood bear was repainted and now looks much restored. Thanks to Neale and Karen Fox for this work.
- c. In June 2015 new nesting boxes and plaques were installed by FSW. These included bird boxes made by Jim Dunning, a bat box donated by Neale Fox and plaques in Linden Glade and The Gorses. A number of other boxes were installed in March 2016.
- d. The old SWAG (Selsdon Wood Appreciation Group) notice board at the Kingfisher Gardens gate was replaced with a new board for the FSW notices and a similar board was sited at the Quail Gardens gate. Thanks to David Malins for this work.

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 guided walks have been well attended and all the presenters have provisionally agreed to come back in 2016 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 and Roger Hawkins. Reports of all walks are published on the website.
- b. During the refurbishment of the toilet block by the Council in late summer FSW had to move out of our store to allow it to be painted and all our resources were relocated temporarily to the garage. They were returned to the store on 3rd September. On completion of the work the FSW applied to Croydon Council for a licence to make use of the "mess room" which had been largely unused since there ceased to be a full time warden. Thanks to funding from the local Councillors' Ward Budget we purchased a display board, which is installed in the mess room and bears a series of displays linked to events and walks. These displays also include a "museum" of items found in the wood such as the skulls of various mammals.
- c. FSW members continue to receive an illustrated newsletter each month, which I produce and circulate via email Thanks to Linda Lee for delivering these to members who do not have email access.
- d. We produce three main leaflets (Membership Application, General Information, Red & Green Walks). These were updated this year and available on the website, in the Selsdon Library and at events. The red and green trails are now supported by QR codes sited on all of the numbered posts and accessible by scanning to smartphones. Many thanks to Neale Fox for creating and installing the codes. The positioning of the posts was reviewed in March 2016 and a few were turned or modified to add clarity,
- e. As in previous years we have provided articles for the Selsdon Gazette, Forestdale Link (now the Local Link) and the Community Voice column in the Croydon Advertiser. I now compose these with contributions from all committee members in particular Ted Forsyth who writes the Nature Notes. All events are also advertised with posters at entrances to the woods and in other places around the community. Thanks to David Malins for the production of the posters and to all committee members who support with their distribution.
- f. We were approached in November by a group of students in Filmmaking, at Kingston University. They were led by Jade Lederer who was shooting an adaptation of "The Wonderful Musician", a Grimm's fairytale as part of her assessed coursework. We gave her and her art director a tour of the wood looking for suitable locations and after they had cleared everything with the Council they came to film on 9th and 11th of November. We are told that the film will be available on the web in due course and we shall be sure to link to it from the website when it appears.
- g. The display from our annual Photo Competition attracted lots of interest on Open Day and the winner was Goldcrest by Tony Flecchia. Thanks to our anonymous donor there are now cash prizes for all winners in addition to Snappy Snaps vouchers. This year Tony donated his cash prize to the FSW - many thanks Tony. All the winning photographs and shortlisted entries can be seen on the Photo Competition page of the FSW website.
- h. There has been much development of the website which I edit. It 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. The Fauna, Flora and Fungi pages contain annotated photographs of nearly one thousand species. Many thanks to Tony Flecchia and Ted Forsyth who have contributed most of the photographs.

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 tightly focussed. All members are welcome to attend - location and times are advertised on the website.
- b. The website and newsletters provide a forum with a wider reach.
- c. The FSW have maintained liaison with other local groups through the ACCS.

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 almost £380 and 14 new memberships. Thanks to Linda Morris for organising the event and to all who helped on the day.
- b. We have successfully applied for a number of grants to support our work - details of which are covered in the report from the treasurer. Many thanks to Sandra Crapper for all her work on this.
- c. Membership numbers reached 159 in 2015. Most memberships are eligible for Gift Aid, which adds to our funds.
- d. The FSW 2016 calendar was available for £5. We supplied 70 copies and raised over £70.
- e. Distribution of logs and charcoal is another fund raiser. Our thanks go to Neale Fox who coordinates this and Cyril Whatmore who cuts them all with his chainsaw.

Conclusion

We have had a busy and successful year and I continue to enjoy my involvement 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 throughout the year.☺

We have been delighted with the growth in membership over the past twelve months but would really like to see more members getting involved with our work. We are a very friendly group so do please come along to our workdays, walks and monthly meetings and lend your hand to help us meet our aims again in 2016.