

Friends of Selsdon Wood

Working to improve our wood



Chair's Annual Report to the AGM – 25th March 2019

In 2018 the small band of active Friends ran a varied programme of walks, and volunteers worked on site on 17 planned occasions – including the Open Day on Sunday 9th September. There was also some unscheduled work as I shall detail later. Accounts of all our 2018 activities are archived on the website.

We are sad to report the death on November 2018 of one of the founder members of the FSW, Janet Nightingale. A bench dedicated to her memory is to be installed in the wood.

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. **Thanks to Ted Forsyth, our workdays organiser, and to all the other volunteers** for their dedicated efforts on regular workdays which are held twice a month in winter and once a month in summer. We could do with more help so please join us if you are able.
- b. **Summer Workdays** focussed on regular maintenance, such as the clearance of areas around benches and marker posts and information boards. We also repaired and replaced path name boards and removed some invasive Laurel and Holly. A large Oak in Farleigh Border had fallen and been cut by Croydon council but large sections of trunk were blocking the path. These were rolled aside by the workdays team.
- c. Also in summer we cleared some Yew, Hazel, and Sycamore from one of the few areas in the wood where Herb Paris grows (Court Wood). This was to let in more light as the plants had failed to flower. We will be hoping for increased flowering this year.
- d. **The Winter Workday activity** this year began with repairs to our trolley, the sharpening of loppers and shears and reorganisation of the tool store. We also trimmed bushes around the car park and removed mud and fallen leaves.
- e. The major project this winter was coppicing and clearance work in the area along Stevens' Walk from the Langford's Way junction. Most of our winter workdays were devoted to this project. Larger material was retained for possible charcoal making and for fence posts but much of the other material was burned. An additional electric chainsaw was purchased in January 2019 which will help with this work.
- f. We erected a new bat box in Leafy Grove and located a broken owl box which we hope to repair.
- g. We planted a number of whips which had been donated to us by members who had received them through national schemes and will plant others supplied by Simon Levy (forestry advisor to the council) when we have cleared the area.
- h. Five new seats, purchased in early 2018 were set in place in late spring once ground conditions were suitable for their transport to the sites. Our workdays team, assisted by others, had prepared all the holes and added soil to secure the benches once they were in place. One of the old replaced seats was deemed repairable and taken away for repair. **Thanks to David Malins for organising this project.**
- i. In February 2019 FSW submitted a response to the Council planning committee about the proposed development in Quail Gardens and its impact on Selsdon Wood. The issue remains unresolved at the time of this report.

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

- a. We were unable to cure the leak in the pool in Linden Glade but with the help of Sutton and East Surrey Water we did manage to trace the water supply. We cleared one of the manholes en-route and fitted a blank end to a pipe that had been leaking water. This meant that we were able to restore a slow feed of water to the bird bath above the pool. However, subsequent vandalism damaged the access point in Linden Glade. We are currently investigating how this and the pool leak can be addressed. **Thanks to Tony Flecchia, Neale Fox and Christian Kuepers for their work on this project.**

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 2019 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. A litter pick in Court Wood alongside Courtwood Lane was organised with the Scouts in February 2019, supported by the Council Clean and Green team. This was well attended and very fruitful. A full report was given in the March 2019 Newsletter and is available on the Events page of the website.
- c. As last year we organised a Community Picnic in July 2018 in conjunction with the Selsdon Residents Association (SRA) with support from the Scouts who ran a refreshment tent serving burgers, cakes and hot and cold drinks. **Many thanks to Linda Morris for organising this event.**
- d. Open Day is always an effective event for encouraging public interest in the wood. With favourable weather this year attendance was good and over £300 was raised. **Many thanks to all the Friends and others who contributed to its success and especially to our Open Day Organiser, Linda Morris.**
- e. FSW members continue to receive an illustrated newsletter each month, which I produce and circulate via email. **Thanks to members of the Committee and Linda Lee for delivering these to members who do not have email access.** These 22 non-email members now receive newsletters quarterly in batches of 3 to save on postage and/or shoe leather.
- f. We produce three main leaflets (Membership Application, General Information, Red & Green Walks) and a pocket-sized map which is very useful for rescuing lost souls. These are available in our museum, on the website, in the Selsdon Library and at events. As in previous years we have provided articles for the Selsdon Gazette and the Local Link where we advertise all events and workdays. Events are also advertised with posters at entrances to the woods and in other places around the community. **Thanks to Ted Forsyth who writes the Nature Notes for external publications and to David Malins for the production of the leaflets and posters and to all committee members who support with their distribution.**
- g. This year there were 19 entrants to the Photo Competition who submitted over 100 photographs. From these, a shortlist of 48 were selected and printed for display at Open Day when the public were invited to participate in a secret ballot to select the winners. Over 80 visitors voted and the winners were: First Prize £50 - Time Machine by David Pinkney; Second Prize £20 - Meadow Flight by Philip Murray-Pearce; Third Prize Equal £10 - Peacock Butterfly by Tony Flecchia & Jet in the Bluebells by Lee Butcher. Cash prizes were donated by an anonymous benefactor - to whom sincere thanks! (Both of the 3rd prize winners donated their prizes to the FSW.) All the winning and shortlisted photos are shown on the Photo Competition page of the website.

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

- a. As much work of the FSW can be done by email we now meet on alternate months only (as from the start of 2018). Meetings rarely attract many members beyond the core team but this does have the advantage of keeping them tightly focused. All members are welcome to attend - location and times are advertised on the website.
- b. The website continues to be 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 is also a FSW Facebook page, set up by Dawn Gibbons, which is increasingly popular and well used.
- 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 over £300 and 23 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 our treasurer Sandra Crapper for all her work on this.**
- c. Membership continues to grow. Most memberships are eligible for Gift Aid, which adds to our funds. **Thanks to David Malins, Membership Officer, for his work on all membership matters.**
- d. The FSW 2019 calendar was available for £5. We supplied 65 copies and raised around £100.

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.☺