



## Chair's Annual Report to the AGM – 30th March 2020

In 2019 the small band of active Friends ran a varied programme of walks, and volunteers worked on site on 18 planned occasions – including the Open Day on Sunday 8th September. There was also some unscheduled work as I shall detail later. Accounts of all our 2019 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. **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 and the trimming of invasive bramble. We also replaced a fallen way post. The dry spring meant that some of the whips planted in the previous winter season had to be watered by hand. We discovered that a wren had taken up residence in the bat box sited above the store room door.
- c. **The Winter Workday activity** this year mainly involved continuing work on the coppice 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 fence posts but much of the other material was burned. Many of the original fence posts were rotting at the base and were replaced. We purchased a new post driver to facilitate this work. Hazel whips, supplied by Simon Levy (forestry advisor to the Council), will be planted before the end of March.
- d. The commercial coppicing at the Langford's Way end of The Wend has really opened that area up and, as it is one of the sunniest parts of the wood, it will be interesting to see what the ground flora is like later. Also this year TCV (The Conservation Volunteers) cleared more of The Gorses so there should be lots of regeneration in the coming months.
- e. Winter storms produced many fallen trees. We cleared all within our capabilities and reported those that we felt unable to tackle ourselves to the Council's Trees Officers who were usually quick to respond.
- f. A memorial seat was installed in Bluebell Grove and the seat which we had taken for repair last year was also installed in this area. A further memorial seat was installed in Courtwood Grove. Local farmer, David Marsden helped move the seats and our workdays team, assisted by others, had prepared all the holes and added soil to secure the benches once they were in place. **Thanks to David Malins for organising this project.**
- g. **A policy for installation of future seats and benches was agreed.** In the main body of the wood and fields there will normally be no new benches or seats - only replacements for any rotted or damaged ones. The installation of any new benches and seats must be justified to the FSW Committee and Croydon Council. New dedicated benches, if and when more are offered, could usefully be placed along the London Loop and at the North East end of the wood.
- h. **The FSW Facebook site and our newsletter have encouraged more people to help with litter picking in the wood.** A number of Friends now do this on a regular basis as part of their daily walks.
- i. **We met with Council representatives in September** to discuss the role of the FSW and our relationship with the Council. Our policy for seat/bench installation and a strategy for our coppicing work were agreed.

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

- a. Work on the pool in Linden Glade was suspended this year pending further consultation with the Council.

**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. **On behalf of the FSW, thanks to all our external group leaders - Meike Weiser, Malcolm Jennings and Roger Hawkins.** Reports of all walks are published on the website.
- b. **Selsdon Wood is owned by the National Trust** but we were sorry to see that it does not get a mention in their latest handbook. We approached the NT about this and although it is not possible to change the printed material the NT

agreed to include Selsdon Wood in their on line resources with a link to our website - see <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/features/selsdon-wood>. **Thanks to John Bickerstaff for his persistence with this.**

- c. Tired of finding of dog poo bags hanging on trees or thrown into bushes the FSW started a campaign in the spring of 2019 to persuade the Council to install more poo bins. This was supported by many users of the wood who lobbied the local Councillors. They were persuaded and the Council installed new bins at 4 key sites - the gates at Yew Tree Way, Cascades, and Vincent Avenue and also at the exit from the car park field on Vale Border. We have also put up many posters encouraging dog owners to "bin it or flick it".
- d. Our Open Day 2019 was a combined event with the SRA Community Picnic Lunch and Fun and Games afternoon with support from the Scouts who ran a refreshment tent serving burgers, cakes and hot and cold drinks. For the first time we also had musical entertainment from the Soul Symphony Choir. **Many thanks to all the Friends and others who contributed to its success and especially to our Open Day Organiser, Linda Morris.**
- e. **Greenvale School** held a Teddy Bear's Picnic in July. This was not a FSW event but held in our wood. The whole school visited on a lovely summer's day for a Teddy Bears' Picnic. We opened up the toilet block for them.
- f. 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.**
- g. The winter tree work carried out by Council contractors was a source of much comment by users of the wood. Recent deluges followed by lots of vehicle movements really churned up many of the paths. A digger was brought in to repair some of the damage by filling in the ruts but the paths are inevitably left deep in mud. The major transformation has taken place in Pool Grove which is now very much wider and brighter. Trees were also taken out along Leafy Grove and Courtwood Grove and some large wind-blown trees were removed from Smith Grove. There should be an increase in biodiversity in these areas.
- h. Regular butterfly transects were carried out. 31 species of butterfly were seen and the full details are supplied on the FSW website. Records of bat species seen in the wood were also kept. **Thanks to Daniel Bound (butterflies) and Steve Budd (bats) for this work.**
- i. 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, the Croham Valley Residents Association newsletter 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.**
- j. **In the 2019 Photo Competition** there were 13 entrants who submitted over 80 photographs. From these, a shortlist of 43 were selected and printed for display on the FSW Open Day on 8th September 2019 when the public were invited to participate in a secret ballot to select the winners. Over 50 visitors voted and the winners were: **First Prize £50 - Deer by Ian Schofield: Second Prize £20 - Bullet Drop by Steve Budd: Third Prize £10 - Inquisitive Robin by Tony Flecchia.** Cash prizes were funded by an anonymous benefactor - to whom sincere thanks! I am delighted to say that all of the winners donated their prizes back to 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.. **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 and last year exceeded 200. 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 2020 calendar was available for £5. We purchased 65 copies and made a profit from sales

### **Conclusion**

**We have had a busy and successful year.**

**Due to illness I have had to resign my post as chair of the group but I am happy to support the group as much as I am able and continue work on the website and newsletters.**

**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.☺**