

Friends of Selsdon Wood AGM 2009 Chairman's Report

The Friends of Selsdon Wood has had a productive and successful first year. We set up at the group at the beginning of 2008 and now have a total of 24 paid up members.

We managed to obtain funding from the BTCV to buy tools which we received in late summer. The group also received a donation from the Selsdon Resident's Association which was much appreciated.

We have worked closely with Meike Weiser, the Community Partnership Officer at Croydon Council for advice and help in our early stages. Simon Levy, an independent tree specialist, has also provided us with valuable advice on woodland management.

Dave Johnson, from the Croydon BTCV, ran an initial coppicing training day in February 2008 which was well attended. A coppicing work programme is currently being organised and it is hoped that Dave Johnson from the BTCV, can run a workday before the end of the coppicing season in February.

The general maintenance programme started on a regular basis in the Autumn. The first workday had to be cancelled due to the bad weather. However, two workdays took place in November and December 2008. On our first workday in November, the bramble around the visitor's centre was cleared and some shrub pruning near the car park entrance was completed. The second work day in December provided much needed maintenance to the Scouts Jubilee Plantation area which was planted in 1977. The general maintenance programme will continue this year on a regular monthly basis. Suggestions for future work days are always welcome. Stephen Saunders has volunteered to be our co-ordinator for maintenance and coppicing events, with back up from Gordon Endersby.

We decided to promote the group further by holding an Open Day in September 2008. Despite the wet weather, attendance was around 200. The RSPB and the East Surrey Badgers Society were two of the invited stall holders. The event raised £100 and we obtained three new members. It is hoped to repeat the event this year.

During the last year, Ernie Tomason, the Park Ranger, led a number of walks around the Selsdon wood which we supported. The most popular being the Bluebell Walk in May 2008 which had over 50 people in attendance. Other walks included a wild flower and a butterfly walk. He has also provided much needed support on a wide range of matters including the open day. It is hoped that this year we may be able to organise a walk ourselves during the summer.

We also managed to obtain funding from the council for a new leaflet for the Selsdon Wood which Meike Weiser has been busy designing. This leaflet is much needed as the old leaflet was produced over 10 years ago and is now out of date. David Malins, a group member has kindly co-ordinated work on this new leaflet in the last few months and sent our suggestions to Meike Weiser. It is hoped a draft copy will be back from the printers shortly and the final version will be ready for the Spring.

Gordon Endersby has been busy during the last year setting set up a Forum site for the group and also an email contact address for us. Please take the opportunity to look at the forum site and register as a member if you have not already done so. Gordon has also provided a storage shed for our growing collection of tools. Some of you helped him with the shed construction. The tools purchased from the BTCV are stored there plus a few extra specialist tools

we received recently from another local group, the Friends of Foxley Wood, which had surplus stock.

Linda Morris has had a busy year as Secretary making sure monthly minutes were produced and other administrative matters were dealt with including news updates for the Selsdon Gazette.

Liz Phillips has efficiently organised the finances for the group in her capacity as Treasurer. We have created an up to date paid members list.

A special mention should also go to Rob Turley who created our first newsletter in the summer. It is hoped that a follow-up newsletter can be produced later this year. Any articles for future inclusion can be sent direct to him.

Finally, Ted Forsyth has provided support on the summer walks and workdays. His knowledge of the wildlife, plants and fungi has been very useful especially in labelling my photographs that I have taken in the past year.

We hope to increase membership further this year. We will be continuing with the general maintenance programme during the year and may open the visitors centre on a few days during the summer. Due to the presence of the new group we have been offered five new wooden benches for the wood by the Croydon Council. With the continued existence of the group, future improvements can be made to the wood for the enjoyment of all its visitors. Therefore your continued support would be much appreciated.

Dawn Gibbons
Chairman
Friends of Selsdon Wood