

Friends of Selsdon Wood

Working to improve our wood



Chair's Annual Report to the AGM - 6th January 2014

It has been another good year for the FSW. The small band of active Friends have run a varied programme of walks and volunteers have worked on site on at least 20 days – including the charcoal event and Open Day. Accounts of all our 2013 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. The bulk of the regular maintenance, such as the clearance of areas around benches, is carried out on summer workdays and these have been well attended, although additional helpers are always welcome. 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.
- b. We are pleased to report the repair of the fence adjoining the bridleway to the north of the wood, which was broken by thieves who stole the telephone cables in 2012. We contacted the Council over this for some months and the work was finally completed in February 2013.
- c. The Friends have serviced and cleaned the toilets periodically throughout the year. Although they are in poor condition, the water supply is now working and the Council have made repairs to the roof and to one of the cubicles at our request. Sadly funds are not available for any more major renovation.
- d. In August 2013 the Friends installed a new seat, which we have donated to commemorate the establishment of our organisation in 2007. It is at the top of Green Hill (Field 1) and seems to be a popular place for sitting to take in the view. The Council have agreed to adopt the seat, which means they will cover the cost of future maintenance. The older bench in that location was re-sited in Field 3. Over the summer the Council carried out a programme of renovation of all the other dedicated seats and a new dedicated bench was also installed in Field 2 in memory of Heather Creamer, a lover of Selsdon Wood, who died last December.
- e. The Friends also built and installed a lost property box, fitted to the notice board in the car park. This proved a great boon to at least 2 users of the woods who recovered their lost keys, deposited in the box by helpful finders.
- f. A regular (nominally weekly) butterfly transect and bird survey were carried out and this data has been archived on the website.
- 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. 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. One hundred Hazel whips were planted in the area in the autumn/winter of 2012-2013. Reports of all workdays are archived on our website.
- b. Some of the wood from this coppicing was used for the Charcoal Burning Event in May. Thank you to Rob Sowter and to all involved. Records of this event can be found on the Events and Management pages of the website.
- c. In the spring the Friends helped clear coppiced material from the other area of coppicing in the Wend and replanted Hazel whips. This coppicing is a commercial activity carried out on a 9-year cycle by Rob Sowter. The Friends pitched in with the Council to help when Rob was ill early in the year.
- d. Clematis, nettles and Ash were partially cleared from the Jubilee Plantation but keeping this cleared continues to prove a major challenge.

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 2014 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. Reports of all of the walks are published on the website.

- b. FSW members receive an illustrated newsletter at each new season (4 per year).
- c. We produce three main leaflets (Application, General Information, Red & Green Walks). These are available on the website, in the Selsdon Library and at events.
- d. As in previous years we have provided articles for the Selsdon Gazette, Forestdale Link and the Community Voice column in the Croydon Advertiser.
- e. The annual Photo Competition has been an effective way of raising public interest in the wood. In 2013 there were 21 entrants who submitted over 90 photographs. From these, a shortlist of 50 were selected and printed for display on the FSW Open Day when the public were invited to participate in a secret ballot to select the winners in each category. Over 100 visitors voted and the winners of the Junior and Senior competitions were each offered a voucher, kindly donated by our sponsor, Snappy Snaps of Croydon. 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. There has been much development 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. The Fauna and Flora pages contain annotated photographs of several hundred species. Many thanks to Tony Flecchia for his substantial contribution.
- g. Liaison with local schools has included 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. The Schools section of the website has been created to support this work.

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 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, which publicises our wood.

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. Thanks to Linda Morris for organising the event and to all who helped on the day. We hope for more volunteers next year to make the event even more successful.
- b. Membership was increased to 137 members - with 12 being recruited on Open Day. The majority of memberships are eligible for Gift Aid, which adds to our funds.
- c. The FSW 2014 calendar was available for a donation of £5. We supplied 70 copies and raised £60.
- d. Distribution of logs (from coppicing work) has raised around £466 this year - a bagful is available for a donation of £4. Our thanks go to Neale Fox who has agreed to coordinate this for us as the project is proving another excellent money raiser.

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 monthly meetings and lend your hand to help us meet our aims again in 2014.