



Chair's Annual Report to the AGM – 28th March 2022

As usual, I shall structure this report with regard to the aims of our group as stated in the constitution. With climate change and an international pandemic, protecting and maintaining our bird sanctuary has never been more important.

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

In the early part of 2021, while Covid restrictions were in place, our Workdays Team continued to work in small, Covid-safe groups at times convenient to them. In May, with the lifting of restrictions, formal workdays recommenced.

Work included:

- a. **Clearing fallen trees** - Many tree and branch falls across paths and seats were cleared throughout the year and especially after the storms of mid-February 2022. In a couple of cases there were trees too large for us to handle and these were reported to the Council.
- b. **Fencing around the Butterfly Bank** - In May a fence was erected around the Butterfly Bank to prevent it being walked across by people or dogs. Towards the end of the year further attention was given to some of the fence posts which had fallen.
- c. **Removal of invasive Species** - A clump of Spanish Bluebells was removed from the side of F1 in May. Invasive Laurel was also cut down, in particular a number of bushes in the northern end of the wood. The cut material was placed in trees above ground level to prevent the possibility of re-rooting and left there to die back.
- d. **Replacing and Restoring fallen Guide Posts and Name Boards** - A fallen guide post in Broom Path was restored using a Metpost - a metal sheath for the base of the wooden post with a spike which can be hammered into the ground. Name boards were replaced on trees at the Noakes Way/East Gorse junction and two in Langford's Way.
- e. **Adjustments to the Farleigh Border Gate** - After reports of a dog running out onto Old Farleigh Road through an open Farleigh Border gate, in May we investigated what could be done to prevent any future similar occurrence. The Council were informed but they were unable to undertake any work so initially we decided to lock the gate until further notice. Warping of the gate and frame meant that the bolt could not be easily slid into the lock but we managed to jam it in place in hope that it would serve as a lock. However a few days later the bolt had been unjammed, the gate was once again fully open outwards and the notices that we had posted explaining the situation had been torn down. We feared that the fence might be broken down if the gate was padlocked so looked for another solution. The bolt was fixed in a fully out position and a very simple gate closing device was added using a bit of rope tied to a tree opposite. This is proving very effective so far.
- f. **Clearance around Seats, Benches and the Car Park** - Clearance of encroaching vegetation was carried out in the summer months around many of the field perimeters. Bushes projecting into the car park were also cut back.
- g. **Replacement and Refurbishment of Rotten Seats and Benches** - One of the original National Trust seats backing the Centenary Plantation had fallen into disrepair. A member of our team restored the seat making use of some materials from another severely damaged seat and the new seat was put in place on 27/6/21. A rotten bench in F3 was removed to make space for dedicated bench (1/8/21) and 1 new dedicated seat and 2 new benches were installed - with some mechanical assistance from the local farmer (30/9/21). One of the benches was placed at the junction of Broad Walk and Addington Border. This had been requested by the Vanguard Way Working Party in their Annual Review for 2020. One seat of the pair together in F2 had fallen into serious disrepair and was removed. The plaque from that seat, dedicated to Murray Silverstone, was attached to the adjacent bench. A change of supplier meant that a further bench, delivered to the wood in sections in November could be installed without the need for the farmer's tractor.
- h. **Creation and installation of Bat Boxes** - Leafy Grove we put up a cluster of three bat boxes on three separate trees (1/8/21) and we placed two in Vincent Avenue (26/9/21).
- i. **Refurbishment of the Lost Property Box** - Lost Property Box behind the notice board in the car park had fallen into disrepair. One of our team took it away and brought back a lovely new box. In true "green" fashion he created the box from a pallet and materials he had available so it has cost us nothing (3/9/21).
- j. **Installing the Bird Feeding Station in the Jubilee Plantation** - We had agreed with his family that a bird feeding station would be set up in our wood in dedication to David Malins, a very active founder member of FSW who died in 2021. The feeders were installed in January 2022 and have been maintained and stocked since. An interesting page of sightings is building up on the FSW website and a board with a dedication to David and pictures of birds to aid ID will be installed later this year.
- k. **Marking bays in the Car Park** - The line markings in the car park are almost worn away so we stencilled "T" marks to indicate each bay and to encourage cars to park tidily. The work was done at twilight when the car park was empty.
- l. **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. In November a Workdays team cleared up rubbish left by revellers in the large crater in Stevens Larch.
- m. **Thanks to our Workdays organiser, and to all the other volunteers** for their dedicated efforts. We could do with more help so please join us if you are able.

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

- a. **Wood Chipping of Muddy Paths** - At the Committee Meeting on 29th November 2021 it was agreed that we should undertake a further project to improve some of the muddy paths. The last time any work was done on this was in 2017. This project was begun in January 2022 with a delivery of wood chippings to the car park from Woodside Timber. These were bagged up and most transported to the bad puddle in Farleigh Border. Some was also laid in Vale Border and Greenhill Way.
- b. **Clearance in the Gorses area** - Without intervention the gorse gets swamped with brambles and bracken. The main Workdays task for the earlier part of the winter season was the clearance of bramble, bracken and sycamore saplings, leaving gorse bushes and seedlings along with young oak seedlings. The cut material was moved to a pile in the wood where it will be allowed to decay (26/9/21).

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. After the Covid shutdown our guided walks restarted with Malcolm Jennings' Summer Flowers walk in June 2021. The six events since have been well attended and the presenters have provisionally agreed to come back in 2022 when we plan to run a similar programme. **Thanks to our external group leaders - Malcolm Jennings and Roger Hawkins and also to all the FSW leaders.** Reports of all walks are published on the website.
- b. To support users of the wood, especially newcomers, we continue to produce three main leaflets (Membership Application, General Information, Red & Green Walks) and a pocket-sized map. Dispensing boxes at all main entrances are kept stocked by committee members. A QR version of the information booklet is available and the QR code is posted on all the dispensing boxes and also at minor entrances which do not have the dispensers.
- c. As in previous years we have provided articles for the Selsdon Gazette and published our annual calendar. These were advertised with posters at entrances to the woods and in other places around the community.
- d. The FSW website is regularly updated and provides a rich source of information about the wood. In addition there is a FSW Facebook group which now has over a thousand members. This is a rich resource for the sharing of information about the wood, especially interesting sightings. **Thanks to the manager of the Facebook group and to all participants who share photographs and experiences.**
- e. **Open Day 2021** - Following the Covid hiatus last year, we were happily able to resume the tradition of the annual Open Day on the first Sunday in September. Full details of the event are available on the Events page of our website. **Many thanks to the organiser of the event** and to all members of the FSW who helped out on the day.
- f. FSW members continue to receive an illustrated newsletter each month, circulated via email. **Delivery of these to members who do not have email access was suspended this year** because of Covid.
- g. **The Photo Competition** was back to normal this year after last year's online version. An unprecedented number of photographs were submitted with 26 people entering, many sending all six permitted photos. It was thus necessary to draw up a shortlist. This comprised 50 photographs which were shown at Open Day with all visitors invited to vote for their three favourites. 128 people voted - most saying how hard it was to choose amongst 50 such superb photographs. Voting was close but by the end of the day we had winners: **1st Place £50** - They're Not In - Can I Take a Message? by Steve Budd, **2nd Place £20** - Sky of Fire by Lee Butcher, **3rd Place £10**- Sunrise over Snow by Kylie Butcher. Many thanks to Lee & Kylie who donated their prizes back to FSW.

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

- a. Due to the pandemic the AGM was cancelled last year and only 2 Committee Meetings were held (in September and November). However the committee kept in constant contact by email.
- b. The FSW Facebook group is well used and promotes much discussion. The website also 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.
- c. The FSW have maintained liaison with other local groups through the Association of Croydon Conservation Societies.

Aim 5) To raise money as necessary for the carrying out of its work

- a. Open Day, was our main money raiser again this year - see the Treasurer's Report for details.
- b. Bankruptcy of Croydon Council meant that all of the usual grants were not available again this year.
- c. Membership exceeds 200 and most memberships are eligible for Gift Aid, which adds to our funds.
- d. The FSW 2020 calendar was available for a minimum donation of £5. Last year we sold out early so we ordered an extra 30 calendars this year but 20 have remained unsold. However we did sell enough copies to cover the cost of purchase.

Conclusion

We have had a busy and successful year in spite of the pandemic.

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. However, we are sad to report the death of David Malins, a founder member of FSW, membership secretary and an active participant in all activities. As he was a keen bird watcher a Bird Feeding Station has been set up in the Jubilee Plantation in his memory.