



Chair's Annual Report to the AGM – 27th March 2023

As usual, I shall structure this report with regard to the aims of our group as stated in the constitution. With much current news about the decline of biodiversity, 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 2021, members of our Work Team started to work in small, Covid-safe groups, at times convenient to them. Although formal work sessions have now recommenced some small informal activities have continued.

Work has included:

- a. **Clearing fallen trees** - Many tree and branch falls across paths and seats were cleared throughout the year. In a couple of cases there were trees too large for us to handle and these were reported to the Council.
- b. **Maintenance of the Butterfly Bank** - In May a selection of plug plants was added to the Butterfly Bank - Kidney Vetch, Marjoram, Wild Thyme, Rock Rose, Hairy Violet and Small Scabious. These were watered-in after planting and further watered in the following months. In the Autumn the area was tidied by the removal of dead vegetation and repairs were made to the fencing on several occasions.
- 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 on several Work Sessions and by visiting TVC volunteers. The cut material was placed in trees above ground level to prevent the possibility of re-rooting and left there to die back. In May the Iris in the Jubilee Pond was thinned out. Much pond weed was also removed and barley straw was floated on the pond to keep it at bay. However, it soon grew back. Bracken was cleared in David's Crook in August and Bramble in the Centenary Plantation in January 2023.
- d. **Replacing and Restoring fallen Guide Posts and Name Boards** - Fallen path name boards in David's Path, Beech Grove and Bluebell Grove were replaced and two guide posts were re-erected using Metposts - spiked metal sheaths which can be hammered into the ground to form the bases of the wooden posts. A Middle Gorse sign that had been taken down by Council contractors was remounted.
- e. **Outreach Support Work** - We met with Oliver Connolly, Director of Grow Wild Outreach a support service that supports people with disabilities and mental health needs to help them contribute and take part in local environmental projects. They support people from Croydon Monday to Friday and would like to support Selsdon Wood in any way possible. The group visited the wood on several occasions and were shown how to clear bracken & brambles. They also helped clear away arisings cut back by our team. Many thanks to Linda and Jim for their work with these visitors.
- f. **Clearance around Seats and Benches** - Clearance of encroaching vegetation was carried out in the summer months around many of the field perimeters.
- g. **Replacement of Rotten Seats and Benches** - Graffiti was removed from one seat in July and 5 dedicated benches were installed this year - all replacing very old benches that were so rotten they were unusable. The structure of all the new benches is such that they come in pieces which can be transported to the site without recourse to the farmer's tractor. The bench is then assembled at the site. Many thanks to Jim Dunning who organises all this work including liaison with those who have requested and are funding the bench, liaison with the supplier of benches and plaques, and coordination of all the installation work.
- h. **Creation and installation of Nesting Boxes** - Bird Nesting Boxes, built by Jim Dunning, were erected in Pool Grove, East Gorse, Broom Path and by the Jubilee Pond. A fallen Bat Box over the store door was reinstated and another that had been taken down by Council contractors was remounted.
- i. **Planting of Juniper Saplings** - Four Juniper Saplings were donated and planted in David's Crook in October. Two were caged to stop nibbling by deer and all seem to be thriving.
- j. **Work on the Bird Feeding Station in the Jubilee Plantation** - In January 2022 a Bird Feeding Station was set up in our wood in dedication to David Malins, a very active founder member of FSW who died in 2021. The board with a dedication to David and pictures of birds to aid ID was installed in June 2022 and repaired in August after water got into it. Many thanks to Steve & Ruth Budd who have kept the feeders replenished ever since they were installed. They have recruited another FSW member, Chris Green, to share the work and to take over the organisation when the Budds move out of the area, as they plan to do.
- k. **Repair of the Gate Post and Leaflet Dispensers in the Car Park** - The emergency entry gate beside the car park had a broken post and kept falling over. This was repaired by inserting a piece of scaffold pipe. The two leaflet holders in the car park had broken lids and thus let in water. These were repaired with custom lids.
- l. **Litter Picking** - The FSW Facebook site and our newsletter have encouraged more people to help with litter picking in the wood. Several Friends now do this on a regular basis as part of their daily walks. In July a Work Team cleared up litter left by fire makers just off the Bridle Path and a fire in the crater in Steve's Larch was put out with 40-50 litres of water brought up by trolley from the toilet block. Material dumped in the car park was cleared in January 2023. The FSW dog poo bin at the top of Field 1 is well used, and emptied by the Friends on alternate days.

Thanks to our Workdays organiser, Ted Forsyth, 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. **Repair of Muddy Paths** - Although much energy was spent exploring the options for the repair of muddy paths, we have not been able to progress this further due to the fact that the highways section of L B Croydon has not been able to provide scalplings. The muddy path problems persist and could be the basis of a future project.
- b. **Renovation of the Linden Glade Pond** - We were approached by a family who said they would be interested in funding a major redevelopment of the Linden Glade Pond. We arranged for the Council Contractors to cut down 2 of the Lime trees surrounding the pond and to trim back the others in order to let more light into the area. This was completed in February 2023. However there has been no further communication from the family and so it is uncertain how this project will progress.

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. All our scheduled walks have been well attended and the presenters have provisionally agreed to come back in 2023 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. All are available to download from our website. Dispensing boxes for the maps at some 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 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 managers of the Facebook group, Steve Budd and Chris Green, and to all participants who share photographs and experiences.**
- e. **Open Day 2022** - Open Day was held, as usual, 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, Linda Morris,** 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 stopped two years ago because of Covid.
- g. **The 2022 Photo Competition was cancelled** - After a bumper entry in 2021, with a total of 26 people sending in their photos, hardly anyone submitted an entry in 2022. By the closing date we had just 5 entrants despite advertising on the FSW website, in the FSW Facebook group and on posters. This was not enough to give an interesting selection to choose from so sadly there was no competition last year. However, we will try again this year when there will be a 2-year period for eligibility (20th August 2021 - 19th August 2023) so photos already taken last year will be acceptable.

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

- a. The AGM was held in March 2022 and Committee Meetings were held in May, July, September and November. In addition the committee kept in constant contact by email. It was agreed that the January meeting should be abandoned as the weather is likely to be too unpleasant and there is little business to be completed at that time.
- 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 2022 calendar was available for a minimum donation of £5. All 70 calendars ordered were sold, making a profit of £120.
- e. After the resignation of our treasurer, Sandra Crapper, a new treasurer, Karen Hall, took over in April 2022. Many thanks to Sandra for all the work she has done over the years and to Karen for stepping into her shoes.

Conclusion

We have had a busy and successful year.

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.