



Chair's Annual Report to the AGM – 25th March 2024

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

Formal work sessions are scheduled monthly in the summer and twice a month in the winter. Informal activities also take place at times suitable to members of the work team.

Work has included:

- a. **Clearing fallen trees** - Many tree and branch falls across paths and seats were cleared throughout the year. Falls in East Gorse, Middle Gorse and Farleigh Border were removed in July and August and falls between Broad Walk & Vale Border and near David's Crook were removed in November. Further falls in Broom Path and Farleigh Border were cleared in January and February 2024. One fall in Great Field was too dangerous for us to tackle so it was reported to the Council Tree Officer and cleared quickly by Council operatives.
- b. **Maintenance of the Butterfly Bank** - In July and November many of the perimeter stakes were replaced. In Autumn the area was tidied by the removal of dead vegetation with the help of the Outreach Team (see below).
- c. **Removal of Invasive Species** - Invasive Laurel was cut down on many Work Sessions and also by visiting TCV 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 October Holly was removed at the junction of West Gorse and Farleigh Border.
- d. **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 Laurel, Bracken & Brambles. They also helped clear away arisings cut back by our team and helped to clear the Linden Glade pool as part of the renovation (see below). Many thanks to Linda and Jim for their work with these visitors.
- e. **Clearance around Name Boards, Seats and Benches** - Clearance of encroaching vegetation was carried out in the summer months around many of the field perimeters.
- f. **Replacement of rotten Guide Posts** – The guide post at the junction of Broad Walk and Beech Grove was replaced in June and the marker post in the car park for the start of the Red walk and the end of the Green was repaired and replaced with a Metpost in February 2024.
- g. **Replacement of Rotten Seats and Benches** – In September Jim renovated the old seat in the car park dedicated to Miss Margaret Horn and in September he repainted the Croydon National Trust bench in Great Field by the Centenary Plantation.
- h. **Installation of New Benches** – Two new dedicated benches were installed in October in Field 3 and 2 further benches, made by Jim Dunning, were installed in Addington Border and Langford's Way in December.
- i. **Creation and installation of Nesting Boxes and a Leaflet Dispenser** – A Bird Nesting Box, built by Jim Dunning, was erected in Vale Border in June. Last year several of the plastic leaflet dispensers were destroyed by vandals. In response, Jim built a wooden dispenser out of an old nest box and installed it at the Courtwood Lane entrance. Many thanks Jim!
- 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. 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. In November David Brown dredged the Jubilee Pond, taking out a lot of leaves and branches, which were then raked away, and trimmed the vegetation between the pond and the fence.
- k. **Clearance of the Centenary Plantation** – Several winter Work Sessions involved clearance work in the Centenary Plantation by removal of Brambles and dead wood
- l. **Removal of Old Fencing and plastic sheeting close to David's Crook** – Fencing and plastic sheeting, possibly left over from a past Autumn Fair, was found in the wood close to David's Crook. This was removed in January and taken to the car park where it was broken up and left for collection by the Council.
- m. **Litter Picking** - Several Friends now do this on a regular basis as part of their daily walks. The FSW dog poo bin at the top of Field 1 is and emptied by the Friends on alternate days. Many thanks to Andy Campbell who has taken on a regular Friday collection.

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** – This project was revived this year starting with the purchase of two electric trolleys with tipper function. These can easily be loaded with gravel or shingle (250 kg load max) and driven to where needed. We

purchased several bags of ballast, and a start was made laying several trolley-loads at the muddy spot in Farleigh Border. Channels were also cut to allow some drainage.

- b. **Renovation of the Linden Glade Pond** - Work was carried out throughout the year commencing with clearance of mud and removal of edging stones in preparation for laying of a fibreglass liner. In September, FSW paid a contractor, Fab Fencing, to erect a sturdy fence around the pool with a locked gate. A path was cleared around the outside of the fence so that the public could view the pool from around the full perimeter. The soil in the area inside the fence was turned over and a few appropriate plants added. The surroundings of the memorial stone were cleared.
- c. **Removal of Fence at the Yew Tree Way entrance** - The fence at the Yew Tree Way entrance has been broken for some time and lay on the ground looking untidy and neglected. This fence served very little purpose and a complete replacement would have been expensive, so FSW paid Mick, of Fab Fencing to remove it for us. The area now looks much better – thanks Mick.

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. This year the website has been restyled to make it mobile responsive and legally compliant. Thanks to Louise Green for her advice on this. 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 2023** - 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.
- g. **In the 2023 Photo Competition** there were 20 entrants who submitted over 80 photographs. From these, a shortlist of 45 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. the winners were: **First Prize £50 - Roe Deer and Fawn by Ruth Budd: Second Prize £20 - Did Somebody Say Just Eat? by Scott McCulloch: Third Prize £10 - Peanut my little Branch Manager by Lisa Dervish.** Cash prizes were funded by an anonymous benefactor - to whom sincere thanks! All the winning and shortlisted photos are shown on the Photo Competition page of the website.
- h. The FSW have commissioned **Alasdair Craig of Essex Chainsaw Carving** to carve a few sylvan scenes on old tree stumps throughout Selsdon Wood. To date 2 carvings have been made, a group of owls and a green man. These have been very well received and are likely to encourage public interest. **Many thanks to Jim Dunning who has organised this work.**

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 2023 and Committee Meetings were held in May, September and November 2023 and February 2024. In addition, 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. Membership exceeds 200 and most memberships are eligible for Gift Aid, which adds to our funds.
- c. The FSW 2022 calendar was available for a minimum donation of £5. All the 70 calendars ordered were claimed, raising £120 for our funds.

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.