



Chair's Annual Report to the AGM – 31st March 2025

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. We continue to liaise with Council officers for guidance & support.

Work has included:

- a. **Clearing Fallen Trees** – As in most years, several trees that had fallen across paths were cleared. The major one of these was a fall in Farleigh Border near the Green Man carving. A fall in Greenhill Way left a tree hanging at a perilous angle close to the path. This 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** – One of our team took responsibility for clearing the grass from areas of the Butterfly Bank and planting butterfly friendly plants. These areas were maintained regularly throughout the year and the whole enclosure was given a strimming in the Autumn. Many thanks to Valerie & her team for their work.
- c. **Maintenance of the Bird Feeding Station** – Weed was cleared from the Jubilee pool on several occasions and vegetation encroaching on the area around the pool cut back. Thanks to David Brown for this. The feeders were refilled on a regular basis and replaced if they got damaged. Many thanks to Ruth & Steve for this work.
- d. **Outreach Support Work** – As last year, we welcomed Grow Wild Outreach, a service that supports people with disabilities and mental health needs to help them contribute and take part in local environmental projects. The Croydon Outreach Team visit our wood on Tuesdays. The participants were shown how to clear path overhangs and Laurel, 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.
- e. **Removal of Invasive Species** - Invasive Laurel was cut down by the team on many Work Sessions and on other occasions by the Grow Wild volunteers. The cut material was placed in trees above ground level to prevent the possibility of re-rooting, and left to die back. Thanks to David and Harry for mapping the Laurel to be removed.
- f. **Clearance of Paths and around Name Boards and Seats** - Clearance of encroaching vegetation beside Noakes Way was carried out as the path was becoming very narrow. In the summer months, Brambles and Bracken around many seats in the field perimeters, and in front of the Centenary name board, were cleared.
- g. **Remounting of Fallen Signs** – Signs at the end of Avis Grove, in Greenhill Way and in Beech Grove were remounted and another on Beech Grove realigned.
- h. **Maintenance of the Wood Carvings** – The three carvings created in Selsdon Wood last year were maintained with a sprayed coat of linseed oil plus turpentine. Thanks to Jim for that work.
- i. **Planting of Marjoram in David's Crook** – A few Marjoram plants were planted near the paths to encourage butterflies. These were kept watered during the height of the summer.
- j. **Cleaning of the Toilets** – The toilets were given a deep clean in September but are badly in need of major repairs and redecoration. A few repairs were made to the flushes and the water supply was turned off during the winter months to prevent possible bursts and leaks. Thanks to Jim, Neale and Karen for their work.
- k. **Repair to the Automatic Closing Device at the Farleigh Road Entrance** – For some years, a rope with a stone-filled bag weight has been attached to the Farleigh Road gate so that it closes automatically after use. A bolt was fitted to the latch to prevent the gate opening outwards and later in the year a replacement for the bag was installed after a tree fall rendered the original mechanism ineffective. Thanks to Jim and John for this work.
- l. **Creation and Installation of new Nesting Boxes & Repair of Existing Boxes** – Several bird and bat boxes were built and fitted throughout the wood and a number of other boxes were repaired. A map of all the boxes was created and is available on the Nesting Boxes page of the website. Many thanks to Jim for this work.
- m. **Litter Picking** - Several Friends continue to do this on a regular basis as part of their daily walks. The FSW dog poo bin at the top of Field 1 is also emptied by the Friends on alternate days. Many thanks to Andy Campbell who continues with a regular Friday collection. In December two youngsters working for their Duke of Edinburgh Awards came to clear litter in the coppiced area at the end of Langford's Way and in the area of Court Wood further down Courtwood Lane adjoining the wood. The litter in the coppiced area by Langford's Way had been there since early in the summer when it was dumped by persons unknown. The litter in Court Wood had built up over a long period and included a pink suitcase which had been there for over a year. Many thanks to Shayan and Adam, and also to Adam's mum, Jane, who organised things. They left the full bags by the street bins and with perfect timing the Council turned up early next morning to empty the bins, so now all the bags - and the pink suitcase - have been taken away and our wood looks pristine again!!

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 continued with the laying of many more trolley loads of ballast on Farleigh Border and the removal of some surface mud. Ballast was also laid in the path from David's Crook to Greenhill Way. Two of the boys who cleared the litter as part of the Duke of Edinburgh Award work (see 1m above) cleared surface mud from a section of Avis Grove.
- b. **Renovation of the Linden Glade Pond** - Work continued with the laying of wooden stepping stones, loosening of topsoil and replanting. Several containers of water plants were placed in the pool and the pool skimmed of leaf debris in the late Autumn.
- c. **Clearance of the Pavement and Dropped Kerb at the Car Park to Allow Access for Prams and Mobility Scooters** – A mobility scooter user contacted us in April to report that it was impossible to gain access to the wood using the footpath beside the entry gate. Around six inches of mud was removed making the entrance much more accessible. Thanks to David and Colin for this work.
- d. **Repainting of Car Park Lines** - Many thanks to Kevin Alderton and his company Entire Surface Solutions for repainting the car park lines free of charge as a gift to Selsdon Wood. Thanks too to Steve who organised everything including the locking of the gates in advance and the opening of them when the work was complete. We now have professionally painted lines in durable thermoplastic.
- e. **Installation of a Carved Mushroom** – A carving of a mushroom seat was commissioned by FSW to celebrate Ted's 90th birthday. This was inscribed by Jim and installed at the junction of Langford's way and Leafy Grove.

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. **Scheduled Walks** - All our scheduled walks were well attended, and the presenters have provisionally agreed to come back in 2025 when we plan to run a similar programme. Thanks to our external group leaders - Malcolm Jennings, Daniel Bound and Roger Hawkins and to all the FSW leaders.
- b. **Visit of Croydon High Students** – Several groups of students visited in June and were introduced to some of the species in the wood. Many thanks to Ted, Linda, and Valerie for talking to the girls.
- c. **Information Leaflets** - To support users of the wood, we continue to produce three main leaflets (Membership Application, General Information, Red & Green Walks) as well as 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.
- d. **Calendar** - 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.
- e. **Open Day 2024** - 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. Sadly, this was our last Open Day as Linda has stepped down from the task of organising the event after many years and there have been no volunteers to take on the job. However, the FSW will have an informative display and the annual photo competition at this year's SRA event.
- f. **Newsletter** - FSW members continue to receive an illustrated newsletter each month, circulated via email.
- g. **Calendar Photo Competition** - In the 2024 competition to find photographs for future calendars there were 20 entrants who submitted over 50 photographs. From these, a shortlist of 38 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 - Deer in Bluebells by Slawomir Wnuk: Second Prize £20 - The Owl & the Pussycat by Andy Hart: Third Prize £10 - Bombus hortorum, Bumblebee by Tony Flecchia. Cash prizes were funded by an anonymous benefactor - to whom sincere thanks!

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

- a. **Meetings** - The AGM was held in March 2024 and Committee Meetings were held in May, July, September and November 2024 and February 2025. In addition, the committee kept in constant contact by email.
- b. **Website & Facebook Group** - 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 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.
- c. **Liaison** - FSW liaise 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** - This was our main money raiser again this year - see the Treasurer's Report for details. Many thanks to Karen, our treasurer for her work throughout the year.
- b. **Membership** - This exceeds 200 and most memberships are eligible for Gift Aid, which adds to our funds.
- c. **Just Giving & Easy Fund Raising** – These two on-line platforms are used to raise money for projects & activities.

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.