

2016 London Tree and Woodland Awards Winner of the Community Woodland Award: Friends of Selsdon Wood



On Thursday 6th May four members of the FSW attended a ceremony at City Hall at which we were presented with the award as winners of the Community Woodland Award. The photograph shows Sir Harry Studholme, Chair of the Forestry Commission with four members of our committee, Linda Morris, Ted Forsyth, John Zareba and Neale Fox.

This award is given for woodland management that has been inspired, driven and delivered by a local community group. The award panel noted that since getting involved in management of the site in 2008, the group has been involved in survey work, habitat management and tree planting. They have also produced an engaging website, path improvements, leaflets and guided walks that have improved access and connected people with the woodland.



Nomination

We were nominated for the award by Matthew Frith of the London Wildlife Trust who supplied the following information as reason for our nomination.

“The Friends of Selsdon Wood were formed in about 2007, in response to growing user interest in the management of Selsdon Wood, a 80-hectare site owned by the National Trust and managed by London Borough of Croydon (and its predecessors) since it was purchased in 1935 (as a means to save it from being built on). The Wood, largely oak beech, ash and sweet chestnut, explodes with millions of wildflowers each spring, and is probably the best site for wood anemone in Greater London. It is of Metropolitan Importance for Nature Conservation and a statutory Local Nature Reserve, and is enjoyed by many thousands of visitors as a place to walk and get a piece of the ‘London countryside.

The Friends are a very active group of volunteers and have put in a significant amount of work both in the Wood and outreach into the communities of Selsdon and Forestdale that live adjacent to the site. The Friends’ Chair, Heather Govier, has created an engaging website which now has hundreds of photographs taken in the Wood, including details of every tree species. She also produces a monthly newsletter, often containing pictures of natural history items to look out for during the month, and since 2010 held an annual Photographic Competition. Ted Forsyth, Vice-Chairman, organises the regular workdays, writes monthly Nature Notes for the *Selsdon Gazette*, leads walks and surveys birds, butterflies, fungi, etc. David Malins organises many projects, including name boards for the network of paths, has updated the two self-guided walk leaflets and set up two trails. These are now accessible on a mobile phone by way of QR codes. Linda Morris makes sure the Friends’ Open Day is a success each September, when they recruit new members, raise funds for the work in the Wood, and promote its wildlife to visitors. Linda, Neale & Karen Fox, Jim Dunning, John Zareba and Alan & Janet Bushnell

are regular attendees on the workdays and a few others join them frequently. (I would also like to pay tribute to our Treasurer, Sandra Crapper, to our founding Chair, Dawn Gibbons and to Tony Flecchia, who has contributed the majority of photographs for the website. HG)

The Friends work closely and constructively with Croydon Council officers to ensure that it is maintained for the benefit of the flora and fauna. What makes their work impressive is the breadth of activity and the partnership with Croydon Council; the Wood is of significant size and through partnership working it is clear that the site is being given the care it deserves. (The nominator has known the Wood for almost 50 years, and has noticed the positive changes in the past 15)."

Our Recent Work

The photographs below show some of our work in 2015/16. This included thinning of Sycamores in Greenhill Way to let in more light and increase biodiversity and the clearance of Ash seedlings in the Centenary Plantation. A total of eight new benches and a number of nesting boxes were installed. We also refurbished Council information boards at the entrances to the wood to provide up-to-date information for visitors and replaced fallen route marker posts. Clearance and refurbishment of the Linden Glade area is now underway. We collect litter on a daily basis and have held two community litter picks.

Our work on the Jubilee Plantation is ongoing with regular maintenance. This special area was created to commemorate the Queen's 50th Anniversary but many of the planted trees were badly distorted by squirrel damage. In 2010 we cleared many of the trees to create an open area where we then re-planted with a mixed group of 250 tree whips and for the 60th Anniversary we helped the local Brownies and Guides to plant a further 60 trees. The intention is to develop an area for birds to nest and feed as the trees mature. We have recently planted 100 hazel whips, 6 wild service-trees and 6 disease-resistant elms in an area of the Plantation which we had previously coppiced.

In the past 12 months we have also conducted eight guided walks, all free to the general public and well attended and for each a display was provided in our visitors' room including photographs and a number of 'museum items' such as skulls or antlers found in the wood. For those walking unaccompanied, we have updated our trails leaflets and the trails are now all supported by QR codes attached to the marker posts.



See the website for details of our next

Workday on Sunday 3rd July @ 10am and our next walk on Saturday 16th July @ 11am - 'Discover Summer Butterflies' with Malcolm Bridge