

# Friends of Farnham Park

Newsletter Autumn 2016

Registered Charity No. 285383

<http://www.friendsoffarnhampark.co.uk>

 Friends of Farnham Park



## ANOTHER FLAG(SHIP) YEAR



*Friends' Committee Members help Robin raise the Park's fourth 'Green Flag' award in successive years*

Welcome to our Autumn newsletter, which this time features a roundup of some of the wildlife surveys which our dedicated volunteers conduct throughout the year. We hope you enjoy hearing about what has been seen out and about in the Park, and if some of these things are new to you, perhaps you can keep a sharp eye out for them next year!

## RECENT EVENTS

Friends have once again had a variety of events to attend this year, starting in April with a lovely show of landscape and wildlife photographs by Neil Longhurst.

In June, a talk by Andy Thomas on the enigma of crop circles had members arguing about their origins for a couple of weeks afterwards!

July was blessed with good weather for both of our events – the BBQ, which was again very well-attended, and a walk with Isobel Girvan of Surrey Wildlife Trust, looking at the chalk grassland plants of the southern slopes – who knew we had at least 18 species of grass alone in that area!

A very well-received talk on Deer by Roger Owen provided our September entertainment.

*Friends enjoyed a flower walk on the southern slopes, with botanist Isobel Girvan of Surrey Wildlife Trust*



If you have enjoyed any of our other events this year, we hope you will come to our last two events of 2016:

## TALK: Tuesday 18th.October: THE NADDER

Alan and Richard of the Friends take you on a guided walk along the Nadder stream in The Park, from the comfort of your chair, following its course and investigating what, who, live in and around the stream.

7.0pm. for 7.30. Rowhill Centre, Cranmore Lane - £ 3 for non-members.

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Friends of Farnham Park  
Annual General Meeting  
will be held on  
Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> November 2016 at 7.30 pm  
at Rowhill Field Centre,  
Cranmore Lane, GU11 3BD

Copies of Agenda papers will be available at the meeting and, on request, from the Secretary two weeks in advance.

All members are welcome to the AGM which will be followed by the annual illustrated Ranger's Report and informal discussion. Please e-mail Robin in advance if you've any interesting photos of the Park or of your garden wildlife which you'd like displayed.

Martin Clegg, Secretary, 01252 821977

## **BREEDING BIRD SURVEY**

The national Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) is a line transect survey walk, based on randomly located 1km squares throughout the British Isles, with more squares in areas with more volunteers. BBS volunteers make two early morning visits to their square during the April- June survey period, recording all birds encountered while walking two 1km transects across the square. During this period, it is assumed that most birds encountered will be breeding here.

Each 1km transect is divided into five 200m sections for ease of recording. Birds are recorded in three distance categories or as 'in flight', in order to assess detectability and work out species density.

Recording in Farnham Park has been going on for a number of years and I use the same route, to cover the lower eastern 1km square of the Park. The first transect starts at Upper South View entrance by the stile and proceeds along the path to the Osborne Road entrance to Bells Piece. The second transect covers White Bottom, across the football pitches and terminates at the Avenue.

The reports are all available on the BBS web site, which identifies birds under threat, such as the Turtle Dove, which has suffered a 93% decline between 1994 and 2014.

41 species of birds have been recorded on the Park transect square are as follows: Canada Goose; Woodpigeon; Collared Dove; Feral Pigeon; Green Woodpecker; Great Spotted Woodpecker; Magpie; Jay; Jackdaw; Crow; Blue tit; Great tit; Long-tailed tit; Chiffchaff; Wren; Starling; Blackbird; Song Thrush; Robin; Dunnock; House Sparrow; Goldfinch; Pheasant; Blackcap; Meadow Pipit; Black-headed Gull; Greenfinch; Rook; Coal tit; Chaffinch; Swallow; Whitethroat; Stock Dove; Herring gull; Mallard; Garden Warbler; Nuthatch; Spotted Flycatcher; Swift; Willow warbler; Buzzard.

The local BBS organiser for Surrey is Penny Williams, who can be contacted via the BBS web site and she would be delighted to hear from any prospective volunteers to cover other sites.

BBS reports are sponsored by the BTO ([www.bto.org/bbs](http://www.bto.org/bbs)), JNCC ([www.jncc.defra.gov.uk](http://www.jncc.defra.gov.uk)) and RSPB ([www.rspb.org.uk](http://www.rspb.org.uk))

Helen Wilson

## **ORCHIDS IN THE PARK**

This has been a very good year for orchids in the Park.



There was a group of about fifteen Common Spotted Orchids (*Dactylorhiza fuchsia*) in the grassland close to Friends' Pond and a further single one (which was probably the best specimen) close to the path, near the pylon, leading to Shady Nook. Sadly, someone "picked" this one! Hopefully it was a child who took it home for his mum!

Just below the oak which recently lost a major branch, in the grassland running towards the brook, there was a Southern Marsh Orchid (*Dactylorhiza praetermissa*), and there was another one amongst the Common Spotted near Friends' Pond.

*Common Spotted Orchid*

*Southern Marsh Orchid*



Several Pyramidal Orchids (*Ancampsis pyramidalis*) were to be found on the Southern Slopes, not far from the adventure playground.

Broad Leaved Helleborines (*Epipactis helleborine*) could be found on the damp heavy soils, and close to the brook, near Yoyo and Aubrey's Pond. They are not easy to find but I found nearly a dozen.

*Pyramidal Orchid*

*Broad-leaved Helleborine*

Who knows - there may be more varieties waiting to be found!

David Havenhand



## MOTH REPORT 2016

Until the end of August, the total number of species seen was 242, as opposed to 241 last year. The year commenced very slowly with recording not starting until late March, due to adverse weather conditions. Therefore, many early species were not recorded. Some species were missing this year, but others have reappeared after some years. The summer months were normal with number of species seen similar to last year, although numbers of moths within species were much lower.

Some of the more interesting species seen in the Park are the Footman moths, the following of which were seen.

- Rosy Footman
- Common Footman
- Scarce Footman
- Dingy Footman
- Buff Footman
- Red Necked Footman



*Red Necked Footman*

The Footman moths all feed on lichen and algae growing on trees and in dense vegetation or on the ground. Pupation occurs in a cocoon in a crevice, under bark or on the ground. Of course all this habitat occurs prolifically in the Park.



One of the rather spectacular species occurring this year in the late summer is the Red Underwing, whose caterpillars feed on poplar and willow. It is a very large moth with a wingspan of 30-40 millimetres. There have been intermittent recordings of this moth for many years.

### *Red Underwing*

A number of new species were recorded in the Park this year. They are

- Red Necked Footman, which feeds on algae on Conifers
- Dingy Shell, which feeds on Alder
- White Lined Snout, which is nationally scarce
- Small Rufus, which feeds on rushes
- Brown Scallop, which feeds on Buckthorn
- The Vestal, which is an immigrant
- The Gem, which is an immigrant
- Clifden Nonpareil, which is an immigrant but may be breeding here.

The Gem Moth and Vestal Moth originate from Southern Europe and North Africa and are breeding here, but up until now and as far as is known are unable to overwinter here. This is happening due to climate change and if winters become less cold and summer temperatures become warmer then insect populations including moths and butterflies will be affected more and more with some species increasing and some declining.

However, and to conclude, the Clifden Nonpareil was the most spectacular moth taken this year on August 27th. It is a transitory resident. It has a wingspan of 41-48 millimetres and originates in Northern Europe, Eastern Europe and Siberia. However the one recorded at the moth trap was unblemished and fresh looking, as if it had recently emerged in the Park.



*Clifden Nonpareil*

The total number of species I have recorded at the moth trap over the past 30 years is now 423.

## **BUTTERFLY TRANSECT 2016**

They say that good things come to those who wait and in week 24 of this year's 26 weeks of counting I was rewarded with seeing my first Small Copper in 3 years. This is significant because this species is in serious decline and 2015 was its worst year nationally in 40 years so it was lovely to see it on the Park.

After a mild early spring a chilly spell kept butterfly numbers down with only 72 recorded in the first 3 months (April to June) which was below average. Warming weather and a mini heatwave saw the count for July rocket to 401 (over 70% of the 6-month total and up 46% on the 9-year average for the month). The peak was 159 on the 18th which was also the best week in 3 out of the previous 4 years.

Overall this year's count was very similar to 2015 (an estimated 560 with 2 weeks to go against 576 last year) with the peak in July this year compensating for the below average counts earlier and later. The hay meadows which cover a large part of the transect were cut in the second week in August resulting in the usual drop in counts. The hot late August and early September had little effect as most of the adult butterflies had already completed their life cycles.

The best performer against last year was again the Marbled White up from 49 to 65 - its best showing in the records since 2003. As usual the most common species was the Meadow Brown (over 40 % of the total) and the butterfly seen in the greatest number of weekly counts was the Speckled Wood (15 out of 24 counts so far).

Unfortunately, there were significant drops in the counts of Small Tortoiseshell, Gatekeeper and Small Heath although the latter was more abundant in other parts of the Park not covered by the defined transect.

Overall 2016 was slightly above the 9-year average of 536 thanks to the peak in July.



The photos are of one of my favourite butterflies - the beautiful Red Admiral in a "now you see me, now you (almost) don't" teaser.



Richard Burgess.

## **RANGER'S REPORT AUTUMN 2016**

Trees form a very important part of the Park's landscape. The double line of lime and beech that stretch for over a kilometre across the southern slopes is the principal historic landscape feature and defines the Park to many. Originally an ancient elm avenue planted in the late 17th century by Bishop Morley, it formed a majestic processional ride along which royalty approached the castle. Age and the ravages of disease mean none of the original trees remain, though it was replanted in the early 20th century and subsequent decades with a mixture of beech and lime species.

Although many of the trees are not great individual specimens, the overall effect is greater than the sum of its parts and it remains a striking landscape feature. Sunlight and breeze filtering through the foliage in summer, it evokes a peaceful attitude of mind, especially when accompanied by birdsong. Add to that the verdant greens of spring and deep russet and ochre of autumn, and it is probably the most frequently visited and photographed part of the Park.

The Avenue forms part of Waverley's formal tree inspection regime in the Park and is inspected every four years unless specific trees require a shorter re-inspection. Much of the prescribed works involve limb reduction to reduce the likelihood of breakout from tight forks and squirrel damage. Some trees are in such poor condition that felling and replanting has been necessary. In most cases, trees are replaced with small leaved lime which is an attractive avenue tree with an upright, slender habit and the most appropriate species for re-stocking. Pruning takes place each year on some of the lowest branches to maintain sightlines and provide clearance for vehicles and machinery. The Park Volunteers also clear basal frith from the limes on an annual basis, to aid inspections and maintain the aesthetic.

Many replacement trees planted along the Avenue in the 1970's and 80's were Caucasian lime, which have a short, spreading habit with many weak branch unions, and do not form good avenue trees. There is a need to pro-actively manage the whole population of the Avenue through a felling and replanting programme to both reduce future risks, and costs arising from regular, ongoing surgery works. If work is not started now, the costs from future limb failure will be significantly higher, as the trees will be larger, pose greater risks and be more labour-intensive to work on. The aesthetic of the Avenue is obviously very important, and a long term approach to felling and replanting, probably over fifty years, is needed to maintain a relatively even age of tree stock and leave a lasting legacy for many generations to come. All the trees have been surveyed and scored depending on their health and structure and about thirty of those in most need of replacement will be felled and replanted in the next five years, starting this winter.

Robin Crowther

