

Friends of Farnham Park

Newsletter Autumn 2017

Registered Charity No. 285383

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

 Friends of Farnham Park



A SUCCESSFUL SUMMER

Another six months, another newsletter, where has all the time gone?! We have had a busy season in the Park, and we hope that you have been out and about enjoying it too. The volunteer work parties go from strength to strength, with several new people joining us.

Our Friends' events this year have also been extremely well-attended. In April, June Chatfield challenged our brains with her explanations of the geology of the Park and how it affects the landscape and wildlife, then in May, Roy Champion gave a very interesting talk on the conservation activities at Rowhills – it was very interesting to hear and compare with what we do in the Park.

Our annual barbecue in July was attended by nearly 70 people – it was great to see you all, and we were able to show off the latest Green Flag, awarded to the Park for the fifth year running.



A new record was set for our 'Fistful of Feathers' event in September, when around 100 people joined Simon Wilson for his fascinating display and anecdotes around owls, hawks and falcons. We could have listened all night (and nearly did 😊)



Our Chairman and a friend

Despite the dodgy weather, 14 people, all new to the Park joined committee members for the annual Heritage walk in September – we hope they will come back and enjoy the places they have discovered.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Friends of Farnham Park
Annual General Meeting
will be held on
Tuesday 14th November 2017 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 which you'd like displayed.

Martin Clegg, Secretary, 01252 821977

BRENDA BROOMHEAD

On 18th August, we lost a true Friend of the Park, when Brenda Broomhead lost her valiant fight against cancer.

Brenda was a real Farnham girl. She was born in Wrecclesham and attended Farnham Girls' Grammar School. After leaving school, she trained as a dental nurse, but her real love was tennis - she was a dynamic left-hander!

She married in 1955 to a serving soldier and spent many years living in overseas postings, but coming back to Farnham as often as possible. She had two children - Lynn and John. Her second marriage was to Len Broomhead in the mid '80s. They lived for a while on the south coast, moving back to Farnham in the late '80s.



Brenda almost immediately became involved with the Park. She joined the Friends and was soon appointed Voluntary Ranger by Stewart Dakers, a position which she held until 2009, having assisted four other Rangers during that time - Mike Coates, David Tapp and Ron Hills, who all spent most of their time at their Frensham base, a situation which changed after the arrival of Robin Crowther. She was recognised in 2010 for her outstanding service to Farnham and was presented with a certificate from Mayor Lucinda Fleming. During all this time and up to a couple of years ago, she was a regular and enthusiastic member of the Friends' Volunteers work party.



Brenda was a dog lover. During her time in Farnham, she had Misty and then Dixie - both rescue dogs. When Misty died suddenly and tragically, she was devastated. As a thank you for her help to him, Ron Hills had a seat made from the wood of a Cedar which had toppled in the Park some time before. He had it suitably inscribed "Misty's View". It is situated just below Phoebe's Copse and provides a splendid view over the Park looking towards Hale and eastwards to the Hogs Back - a place where Brenda and Misty often sat.

Ron Hills said "We were a great team when I was Park Ranger. Always a great ambassador and well thought of by everyone but especially their dogs"



We all remember Brenda with affection and thanks. We offer our sincere condolences to her partner Roger and to her family.

David Havenhand

MOTH REPORT 2017

The year was mixed with a very good start, from the early warm weather and mild winter. Two hundred species were recorded at the trap by June 26th – the earliest this number has been achieved since I began recording at Hampton Road. The weather then settled into its more routine pattern and up to October numbers were 280 vs. 274 last year, only exceeded in 2014, when 295 species were recorded. There were more immigrants including the Clifden Nonpareil and the Crescent:



Clifden Nonpareil



Crescent

The former was recorded once last year and twice this year, which may indicate the possibility of breeding in the area, although this is not certain.

The following species were recorded for the first time at the trap.

- Spruce Carpet
- Cream Wave
- Crescent
- Oak and Sallow Nycteoline
- Small purple Barred
- Small Yellow Underwing

One of the species with more recordings this year was the Great Prominent, whose caterpillars feeds on mature oaks.

Two species reappearing this year after being absent for the past few years were the Golden Plusia and the Varied Coronet.

One of the more interesting observations was the presence in and at the moth trap of the European Hornet (*Vespa crabro*) - every night from the end of July until the middle of October. They are



spectacular and their appearance at the moth trap could be caused by either the presence of a nearby nest or increasing numbers, due to environmental factors and climate change. I discovered the main reason for them entering the trap is that they were attracted by the fluttering of the moths around and inside the trap and seem to prefer to bite off the heads of the larger moths and leave the body and wings behind, maybe for a later feast. Hornets can occasionally predate honey bees, but should not be

confused with the Asiatic Hornet (*Vespa velutina*) which is now appearing occasionally in the UK. This is far more vicious and must be notified to the relevant authorities if seen because it is a serious predator of honey bees.



David Helliwell

BUTTERFLY REPORT 2017

At last some good news on the butterfly front! After a couple of average years and a poor start to 2017 things really turned around from the middle of June with an improvement in the weather and continued until the annual hay cut in late August. Counts on the designated transect walk rocketed nearly three-fold against the 10-year average and continued with significant increases in July and August. Overall figures up to early September increased by a very encouraging 63% against the average (863 vs. 528).

As usual the most prolific was the Meadow Brown - the UK's commonest species - which reached a new peak of just over 500 representing 60% of the total with other grassland species all doing well.

Last year I was happy to see a single Small Copper (photo) after a 3-year absence and this year I recorded an encouraging 8.



Also showing a significant increase was the Common Blue up from 4 to 28 with Small Skippers also doing well. There are actually two very similar species - Small and Essex - whose main distinguishing feature is the colour of the tips of their antennae (brown for Small and black for Essex). In the past they were usually counted together as Small/Essex due to the difficulty in distinguishing them in flight but this year I dusted off my trusty 50-year-old net and having caught a few can confirm that both species are on the park.



This year's highlight for me was seeing a species I had not seen before and which was previously unrecorded on the park. It was a Brown Argus - actually a member of the blue family. It takes the total number of species recorded on the park to 26.

Richard Burgess

RANGER'S REPORT Autumn 2017

Grazing fence replacement

As I write we are currently replacing over 1200m of stock fencing within our grazing area. Over the last few years, the condition of parts of the grazing fence line has been deteriorating and we have had a number of bovine escapees wanting to experience other more exotic parts of the park. Although exciting for the animal in question, it is not something we want to encourage. The old saying goes "good fencing, means good neighbours!"

Grazing with cattle is a key part of the management of Farnham Park, maintaining a landscape of scrub, open grown trees and grassland that has existed for centuries. Grazing also creates a variety of ecological niches from bare ground, short grass, rank grass and scrub for a variety of birds and insects. We will be using more rustic sweet chestnut posts which because of the quality of the heartwood, do not require any preservatives or chemicals and should last at least fifteen years.

We have cleared encroaching scrub from either side of the fence to get access for machinery which has also benefited certain selected young oaks, giving them space and light to grow out as well as up. Certain areas have become dominated by scrub and periodic cutting enables our cattle to venture into areas and maintain this historic landscape. The project started in September and will be finished by the end of November before it gets too wet hopefully.

New footbridges

The Nadder stream winds its way through the park and is crossed a number of times by informal and semi-formal paths. Water volume is high after rainfall, especially in winter which has eroded gullies and bridge foundations. Three footbridges have been identified as in need of replacement due to erosion of the footings and degradation of the main structure. They are simple footbridges consisting of sleepers on wooden foundations. The new structures will be very similar but have foundations of gabion baskets filled with stone to give a solid base and resist erosion. Work will start towards the end of March when ground conditions will have hopefully improved.

Entrance surface improvements

The main car park supports the bulk of the visitor entry to the Park and its two entrance gates experience considerable pedestrian and vehicular traffic on a daily basis. As a consequence, they have become compacted, rutted and look unsightly during the winter. Daily vehicle movements consist of 4x4 vehicles and small tractors while there is occasional use from tankers, fire engines, large farm machinery and articulated trucks. Over the winter, we will be installing a cellular ground protection and reinforcement matting in two of the main entrances to the park to create a strong, hard wearing surface enabling pedestrian and vehicle traffic. The cellular structure is filled with soil and sown with grass seed and will not be seen from a distance, maintaining an attractive entrance in keeping with the historic landscape.

Veteran trees

Waverley have been successful in gaining a £10 000 grant from SUEZ Environmental Trust (a landfill tax initiative) to undertake work to some of our more vulnerable veteran oak trees. Farnham Park's most treasured possessions are its many old oak trees, some of which are truly ancient, their trunks broad in girth and crowned with majestic boughs. These trees are remnants of the park's mediaeval landscape and are of great importance historically as well as supporting a huge range of specialist wildlife. Veteran trees can become 'over-mature', with large heavy limbs that are vulnerable to breaking off the tree as well as increasing the risk of the tree being uprooted by wind. Many examples of limb loss and wind-blown veteran oaks can be seen in this area.

Gradual crown reduction (reducing the length and weight of selected branches) by experienced arboriculturalists can help prolong the lifespan of over-mature trees, decreasing the chance of them splitting apart and encouraging new growth lower down the trunk (known as retrenchment). This work will give the trees the best possible chance of still being around in another four hundred years' time.

At the same time, we will take the opportunity to remove certain smaller trees and scrub surrounding the old oaks to increase light levels and give the best possible conditions for continued growth. Pruning work started in July with most of the project taking place over the winter.

Robin Crowther