

Friends of Farnham Park

Newsletter Autumn 2018

Registered Charity No. 285383

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

 Friends of Farnham Park



WHAT A SCORCHER

Looking back on the hot summer, it's hard to believe that I started the last newsletter with a picture of snow in March!

Once again, we've had an entertaining Friends' programme, kicked off by Noel Moss giving us the benefit of his research into the history of water in Farnham – both supply and disposal – which was very interesting and appealed particularly to the engineers in our audience.

Steve Langham followed in May, with a talk about reptiles and amphibians in the area. Later in the month, some of the Committee led a History and Heritage Walk as part of the Farnham Walking Festival. Dogged by rain and threatened with thunder, nevertheless around 20 people turned out, most of whom lived locally but knew very little about the Park.

Isobel Chamberlain again entertained us with a flower walk in June. The hot weather had accelerated a lot of the flowers, but Isobel never ceases to boggle us with her knowledge of all the different flowering grasses we get across the meadows in the Park.

Our BBQ in July was attended by around 60 people – lovely to see you all, and we held onto our run of good weather for this event.

Our Autumn programme was kicked off in September with a talk from David Standing about the restoration of the garden at Gilbert White's House in Selborne, interspersed with snippets from Gilbert White's insights into the wildlife he saw around him in the 19th century. Several of us bought interesting plant samples from the garden – we look forward to growing them on and comparing notes!

Libby Ralph

COMING UP THIS AUTUMN:

We have one more talk coming up in October, then our AGM in November.

Tuesday 16th October Introduction to Bats

by Chris Doubell. The speaker has been interested in bats for many years and was able to detect their bottom frequency noises in his own garden. He later lost this ability after working as a site engineer in a noisy environment. He is a member of both the Surrey Bat Group and the Hampshire Bat Group and has been for several years.

Note: all indoor talks take place at the Rowhill Centre (Cranmore Lane), 7pm refreshments for 7:30pm start. The Centre now has a hearing loop should anyone need it.

Events are free to FoFP members, £3 to non-members.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Friends of Farnham Park
Annual General Meeting
will be held on
Tuesday 13th November 2018 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 Ranger's Report and informal discussion. Nick would welcome your help with any photos of the Park over the past year
Nick.Macfarlane@waverley.gov.uk

Martin Clegg, Secretary, 01252 821977

BEFORE AND AFTER



Just a quick update on what we hope will be the finale of the ‘sewer saga’ earlier in the year. For those of you who expressed concerns regarding the regeneration of the area, we thought we’d show a comparison of the same view, heading into the Park eastwards from Shady Nook, from March and then September. Despite the hot dry summer which slowed things down a lot, the area has already greened up significantly – and for those of you with a botanistic streak, has thrown up some interesting native plants that we haven’t noticed before – worth a ramble if you’re that way inclined!

(Pictures David Havenhand)

A REMINDER OF THE HOME GUARD!

We had just got back to the car park after an afternoon planning winter work to be greeted by a policeman! Two young girls stopped off to play in the Park on their way from ‘back to school’ shopping, and were surprised to find what they realised must be a grenade! They sent a photo to their parents who then passed it on to the police. We helped the policeman locate them and the grenade, and additional police arrived to tape off the copse where they had found it just south of the Avenue. We then had to wait for an expert to come up from Portsmouth who was able to confirm that it was a deactivated practice grenade, probably a relic of the Home Guard in WWII.



What the girls found

It was believed to have been dug up by rabbits or possibly a badger, and others have been found in the past, both in the Park and in Upper Hale, so keep your eyes open!



The Farnham Home Guard in 1944.

The second World War saw a number of activities in the Park. The Ranger’s House was used as an Air Raid Precautions Centre, and also as a base for the Home Guard. A grassed area was disguised as a mock airfield, Pill boxes were built across the Park, and various obstacles were erected to prevent German aircraft or gliders from landing. The Home Guard were also responsible for manning the spigot mortar which pointed down towards South Street, the base of which can still be found in the nettles near the Bear Lane entrance.

Libby Ralph

NUTS ABOUT THE PARK

We have wing nuts on bicycles, nuts and bolts on the gates and pylons, and the nutters who vandalise and litter our Park, but more importantly, we have quite a large selection of naturally occurring nuts about us – and this year is a good year for them.

Undoubtedly, the most prolific are the acorns. We have five species of oak in the Park: the pedunculate or English Oak (*Quercus robur*); the sessile oak (*Quercus petraea*) also known as durmast; red oak (*Quercus rubra*) from North America; Turkey oak (*Quercus cerris*) and Holm Oak (*Quercus ilex*).

The acorns on both the English/pedunculate and sessile oaks are roughly the same size, but can be told apart because those on the English oak grow on stalks – or peduncles – whereas those on the sessile oak grow straight from the twigs (sessile means immobile). Both of these trees can be found throughout the Park. The Turkey oak's acorn is much longer than the others and is slightly pointed. Its cup is bristly. There are several Turkey oaks in the Park, including a very large one on the edge of the copse by Shady Nook.



Pedunculate oak



Sessile oak



Turkey oak

The red oak acorn is usually much darker in colour than the others, and is almost round, with a very wide, shallow cup. There is a big red oak on the edge of Phoebe's Copse. The Holm oak has an egg-shaped acorn, in a grey, hairy cup. There are a few of these trees in the eastern half of the Park. None of the acorns are edible for humans.



Red oak



Holm oak

Probably the next most prolific in the Park is the hazel (*Corylus avellana*). These brown nuts occur in the autumn enclosed in a leafy husk. Hazelnuts (or cobnuts) are edible as well as being much loved by squirrels. Hazel trees and bushes can be found throughout the Park, but close by the Nutshell Lane entrance there is a large grove, which is coppiced annually to provide stakes and binders for hedgelaying.



Hazel



Beech

The beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) produces nuts (or mast) which are dark brown and are protected by a rough coat. Most of the beeches are along the Avenue, but there are a few in the woodlands and a beautiful copper beech (*F.s. 'purpurea'*) close to the main path at the western end of White Bottom. Beech mast are edible, a tiny alternative to hazelnuts.

Everyone knows what a horse chestnut looks like – don't they? The well-known conker is hard, glossy brown, almost round and is enclosed in a hard prickly case. It is inedible. In the Park the best display of

horse chestnut trees is west of White Bottom, where there is a row of alternating white (*Aesculus hippocastanum*) and red (*Aesculus x carnea*) flowering trees bordering the path. There are a few sweet chestnut (*Castanea sativa*) in the north and east of the Park, and none of them produce many nuts. The cases of the sweet nuts are spiny, and the nuts themselves shiny dark brown, not as hard as conkers, and usually flat on one side and pointed at one end. They are edible if you can find them!



'Conkers'



Sweet chestnuts

What about walnuts? We have two black walnuts (*Juglans nigra*) planted in White Bottom, but they are young trees – a long way short of producing nuts.



And finally, there is pignut! This plant, *Conopodium majus*, is a member of the carrot family, and the 'nut' is in fact the edible tuber, resembling a sweet chestnut and is much loved by pigs, hence its name. It is found in the woodlands in the Park, especially near the Nadder Stream, and although not rare, it can be quite scarce.

Pignut, not a nut, but an edible tuber

Happy nut hunting!

David Havenhand

RANGER ROUND UP SUMMER 2018

My first summer at Farnham was a busy one. From the discovery of the WW2 Home Guard dummy hand grenade to the unexpectedly hot and dry summer that led to a rather sorry-looking park for some time, requiring watering of the memorial trees and an early hay cut to reduce the risk of wild fires. The much anticipated downpours thankfully returned our park to a state much more favoured by all - especially the cattle. Between site familiarisation and carrying out the day-to-day jobs the site entails I have been working on the next management plan for the period 2019-2025. This has proven valuable in my understanding of the park and increased my appreciation for all that it is and what it does for so many.

The weekly Farnham Park volunteers have greatly assisted in much valuable work across the site including the systematic pulling of the invasive non-native plant Himalayan Balsam which has colonised large swathes of the park. Whilst we never expect to completely eradicate it, the volunteers have made considerable progress this year in isolating it to less, smaller patches which will be hit hard over the next few years. The ultimate goal is to achieve minimal regrowth each year where we can spend fewer hours pulling and more hours spent elsewhere in the park. Other achievements this year have been the installation of 2 footbridges and path vegetation clearance. The volunteers' efforts are certainly valued by all, not least by myself for whom they have shown great support as I settle into my role. As Autumn begins to arrive our focus will turn to habitat management works including scrub 'bashing' and hedge laying. The Volunteer programme is available up to March 2019 with many exciting projects and tasks to look forward to.



There are a number of planned works taking place across the site between September and October including tractor-mounted flailing operations and fencing. Signage will be erected prior to these operations.

Nick Macfarlane

