

Friends of Farnham Park

Newsletter Spring 2018

Registered Charity No. 285383

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

 Friends of Farnham Park



SPRING HAS SPRUNG (!?)



As I write, spring has sprung, un-sprung, sprung again and then disappeared under the duvet! I think we've had every possible sort of weather during March. With April here, surely things will improve ...? We could certainly do with drying out the Park a bit.

It's been an eventful winter in the Park, with the biggest disruption being the failure of the main sewer which runs under the Park from Hampton Road/Shady Nook. See David Havenhand's article on the history and the repair. Also, this winter we have said goodbye to Robin, who had been ranger here for nine years. He has moved to Northern Ireland for family reasons. We are pleased to announce that Waverley have appointed a new full-time ranger for the Park, Nick Macfarlane, who is just awaiting clearance for a start date.

Finally, a new General Data Protection Regulation comes into force in May, which affects every organization, however small, that holds any data, even just names and addresses. With this newsletter we have included a statement of how the Friends Committee complies with this regulation. It should be as straightforward as we can make it, but if you have any questions or concerns, please raise them with us.

FoFP SPRING/SUMMER EVENTS 2018

Tuesday 17th April: From Wells to Mains

The story of Farnham's water supply and its disposal by Noel Moss (The Bourne Conservation Group)

Tuesday 15th May: The Reptiles and Amphibians of Farnham (and Surrey)

by Steve Langham (The Surrey Amphibian and Reptile Group)

Thursday 31st May: 2pm Farnham Park Walk

History and Heritage Walk (part of the Farnham Walking Festival – NB – *this walk can only be booked through the Walking Festival*)

Tuesday 12th June 5.30pm: Flower Walk in Farnham Park by Isobel Chamberlain of Surrey Wildlife Trust. Meet at the Ranger's House Car Park, Folly Hill.

Thursday, 26th July 7.00pm: FoFP Barbecue

As this event has become very popular we will have to put a limit on places this year – the committee and chefs can't cope! Members will be contacted nearer the time and RSVP will be required.

Weekend 15th/16th Sept. (tbc) Heritage Walk

Part of the Heritage Open Day events, we will be conducting a History and Heritage Walk, led jointly with David Graham.

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. Walks at Park Lodge/main car park unless stated.

THE SEWER SAGA

Have we reached the end of the tunnel – both physically and metaphorically? I refer to the sewage problems which have beset the Park intermittently for the best part of 20 or more years.

Looking at cuttings taken from the Herald, the first report of a problem was in 2003, although we were aware of one before that. A manhole cover was spewing ‘nasties’ onto a path and into the Nadder in heavy rain, and in late summer tomatoes were growing below the manhole. Following this a short length of pipe was replaced by Thames Water from the bottom of the path below Hampton Road, to the junction with the main perimeter tarmac path.

All seemed OK until 2014, when it overflowed more seriously than ever after the heavy rains. A full page in the Herald was given over to concerns for drainage generally in the town, including our piece (and a picture of me!) – even Jeremy Hunt got involved. We got the Environment Agency involved, Thames Water put a camera down and cleared some tree roots that had damaged the pipe. Again, things seemed to improve, until ...

In mid-December the problem recurred, far worse than ever before - not one but three manholes were spewing. It was reported on 15th December, Thames Water arrived on site on the 18th, and stayed until the end of March. Publicity this time included not just the Herald, but BBC South and others. I walked the pipe with the reporter and a Thames Water representative. This time the problem was recognised as serious and immediate remedial action was set in hand. Within days, the offending sewer pipe was isolated, and tankers collected sewage at the bottom of Hampton Road and took it to another sewer near Upper Hale Road. Unfortunately for the residents of Hampton Road and Shady Nook, this had to go on day and night throughout Christmas to 5th January, until a temporary overground sewer was installed across the Park, routing to a manhole further along the pipe.



The temporary roadway



Replacing the pipe across the Park

Then the job of replacing the Victorian sewer began. A site office and machinery park were established at the end of Shady Nook. Then some trees and lots of brambles had to be cleared to make a temporary roadway into the Park. The clay ground was too soft for tracked vehicles, so membranes had to be put down and covered by hardcore to make a stable track. Because of the sensitive nature of the Park, all work had to be monitored by an ecologist, the archeologist, and Waverley’s tree officer.

Then the digging and replacement began. Originally, the intention was to replace about 80 metres between manholes 1 and 3. However, further examination showed damage beyond manhole 3, so a further 100 metres was replaced, taking in 4 more manholes. All of this has used an iron pipe system which is incredibly robust and long-lasting. This left about 50 metres of pipe from the edge of the Park to manhole 1, which ran directly under some veteran oaks. Thames Water were able to use an impressive ‘pipe bursting’ technique, where the new pipe is fed up the old, breaking it out as it goes, so that all sections are now higher capacity than before.



The pipe-bursting power hammer, going underground

The new pipeline was connected around 10th March, and the temporary sewer removed on 17th March. So, we're nearly back to normal. The temporary roadway has been removed, and deadwood strewn along its length to discourage use as a new track, so that brambles can re-generate, and trees be replanted later in the year. Heavy machinery, pipes, old tree roots and site office were removed in the last week of March, the pedestrian entrance to the Park and the path is being re-established, Thames Water still have to make good the tarmac at the end of Shady Nook.

It's been a long job, but speaking personally, I found the Thames Water people and contractors – Site Engineer, Customer Liaison Officer, tanker drivers and workers – all very helpful and cooperative. Theirs is a lousy job which they did with fortitude and no little humour! Thanks, and well done!

As I said, have we reached the end of the tunnel? – yes, I believe we have!

David Havenhand

KESTRELS

Many of you may know that we have kestrel boxes in the Park, one in the pines near the Ranger's House, which has successfully reared young on several occasions and one in an oak next to the cricket pitch, which is newer, but kestrels were seen eyeing it up as early as February, so we might be lucky with two broods this year.

They will lay 4-6 eggs in late April or early May, which hatch after about a month. The male will provide the female and chicks with food throughout nesting, until the young fledge around July. He may hunt over an area 1 to 10km².

Voles are their most important food – occasionally spotted in the Park, but we must have a healthy population, as kestrels need to eat 4-8 per day. They also take wood mice, shrews, small birds, insects and earthworms. They can locate their prey at remarkable distances - a beetle up to 50m away! They have a habit of catching several voles in succession and caching some for later. The stored food is usually eaten the same day just before dusk. This reduces the risk that the bird would have to go to roost on an empty stomach. Like other raptors, they produce pellets, which can sometimes be found near a feeding post. Look out for these beautiful birds as you pass near the boxes this summer!



Kestrel © Mary Braddock

Libby Ralph

RANGER NEWS - GOODBYE ...

In February we said goodbye to Robin Crowther, who had been ranger in the Park since 2009. The Friends and volunteers presented Robin with an antique bill hook, so that he can keep up his hedge-laying in Northern Ireland, and some lovely pictures of the Park and the Castle.



Robin and the volunteers on his final task – completing the latest stretch of the Queen Mother's Hedge

Here are Robin's farewell words:

"After nine wonderful years at Farnham Park it was time to hang up my bow saw and move onto pastures new. My wife is originally from County Down and having spent 25 years teaching in England she felt the call home. As the volunteers will know, we spent most of our holidays in Northern Ireland in the past few years and as I like Guinness, we decided to move back as a family early this year. I have a job with another Local Authority in County Antrim managing a number of country parks over here - different landscape, similar issues!

It's been a challenging first month with a lot to take in and a bit of a culture shock to be honest, not least the language - at least I'm catching four in every five words now! One of my first jobs is to deliver some leaflets and information panels for Ecos Nature Park, exactly as I did at Farnham Park nine years ago.

I thoroughly enjoyed my time in Farnham and have very fond memories of the landscape and its people. Not least the volunteers whose bonhomie on a Wednesday morning was the highlight of the week. One of my last jobs at Farnham was to monitor the sewage leak in the Park and I left without it being resolved - nothing like leaving you all in the muck. I hope it's been sorted satisfactorily now and things getting back to normal. I miss the trees in Surrey too, moving from one of the most heavily wooded areas of the UK to Northern Ireland where tree cover is 3%, though it makes up for it in stunning coastal scenery.

Thanks to the Friends and Volunteers for a lovely send off at the cafe and generous gifts, they are taking pride of place in my new house. I look forward to receiving my twice-yearly newsletter from the Friends of Farnham Park and keeping up to date with all the latest from this special corner of Surrey...I miss that homemade cake on a Wednesday....."

Carnfunnock Country Park, one of Robin's new sites



Robin Crowther

... AND HELLO!

An introduction to Nick who will become our new ranger soon (starting date yet tbd). We look forward to working with him (and hopefully teaching him to smile for the camera – he said he was no good at selfies!)



"My name is Nicholas Macfarlane and I've been a ranger for over 5 years. I studied at Merrist Wood College where I obtained an Extended Diploma in Countryside Management followed by further study at University of the West of England for my BSc Conservation & Countryside Management. Prior to this I worked as an engineer in Guildford at Dennis' where I worked on the development of bus and fire chassis.

My first work experience as a ranger came from completing 3 summers at Frensham Great Pond with Waverley whilst I was studying. My first full-time job was for Essex Wildlife Trust at a site called Gunners Park SSSI before moving onto my most recent position with Hart District Council as the ranger responsible for Fleet Pond and volunteer coordination.

Through my work history I have gained experience in the management of a variety of habitats including wetland, parkland, heathland and woodland. I also have a great deal of experience restoring historic structures and I have led several projects including the restoration of Napoleonic coastal defences in

Essex and the restoration of a Second World War pillbox in Hartley Wintney.

I have personal interest in trees, bats, history and gardening for wildlife. I have a phobia of moths which I try not to let get in the way of my interest in bats.

I am very much looking forward to joining the team and getting involved with Farnham Park".

Nick Macfarlane