

# Friends of Farnham Park

Newsletter Spring 2019

Registered Charity No. 285383

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

 Friends of Farnham Park



## A NEW SEAT FOR SPRING!



*The new Cross Bench (Roger Griffith)*

Regular users of Farnham Park have been delighted to find a new 'cross bench' installed near the highest point of the Park, after the old one, already a bit dilapidated, was destroyed by kids having a barbeque in July 2018.

In October 2017, our Secretary, Martin Clegg, received a letter from a solicitor in Henfield, West Sussex, advising that an early member of the Friends – Vivien John, had passed away and had left a very generous legacy to the Friends in her will. We know little about Miss John – where she lived locally, her involvement with the Park or when she left for Sussex – but she may have been a founding member of the Friends in the 1980s. The Treasurer advises that she made regular donations up to a few years ago. What has this to do with the cross bench? – well...

The last cross bench was installed about 20 or so years ago. It replaced a bench of unknown date which had a 'star of David' configuration. During the last few years it had become very shabby and

unstable, largely due to vandalism. The final straw was when it was set alight and one of its 'arms' pulled off.

The Friends obtained quotations for a replacement ranging from about £1,000 to £2,500, at the time beyond our reach. In the meantime, we thought it would be a nice idea to ask our friends at Rowhills Nature Reserve if they could help, knowing they had previously sourced their own timber.

Lo and behold, the setting fire of the bench almost coincided with the receipt of Miss John's legacy, so Rowhills were contacted and Roy Champion, their chairman at the time, agreed to provide the wood for the bench. In fact, he went far beyond this in the design and construction of the new bench.

The Park volunteers installed the bench on Wednesday 6th March, in very wet and windy conditions. The morning started badly when the Ranger's truck carrying the timber got stuck in the mud just off Folly Hill. The eight legs and four planks for the bench had to be manhandled up to the site – and they were very heavy! Roy had done a great job – each leg was marked and drilled to fit a matched socket on each plank, and they fitted perfectly! The hardest part was digging the eight holes, at just the right depth and width to take the legs. The intermittent rain made the Farnham Park clay very sticky and very heavy, and a lot of flints were encountered, but we got there eventually. After about four and a half hours of sweat and strain the job was done – I think to everyone's satisfaction.

The new bench is engraved with 'In memory of Vivien John – Friend of the Park'. Much of her legacy will pay for it. Thank you, Vivien John, Roy Champion and the volunteers who installed it. It is a welcome addition to the Park.

*David Havenhand*

## **DATES FOR YOUR DIARY:**

**Tuesday 2nd April 5pm** at Ranger's (Main) Car Park WW2 Defences Walk, led by Chris Shephard

Chris is a local historian and editor of Peeps into the Past in the Herald for over 30 years. He also started the Farnham Walking Festival in 2017 and led the defence line walks in this year's event. The walk will be a circuit from the car park all the way up the Park and out onto Folly Hill to the top, and back down through Old Park to the town. It's about 4.5 miles and 2.5 hours, but can be truncated if we run out of time, light or stamina!

**Tuesday 30th April 7pm for 7.30pm Farnham Park Trees: Past, Present, and Future** at Rowhills Field Centre (Cranmore Lane), given by Ron Hills.

Ron is a former Ranger of Farnham Park and his talk will look at the history of trees in Farnham Park based on his 2006 MSc dissertation. Ron currently teaches a Countryside Management Course at Merrist Wood, Guildford. He will also examine the challenges of managing a tree population in the 21st century.

**Tuesday 21st May 5.30pm Flower Walk** (Nutshell Lane entrance of the park) led by Isobel Girvan (Surrey Wildlife Trust).

**Thursday 25th July 7pm Friends Barbeque** (Farnham Cricket Club) Let's hope for good weather!

## **ACCESS THROUGH THE PARK (and TOWN) ANCIENT & MODERN**

With parks being under continual threat throughout the UK it is interesting to review what might have happened to Farnham Park if proposed developments had taken place some ninety years ago.

The first trackway recorded to pass through the Park is Harrow Way, a bronze/iron age ancient trackway which ran from Seaton in Devon to Dover. The route is dated using archaeological finds and is believed to follow the existing Park avenue, and cross the road at the Six Bells, continuing past Badshot Lea where a Long Barrow burial mound was sited (destroyed during quarrying in the 1930s). A sarsen stone near the Shepherd & Flock roundabout probably identified a marshy crossing area. The eastern section from Farnham to Dover became known later as the Pilgrims' Way.

Britain's oldest road map is the Gough Map dated 1360. Pilgrimages were banned in 1538 and once a route ceases to be walked old pathways become overgrown and forgotten. The Gough Map shows a lost pilgrimage route from Southampton to Canterbury, but does not show the Winchester to Canterbury or Southwark to Canterbury routes which were in use at least 150 years before pilgrimages were made illegal. There is no simple path which is the ancient Pilgrims' Way but there are several routes which the traveller might have used to Canterbury. European pilgrims landed at Southampton or Portsmouth to make their way to Winchester and Canterbury with Farnham being an aggregation point for travellers. The title Supposed Pilgrim's Way first appeared on a 19th century Ordnance Survey map by O.S. employee Edward Renouard James. It is assumed that he put the name on the map because it was popular usage by those living near the track. Later O.S. maps omitted the description "Supposed".

From pilgrims to motor vehicles: a suggestion to divert traffic from the town through the Park was made in 1925. In 1930 the town planners produced a report for the merits of a bypass, based on two schemes: one through the Park (Northern route) and a Southern route which the Council preferred and which ran from Coxbridge to the Albion passing through Red Lion Lane, Bridge Square and Darvills Lane.

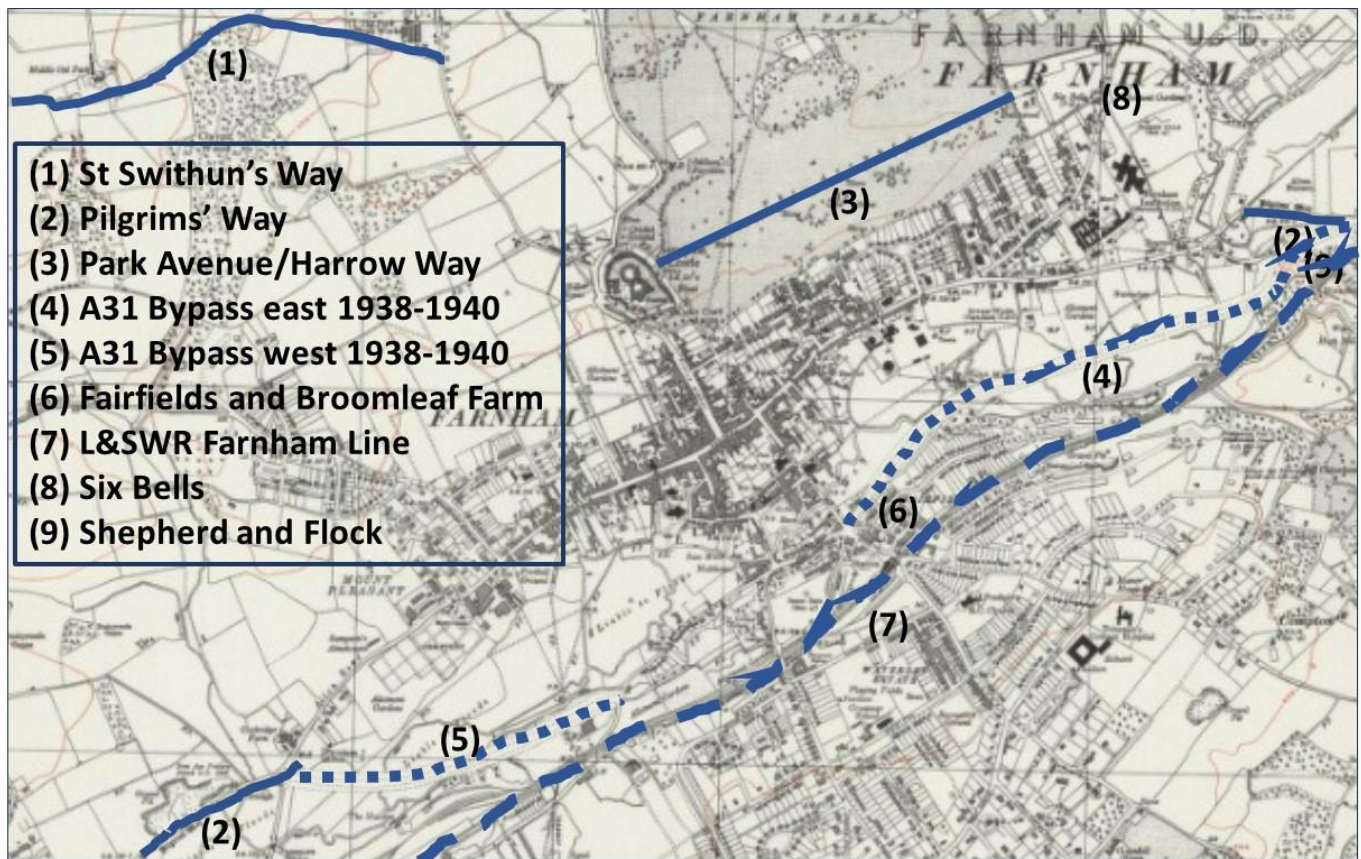
In 1932 County planners and Government Transport Ministry Engineers became involved and questioned why no northern route had been put forward by the Council. Two alternative northern schemes, both having the road through Farnham Park were then submitted. Route 1 parallel with the southern boundary and Route 2 running through the park 400 feet north of and parallel with the avenue. The latter was favoured because of fewer demolitions and remoteness from the town. Later the locals had their say and the people wanted the northern route. Suggestion that the road might destroy the amenities of the park was neutralised by the unspoiled Windsor and Richmond Parks through which roads had been made, and the road would attract visitors to the Park. Apart from cricket and golf the park had failed to attract the general public in any numbers. It needed something like a road to open up the potential building land north west of Farnham.

In addition the southern route would not bypass the town, would be a relief road rather than a bypass. It would cut across busy thoroughfare used by local people between main shopping area and expanding



residential localities in the south. In addition there was railway level crossing causing traffic chaos down Station Hill. A response to this was that the level crossing could be eliminated with the railway's co-operation. The L&S.W.R had proposed a plan in 1896 to close the level crossing for good and make a road through the Fairfield and bridge over the railway to emerge at Broomleaf Farm. People of Farnham rejected the proposal and again in 1909. In 1937 an Inquiry was finally held when the southern route was selected by the Council. A northern route would mean a gradient of 1 in 20, the planned southern route would interfere as little as possible with Farnham's amenities and the Council was averse to a road being taken through a fine park. The bypass was in full swing in 1938 and half the road was ready for use in December 1940 (east and west sections). Middle section traffic still had to thread its way through Red Lion Lane, Bridge Square and Abbey Street. The bypass was finally completed in the 1960s.

In the 1980s a rumour concerning the possibility of a Bypass through the Park initiated the forming of The Friends of Farnham Park in order to deter any development taking place in the Park. Consequently the Park is still free of traffic and other developments but the Town has a notorious black spot at Hickleys Corner along with regular traffic disruptions at the railway station level crossing.



Glossary:-

Harrow Way: another name for "Old Way". The name may derive from herewag, a military road or hearwag, the road to the shrine (perhaps Stonehenge). It is possibly associated with ancient tin trading.

Sarsen Stone: Neolithic monolith. Dense hard rock

The Gough Map: created in 14th century owned by Richard Gough 1735-1809

*(Neil Taylor)*

## **RANGER ROUND UP**

My first winter in Farnham Park was a busy one and it's only seems like yesterday that the winter season started. The season kicked off with some good old 'scrub bashing' and several 'breaks' in the scrub were created as wildlife corridors to allow free-movement through the park for invertebrates and well as to allow botanical species to colonise. Whilst these look a little bare at the moment, they will soon green up.

December saw the volunteers carry out our annual hazel coppice cut to produce stakes and binders for January's hedge lay. We were hedge laying for all of January and part of February. This season's section was a particularly difficult one as it was so thick and overgrown. The volunteers did a remarkable job and

with grit and determination, and several very large fires, the section was completed.

Other jobs around the park have included the clearing of the dry ditch at the castle. The volunteers worked hard at clearing a significant section, although I should hardly be surprised by their determination. So impressed and inspired was the Castle management that they have systematically continued the clearance and now we have a very nearly clear ditch! Elsewhere on site a 50ft section of hedgerow was planted at the Shady Nook Boundary, funded by the Friends. It is hoped that this will be the start of a larger-scale project that will see the installation of several hundred feet of hedge planted across the park to increase biodiversity.



In addition to cutting down here and planting there, autumn was spent clearing the Nadder to avoid blockages and get sunlight to the stream. Surveys in the stream have shown significant improvement following the major pollution incidence of 2017 and continued management will go further in improving the habitat for freshwater invertebrates. As for terrestrial invertebrates, the volunteers built 2 insect hotels to encourage amongst other species, stag beetles. Whilst no formal stag beetle surveys have been carried out, by the very nature of the park and its veteran trees there is a very high chance they will already be present.

*Traditional division of volunteer labour!*

As the cold days draw to an end the spring/summer work schedule is coming together with many exciting projects planned.

*Nick Macfarlane*

## **BUTTERFLIES IN 2018**

As you may have noticed the weather in 2018 was a bit crazy! After a wet winter we had the 'Beast from the East' followed by a record breaking spell of hot weather in the summer which left the butterflies very confused. Counting does not begin until April so the earlier wet and cold did not really influence the results as April and May only account for about 3% of the annual total. June however was another matter with the count topping 200 for the second year in a row and well above average. July continued the trend with the hot and dry weather giving a count of over 400 and the two months together making up 85% of total for 2018.

Unfortunately the continuing hot and dry weather shortened the flowering season of many of the smaller flowering plants which together with the early cutting of the hay meadows ( Late July rather than late August ) to alleviate the threat of fires the count in August was down by a third on the average. Overall it was another very good year and well above average even if not quite as spectacular as 2017 ( 775 v 868 ).

On a species specific note the biggest increase year on year was shown



*Dark green fritillary*

by the Whites (as my Brassicas testify), the poorer showings came from the Skippers, Common Blue and the Small Tortoiseshell which seems to have disappeared again. The commonest species as usual was the Meadow Brown - that showed a decline of 18% from its peak in 2107 but still well above average.



*White-letter hairstreak*

The number of species of butterflies recorded on the park had another boost this year as I saw a single Dark Green Fritillary and also a Purple Hairstreak. Also seen ( unfortunately not by me ) was the White Letter Hairstreak whose larvae feed on Elm and their numbers were decimated as a result of Dutch Elm Disease so it is lovely to see them fighting back and taking our total for the park to 29 species.

*(Richard Burgess)*

