

# Friends of Farnham Park

Newsletter October 2008



Ron Hills

## FREE HOLIDAY

Be suspicious when someone offers you a free holiday, unless it's the Friends. As we seem to have more money than most of the banks put together (and rewarding the bankers' gambling with even more of our money may not be entirely wise!), the Committee are proposing a **Membership Fee Holiday** this year. Hence you won't find Judy's usual request slip with this Newsletter. We are proposing that all Memberships be automatically extended to November 2009, and prospective new Members can try us for free! Members that might violently oppose the motion are welcome to attend the AGM where it will be put to the vote, or just come along and thrust money at us. Donations will be welcome as always.



Harry Pepper

## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Another eventful English summer for the Friends started with the childrens' 'Go Wild In The Park' in April and another successful Tree Walk in May, both led by Ranger Ron Hills. The hugely enjoyable 'Chalking The Park' followed, organised by Jane Woodyer as part of "*Farnham Creates...a community arts festival*". (If any creative Members have ideas for integrating the Park into next years' arts/crafts festival, step forward now).

The Sunday Social event at Rowhills in July for FoFP Members found a goldmine in Roy Champion, the 'bat-man' and lead volunteer, who led a fascinating and engrossing tour of Rowhills nature reserve. It was a real joy to be able to learn coppicing techniques and woodland management from a proper old-fashioned (yet young) woodsman. Some may recall Roy from his help in hedge-laying in the Park, and he has offered to host another event for us, so watch this space!

August saw the departure of Ron Hills, Park Ranger for 12 years, to take up a lecturing post at Merrist Wood agricultural college. The many friends that turned up to his leaving party at the Cricket pavilion are a testament to the special personal touch he gave to the job. Our loss can only be a great gain to the education of future generations of Rangers, and we wish him well, even if it does feel like a limb has been sawn off. It's no surprise that Waverley are finding him difficult to replace. Following another good performance for the Farnham Park History Walk, a part of the popular Heritage Walk Season, we might just allow him a break to get some paid work done, but as we can now entice him with free Membership I somehow doubt he will be able to escape our company for long.

Our season ended in October and whilst the financial world collapsed, Friends enjoyed an altogether saner world at a well-attended illustrated 'Squirrel Talk' by Harry Pepper. A delightful and interesting presentation was followed by a lively questions session, without delving too deeply into how best to cook the grey variety. A local Forestry expert from Frith End, Harry is now retired from authoring papers for Forest Research on subjects from tree management to deer fencing, so hopefully we can persuade him to further enthral us with a deer talk in the future.

Thanks are extended to Helen and Judy for organising and co-ordinating the successful events calendar, Nick for publicity, Murray Nurse for another good season of Bird Walks, Brenda, David and the volunteer workparties for the vital role they play in maintaining the Park, and to all the Friends whose support we rely on.

- *Chairman*

**NOTICE OF AGM :** The FoFP Annual General Meeting will be held at **The Rowhills Centre, Cranmore Lane, on Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> November 2008.** *Tea & biscuits from 7pm for 7.30pm start.* Items on the agenda are the Membership Fee Holiday, Officer Reports and Election of the Committee. Waverley Countryside Manager Jane Bowden has kindly offered to step into Ron's boots for the evening to provide an update on the ongoing works and replacing the irreplaceable, etc., followed by an open questions session. All are welcome.

## PARK BUTTERFLY SURVEY 2008



Orange Tip



Common Blue



Comma



Marbled White



Gatekeeper

**Save trees! Please ask to receive future Newsletters by email**

As I continued week after week doing this year's survey, I became more and more convinced that if anything, it was an even worse year than 2007. Imagine my surprise, on totting up the figures, when I found that I had recorded more than last year – only 14 more, but more nevertheless – this year's figure of 439, against 425. Hopefully, this will signal a halt to the decline in numbers shown over the last few years.

I won't go into all the parameters of the transect – the route taken is as before – diagonally across the Park from Hampton Road to St. James Avenue – and the same time, temperature, etc. restrictions still apply. Despite what appeared to be a cold, wet summer, on 22 occasions, the temperature recorded was greater than 17 C (63 F) and sunny days totalled 18! What was noticeable, however, was the wind. I recorded a speed of 3 (leaves and twigs in motion) or over on 20 of the 26 walks!

The most prolific months for sightings were June (100), July (220) and August (73). April was almost butterfly-less, with only 5 sightings. The most seen in a week was 65 – twice in July.

As in previous years, the Meadow Brown at 154 sightings was the most prolific, recorded on 13 occasions, followed by Ringlet (66 / 7 weeks) and Speckled Wood (62 / 19 weeks). Compared to last year, the Marbled White numbers were drastically reduced (18 against 60) although the Small and Large Whites at a total of 55 were more numerous than last year's 32. Yet again, the Skippers showed a decline from 19 to 13. The Gatekeeper at 39 was slightly up on last year, but still way below earlier year's sightings. As for the Blues, Admirals, Peacock, Comma, etc., only a total of 16 were recorded – the same as last year. There were no sightings of Coppers, Painted Ladies or Clouded Yellows and only 5 Orange Tips and a Brimstone. Off the walk, I did spot a Silver Washed Fritillary – which unfortunately can't be counted!

The most productive area of the transect is the stretch behind The Ranger's House down to White Bottom, where 136 sightings were made in 20 weeks – the least was White Bottom itself with only 33 sightings in 12 weeks. All in all, a rather depressing picture again this year. Hopefully, 2009 will produce a REAL summer and an abundance of butterflies.

- David Havenhand

### CONTACTS: THE FoFP COMMITTEE

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Plus Helen Wilson (Events), Tim Seely, Dr. Rosemary Thomas.	

## WAVERLEY REPORT OCTOBER 08

It is an exciting time at Farnham Park, with the long awaited redevelopment of the 60s bungalow at the main car park entrance underway.

The 2004 Historic Landscape Survey and Restoration Management Plan pointed out that the main entrance did not do the park justice and recommended that Park Lodge be converted to provide a ranger office, store, accommodation and covered interpretation area. Funding from developers' contributions is helping us to achieve this transformation. The building will be clad with cedar to give it the appearance of a rustic park lodge and part of the accommodation will be converted into a new ranger's office.

Outside, a canopy of larch beams with a sedum (or green roof) will provide shelter for an outside interpretation area. We are currently working with a design company to produce illustrated information about the park's history, wildlife, features and recreational opportunities. We hope this will help people to understand the importance of Farnham Park and enjoy their visit to this special site. In addition, Pat Heather has written a history of Farnham Park which will complement this interpretation.

We are also taking the opportunity to incorporate new `green` features with in the building. All the heating will be provided by a log gasification boiler which will use seasoned wood direct from the park, plus solar panels for summer hot water. The building works are planned to be completed early 2009 and we are planning for a launch around Easter time.

- Jane Bowden, Countryside Manager at Waverley Borough Council, 01483 276952.