

Friends of Farnham Park

Newsletter Autumn 2013

Registered Charity No. 285383

Website: www.hairycalyx.com/fofp



WELCOME!

- to our Autumn Newsletter, and we hope you've enjoyed summer in the Park in a bit better weather this year! Robin and the Volunteers have been busy, as have our large herd of cows that grazed White Bottom and the upper grazing area until the dry weather reduced the supply of grass. As described in our Ranger's Report, work and community involvement has been recognized on a number of fronts, including winning a prestigious national Green Flag award, and getting special mention in Farnham's Gold Medal and Best Town/Best Large Town awards in Britain in Bloom.

In this edition of the Newsletter, David Helliwell reports on his moth surveys including the exciting find of a Bedstraw Hawk moth and Richard Burgess reports on the regular butterfly transect. Helen Wilson also reviews our programme of events, with our Fungi Foray still to come.

On the back page we feature a drawing by local artist, Eleanor Thomas. If anyone else knows of local artwork created in or about the Park, we'd love to hear about it.

Libby Ralph

FRIENDS IN FASHION!

Some of you may have seen our volunteers out and about in the Park in a range of shirts with our smart Friends logo, as beautifully modelled below.



These are available for Friends to buy through Committee member, Sally Hall. Choose from rugby shirts, polo shirts, sweat-shirts or fleeces with short or full length zip. Colours: Navy, Bottle-green and Burgundy. Sizes: S.M.L.XL.XXL. Prices £15 to £24 depending on garment. To order please contact Sally on 01252-726510.

NOTICE OF AGM

The Friends of Farnham Park
Annual General Meeting
will be held on
Tuesday 19th November 2013 at 7.30 pm
at Rowhill Field Centre,
Cranmore Lane, GU11 3BD

Refreshments from 7pm for a 7.30 start to the formalities. As well as appointing the Committee and the Officers for the next year and receiving reports from the current Chairman and Treasurer, the AGM will be informed of the detailed rules for the application of certain elements of the 2008 Constitution (membership and elections), which have been drawn up by the current Committee. These rules specify the membership year, clarify the conditions for the voting eligibility of the membership and set out the procedures for the annual elections of the Officers and other Trustees, including the requirement that nominations, duly proposed and seconded by eligible members, should be submitted in written form at least seven days before an AGM.

Copies of these detailed rules (as well as of the Constitution) and of other 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 or of your garden wildlife which you'd like displayed.

Martin Clegg, Secretary, 01252 821977

martin_clegg@btinternet.com

If you have E-mail and not yet provided us with your address please email Judy Sauter (judy.sauter@ntlworld.com) with your details so we can reduce printing and postal costs by sending newsletters and other information electronically.

DON'T MISS our final event of the year - the FUNGI FORAY around the Park with Dr. June Chatfield, on Saturday 19th October. Meet at the Golf Club cafe at 2.30pm.

EVENTS REVIEW

POTTERY, RED KITES and OTTERS

This year's programme started off with a talk by David Graham on the History of Farnham Pottery with fascinating snippets on the old potters. David is a nationally renowned archaeologist and speaker, and the audience agreed it was a fascinating evening. Did you know why we call holes in the road 'potholes'? It was common practice for potters to make holes in the tracks of yesteryear and fill them with misshapen, cracked pots for the coaches, horses and farm wagons to break up as they rumbled over them. The shards were then collected and re-used. David's talk was filled with these wonderful pieces of history and we have the best-preserved Victorian Pottery right on our doorstep in Wrecclesham, certainly worth a visit.

I wondered how we were going to top this with our next speaker, but I need not have worried. Keith Betton, [who knows more about the world's birds than even Darwin knew] was brilliant. His Red Kite photography was superb and his talk was informative and interesting for both amateurs and knowledgeable birders. Our chairman struggled to close the meeting as the questions kept coming. If anyone missed this talk they missed a treat, but we do hope to get Keith again and I for one will be first there.

In September we had Chris Matcham's illustrated talk on the Otter. Many of us heard Chris speak last year on Hedgehogs so the meeting was well attended and enthralling as always. One member said how much he enjoyed listening to Chris as he always gave a clear informative talk from his detailed knowledge of any topic. Chris worked in otter conservation from 1993 and was the Otter and Rivers Project Officer for Surrey Wildlife Trust before retiring in 2011. He worked closely with landowners and farmers as well as Waverley and Hampshire councils. To work with one of these needs much diplomacy but to work with all of them is, to put it mildly, a challenge. Chris seems to have achieved this with calm ease - I am sure it had its moments.

BARBEQUE 2013



July 4th was our annual BBQ, and knowing our usual luck with the weather, we were crossing our fingers. It worked - a perfect July evening. We are very grateful to Farnham Cricket Club for once again allowing us to use their facilities and at least this year we didn't have to sit inside. Many members made salads and cakes and some brought wine to go with the sausages and burgers, thank you one and all. The highlight was singing from Keith Barnard and Mike Bigg who played all evening on their guitars, even taking requests. Thank you from us all, it really made the evening. You've started something Keith. I hope you'll come next year.

BOURNE WALK

In Spring last year (before the monsoon), a group of Friends visited The Bourne Conservation Group, for a very pleasant evening wandering around the old churchyard and village, being entertained by members of the Group. It was only right to return their kindness and invite them to the Park. On 22nd August, nine 'Bourne-ites' joined the Friends for a couple of hours wandering in the Park in brilliant sunshine, followed by refreshments at the Cricket Club pavilion, prepared by some of our ladies. (Thanks again to the Cricket Club). Several were unaware of the extent of the Park, knowing only the playground, football pitches and golf course. As it happens, several who visited The Bourne last year were surprised to find and admire the 'back streets' of the village, only knowing the Bourne from the A287! Just shows that you're never too old to learn!



HERITAGE WALK

In September, our Chairman, David Havenhand, stood in for the Ranger to lead the Heritage Walk in the Park, linked to Farnham's Heritage Open Day. He was assisted (or hindered!) by Libby Ralph, Helen and Derek Wilson, who all chipped in from time to time. Despite dreary weather, we had nine 'customers' for the walk, and David did an excellent job displaying his knowledge of the history of bishops, battles and bygone crafts as well as introducing the audience to some of the work done by Friends and Volunteers over the years. The visitors came from as far afield as East Sussex as well as locally, and all seemed to enjoy it and learn something new about the Park.

STILL TO COME: Saturday 19th October at 2:30pm: FUNGI FORAY with Dr. June Chatfield.

June is a Vice President and Fellow of the BNA [British Naturalist Association]. She is a well-known and highly respected author on Natural History and amongst many things was, and is, involved in the gallery redevelopment project at Haslemere Museum. The event will start at the Golf Club cafe, at which anybody is welcome to bring along fungi in advance to be identified. June will then take us on a walk around the Park, discovering and identifying fungi, finishing back at the cafe for a cup of tea.

Helen Wilson.

MOTH REPORT FOR 2013

After the worst possible start to the season from a weather point of view it turned out to be a very pleasant, warm summer with lots of humid and warm nights, ideal for moths.

Very low species numbers were recorded up until June. This was one of the lowest species numbers since I first began recording; however from then on numbers gradually increased, and over the summer months I was recording between 100 and 200 moths per night. It was also notable this year that some species have had a second generation, some for the first time, which might indicate possible effects of climate change on moth populations. Due to the warm summer it was also noted that there was a re-emergence of species of moths not seen for many years including the **Festoon Moth**, **Leopard Moth** (pictured) and **Large Emerald**.



Three rare and scarce moths also occurred over the past year. The **Small Ranunculus** was recorded for the first time and is described as being very rare and scarce. The rare **Four Spotted Footman** re-occurred again this year, but the undoubted highlight of the year was the capture of a **Bedstraw Hawk moth** (below). It is really a Continental species and does not normally overwinter, being described as a transitory resident or immigrant species.



Finally the year could best be described as very positive in many respects but the underlying observations still identify a decline in numbers within species groups which is a continuing cause for concern. The total number of moth species recorded so far this year is 250, higher than the whole of last year.

David Helliwell

BUTTERFLY SURVEY REPORT

This time last year David was lamenting the lack of butterflies due to the wet summer. In complete contrast, 2013 spectacularly demonstrated nature's way of bouncing back with the best year since 2004 thanks to the unusually hot and dry July and August.

For those of you who are not familiar with the survey it involves walking the same route (transect) across the Park from the St James Avenue playground in the south to the Hampton Road exit in the north. It is predominantly grassland but also includes the wooded area behind the Ranger's House. The transect is undertaken once a week between 1st April and 29th September on a day when the weather is conducive to butterflies on the wing – preferably dry, sunny and not too windy, which this year proved a lot easier this year than last!

The year got off to an unpromising start, with a reasonable amount of sunshine but generally cool and breezy with rain in late May, and the counts reflected that. I only missed one week (the first) as the temperature was a meagre 7°C with a cold NE wind blowing that no self-respecting butterfly would brave. In the remaining three weeks April only four butterflies were recorded, 19 in May and 27 in June. Then the sun came out and stayed out, the wind calmed down and things took an amazing turn for the better. In July alone I counted 357, against 355 for the whole of 2012, the best being 141 in the third week compared with last year's best of 66. This continued with 176 in the first two weeks of August (the whole month total last year), before numbers fell when the cutting of the hay meadows caused the butterflies to move to the edges for flowers and shelter, away from the transect route. This is an annual event so does not affect year-on-year comparison.

With only one week left of this year's survey, the total count stands at 680 - a rise of 91.5% on last year's 355, with just about every species showing a significant increase against last year. **Whites (Large, Small and Green-veined)** increased massively from 17 to 103 as any of you who grow brassicas may have noticed! The **Brown family (Meadow, Gatekeeper, Small Heath, Ringlet, Speckled Wood and Marbled White)** rose from 311 to 496, with the commonest species **Meadow Brown** rising from 188 to 293. Other significant increases were shown by **Small Skippers**, and there were also better numbers of **Peacocks** and **Commas** but unfortunately no **Painted Ladies**. On the more unusual side there was a single **Clouded Yellow** on the Southern Slope, and away from the transect (so not officially recorded), there was a **Silver Washed Fritillary** at Aubrey's Pond and a couple of **Purple Emperors** at YoYo Pond.

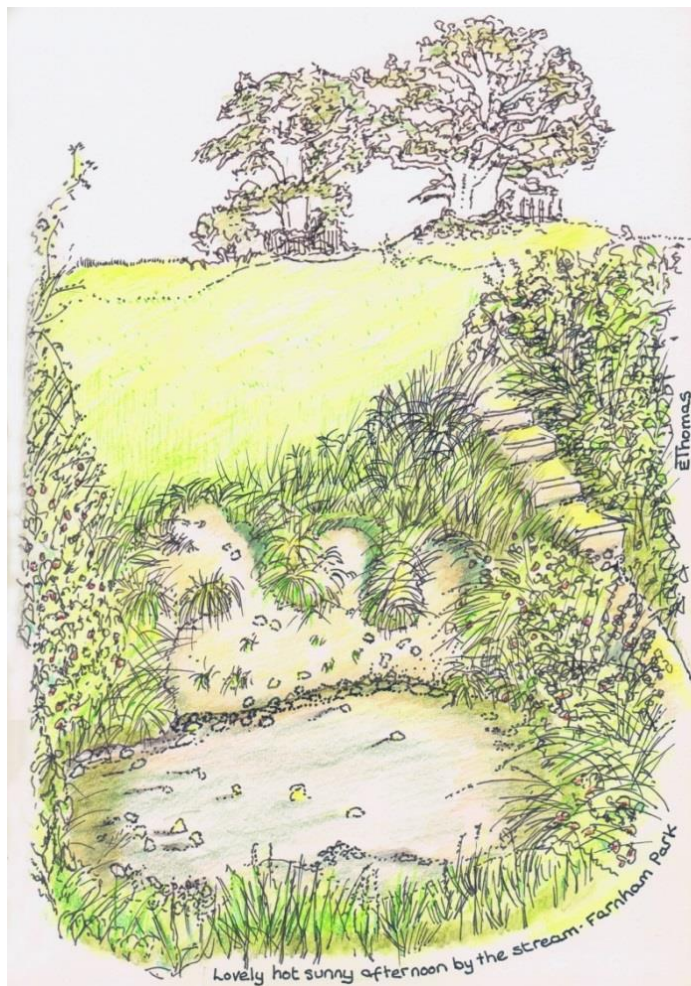
In general, increases were seen on 5 of the 6 sections of the transect, the exception being section 1 (Southern Slope), virtually the same as last year with 73 vs. 76 recorded. The most populous was section 3 (the wooded area behind the Ranger's House) up from an unusually poor 67 last year to 206 - possibly due to the prolific number of bramble flowers. The meadows between there and Hampton Road increased numbers by nearly 100% from 168 to 332.

So on to 2014 with higher hopes than we finished 2012. With the lovely summer there should be more overwintering eggs, caterpillars and pupae and hibernating adults than last year and given some decent weather we could well see another bumper year, but don't quote me on that!

Richard Burgess

LOCAL ARTIST

This lovely sketch of Farnham Park is by Eleanor Thomas (aka KnitNell), a local artist recently retired from full-time work to concentrate on her artwork. Once a member of Wednesday's volunteer group in Farnham Park she can often be seen walking and sketching there with Molly her dog. She has already exhibited her art locally and some of her work can also be seen on her blog www.knitnell.com and on her monthly guest blog 'Adventures in Farnham' on the Best of Farnham website. Eleanor can be contacted on KnitNell@yahoo.com.



OBITUARY – SHARON WATSON



In June, we were very sad to say goodbye to a well-loved Friend and Park Volunteer. Sharon created and maintained the Website for several years, which includes her beautiful photographs of the Park and wildlife. She was also responsible for the re-vamped Newsletter in the Spring. She was a regular Volunteer, and after cancer diagnosis a year ago continued to join in whenever treatment permitted, up until three weeks before she sadly succumbed to her illness.

RANGER'S REPORT

GREEN AND GOLD

The Park was presented with a Green Flag award in September. This prestigious national award recognises excellence in open space management and rewards green spaces that have good links with the local community among other things. The Park Volunteers, the Friends of Farnham Park, schools and the general public played a key part in the process through their wide ranging involvement in the Park. The award judge in his report said, 'This Park will continue to flourish and improve its high standards going forward, if the same level of commitment and passion is shown by all involved'.



Farnham Park also contributed to Farnham in Bloom this year, for which the town won Gold. It was praised as 'a good example of combining local heritage, wildlife and environmental management and the running of a large Volunteer group'. A big thank you and well done to everyone who has put time into the Park.

ELM TREES

The elms south of The Avenue are *Almus sapporo* 'Autumn Gold'. Although nice this time of year, they are structurally weak. With long limbs and weak joints, the spreading branches rip out easily as they have done a number of times this year. Reduction would reduce the risk but with the number of trees and regular care needed, it is financially prohibitive. We propose to remove some of the worst specimens each year and replant with another elm species with better shape/structure and real potential for a long-term landscape tree.

OAKS

You may have noticed the Volunteers clearing bushes and small trees recently from the area near to Nutshell Lane entrance. This is part of our woodland management, to help young oak trees have the space and light needed to grow into mighty veterans of the future, with the added benefit of opening up glades and views in an area which has become very dark and overgrown since the cows left about 25 years ago.

CYCLES

There continues to be issues with cyclists and walkers on the narrow surfaced paths from Nutshell Lane down to Bell's Piece. The main problem seems to be the speed of cyclists – who should use their bell and always slow down or stop when approaching people or dogs. Those looking to get somewhere fast should try an alternative route. The situation is not ideal, but the Council is broadly supportive of responsible cycling in the Park as a safe, green route avoiding busy main roads, and are currently exploring possibilities of path widening, improved signage and restrictions to ensure safety for all.

Robin Crowther