

# Friends of Farnham Park

Newsletter Autumn 2014

Registered Charity No. 285383

Website: [www.hairycalyx.com/fofp](http://www.hairycalyx.com/fofp)



## MISTS AND MELLOW FRUITFULNESS

Hello again, and I hope you've all been enjoying some sunshine this summer – or you did until the August Bank Holiday anyway!

Our Autumn edition sees a round-up of some of the wildlife surveys that go on in the Park each year, including moths, dragonflies and newts. We couldn't squeeze in our butterfly report, which will be included in the Spring Newsletter!

I'd like to give a special mention to the work done by Rosalie Hughes, who for many years has been responsible for both the dragonfly and newt surveys. Last year she handed over the baton for newt surveys to a group of keen amateurs, and is hoping that others will take on the dragonflies from next year. Read her report with beautiful photographs on page 3. Thank you Ros, for the brilliant work you've done over the years.

Libby Ralph

## REMAINING EVENTS FOR 2014

**Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> September, 7pm: 'My Friend Jane'. A talk by Geoff Lunn**

The return of a very popular speaker, this talk was originally a personal record for family and friends - it tells of the life of the lady after whom Elstead Wildlife Rescue was created.

**Sunday October 19<sup>th</sup>, 10am Fungus Foray**

Join West Weald Fungi Group for a foray in the Park.

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Friends of Farnham Park  
Annual General Meeting  
will be held on  
Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> November 2014 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 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](mailto:martin_clegg@btinternet.com)

*Note: all indoor talks take place at the Rowhills Centre (Cranmore Lane), 7pm refreshments for 7:30pm start. Events are free to FoFP members, £3 to non-members. Walks meet at Park Lodge/main car park.*

## W.H.ALLEN – CELEBRATED FARNHAM ARTIST

In the Spring edition of the newsletter, we introduced William Herbert Allen, who painted several pictures in Farnham Park and lived in Farnham from 1897 to 1932. He was born in West Brompton, London in 1863, but his father came from Alton – William's grandfather ran a shop, while his great grandfather was John Allen (1778-1858), a well-known landscape gardener.

After schooling in London (including Charterhouse, which at the time was in Smithfield), he did a three year course at the Royal School of Woodcarving, before entering the Royal College of Art in 1884, where he won many prizes. In 1888, he was awarded a travelling scholarship, visiting France and Germany and producing some fine work. In the Autumn of 1889, he was appointed Master of Farnham Art School (then in South Street), and in 1904 he was made responsible for the teaching of Art for all schools and colleges in the Farnham area, a position he held for 37 years.

He purchased land on the Tilford Road in 1897, where he built his house 'Strangers Corner', designed by another famous son of Farnham, Harold Falkner, who had been one of his pupils.

In 1905, Allen married Adelaide Maria Sothern, a teacher at Farnham Girls Grammar School, at the (old) Bourne Church, and after a honeymoon in Italy they returned to 'Strangers Corner' where they lived for the next 27 years.

*Strangers Corner*, painted by W.H.Allen in 1903, and now in the Museum of Farnham



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During the next few years, William was made a Fellow of the Royal Watercolour Society, a member of the Royal Society of British Artists, and he exhibited at the Royal Academy.



During his time in Farnham, he painted thousands of watercolours of the surrounding area. His favourites included Farnham Park, the water meadows (now Bishop's Meadow), Tilford, Moor Park, Bourne Valley and Binsted, as well as travelling and painting extensively in Europe.

In 1932, he sold 'Strangers Corner' and moved to a cottage called 'Westcombe', near Wylye in Wiltshire, where he continued to paint. He was also an avid gardener, which sadly eventually contributed to his death from pneumonia in May 1943. He is buried at St Nicholas Church, Fisherton de la Mere, near Warminster.

A large collection of his works is now in the care of the Hampshire County Council Museum and Archive Service. Examples can be seen at the Allen Gallery and Curtis Museum in Alton, the painting of Strangers Corner can be seen at Farnham Museum.

*(The above information is extracted from a book – 'A Modest Genius – the life and paintings of William Herbert Allen', compiled by Alistair Penfold and Tony Cross, whose work is gratefully acknowledged.)*

David Havenhand

*Ploughing in Farnham Park by W.H.Allen (perhaps during WWI?)*

## **NEWT WATCH**

This spring a small group could be found skulking around the 7 ponds in the park around dusk armed with powerful torches which is apparently the best way to ascertain the abundance of these elusive amphibians. The 3 species are easier to distinguish during the spring breeding season due to colour and morphological changes.

We managed to find all 3 of the native species (Smooth or Common, Palmate and Great Crested) in varying numbers in the majority of the ponds although the first two species are relatively difficult to tell apart as they are both about the same size (up to 4" when mature) and of a similar olive brown colour although there are differences, especially during the breeding season. In the females the throat of the Smooth newt is generally spotted while that of the Palmate is not (Smooth = spotted / Palmate = plain) although trying to see a newt's throat by torchlight in a murky pond is a bit tricky! The males are slightly more obliging as the Smooth newt develops a continuous crest from head to tail while the Palmate has black webbed feet and a pointed filament at the end of its tail.



Male Great Crested Newt (*Triturus cristatus*)

The Great Crested Newt (photo) is a different creature altogether being much larger (up to 6" long) with a dark almost black colour, a warty skin and an orange belly with a pattern of black spots which are unique to each individual. During the breeding season the male develops its 'great crest' which runs along its back and tail but with a gap between the two sections and it also has a white stripe on the tail. The female lacks the crest and has an orange stripe on its tail.

Once mating has been achieved the females lay a number of single eggs on leaves of suitable pond weeds which they then roll around the egg to protect it. When the larvae (efts) hatch they feed on small invertebrates and even tadpoles and as they develop grow legs and lose their gills before leaving the ponds to spend the rest of the year along with the adults in damp places such as under logs and stones before returning to the ponds in the spring.

On a serious note all newts are protected by law and it is illegal to sell or trade any of them and for the Great Crested it is an offence to kill, injure, capture or disturb them or damage or destroy their habitat - one reason for the need to fence off most of the ponds in the park.

And finally on a lighter note - have you ever wondered why newts have a reputation for overindulgence in alcoholic beverages? Some of the suggested origins for the term "p\*\*ed as a newt" relate to their natural wobbling gait or the staggering of the male when attempting to impress potential mates (we haven't evolved much have we?!) but my favourite suggestion is that professional mourners in Victorian times were known as newts and they were expected to take a drink at each funeral as a mark of respect and some were a little too respectful!

Richard Burgess



## **DRAGONFLY SPOTTING IN THE PARK**

My deeper interest in dragonflies started when I discovered one of our largest species the Golden-ringed dragonfly which is regularly seen in the park. The males patrol along the deep channel of the Nadder stream. Look out for them around hay-making time. When resting they hang in the stream side vegetation as if posing for a photograph.



Golden-ringed dragonfly, *Cordulegaster boltonii*

As early as July into November Common darter are frequently seen settled on sun baked earth or on wooden rails as this mating pair. They stay in tandem whilst egg-laying; he appears to be thrashing her tail on the water surface.



Common darter,  
*Sympetrum striolatum*

Another late flyer is the Southern hawker, a large dragonfly. Their flight period can overlap with the earlier emerging, but similarly sized and coloured Emperor. The thorax for both sexes of the Emperor is all green, but for the Hawker there are diagonal dark strips on the side and apple green 'headlights' on top. Females of both species are easily photographed when egg-laying. The softer colours of this female Emperor make her less conspicuous.



Female Emperor, *Anax imperator*

The Southern Hawker often lays into rotting vegetation above the water and is more boldly coloured.

Female Southern hawker,  
*Aeshna cyanea*



Damselflies are the first to appear in spring, late April or May, and are most easily caught on camera when mating; the Azure and less often the Common Blue and the Large Red. The fine half line on the thorax of the blue damselfly identifies these as Azure not Common.

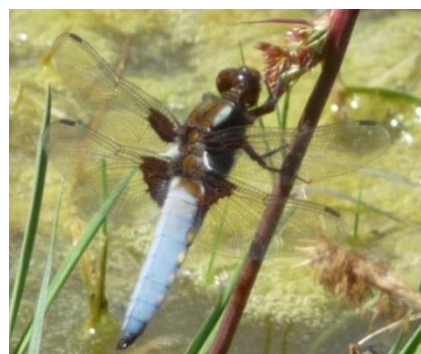


Azure damselflies,  
*Coenagrion puella*



Large red damselfly  
*Pyrrhosoma nymphula*

Another early arrival is the Broad bodied Chaser. The male darts around the pond then often returns to the same perch. The female is less often seen and quite different being 'wasp' coloured.



Some species are difficult to spot without close-focus binoculars

Male Broad-bodied chaser,  
*Libellula depressa*

About 12 species are observed regularly each year, but other species are seen occasionally. This year in July a brilliant scarlet Ruddy darter was spotted across Aubrey Pond, it then moved to the fence and positive verification of the species was possible. A week later a Red-veined Darter was seen. First seen in Britain in 1996 the Lesser Emperor is becoming increasingly common. This year the first sightings in the park, seen separately by Roger and myself in mid July, will be reported.

Rosalie Hughes



## **MOTH REPORT 2014**

The moth survey is done at night using a light trap in David's garden bordering the northern edge of Farnham Park.

The spring and summer months were warmer than usual and after good winter rains there was plenty of growth providing food for moth and butterfly larvae. Consequently up to midsummer the number of species recorded by July 1st was 200. This is the highest number of species ever recorded in the park by this date since I commenced light trapping. The late summer was rather more disturbed with some cooler night temperatures and by mid-September 270 species were recorded overall, which is slightly higher than 2013 when 264 were recorded.

**THE FOLLOWING SPECIES WERE RECORDED AT THE LIGHT TRAP FOR THE FIRST TIME:**

**OAK EGGAR:** Oak Eggars are fairly well distributed in Britain and the males can often be seen flying during the day in the sunshine in a zig zag fashion over heath and heather, on which their larvae feed. They will also feed on various other types of foliage. The females fly at night and will come to the light trap.



**THE GREAT OAK BEAUTY:** is nationally scarce and confined to Southern Counties in mature oak woods. It is good to see it recorded in the park for the first time.



**DOUBLE LOBED AND PLAIN WAVE:** were also recorded for the first time. Both these moths are relatively common in other parts of Britain.

In conclusion the commoner species of moth have been abundant this year and the less common species have been present, but in much smaller numbers and this seems to confirm the national trend. It is worth noting that I have recorded over 400 species of the larger moths in the park since I first started recording over the past 20 years.

David Helliwell.

## **RANGER'S REPORT**

The crunching of nut cases underfoot, great claret clusters of hawthorn berries perched on drooping branches and the emotive 'gor-rnonk' of Canada geese flying in low formation overhead. I love the autumn - it just seems befitting of a medieval Park somehow. Standing under one of our magnificent oaks in the crisp early morning air, you can feel the weight of history that the Park has witnessed through the years. A comforting sense of stability in an uncertain world.

Firstly, I must mention that the Park received its Green Flag award for the second year running – still the only open space in the Borough to hold this prestigious national recognition of a quality green space! The contribution from the Volunteers and Friends of the Park plays a significant part in the process, and as always, thanks to you all for making the Park what it is. A rather attractive new flag on a pole is proudly flying at the main entrance.

The postern (rear) gate of Farnham Castle will soon be open every day so visitors can access this wonderful asset by walking through the Park. We have a couple of new fingerposts and refreshed leaflets to go with it too. The adventure playground is getting a much needed major refurbishment this winter and we are keen to install a naturalistic feel to the equipment which will get kids imagination and exploration fired up. If you use it and have views on it please let us know your thoughts at <http://www.waverley.gov.uk/play4you>.

The smell of wood smoke is in the air as the Park Volunteers brave stinging eyes and smelly hair as they get stuck into the winter work programme (though it's quite a relief after weeks pulling balsam and being stung, scratched and bitten). They'll be clearing scrub from paths and opening up stretches of the Nadder which have become very shaded over the years. The highlight of the winter is always the hedgelaying though, where January snow and wind is braved to lay 50 yards of traditional hedgerow along The Avenue.

Tree surgery work continues to make high risk areas safe and to try and keep the old trees intact as long as possible. In addition, we'll be removing a number of young but large sycamore trees which have grown up along the residential boundary edges. They have been ignored for too long and if not removed now, will be more risky and expensive to remove ten years down the road. It is also with regret we say goodbye to the mature horse chestnut which has overlooked the main car park for 120 years or so. This grand old dame had been declining for a number of years before honey fungus finally killed her off - she'll be missed.

Lastly, if you or anyone you know is interested in providing a memorial to a loved one in the Park – have you thought of a tree instead of a bench? We will be re-stocking the line of Japanese elms just south of the Avenue as we have lost many to storms and poor structure in recent years. The trees will be a new variety of elm which are more akin to the majestic English elm but still resistant to elm disease.

Robin Crowther