

Friends of Croham Hurst Woods

We aim to support and promote the preservation of Croham Hurst Woods and its flora and fauna for the enjoyment of the community

Newsletter No 23 October 2012

Chair's Report (Councillor Maria Gatland)

November 2012 will be the 10th anniversary of the Friends of Croham Hurst Woods. I think this is quite an achievement for a small voluntary group. It has made me reflect on the past ten years on what has been achieved and what we could do better. Our first project clearing 40 years of scrub from the bank on Upper Selsdon Road was a huge undertaking but has enormous benefits for the Hurst. Recreating the meadow shown on old maps is a personal favourite. Instead of scrubland we now have a wild meadow of grasses, flowers and butterflies. We designed and installed the Information Boards and put in new benches. This year we funded a major conservation project, the removal of one hectare of holly that allows light and warmth into the Hurst bringing regeneration. None of this would have been possible without the great support of so many people as members of the Friends of Croham Hurst Woods. I would like particularly to thank the workday volunteers who come out rain or shine 10 months of every year to help with the projects and to keep the Hurst clean green and accessible. We started with around 20/25 volunteers on our workdays ten years ago now between six and ten support the workday every month. It is quite a commitment over ten years and I am really grateful to them. I would also like to thank the Downland Trust and BTCV volunteers who over the years have worked hard in the Hurst. There is always so much that could be done, my own preference would be the restoration of the view (nearly hidden by heavy growth) from the top of the Hurst. If you have a favourite project let us know but please remember we are not an alternative workforce for the Council who own and have responsibility for the Hurst, but a Friends group that has worked hard to enhance a place we all love. Contact me on twitter @GatlandMaria or email maria.gatland@croydon.gov.uk.

The effect of such a wet summer on birds, butterflies and bees has been well documented nationally. We have struggled to keep up with the growth on paths in the Hurst. Rampant bramble and weeds are taking over the areas where the council felled sycamore last year. It has been very noticeable too that wet weather has reduced anti social behaviour this year particularly lighting fires that threaten the Hurst. Not a permanent solution I hope!

Putting up signs in woodland is always contentious. The Friends put up a monthly sign advertising our workdays and take them down within a week. Over the last six months someone has removed some of them before the workday preventing some of our volunteers picking up the information. I also put the information on Twitter, a great information tool, but not everybody uses it. If whoever is doing this has an issue with these posters please let us know so we can resolve the problem. Personally I have no problem with council, police, missing pets posters in the Hurst, but posters advertising items for sale is a step too far for me. What do you think? Let us know.

All the dog owners I know who walk in the woods are responsible and caring people, many pick up litter daily and act as eyes and ears for the local police team. Lately I have received a number of complaints about dogs not under control leaving the Hurst. Complaints centre on dogs loose on the road in Bankside and running across Croham Manor Road. Fouling verges and chasing residents pet cats was also mentioned. As a dog owner I am only too aware of the growing restrictions being placed on owners across London's green spaces. A little consideration for local residents would help us all to continue to enjoy and share this beautiful ancient woodland.

Our AGM on Wednesday 7th November will be a special one to celebrate our 10th anniversary. The Committee will report back on the year and we will have an expert there to answer any questions on conservation. This year we wanted something different so a really amusing and talented magician will help us celebrate our anniversary. Put the date in your diary it should be a great evening.

Downlands Project Work on Croham Hurst (Marion Davis, Downlands Project)

Croham Hurst is a site of ecological and geological importance with many features of interest exhibited within a small area. The land was purchased in 1901 by Croydon Council after a strong local campaign to prevent housing development.

The Downlands Project has been involved in two types of conservation here. In 2004, the 'fast disappearing' remnant of chalk grassland with fruit trees was opened up by the cutting of thick undergrowth and removal of secondary woodland. Just six species of ground flora were recorded at the time, but in the following year thirty were seen. In 2012, I saw hairy violet and vervain prominent among other small species.

Also in 2004, and previously, work was done to maintain and enlarge the remnant of lowland heath (which is on the ridge top!). Bracken, small trees and shrubs were pulled from areas of heather to prevent shading out the heather plants. Gully erosion below areas of heather was slowed by blocking rain run-off by means of piles of cut vegetation. I noticed in 2012 that the areas covered by heather have greatly expanded. The rapid erosion of gullies has been much reduced with the result that the edges of the heather areas are not under such imminent threat of disappearing.

Message from the Treasurer (Ted Budden)

A big thank you to all who have subscribed to the Friends during the past year. The new financial year starts in November and so annual subscriptions are now due.

Newsletter Delivery (Sheelagh Smith)

As always a big thank you to all of you who deliver the newsletter. Newsletter deliverers are always needed. We deliver two newsletters a year in the environs of Croham Hurst and anybody willing to help should contact Sheelagh Smith on 020 8680 4687 or at sheelagh.smith@talk21.com.

Annual General Meeting 2012

The AGM this year will be held at 7.30pm on Wednesday 7th November 2012 in the Hall of Emmanuel Church, Rockhampton Road. This year we celebrate our tenth anniversary so please come along to what promises to be a very entertaining evening.

Subscriptions If you wish to subscribe to the Friends of Croham Hurst Woods, please supply the following:

Name
Address
Tel. No.

Subscription enclosed (£10 min), cheques payable to **Friends of Croham Hurst Woods**
Send to Councillor Maria Gatland, Floral House, 238 Selsdon Road, South Croydon CR2 7AA
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Committee

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Treasurer Ted Budden
Secretary Ann Kellaway
Additional Members Sheelagh Smith, David Coups