

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 28 March 2015

Chair's Report (Councillor Maria Gatland)

There have been some special meetings since I started the Friends Group along with two other people back in 2002. The very first one, our inaugural public meeting, was special but our last AGM when we received the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service 2014 will take some beating. Colonel Ian McRobbie OBE TD DL presented the award to us on behalf of Her Majesty the Queen in front of about 80 of our members. He said in his address how proud he was to represent Her Majesty and how the award was the equivalent of an MBE for voluntary work. We have come a long way since we waited nervously in 2002 to see if anyone would turn up to our first meeting. The award is testament to the hard work and dedication of so many of our members who care for our wonderful ancient woodland, Croham Hurst Woods. In rounding off a remarkable evening for us, Mathew Frith from The London Wildlife Trust gave a hugely interesting and thought provoking talk. Mathew will lead a walk and talk on the Hurst in the spring, the details will be available soon.

When I was notified by the Cabinet Office that the Friends had been shortlisted for the Queen's Award I was invited for interview. During that interview I was proud to share how much our members had done for the Hurst in particular the major projects we had undertaken and funded.

One of the projects was the removal of two hectares of invasive holly. This work has had a dramatic effect in opening up parts of the woodland to light, warmth and regeneration. After some delays another tranche of holly will soon be removed. The works will be jointly funded by the Friends and the Council, who will fund their part through a grant from the Forestry Commission. It is important to note that the Council will run and supervise the holly removal as the owners of Croham Hurst Woods. There are no plans to remove all the holly on the Hurst but only in places where it has become so dark and dense that little light penetrates to the woodland floor. The contractors will use a machine used in bog work to help protect the soil surface particularly important on a Site of Special Scientific Interest. While there may be some disruption these works are so important for the health of our woodland. We will all see the benefits but for me more importantly so will future generations.

In addition I had hoped that work could begin on the gradual restoration of the once spectacular views from the top of the Hurst. Due to the delays I mentioned this work should begin next year.

A number of residents noticed and mentioned to me that a memorial bench installed on the bridleway by the Council on behalf of a local family had disappeared. We all presumed it had been stolen although removing such a heavy bench brought in by tractor and concreted in would have been difficult. The truth is stranger than fiction since it was removed by a friend of the deceased who believed apparently that a much better place would be on the golf course, but didn't inform or consult the family or the Council. On my last update the matter was being pursued by the Council and the police. The bench was a popular place to rest for residents so the Friends hope to put in a new bench along the bridleway so residents can still enjoy a walk in the Hurst.

Officially we are in a growth area and it obvious that many more residents are enjoying Croham Hurst Woods. This is great news and hopefully there will be many Friends for the future. It is a wonderful place to walk, to observe nature and for children to play. However it is not a park so please keep cycling to the bridleway where it is allowed. Anywhere else may damage the fragile soil surface and is not permitted.

Last November on our workday the Friends removed 11 large bags of rubbish, so enjoy the Hurst but please take your litter with you. We are so lucky to have such a wonderful place on our doorstep and so many residents who help us care for it. Thank you all for your help and support.

Message from the Treasurer (Carrie Le)

A big thank you to all who have paid a subscription for the 2014/2015 year. The new financial year started in November 2014 but if by any chance you have forgotten you can still pay your annual subscription now. New members may join at any time.

Newsletter Delivery (Richard Kellaway)

As always many thanks to all those who deliver the newsletter. We are currently seeking volunteers to deliver newsletters in Mansfield Road and Chelsham Road. If you are willing to help please contact Richard Kellaway on 020 8657 4672 or at rekellaway@blueyonder.co.uk.

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