

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 39 October 2020

Chair's Annual Report (Councillor Maria Gatland)

Last November we held our Annual General Meeting at the Watney Room of Emmanuel Church. It was attended by over 70 residents and we all enjoyed a fascinating talk by Mathew Frith of the London Wildlife Trust. Afterwards we all mingled together over a glass of wine. Now all that seems like memories of a lost world.

In recent newsletters I have written about the importance of our green spaces to bring solace and hope in times of difficulties or despair. My heart goes out to everyone who has experienced illness or bereavement in these awful times. I hope Croham Hurst Woods has provided comfort. I know being in a green place connecting with nature helped me through times of loss and sadness.

Always popular with local residents, the Hurst experienced much higher footfall during Lockdown. For those of us who have walked there for years it is a really special place in so many ways. It has always had a strong connection with the residents who live all around it. The outrage felt by residents at the end of the 19th century when the former owners the Whitgift Foundation planned to build on it, led to a massive local campaign, camping out for days on the top and sending in a huge petition to Croydon Council. In 1901 Croydon Council bought Croham Hurst Woods for the people of Croydon. A strong local connection remains to this day.

Along with two others, I started the Friends of Croham Hurst Woods way back in 2003. I am really proud that thanks to the generosity of our members we have contributed well over £30,000 for projects

that have transformed Croham Hurst Woods. From removing hectares of invasive holly to bring light and regeneration to the woods, to the recreation of the meadow area shown on old maps with the help of the Downland Trust. My personal favourite is the restoration of the historic view on the top of the Hurst, these are just some of our projects over the years.

This year has been no different and in February not long before Lockdown the contractors finished off the removal of more holly. We have contributed to the cost of the works along with Forestry Commission funding. A huge thanks to Simon Levy who has since retired from advising Croydon Council, his advice and support has been invaluable to us. A few weeks ago, before more restrictions were put in place, I met up with the new Forestry Advisor to the Council, along with David Coups, to discuss funding future works.

Also we met up with the Council to discuss the installation and funding of new signs around the perimeter of the Hurst to advise on cycling in the Hurst. The old signs were often in the wrong place and not clear. The Council and ourselves are hopeful that they will clear up the confusion about where cycling is permitted in the Hurst and where it is not. Cycling is only permitted on one path, the bridleway which is the path that runs alongside the Golf Course. Cycling is not permitted on any other path.





I was really pleased to receive so many messages about Croham Hurst Woods during Lockdown. Many spoke about the beauty of the woods and how walking there every day had helped them deal with Lockdown. Inevitably with so many more people using the Hurst there have been problems. There were raves some broken up by the police, offensive chalking on signposts, small fires, swings, tepees (fallen wood on the ground is home to numerous creatures many invisible to the eye but vital to the health of the woods so the wood is best left on the ground), and mounds of litter to name but a few.

Once again residents led the way, clearing litter every day and cleaning off offensive messages on the posts and much more. Over and above anything else I was contacted about cycling. Most concerning were the reports from shaken residents who received abuse from a minority. I sympathise as I received a mouthful of abuse when attempting to explain where cycling is permitted. It is sad and divisive. I am hopeful that the new signage will be more helpful for everyone. I know no one would deliberately wish to damage such a beautiful place (a Site of Special Scientific Interest) with a fragile surface in places.

I have received a number of comments about the disappearance of the Lord Croham bench from public footpath 149. A problem with the bench was reported to us towards the end of August. On inspection it was found that two of the supporting legs had rotted at ground level and disintegrated and the remaining two legs were in a poor condition along with one of the planks that form the seat. In the current circumstances it was felt the safest option was to take the bench out of service as soon as possible and this was done by one of our volunteers. We have retained the plaque that identified the bench.

Since July we have been permitted to have our monthly work mornings. We have put all the safety guidelines in place but are only permitted 6 volunteers and are not permitted to advertise the events. How good it feels to be back doing a little to help Croham Hurst Woods and meeting up with old friends. Social distancing in place of course!

Croham Hurst Woods is not a park, it is a natural green space. We are so lucky to have such a place with birds, deer, badgers, wonderful trees, wildflowers, views and so much more. It is all the more remarkable as it is surrounded by housing and within sight of the high tower blocks of central Croydon. I hope visitors, both old and new, will continue to enjoy it and help care and protect it for the future. The Hurst has seen plagues and wars and will be here when we are all gone but while we are here let us try to make a difference to this wonderful place.



Notes from the Treasurer (Carrie Hay)

A big thank you to all who have subscribed to the Friends during the past year. The new financial year starts in November 2020 and so annual subscriptions are now due.

Also I want to take opportunity to let you know that I will be stepping down as Treasurer from December 2020 as my family and I are moving out of the area. When Kirk and I moved into South Croydon eight years we were footloose and fancy-free. Now we will be leaving with Sebby (an active 2½ years old toddler) and Upton (our four legged toddler). Croham Hurst Woods will always be a special place to my family.

Treasurer Vacancy

We are looking for a numerate volunteer to take over the role of treasurer from Carrie Hay and so any one willing to take up the challenge should contact Councillor Maria Gatland on 020 8407 1327 or email maria.gatland@croydon.gov.uk

We would like to thank Carrie for all her hard work and dedication to the Friends and to wish her and her family the very best for the future.

Newsletter Delivery (Richard Kellaway)

As a precaution during the current Covid19 situation we have decided not to deliver this newsletter and to make it available only online. We hope to resume deliveries next year. There is a vacancy to deliver forty copies of the newsletter in Langley Oaks Avenue and other vacancies do occur from time to time. If you are willing to help please contact Richard Kellaway on 020 8657 4672 or rekellaway@blueyonder.co.uk

Annual General Meeting

Due to the Covid 19 restrictions relating to meetings, the Annual General Meeting originally scheduled for the 10th November 2020 has been cancelled. The Chair's report in this newsletter covers the activities of the Friends over the past year.

Website (Ann Kellaway) www.friendsofcrohamhurstwoods.com

Any appropriate contributions or photos would be welcome. For instance if anyone has thoughts about how visits to the Hurst in the lockdown period has cheered them up that would be interesting to our members. Also you can visit our Facebook page for more up-to-date information at www.facebook.com/thefriendsofcrohamhurstwoods

Committee

ChairCouncillor Maria Gatland
Treasurer.....Carrie Hay
SecretaryAnn Kellaway
Additional Members ...Nick Gill, David Coups

Subscriptions

Normally subscriptions are due at the beginning of November and in the past we have used the newsletter as the prime vehicle for reminding Friends about the subscription. However since we will not be able to deliver the newsletter to the environs of Croham Hurst we are asking anyone who is able to view the newsletter on the Friends website to consider paying this year either by the Bank Faster Payments System or by printing out a copy of the Subscription Form from the website. The form can be found in this newsletter.

If you wish to pay by the Bank Faster Payments System please contact Councillor Maria Gatland on 020 8407 1327 for details.

Subscription

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, 33 Whitmead Close, South Croydon CR2 7AS

Tel. No. 020 8407 1327.

email: maria.gatland@croydon.gov.uk