

Doors were open from 10.30am. We served tea, coffee and cake, took membership subscriptions and gave away free FoSNCP tote bags.

c. 17 people attended.

**1. Welcome**

At 11am, Sue Takwani (Chair) welcomed us – especially those who were new. She reminded everyone of the Winter Walk happening at the end of the AGM, at 12 noon, to be led by the warden, Rob Spencer. She encouraged everyone to find out more about the Park and the Friends, and then gave an overview of the AGM to come.

**2. Report on 2018 and Preview of 2019 (Chris Peskett, Treasurer)**

Chris Peskett (Treasurer) gave this report.

**Review of Workdays in 2018**, our 4<sup>th</sup> year.

Chris reported that these had happened on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday of every month and usually drew 10-12 people; last time we met, 15 volunteers came. She reported that we undertook different activities, which were the tasks the warden needs help with.

March: Bramble-clearing and litter-picking at Harrington Road. This area does get overgrown and attracts rubbish and fly-tipping.

April: Prepping the ground near the apiary, for wild flowers for the bees. A tortoiseshell butterfly came to visit while we were working; sadly, the very hot summer saw the flowers off.

May: Scrub-clearing around the trees which we've planted over the last 3 years. Chris explained the planting process: we receive the trees as whips, make a hole with the spade; place the whip in and press/stamp the slit closed. We clear the scrub from around the trees as too much growth around the whips takes needed moisture away from them. We also sowed flower seeds for the bees. We had visits from a passing dog and a bumble bee (on red campion) and our work was serenaded by a song thrush.

June: Three-rivers clean up. This is an annual event, seeking to protect the Rivers Pool, Quaggy and Ravensbourne. Water from brooks in our park flows into the Ravensbourne (and then on to the others). We removed Himalayan balsam, an invasive species. There was less to do this year as we'd done a good job the year before. We love doing this and donning full waders! We saw a newly hatched dragonfly – with its still-soggy wings.

July: Pond-clearing by the visitor centre. We clear this so that there is space for ducks and frogs; with the cut bulrushes we made a bug pile.

August: Scrub-clearing around new trees. We did manage to locate the trees under the growth! The mini-trees thrive in some areas but die in others. It used to be a sewage works, so who knows quite what's there! And we picked up litter.

Sept and Oct: Preparing ground for new trees in the coming months. This involved clearing long grass, right down to ground level. This in turn made more bug piles. Our observation was that

the men like the tools with the blades, particularly the slashers. We had to have a particular eye out once we had new snaths (special handles) to go on the scythes. No-one mention Poldark!

November: Preparing tree sites, part two: we completely cleared the holes and put canes in ready for the 5 species to come. 100 trees - Oak, Alder, Silver Birch, Beech and Hornbeam – were given to us by The Conservation Volunteers (TCV), donated by OVO energy.

December: Actual tree-planting, on another lovely day. We put the trees in and this time, we didn't put plastic protectors around the trunks as we don't have deer and we don't strim. We've just left canes as markers so that we can find and protect the new trees. Thanks to Ian for doing this.

January: Ivy-clearing and litter-picking at Elmers End. By the bus-stop, there's a lot of litter. We cleared the path by the fence and lots of rubbish. Thankfully, Rob the warden can bring his van right up to where we were working to load up. A robin came along to cheer us.

February: Harrington Road – where we began the year, this wasn't as bad as usual for litter. John Collis, Chris and another friend went and did an interim clear a few months ago as it had been bad. But there were still plenty of brambles. The more unusual items of rubbish were a fair quantity of curry powder and a vehicle clamp; and to brighten our morning we found some beautiful snowdrops!

#### **A Preview of the next few workdays of 2019**

The next few workdays will be:

9 March: hedge-trimming in the Environmental Garden

April: litter-picking at the Westgate Road entrance

May: scrub-clearing around the new trees

Chris encouraged anyone to come and volunteer – all are welcome and we are always very grateful. Please come for what you can; tea and excellent biscuits as a reward after.

#### **A Review & Preview of other activities and news**

The South Norwood Community Festival which we were at last year will be happening again on Sunday 30 June.

Chris P and Chris C attended the Woodside & Shirley Pop-in session so that people could have information about the park. This is a local health initiative run through local GP services, meeting in Ashburton Hall.

Our bees. We now have 4 colonies, with two each donated by two of our beekeepers, Tricia Pelican and Jem. Tricia also managed to secure a queen for one colony which didn't appear to have one. The queens are given red dots for ID. In total, we have 3 trained beekeepers (Ian Glover, our secretary, is the third).

The bee-keepers check regularly to make sure the bees have food; they add in fondant if necessary. Ian reported that the bees were checked 2 weeks ago and will be again tomorrow. Chris P reported that volunteers can go and observe the bees when they're being checked,

usually on a Sunday morning (both Chris P and Chris Claridge have done this). It is absolutely fascinating.

There is now a shed for the bee-keeping equipment on-site and a water-butt has been rigged up to collect water from the roof, so that the bees' mini-pond maintains its supply of water, especially over the summer (it dried up last year). Tricia, Jem and Ian are going to make new stands for the hives; and a solar panel and fountain for the bees are going to be installed. We hope the number of bees/colonies will expand this year.

In terms of collecting honey, sadly, last year, there wasn't very much and so we didn't take a harvest. Fingers-crossed, there'll be more this year.

Chris reported that if anyone sees a swarm, Tricia is an official collector.

**Action:** LM to take to next meeting – can we/would Tricia be happy for us to make her contact details available on the FoSNCP website to help this?

## **A Review and Preview of Walks and Talks**

### Dawn chorus – May 2018

Chris presented Sue Takwani's report from the Dawn Chorus:

Eight people dragged themselves out of bed for 5am! But it was a morning with many rewards. The walk was led by the warden, Rob Spencer and began with the call of the wren – enough to wake those still feeling sleepy! This was followed by the song thrush and, through the mist, we heard a blackcap warbler, greenfinch and great tit with Egyptian geese overhead. Then the relative late-risers, as we headed back to the visitor centre, were reed warblers, dunnocks and whitethroat. We heard/saw 20 species of birds in all.

Whilst on the subject of birds, Chris P drew the attention of those at the AGM to the bird-feeders, positioned just outside the visitor centre windows. On it that morning, we could see goldfinches, blackbirds, bluebirds, great tits, greenfinches and a great spotted woodpecker.

### Bat-walk – May 2018

Chris reported that Bat-walks can be a bit 'hit and miss'. The previous walk had been a bit of a miss; but May 2018 was certainly a hit. 30 people gathered at 8:30pm (our largest group to date). Meike Weiser (Community Conservation Partnership Officer from Croydon Council) led the walk. We went to lake with bat detectors, including one person's iPad bat-detector, and heard 6 species of bat (there are only 7 in Croydon area). They were the Common pipistrelle, Soprano pipistrelle and – new to us – the Nathusius' pipistrelle; also, the Leisler's bat, Noctule and Serotine. The only one missing that evening was a Daubenton's bat, which we have seen/heard in the park before. It was a thrilling night – Meike told us it was rare to see three big bats in one night. We hope to repeat it next time!

### History walks with John Hickman

- Cemetery walk in April

John uses the walk to give a history of the lives of various people buried in the cemetery. He is discovering new graves all the time and hopes to run a future walk and talk on 28 April 2019 (tbc – delayed due to a change of management).

**Action:** LM to bring this forward to 1 April committee meeting for update and further action.

- South Norwood History Walk and Talk in June

A group of 9 met at the Stanley Halls where John talked about the history of the area. They moved to the High Street where John informed the group about the Croydon canal (the route of which can be seen near Aldi); moving back up to the High Street, John pointed out architectural features of Stanley Halls, Suffolk Road; we then paused at the Clocktower – an anniversary gift from the people of South Norwood to the Stanleys; the group then moved onto the South Norwood Recreation Ground and the world's first reinforced concrete tunnel under the railway tracks. The evening concluded in the Albert Tavern.

#### **Future Walks planned for 2019**

- Lakeside Walk - 23 March, 11am – to be run by Adam from TCV (The Conservation Volunteers).
- Cemetery Walk – Sunday 28 April, 2.30pm (tbc) – John Hickman.
- Dawn Chorus – 5 May, 5am – Rob Spencer. This is a national day.
- Bat walk – 10 May, 8.30pm – Meike Weiser. She is also leading an earlier one in Norwood Lakes.
- Woodside History Walk and Talk – 6 June, 7pm. Meeting outside St Luke's Church – John Hickman. Woodside is older than South Norwood.

### **3. Treasurer's report (Chris P)**

Chris Peskett, Treasurer, presented the year end account for December 2018

Income was £273.69, which represented donations and honey sales.

Expenditure was £3460.57.

This mostly was the informative lecterns (the money for which was carried forward from 2017). We are still awaiting their installation – delayed because of idVerde losing the contract for managing the park; this is now back in the hands of Croydon Council. We will be in contact with Meike Weiser to take this forward.

**Action:** LM to take to next committee meeting for action

Other items of expenditure were: £275 spent on the bees; £112 on insurance; £275 on tools and £46 on website fees.

We end the year with £1028.26 in the bank, of which £305.79 is ring-fenced for expenditure on the bees.

Chris then invited Questions from the floor on the reports.

Someone asked what Himalyan Balsam looked like? Pretty, tall, small pink flowers.

Another asked whether we have any members from Elmers End. There were two – Jen and Nathan – new with us that morning.

#### **4. Election of officers, committee (Sue)**

Sue Takwani (chair) reported that the Committee had met quarterly and, during the year, we had 11 members. We are currently reduced to 9 members.

Within the committee, there is an Executive committee, consisting of the Chair, Sue Takwani; Vice-Chair, Chris Claridge; Treasurer, Chris Peskett; Secretary, Ian Glover; Minutes Secretary – Leonie Mason.

All 5 had agreed to continue in post.

These office holders were nominated en bloc by John Hickman; seconded by Rob Little (I think).

The other committee members are: Sundeep Takwani; Rob Little (website); Paul Scott (not present but is very supportive, particularly in helping secure Ward Budget funding and Rob Spencer (warden).

Jivko Hristov has stood down from committee. Sue announced that Jivko felt he could no longer stay on the committee because his new job means working every Saturday.

Sue asked those present whether anyone wanted to join the committee. No nominations had been received and no one present wished to volunteer then. John Hickham expressed some interest but he does already give us a lot of time. If anyone else was interested, Sue invited them to be in touch via email.

South Norwood Community Festival: Sue also mentioned this festival. She advertised that we are hoping to have a tombola at the 2019 event in June (we are unable to sell merchandise because we have a free pitch). Sue invited anyone to bring unwanted gifts to workdays or to be in touch with Sue if they have items for the tombola which they need collecting.

#### **5. Visitors' Centre (Sue)**

Sue also advertised that we are opening the Visitors' Centre on Workday Saturdays, while the Friends are out working in the park between 10am and 12pm. There is plenty of information, history, old photos, including of the park's development – and we are keen that people have access.

We are looking to recruit volunteers for this: Carol has volunteered; and Angela has also helped to date. We recorded our thanks.

Sue stated that we would like to do this regularly and be able to advertise that it is open. Carol cannot help for the March 2019 workday; anyone wishing to help should speak to Sue.

## 6. AOB

- Carol raised the issue of the fence around the pitch and putt, which is broken down in 3 places; dog-walkers are going in there. Is that something council could fix?

**Action:** LM take to next Committee meeting

- Someone asked what the management policy was for the giant Hogweed by Harrington Road? Rob Spencer (the warden) answered that it is dug up every 3 years but that there is a big seed bank. He stated that the amount has reduced a little. The problem is primarily one of contact: Rob is trying to get rid of it so that it doesn't seed into the Ravensbourne.
- John Collis proposed a vote of thanks to the officers for such a good job – and for a lovely presentation.
- Sue proposed thanks for all the volunteers for their hard work, and encouraged everyone to keep raising the profile of the park and Friends, and to come on walks.
- John Hickman advertised the Croydon Natural History and Scientific Society, which is 150 years old next year (founded 1870); running meetings and publishing every year. Notable former members are: Herbert John Fleure (published *A Natural History of Man in Britain*); Sir Arthur George Tansley (published *British Flora*) and Alfred Russel Wallace – who, with Darwin, proposed the theory of evolution through natural selection.

John suggested that we hold a joint event to celebrate, somewhere between April and October 2020. The centre of this could be public open spaces.

**Action:** LM include in agenda for next Committee meeting

John Hickman extended a welcome to all to the Croydon Natural History and Scientific Society's Entomological evenings particularly. They are held in the small hall of East Croydon United Reformed Church, Addiscombe Road on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday evening of the month at 8pm (website advertises as 7.45pm); tea and cake are available. About 14 people normally come along.

(website: <https://cnhss.co.uk/our-event-programme-for-2018-19>)

He also mentioned that TCV have a 'Ponds in Croydon' project. He asked whether they could include our pond: Ian Glover confirmed that this is the case (Adam Asquith, who is doing our lakeside walk, is involved).

The AGM concluded and was followed by a Winter Walk, led by Rob Spencer.