

## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2010 by Jennie Randall

### January.

The year 2010 started & finished for the Friends with snow affecting both our work parties and our events programme. In January, the much-anticipated tree identification walk, led by Glenn Morris, had to be post-poned and one work party cancelled. However, once the thaw set in we did achieve a great deal in terms of both glade clearance (on the wood anemone patch at Thornet Wood) and glade creation in the Tent Peg Wood area.

**February.** 26 Friends, RSPB members and members of the public enjoyed a Bird Watching walk at Jubilee led by the Bromley RSPB. The Friends had a display at High Elms Local History Day, exhibiting some of the information we have discovered about history of the area now forming Jubilee Country Park. During this month, the Friends paid contractors to relocate the Thornet Wood notice board from its original site to a position which makes it far more accessible to all. This has proved a great success. Amongst our work tasks were ditch clearance and the removal of fallen trees & branches resulting from yet more snow. We also reinforced the chestnut paling fence around Ray's Pond and extended this with a dead hedge up to the boundary with Bromley High School to make it more difficult for dogs to reach the water. We also planted, in memorably torrential rain, whips (many of which were kindly donated by Coolings Garden Centre) at the St James's School entrance to replace the non-native laurels which had once dominated this area.

**March:** This proved to be a very busy month, with further glade clearance work in Thornet Wood, scalloping along the butterfly transect and the removal of overgrowing vegetation from pathways. We celebrated the 80th birthday of Jean Archer, our work party tea lady, by presenting her with a Friends of Jubilee mug with her name on. We all know how important tea breaks are on a workday and Jean's cheery smile, wonderful organisational abilities, and lovely cuppas are greatly appreciated by all of us. The Friends had a display at the Walking Promotion Day at High Elms. Our AGM took place. An event, led by our Countryside Ranger, Jenny Price, "Ponds, People & Pond Life" was held beside the newly-completed Ray's Pond to raise awareness of the importance of ponds as a wildlife habitat. It proved to be very popular, with 68 people visiting our tent during the course of the day. Heronwatch, a joint event for the Friends of Kelsey Park, Bromley RSPB, Bromley Countryside Service and our Friends

group, was held over two days by the main lake at Kelsey. This was a very successful, fun event. Ian Pannett organised a meal for members of the Friends group at the Tigers Head, in Chislehurst, which was much enjoyed by all those present.

**April:** Jenny Price led a Pond Walk, assisted by Tony Ruffle & Marcus Jordan, attended by 18 people. There were several good opportunities during this to get excellent views of Jubilee's resident newts. Jo Goddard, Friend & Bromley High School PTA Chair, led a campaign to prevent a housing development on Green Belt Land at Blackbrook Lane. A number of Friends attended the Planning Meeting at Bromley Civic Centre at which Cllr. Catherine Rideout (also a Friend) gave a very good speech condemning the proposals. I am pleased to say the plans were unanimously rejected & yes, we were told off for cheering! 36 people joined me for a History Walk around Jubilee Park.

**May:** May Bank Holiday was celebrated with a joint stall with the Parks Partnerships Officers from Bromley Council at the Petts Wood May Fayre in the gardens of the Memorial Hall. They were there to publicise the forthcoming London in Bloom Competition in Petts Wood. The weather was not kind (very cold, with a little hail!) but the event still drew the crowds and resulted in us gaining several new members, as well as promoting our new sales items developed by Sue Folkes - bookmarks & fridge magnets. May was a particularly notable month for two previously unrecorded birds being heard in Jubilee Country Park - a cuckoo and a nightingale. Jubilee Park became something of a magnet for local birders that week! The Tree Identification Walk, originally scheduled for January, took place-unfortunately in very heavy rain & it was rather cold too. This did not deter the 20 hardy Friends who went along and were amazed by Glenn Morris's encyclopaedic knowledge of trees. Three weeks later, we did some hedgerow surveying-this time in unbelievable heat! What a contrast!

**June:** Clearance and repair work occupied many of this month's work parties, as well as a Responsible Dog Owners Event. Tony Ruffle, Richard Pearce and I were involved in two events with our "sister" group, The Friends of Darrick Wood as they celebrated achieving Local Nature Reserve status with an Opening Ceremony and Community Day. Jon Bramley gave us a very interesting talk on Otters. Sally Morris led 20 people on her ever-popular Flower Walk

during which Jackie Dennis made the amazing discovery of two Bee Orchids- the first recorded in the vicinity since 1897! I led a History Walk, assisted by Richard Ewing, for 25 uniformed soldiers from the Territorial Army (based at Grove Park) about the role of Thornet Wood Gun Site during the Second World War.

**July:** On an extremely hot day, the judging of Petts Wood in the London in Bloom Competition's Urban Community category took place. The judges were particularly impressed by the commitment of the Friends to improving biodiversity within Jubilee Park. I led a walk for the Petts Wood Methodist Wives called "That's what Friends are for", a walk I repeated on St Swithin's Day for 18 Friends and EnBro members. Needless to say, it rained! To improve access for disabled park users, two Radar kissing gates were installed in the park. One of these was funded by the Petts Wood Residents Association, the other by the Friends. An Identifying Bumblebees Day was held, led by an expert in this subject-Mike Edwards. 35 people came along to two informal training sessions in the field and we had an information/sales tent near the picnic area. Workdays included preparing the park for the summer and painting the picnic tables. Work party members enjoyed a delicious "end of term" barbeque in Alan Saban's garden (it rained though!) We took delivery of Friends of Jubilee polo shirts, in bottle green, with our logo on. These are now being worn by many of the working party.

**August:** A large party of Friends and helpers joined us to welcome 8 residents from sheltered accommodation at Southmore Court for a Wheelchair Walk in the park. The sun shone!! This was very jolly, social event, much appreciated by our guests. Ian Pannett arranged a visit for a group of Friends to the British Wildlife Centre in Surrey, which proved to be very interesting.

**September:** The hedgerows at Jubilee were heavily laden with fruits this autumn, some of which were much enjoyed on Jenny Price's Blackberry Hunt. Work commenced on clearance of both the Loosestrife Pond and the Secret Pond. Hazel Ryan, from Wildwood near Herne Bay, gave us a wonderful talk on Dormice and introduced us to two of these delightful creatures who are part of a captive breeding programme which the organisation she works for is involved with. At High Elms Open Day, we shared our tent with friends from the RSPB for a very successful afternoon-we were visited by over 200 people.

**October:** Work parties this month largely focussed on the task of ditch clearance. Our monthly "Jub Pub" night was changed from the first Monday to the first Wednesday of the month. I led another "That's what Friends are for" walk, attended by 27 people, including George Taylor, the Mayor of Bromley. He was most impressed by the work undertaken by all the Friends.

**November:** Jenny Price led a "Winter Wander" through the park for around 7 people who braved the extremely heavy rain that day. Ditch clearance work and general maintenance occupied the workdays, as well as the deepening of the Holly Pond. The Friends held a stall at the Bromley High Christmas Market to promote the group.

**December:** The snows this month were to lead to the cancellation of many activities, including the Owl Talk, Jub Pub Night and the High Elms Christmas Social. In between the blizzards, we did manage to commence work on a project to put a substantial dead hedge around the Secret Pond & also undertake scrub clearance in the meadows. The removal of overhanging vegetation, caused by the snow, kept us busy. A new interpretation board, by Ray's Pond, was installed, explaining the importance of ponds as a wildlife habitat. This was funded by a grant from the Capital Community Foundation of £3268.

It is impossible to condense down into a few pages the activities of the Friends over a year and truly do justice to all the work everyone does.

Bromley Council measures the achievements of Friends groups in an annual census of man (and woman!) hours spent on workdays, and of grant funding obtained. Although figures for these are provided, in reality the total time spent is completely unquantifiable. On a daily basis, there are Friends engaged for many hours on all sorts of projects. Monitoring flora and fauna, litter-picking, running the website, making 'phone call, writing letters-the list goes on and on. The financial worth to the Council of what we do must be enormous. So why do we do it? We do it because, in spite of the difficulties and challenges which we frequently encounter, the enthusiasm we all share for Jubilee Country Park gives us a wonderful sense of community and we have a great deal of fun too. Those are things you cannot measure.