

Friends of Jubilee Country Park

Annual Works Summary

2019-2020

Highlights

Pond works

At the start of 2019, Long pond received some much-deserved attention. At the start of the task it was all but hidden amongst a jungle of vegetation, however after the Friends tackled it they discovered it does actually contain water! We worked on this again in late 2019, further taking back the vegetation along the bank to allow more light through, created more log piles for our amphibian population and the hedge was re-laid to enhance this natural barrier.



Marcus's pond

Marcus's pond was not holding water as well as usual, so the Friends set about deepening it to increase the water holding capacity. Andrew also felled a couple of small oak to allow more light in and reduce water uptake. These were cut up and stacked in a log pile to create an ideal hibernation area for newts and other creatures. The Friends also cleared an area of small trees towards the Thornet wood track, to encourage water to flow along the natural ditch leading to the pond. During the amphibian survey, following the winter of heavy rainfall, the pond had never looked so full!

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Dog Pond

The unnamed pond at Jubilee which is still accessible to dogs was looking very full this year with all the rain we've had. Newts were seen bobbing about very early in the year, scouting it out as a breeding area. The rear of the pond, just into Thornet Wood is also the only location on the site in which both Cow wheat, the food plant of the nationally scarce Heath Fritillary butterfly, and Betony grow. With all this important biodiversity in mind, we decided the best way to protect it would be to lay the hedge around the pond, to limit dog numbers by creating a natural barrier, provide an ecologically advanced habitat and also this would lower the height of the scrubby hedge around the pond which is shading the ground where the interesting ground flora thrive.

The small trees which were laid into the live hedge were not in the most favourable condition, so we weaved in extra dead material to enhance the barrier. We ended up with a sort of live/dead hedge, but in time it will strengthen. In time, once the hedge is more established, we intend to add mesh to the post and rail fencing around the other side of the pond to prevent access from man's best friend.



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Glade Restoration

We spent a few weeks restoring a glade within Thornet Wood, felling some larger trees, old over-stood coppice and clearing the brambles. We had a huge fire to burn a lot of the vegetation, however still were left with a reasonably large pile to tackle next time around. Invasive species, namely, Snowberry was popped out to reduce and need for chemical treatment.

Ensuring open spaces in woodland is important for some butterfly species and other invertebrates. By clearing some of the trees and scrub we allow more light to reach the floor, encouraging ground flora to flourish and thus providing a nectar rich food source.



Boardwalk Replacement

Two areas of boardwalk in Jubilee underwent some much deserved attention late last year. The boardwalk across the meadow was replaced with a gravel path as it was felt that a boardwalk was unnecessary for this drier area. Andrew and the Friends hauled 7 tonnes of chippings across the field in barrows, before laying it out and using a petrol driven whacker plate to compress the new footpath and stabilize it.



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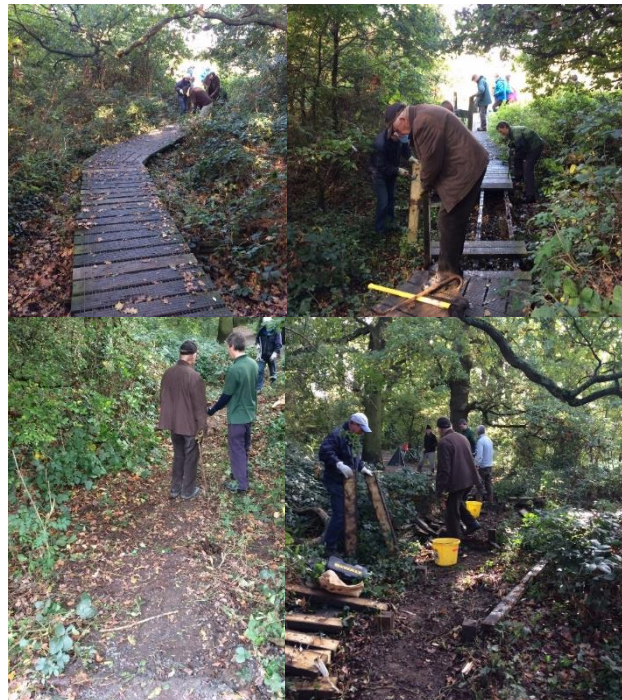
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The second area of boardwalk to be tackled was the section through the woodland. Once the hard job of removing the old structure was undertaken. Oak sleepers were used to construct a new boardwalk, with a wire mesh laid on top to prevent slips and falls, particularly in winter.



Glade channel

The friends connected the meadow by Thornet Wood to Nick's glade but felling small trees, mainly yew, holly and a bit of hawthorn. This will create a wildlife corridor linking these two open spaces and allow birds and butterflies to travel easily from one area to the other. We left trees with wild honeysuckle growing on them as this is an important wildflower, in particular it is the foot plant of the White Admiral butterfly caterpillar. A dead hedge was formed at the end of the channel by Nick's glade to further enhance the habitat, providing a hibernation area, while also discouraging the public from wandering through.



Before



After

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Alan's Entrance

In honour of Jubilee Friends' much loved founder, Alan Saban, who sadly passed away in 2019, the entrance to Alan's path was revamped. Contractors installed new gates and post and rail fencing, as the old one was beyond its best. The Friends tidied the grass area alongside the path, cut back some of the encroaching scrub and laid chippings at the pedestrian gate to make the entrance more enticing. A new sign was installed and a ceremony held, with some of Alan's family and friends joining the Friends to celebrate his life and his dedication to Jubilee Country Park.



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Lowlights

Meadows

Sadly, there were no annual meadow cuts in 2019 as it was too wet for the tractor and bailer to go in. The aim was to cut in Spring 2020, but again it was still too boggy with the wettest February on record. Fortunately, it's not always bad news as some species that don't take kindly to a cut will benefit, including insects, reptiles, amphibians and small mammals will benefit enormously as cuts inevitably destroy their habitats and food source. Coincidentally with the rainfall we have had recently, the uncut grass would have a slightly better capacity for water load, so it's not all bad news. It will be interesting to see how our wildflowers react this year and in turn the butterfly numbers on the 2020 survey, due to begin in April.



Container

Unfortunately, we were delivered the bad news that the Friend's tool container, which resides on Scout property, would no longer be allowed to stay in its current location as the Scouts wish to safeguard the area and install new fencing along the access track. This will prevent the Friends from accessing the site, so the container requires relocation. London Borough of Bromley have agreed for it to be relocated to a new site up in Thornet Wood, on an area of hardstanding near the picnic tables. I will be meeting contractors shortly to arrange the logistics of this and hopefully we will see it in a new spot very soon.

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Upcoming Projects

Hedgehogs

We hope to organise a project with one of the local schools to monitor hedgehog activity within the Park. Jubilee is believed to have a high population of hedgehogs, despite their numbers being in a huge decline nationwide. Our hope is the school children will put out monitoring tunnels in the school grounds next to Jubilee Country Park and will be able to check from footprints whether or not the tunnels are being investigated by the prickly critters. This will not only provide us with important citizen science data, it will also help encourage children to get involved with nature and the importance of conservation.



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Natural Play Area

We have begun works to create a natural play area in the pocket of woodland beside the picnic area. Contractors who carried out thinning works earlier this year, felled a few trees to open up the planned zone. We will be hopefully winching out some of the larger trunks to provide balance beams for children to walk across. As part of our conservation works this week, we undertook the ancient practice of coppicing of an area of old hazel coppice nearby to the picnic area. This not only rejuvenates the trees to extend their life, it also opens the area for ground flora and improve biodiversity. We intend to use the materials from the coppiced hazel to create dead hedges within the play area for children to scamper around. Using some of the logs felled during the thinning works, Andrew Harby has kindly set about carving some insects onto the surfaces, which will then be sunk into the ground to create stepping stones and mini-beasting logs. We hope this will provide a delightful new attraction for children to adventure and explore, while their parents watch on from the picnic tables. This is something that is very dear to me as it's through being encouraged to play outdoors that I first developed my love of nature and conservation, a feeling I hope many of you will share.



Scadbury's
Natural Play Area



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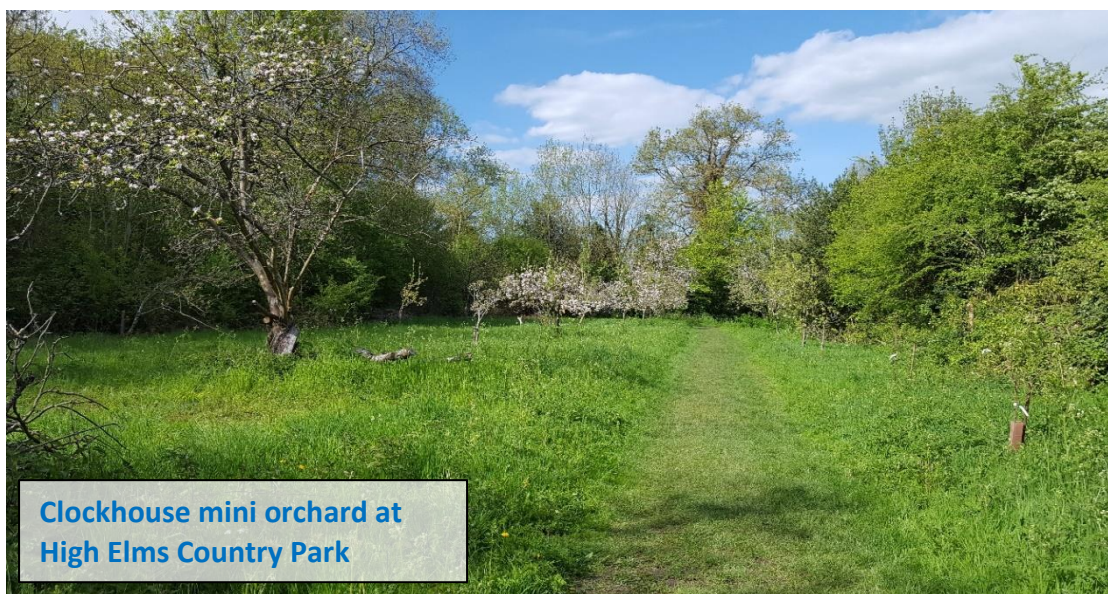
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Mini orchard

We plan to further enhance Alan's entrance making it more enticing, while adding benefits to wildlife. This project is in its very early stages, however it is something we are planning for the Autumn, when the ground is wetter to help the new trees establish themselves. We will get lots of advice from specialists regarding the right type of trees for the area that will thrive and hopefully produce lots of food for visitors and wildlife to enjoy.



Ditches

Ditch works is going to be a main focus over the summer months, once the water levels have dropped. A build-up of vegetation and silt has left many of them blocked and not flowing as well as they should be, resulting in flooding, particularly following the heavy rain we have experienced this winter. We will then continue to maintain these throughout the winter to reduce leaf litter build up and restore them back to their original function.



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Amphibian Survey 2020

Species	Frequency	
Common Toad	294	
Common Frog	11	
Smooth Newt	36 Male	58 Female
Palmate	1	
Great Crested Newt	15 Male	4 Female
Unidentified Brown Newt	16	
Frog Spawn clutches	54+	

Butterfly Survey 2019

Species	Frequency	Species	Frequency
Brimstone	8	Painted Lady	7
Brown Argus	2	Peacock	2
Camberwell Beauty	1	Red Admiral	8
Comma	3	Ringlet	1
Common Blue	27	Silver-Washed Fritillary	1
Gatekeeper	149	Small Blue	2
Holly Blue	6	Small Copper	1
Large White	12	Small Skipper	23
Marbled White	1	Small Tortoiseshell	1
Meadow Brown	531	Small White	68
Orange Tip	1	Speckled Wood	72

THANK YOU

Please let me take this opportunity to thank all the Friends for their hard work this year in actively managing the site, fundraising for new infrastructure etc, carrying out species surveys and generally supporting Jubilee Country Park to be such a wonderful area for all to enjoy.

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