



Sundew



# Annual Report 2019

## Overview

The Friends of Keston Common (FoKC) began in October 2007 and is a voluntary non-profit making organisation. Our main aims and objectives are:

- To help to secure and promote the conservation and protection of Keston Common, Ravensbourne Open Space and Padmall Wood; hereafter all three sites will be included in any reference to Keston Common.
- To monitor its plants, animals and wildlife habitats and maintain and improve its biodiversity.
- To promote its use as a place for quiet, informal enjoyment, recreation and study.
- To help with practical conservation through voluntary action for the benefit of wildlife and the community under the supervision of the London Borough of Bromley through its appointed parks' management contractors.
- To assist in providing an educational experience for the general public in the history, natural history and biodiversity of Keston Common.
- To maintain a sound financial base and seeking other funding or donations to further activities which meet the above aims and objectives.

## Committee

The committee of the Friends met three times during 2019 to oversee its activities. Its members during the year were: Larry Herbert (chair), Tudor Davies (treasurer), Christine Lloyd (secretary, resigned March 2019), Françoise Harrop, Angela Godfrey, Wendy Wiseman & Veronica Moloney (elected March 2019).

## Chairman's Statement

I am pleased to report another successful year with activity numbers consistently in the mid to high teens with a peak of 18 towards the end of 2019. As part of this year's annual report to LBB our estimate for activity hours is 2126 making us one of the highest in terms of effort spent by all 48 Friends Groups. So well done everybody and thanks for all the hard work.

I am also pleased to report that we have been able to retain our Green Flag and my thanks go to idverde for their support enabling this to happen. This year we walked around the site with our judge, who had strong praise for all the work we have been undertaking. The only negative element was the state of the embankment alongside pond 3. It is proposed to move the path to a higher level and let the bank naturally flow into the pond as it does on the east side of pond 2. This change would require LBB/idverde agreement, as there may well be a funding issue to remove fallen trees/clear a route through the rhododendrons. As the Green Flag organisation has flagged this up they will be expecting to see some change within the next couple of years even if this change is merely a plan to make change. I would hope by the time of our next AGM (March 2021) a solution has been forthcoming.



One of the new additions this year was the installation of a new interpretation board close to the entrance to the Common by the roundabout at the junction of Heathfield Road & Westerham Road. This board in the main was funded through the woodland management work agreed with Natural England. FoKC paid a small fee towards the design of this board and we are most grateful to idverde for enabling this project to go ahead. The aim of woodland management is to encourage a wide range of tree species of all ages from saplings to mature trees and deadwood to support the greatest range of wildlife.



With regard activity mornings Steven has been with us throughout the year and we are most grateful for his guidance and expertise. I think the relationship has worked extremely well and his report on progress is available under a separate report.

Towards the end of the year contractual coppicing work has been taking place in Padmall Wood. This has been undertaken as a trial for the Biomass Energy Plant in southern Kent and as such has been completed at no cost to LBB. The wood taken out has been sold to the plant and as such paid the contractors for their work. Although this might at first appear destructive, thinning brings important environmental benefits by allowing increased light to reach the woodland floor resulting in more woodland plants and flowers growing, and new trees regenerating. The increased space and light encourages the remaining trees to grow strong and healthy and for the ground flora to grow. The unfortunate wet weather has made the area and pathways particularly very muddy. Once this has had a chance to dry out further remedial work of restoring the pathways will be undertaken.

As is usual we have had a number of issues throughout the year. Fortunately vandalism has been relatively minor (e.g. broken picnic bench in playground, broken posts and rails, wire netting removed). Littering and fly-tipping remains a continual nuisance. I have submitted countless reports to FixMyStreet and I'm pleased to note that these are generally fixed fairly quickly. One that has remained outstanding for several months is the repair to the see-saw in the children's playground. It seems sourcing parts is the hold-up as there shouldn't be any budgetary constraints. I hope this status will change soon.

Issues that remain on our to do list include several areas of pond work. On pond 1 the islands keep wandering about, the waterfall between pond 1 and pond 2 needs repair, the revetments at pond 3 need a tidy-up and the sluice gate at pond 4 needs further restoration work. Some of this work will need substantial funding and the FoKC Committee will need to consider a variety of options to take these forward.

The committee has also looked at re-instating the drinking fountain close to the store room. At the time of writing the re-instatement of water fountains across the borough's parks is under consideration with LBB. There is the purchase cost as well as the on-going maintenance costs to be considered and whether these can be off-set by savings in a reduction in litter of plastic bottles and cans. As a consequence any definitive plans are on hold for the time being.

## Events

This year FoKC has been involved in two events. The main one being Countryside Day on 30<sup>th</sup> June, which we both organised and participated in. This proved to be once again a successful event raising over £600. One element of concern was the entrance to the site, where the newly erected posts proved problematic to the smaller vehicles. It is noted that this has now been altered and we will have to see how this works for the 2020 event.



A second event was participation at the Christmas Fair hosted at the MA Centre in Hayes. We were able to sell our cards and booklets and generally promote the volunteering effort of the Friends. Unfortunately the footfall for the event was somewhat lower than we had hoped and though we made some money it was less than we had hoped. The organisers are looking to expand matters for 2020 and we will reconsider whether its worthwhile attending in 2020.



## Walks

Our monthly walks continue to prove popular and we are now regularly getting numbers in the mid teens. They are held on the first Wednesday of each month starting at 2pm from the Keston Village sign. All walks will aim to explore the wonders of Keston Common and the surrounding areas of Hayes Common, West Wickham Common, Downe and Leaves Green. Some walks, as determined by attendee choice, will focus on the historical landscape whilst others will be purely for enjoyment. Well behaved dogs are always welcome.

## Publicity

Our social media presence continues to attract followers and our website has now had over 61,000 visits up from 50,000 last year. The History page continues to attract the most visits up from 9,500 to close to 11,000. On Facebook our followers have risen from 258 last year to 321 this year, a slightly slower increase than we have seen in previous years but still very welcome. We will endeavour to post more regularly in the coming year with a hope of attracting more interest and potential volunteers.

I would also like to thank Sally Churchus, editor of the Keston parish magazine, who continues to support us and publish a variety of FoKC progress reports. My thanks also to Tudor and Bob, as occasional contributors.

## Training

The Bromley Friends Forum has organised a number of training courses throughout the year. These included Hedge Laying (both live and dead), Pond Maintenance, Improving Biodiversity in Amenity Spaces, Reptile Surveying, Butterfly identification and Emergency First Aid. FoKC has sent delegates to most of these courses and we would like to thank the various course leaders for their time and expertise. All courses have been very well received.

## Summary of Accounts

A summary of accounts for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> December 2019 are as follows:

Income		Expenditure	
Volunteer Donations	£270	FoKC printed clothing	£394
Friends Forum Grants	£205	Board design/production	£228
Event generated income	£652	Admin costs (inc. tool insurance)	£254
		Donations to external parties	£100
<u>Total income</u>	<u>£1,127</u>	<u>Total Expenditure</u>	<u>£976</u>

Full audited accounts will be presented under separate report.

*Larry Herbert*  
*Chair, Friends of Keston Common*  
*26<sup>th</sup> February 2020*