



Welcome

We hope that you will enjoy reading this first newsletter produced by the Friends of High Elms. We are a small but enthusiastic group of volunteers. We love High Elms and believe that it has so much to offer visitors – from the Cafe and visitors' centre, with its new mural, to the formal gardens, wildflower meadows, nature trail, ponds and woodlands. Our aim is to maintain and improve High Elms Country Park for the benefit of both wildlife and people. You may have seen us working around BEECHE or in the woodlands and wondered what we were doing. In this newsletter we hope to give you an idea of the work we undertake.

The Orchid Bank

The display of flowers and grasses on the Orchid Bank has been magnificent this year. From June until July the orchids are a feast for the eyes. Six species of orchid may be seen on the Orchid Bank: the Common Spotted, Pyramidal, Bee Orchid,



Bee Orchid

Twayblade, Man Orchid and Fly Orchid. Whilst the Orchid Bank looks very natural it does require careful management. If the soil is allowed to become too fertile then other plants will start to dominate. A yearlong management cycle is followed to produce the best habitat for these rare and beautiful species.

Regular visitors to High Elms may have noticed the work that the Countryside Officers and Friends of High Elms have put into the Orchid Bank and the surrounding rides. Over the winter of 2011/2012, invasive scrub was removed and the ground mowed and raked. The cuttings were removed to maintain low nutrient levels in the soil and the central racks were considerably reduced. A few mature Beech trees were also removed to allow more light to reach the plants at ground level. The harvested wood has been used to make charcoal in our charcoal burner. The charcoal created is then sold on site to the public to raise valuable funds to support the High Elms Estate.

The walk around the top of the orchid bank has been opened out to create a transition zone of woodland edge between the chalk grassland and the woodland. It is hoped that this work will encourage birds to colonise this new habitat.



Dog Violet (Bob Land)

Clearance of scrub from the edges of the rides is an important task during the winter months as this allows some of the more delicate

plants to gain light to grow in early spring. One of these plants is the lowly Dog Violet, which is the sole food plant for the caterpillar of the Silver-Washed Fritillary. This butterfly was on the verge of extinction within Kent in the early 1990s but has since seen a dramatic return with a thriving colony at High Elms thanks to the hard work put in by the volunteers. Last Summer Silver Washed Fritillary butterflies were observed egg laying on tree trunks at a couple of

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sites where scrub clearance has taken place. It is amazing that the tiny caterpillars that hatch from these eggs in August remain on the tree bark all through the winter without feeding until the following spring when they finally descend and disperse to seek out Dog Violet.



Silver-Washed Fritillary (Paul Sokoloff)

Look out for this year's generation of these unmistakable large bright-orange adult butterflies through mid-July to August.

Summer Butterflies at High Elms

It should be possible to observe the following butterflies flying among the meadows and along the glades at High Elms. Test your identification skills and put a tick against each butterfly that you spot on site.

Small Skipper	Holly Blue	
Essex Skipper	White Admiral	
Large Skipper	Red Admiral	
Dingy Skipper	Peacock	
Brimstone	Comma	
Large White	Silver Washed Fritillary	
Small White	Speckled Wood	
Green Veined White	Marbled White	
Small Copper	Gatekeeper	
Brown Argus	Meadow Brown	
Common Blue	Ringlet	

Lavender Garden – a touch of Provence at High Elms.

One of our more fragrant and attractive projects was the planting of the Lavender Garden. Kent Bee-Keepers

Association maintains the teaching apiary at High Elms. There was an area of overgrown land next to it and so we thought that was

the ideal site on which to create a “bee-friendly” habitat. We cleared the piece of land of weeds and planted lavender plants, a buddleia and a honeysuckle –all plants which bees (and other pollinators) love.



Bee good today - Bees (and other insects) are vital to the pollination of plants but numbers are declining. Help by planting bee friendly flowers. Search online for ideas.

A Walk with a Tree Expert

There is an arboretum and many magnificent specimen trees on the High Elms Estate. The Friends wanted to be able to identify the trees and to learn a little bit more about them. So we called in the expert, Mark Byfield, Arboricultural Officer, London Borough of Bromley. At the end of May, Mark led a very interesting walk naming the trees and regaling us with fascinating tree related facts and stories.

Next to the Gate House there is a Cedar of Lebanon, which was probably planted in the 1840s. It is said that the first cedar to be grown in Europe was brought by a returning Crusader, who gave it half his own water ration on the voyage to keep it alive.

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Opposite the Eton 5s court, there is a yew tree. The yew is relatively slow growing and long lived, with some estimated to be thousands of years old. Yew wood was traditionally used for making longbows, with the heartwood on the inside of the bow and the sapwood is on the outside. This increased the strength and efficiency of the bow.

Near the picnic benches is a Giant Californian Redwood tree. This species is the largest tree, by volume, in the world.



Calculating the age of a Redwood in High Elms

If you measure the circumference of the trunk of the Giant Redwood tree you can calculate its age. It grows at 2 inches per year, twice as fast as other trees.

The Next Step Now that all the trees have been identified, the plan is to label them and design a tree trail.

Maintaining the Lubbock Family Burial Site

Traditionally members of the Lubbock family, who formerly owned the High Elms Estate, were buried at St Mary the Virgin Church in Downe. After a difference of opinion between John Lubbock, 1st Lord Avebury and



the vicar about the emphasis on the teaching of science over religious studies, the Lubbock family moved their place of worship to St. Giles Church, Farnborough and established a family burial site on the High Elms Estate. The Friends group spent a morning in June, weeding, cleaning the brickwork on the memorial and removing overhanging branches.

Dates for your Diary

Ice Well Tours

Enjoy a guided tour of the Victorian Ice Well (open 2:00 pm to 4:00 pm) on: **August 5th, 19th and 27th.**

Lubbock Celebration Day

Bank holiday Monday 27th August 2012 12-4pm

Join us to celebrate the end of the Lubbocks Landscape at High Elms project which has been looking into the history of the High Elms Estate.

You may have noticed brickwork which has appeared on the lawn area: this marks out the corners of the former mansion footprint and gives visitors a much better idea of where the mansion house used to be. There will be much to see and do:

- ❖ **Guided walks** at 1pm and 3pm (Please book in advance on 01689 862815).
- ❖ **Watch a demonstration match of Eton Fives** by the Fives Association, 'have a go' sessions also.
- ❖ **Talk to former nurses** that were trained at High Elms, when the mansion house was rented by King's College Hospital, London in the 1950s.
- ❖ **Listen to oral histories** gathered from people that lived and worked at High Elms
- ❖ **Chat to Bromley Borough Local History Society** and Friends of High Elms

We hope that you can join us on the day.

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Join us.

- Do you enjoy visiting High Elms Country Park?
- Are you interested in finding out more about this beautiful nature reserve and helping to maintain it?
- Would you like to discover more about the history of High Elms?
- Do you welcome the opportunity to become involved in new projects, environmental events, surveying flora and fauna, leading tours of the Ice Well and much more?
- Would you like to join us in our practical conservation work?*

If you answer “yes” to one or more of these questions, then why not join the Friends of High Elms.

***Conservation work tasks take place every Wednesday morning and once a month on a Saturday. All tools and training (and tea!) provided. No previous experience is required, just bring your enthusiasm.**

It's easy to become a Friend of High Elms.

To join us, simply complete the form below and send it to the address at the bottom of this page.

Alternatively email your details to: friendsofhighelms@gmail.com

Name:

Address:

.....Postcode:

Tel: Mob.:

If you would like to receive updates about forthcoming activities with the Friends of High Elms, please complete your e-mail address below.

E-mail:

If you are not able to join us in practical tasks, but would still like to support the **Friends of High Elms**, then you may like to consider making a donation towards our work. Please make your cheque payable to 'Friends of High Elms' and send it to: **Friends of High Elms**, c/o High Elms Country Park, Shire Lane, Farnborough, Kent, BR6 7JH