



Friends of Jubilee Country Park

Newsletter Autumn 2020

Chairman's Report by John Bruce

What a strange year this has been! Our conservation work party came to an abrupt end on 16 March as everyone went into lockdown and we weren't able to resume until the end of July, though some of our loyal litter-pickers continued throughout. They were much needed as the park's popularity has flourished, with many local people discovering it for the first time.

Unfortunately, most of our programme of events, talks and walks had to be cancelled. First to go was our Annual General Meeting which had been scheduled for March 19. We quickly rearranged this as a 'virtual AGM' on 30 March, with the majority of papers and voting slips distributed by email. For the few members who do not have email, the accounts and a voting slip were included in their newsletter mailing.

By 6 April, the voting slips had been received by the Chairman and all were unanimously in favour of the four motions:

1. Acceptance of the minutes of the previous AGM, held on 28 March 2019
2. Acceptance of the Chair's report
3. Acceptance of the accounts for the year ending 31 December 2019, and the re-appointment of Mr Donald Wilson as independent examiner
4. The election of the following six nominees to the committee of the Friends of Jubilee Country Park: John Bruce, Sarah Coulbert, Zara Jolly, Ros Martin, Jennie Randall and Peter Runacres.

Thanks were recorded to Sylvia Chubbs and Penny Russell who stood down from the committee and we greatly appreciate their contribution to the work of the Friends.



At the end of August, a suitably distanced and disinfected conservation work party started up again. Our first job was to remove the saplings that had sprung up in the meadows – ready for mowing! We are now meeting weekly on Monday mornings and would warmly welcome any new volunteers.

Please contact us on 07840 542261 or find full details at www.jubileecountrypark.btck.co.uk/getinvolved.

Mowing of the meadows took place in September for the first time in two years

The spring weather was magnificent and brought out fabulous displays of woodland wild flowers. This was in turn followed by a scorching summer.

On Monday 21 September, the mower came to the meadows of Jubilee Country Park. This is the first time in two years that our fields have been mowed, raked and baled. In autumn 2019, it was too wet to mow.

Autumn mowing of meadows helps to encourage wild flowers in the spring



The raking and baling is an important part of conservation as it helps to prevent the soil from becoming enriched, as wild flowers and a wide variety of our grasses flourish on poor soils. It will be interesting to see what effect the two year gap has next spring and summer.

Currently, our walks and talks programme remains on hold, but I still have my fingers crossed that we will be able to go ahead with my Christmas walk on Monday 28 December. Please check our Events Diary on the website for updates and we will email further details as soon as we have them.

Elsewhere in this newsletter, Ros Martin reports on butterflies in our park and she is to be congratulated for producing a new interpretation board which will be installed near the picnic area.

We recently heard that Sue Folkes plans to move away from the area in the coming months. Sue, a former Chairman, has been a great supporter of the park for many years and she is the driving force behind the Digital Nature Trail and the Woodland Trail. Sue has also raised considerable funds through her very popular plant sales, and if that weren't enough, she is also our IT guru, maintaining our website and email account. We will all miss her and we wish Sue and Brian well for their new life on the east coast.

In terms of membership, we currently have a total of 351 individual members across 212 households. We have 18 volunteers making up the conservation work party and 31 active members who run and support our various events.

Although almost all of our summer events and fundraising had to be cancelled, we did manage to run a couple of events early in the year and one of our members did a fantastic job selling plants at a social distance from the end of her drive, raising £700. Overall, due to expenditure we were already committed to, including new information boards which cost almost £3000, and with repair work needed to our tool store, we will have a deficit of about £500 against our income for this year.

We are about to send out our membership renewal reminders and while we fully appreciate that these are difficult times, our green spaces are more important than ever and if you are able to, we hope you will renew your membership and continue your support. Our sincere thanks to those who have already done so and kindly included donations, it is greatly appreciated.

We really hope that we will be able to re-start some of our events programme next year. Please check our website for updates and we will keep you posted as the situation becomes clearer.

We hope to see you again soon. Meanwhile, keep safe and thank you all for your continuing support.

Plants and Flowers found in Jubilee Country Park by John Bruce



Common Fleabane (*Pulicaria dysenterica*)

Although common in Jubilee Country Park, I seem to have seen more fleabane in late summer this year than ever before. It has a neat, bright yellow daisy-like flower and grows in damp ground. It is attractive to many insects, including bees and butterflies.

As its name suggests, it was dried or sometimes burnt and used to deter fleas and midges – it has a slight smell of carbolic. *Pulex* is the Latin for flea and was given its name by Linnaeus. Its Latin name indicates that it was also used to treat dysentery and eye ailments.

Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*)

The fruits, or haws, of the hawthorn are magnificent at this time of year, as is the blossom in springtime. There are two types of hawthorn, or May, which are found in our park – *Crataegus monogyna* and *Crataegus laevigata*, or Midland Hawthorn. They differ from each other in that the common variety has one style which results in one stony carpel in the haw, while the Midland variety has two or three styles, resulting in two or three carpels. Unfortunately the two types freely hybridise, resulting in bushes with both characteristics.

There is a mass of mythology surrounding the hawthorn, largely due to the commonly held belief that it formed Christ's crown of thorns. So some say there are many medicinal and magical uses. One that I like was used by the women of Thrace who used it *"to stop my husband beating me and to change him into a donkey, that I may make him carry the straw!"*



Autumn's Bounty by Sue Folkes

Winter berries bring a welcome splash of colour in autumn and winter when many trees are otherwise bare. They provide a vital food source for wildlife during our coldest months.

These are some of the colourful autumn berries you might see next time you visit the park.

For more information, please see the autumn nature trail on our dedicated website: jcpnaturetrail.btck.co.uk

Butterflies in Jubilee Country Park by Ros Martin

Jubilee Country Park's variety of landscapes - wildflower meadows and natural grasslands, hedgerows and semi-natural ancient woodlands - are all beneficial to butterflies and wildlife. Many of the tasks undertaken by our Conservation Work Party, such as the removal of saplings from meadows and the opening up of woodland glades, help to ensure that these habitats are properly maintained as they are essential for the survival of butterflies and other wildlife.

Another important part of butterfly conservation is monitoring trends in the populations of butterflies. In order to do this, volunteers walk a fixed route, known as a *transect*, each week between April and September. The number of individuals of each butterfly species is counted and sent to Butterfly Conservation and the UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme. These annual surveys show that the population of butterflies varies each year, but the trend is a long-term decline. Overall, 76% of the UK's resident and regular migrant butterfly species have declined in numbers over the last 40 years. This is of concern not just for butterflies, but for other wildlife species and the overall state of the environment. Intensification of agriculture, changing woodland management, pollution, changing climate and the ever increasing demands on land are believed to have contributed to the butterflies' decline.

The Friends of Jubilee Country Park have carried out weekly transects for a number of years, with records going back to 2004. The warm, sunny weather has been perfect for butterflies - of the total of 26 species which have been recorded in the park, 21 species have been seen this summer. The most abundant were the meadow butterflies, especially the Meadow Browns, which appeared in early June, along with Gatekeepers later in the month. Their caterpillars feed on flowers such as common knapweed, ragwort and yellow rattle.



Gatekeeper



Orange Tip

Orange Tips and Brimstones were the earliest butterflies to appear and were a welcome sight during sunny days in March and April. Common Blue appeared in May, with a second brood in July. Their caterpillars feed on Bird's Foot Trefoil, a common flower found in the meadows.

Skippers, which thrive where there is an abundance of grasses, were on the wing in June and July and Ringlets, with their chocolatey brown wings and white trim, were feeding on brambles in July. Brown Argus, Small Heath and Small Copper were also about this summer. The most common

'White and Yellow' butterflies recorded were the Small and Large Whites, although a small number of Green Veined and Marbled Whites were also seen.



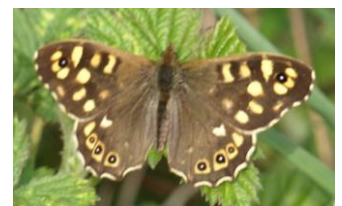
Ringlet



Comma

Commas, with their distinctive orange colour and ragged outline, have increased in number in recent years. It is believed this is due to climate change and increasing temperatures. Along with the Peacock, Red Admiral and Painted Lady, which have all been seen in Jubilee Park this year, they lay their eggs on nettles, the food plant of the caterpillars. It is therefore vital that nettles are not cut back whilst caterpillars are feeding.

Butterflies found in the sunny spots of woodlands are the Speckled Woods, often seen spiralling into the air chasing each other. They were about in good numbers from April and throughout the summer, feeding on aphid honeydew from leaves near the tops of trees. Their caterpillars feed on grasses and can overwinter either as a caterpillar or as a chrysalis, hanging from blades of grass.



Speckled Wood

For more information on many of the butterflies in Jubilee Country Park, please see the butterfly pictures in the Gallery pages of the Friends' website: jubileecountrypark.btck.co.uk

Jennie's Jubilee Jottings by Jennie Randall

Just before lockdown, on 9 March, the Friends conservation work party gathered for the unveiling of the *Alan's Path* sign (at the pedestrian entrance, almost opposite the Crooked Billet) in memory of Alan Saban, a founding father of the Friends. The sign was unveiled by Sue Holland, Conservation and Community Manager from idverde, but perhaps better known to us as one of our former rangers. The sign was funded by a combination of the monies raised by my quiz night and generous donations from many of the Friends.



The Friends unveil the sign for Alan's Path in memory of Alan Saban

It is a well-known fact that during lockdown and since then, many people have made much more use of their local park or greenspace than ever before. For residents of Petts Wood and Bickley, Jubilee Country Park is where they have been heading. Many have said to me that they've rediscovered Jubilee Park, having not visited for many years, purely because they never had the time before. Others have confessed that although they've lived in the vicinity of the park for decades, it was not until lockdown, when there was nowhere else to go, that it ever occurred to them to visit! It has been great that so many have had the opportunity to see so many new faces and perhaps make new friends too.

You may have read in the media of the tremendous increase in litter resulting from the influx of visitors to parks and wondered perhaps if this was also the case at Jubilee. The answer is most definitely, yes.

Although the conservation work party was not permitted to operate, a dedicated team of individuals was still allowed to litter-pick in the park on a regular basis. I would especially like to thank Angela Martin, Ian Miller, Stephen Westcott, Pat Brown and Andrew Mackay, who all devoted many hours and walked many miles, clearing up rubbish.

The majority of what we found was not from our daytime visitors, but from the nocturnal ones (and I'm not referring to hedgehogs and bats), who were clearly gathering in contradiction of all the social-distancing laws and guidelines. Cans, bottles, PPE and much more besides were found in vast quantities. Had it not been for the dedication of our litter-pickers, since March, the park would not be the beautiful place it is today.



Jennie Randall with Alan's son Dave

I would also add that it's not always visitors who litter – sometimes it is our neighbours. On one occasion recently, while clearing a huge quantity of bottles from near a boundary fence in the park, I narrowly escaped being hit on the head by three large gin bottles being thrown over a garden fence!

Litter-picking can have much nicer memorable moments too though – one day we got a glimpse of a deer near Alan’s Path. Now that was exciting!

Some cheerful news is especially welcome at the moment, so the arrival of a baby girl to our Ranger, Angela Wood, was something to celebrate. Serin Elsie Hazel was born on 2nd July at 14.21, weighing in at 7lb 11oz. Mother and baby are both doing well. Angela is currently still on maternity leave but plans to return to work in the near future.



I can't believe it's not wood! One of the new benches made from recycled plastic.

As part of a new initiative, the Friends have recently purchased two benches made of recycled plastic which has the appearance of wood. One is situated in the field near the Oxhathw Crescent pedestrian entrance, the other on the London Loop path, near the boundary with St. James’ School. These benches have the advantage of being virtually maintenance free (no painting required), graffiti can easily be removed from them and they will not rot. Another distinct benefit is that unlike wood, which retains dampness long after it has rained, plastic benches do not. So, as Mary Berry might put it, fewer soggy bottoms!

A television crew from Channel 5 visited Jubilee Country Park in September to film along Alan’s Path and on Bob’s Land for the children’s programme *Milkshake*. The episode will encourage children to engage with nature. We will try to let everyone know when this is scheduled to be broadcast, possibly in November.

All the main car park and pedestrian entrances in to Jubilee Park have a dog waste bin with one exception, that of Alan’s Path. Following feedback from the Friends and dog walkers, idverde are now looking into installing a dog waste bin at this location. This will be a great improvement!

And finally, I expect that like me, you are missing all the talks, walks and events which the Friends normally host and can’t wait for the day the “new normal” reverts to everything being just normal again. Then, as our Queen, for whose Silver Jubilee the park was named, so memorably said in her broadcast “ we will be with our friends again” and isn’t that something to look forward to!

We would like to extend a warm welcome to our new members and we hope you all enjoy reading this edition of our newsletter.

*Whether you are a long standing Friend or have recently discovered the park, you may be interested to read about its long and varied history in Jennie Randall’s book, **Jubilee Country Park-Its History and Heritage** which tells the fascinating story of the area which now forms the park, from the Bronze Age onwards.*

You can purchase the book from WH Smith’s Petts Wood, Southborough Library or Petts Wood Library. It is priced at £5 and all profits support the work of the Friends of Jubilee Country Park. The book makes a great gift or would be the perfect stocking filler.

Jubilee Country Park- Explore it, love it, support it

Visit to Saltbox Hill Nature Reserve by Ros Martin

Sunitha Amos from London Wildlife Trust led a very interesting walk at Saltbox Hill Nature Reserve to show us the work of the Brilliant Butterfly Project. The two year project is a partnership between London Wildlife Trust, the Natural History Museum and Butterfly Conservation. Their aim is to maintain the existing areas of chalk grassland, as well as the creation of new wildlife havens.

The site, near Biggin Hill, was purchased by the London Wildlife Trust in 1999, after a campaign to save the area which had become neglected. The 17 acre reserve is one of the most important surviving areas of chalk grassland in the Greater London area and is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

The area is west facing, steeply sloping and overlooks a hidden dry chalk valley. Following the clearance of some mature trees and hawthorn scrub, it is now home to an array of wildflowers and grasses, as well as 32 species of butterfly.

Charles Darwin lived nearby in Downe and the abundant wildlife in the surrounding area was said to have been an inspiration for his evolutionary theories.



Saltbox Hill Nature Reserve - Wild Carrot, Wild Marjoram and Yellow Rattle in flower



Brown Argus

After a shower of rain earlier in the day, it was warm and sunny for our visit – perfect weather for butterflies, which were out in profusion.

Sunitha is very knowledgeable, not only regarding butterflies, but also the wildflowers, which made the visit both enjoyable and very informative.

The Brilliant Butterfly Project is due to run for another year and we hope to arrange more visits to this beautiful and tranquil area next summer.

For more information about the project and the wildlife of the area, please see their website:

www.wildlondon.org.uk/brilliant-butterflies

How to get in touch and useful contact details

We would love to hear from you with your ideas, suggestions and feedback, so please get in touch via our website www.jubileecountrypark.btck.co.uk or by email to jubileecountrypark@yahoo.co.uk

You can follow us on Facebook and Twitter. Please send in your photos with captions and don't forget to share with your friends and family. **You can find us at www.facebook.com/jubileecountrypark**

If you have a question about a particular event, or would like to find out more about volunteering, please contact the number mentioned on our website or call us on 07840 542261.

The Friends of Jubilee Country Park work with Bromley Council solely in a conservation and preservation role. To report any of the following issues, please contact Bromley Council's Customer Service Centre on 0300 303 8658: Overflowing bins (dog waste and rubbish), fallen or dangerous trees, anti-social behaviour, vandalism/graffiti, dog related issues including dangerous dogs, maintenance issues including uncut grass, damaged fences, gates and paths and dumping of rubbish.

The Importance of Road Verge Management to Support Wildlife

Dr Judith John has been promoting more wildlife friendly verges for several years following Plantlife Road Verge Management Guidelines. It has always been perceived that verges look untidy if they have not been cut. However, following lockdown, when verges were left unmown until mid-May, she received emails from people who were upset that the wild flowers, which had appeared on verges in the brief period when they weren't mown, had now been cut. Following these responses, she started to make a list of verges that might be suitable for management in a more wildlife friendly way. She would like to know of any verges around Jubilee Park (or elsewhere) that might be worth managing for wildlife. However, where they interfere with sight lines which could cause risk to safety, road verges would still need to be cut regularly.

If you know of any suitable verges, please get in touch with Judith at j_john02@hotmail.com.

Below is an overview of Dr Judith John's report for Bromley Biodiversity Partnership on the importance of road verge management to encourage biodiversity.

Since the 1930s, 97% of ancient wildflower meadows have been lost. Road verges are sometimes remnants of old meadows which have not been subject to herbicides, fungicides, pesticides, fertilisers and soil disturbance, such as ploughing, which has negatively affected much agricultural land. They may therefore contain relict hay meadow flora in the seedbank beneath them. Any grass verge, if allowed to grow during the spring and summer, will support some native grasses and wildflowers. Examples include Cocksfoot and Yorkshire Fog which are important food for caterpillars of butterflies including Large, Small & Essex Skippers, Speckled Wood and Gatekeeper.

Flowers provide nectar and pollen for pollinating insects including solitary and bumblebees, hoverflies, butterflies, moths, flower beetles etc. Numbers of many invertebrate species, including many pollinators are in decline, often steep decline. Butterflies of the "wider countryside" fell in abundance by an estimated 46% between 1976 and 2017 and one third of 353 wild bee and hoverfly species declined in the areas where they were found between 1980 and 2013.

Road verges can provide vital links between areas of greenspace, thereby allowing plants and animals (including species in the London Borough of Bromley that are rare and/or declining) to move through the landscape between larger greenspaces. This will be of increasing importance as the climate warms and the range of some species in southern England has to move northwards to allow their survival.

The Natural Environment White Paper 2011, written by a large group of wildlife experts, highlighted the importance of linking habitats to reduce biodiversity loss. It concluded that the current system of wildlife sites "does not comprise a coherent and resilient ecological network" and called for wildlife sites to be, 'more, bigger, better and joined'. The Nature Recovery Network proposed as part of the Environment Bill 2020 builds on these principals.

Better linking of areas for wildlife is also important for people and can bring the countryside into the town, allowing city dwellers better access to nature and offering the mental and physical benefits of natural greenspace.

Most wildflowers grow best in nutrient poor soil so good verge management generally means cutting the verges annually in September or thereabouts and **removing** the cuttings, then composting them. Cutting and clearing of road verges is sometimes carried out more than once a year, but critically should not occur between end February and August/September, to allow wildflowers to flower and set seed.

The Countryside Survey 2007 stated that grassland soils, 0-15cms deep, have the highest carbon stock of any UK broad habitat. Factors relating to carbon loss from the soil include disturbance, drainage, application of chemicals, and management. Verge management for biodiversity will contribute to making London Borough of Bromley carbon neutral by 2029.