

Friends of Jubilee Country Park

Autumn Newsletter 2017



Editorial

by Susan Folkes

I feel that every other word in this editorial should be HELP! We need help on the work party, help on the newsletter, help with walks and talks, help with membership and renewals, secretarial help, help at events and help with school projects. Having said that, I would like to thank everyone who has been working to make everything run so smoothly this summer, alongside their own commitments.

The loss of Ian Pannett from the work party and our committee has left a big hole. He has been an active member since 2008 moving to Devon last month to spend more time with his daughter and grandchildren. An invaluable member of the work party, he was always there first to help sort out the tools required for each Monday's tasks and last to leave as he put them away after each session. Apparently, Ian was inexplicably fond of brooms and insistent upon taking a broom whatever the task was and however unlikely it was that the broom would ever be used!

He has organised days out for the volunteers including Wakehurst place, Wisley and Hever Castle, driving them in the *give to give* minibus. He drove the minibus regularly for the Multiple Sclerosis Society and has been a key figure in organising teams for the Friends to compete in the Mayor's quiz. He helped Derek McWalter of the RSPB with monitoring the bird boxes in Jubilee (see survey below) and has kept the notice boards in the Park up-to-date. He has helped out at our talks, grown tomatoes to sell at May Fayre and regularly led walks around the park and beyond. His wife Gill has also been very supportive and baked cakes for this year's cake sales in Petts Wood. On behalf of all our members we wish Ian and Gill well in their new life in Devon and thank you, Ian, for being such a dedicated volunteer and good Friend.



Ian Pannett treating bench in picnic area

Dear reader, if you feel you can plug any of these gaps please contact us!

Another sad loss is that of Jan Coulbert, the mother of Sarah our Facebook guru, who passed away on 15th March, 2017 after battling with a complicated illness. Jan was co-opted onto the committee only last year. Her legacy is the organising of two coffee mornings at the Methodist church in Petts Wood where we made over £330 for the Friends. Our hearts go out to Sarah. Another coffee morning will be scheduled in February. Keep an eye out for emails and posters.



*Moth - Agapeta zoegana
by Bill Welch 30/7/17*

I can't miss the opportunity to publish a good photo. This is my favourite by Bill Welch from the hugely successful bat and moth evening. You can find many others on the website in the Galleries.

We have had no demand from members for our monthly social meeting at the Sovereign of the Seas, so have decided to discontinue. There are ample opportunities for people to meet at our events, the work party and at our new coffee mornings in Petts Wood. The last meeting will be on 6th October.

In the Park, *idverde*, have been busy. Works include improving the London Loop path which runs through the park from the radar gate to the St. James Park entrance and replacing the damaged gate to the picnic area. Congratulations are in order to Sue Holland on her promotion to senior community manager at *idverde* and we welcome Darren Russell, who replaces her as our community and conservation team leader. The latest work party programme is on the Volunteer page of our website.

Jubilee Country Park's new, improved Nature Trail promised in our last newsletter is now available and leaflets can be found in Petts Wood and Southborough libraries as well as at the Beeche Centre or any of our events. The leaflet can also be downloaded from our website on the Nature Trail tab. We thank the Petts Wood Residents Association for funding its printing.



Squirrel posing in the Ancient Oak at post 15 of the Nature Trail

Following our appeal in the last newsletter, we are working with Bromley High School to digitise the nature trail. If you would like to help on one of our school projects, then please get in touch.

Also, in this issue, we have a report on the meadows, which have looked especially lovely this year, a report on the Bee Breakfast for Friends of the Earth and the first, and hopefully not the last in a series "The story behind the name", Jennie gives us the story behind Ray's Pond. Finally, Jennie says goodbye to a good friend, Richard Ewing, who passed away on 10th May 2017.

For Friends without email, to save costs, we enclose a renewal slip for 2018. We will be reminding other members by email in December but, if you like, you can renew online using our bank details which can be found at the bottom of the newsletter.

I am taking this opportunity to give advance notice that the newsletter next Spring will be my last. In March 2018, I will have completed four years as chairman of the Friends of Jubilee Country Park and feel it is time for a new face. I think I'm enjoying it too much!

Jubilee Park's Wildflower Meadows

*By John Bruce
images by Susan Folkes*

In early summer Plantlife launched the Great British Wild Flower Hunt. It had found that 70% of people want to know about wild flowers – and some people know very little (like being unable to recognise a bluebell).

Well Jubilee Country Park is a great place to start. There are probably well over 250 species of trees, flowers, shrubs, and grasses right here on our doorstep. On our Wild Flower Walk in early July we ticked off around fifty plants in flower. Looking at flowers is usually the easiest way to recognise plants – but you can also use other identifiers like leaves, fruits and seeds.

I haven't spotted anything particularly rare or unusual this year but there has been much to delight. In spring the wood anemones (as well as bluebells, primroses, and luminous lesser celandine) were great. In May and June the buttercups and bird's-foot trefoil make yellow the meadow ground cover.



Sniffer dog spots common spotted orchid and buttercup in Jubilee



Ian and other Work party members skirting meadow of Corky-fruited Water Dropwort

In July this year we had a magnificent display of our own Corky-fruited Water Dropwort, blanketing the lower, wetter meadows in white. This umbel used to be rare in our neck of the woods, but is now increasingly found in neighbouring grasslands. Then in August we had a fabulous display of Greater Knapweed in the upper meadows, bringing in the bees and butterflies.

So now it is autumn – look out for Common Fleabane and of course the much under-rated Ivy in bloom. Also look at the Water Dropwort and you will see why it is called "Corky fruited".

So, what has been special this year? The first sighting of the brilliant crimson flower on the Grass Vetchling always raises the spirits, and there are the Greater Hay rattle and Common Spotted Orchids which are always worth searching out. No Bee Orchid this year – but maybe next!

Bird box survey 2017

By Derek McWalter and Ian Pannett

22 boxes were monitored and checked from early March to mid-June.

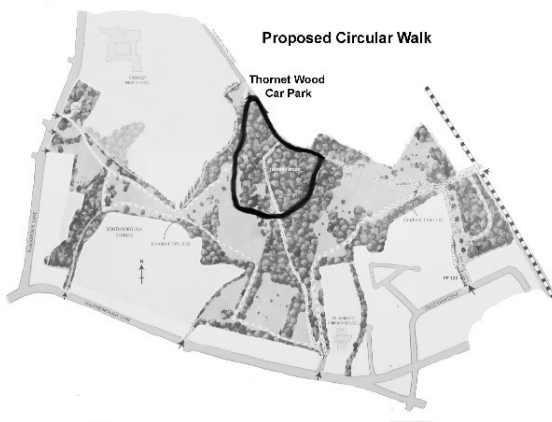
9 boxes with blue tits nesting.
69 young were ringed, 2 found dead - failed to fledge.
8 boxes with great tits nesting.
44 young were ringed, 4 found dead - failed to fledge.
2 boxes not used
1 abandoned with 3/4 built nest
2 abandoned with 5 & 7 eggs, suspect the parents died.



Bird ringing

Woodland and Meadow Wheelchair Accessible Path

by Susan Folkes



idverde have started work on improving the surface on this route and I am delighted to announce that we have been awarded a **Walnuts Community Grant** for adding signage to the route. There are lots of paths in the park and it would be easy to end up at the top of a set of steps! The Walnuts Community Grant is provided by *Rockspring*, owners of the Walnut Centre since 2015, and managed by *Project Dirt*.

Project Dirt is a UK wide active network connecting and resourcing community projects. To discover and get involved local community projects and events have a look at www.projectdirt.com. You will be able to check on the progress of this and other local projects and events.

The story behind the name - Ray's Pond

by Jennie Randall

If you enter Jubilee Country Park from Blackbrook Lane car park and follow the path beyond the gate you will soon pass, on the left-hand side, *Ray's Pond*. I'm often asked how it acquired this name - this is the story.

Many years ago, there was an unnamed pond on this site. Over time, it had slowly silted up, as all ponds eventually do without management. Other than the presence of a few flag irises in a slightly muddy depression, there was nothing there any more to indicate it had once been there. From historical records, we knew that meadow where it was situated had, to earlier generations, been known as *Pond Field*.

Jubilee Country Park is home to Great Crested Newts, an internationally important endangered species, whose habitat it is important to protect and enhance. After a survey of the park by experts from the Kent Reptile and Amphibian Group, it was suggested that the Friends should restore the pond in order to provide the newts with an additional place in which to breed within their dispersal zone of approximately 500 metres.

In 2009 Judy John, then Site Manager for Jubilee, spent many hours working with the Friends of Jubilee to put together a funding bid for £4,500 to restore the pond. Funds for the project



Ray's pond 2010

came, via the Veolia Environmental Trust, from the Government's Landfill Communities Fund. As you may be aware, when rubbish is disposed of by being sent to landfill a tax is paid on top of normal landfill rates by the organisation disposing of the rubbish. The purpose of the tax is to minimise the amount of waste being sent to landfill and to encourage more environmentally sustainable methods of

waste management, such as recycling. A proportion of the money raised is ploughed back into supporting projects to improve the environment. Ray's pond is a perfect example of one such project.

The pond was dug and lined with butyl so it would hold water. However, we had a problem. It had originally been intended to fill the pond with water from Bromley High School but, for technical reasons, this proved impossible. A waterless depression lined with butyl was very vulnerable to damage and there was great concern as to what might happen to it. However, quite miraculously, that very week the heavens opened and the rain poured down relentlessly for days. The pond was rapidly filled and it has held water, to a lesser or greater degree, ever since. A temporary chestnut paling fence was put up to surround the pond and there was then only one thing left to do - give it a name. There was an obvious choice for this - Ray's pond- and this is why.



Heron at Ray's Pond, 2015 by Hugh Stewart

Ray Millard was a Friend of Jubilee Country Park. She was also a keen Rambler all her life but with the onset of osteo-arthritis her ability to maintain a reasonable walking pace gradually diminished. She developed a pronounced stoop and eventually the walking group which she belonged to asked her to leave as she couldn't keep up with them. Ray was very sad about this but she was a very determined lady and was not prepared to give up the exercise she so enjoyed. Undeterred therefore, Ray joined the Friday Health Walk at Jubilee Country Park. At first, she walked with everyone in the main group, but over time her ability to keep up deteriorated further. However, rather than turn her away as her previous walking group had done, arrangements were made that one person on the Health Walk (often the then walk leader, Mary Williams) would accompany Ray on a short stroll around the park. Afterwards, they would both join everyone for refreshments so Ray still felt fully a part of the group. Ray continued to be a very popular, much-loved member of the Health Walk until a few days before she passed away. At her funeral, special mention was made of the contribution the Health Walk had made to the quality of Ray's last years. In gratitude for the kindness of the Health Walkers, Ray's family donated £1000 to the Friends of Jubilee in her memory. This funding was used for various projects in the park, including the provision of the lovely new fencing now encircling the pond bearing Ray's name.



Ray's Pond, 2017 by Hugh Stewart

Initially we were not permitted to put up a sign showing the name of the pond but recently things changed so Alan Saban, of the Friends, carved the beautiful sign which you see there today. And just in case you were wondering how Ray acquired her somewhat unusual (for a lady) first name, her parents named her after a 1920's jazz singer!

Ray's pond now has a brand-new interpretation panel, kindly sponsored by Langford Walker and the Acorn Group, developers and estate agents for the residential development in the former NewsShopper building, Mega House, Petts Wood which has now been renamed Grosvenor House.

Bromley Rotary Club honours Jennie Randall

By John Bruce



On the 29th August Jennie was presented with a Rotary Club Community Award, and a cheque, for her work with the Friends of Jubilee Country Park. Recently Jennie had given a talk about the V2 bombing of The Crooked Billet and during the dinner met up with Roger Hobcraft who remembered his bedroom ceiling in Cloisters Avenue coming down in the blast.

The money will go towards one of Jennie's pet projects, the refurbishment of the Orienteering Course, which has seen an increase in use this year.

Mike Elisha, President of Bromley Rotary Club presents Jennie with her award.

Bee Breakfast in Jubilee Country Park.

*Annette Rose and Judy Palmer
Campaigners, Bromley Friends of the Earth.*

On the 3rd June Bromley Friends of the Earth held a 'Bee Breakfast' in Jubilee Country Park. On a lovely warm sunny day we set up near the picnic area and invited passers by to participate. Also, people on a Wildflower walk organised by the Friends group were able to stop by.

First up was a quiz which consisted of ten foods for people to decide which of them needed bees. The obvious ones that need bees were the honey, strawberries and fruit yoghurt. People discovered that tea doesn't need bees as it is made from leaves. Porridge is made from oats which is wind pollinated. We hope we got the message across that a lot of the variety in our diet would be lost without bees and action to protect them is essential.



Enjoying the Bee Breakfast in Jubilee with Annette and Judy

Next our visitors were offered a variety of tasty breakfast foods which we only have due to our pollinators including bees. On offer were fruit cereals, fruit juices, blueberry muffins, fruit salad and homemade honey cake.

We also told people about the Great British Bee Count which was running at the time. In this nationwide annual project, the public are asked to upload their sightings of bees on a free app that they can download. This year there were more than 300,000 bees spotted!

We also provided some further information on how Friends of the Earth is working to protect our bees. They are seeking to get the government to continue a ban on a group of pesticides called neonicotinoids that have been shown in studies to be harmful to bees.

If you would like to find out more about Friends of the Earth's campaign called 'The Bee Cause' go to www.foe.co.uk. Bromley Friends of the Earth have a monthly meeting in central Bromley, usually with a speaker. All are welcome. If you would like to know more about this friendly local group, you can email us on bromleyfoe@gmail.com.

We would like to say a big thank you to the Friends of Jubilee Country Park for making us so welcome and for helping us to have a successful day.

Annette is also a member of the Friends of Jubilee Country Park

Last Word - The Best of Friends, Richard Ewing 6th July 1924 – 10th May 2017

by Jennie Randall



Richard Ewing circa 1943

On May 10th 2017 the Friends lost a member whose association with the area which is now Jubilee Country Park lasted for over seven decades and whose contribution to our knowledge of the history of the park was invaluable. He also designed the logo that we use today. His name was Richard Ewing.



When I first started to research the history of Jubilee Park in 2003, I found it extremely difficult as there were hardly any records to research. One day, after several fruitless hours trawling through the archives of the Local Studies Library, Bromley I was on the verge of abandoning my quest. I walked out feeling thoroughly disheartened. As I was about to leave the main library, I passed the military section and browsed its shelves. I knew that the Home Guard had been based at Thornet Wood Gun Site (where Jubilee Park is now) so I thought would see what books there were relating to the Home Guard. I chose one, flicked to the index and there quite remarkably (as this was a book

about the Home Guard nationwide) I found a reference to Petts Wood! I eagerly turned the pages and found a wonderful photograph of one of the guns at Thornet Wood, together with a quote from a Richard Ewing.

I knew I'd have to try to track him down! This would be no easy task as obviously neither his address nor telephone number were given in the book and so long after the war he could be anywhere. I then remembered someone I knew had said they had access to the national electoral rolls. I asked them if they could find Richard Ewing. A few days later the reply came through "I've found Richard Ewing but the only trouble is there are 26 of them!". None lived locally, the nearest was in Blackfen. I thought it highly unlikely that this would be the person I was seeking but as I had a telephone number for him, I called it. Miraculously, it was the right one! Within days, the Site Manager of Jubilee and I visited Richard and spent three hours hearing all sorts of tales of life at Thornet Wood during the Second World War. I have a feeling that Richard had spent the previous sixty years waiting for the opportunity to tell his story and I was only too happy both to hear it and, more importantly, to record it.

Richard joined the Home Guard aged 16, lying about his age as he was keen to do his bit. (As an examiner of reconnaissance photographs of enemy aircraft, he was in a reserved occupation) When Home Guard volunteers were requested for work on Heavy Anti-Aircraft Gun Sites, he put his name forward. His Major called him in, laughed at him and said "Waste of time, you'll never make it, what are you? 5ft 2inches? See you back here in six weeks". However, Richard was determined to prove him wrong, and he did exactly that and survived to tell the tale



*Photographed at the gun site at Thornet Wood in 1944
Mr Ewing is the young man on the furthest right*

"What a hell of a thrill you had with those alarm bells ringing, with the clomp and shuffle of unlaced army boots on the concrete, the shouts of action! action! through the camp...The things I remember most about being on the guns when they were in full action are the noise, the flashes from the guns lighting up the surrounding countryside like lightning, the yellowish smoke and the clanging of the empty shell cases hitting the concrete base of each gun"..

He was the first person to mention to me that girls from the A.T.S. had served alongside their male counterparts at Thornet Wood. This information eventually led me to research the history of the V2 rocket attack on the Crooked Billet which resulted in a blue plaque being installed outside the pub remembering all those killed and injured.

Richard not only shared his reminiscences, he also had precious artefacts from his Home Guard days including literature and photographs. As a trained artist, he was able to draw the Gun Site in action which can still be seen today on the park's History Board. His artistic talents were also used to the Friends benefit when, based on a chicory drawing by Friend Betty Dawson, Richard designed our Friends logo. This appears on all our publicity material and the work party's polo shirts.



Nick Hopkins (Ranger) Marian Mills (ATS), Richard Ewing, Jennie Randall & Cllr. Peter Woods celebrate the new History Information Board at the gun site.

Richard kindly agreed to take the Friends group on a walk around Jubilee Park in November 2004 to explain to us the layout of the Gun Site. This walk proved so popular that it became the first of many. Much to Richard's great joy in 2010 we jointly led a Second World War history walk around the park for uniformed members of the Royal Artillery T.A. unit from Grove Park. One of the soldiers afterwards commented to me that the opportunity to speak to someone who had worked on a gun site during the Second World War had been "awesome". It was not just with adults that Richard shared his memories. On one occasion he assisted with a walk for children from a club run by Bromley Museum who had to guess what role he

had played in the park's history. They were fascinated at having the chance to meet someone who had fought in the war and whose recollections were so interesting.

As my historical research continued, I was asked if we would contribute to a display commemorating the 60th anniversary of the end of the war in 2005 at Bromley Museum. Richard made an audio recording for this, and later on also for the Imperial War Museum.

The Time Team's Francis Pryor and Richard Ewing, a former member of the Home Guard, at Thornet Wood Gunsite. Photographed during the filming of Channel 4's documentary "The Real Dad's Army" in Jubilee Country Park, Oct 2005

A few months later, I received a telephone call from Channel 4 who had seen the exhibition. They were filming a series called "The Real Dad's Army" and wanted Richard to be interviewed in Jubilee Park by Francis Prior (of Time Team fame) for the third episode! (If you've not seen this, it may still be viewed on YouTube. Richard appears about 25 minutes into the programme.) The following year, the history board on the Gun Site was unveiled and Richard was one of our guests of honour, alongside other members of the Home Guard and an A.T.S. lady who I had subsequently traced.



Richard's great-grandson, Harry, who adored him, summed Richard up with the nickname he gave him as an alternative to great-grandad. He was just known as "Great" and that is exactly what he was. I have lost the best of Friends and the Friends have too.

Postscript: Over the last few years Jennie has been giving talks about the Crooked Billet to a several local groups, including churches, women's organisations, history societies, charities and various libraries. If you're a member of a community group and you'd like her to speak at one of your meetings you're welcome to get in touch. Contact her on 07840-542261 or email us at jubileecountrypark@yahoo.co.uk

Contacts:

The Friends work with the Council and idverde solely in a conservation and preservation role. To report any of the following, contact Bromley Council's Customer Service Centre by calling 0300 303 8658.

- Overflowing bins (both dog and rubbish)
- Fallen/dangerous trees
- Anti-social behaviour
- Vandalism/Graffiti
- Dog-related issues (such as dangerous dogs)
- Maintenance issues (such as uncut grass, damaged fencing, gates, dangerous paths etc.)
- Dumped rubbish

To report an emergency: Fire, Ambulance, or Police, dial 999

To report a non-emergency issue to the Police, call 101

Contacts for the Friends of Jubilee Country Park

web address: www.jubileecountrypark.btck.co.uk
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/jubileecountrypark/>
email: jubileecountrypark@yahoo.co.uk
write to: Susan Folkes, 41 Lovelace Avenue, Bromley, BR2 8DG
phone: 07976 409743

Renewal Information for 2018 (see end of editorial – still £5 per household)

Online transfer to: Bank: Barclays
Account: Friends of Jubilee Country Park
Sort code: 20-14-33
Account number: 40036684
Reference: use your main contact name

We will be sending a reminder and renewal form by email in December.

Friends of Jubilee Country Park, September 2017