



# Annual Report 2021

## 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

Due to the pandemic the committee of the Friends only met once in 2021 to oversee its activities. Its members during the year were: Larry Herbert (chair), Tudor Davies (treasurer), Françoise Harrop, Angela Godfrey, Wendy Wiseman & Veronica Moloney.

## Chairman's Statement

As you can imagine it has been a difficult year and as we started in lockdown, it wasn't until April 2021 that some level of task activity began. Weekly attendance numbers have been kept at a moderate level with perhaps 12 or so at peak. My estimate on activity hours spent is around 1100 hours which about half the level of non-Covid years. Nonetheless well done everybody and thanks for all the hard work and effort to keeping the Common looking its best.

This year's activities have been a mixture of scrub and bracken clearance, improvements to the bog and valley mire areas, gorse clearance and scalloping work in the meadows. At the end of 2020 our interpretation board in the Westerham Road car-park was vandalised and with the use of some of our funds this was restored and replaced back in-situ (see photo on page 4). Also the Keston Common sign close to the roundabout had collapsed due to rot and this was restored and returned to its rightful place (see photo on this page).





One of the new additions this year was the installation of a new style bin in the Westerham Road car-park. It is understood that this style of bin is part of a trial to see if it inhibits animals from scattering litter all over the place and if successful we may see further bins of this type installed across the site (see photo on page 5).

As you are no doubt aware the pandemic has brought us an increased level of footfall, which thankfully appears, at the start of 2022, to have returned to more normal levels. This increased footfall brought with it a lot of damage, in the form of erosion and extension of pathways, huge amounts of litter and some very unwelcome behaviour. There has also been a lot of fly-tipping of late and it's been a terrific effort to keep on top of it all.

I'm 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 had a secret visit and as far as I'm aware all is in order.



As you may recall, the Green Flag organisation has previously commented about the poor state of the waters edge at Pond 3. As a response to this we are in discussions with LBB and idverde about a potential solution and I'm hopeful, subject to LBB funding, some of this remedial work will take place during 2022. This work is expected to involve dredging, path relocation (including potential sleeper based steps), planting and post & rail. I'm very pleased to report that with regard the path relocation FoKC has secured funding from the Co-op, as part of their Community Funding opportunities. (see summary of accounts for details of this funding).

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.

During the year there has been a lot of contractual tree management work, primarily holly across the site. This has been concentrated in areas close to both the valley mire and the bog. In most cases the vegetation has been used to delimit pathways and boundary lines but in some cases there has been some burning on site. 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 see-saw 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. I'm happy to say the see-saw in the children's playground has been replaced with a brand new one.



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.

On a final point the electricity supply to our store room was cut off in June 2021, and so far attempts to get this re-instated have failed. I have taken this issue to Associate Director level at LBB and remain ever hopeful that this will be restored in the not too distant future.



## In Memoriam

It is with great sadness I report the passing of Michael Collins, a founder and long-time committee member of our group. Michael was a very active and enthusiastic member of FoKC and involved with Keston at many different levels, from practical, such as helping to sort out problems with the dam at Pond 4, to researching online about the whole of the Keston area, warning us of planning issues, and even finding traces of the elusive local Sundew, our emblem, preserved in a botanical collection. He contributed hugely to the upkeep of our store room and the maintenance of the tools we own. He was also instrumental in the delivery of Countryside Day and our tombolas will never be the same without him.

FoKC would also like to express its sadness at hearing of the passing of Shirley Richards, our on-site ice-cream lady. She was always extremely generous to our Group and was much appreciated by all our visitors.

## Events

There were no events planned or attended in 2021. Your committee has agreed not to organise Countryside Day in 2022. It is hoped this will be possible in the summer of 2023.

## Walks

Our monthly walks continue to prove popular and we have attracted a regular quorum of attendees. More are always welcome. 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 78,600 visits up from 67,000 last year. The History page continues to attract the most visits up from 12,000 to over 14,000. On Facebook our followers have risen from around 500 last year to 712 this year, a steady increase which is 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 2021 are as follows:

Income		Expenditure	
Volunteer Donations	£71	FoKC printed clothing	£163
Co-op Grant	£1,512	Admin costs (inc. tool insurance/website)	£145
		Donations to external parties	£30
<u>Total income</u>	<u>£1,583</u>	<u>Total Expenditure</u>	<u>£338</u>

Full audited accounts will be presented under separate report.

*Larry Herbert*  
*Chair, Friends of Keston Common*  
*2<sup>nd</sup> March 2022*