



Friends of Darrick and Newstead Woods



Autumn Newsletter October 2022

A) Introduction

This year has not been so good for FODNW as we have lost our website. The website was transferred, without our knowledge, to a different Internet Service Provider, who then deleted our files. We have had precious little technical support. The editor has been writing articles and uploading members contributions, without any technical support. This cannot continue.

Maintaining the website has become a chore so we are going to propose that we move to a blog which will be more user friendly. We are only trying to inform FODNW members, the public and third parties about our activities, and we are not trying to commercialise the reserve. A blog should suffice to meet our needs. We are going to make a presentation to the next Friends meeting. We need a new name for the blog as “Friends of Darrick and Newstead Woods” is a bit of a “mouthful” to input into search engines. Modern social media demand brevity. We need your thoughts and opinions.

Another issue is succession planning, for which we need your thoughts, opinions and decisions at the next meeting too.

The summer heat and drought has been severe, and this has damaged the woods and the meadows, the soil is cracking up, and leaves and acorns are dropping prematurely. Perhaps, we are lucky that a fire has not started.

There are some happier notes as we have attained Green Flag status; Charlotte Eley, Angela Wood and Brian have put in some marvellous efforts to achieve this.

Brian’s message from the chair is featured below.

It is refreshing to read Gary Cliffe’s article about the Barn Owl Rewilding Project of RSPB Bromley, Charlotte, Gary and Brian Francis, of the RSPB, are showing the tender touch and they should be congratulated.

Vanessa Dixon also has written an interesting article about Cornwall and has included a photograph of one of my favourite birds – the Chough.

B) A SHORT ARTICLE FROM THE ACTING CHAIR

Dear Friends, I trust that I find you in good health and that you are getting back to some sort of normality, or as close to normality as things were, before the Covid epidemic.

The Friends have coped tremendously over the last couple of years and kept the Woods and Meadows in excellent condition considering the usage they were getting, I take my hat off to you!

Stella has written a superb article on the Green Flag award ceremony, which I unfortunately wasn't able to attend: it's fair that all the Friends get the opportunity to attend functions that we are invited to, not just committee members. Our thanks go out to the Friends for all the hard work put in during the preparation of the inspection and the initial preparation of the bid.

I am disappointed by the response we received from our request at our last open meeting for people to come forward to act on the committee, the existing committee have been in positions for far longer than they legally should be, we need new faces and ideas, surely you can spare a couple of hours three times a year to keep the group that you are proud of to work well. We will put this request forward again at our next meeting. Regarding our next open meeting which will be at St Paul's Church Crofton as our normal venue the Community Hall is unavailable so look out for the date. (*Which is now at 1930 on the 2nd of November 2022 - Ed*)

Keep Safe.

Brian Street, Acting Chair

NB: Please note that we have just heard that Charlotte, our ranger, is leaving Idverde: we thank her for her hard work and enthusiasm. We have included the pen picture of herself below because it is so well written and gives members a clear idea of what the ranger does and what attributes are required for their role. Ed

C) The Summer Drought in the Reserve by Trevor Morgan

So far this has not been a good decade, as we have had to contend with the Covid19 epidemic, which is still not over. Some people who are immunosuppressed are still sheltering. We are also having to deal with the adverse effects of climate change which is producing extreme weather both locally and globally.

This summer we have had to contend with the worse drought for a long time with record breaking temperatures; there is now little doubt that our weather and climate crises have been caused by human beings, and possibly we are now entering a new geological epoch: the “Anthropocene”.

One day, in June, I was running through the reserve, and I asked myself when we would see 40-degree Celsius temperatures in the UK. I didn't have to wait long, as we saw 40 + Celsius temperatures in both the Southeast and the Midlands to break records.

It now looks as if record breaking temperatures will now become a regular occurrence.

The soil in the reserve is extremely parched and both our ponds have dried out completely. This is bound to have an influence on the insect, amphibian and bird life in the reserve. The ponds attract newts, frogs, ducks and aquatic insects and arachnids. Grey wagtails also like to visit the watercourses.

The reserve is in the upper reaches of the river Kidbrooke which was not flowing in the reserve as at the end of August 2022.

Autumn has appeared to be earlier this year, owing to the parched soil and the lack of water, so the trees were shedding their leaves in August. Acorns were also dropping, and I have never seen this before. This is not the “False Autumn” that some newspapers are claiming, but the defence mechanism that trees use to retain moisture. When there is a severe drought leaves do not have sufficient water to maintain photosynthesis and the trees lose water through their leaves, so what better way to conserve water by shedding those leaves which can no longer provide sustenance and by dropping acorns which are already ripe.

Blackberries were also ripening before the end of August, which is much earlier than usual, but their fruit seems to lack flavour. Many species rely upon a later harvest of berries and nuts to survive the winter. Jays rely upon stores of acorns and other nuts, which are gathered and hidden in October and November. Likewise, Hedgehogs rely upon a late harvest to fatten up before they hibernate – that is if there are any of this iconic species left in the reserve.

Forty or fifty years ago anyone walking through the reserve on a hot summer's day would have seen a haze of insects dancing in the air above the meadows, but not so anymore, as insect life is considerable reduced. This year I have noticed fewer insects than ever flying over the meadows, and this is probably a result of the drought.

Nationally there has been a steady decline in the population of Sparrows, Swifts and other bird species which feed on insects, and the drought is probably making matters worse for them

The soil in the reserve is mostly thick clay overlaying chalk. Where the trees are able to penetrate down into the chalk to obtain more moisture they are not as affected by the drought and are not shedding their leaves.

All summer it seems that the trees and meadows have been suffering badly, but hopefully copious rainfall will restore the reserve to full health.

Tubbenden Meadow Playing field



Tubbenden Meadow itself



The large pond



D) Local Barn Owl Re-wilding Project by Gary Cliffe

On the 30th June 2022, Bob Francis, from the Bromley RSPB local group ringed two Barn Owl chicks not far from Darrick Wood. One was a male and the other a female. It was thought that the first eggs were laid in early and then the middle of April. The mother of the chicks was ringed 5 years ago in Glastonbury, Somerset. Barn Owls usually lay 4 to 7 eggs.

They hunt mainly around late afternoon/dusk over rough grassland on the edges of woodland searching for prey items like short-tailed field voles, mice and young rats.

The nest, in a purpose-built box within an old building, was monitored initially this year on 25th May when there were 4 chicks and then again on the 23rd June when there were only two chicks – meaning something must have happened to the missing 2 chicks.

Brian Francis ringing a chick



Gary Cliffe with Barn Owl chick



Charlotte Eley with Barn Owl chick



E) A pen picture written by Charlotte our ranger from Idverde

A little introduction to me:

Hello, I am Charlotte, a Bromley girl who was born in Farnborough hospital. I have grown up in this beautiful borough and throughout my childhood and adolescence I have learnt to love wildlife and the outdoors. I have always had an inherent instinct to look after nature and even try to encourage others to look after it too.

At university, I studied Physical Geography, which led to my particular interest in Conservation Ecology. Soon after graduation, I started an apprenticeship as an Assistant Instructor at Sayers Croft, an Outdoor Education Centre in Surrey. This was a yearlong contract and throughout my time there I decided that I really got on with teaching, especially when it was focussed on the environment.

Sharing my knowledge with school classes seemed to fit my criteria for work perfectly. It allowed me to inspire children and adults, of all ages about the natural world and how important it is and how incredible it can be - and I got to be outside! When this ended, I was seeking something similar and that's when I applied to work for the Beeche centre at High Elms Country Park in Orpington. This role, as an Environmental Education Instructor, was a brilliant next step in the sector, with more responsibility and in my local area. I settled in quickly but unfortunately the pandemic was erupting and brought disruption to all our lives. Overall, I gained so much from my time in Beeche and I don't think I will ever lose the passion to share my knowledge with others.

Angela Wood, my predecessor and the former ranger of Darrick and Newstead Woods, caught me in the car park last year and suggested that I should apply for her role. The suggestion took me by surprise because I hadn't considered a job in countryside management this soon in my career, especially as my experience was based in educational roles. However, at Sayers Croft we had the chance to assist the site ranger and this involvement opened my eyes and turned out to be my favourite part of the job.

Also, when I was an instructor for Beeche, I had the chance to get to know the Idverde Bromley countryside team and was occasionally free to join them on their collaborative workdays. These combined experiences demonstrated key factors of the job and I had a real enthusiasm for it so I could not skip the opportunity to apply. Having studied conservation too, it was the progression in my career that I hoped for.

Being a Conservation and Community Ranger is a busy role, and one I am still learning about. We are a small team of nine and there is a lot of land to cover. But the challenges we face we can overcome and I'm excited to overcome them during this job. It has been a great pleasure to learn and become more familiar with the borough's country parks. Now having taken on Darrick and Newstead Woods from Donna, my skills are developing even further.

I'm very proud to have been involved in the Green Flag Award inspection. We had a wonderful day giving the judge a tour of the site and we are almost certain that we will be successful in obtaining the award, especially considering the level of work that goes into the park from the Friends group.

I hope I can uphold the admirable reputation the park possesses and work alongside the community to manage the park to the best of my ability. I hope to meet more of the Friends of Darrick and Newstead Woods over time, and I thank you all for your contribution to the group.

F) FODNW Green Flag Award - by Stella

The Friends of Darrick and Newstead Woods are delighted that our site has been awarded a Green Flag Award by Keep Britain Tidy. These awards recognise and reward well managed parks and green spaces worldwide. This year, 2022, awards went to a wide variety of green spaces across the UK including nature reserves like ours, parks, recreation grounds, heritage sites and community gardens.

Bromley Borough owned sites were awarded eight green flags this year for sites managed by Idverde with Darrick and Newstead Woods and Biggin Hill Recreation ground winning awards for the first time. All the sites, large and small, are judged on the same criteria. They must be well managed, safe, well maintained, clean and welcoming. They must have a positive effect on the environment, promote biodiversity and ensure conservation of the landscape. Sites must also demonstrate that they provide facilities for, and communicate with, the local community.

The team at Idverde, with the help of the FODNW, spent months putting together documentation proving that we met all the requirements and on a sunny day in early July we were visited by Chris Worman MBE, one of the Green Flag award judges.

Our ranger Charlotte and Angela (her predecessor) organised and spent a very enjoyable day showing him around our site with Brian, our acting chairman and volunteers Trevor, Stella and Martin telling him about the work we do. He, in turn, told us about some of the worldwide places he has judged, including an oasis in the Middle East!

We followed the route of the nature trail which starts at Broadwater gardens taking a break for lunch hosted by our Brian, in his garden. Along the route, we met and talked with Sue who, with David, monitors butterfly numbers from the beginning of April to the end of September. They walk a set route through the woods and meadows weekly, counting butterflies; the figures are then reported to the Butterfly Conservation Society.

Martin chatted about our interactions with the West Kent Badger group through Darren Russell our Bromley contact. Trevor spoke about his and Richard's regular bird surveys and Christine impressed with her records of the hundreds of plant species seen every year.

We were also joined by Stephen Lofting the RSPB Biodiversity Advisor who works with Idverde in Bromley who shared his knowledge about our site. We have been collecting these statistics since the FODNW was founded 12 years ago giving invaluable information about how the site has developed and been improved as well as feeding information into national records.

It was clear that the site was being enjoyed by a wide variety of people, dog walkers, young mums with buggies and toddlers as well as participants of our weekly walk for wellbeing. Chris left us with the comment: "just keep on doing what you are doing" which was very encouraging and left us optimistic about our chances of success. He also gave us useful advice on organisations which we could apply to for funding for projects to improve the site. The Green Flag award will improve our chances of success when looking for future funding.

The award was presented to Andy, Angela and Charlotte from Idverde and representatives of Friends groups from Darrick and Newstead Woods, Biggin Hill Recreation ground and Chislehurst and St. Paul's Cray Common at a ceremony in Lambeth Assembly Hall. After a drinks reception in the courtyard, awards were presented to winners from all over Greater

London and the South of England, followed by afternoon tea. The ceremony was an interesting and entertaining event in an impressive venue and an opportunity to meet and talk to many groups from a diverse range of green spaces about their work.



The FODNW meet on Thursday mornings to work with our Idverde ranger on various tasks around the woods. We are always happy to welcome new members; please come and join us or just pop along to say hello. Meeting points are posted on notice boards at the entrances to the woods.

There is also a weekly Walk for Wellbeing around the woods. The walk starts at 2pm by the cricket pavilion on Tugmutton Common and lasts for about 1 hour, with a slightly longer walk to High Elms on the last Wednesday of every month. Look out for local events that are taking place on National Badger days (for information contact: darren.russell@hotmail.co.uk).

We are grateful to all you who regularly combine your walks in the woods with litter picking and who keep us informed of any problems - your contributions helped win this award.

<https://greenflagaward.org/park-summary/?park=4174>

<https://beta.ramblers.org.uk/go-walking/wellbeing-walks/search?longitude=0.01519&latitude=51.40606&type=wellbeing-walk&distance=40>

G) Two messages from our acting chairman Brian Street

1) George O' Malley

It is with great sadness that we report the death of George O' Malley who was an avid supporter of the weekly Walks for Health, and a long standing member of the Friends. He was always there on a Wednesday, and raring to go either on the walk around Darrick Woods or the monthly walk to High Elms; he will be very much missed by the regular walkers.

2) The Safer Neighbourhood Panel

The Crofton and Farnborough panel are in desperate need of a Chair Person owing to Boundary Changes which do not allow the old Chair Person to continue in position.

I go along to the meetings as a representative of the Friends of Darrick & Newstead Woods, but don't have the time to take up the Chair Person position.

The panel meet every three months when we liaise with the Community Police to discuss crime figures in the ward, and any other problems we are concerned about. The meetings are held locally and usually last just over an hour.

Although the Community Police attend the meetings they are not allowed to Chair them, so we don't want to lose the chance to keep our area safe.

This is an ideal opportunity for someone to support our Community.

If you contact me on bristreet44@gmail.com then I will put you in contact with the Community Police, and answer your questions.

Brian Street, Acting Chair.

H) Cornwall Rambling by Vanessa Dixon

I first went to Cornwall as a veterinary student in the mid 1970's in order to 'see practice' during the summer holiday. The scenic train journey gave me a sense of entering another country. One of the cases I had to write up featured a North Devon cow with 'Red Water Fever' (Babesiosis). This condition was mentioned the other day on 'The Archers'! I wonder whether the storyline will turn into an explanation of concerns about the increasing prevalence of tick-borne diseases due to climate change? The most exciting incident during that long ago summer involved a cow too. It occurred late one evening, when an unfortunate beast fell around 100 feet from a cliff. The duty vet had to abseil down the cliff in order to examine her. Miraculously, she was bruised but had no broken bones. The RNAS came to the rescue with one of their helicopters from the base at Culdrose and airlifted the sedated cow in a huge net from the beach to a safe pasture.

I became a regular visitor to the south coast of Cornwall after my parents chose to move there in retirement. They lived at St. Mawes at the tip of the delightfully named Roseland Peninsula. The name comes from a Cornish word 'Ros', meaning promontory. Oystercatchers are frequently seen on the rocks of the foreshore.

Cliff-top walks are always a joy. Peregrine falcons sometimes nest in these cliffs on St. Anthony headland. There's a strategically placed bird hide which anyone can visit.



Cornish gardens are a delight in springtime, azaleas, rhododendrons and magnolia mingling in a riot of colour. Primroses and bluebells flower in profusion.

Primroses and bluebells flower in profusion. These primroses are at St. Just in Roseland. I am also intrigued by the prevalence of other plants in Cornwall.



Navelworts seem to thrive on stone walls. I used to think the fascinating three-cornered leek with its triangular stem, only grew in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, but then I found a patch (probably a garden escape) by the A21! However, this photo shows it growing by a roadside in Cornwall.



I've sometimes heard a tawny owl at night in St. Mawes. During a visit one New Year I saw a barn owl on three consecutive evenings over the same stretch of road. Godrevy is a favourite spot on the north coast. I once saw three dolphins swimming along the channel between the lighthouse and the mainland. We were there again earlier this year, and I was thrilled by my first sighting of a Cornish chough.



Spot the chough!

Although we're going through the sad process of selling my late parents' home, Cornwall remains very close to my heart, so I hope that there will be many further opportunities to make the long trek westwards.

Vanessa Dixon

Future Events

Thursdays 10.00-1200 hrs:

The Darrick Wood work day takes place weekly and is led by Idverde UK. See Notice board for assembly location.

Links and Contacts

Useful Numbers

| | |
|--------------------------|---------------|
| Ward Security | 0845 847 6180 |
| Willow Wild Life | 0795 647 2284 |
| Fox Project | 01892 731 565 |
| RSPCA | 0300 1234 999 |
| High Elms Rangers | 01689 862 815 |
| Safer Neighbourhood Team | 07920 233 856 |

Websites

Friends of High Elms: www.highelmscountrypark.btck.co.uk/

Friends of Jubilee Country Park: www.jubileecountrypark.btck.co.uk/

Friends of Keston Common: www.friendsofkestoncommon.btck.co.uk/

Friends Forum: www.bromleyfriendsforum.org/

Friends of Darrick & Newstead Woods email address

fodnw@outlook.com

Membership Form

Membership of the Friends of Darrick & Newstead Woods includes the whole household. If you would like to join, please complete the slip below and send it to: Friends of Darrick & Newstead Woods, 3 Ivy Close, Westergate, Chichester, West Sussex PO20 3RF

There is no subscription, but donations will be most welcome. All money will be used to support the work of the Friends: sending information, publicity for Friends events, and other activities. Please make sure that all members of the family who wish to be included are listed.

Please make cheques payable to 'Friends of Darrick and Newstead Woods' and write your address on the back.

I/We would like to join the Friends of Darrick & Newstead Woods

Names *

.....
*Under 16? Parent or Guardian's permission required..

Signed Parent or Guardian :

.....
Address

.....
Postcode.....

Telephone.....

Mobile.....

Email.....

Donation.....

Date.....

Under GDPR rules you have the right to see , amend or have deleted any information that FODNW holds about you.

MF/1/6/14