



Friends of Horton Country Park

Minutes

For the Annual General Meeting and meeting held on the 03/04/2007

Present:

Brendan Kilby (Chair), Marie Cantoro, Anne and Alan Cheshire, Laurence Coley (Membership Secretary), Tony Gibbs, Brenda Hammond-Gibbs, Sarah Hallums, Pat Lowe (Minutes Sec.), Pam and Mo Pearcey, Terry Summerfield (Treasurer), Ian Tilbury, Peter Tomlin (Website & Newsletter) Eileen Tomlin.

Apologies:

Rosemary and Ray Eyres, Bill Facer.

1. Chairman's Statement

This has been an interesting but difficult year for a lot of people. However, the Friends have achieved more tasks than ever before. These were Hedge laying; Tree planting; Hedge scalloping; Ragwort pulling; Coppicing; Making bird and bat boxes; 2 Litter picking days and 2 days working on the Information Centre, a total of 10 tasks and 12 Task days. A considerable increase on last years best ever total of 4 Task Days. Thank you to all those who took part.

The Membership fee was increased to £3 with the extra £1 being put towards buying our own Insurance so that the Friends could carry out tasks without a Ranger being present. The Insurance was unfortunately too expensive to arrange for this year, but the money from Membership fees will be added to next year's. Hopefully we will be able to afford it next year and so become more self-sufficient.

This year we are hoping to get a firm idea of the actual number of members i.e. those whose subscriptions are up to date. Thank you to Laurence for his work.

Peter has done very well to get the website up and running and looking so good. A copy of the minutes is now available to everyone through the website.

Problems with the Council's Management of the Country Park have caused uncertainty and feelings of disenchantment and demoralisation. But there may now be some light at the end of the tunnel. Cuts in funding have made it difficult to know how to proceed in certain areas. We are all concerned, particularly with regard to the lower levels of ranger presence that are apparent within the Country Park. The projected Management Forum has not yet happened because of these continuing problems but this is hopefully only a temporary delay.

Over the last three years of my chairmanship you will have seen some changes. I may have upset some people but I have also made new friends. I thank everyone for their support.

The aim I set myself for my period of office was particularly to initiate more work tasks by the Friends and increase active membership, whilst working within The Constitution, which states that we should:

- Broaden knowledge of the Country Park,
- Maintain and develop the park for the public,
- Co-operate with Epsom and Ewell Council in managing and maintaining the park
- Document species and their numbers for Conservation purposes.
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There have been successes and failures but we keep going and it is nice to see so many members here at the AGM. It has been an interesting and enjoyable three years.

2. Treasurers Statement

2005-2006 was a good year financially with £730 cash in hand.

2006-2007 was less good; we had fewer members so we had membership subscriptions of only £76 plus a £50 donation from Clarendon Park Residents Association.

2007-2008 So far this year we have had only one subscription by post but are hoping this will improve with the publication and distribution of the Newsletter. We have used only £30 from the balance so far because we have not yet incurred costs for the Newsletter.

3. Agreement of Accounts

Bill Facer as auditor had signed the accounts which were passed round and agreed by the members.

The Chairman thanked the Treasurer and Auditor for their work.

There was discussion about the need for Insurance and the best way to raise the extra money needed which is approximately £200.

The following points were **agreed**:

1. £1 from each membership subscription will be used for Insurance;
2. It may be agreed at any future meeting that any surplus money from donations etc. can be used, if necessary in the future, to pay the rest of the Insurance premium;
3. Money from the Council for Volunteer days will also be used for paying premiums as the insurance negates the need for a council employee to be present.

4. Changes to Constitution

5.

It was proposed that the constitution be changed to include a new officer role of Membership Secretary.

Agreed

Brendan asked if members were happy to remove Section 8 - “Committee” from the Constitution, and all other references to committee in the constitution.

Agreed

6. Election of Officers

It was decided at the previous AGM that the re-election of officers would be left until this year so that all were in line with the election of the Chair every three years. Officers can be changed within the three years if necessary, by extraordinary general meeting.

The following officers were elected.

Officer role	Candidate	Proposed	Seconded
Chairperson	Brendan Kilby	Mo Pearcey	Ian Tilbury
Honorary Treasurer	Terry Summerfield	Laurence Coley	Mo Pearcey
Honorary Secretary	Pat Lowe	B. Hammond-Gibbs	Anne Cheshire
Membership Sec.	Laurence Coley	Sarah Hallums	Tony Gibbs
Auditor	Bill Facer	Brendan Kilby	Pat Lowe

7. A.O.B.

None

The bi-monthly meeting followed the AGM

Matters Arising:

Newsletter

The newsletter is now ready to be published after the inclusion of the chairman's statement. Members were thanked for contributions.

Coppiced area

This has now been completed and fencing will be done as a Volunteer task.

Dangerous Trees

Some of these are still to be dealt with. It will be done when more money becomes available.

Pay for Volunteer Days

The Council gives us £2 per head per day for volunteers on tasks. Sarah keeps the tally. So far we have earned £86.

Bat Roost

This is now secure again and Sarah has put up a notice telling the public what it is and emphasising that bats are protected. Hopefully "Farmstead Belfry" will now be respected for what it is.

Birds

18 Herons' nests have been counted in Great Wood although they may not all be occupied. There are more inside the wood than previously. As many as 8 or 9 herons have been seen standing. They are still fishing in Meadow Pond and the pond in Pond Wood.

Water-rail seen at Meadow Pond but Waxwings have not been seen this year. Tony remarked that very few birds in general seen this year. Brendan is concerned that we have slipped away from documenting species and we need to get back to it, keeping a balance. He suggested we get someone in from for example Surbiton Bird Club. We need someone to document it.

Entomology

There was a lively discussion of the variety and identification of ladybirds, particularly the Harlequin.

Members were told to look out for the Dusky Skipper Moth.

Information Centre

It was suggested that the obsolete window be covered with a board which could be the sign for the Centre plus a blackboard for notices. Sarah will chase up the aerial photograph to finish the display. The exterior and surrounding area need attention so should be another Task day.

Fire-setting

Members were asked to be vigilant for signs of fire-lighting and to phone Police if they see any as it is a criminal offence. We were also asked to phone the Rangers Office if we see anyone fishing.

Flooding

The flooding near the Ruxley Lane entrance is easing. There is a ditch between the footpath and the houses over which the house owners have rights. The owner of the end house, Mr Tyrell, was approached and asked for permission to dig a channel to drain into the ditch. The Golf Club will help to dig out the ditch and get a pump to help clear the water. The Golf Club have been very good in trying to be helpful.

Student Volunteers

Nescot students are giving 1 day a week at present and have done really well. They have helped to put tree guards round the newly planted hedge; tidied up and fixed the fence opposite Primrose Cottage after it was damaged by a fallen tree. Their next project is to fence the Chessington Road balance pond.

Bat boxes

These have to go up very high so there are Health and Safety issues which have delayed putting them up. They will go in Burnham Grove between Pond Wood and Four Acre Wood. The four bird boxes will be near Colliers Close.

Gate closed

The gate near the entrance to Equus and the stables was closed because of deep pot-holes.

Mole Valley Orienteering Club

have given £180 to the Country Park for refurbishing the orienteering posts.

Tasks

Tues 24 th April	Deer fencing, also 25 & 26 th if necessary.
Sun 29 th April	Workshop with Lower Mole Volunteers.
8/9/10 th May	Lower Mole Workshop, Friends can join them for our tasks.
Sat 9 th June	Information Centre, Alan will paint outside during May.
19/20/21 st June	Lower Mole Workshop, Friends can join them for our tasks, e.g. .

Dates

Sun 6 th May	Springtime Woodland Walk. Starts 2 p.m. Information Centre Donkey Day in the Totem Pole field.
Sun 20 th May	Herb Walk on the Hogsmill, start 2 p.m. at Ewell Court House, ring Sarah to book.
Sun 1 st July	Friends Barbecue

AOB

Laurence had noticed that the David Lloyd Centre have organised a run in the park for 29th April and wondered if they had asked permission. Sarah will check. Friends are concerned about organised runs being a hazard “some of them charge through expecting everyone to clear their path.” Warning Signs and Markers are needed.

Brendan suggested that next years Carriage Drive could be a good opportunity to advertise the Friends’ work and perhaps raise some funds. Brenda asked if the organisers pay any contribution towards the maintenance of the tracks in view of possible wear and tear.

Thanks to Sarah for providing refreshments.

Members are reminded that **All subscriptions are now due.**

Next Meeting

Tuesday 5th June at 7.30 in the New Hall.

Members are asked not to use the Rangers Car Park for meetings. Please use the public Car Park and Sarah promises to make sure no-one is locked in.