



# Friends of Horton Country Park

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**Minutes**

**For the meeting held on the 04/10/2005**

**Present:** Brendan Kilby (Chair), Sarah Hallums (minutes), Bill Facer, Tony Gibb, Anne Cheshire, Alan Cheshire, Ray Eyres, Rosemary Eyres, Ian Tilbury, Terry Summerfield (Secretary), Tony Quinn, Laurence Coley, Pam Pearcey, Mo Pearcey, Sandy Fleming, Eileen Tomlin, Peter Tomlin, Shirley Baxter.

**Apologies:** Pat Lowe.

The last meeting held was a **walk around the park** guided by Stewart Cocker who told us all about the new management plan. This was very useful and would like to repeat it, perhaps on an annual basis.

**The old farmstead school buildings are being demolished** and Alison Fure, the bat expert overseeing the demolition has confirmed that brown long-eared bats are using the new re-vamped bat lodge. It was also suggested that we think of a new name for the bat house. 'Wayne Mansions' was suggested!

(After speaking to Stewart Cocker, he was keen to have Farmstead somewhere in the name to keep the link between the old use of the building and the history of the area.)

**Action, all Friends: Think of a name for the building.**

The Friends had a very successful **working party on Sun 11<sup>th</sup> Sept** to clear a path connecting footpath 26 to Pond Wood, along the western boundary of Horton Country Park. The volunteers cleared half of the vegetation, up to the Blackthorn, which will be trimmed back later on another task. The fence line around the field will be taken in a bit along the Blackthorn to allow access.

The Ramblers have been contacted by Brendan to let them know of our efforts and to encourage their members to use the new path to keep it open and not let it become overgrown again.

**Action: All friends to use the path as much as possible to keep the path open.**

**The Autumn Fair** was a great success. A big thank you was made to Annette Murray especially for all her organisation, and to all those who helped on the day and with preparations for it.

18 new members were recruited who were interested in a mixture of activities.

Approximately £300 was raised on the day from the raffle, pony rides and donations.

Brendan received a lot of good comments about the day including a thank you from Jean Steer (Chair of the Leisure Committee).

If the event is to be repeated, a great deal more help will be needed on the day to marshal the event, for example in the car park and manning the Friends' display.

The badges made for the Autumn Fair were popular and more were asked for so the Friends could identify themselves to people when walking around the park or manning the information centre. **Action: Sarah to make badges.**

There was also a photographer from the Guardian who has agreed to do a feature on the Friends and the planting of the trees in the orchard.

Brendan also mentioned that he had a conversation with the Chair of Clarendon Park's residents association. Brendan was very open to attending their meetings and let them know what is going on in the park and work a bit closer together. At first, he was reluctant but after discussing the matter he became more amenable and eventually said he would invite Brendan.

Brendan apologised for not having completed **the newsletter**. Due to work commitments and illness it has proved a bit difficult. Brendan also made the group aware that he had been trying very hard to Chair the Friends in a way that everyone was happy with, and although he appreciated suggestions being made to him, support as well as criticism would be nice. He has worked hard and deserves some recognition for it.

There are **cattle** in the Lower Mole holding field (near the children's farm field) which have come from Epsom Common. There is not quite enough food up there for them so they have come on to the Country Park to afterwards graze the holding field. Grazing at this time of year, after the field has been cut for hay, is the best way of managing the grassland to increase the diversity of the flora.

(At the time of writing the cows have now been taken back to the farm. They arrived on 26<sup>th</sup> Sept and left on 11<sup>th</sup> Oct.)

The **website** is looking fantastic. We now have our own domain name costing only £5. This means that when you do a search on the website, for example putting in Horton Country Park, it should come up immediately. The new address is [www.friendsofhorton.co.uk](http://www.friendsofhorton.co.uk)

The **management plan** is nearly completed. The consultants writing the plan have had to do a lot of work elsewhere so it has been delayed slightly. The Countryside and Community Development Team (CCDT) are also working hard to try and secure funding for Horton Country Park and the management plan. CCDT has put together a bid for the next four years and hopefully this will be accepted. We can not stress more how important the volunteers and the Friends support are to CCDT and the successful future management of the park.

Some **new gates** have been put in at the Ruxley Lane and Chessington Close entrances in to Horton Country Park. CCDT is aware that they are not acceptable and are working with Surrey Country Council, who organised them being put in, to rectify the situation.

The litter problem at the Castle Hill entrance and along the path in from Ruxley Lane is getting worse. **Action: Sarah to phone contact centre and report the problem.**  
**NB: If any one sees a problem like this on the park, littering, dumping, graffiti e.t.c. please phone the contact centre on 01372 732000 and report it. Only if there are many reports and clear evidence of a problem emerging, can the Council do something about it.**

The police joined us with bailiffs from the Environment Agency to crack down on the **illegal fishing** going on in Horton Country Park (HCP). It seems to have worked well and word has got round. The Golf Club does still have a few problems though. To further aid the cessation of the fishing activity, CALPAC (Central Association of London and Provincial Angling Clubs) have agreed to take fish out of Meadow Pond and the Golf Club Pond. They have been quite successful and have managed to take away some of the bigger fish, so hopefully the draw will not be there to encourage people to fish.

The **NESCOT** volunteers have returned. Their first job was to do some ragwort pulling before it set seed and are now continuing the removal of dead elms along the bottom track near Field Pond.

Tony Gibb wondered whether they could make some owl boxes to put up near Butchers Grove, Pond Wood, Great Wood and Four Acre Wood. **Action: Sarah to investigate.**

Tony Quinn wondered if we could employ the services of the Community Service Youth Offending Team, to carry out some **work in Hendon Grove**. There is some ash removal to do and Tony would like to see encouragement of scrub and the removal of some larger trees. Hopefully this will encourage suitable habitat for Yellowhammers, and Willow Warblers. He also suggested George McNamara could bring along his chipper to remove some of the waste.

**Potential tasks** for the next volunteer day for the Friends were discussed. Ideas mentioned were: work thinning the woodland in Hendon Grove; continuation with maintenance of the Water Vole Habitat; dead elm removal from hedgerows; tree planting filling in gaps of hedgerows and creating new hedgerows.

Tasks for later that were mentioned were manning the information centre and planting the apple trees being grafted for us by Brogdale.

From mentioning the planting up of new hedgerows, there was a consensus within the group that this should not impact on any views. It was mentioned that the view out to London from the south western corner of the Children's Farm field was becoming obscured. It was also felt that too many hedgerows, especially if they are on both sides of the track, give a feeling of insecurity to some people. Around bends hedges should be widened to allow greater visibility so cycles/horses e.t.c can not surprise anyone.

A date was agreed for the next task which will be **Sun 20<sup>th</sup> Nov. Action: All Friends put the date in your diary and tell your friends!!**

It was agreed that we would think about doing some work in Hendon Grove depending on the suitability of the task and after consultation with Stewart Cocker (Countryside and Community Development Manager).

Having discussed the task with Stewart, it was thought that the trees in Hendon Grove were a bit too big to cope with. In February Annette and Sarah will be going on a chainsaw course, so after that Hendon Grove will be an easier task.

It has been decided this time to do some management to the hedgerow running through Lambert's Mead. We will start undertaking the 'zig-zag' approach as discussed in the last walk around meeting and in the management plan. Meet at Rangers' Office@10am.

The **Dormice boxes** have been successful, although only for blue tits and wood mice so far! Alison Fure has been checking them and clearing out old nests where necessary. She will keep us updated with the progress.

A **dead deer** was found by the Children's Farm and the Black Barn Forge, thought to be attacked by a lurcher. The dog is thought to be owned by a poacher. The police were called and the matter is being looked in to.

By the gate to Collier Close, there is a small tree which has fallen. **Action: Sarah to sort out.**

David Anderson will be **fencing** the field next to the one he currently uses. It was suggested that at the next meeting we have a **map** on the table with all the names of the fields and paths so we know which area we are all talking about. **Action: Sarah to arrange map with all the new names on for next meeting.**

Sandy brought up the **Information Centre** and mentioned that he felt it is a great resource to recruit new members. Unfortunately it has not been manned very often by the Friends and wondered if a rota could be set up. He mentioned that on one Sunday 30 people visited the centre and thought it would be a great opportunity to spread the word and give out information. The busiest times are before and after lunch on weekends. Perhaps we could set up a rota system for next spring so that it can be manned at least one day on the weekend, especially if there is an event going on.

**Action: Organise rota for next spring. Any volunteers welcome. Please let Brendan know if you would like to do this.**

The **Membership Secretary** has resigned unfortunately. However, in the meeting Laurence Coley agreed to take up the job. All new members should send their forms to him and he will liaise with Terry to make sure the members list is correct. It was also agreed that he would arrange for the latest newsletter to be sent to the new member to acknowledge their membership. **Action: Sarah, Brendan and Laurence to create new membership forms.**

With the **money** raised at the Autumn Fair and our membership money, ideas were raised about what to do with it. These were: tree guards for the trees from Brogdale; tools/insurance; benches; memorial trees/benches (promote this as an idea for the public).

**Action: Friends to think about other ideas for the money. Sarah to find out information about the Norlands Grant Stewart has mentioned.**

Brendan mentioned that there are still popular **health walks** being led around HCP and other sites in the Borough. They are walks designed to encourage people to do exercise that wouldn't normally, especially on Countryside sites due to the fear of being alone. The aim is to raise your heart beat but not to become out of breath, so you should go at your own pace. There are front and back markers to allow for this. If anyone is interested in going along or becoming a walk leader, contact Shirley Piotrowski at the Town Hall on 01372 732000.

**Next Meeting: Dec 6<sup>th</sup> 7.30 pm in the New Hall**

Remember, they are the first Tuesday of every other month (even numbered ones).