



Friends of Horton Country Park

Minutes

For the meeting held on the 07/02/2006

Present:

Brendan Kilby (Chair), Sarah Hallums, Terry Summerfield (Treasurer), Pat Lowe (Minutes), Alan Cheshire, Anne Cheshire, Bill Facer, Sandy Fleming, Tony Gibbs, Brenda Hammond-Gibbs, Pamela Pending, Ian Tilbury, Daniel Tomlin, Eileen Tomlin, Peter Tomlin, Emma Beeken, Louise Wilford (Lower Mole Project),.

Apologies:

Ray Eyres, Rosemary Eyres, Laurence Coley.

Matters Arising:

Newsletter

The newsletter is now complete and on the website. Sample copies were circulated. Much appreciation was expressed for the website and the newsletter. However, quotes for the cost of printing/photocopying the newsletter were between 70p and £1.50 per copy! This would mean that the cost of sending copies to all members three times a year would be greater than the revenue raised from membership fees and therefore not practicable. Sarah is looking into asking the Council if they can print it for us. In the meantime, all members who have internet access are asked to download it from the website to save on printing costs - www.friendsofhorton.co.uk. And to let us know their e-mail address so that they do not need to be sent a printed copy.

Membership

Lawrence Coley has taken over as Membership Secretary. Membership now numbers 94. In future members will receive an acceptance form when they pay their fees. This will have a list of key phone numbers etc. Lawrence Coley, Peter and Terry are compiling a database with members details but need clearer information from some members. It is now possible to register on the web – www.friendsofhorton.co.uk/addme.

A new Information leaflet about the friends has been produced. It is a colour illustrated, three-fold A4 sheet, so that it can be displayed in Information Centre, Library stands, etc. and contains a new membership form and map of the Country Park. Copies were circulated and members were impressed.

Brendan told us about an interesting project that a friend of his doing on the History of Horton Hamlet, which is based on Census information from 1851 to 1901. He started working on it after seeing Stewart's map of the fields (management compartments).

January task

Brendan thanked all the volunteers who worked on 29.01.06 to plant traditional apple trees in Lambert's Orchard and to clear litter from near the Ruxley Lane entrance. He welcomed a new member, Emma, who had written an inspiring account of her experience on the day and copies were circulated. There is still rubbish to be cleared from dumping behind houses backing onto Butcher's Grove – this will be another task later. There was

a suggestion that Friends walking in the orchard might keep an eye on the new trees, and if the weather was particularly dry, take a bucket to water them from the Orchard pond.

CPRA Donation

Brendan told us that the Clarendon Park Residents Association had sent a cheque for £50 which was very welcome and he sent his thanks to Alan Culff, the chairman for mentioning the Friends of Horton Country Park at their recent AGM. We have another new member as a result.

AGM

There was discussion of whether to have it combined with the April meeting or separate. As there was no other specific business (last year Stewart had talked about the Management Plan) it was decided to combine the meetings and hold it on **April 4th**. Brendan will put out a letter to all members before then asking for nominations as the main officers have to be re-elected this year. He also asked for members views on the formation of committees with responsibility for various areas e.g. Social, Natural History, with members to be put forward for voting at the AGM.

Autumn Fair

Initially £60 of the money raised at the Autumn Fair would be used to buy bow saws, forks, loppers etc. as our own equipment to use on Tasks. More could be made available later if necessary.

Brendan pointed out that the Fair had never been intended as an annual event. It was done last year because there was no Epsom Common Fair. A lot of the work involved had fallen on the Rangers who do not have the time or manpower to take it on. Whilst it would be good to have our own Fair again, next time the Friends would have to be prepared to do far more of the planning, which takes at least a year, and organising and manning on the day. Nothing is planned for this year, next year it will be the Epsom Common Day. It is possible that we could have a HCP Autumn Fair in 2009, but we would have to co-opt a Committee to do the work, possibly at the 2008 AGM. We could still have our Apple Day annually, but again members would have to do the work, not the Ranger Service.

Brendan then handed over to Sarah to talk about the Rangers' work.

Tracks

Work has started on putting right the damage caused when fences were removed. The main track beside the Equestrian Centre will have finer stones than the present, temporary layer and it will be rolled to form a firm, level surface. Work is to start shortly on repairing the damage to Track 73 (Public Footpath between Children's Farm and Clarendon Park) which was laid by the Lower Mole Volunteers, and the rest of that path will be surfaced. There will also be planting alongside that path to restore the privacy of houses backing onto it.

The Rubble heaps in the newly opened fields to the right of the main track will be cleared when the ground is drier.

Tony Gibbs asked about the heronry – there should be no more work in that area to disturb them.

Nescot

They have been clearing the stream from Lambert's Orchard which is now flowing much better. They have cleared the scrub beneath the pear trees around the picnic table and have been burning the brushwood on site.

Dead elms have been cleared from near the Field Pond and they have now moved on to Upper Norris, the paddock near the water vole stream, where they have been clearing brambles etc. There was clear evidence of water vole activity, runs etc. definitely not rats, so earlier clearing has been effective, although it is low density population and none have yet been seen. Brambles will need clearing on a regular basis and the willows need pollarding.

History Walk

This was very successful with 35 people taking part and a new member recruited for the Friends. Well done, thank you, Annette- "She was very knowledgeable."

The Golf Course

is to become part of the Nature Reserve. The rough areas will be managed for wild-life in collaboration with the Rangers. The company already have other courses which are on SSSIs so manager Mike Saunders is interested and knowledgeable. Tony asked if he could get permission to investigate the area. Sarah felt sure that would be possible "Mike is very busy but approachable."

Coppicing in Butcher's Grove.

Sarah thanked Lower Mole volunteers for the good work. Dormouse boxes had been found but they were empty.

Two people had expressed an interest in Coppicing the area as a commercial proposition. The LMV have been coppicing Butcher's Grove for 20 years and now wanted to move on to other areas in the Park.

Sitings

Waxwings are back. Sandy saw a long-eared owl on the land between the Car Park and the David Lloyd centre (Huckle Grove).

Bat Roost

Concern was expressed about placing the Information Board next to the Bat roost as this might encourage vandalism. There had already been attempts at breaking in before the metal door was fitted. It was suggested that the information be placed elsewhere in the park, as with the water voles, etc. Alison would like some planting to be done near the roost as at present it is rather exposed. She suggests a hedgerow leading from Long Grove Wood.

Section 106 money (West Park Hospital)

This money will be used for Public Access management. Stewart's plan is to use it to re-do the main track and give the Equestrian Centre a new entrance to make the area around the Information Centre safer for pedestrians.

Members again raised the issue of misuse of the park by equestrians. They were not keeping to the hard paths e.g. riding through the Orchard, and some were extremely rude and arrogant about expecting walkers to give way to them. Brendan said he would write to both the local Centres reminding them that use of the Park was permissive only and asking that riders be reminded to keep to the hard paths etc.

A tarmac strip is to be put down in the Car Park.

Lower Mole Countryside Management Project

Sarah introduced Louise Wilford from the project to tell us something about their work. They are based in HCP near the Rangers Office. They work on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday every week and on alternate Sundays. They are funded by Surrey County Council and local Authorities such as Epsom, Kingston, Leatherhead. They mainly work in the Public sector but will undertake work for private individuals if the land is a high quality environment.

The Lower Mole Trust works alongside them to raise funds and access grants e.g. to pay for our apple grafts.

Helen Cocker, Stewart's wife, is the Secretary.

They have worked in HCP for 20 years on a variety of tasks – they built the Dipping Platforms at Field Pond for example.

They would be interested in joining up on our Sunday tasks and would be happy to teach skills such as hedge laying, pollarding.

Sarah suggested that we could learn coppicing in the remaining corner at Butcher's Grove as our June task.

Tasks

March 19 Elm suckers to be cleared along the path beside the Events field. If time permits, move on to clearing brambles etc. in the Paddock beside the water vole stream.

April 23 Making "animal homes" e.g. bat boxes with the Lower Mole Volunteers in their workshops. We will be using fresh-felled oak from Epsom Common, so it will not be treated wood.

July 29 Ragwort pulling combined with social event - Barbecue? This is necessary because if it seeds in meadows and dried plants find their way into feed it cannot be recognised in dry state by horses and is poisonous to them. Members were concerned that it should be left in places not close to meadows to provide habitat/food for the Cinnibar Moth.

AOB

Sandy told us that 5 new Rangers have been employed so expect to see new faces around. They also have new uniform – bright yellow jackets with RANGER on front and back, vests in summer, and bicycles for moving around the Park.

He said there had been some unpleasant graffiti in the Gents and asked members to be vigilant and to report this or unpleasant behaviour.

He asked for volunteers to man the Information Centre, especially around Sunday lunchtime.

Surbiton Bird Club will have a stand in the Car Park on Sunday 7th May and will be doing bird-watching walks.

Sarah is doing her Springtime Woodland Walk at 2pm on the same day.

One of our summer meetings will be a wild flower walk.

There is a Valentine's Carriage Drive in the Park on Sunday 12th February. Members expressed concern about safety as previously some drivers had been driving inconsiderately. Eileen said this one should be better supervised and organised.

Members were reminded to be careful not to publish detailed whereabouts of protected species on the website.

Dates

Tasks March 19 Elm removal

April 27 Box making with LMV

July 29 Ragwort clearing.

Next Meeting 4th April, 7.30pm in the New Hall.combined AGM

Meetings are always on the first Tuesday of every second month throughout the year- Feb, Apr, June etc.