

**THE FRIENDS OF CHORLEYWOOD COMMON
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, 30 MARCH 2017
CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

When I started to prepare this report, I thought it had been rather a dull year; but when I checked what has actually happened, I realised how wrong I was. There have been a number of events the Friends have organised for our members; other things that some of us have done; and yet other things on which we have made representations to the Parish and District Councils. Before I go into those details, some preliminaries. First, I want to say Thank you to Mike Warburg and Anthony Boswell for all their contributions to FoCC over many years: Mike stood down from the Committee in the course of the year, and Anthony is retiring with effect from the end of this meeting, and I think we should acknowledge everything they have done. Secondly, I should report that the membership of the society has gone down this year: we now have 135 households as members, and we think part of the reduction represents members not renewing because they have disagreed with the approach the Friends have taken to the play area proposal; if that is correct, it may be that the issue will become less contentious, and some support will return, when the Nature Trail is in place - we will hear more about that later. Thirdly, at the end of the meeting I shall ask for any comments on the decision to move this meeting to a date after the beginning of British Summer Time - so that at least you get here in daylight. And fourthly, congratulations to Stuart Marshall on his co-option to fill the vacancy for North Ward on Chorleywood Parish Council.

FoCC events - also described in the Newsletter which came out in December 2016.

- 4 March 2016: after the last AGM, David Cansdale told us about the 'Clean for the Queen' project, and other things that he does as a Deputy Lieutenant for Hertfordshire.
- 5 March was the 'Clean for the Queen' day, organised by the Parish Council; several members of the Friends participated, and contributed to the collection of several dozen bags of litter from the Common.
- 1 May saw the Beating of the Bounds, combined with a further litter collection: the weather was good and the event was well supported.
- 19 May was the children's Pond Dipping evening: the turnout was small, but those who did attend apparently had a good time. We are considering whether a slightly different

type of event should be arranged for this year as part of the Young Rangers programme.

- On 21 May, Victoria Stainsby again led an 'Edible and Medicinal Plants' walk in the area around Shepherd's Bridge and the Cattle Creep, and she also contributed an article on the same topic to the Newsletter, including a recipe for nettle soup. The nettles are now beginning to grow again, so this may be the time to try it out.
- Village Day on 9 July had pleasant weather; we signed up 14 new members, and the tanks of pondlife and the 'Whose Poo?' competition - matching pictures of animals to pictures of their droppings - were both very popular with the children.
- On three evenings in July a small party went out with the Ranger at dusk to look for glow-worms, but did not find any - that was the second time we had tried, and as glow-worms have a three-year life-cycle we will try again this summer: we might just be lucky.
- 7 August was the Wildflowers and Butterflies walk led by Andy Goddard and Martin Hicks; again the weather was favourable, the event was well supported and much enjoyed.
- Commons Day, 10 September, was not so lucky with the weather - it was one of those days when the people who turned out really meant it. Our stand did attract a number of visitors, including two who signed up for membership. The Parish Council has decided for this year to combine the best elements of Commons Day with Village Day.
- On 17 November, Linda Herity told us about the results of her researches into the life of Lady Ela Russell.

Other FoCC activities

Fixed Point photography: is continuing, but on a quarterly basis rather than monthly.

Volunteering: the most visible project is the coppicing of the bank between the bottom of Larks Meadow and the lower chalk slope, done by the volunteers and the Rangers on three mornings over the winter months, with the cut material used to reinforce the fence between the lower chalk slope and the Railway Field. Anyone who is interested in joining the volunteers should please contact Simon Varnals.

Young Rangers: this is a project initiated last summer by Nikki Varnals, in conjunction with the Rangers, to provide activities on the Common specifically for children. After a well-supported initial event, support for the follow-up ebbed away (see Newsletter), and more detailed thought is being given to how the programme should be organised. One possibility

under consideration is an afternoon event in the summer holidays for the children to help the Rangers take fish out of Darvells Pond, where they ought not to be - details of that and other events will be advertised in due course.

Butterfly surveys: last season's surveys found 26 species of butterflies and day-flying moths on the Common, though the numbers of individuals of several species were down. This year's first survey took place a few days ago in cool and breezy weather, and found nothing except what may have been a Peacock butterfly blown by the wind; the Ranger, with more opportunities, has already seen Brimstone, Small Tortoiseshell, and Comma. Anyone interested in taking part in the butterfly surveys, please get in touch with Michael Hyde.

This is the appropriate point to mention, as many of you will know, that Bill Cattle died earlier this year. He was a long-time user of the Common; he carried out his own butterfly surveys and then passed on his relevant knowledge to the team that are carrying on the project. Michael Hyde, Simon Varnals and I attended his funeral.

Representations on behalf of FoCC

We supported the introduction of the pedestrian crossing at the junction of the A404 and Common Road, and made representations about the appropriate traffic control measures at the 'pinch point' towards the bottom of Dog Kennel Lane; both those projects (mentioned in my report last year) have been completed.

The Community Plan is now in place, and the proposed Neighbourhood Plan is continuing work in progress: Jackie Worrall, Gareth Hunt and Bob Sutherland are due our thanks for their work on both.

The Three Rivers Public Spaces Protection Order has been made, and is being enforced, to ensure dogs are kept under proper control and that their owners pick up after them - we supported the proposal in principle, and with sensible enforcement the Order seems likely to lead to perceptible improvements in the amenity of the Common (as well as other areas).

We have made representations on both the Three Rivers proposals for a play area on the Common (against), and the Parish Council's project for a Nature Trail and Wildwood Dens (cautious support). As you probably know, last April the Parish Council rejected the proposal for a play area on the Common, but Three Rivers resolved to persevere with the project and has adopted a time-scale which would lead to a further proposal in 2018 - after the next

Parish Council elections - if the environmental surveys being commissioned are favourable. Separately, the Parish Council has decided to proceed with its Nature Trail, which does not need planning permission or Commons Act consent, and is supported by Natural England and the Open Spaces Society: Jane White, the Chair of the Parish Council, will tell us more about this project after the formal business of this meeting (and the refreshment break). FoCC can claim some slight credit for the financing of the Trail: Bob Sutherland received an offer, which we passed to the Parish Council, from the family of a former Chorleywood resident to make a contribution in his memory into something for the benefit of the Common, and the result will be £3500 towards the cost of the project. If the Nature Trail proves popular with families, that may take some of the heat out of the issue of play provision, which will be all to the good.

Finally, although I have mentioned some members of the Committee in connection with particular activities, I want to say Thank you to all of them - and to say 'Please make yourself known' to anyone who would be interested in joining the Committee; there is room, and that is your opportunity to bring forward any suggestions.