

Friends of Queen's Wood

Chair's Report - March 24th 2010

This has been another busy year with new ventures taking place undertaken by an energetic committee and supported by outside grant bodies and the council.

During the year the membership has again reached 200 households, including members from postcodes as wide ranging as NW3, N4/5/7/8/11/17 and 22, as well as the solid core from N6 and N10. The informal group of FQW volunteers, set up 20 years ago, relied mainly at that time on a few households bordering on the wood who were concerned when the last keeper left. Their tasks then were litter picking, clearing dead branches from the paths and sweeping leaves. The latter job, now abandoned by FQW, was very hard work but the original keepers did it assiduously every autumn.

Since the formally constituted group was set up in December 1999 we have, with the help of BTCV, become more ambitious and put in steps, bridges, coppiced areas and cleared ditches. Regular events, such as the Woodland Art Fun Day, bird walks, evening talks, and guided walks, have become part of our calendar. I make no apology for including this in an annual report as this year we are celebrating history for FQW.

We have also funded benches, bins, posts to stop rubbish dumping by vans, and commissioned a Bird Survey and a Flora Survey. We hope to commission others, such as an Invertebrate Survey, in the future. Many local experts have records of the wood going back 20 years and it would be good to formalise these and have them available for all.

The large coppiced area, which was funded by the SITA landfill tax trust, has seen a re-generation of old plants whose seed was dormant in the soil and the arrival of new plants taking advantage of the open aspect created. David Bevan has been thrilled with the results and those of us who have helped with the monitoring have benefitted from his enthusiasm. David's Flora Survey was launched in December at a meeting of the ---- and will be launched again in the wood on April 18th. Copies will be available and it will be on the website.

Our plans for turning the derelict paddling pool back into its former role as a wildlife pond have become reality. This is largely due to Rebecca Turpin of the Amphibian and Reptile Conservation charity, supported by Ian Holt, Conservation Officer for Haringey. The bulk of the grant comes from BIFFA landfill tax trust with additional funds from the council Making the Difference fund. The start of the work has been delayed due to constant rain but is now in progress and we hope to put suitable plants round the edge of the pool at the end of April. We consulted widely with wood users and had full support for this project.

Another grant has been obtained from the London Tree and Woodland Grant scheme, funded by the Forestry Commission, for a new Management Plan as our existing plan was out of date. A Local Nature Reserve should really have its plan reviewed every 5 years. Jon Riley, the ecological consultant who will speak tonight, has drawn up the new plan and it will eventually be available on both the FQW and Haringey websites.

This year we took part in the Highgate Wood Heritage Day event, along with other local organisations. Our stall, adorned with our new banner, attracted a lot of attention and we gained new members, distributed leaflets and maps, sold T shirts and asked the public for their views on the frog pool. We took part in a similar publicity event at the Tree Trust for Haringey's Open Day. The Woodland Fun day was very well attended and activities included art work and woodcraft using wood from our trees.

There have been problems with drumming late at night disturbing the residents near the wood and causing disturbance to the birds. However this was resolved, thanks to the intervention of the local Safer Neighbourhood Team of police from Muswell Hill and Highgate Wards, which led to a constructive meeting with the Pagan Federation of London. The police also helped with the removal of campers in the summer. Another problem was water coming across the main path near the Lodge even in dry spells. Thames Water came and denied any involvement but miraculously when leaks on Muswell Hill Rd were dealt with the leaking stopped! Dealing with this involved numerous calls and emails by members of the committee. Our request for official 'No Cycling' notices is an ongoing problem which is not yet resolved.

All this activity could not take place without the continuing support of the committee who work very hard behind the scenes to make FQW run efficiently and give time to attend meetings and run the various activities including work groups in all weathers. Ian Holt and Tony Healey (woods manager) also give their support and FQW is regularly represented at the Friends of Parks Forum in Haringey.

This year is the 10th anniversary of our formally constituted group and we shall be celebrating with an exhibition in the Lodge and a party for members and families on June 26th. I do hope that some founder members will attend along with present members. I think we have much to celebrate and many challenges ahead in keeping the wood as an important place for the local community in what may be difficult financial times ahead.

Lucy Roots
Chair March 2010