

Westcombe Woodlands Newsletter

Friends of Westcombe Woodlands

Summer 2016 Issue No.8

Chairman's Message

The arrival of the pond in the glade (courtesy of the time and effort of Barclays Bank outreach team) has made a big difference. Quite a lot of water life has arrived and the pond now looks as if it has been there for ever as opposed to a few months. We are hoping that the same Barclays volunteers will be returning in November for clearing and preparing the ground for the new beehives.

But it is our own volunteers who, month in month out, put in the time and muscle in keeping things under control. The small shed down by the Seren Park Gates allows us to keep our tools and (equally important) a supply of biscuits on site. We average about 12 volunteers on the monthly work mornings, and it is extraordinary how much can be achieved in a couple of hours by enthusiasts of all ages. We would like to have more, so note the days for the coming months in this Newsletter and come along.

I hope that the event planned on 2 October will be widely supported. This is an Open Afternoon with a variety of activities on offer and featuring apples (although the trees in the glade may not yet be sufficiently established to participate).

I am keen to bring the membership of the Friends above the 100 mark. So please encourage friends and neighbours to join up. We hope to re-instate events solely for Friends in the coming months so that there will be some incentive to join up rather than simply appearing on Open Days.

Many thanks for all your help and support

Tim Barnes

Progress since the last Newsletter

Tool Shed

A secure tool shed has now been installed on the Westcombe Woodlands site by the Seren Park gate. Once the space had been cleared, a base was prepared for the shed. The shed arrive flat packed and was dropped in by crane over the perimeter fence and blends in very well with the woods. It will be a great asset to future projects as a store and focal point.





A few cosmetic additions are still to be completed like the gravel board surround, step at the entrance and spaces created to store the tools. Finally we have a place to keep all the tools which Frank and others have been ferrying back and forth for years.

The Wildlife Pond

In the last Newsletter we reported our plans for a wildlife pond in the corner of the Glade. We were very fortunate to have the support of an enthusiastic team of volunteers from Barclays Bank to undertake the hard work of digging and lining our pond. Their work was undertaken to the design of Committee member Don Albrecht who also helped with the supervision.



By March the pond was dug, a liner in place, and a further liner sunk into a trench along the line of the native species hedge. The idea is to ensure that rain running off the Glade will find its way into the pond so as to keep a good water level. Initially, we filled it by stringing a tarpaulin up from neighbouring trees so that rainwater would flow in.

This worked well, meaning that there was no need to use tap water at all. The edges of the pond were planted at the same time, and are now looking well-established. At the beginning of May, while preparing for the Open Day, we noticed a splash.

We have visitors!

Since then, the pond has established well and our Barclays volunteers returned to see the fruits of their work in July. We are truly grateful to them. As Tim says above, they may be able to return for another project.



Events

A Bluebell Open Day



On 7 May we held our second Open Day, and were pleased to have over 100 visitors during the afternoon. As before we arranged refreshments and a number of activities for children and families. Bluebells were out, the sun shone throwing dappled light through the canopy and a good time was had by all. Once again, we were grateful to Joe Beale and Yu Hsuan Lin for their nature quiz.

Open Garden Day

In June we joined in with many gardens in Blackheath and Greenwich, opening in order to fund-raise for the Greenwich and Bexley Community Hospice. Again we were lucky with the weather (cooler, but mostly dry) and welcomed some 100 visitors. It is good to be able to report that the Open Gardens weekend altogether raised over £12,000 for the hospice.

Bat evening

Les Clark of the London Bat Group led over a dozen Friends to observe bats around dusk on 10 June. Les provided bat detectors to help us to spot the bats and to identify which species they were. We saw pipistrelles, soprano pipistrelles and there may have been a sighting of noctule bats, although this was not confirmed. We also saw a number of flying stag beetles. Les has since indicated willingness to make this a regular event, so keep in touch if you are interested in joining us next year.

Visit from Friends of Greenwich Park

On 16 April some 20 Friends of Greenwich Park came to visit and look around the Woodlands. Volunteers guided them round in small groups, showed them what we have achieved, answered their questions and discussed ideas and plans for the future. The morning ended with refreshments. Some of the visitors have already signed up as Friends of Westcombe Woodlands and we're aiming to develop links with other local groups interested in wildlife and the environment.

Mapping Project.

The purpose of the mapping project is to produce an outline map of the Westcombe Woodlands site and a base map that anyone can use to record their findings; flora or fauna.



Survey points are being established in the woodlands using GPS and other survey methods. From these points, with a little bit of survey knowledge you will be able to locate any point and so record the position of your find. This information will enable us to build up a comprehensive record of the various species found here and in turn help with the management of the environment.



Andrew Slade

Future Events

Volunteer Days

We have just held a Volunteer Day (3rd September) and were delighted to be joined by four new volunteers. They were very welcome and provided a lot of help. The next Volunteer Day will involve preparation for the Open Day in the afternoon as well as the normal work improving the environment for native species.

Those planned for the remainder of 2016 are:

- Sunday 2 October
- Saturday 5 November
- Sunday 4 December

On each day we meet at 10 am by the Seren Park gate and stay until around 1 pm, although if you can do only part of that time you are still very welcome. There are always plenty of jobs to do and the work varies from day to day. What is more, if you are not in a position to join us in volunteering work but would simply like to come along to join us, do feel free. There will be refreshments when we feel like taking a break.

Open Day, Sunday 2 October 2016

This is planned to run from 2 – 5 pm and, as usual, we will have refreshments and plan to organise activities for families and children. We will be showing our guests around the woodlands, to give an idea of the ways in which we are trying to improve the environment for native species.

Annual General Meeting 2016

We plan to hold our annual general meeting, as required by the Charities Commission, in the evening of Wednesday 19 October 2016. The precise venue is yet to be finalised but it is likely to be in the Royal Naval College. As well as conducting our formal business we are planning a talk of interest to Friends. More details will be available soon.

Nigel Duncan

Secretary,

Friends of Westcombe Woodlands

The Friends of Westcombe Woodlands

A Charitable Incorporated Organisation – registered charity number 1161352

Committee: Don Albrecht, Tim Barnes (chair) Chris Bates, Cllr Geoff Brighty, Kate Campbell, Ruth Cracknell, Nigel Duncan, Frank Smith (vice chair), Andrew Slade, Rich Sylvester.

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