

# FRIENDS OF FARTHING DOWNS & HAPPY VALLEY

## SHAPING UP TO CLIMATE CHANGE

Experience from a growing outer London suburb  
with major open spaces and much woodland



Symposium held on 10 November 2021 at  
Coulson, Surrey with speakers from  
City Commons, Croydon Council and the Woodland Trust

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**RS**

## THE SPEAKERS IN PROFILE



RICHARD EDWARDS has been Tree and Woodland Officer for Croydon for almost three decades, so very familiar with parks and green spaces issues locally. A local man – his school was Riddlesdown High. He studied forestry at the University of Cumbria in the mid-60s, based at Keswick (now at Ambleside), and became keen on urban tree management as against commercial forestry. A past Chairman of the London Tree Officers Association: and Director of the National Association of Tree Officers.



TOM OLIVER is in his fifth year as a ranger at the City Commons with responsibility for drafting ten-year plans for each of the four areas – Farthing Downs Coulsdon Common, Kenley and Riddlesdown. Specialising in nature management, forestry and greening, Tom has done post graduate studies in Denmark, and been a speaker at the European Forum on Urban Greening held in Copenhagen.



DAVID HATCHER a graduate of the University of Kent, and with a life-long career in the Civil Service, he has been a long-time volunteer in both the RSPB and the Kent Trust for Nature Conservation. He joined the Woodland Trust helping develop the new Centenary Woodland (for WWI) at Langley Vale and now acts as Estate Manager at a country estate near Guildford to encourage rewilding. He also chairs Veterans Gateway, the rehabilitation service for ex-service personnel.

## ILLUSTRATIONS IN THE TEXT

The Friends are indebted to Melanie Harrison and Rod Swain for use of photographic material accompanying this symposium report. Both regularly take pictures of Farthing Downs and Happy Valley as a hobby. (Rod's giant photos enliven the booking hall at Coulsdon South Station). The initials MH and RS are alongside each of their shots. We have used a photo created by Melanie for the cover of this symposium report.

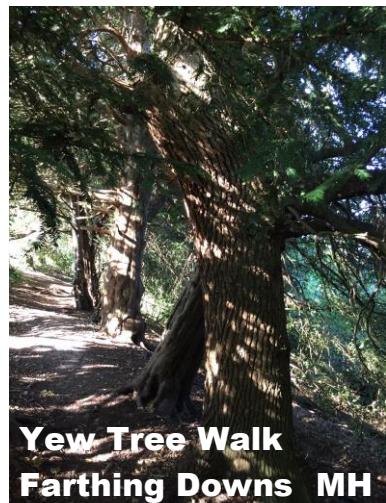
## BACKGROUND TO THE SYMPOSIUM



Since our formation in 2005, The Friends have held regular public meetings on issues concerning Farthing Downs and Happy Valley, while encouraging people to explore the rich tapestry of the natural world on their doorstep. A symposium in November 2021, as part of our Annual Meeting, explored the issue of climate change, and the role nature's groundcover plays in reducing carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. For over a decade now the public have been encouraged by local government to think about, and grow, more trees; so in a background paper for this symposium under the title '*Who's for more trees?*' I speculated whether our southern London suburbs, already rich in woodland and protected open spaces needed nevertheless to capture more carbon by perhaps placing more trees in hedgerows, turning the periphery of treeless Kenley airfield into woodland; and adding – perhaps symbolically – to the small number of beech trees at the Folly on Farthing Downs.

Three speakers with great experience of woodland management, in the context of conservation, and strategic planning, were invited to address the theme. We produce a summary of their talks here. The talks, and discussion following – lasting 'till 23.30 hours – served to indicate that ground cover is a mere fragment of the set of measures needed – locally and nationally – if the climate threat is to be fully addressed. It seems right, therefore, at the end of this paper, to touch also on the way we live in the suburbs – our style of life – and our use of planetary resources, if 2050 is not to be the doomsday climatologists are predicting.

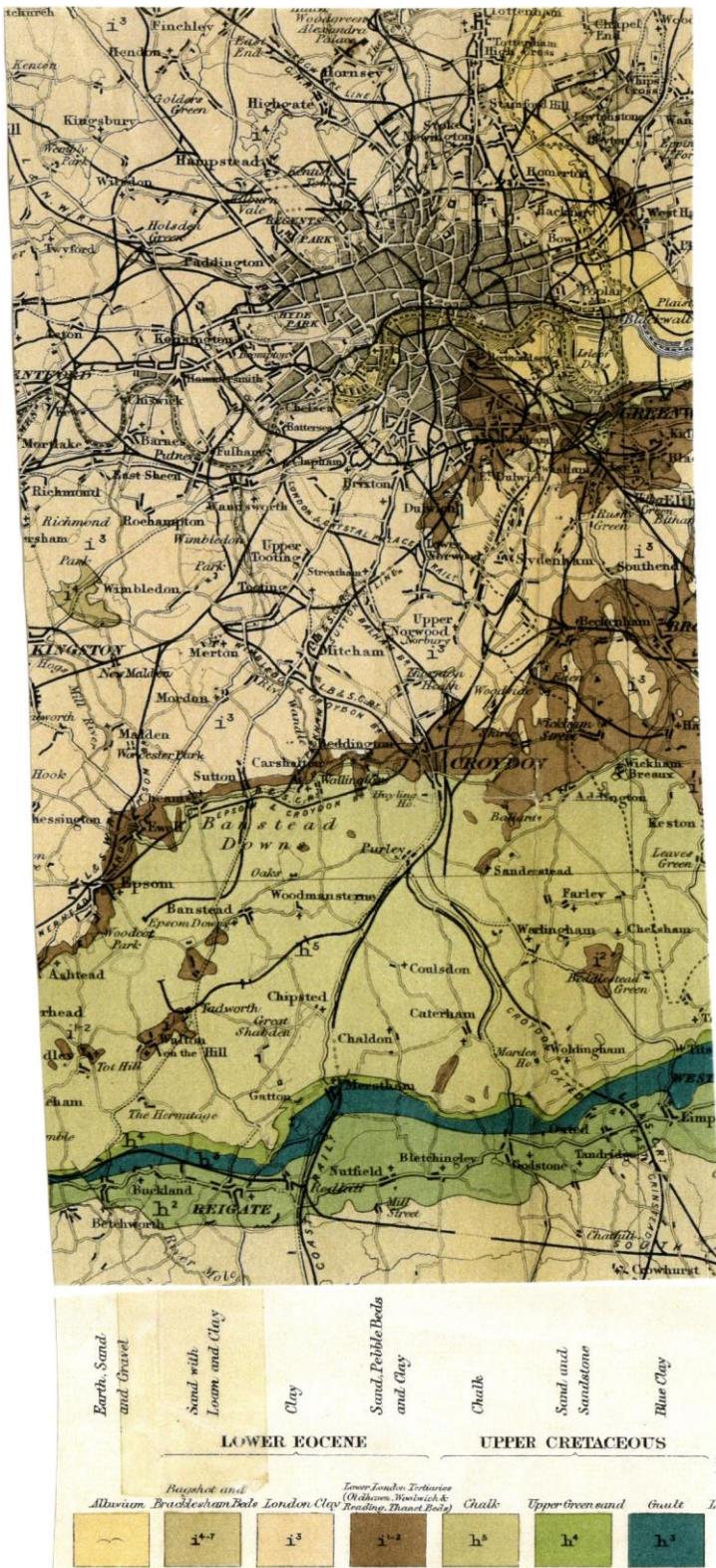
Not least important in this context, is the recent insolvency of Croydon among London boroughs, and the impact this will have on all but the most essential of council services for the next little while.



Graham Lomas, Chairman, The Friends

# 150 YEARS OF CONSERVATION ACROSS CROYDON

A brief history of change

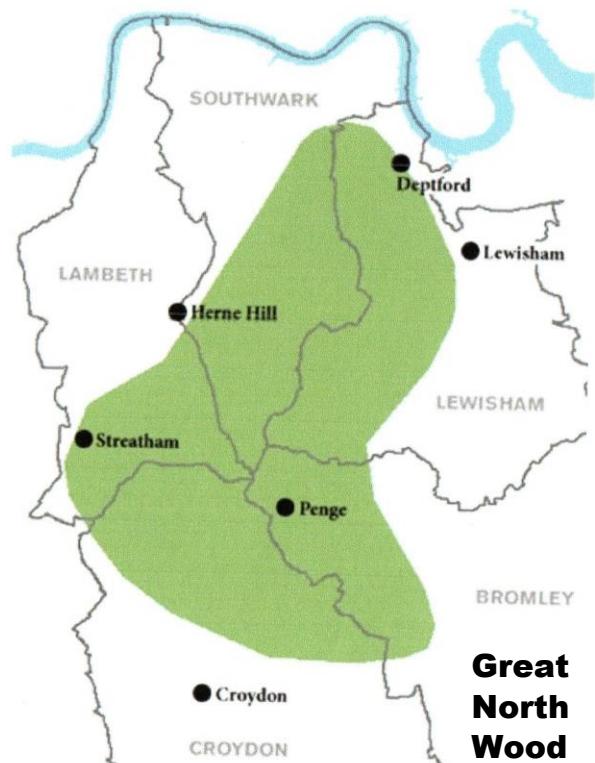


Spanning two very different geological strata, Croydon early on displayed two distinct landscapes – the northern half covered in oak forest, the southern half sparsely wooded chalk grassland. From Deptford to Penge The Great North Wood dominated the loam, sand and gravel of the ‘London clay’ – a resource for ship building, charcoal and leather making, but eventually giving way to dense terraced housing as the London metropolis edged south. All that remains of this forest are mere fragments at Dulwich, Sydenham, Beaulieu Heights, and at Biggin Wood, all now subject to conservation efforts by the London Wildlife Trust.

Southern Croydon on the other hand, lying across the dip slope of the North Downs with dry valleys crossing the chalk, gave rise from medieval times to a more open landscape characterized by small rural settlements, agriculture, husbandry, country estates, landed gentry, and even Archbishops. The expanding metropolis

eventually engulfed even this area, though with compact urban development here giving way to ‘suburbia’.

From the mid 19C public health was giving rise to concern. A mighty asylum at Cane Hill in Coulsdon (1872) helped pioneer care for hundreds unable to cope, with the local Health Board also purchasing pieces of open land across Croydon to encourage better health through recreation – Duppas Hill (1863), Addington Hills (1874), and Addington Rec (1875). The boldest step in public health undoubtedly was in 1883 when the City of London Corporation purchased 222 hectares of the North Downs in south Croydon known as ‘The City Commons’, some ten miles from The Square Mile. The City also acquired Ashtead Common, Epping Forest, and much of the Chilterns – iconic prime countryside. Far sighted philanthropy indeed, some sixty years before legislation would enable designation as open space without purchase.



**Great  
North  
Wood**

As suburbia spread, and the landed classes increasingly sold up, some bequeathed parts of their estate to the local authority as parks for public enjoyment – Coombe Park, Betts Mead, Bradmore Green, Chaldon Way, Heathfield, Lloyd Park, Norbury Hill, Littleheath Wood and Edgecombe. In the 20C the newly emerging local authorities covering the area were keen to follow these precedents. Coulsdon and Purley Urban District Council in southern Croydon purchased Bourne Park, Coulsdon Memorial Ground, Grange Park and Rickman Hill Rec (some aided by public subscription). Its major contribution undoubtedly was to use the new LCC Green Belt Act (1938) to buy Happy Valley, Kingswood, and Millstock. (Devilsden Wood was similarly purchased by Warlingham and Caterham UDC).

In the more recent past, Croydon borough has, among other sizeable initiatives, added further to the stock of playing fields – At Ashburton Park, Mayfield Road, Milne Park, Grangewood Park, King George’s Field, Norbury Hill and Croham Hurst. Last – and not least – Purley Way.

## The stage reached



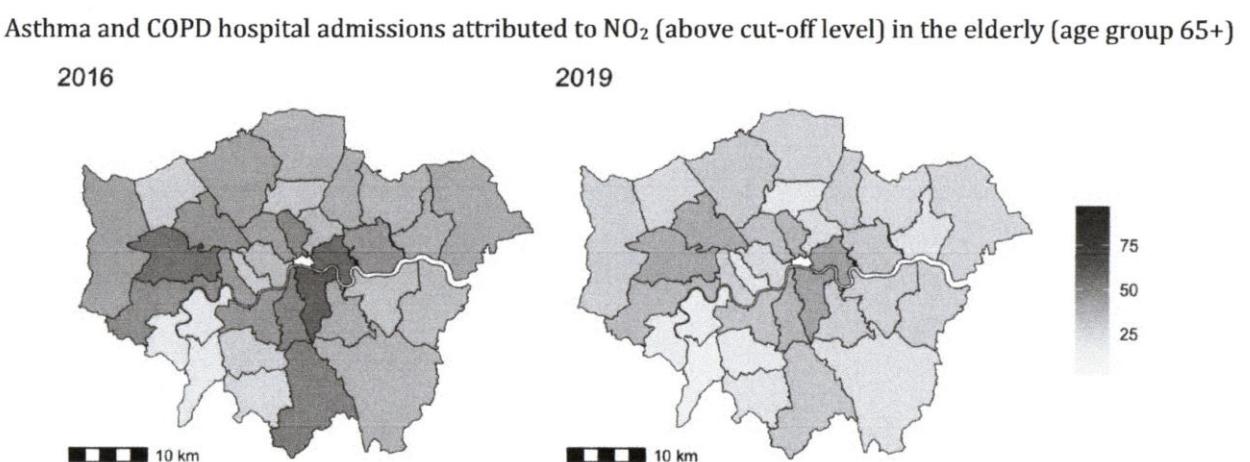
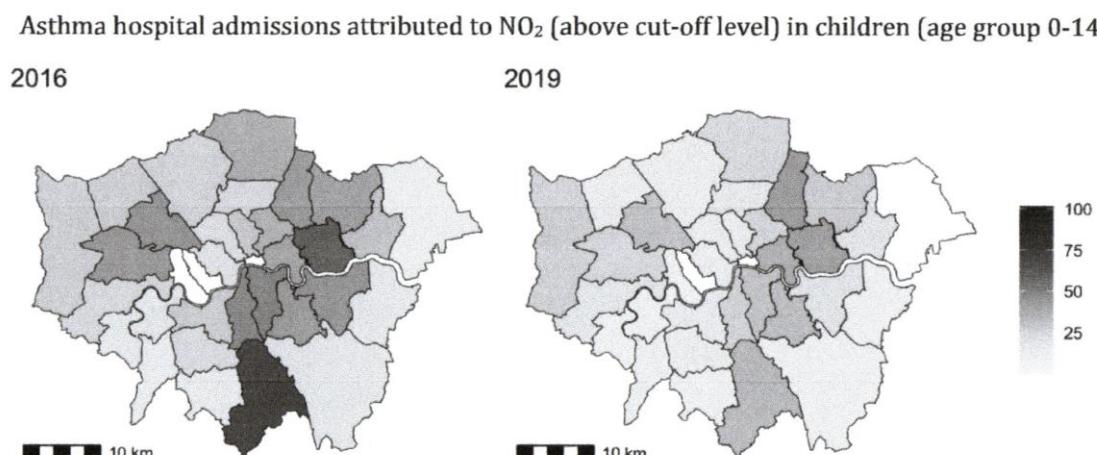
By the close of the 20C, Croydon could boast 127 open spaces – parks - with the southern half of the borough becoming among the greenest districts in the whole of London.

Mounting concern however over climate change, and the growing impact of atmospheric pollution on people's health is impacting on ways of sustaining urban environments – in Croydon as in many other places - with a decided shift towards reducing travel, and growing more trees. Since 2010, a dozen or more schemes centring on trees have been sponsored by public agencies in Britain, each involving millions in expenditure – government departments, London Mayors, DEFRA, the Forestry Commission, Natural England, the Environment Agency, the Lottery, Unilever, and the Woodland Trust. Their name evocative of their purpose: Big Green Fund, Grow Back Greener, Green City Fund, Pocket Parks, Forever Green, Help London Parks, For the Love of Trees, Plant a Tree in Nature Week, Green Recovery Challenge Fund, Urban Tree Challenge, and Trees for Streets.

The schemes so far vary considerably in scale and scope. The Recovery Fund, internationally financed, focuses on lowering carbon

footprints in specific developing countries, while its UK component champions for example the employment of ecologists. Schemes developed by the two London Mayors have so far committed over £16m to 'green' initiatives, including play spaces, cleaning rivers and planting trees. Interestingly, the early Green City Fund was restricted to tree planting in public parks (specifically ruling out planting more trees in urban streets), whereas the current Trees for Streets scheme does precisely that. The emphasis throughout the London Mayoral initiatives has been on the inner city, for sound reasons.

Notwithstanding, data on hospitalization from asthma attacks among children 0-14 and people across London over 65 shows Croydon in southern London having noticeably higher levels of NO<sub>2</sub> than both inner and outer London boroughs.

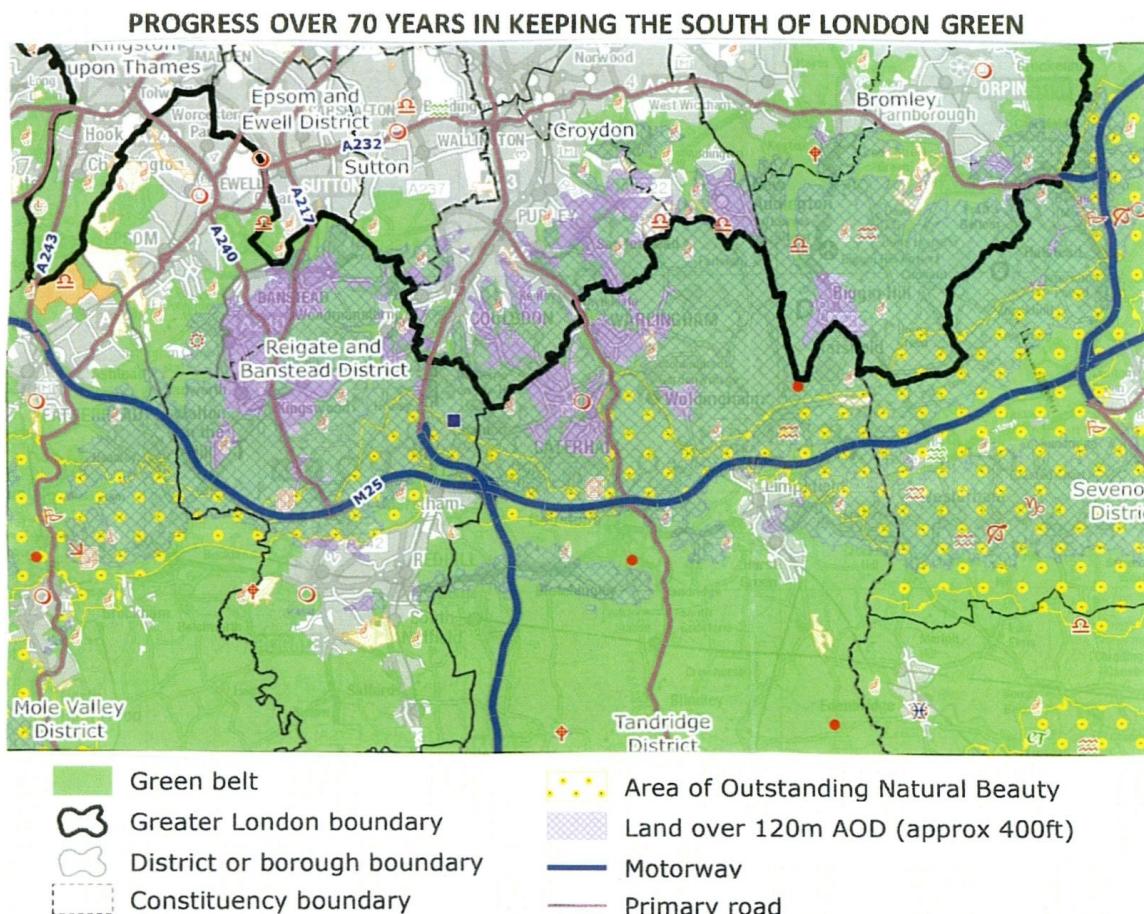


The Climate Change Commission has been saying Britain needs to grow 30m new trees every year – equivalent to covering twelve times the scale of Epping Forest, or 120 times the size of new South London Downs National Nature Reserve, if the country is to reach carbon neutral

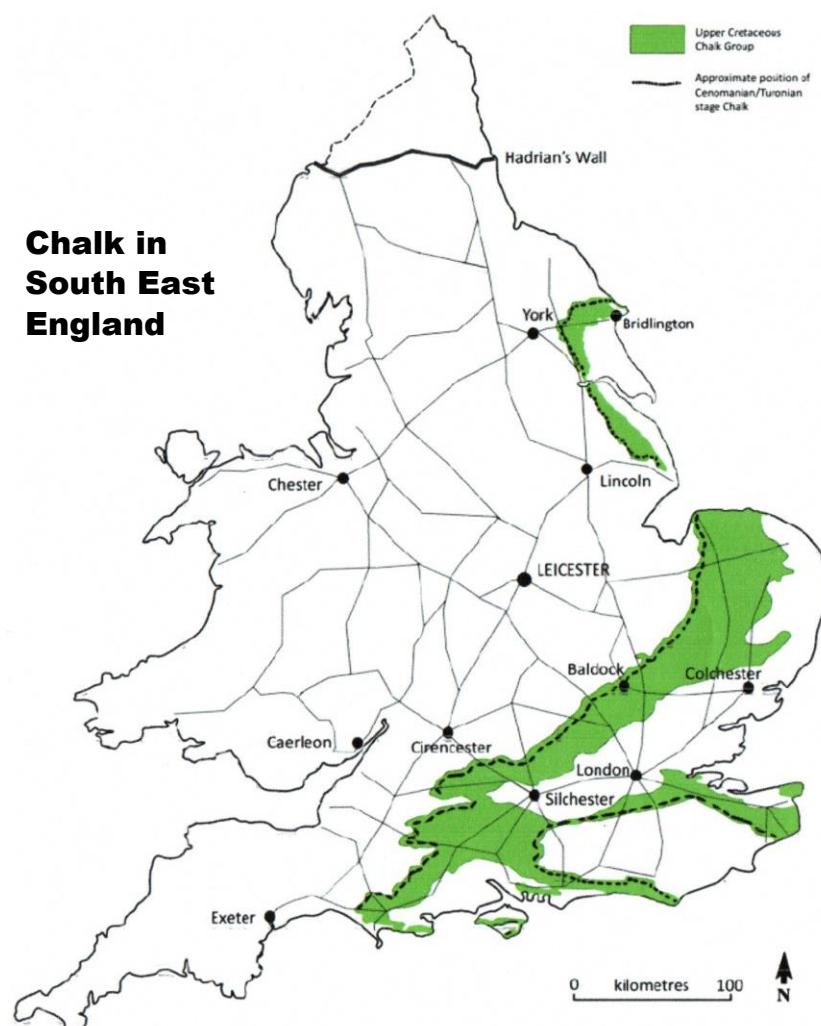
by 2050. A very tall agenda. Woodland cover has scarcely so far gone from 12 percent to 13 percent since 1998. For the Queen's Jubilee this year, some seventy patches of ancient woodland across the country are being signalled for special conservation, and the Woodland Trust is using its major new document State of the UK's Trees 2021 to sponsor 50m trees across the country.

## Two Croydons

If underlying geology was responsible for dividing Croydon into two, way back; urbanization in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19th centuries similarly shaped the town's emerging social structure – a division that was to become more marked in the 20C with a strong north/south divide in political allegiance as Croydon's southern suburbs emerged. In the municipal elections in May 2022 the borough population voted overwhelmingly to have a directly elected Chief Executive Mayor to circumnavigate party political divide, joining four other London boroughs that had previously adopted this system. The underlying political polarization has scarcely changed however, with the new council divided exactly 50/50 in party allegiance.



It is against this background that current concerns over conservation, housing need, job growth, biodiversity, the carbon footprint, and climate change have now to be addressed. Pressure on London to continue to grow remains very high. Its population could go from 8.6m to 11m by 2039, given that planned decentralization has been abandoned. GLA policy moreover is that ‘levelling up’ the North and the Midlands must not be at the expense London. The consequence is to see greatly intensified land use in the 20C suburbs – which architects and builders see as somehow turning suburbia into ‘superbia’. Government strategy favours such ‘intensification’, and has urged the Mayor of London to push high house building targets in the capital in the London Plan (2021) much higher. Croydon’s own forecasting puts the level of required housing some 14,000 units higher than the GLA’s – involving substantial urban renewal around Purley Way (between 9 and 12,000 dwellings); high rise redevelopment around the town centre (the scale of numbers yet to be fixed); and considerable building in the southern suburbs



(between 15 and 19,000 new dwellings) the latter to be achieved through a cadre of small scale architectural and building enterprises geared to operating on small sites – scouting, locating, buying up, demolishing, and rebuilding to higher densities – providing nine flats in place of one large house, so avoiding ‘affordable’ housing obligations. The scope for such intensification is considerable.

All this puts pressure on England's remaining cretaceous chalk underbelly. A similar issue arises outside London, in the greenbelt along the North Downs, where speculative planning applications for housebuilding are undermining official policies of almost total development restraint.

Only 9500 hectares of chalk grassland remain in southeast England, with a mere 320 hectares in Greater London – and the lion's share (60 percent) of that is in Croydon, about 184 hectares. Farthing Downs, Happy Valley and Riddlesdown account for 64 hectares, the rest is in small pockets of local nature reserves and parks. Decline in sheep pasturing after WW2, together with the relentless spread of urban London meant loss of much chalk grassland short sward – not least for example close to Farthing Downs where intensive farming gave way to horse stabling, deterioration of the soil and reduced biodiversity. The downland landscape that lent itself so readily to colonization from Saxon times, now faces intense housebuilding.



## **Richard Edwards, Croydon Council**



Richard began by stressing the need not only to plant new trees but to look after the old. Richard concluded that nothing is better designed than trees for de-polluting, filtering out carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and also be good for both mental health and wildlife. Richard recalled earlier times when a Council Officer, Nigel Browning ‘snaffled’ a pot of money from other departments and used it to plant hundreds of trees in Croydon, later Director of Public Services and works, Keith Ollier promoted a ‘Greening of the Borough’ project with the aim of planting trees in roads devoid of trees but funding for this project ‘dried up’. In 2017 it was realised that in Croydon

more trees were being taken out than being put in. Capital funding was made available providing for three thousand trees over a five-year period. Tree planting was targeted in the north of the borough due to its lower tree cover, however, the funding was pulled when Croydon Council declared bankruptcy in 2020.

Funding for tree planting is now being sought from a variety of sources including CIL and 106 which is money received from developers for community projects. Also available are grants such as the Urban Challenge Fund and the Government funded Local Authority Treescape Fund which is enabling 480 trees to be planted this winter plus 2 years maintenance. Since 2019 the council has planted 2,217 trees. This is down to the hard work of the planting officer Helen Lomasney.

I-tree Canopy can be used to digitally estimate the tree canopy cover both locally and nationally. The national average is 13%. Croydon's tree canopy cover is generally above the national average: 18% north Croydon, 35% south Croydon and 25% central Croydon.

Richard then moved on to speak about Croydon's partnership with Trees for Streets which is a not-for-profit enterprise which enables residents, businesses (to improve their carbon footprint) to sponsor trees for their local streets and parks. Local sponsorship can be set up by downloading the app to make donations for a tree for a chosen site. The application is then checked by the council's tree officer to see if it is suitable before the money pledged is used for planting the tree. Sponsorship is £350, or less if the sponsor is willing to take on watering until the tree is established. At present the main task is to fill empty tree pits and grass verges.

The council are also looking to extend this scheme to allow crowdfunding for larger schemes.

Richard spoke about the help the scheme is receiving from GoodGym, a Croydon group who combine exercise with good deeds, who are currently delivering leaflets about the scheme to Croydon residents.

Q: There is a need to preserve mature trees which need TPOs and maintenance to protect them. A lot of trees are lost due to development.

A: Tree Officers can only protect a tree which is shown to be under threat – legislation is in favour of housing development and officers are unable to protect every tree.

Q: Regarding permission to plant: Network Rail recently felled trees on the steep embankment beside the Brighton Road which residents asked if they could replant.

A: (Charles King, East Surrey Transport Committee): The embankment is very steep and a landslide had caused a derailment so trees were felled so that the embankments could be made safe. Ten new trees have been planted which are more suitable for the site. Point was made that a cycle of coppicing was needed to both preserve wildlife while also keeping the trains running.





Richard was aware of the site and had noted that it was regenerating naturally, but would look into the matter.

The Chairman had noted that Network Rail needed a six-foot clearance beside tracks and no growth to be above six feet.

Left: Railway embankment south from Woodplace Lane bridge.

**Q:** Are Chestnut Trees still a good tree for planting.

**A:** Unfortunately, Chestnut trees are threatened by Chestnut Gall Wasp a new decease (2015) which causes leaves to drop early.

**Q:** Regarding the availability of a digital map of Croydon which would show the location of trees in the borough.

**A:** The database is a little behind schedule, while it gives location of existing trees it is not up to date. The systems upgrade will enable residents to plot the location of trees.



## **Tom Oliver, City Commons**

The City is one of the largest land managers in London along with the Royal Parks and as well as the Coulsdon Commons, manages twelve other sites including Epping Forest (one of the largest ancient woodlands in London) and Hampstead Heath. The City's Rangers have a background in environmental management dating back to 1883 when there were few green space managers. In 1870, the threat of enclosure of the Coulsdon Commons by the owner Lord Byron prompted the eventual sale to the City who bought land for recreational use by the people of' London. The Commons, being close to a railway station, gave easy access for visitors. Tom showed a water colour by local artist Edith Hall of a view of the Quarry as seen from Farthing Downs in 1923 and which illustrates the advance of urbanization since then – the quarry is now home to a large Waitrose Depot among other light industrial uses. Tom drew attention to the grazing animals in the foreground of the painting.



Tom turned to the maintenance and restoration work that the Rangers carry out on the Coulsdon Commons beginning with an image of the Tom Bainbridge map of 1773 showing the location of 'The Folly', still a very well-known landmark on Farthing Downs. 'The Folly' as it has become known, was originally a planting in the 18th century of seven Beech trees which the Rangers continue to replace and maintain today.

Coppicing is another maintenance task regularly carried out by Rangers to maintain woodland which allows more light and heat to reach the woodland floor encouraging biodiversity. A photograph of springtime bluebells in woodland on Kenley Common underlines its importance. Coppicing allows the regeneration of woodland flowers, such as the bluebells, and other rare species which in turn encourages wildlife: rare butterflies, birds and mammals, such as the Bullfinch and Dormouse, flourish.

Hedgerows are also important to wildlife and Tom showed photographs of the Rangers using an age-old technique to restore and replace hedgerows on the Commons, mentioning how much Rangers enjoy the task. The loss of hedgerows nationally has caused the decline of many native species, and maintenance of hedgerows is an essential task to help sustain the rich habitat they provide.

An area of Wood Pasture on the Grove is another restoration project being progressed by the City Ranges. Rare on the Commons, Wood Pasture is a mosaic of different types of mature trees, a variety of scrub and open pasture kept clear by grazing and coppicing. Tom explained that this mix of open grassland, trees and scrub and older trees provide micro habitats, nesting sites for bats and birds and wide range of fungi thriving on fallen wood and aging trees. Bees and butterflies can flourish on the variety of wildflowers growing on the open pasture. Tom showed a photo of the rare Purple Emperor butterfly which is now seen on many of the Commons.

Farthing Downs and Riddlesdown have a different mix of scrub and trees



**Stag Beetle**

compared to the Wood Pasture of the Grove. Farthing Downs is a 'hot spot' for the Stag Beetle which lives on dead and mature trees. Roe Deer are a common sight on Farthing Downs. A restoration project is underway to replace Juniper Trees, a chalk grassland plant which has been ravaged by development. However, this is a long-term project as the tree is difficult to grow and cultivate.

Tree safety is important for visitors. Checks are regularly carried out and risks categorised with footpaths and bridle ways listed as at the highest need of care. Tom reminded us that trees do fall as they age or can be damaged by high winds. Pest infestations are another problem; the thinning canopy of an Ash tree signals that the tree has ash dieback, will be lost and will need to be made safe. Tom showed us a photograph of the Oak processionary moth (a long joined-up line of caterpillars) which strip the foliage of Oak trees, which can recover. He warned that the caterpillars can cause an allergic reaction in both humans and animals if touched, which makes it costly to remove. The moth has been found on Oaks at West Wickham and is moving closer to local sites – the situation is being monitored.



**Chalk grassland  
Farthing Downs**

RS

It is accepted that historic chalk grassland is as biodiverse as a Tropical Rainforest with forty different species of plants per square metre, but is rarer than a rainforest. Work to protect it is ongoing. It is now recognised that grassland stores 38% of terrestrial carbon and that more attention should be paid to grassland as a way of reducing the impact of climate change whilst supporting biodiversity. This has been acknowledged at COP26 and by conservation charities as it is often overlooked in favour of tree planting. Tom asked us to consider where trees

should be planted and the importance of planting the 'right trees in the right places' in mitigating the impact of climate change. The idea that 'London is a Forest' – having almost as many trees as people suggests that trees are not needed on chalk grassland where they have been removed to keep the Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) status and enable the recent National Nature Reserve (NNR) designation and is an important element in the reduction of climate change. Tom showed us photographs of uncommon and nationally rare orchids which grow on the open chalk grassland.

Tom referred to the alarming loss of gardens to paving since 2010 which amounted to 25% loss of green area. There is action we can take. For example, in Copenhagen the problem has been addressed as all new buildings are required to have green roofs which capture rainfall, dust particles and reduce the urban temperature. Tom finished by saying that there is a lot we can do as individuals and that we could 'get on with it ourselves'.

Q: Ash dieback: There are 80M ash trees and about 80% will be lost that is 72M. How can we keep up? Can a local project be initiated to take trees from gardens?

A: Woodland will be regenerated naturally by other species where ash trees have gone. On chalk soils, Sycamore can be dominant as well as Hazel. Indigenous species of Oak are preferable. Natural regeneration is best as there can be bio-security problems with using cultivated trees from gardens such as disease which could harm native, naturally grown trees and plants.

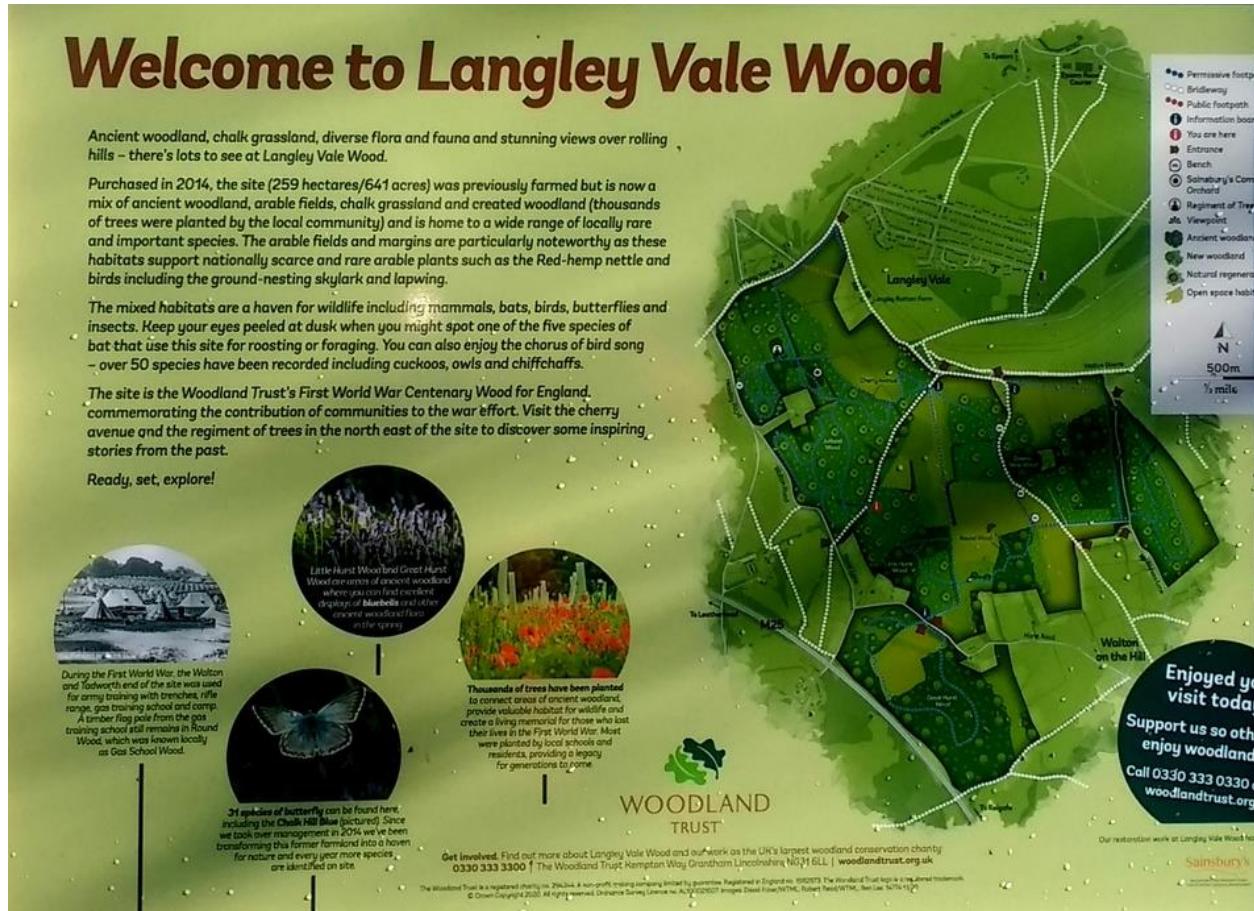


Q: Is the grazing project a disaster? Is it better to have trees?

A: The grazing project is used as a compliment to the regeneration of the Downs and supports a wide variety of rare plants and animals. Maintaining the open character of the Downs is also in keeping with our cultural heritage and the scheduled ancient monument designation. Carbon stored in long-grassland is also far higher than planted woodlands and represents a significant but largely unrepresented store.

## David Hatcher, Woodland Trust

David began by outlining the Trust's major project to both create and restore woodland at the Langley Vale Centenary Wood, the largest of the four Centenary woods in Britain and a significant achievement in creating a huge woodland. Guided walks are organised and a new memorial trail is now available to celebrate remembrance this November.



The Woodland Trust bought the 640-hectare farmland site in 2014 with the aim of creating the Centenary Wood which commemorates the fallen of WWI. Planting of new woodland will be complementary to valuing the biodiversity already present while 40% of the site will be kept as arable land. During the First World War there was a military camp at the Walton and Tadworth end of the site which served as a training camp. An original timber flagpole is being preserved in Round Wood to mark this. Jutland Wood commemorates the Battle of Jutland in which fourteen British ships were sunk. Fourteen portholes have been carved from oak for the site in homage to the WWI sailors who lost their lives. There are also archaeological remains on the site dating from early human

habitation to the 4th Century (Roman) as well as Saxon remains. Fossils including sea urchins have been found.

David went on to talk about the wildlife at Langley Vale which although arable land, has not been over-farmed. Only part of the site was farmed from the mid-18th Century. As a result, it is the second most valuable site for arable plants in the country. Bird life is abundant across the site, not only in the woodland, and over sixty species of birds have been recorded including Lapwings, Skylarks, three species of Owls, Kestrels (Kestrel and Owl nest boxes are provided), Bullfinches, and in fact at least thirty-three British species have bred at Langley Vale Wood. Scrapes have been created to enable Kidney Vetch to grow in the poor chalk grassland soil. This plant provides food for the caterpillars of the Small Blue butterfly. Wasp Spiders and Hornets are also found on the site and the many varieties of fungi include the Scarlet Elf Cup. Areas of chalk grassland and woodland support several varieties of Orchids.

Regarding climate change, David believes it is important that we all lobby our MPs as it is imperative that we get the message across that ordinary people do care. Now 97% of scientists believe that the current increase in the speed of climate change is man-made and most man-made carbon emissions come from fossil fuels. In the UK we have our own equivalent of a Tropical Rainforest in our peat bogs, which can store up to eight times as much carbon as the equivalent area of forest. However, the peat bogs must be kept damp to ensure that the carbon and other greenhouse gasses are not released into the atmosphere. David reminded us that up to 15% of our wildlife is under threat, among them the Pine Marten, Wildcat, Harvest Mouse and Glow Worm. Loss of habitat is affecting insects and we can all help by not using pesticides in our gardens.



David advised that planting more native trees would help to restore our natural biodiversity. In 2020, the Woodland Trust published 'Our Emergency Tree Plan' urging Government and Local Authorities to take action to look after the trees we have and plant new trees.

where appropriate. Advice by the Woodland Trust is ‘Right Tree – Right Place’ for example an oak tree can support up to five hundred different species. Free trees are available from the Woodland Trust for community projects and information about the scheme can be found on the Trust’s website.

David reminded us that we need to act and listed ways in which we can all make a difference:

- Buy locally grown food in season
- Reduce your meat consumption – or stop it altogether
- Reduce your single-use plastics
- Take your own bag when shopping
- Look for recyclable containers when buying food and drink
- Better still, buy unpackaged food

Look for other ways to make a difference:

- Campaign to save threatened trees and woodland
- Lobby local politicians to plant more trees and become carbon neutral
- Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

Q: Regarding the use of plastic tree guards, which the Trust is currently using – are there any plans to replace these with those made from natural materials.

A: There are plans to replace the plastic tree guards. Spiral tree guards were tried but frayed. Other trials are being carried out on bamboo or fungi-based guards.

Q: Re visiting the Centenary Woodland, it cannot be found on google maps, the website doesn’t show how to get there on public transport, and there’s no car park.

A: The planning application for a car park has been delayed but it is hoped it will be in place mid next year. Maps are provided at the entrances and are also on the Woodland Trust website.

## SUSTAINED PRESSURE ON LONDON

The last 150 years have seen built-up London double in size – from four to over eight million. Always the largest city in Europe, London for a time after WW2 seemed likely to decline in population – through reduced family size, emigration, and planned ‘overspill’ (the scattering of development to other parts of the country). In the event in-migration from these very places, much inter-continental movement of labour to the UK, and Britain’s fusion in the EU after 1975 served all to further entrench London’s predominance.



**Development  
Lion Green Road, Coulsdon**

Current government policy, to begin to ‘level-up’ the regions of the UK by strengthening each one’s individual economic base appears unlikely to deflect growth away from London on a significant scale on five counts:

- 1 London’s base is too strong; it has a youthful population
- 2 the pandemic failed to dent London’s economy
- 3 inbuilt population growth will soon expand the conurbation northwards into a new mini-metropolis on an Oxford-Cambridge axis
- 4 HS2 over the next decade will inevitably reinforce London’s magnetism, with a new Development Corporation emerging at Oaks Park and a further one at the Olympic Park in Newham
- 5 Attractive countryside around south London will lead to speculative planning applications for quality development close to the Capital.

This perspective is underlined by *Opportunity London*, a new initiative promoting investment in regeneration and green infrastructure across all London boroughs, highlighting London’s key strengths (over £15bn being invested in London real estate in a single year 20-21 making the total value of London’s dwelling stock £2.4 trillion) and with tech investment in London in 2021 more than in Berlin, Paris and Amsterdam combined.

## A RACE AGAINST TIME

Croydon has its very own climate change report, produced by Councillors, community reps, and chaired by the New Economics Foundation. It advocates annual scrutiny of Croydon life, with specific recommendations focusing on reducing car use, introducing distance-based road pricing, accenting public transport, and reduced street parking, to achieve what it calls the '15 minute city'. (The Report makes no direct mention of planting trees however, save oblique reference to 'reclaiming portions of streets for 'greening''.) It sees the task of neighbourhood greening chiefly as increasing renewable energy usage, decarbonising buildings through retro fitting, and improving public transport.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate change is much more judgemental. Its sixth Report (2022) on global issues paints a bleak picture of dangerous and widespread disruption through worldwide heatwaves, droughts and floods exceeding human and animal tolerance levels, and requiring accelerated action to directly influence climate change by deep rapid cuts in greenhouse gases.

The large body of scientific literature on climate change now fast growing, is advocating what amounts to a new set of 'Ten Commandments' to ensure that global warming is kept below the critical level of 1.5°C, fast being approached (and in places across the globe already exceeded). The key alternatives to coal mining and oil and gas fracking for example has to be on shore and offshore wind power, use of tidal energy and solar power. More conservative use of energy will require much adaptation of new and older buildings alike, to improve insulation ('retro fitting'), and by limiting concreting over of gardens and forecourts. Reducing massive pollution by vehicles in modern society means less use of private cars, more reliance on public transport – and less air travel; while sifting out generic causes of pollution – methane and domestic and commercial rubbish. And then there is the healing power of nature itself – 'self-cleaning' through 'greening', including investigation of the greater use of industrial hemp for fibre; and scope for the systematic use of radioactive thorium in producing much safer nuclear power. Finally of course more trees outside of established woodlands!

## **POSTSCRIPT**

The Friends do not claim expertise in this complex emerging climate crisis. Our concern is essentially to help treasure the magnificent open spaces on our doorstep. If this Report does nothing more than persuade readers that the natural landscape hereabouts is at risk, it will have served its purpose.

High and rising costs in sustaining community services, is forcing the City to find savings, while the Borough too is seeking to stabilize itself following its recent financial insolvency. Services most at risk in this situation are invariably those where there is no statutory duty to provide. The borough's draft strategy for parks and open spaces for instance hints at greater dependence on volunteer help, much as happens in litter picking, the management of a bowling green, and legions of commitments by individuals to manage local community and self-help groups. Not least in importance will be continual readiness by individuals and groups to research, study and use the natural world that abounds in the new South London Downs National Nature Reserve, and how best to sustain it – see map page 27.



# The Friends Website



[www.friendsoffarthingdowns.co.uk](http://www.friendsoffarthingdowns.co.uk)

Friends of Farthing Downs & Happy Valley website tells you who we are and what we do including an Events Diary.

History and Archaeology have their own tabs. Also ‘Walks and Trails’, ‘Useful Links’ and our own ‘Nature Trail’ – see page 26.

Under 'Reports' you can find write-ups of AGM presentations including this 'Symposium Report'. Our Events Diary publicises forthcoming talks and walks which cover topics of local interest from management of Farthing Downs and Happy Valley to Fauna and Flora of varying types with annual Fungi Foray, Bird Walk and Moth night.

For more information and a membership form, please see  
[www.friendsoffarthingdowns.co.uk/images/Leaflet0121.pdf](http://www.friendsoffarthingdowns.co.uk/images/Leaflet0121.pdf)



# Friends of Farthing Downs & Happy Valley

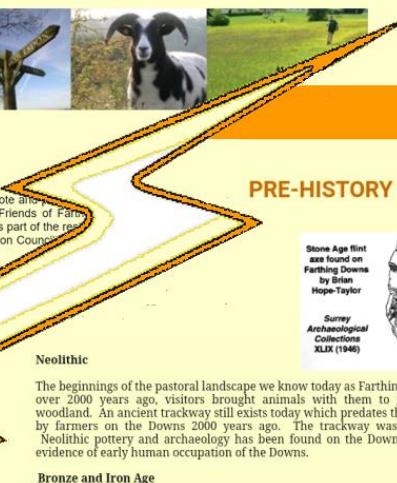
- FoFD&HV
- Getting here
- Events Diary
- Walks & Trails
- Aims & Objectives
- Constitution
- Donations
- South London Parks & Local Nature Reserve
- History
- Reports
- Lyme Disease
- Committee
- Contact Us
- Useful Links
- Happy Valley
- Membership & GDPR
- Projects
- Cain
- Conservation
- Volunteering
- Wildlife
- Archaeology
- City of London
- Nature Trail
- Planning
- E-mail







[Getting here](#) / [Map](#) / [Contact](#) / [Email](#) / [Post code etc.](#)    [Nature Trail](#)

PRE-HISTORY to PRESENT DAY


**Who are we?**  
Friends of Farthing Downs & Happy Valley is a local group run by volunteers who work to promote archaeological surveys, new information boards and the replanting of a beech tree at the Folly as part of the restoration of the landscape. We work closely with the Friends of Happy Valley, working with both the City of London and Croydon Council.

**What do we do?**  
We organise an annual programme of walks and talks devised to encourage local people to explore the Downs. The events include guided walks and talks are led by experienced and knowledgeable specialists. The events concern the future of both local and neighbouring open spaces. We run a quiz night and other activities. We run two annual Quiz Nights jointly with East Croydon Residents Association.

For a summary of our projects please [click here](#).

**About Farthing Downs and Happy Valley**  
Both Farthing Downs and Happy Valley are designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), they offer a safe haven to over 200 species of plants and animals. Happy Valley has diverse ancient woodland sites, which encourage the population of breeding dormice. There are large areas of chalk grassland, which are important habitats for orchids. The Downs are also important sites to protect the Saxon burial mounds, Celtic field boundaries and Roman villa remains.

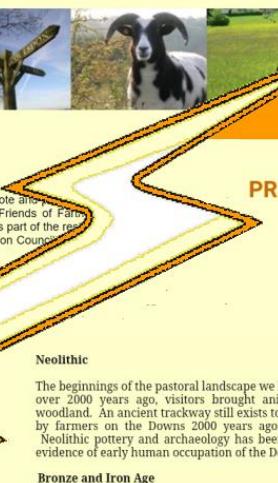
**Why not join us?**  
You can help **protect** our heritage and environment through walks, talks and social events. As part of our work, we have a month to work on conservation projects.

If you would like to join us, please contact us.



Stone Age flint axe found on Farthing Downs by Brian Hope-Taylor

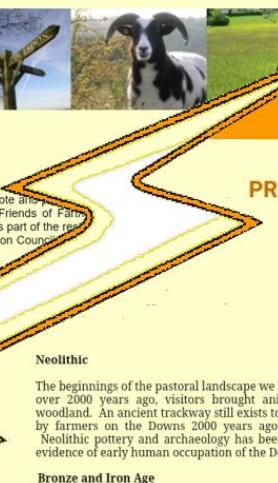
Surrey Archaeological Collections XLI (1946)

Neolithic


The beginnings of the pastoral landscape we know today as Farthing Downs very likely began when, over 2000 years ago, visitors brought animals with them to graze the meadows within the woodland. An ancient trackway still exists today which pre-dates the Celtic field boundaries created by farmers on the Downs 2000 years ago. The trackway was used by the Neolithic visitors. Neolithic pottery and archaeology has been found on the Downs and in nearby gardens and is evidence of early human occupation of the Downs.

**Bronze and Iron Age**

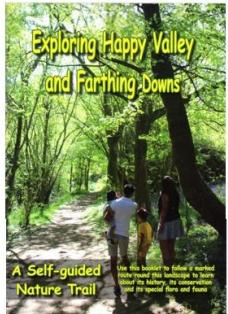
Before the Bronze Age, chalk downland, including Farthing Downs and Happy Valley, had remained mainly wooded. Bronze Age settlers were the first to clear the trees and later, in the Iron Age, larger sections were cleared and ploughed for crops. The chalk downland was chosen for farming by Iron Age people because the soil was light and easily ploughed. The Downs were farmed up to the 2nd century AD. The ridges, or lynchets, which can be seen crossing the Downs were created by ancient farmers whose ploughing methods moved the soil outwards and downhill. The lynchets on Farthing Downs which divided the ancient field system date from the early Saxon period.



# The Friends Nature Trail

## YOUR LOCAL NATURE TRAIL – NOW IT TALKS

FIFTEEN FAMOUS PEOPLE JOIN FORCES WITH  
THE FRIENDS OF FARTHING DOWNS AND HAPPY VALLEY  
TO CHAMPION THE NATURAL WORLD ON YOUR DOORSTEP



A 64 page booklet in full colour covers the history, all the fauna and flora, and all the walks you can take round this special landscape set along the North Downs



QR Codes attached to 29 marker posts snaking across the landscape bring a fingertip library to your smartphone with supporting narratives spoken by each of these celebrities



Using your smartphone or your booklet, you can now explore the great diversity of this Nature Trail



"It was fun recording these narrations for the new Happy Valley and Farthing Downs nature trail. I hope it will encourage people from all parts of the UK to get outside and experience this wonderful landscape, to learn about its wildlife and history, and why it's so important to protect areas like this for our future. Best wishes, Tony" [From Sir Tony Robinson]



BOOKLET FROM: ADVANCED PRINT, COULSDON & CAFÉ, GRANGE PARK £2

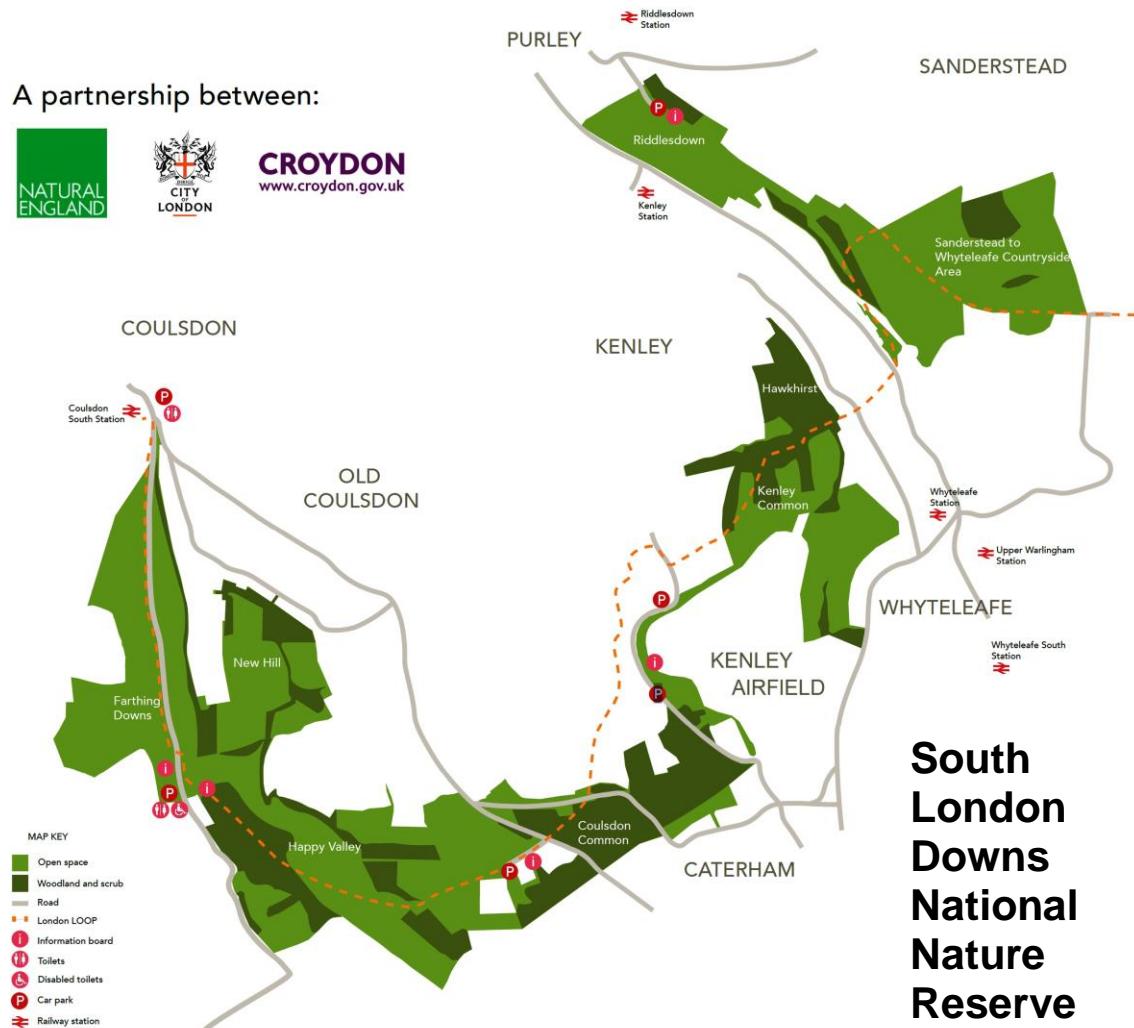
The Nature trail can now be heard in English, French, Hindi and Polish.  
Try it out with your smartphone or go to:  
[www.friendsoffarthingdowns.co.uk/gpage19.html](http://www.friendsoffarthingdowns.co.uk/gpage19.html)

## Publications mentioned

State of UK's Woods and Trees 2021 – Woodland Trust  
Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change – Sixth Report 2021  
Croydon Climate Crisis Commission 2019 (issued June 2021)  
London Area Plan 2021 – The Spatial Development Strategy  
Croydon Local Plan 2018 (revised 2021) yet to be adopted  
Parks and Green Spaces Renewal Strategy – Croydon 2021–24 (draft)  
Integrated Approach to Nature Recovery – Chair, Natural England

## City of London Publications

The City issues online each month a Newsletter about the City Commons, covering topical issues, tasks undertaken, and forthcoming voluntary work. The four City component parts of the South London Downs National Nature Reserve (Farthing Downs, Coulsdon Common, Kenley Common and Riddlesdown) are each subject to a ten year plan (2021 to 2031) also available online. The Merlewood Office also issues free leaflets and pamphlets.



## MEMBERSHIP OF FRIENDS OF FARTHING DOWNS & HAPPY VALLEY (The Friends)

### Who can become a Member

Membership is open to any individual or family who wishes to support The Friends in protecting our heritage and environment, supporting community projects which enhance the appeal of Farthing Downs and Happy Valley and working with the City of London and Croydon Council on conservation projects to further these aims.

### Regular Activities

Organising nature and history walks and talks and exhibitions.

Stalls at local events.

Half-yearly quizzes to support fundraising.

### Benefits of Membership

You will be supporting a local group which is dedicated to preserving historic Farthing Downs as an Ancient Scheduled Monument and a Site of Special Scientific Interest. Farthing Downs and Happy Valley (also SSSI) are part of the South London Downs National Nature Reserve.

You will have preferential invites to all our activities.

You will receive our half-yearly newsletter keeping you up to date with what's going on.



### Becoming a Member

Please download our Membership Leaflet and Application Form: [www.friendsoffarthingdowns.co.uk/images/Leaflet0121.pdf](http://www.friendsoffarthingdowns.co.uk/images/Leaflet0121.pdf)

### Contact

For further information, please go to:  
[www.friendsoffarthingdowns.co.uk/gpage9.html](http://www.friendsoffarthingdowns.co.uk/gpage9.html)

## THE FRIENDS OF FARTHING DOWNS AND HAPPY VALLEY

Officers and committee members elected annually

### Officers

Chairman: Graham Lomas

Vice Chair: Cllr. Margaret Bird

Secretary: Pauline Payne

Treasurer: Ian Payne

### Committee

Maureen Levy – Secretary ECRA

Jayn Harding – Coulsdon Green Belt

Chris Wright – Old Coulsdon

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Independent Examiner: Don Davis



### Representatives

Dominic North – the Warden of Happy Valley

Tom Oliver – Ranger, City of London

Ed Sanger – Ranger, City of London

In a long career Dr Lomas has served on the South East Economic Planning Council; headed policy development in the GLC; directed the London Voluntary Council; co-authored the book *Employment Location in Regional Economic Planning*; helped form the Institute of Metropolitan Studies (and author of its first report *London in Prospect*); has held a Fellowship in American Studies at Harvard University; has chaired a Commission at an international conference on social welfare involving writing the UK contribution *Social Aspects of Urban Development*. In 2014 devised the large scale map of The London Green Belt published by the London Green Belt Council.