

Dear Friends,

Welcome to our winter 2016 newsletter. There are lots of project works and activities to catch up on and we can also bring you up to date with some changes to our Trustees.

Thanks to all of you who attended our AGM last November. For the first time we produced a formal report on our activities over the year and this can now be seen on our re-launched web site - www.force.org.uk

FORCE Volunteer Days

Our season of volunteer activities is well under way. In the last couple of months, we have removed encroaching vegetation from the ruins of Hounslow Gunpowder Mills in Crane Park as well as working for the first time on the newly re-opened Willow Way site between Hospital Bridge Road and A316 – on the opposite side of the river from the main part of Crane Park.

In the next few months we will be re-visiting the Mill Road site to work on the hedges and scrapes; and working on the Hounslow side of Crane Park – where our latest user survey shows continued high levels of public use. More on both these project areas below.

Other Volunteer Activities

One of the great successes of the last couple of years has been the growth of volunteer activities along the Crane Valley. The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) are delivering one to two days project work in the Crane and Duke's River every week on average – and we have been delighted with the quality and value of the work they are doing.

Their methodical approach, working with hand tools and no heavy equipment, is well suited to improvement works along the Crane – and the last few months has seen them removing toe boards; creating new marginal river habitat and wild flower beds; building a kingfisher nesting bank; and removing around 20 tonnes of rubbish from the Duke's River.

We have started another season of community learning sessions in partnership with TCV, funded through Heathrow Community Fund. It is a great chance to learn traditional conservation management skills from experts and implement them as part of a friendly team. This year we they are teaching hedge-laying, marginal planting and scything. For more information, go to www.tcv.org.uk/richmond or call Andy on 07764 655667.



TCV are also running two Green Gyms in the Crane Valley – at Pevensey Nature Reserve every Monday and Kneller Gardens on a Wednesday. These sessions (running from 10-45am to 2pm) are designed specifically to provide health benefits – and are linked to the boroughs' wider health programmes. More information from Nadia on 07801 686014.

This Newsletter is funded for FORCE by: -



Mayday Genealogy

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London Wildlife Trust (LWT) run regular sessions at Crane Park Island on the last Sunday of the month. LWT are also running volunteer led river restoration works in Hounslow and Hillingdon boroughs as well as field work groups with Twickenham Academy students.

Walks and Talks

Following the success of last year's programme, we have submitted a joint proposal with LWT to deliver two walks and talks per month over the next year – and if successful with our bid- hope to be able to say more about this in the next newsletter.

In the meantime, we are undertaking a walk from the Thames to the source of the Crane over three Saturdays in late January, February and March (see programme for details). These events are free but book – through info@force.org.uk

Mill Road activities

Work has continued at Mill Road in Crane Park over the winter. In the last few weeks many of the toe boards along the river bank have been removed and the expectation is that this bank will start to collapse and re-shape itself in the coming months and years. As it does so we will be working with the council and TCV to re-profile the bank and create more wetland and marginal wildlife areas. This will continue the work, started with the removal of the weir in 2013, to slowly improve the river in this area.



New information boards outlining the history of the Fulwell Mill at Mill Road will be on site in the next month. At the same time, we are working with children at Trafalgar School to investigate the history of the site. An exhibition is planned for Twickenham Museum in the summer.

Duke's River Project

Work has started on the ground to improve the environmental and community value of this river corridor. A new path is being constructed along the back of the Harlequins and council depot sites, and is due to open in February. More on this and other parts of the project in our next edition.

Park Usage Surveys

We ran the latest of our twice yearly usage surveys on January 17th – thank you very much to everyone who braved the cold to take part. Given the cold and grey weather it was immensely encouraging to see how many people were using the park. Over 800 went in through the Meadway entrance and over 250 used the pathway

by Butts Farm estate and the Dragonfly Terrace. A short report on the survey can be found on our web-site.

We use these data to demonstrate the value of the park to interested parties and to support funding bids for investment. The next survey will be in July and we are always grateful for volunteers.

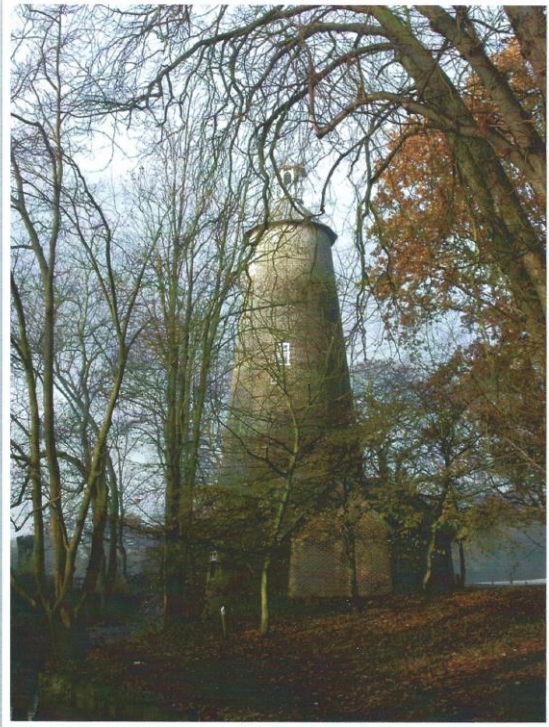
Trustee news

Two of our Trustees are leaving this month: Doug Craik is a founder member of FORCE and Anna Smyk has served as Treasurer for almost ten years. We are very grateful to them for their hard work, enthusiasm and dedication over the last decade

We are very pleased to say that neither Anna nor Doug will be leaving us completely. We will be able to call on their experience - and hope to be seeing them regularly at our volunteer days - in the years to come.

Tales from the Tower

A Collection of Histories of Hounslow Gunpowder Works



Chris Hern

We welcome John Simpson as our new Treasurer. John has a distinguished background in the commercial and charities sectors and we welcome his experience and knowledge to the board. We are also grateful to Mike Mabin for his generous offer to continue to assist with the book keeping over the coming year.

We welcome interest from all members in taking a more active role in the organisation. With our new portfolio structure it is much easier to get involved in particular project areas without becoming a new Trustee – though we still welcome these. We also remain keen to find someone to support the communications role. We would be pleased to talk with any member who would like to find out more about these opportunities.

Tales From The Tower

Finally, Chris Hern, another of our Trustees, has just published a 48 page book on the Hounslow Gunpowder Mills. Entitled; “Tales from the Tower – a collection of histories from Hounslow Gunpowder works”; it is a great read and full of new and interesting information about this hugely important part of the river’s history. Copies, costing £7, are available from both Hounslow and Richmond Local Studies or from Chris himself by calling 07534 158413

Regards,

Rob Gray,

Chair of FORCE

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rob Gray". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending from the end.

FORCE Volunteer Days and Activity Programme

Date	Location	Activities
28 th January 3 rd February 11 th February 17 th February	Crane Park Hospital Bridge Road 10.20am start	Community Learning Hedge laying with TCV www.tcv.org.uk/richmond or call Andy on 07764 655667 for more information
30 th January	Mill Platt Isleworth 10am start	River Crane Walk – along the Duke's River and Crane to Hanworth Road
14 th February*	Crane Park, Mill Rd entrance 10-30am start	Maintenance of the hedge and wetland scrapes plus wood chipping the paths
27 th February	Hanworth Road 10am start	River Crane Walk – along the Crane to Bulls Bridge
13 th March*	Crane Park, Dragonfly Terrace 10-30am start	Maintenance of this part of Crane Park
19 th March	Bulls Bridge 10am start	River Crane Walk – along the Crane and Yeading Brook to Headstone Manor
10 th April*	Little Park and Pevensey, across Hanworth Rd from Crane Park 10-30am start	Development of paths to link the two sides of the river – with the new bridge scheduled for later in the year
Wed 20 th April Wed 27 th April Wed 4 th May Wed 11 th May	To be confirmed	Community Learning Marginal Planting with TCV www.tcv.org.uk/richmond or call Andy on 07764 655667 for more information
8 th May*	Mill Road, Crane Park 10-30am start	Removal of toe boards and marginal planting
30 th May	Twickenham Green 11am start	HANDS May Fair
12 th June*	Hospital Bridge Road entrance to Crane Park 10-30am start	Balsam bash
Wed 20 th July Wed 27 th July Wed 3 rd Aug Wed 10 th Aug	To be confirmed	Community Learning Scything with TCV www.tcv.org.uk/richmond or call Andy on 07764 655667 for more information

*FORCE volunteer events start at 10-30am; join us for an hour or the whole day. Hot drinks are provided but bring a packed lunch if staying the day. Please wear stout shoes or boots and old clothes.