

## Friends of Palewell Common - Chairman's report for 2014/15.

### Chairman's report

The last year has been a successful one for the Common. The Friends have continued to grow and we have been involved in a number of improvements on the Common.

### Sports

- The boules pitch has been extended by a further 3m to create 3 pitches and the surface and edge renewed. The Council bore the greatest part of the cost but the Friends contributed to the costs including passing on a contribution from the Richmond University of the Third Age (U3A) group.
- The new pitch was formally opened on Saturday 9 May by Baroness Susan Kramer (who had opened the original pitch more than 10 years ago) and Bill Stevenson the local President of Richmond U3A.
- The use of the boules pitch has continued to grow – with regular matches at least weekly all year round and growing use by local groups and residents.
- Football cricket and tennis have continued to prosper on the common, but the Friends have some concerns about the lack of activity on the pitch and putt course.. We were pleased that some work was done to repair the surface of the tennis courts but unfortunately this was finished off well.

### Conservation issues and the environment

- A conservation charity Froglife has created a pond to support frogs and other semi-aquatic wildlife in the woods to the west of the main path through the woods. While this has filled well with rain water there are concerns that dogs jumping into the water may prevent frogs from using it. We will continue to discuss with the Froglife what can be done to make it a success.
- We have been concerned about the water-logged area near to the tennis courts which has been fenced off by the Council. We have asked Richmond if this could be planted up to be some kind of landscape feature.
- Council also invested in improvements in the entrance parking area with new kerbstones and new tarmac. This has improved the overall look of entrance to common.
- Otherwise we feel that the standard of maintenance of common by has by-and-large been satisfactory.
- A large tree has fallen into the Beverley Brook at Roehampton gate end of Common. We have asked the Environment Agency about responsibility for this – they say there is no problem for drainage and issue for the owners of the land on the edge of the Brook. [Note added after the meeting – the tree has now been removed.]

### Activities of Friends

- We held a couple of events in the Autumn and Spring on Saturday mornings to inform users of the Common about our activities and to help recruit new members. Both were very successful – in the Autumn we had a mushroom hunt and “pin the antlers on the deer” game for children and we recruited about half a dozen new members
- Our spring event on 9 May included the first Palewell dog show which was very successful attracting about 25 entries
- We met Richmond Council a number of times both to respond to consultations and discuss issues for the future. We have been pleased with

the prompt action the Council has taken to deal with problems we have reported to them. So please do continue to let us know about any issues which need attention.

- We also held a series of conservation days with Nature's Gym during the year – working to tidy up paths and open spaces in the woods, laying wood chips on the paths and most recently planting native wild flowers in the orchard area.
- Thanks to our Committee member Justine Nagaur and to Tony Dowson we have substantially updated our website and created a new Friends blog – available from [www.palewellcommon.org.uk](http://www.palewellcommon.org.uk) This provides lots of information about our activities.
- We've also been talking recently to the newly emerging group of Friends of Sheen Common both to support them and see if there are opportunities to collaborate.

### The Future

- We've also got a number of ideas for the coming year. We have proposed to Richmond an information/interpretation table to point out the different features on the common and would allow us to provide information about future Friends events.
- We will continue to promote conservation days for volunteer work to improve the woods and the common. Our next volunteer day will be on 24 June – meet at the entrance to the common at 10.00.
- We will continue to liaise with Richmond about the re-letting of the maintenance and sports contracts in which will get under way in 2016. We are keen to ensure that the improvements will continue and that the new sports contractors are committed to grow the number of users of our facilities.