

Plans for 2026



The next 12 months will be busy. Refurbishing the Bakehouse will be top priority. We will also be replanting two rose beds, maintaining our commitment to promoting well-being and increasing biodiversity, offering more trees for sponsorship and running Landscape Artist of 2026. We would like to hear your ideas too. Come to the AGM on 15th November or email us: friendsof oakspark@gmail.com

Gardening Group

During your visits to the park, you might have noticed people working in the various beds near the café. The Friends' informal gardening group has helped in the park for several years. We support and supplement the work of the Idverde park keeper.

This year we have planted bulbs, dead-headed many roses, helped with weeding and tidied beds. We planned and re-planted the bed by the café which was partially destroyed by a wayward lorry. It has undergone quite a transformation. Now we're planning to re-plant two rose beds.

Some of the group have been lucky enough to get places on a 10-week training course funded by Sutton Council to learn more about the basics of gardening in parks.

Everyone is welcome to come and help. The main

group meets on Wednesday mornings but you can work at other times to suit you and a What's App group keeps people connected. There is more information on the Friends' website under More/Gardening Group.



Thank You



Thank you to everyone who has contributed to our work and events particularly Ilhan and the café team, Mark Dalzell, Ian Wolstencroft and the Council Parks Team, Ben Morris & the Trees Team, David Warburton, Phil Quirke, Tony Moorhouse and Robert Ilango

from Idverde, John Phillips, MBM Construction & Highways, Downland Trust, Downlands Partnership, Fidelity, STAG (Surrey Trees and Gardens), Andy & Amanda and Wallington Nursery. Finally, a big thank you to the Committee for their amazing energy and patience and the commitment and support of so many Friends.

The Friends Committee

Chairman: Anne Pearcey
Secretary: Ray Shepherd
Treasurer: Tina Bates
Publicity: Anne Jameson
Committee: Brian Doonar, Chris Shorthouse, Roger Thistle, Judith Witts, Derek Yeo

Website: www.friendsofoakspark.co.uk
Email: friendsofoakspark@gmail.com
Write to us at 187 Banstead Road, Carshalton SM5 4DP



Friends of Oaks Park

Newsletter 2025

From the Chairman

Welcome to our Newsletter showcasing some of the things the Friends have done in 2025 and looking forward to 2026. Writing about what we've done makes me realise just how much has been

going on, how many people have been involved and how much we value our relationships with Sutton Council, the café, various organisations and local residents. It's been a year when we've planted

more trees, received some generous grants, gained more members, finally completed chalking the mansion outline and made a difference. Next year is going to be exciting!

The Butterfly Bank

This year has been one of collaboration, co-operation and co-ordination and our beautiful Butterfly Bank, now fully established, is a result of all three. It began in early 2022 with the creation of two chalk scrapes by David Warburton, Sutton Council's Senior Biodiversity Officer, supported wholeheartedly by Friends of Oaks Park. The scrapes were to develop the park's chalk grassland and the ecosystem which it supports. Work moved on to constructing the butterfly bank by exposing more chalk and planting yellow rattle seeds, provided by Peter Wakeham from the Downland Trust, to suppress the grass. Old Lodge Farm on Telegraph Track, part of the Downlands Partnership, supplied all the plants native to chalk grasslands for us. We were a little concerned that the new plants would not survive in pure chalk but need not have worried. In early 2024, David and his team showed us which



self-sown grasses and plants needed to be removed to prevent them from taking over. A large team of Friends got on with the weeding. Many of the plants were new to us and hard to identify.

By developing and preserving habitats such as natural chalk grasslands, which are very rare and under threat, we provide food and shelter for specialist plants and the animals. This year, the whole area was a mass of flourishing, flowering plants alive with butterflies, bees (bumble, solitary, honey, and others) and hoverflies. Over the summer, we took part in the Big Butterfly Count and were able to record seeing several Small Blue

butterflies, a native species exclusive to chalk grasslands, in Oaks Park as well as the more common meadow browns, small whites, ringlets, and peacock butterflies to name but a few. It was so exciting to see the Small Blues as this is a "Priority" species and "Near Threatened" on the GB Red List. Its caterpillars feed exclusively on kidney vetch, which now grows in the butterfly bank and chalk scrapes. We have transformed the original monoculture of the plain grass to a thriving diverse habitat which, with regular care and monitoring, will support hundreds of insect species as well as other invertebrates for years to come.



Sutton Landscape Artist of the Year

Sutton Parks ran the Landscape Artist of the Year competition for the fourth year this summer and Oaks Park was the first of the six parks who took part. Twenty-seven artists entered their work for judging and there were some really amazing entries. All the prizes

were sponsored by the Rotary Club of Carshalton Park. Congratulations to our winners: Adult: Elizabeth Parry, 11-17: Ovidia Gittins and 3-10: Nina Kluska. Keep an eye out for the date of next year's competition.



Rechalking the Mansion Outline

Some of you may remember our efforts to re-chalk the mansion outline near the artists' studios in November 2023. It started with a grant from Sutton Council, advice from local historian John Phillips and ended with trying to find a home for two tons of powdered chalk. I'm delighted to say that we were allowed to roll forward the grant and with the help of John, Graham Knowles and his team from MBM Construction &

Highways Maintenance Ltd and lots of volunteers, the work was done on Sunday 28th September. Fuelled by rolls from the café and a really lovely team spirit the work was done in record time and looks great.



Green Flag Award 2025-26



The Green Flag Award scheme began in 1997 and sets an international standard for parks and green spaces. Oaks Park has been awarded a Green Flag for 2025. The flag is flying proudly at the Croydon Lane entrance and signifies that it is a welcoming place

with good and safe access for all and strong support from the Friends and the Council. The benefits are a sense of pride and achievement, it attracts visitors and locals, and is a lever to obtain external funding through improvements grants.

Did You Know?

- James MacPhail was an RAF pilot during the Second World War. He joined the RAF in 1939 and the next year volunteered for Fighter Command, flying Spitfires. It seems he baled out more than once. In 1941, despite burns suffered in a previous incident, he was ferrying a Spitfire, lost control and baled out. His aircraft is believed to have crashed

into the northern edge of Oaks Park. James survived the war and died in 1963. You can read more about him in the online Battle of Britain London Monument here: <https://www.bbm.org.uk/airmen/MacPhail.htm>

- Clare Balding visited Oaks Park in June 2025 as part of her Ramblings programme on Radio 4.

The Oaks Park Tree Trail



We have revised and updated our very popular Tree Trail leaflet which features more than 20 of our interesting and unusual trees. The leaflets were reprinted with the generous support of the Downland Trust and Fidelity and are available in the café. We run regular free guided tree trails on the first Sunday of each month, usually from April to October, where we add a little more information about the trees and the history of the park. Nearly 90 people came along in 2025. We hope to see you on one of the trails in 2026. As you walk round the park you will notice that we have several yew trees. Just off the short path between the café

and the formal garden, is one split in half during the 1987 hurricane, now growing in a V-shape. There is another notable example at the café end of the car park, which was almost certainly growing there when the Fête Champêtre wedding celebrations took place here in 1774. Yews can reach a thousand years old or more and have been associated with death and the journey of the soul to the next life, even prior to Christianity. They are often found in churchyards, especially those built on earlier pagan temple sites. Although poisonous, extracts from yew trees are the active ingredients in two successful anti-cancer agents in current use.

Tina Bates

The saddest thing for the Friends this year has been the death of our lovely friend and Treasurer, Tina Bates. She was on our committee for over 10 years, kept the accounts very carefully and threw herself into events such as Downland Day. She was passionate

about the Jubilee Copse and adored helping people and talking to them when they came to plant or adopt their trees. She was dynamic, enthusiastic and made committee meetings very lively. We miss her very much.



The Bakehouse



In August 2023, we submitted a bid to Sutton's Neighbourhood Fund for 50% of the costs to refurbish the Bakehouse opposite the Artists' studios and turn it into a small visitor/information centre for the park. Thanks to lots of support from the Friends, local residents and Councillors we were successful and the grant was awarded in January 2025.

We have spent much of the year sorting out administrative matters and agreeing how to handle the project. Everything is now in place and we hope the work will be starting before Christmas. We also plan to do some planting around the Bakehouse to increase biodiversity. We'll keep you informed of progress and ask for your help when needed.

Twinning

The Friends were officially twinned with The Friends of Wellington Botanic Gardens, New Zealand in June last year. Our Chairman, Anne and their President Mazz Scannell are cousins and committee member Judith Witts is a member of both committees. We have shared information, supported

the Botanic Garden's successful campaign to save their Begonia House and shared plant ideas. The Landscape Artist of the Year competition, which has run in Oaks Park and across the Borough for the past 4 years, renamed as The Artist in the Garden, has been held in NZ for the last 2 years.

