



SPRING 2019

creos
Crouch End Open Space



CREOS is a voluntary group set up to preserve Crouch End Open Space for the enjoyment of all. This area is a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation and a vital green corridor for North London's wildlife.

MANAGING FOR BIODIVERSITY: A SPRING OF ACTION

In the last CREOS Newsletter we announced the unveiling of our new Conservation Management Plan. So, for those of you who are wondering how it's all going, here is an update.

The main focus has been the creation of a hazel coppice in the glade between the CREOS meadow and our main entrance. This was once a tennis court, so the hardest part of the job was digging through tarmac and hardcore to create holes large enough to

take fresh topsoil, in which to plant the hazel whips. We were assisted in this task by members of Good Gym, who join us on our monthly work mornings and seem to thrive on manual labour (instead of wasting physical effort in an actual gym!) To make a successful coppice we had to allow more light into the area, and so a large poplar and an ash on the school field side had to be felled. The hazels will be coppiced in sections on a four year cycle and the different stages of 

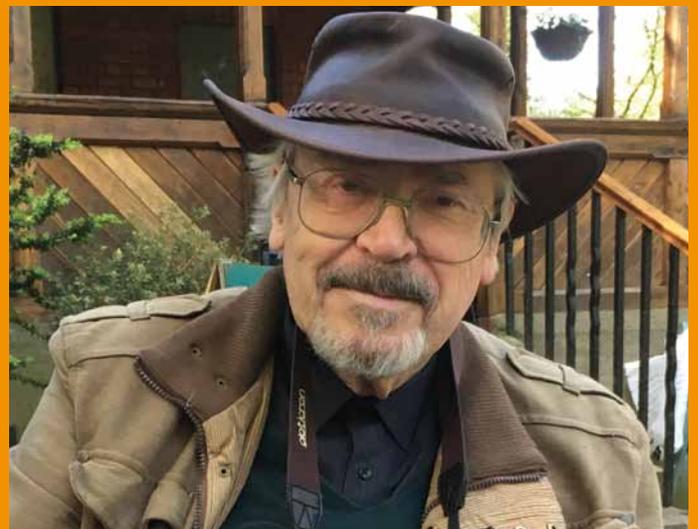
AGM WELCOMES DAVID BEVAN

Monday 20th May, 8 pm at Hanley Tennis Club

Do come and join us at our meeting and social, to learn more about what CREOS has been doing this year.

We will be welcoming David Bevan who will be giving a talk on Woodland Management. David is an enthusiastic botanist and former Conservation Officer for the London Borough of Haringey. He is a local hero for many, due to the vital part he has played in the conservation of some of North London's best known wild places.

While he was in office he reintroduced coppicing in both Coldfall Wood and then Queen's Wood. There was a huge outcry at first because coppicing hadn't been done since the 1930s. Being an ex-teacher, David was pretty good at explaining why conservationists might want to prune a few trees and his photos are a good illustration of what can be achieved.



growth provides a rich tapestry of habitats for understory plants and insects. An additional hazel coppice augmenting one existing stool was planted in the autumn at the side of our meadow and we have planted mixed hedging plants around part of Hanley's carpark, consisting of goat willow, blackthorn, hawthorn, guelder rose and dogwood. Mature hedgerows provide a diversity of nectar, berries and foliage cover for invertebrates, birds and small mammals.

Another task completed earlier this year has been re-routing the paths around the veteran oak which stands where two CREOS paths intersect. This tree was suffering from root compaction caused by too much footfall close by, so we built a protective dead-hedge with the help of TCV (The Conservation Volunteers) and Good Gym. See later article for more on these oaks.



Protecting our veteran oak from further compaction

Our final major project this spring has been the creation of a wildflower meadow at the back of the school field, occupying approximately 200 square metres. This has involved heavy manual labour, as the clay soil had to be dug over to remove weeds, but we also used two pieces of machinery: a turf cutter to remove the grass and a rotavator to break up the clods and create a finer tilth. All this has been made possible with the aid of two grants each of £1000, and the co-operation of Highgate Wood School. The CREOS committee is hoping to interest the pupils in watching this project develop and learning more about the importance of biodiversity. To protect the seeded area a temporary fence of chicken wire has been erected. In addition to this, we are planting wildflower plugs suitable for clay soils and wet conditions in the existing CREOS meadow. Wildflower meadows have great ecological value for invertebrates, birds, small mammals, reptiles and amphibians and of course let's not forget our human visitors who benefit from being amongst diverse nature too.

Jacky Wedgwood and Jane Bywaters

THE
GREAT
CREOS
GET
TOGETHER
INSPIRED BY JO COX

SUNDAY 23 JUNE
FROM 1 PM TO 5 PM

On this weekend, communities up and down the country will be getting together to celebrate kindness, respect and all we have in common.

This year the annual **CREOS Summer picnic** on the meadow will be part of this Great Get Together and this time it will be even bigger and better than usual.

Featuring music from Gregor Grant and his fabulous band, "All Shook Up", there will be space to spread out and bring a picnic, bring something to cook on our BBQ, win a prize in the traditional raffle, show off your dog in some fun competitions and relax while your children join in the fun games designed for learning about nature.

Everyone welcome –do bring your friends.

WE'RE ALL SOCIAL LIKE!

As part of a wider plan to reach out to more residents in the local area, CREOS have set up a Facebook page and Instagram account. Keep an eye on the Facebook page for news, event details and all sorts of interesting CREOS updates. Members can chat to each other, share photos and discuss any relevant local news. Our Instagram page will be full of great photos of the CREOS site throughout the seasons. Start following us now:



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NEW PENSION POT FOR CREOS VETERANS

Those of you mooching through the CREOS Woodland Walks with your pooch or skipping merrily to work of a morning will have noticed big changes along Boundary Oak Walk earlier this year.

The clearing of ivy and competing trees around our veteran oaks was done during a mammoth work morning, generously donated by the team of tree specialists at Hampstead Heath Open Spaces Department. This work was of vital importance because veteran oaks need special care. Lapses in woodland management practices in the last 100 years have meant that public perception of a healthy wood is one that is crammed with trees and undergrowth; this isn't always the case and where veteran oaks are concerned is positively bad news. Very old trees need plenty of light all the way to the ground to help them produce epicormic growth (lots of little branches sprouting directly from the trunk that function as the tree's pension) and reduced competition in the soil for available nutrients and water.

Keeping these trees alive for as long as possible is part of our over-arching plan for increasing biodiversity – veteran trees are an extremely valuable addition to a habitat, creating an ecosystem that can support: hole-nesting birds; bats; beetles, flies and other rotten-wood-loving insects; an array of lichen and fungi and their associated insects; spiders and bryophytes. What's more, veteran trees are rare because mature trees are often either 'tidied up' or strangled through neglect.

So how come ours have survived? Interestingly, it could be because they are boundary pollards. Pollarding is a woodman-ship practice whereby a tree is cut at 2-3m above ground and allowed to produce shoots from there. If harvested every 30 years or so it would provide large limbs that could be used for roofing structures and such like. Regrowth from a pollarded tree was legally the property of any tenant of the land, whereas that of a regular timber tree was

the property of the landowner – there are many historical manorial court records of tenants fined for pollarding trees in order to gain the timber rights. It was also common to pollard trees planted along a boundary so that they didn't interfere with the creation and maintenance of any hedging, fencing, ditches or pathways. Ours certainly seem to have been planted as they are at regular intervals.

You might well ask how we know our trees are veterans and the answer may come as a surprise – maps. In 1866 men with chains working for the OS set out to survey the whole of Britain in order to produce a series of maps at 25" to the mile. As you can imagine, such a whopping scale meant much detail could be recorded and indeed, mind boggling as it seems, every non-woodland tree was in fact measured in. These maps are still in existence and our oaks are on them, meaning they must be at least 170 years old. David Humphries, the trees management officer from the Hampstead Heath team, told us he thinks they're probably even older because pollarding results in a much smaller and therefore deceptively younger-looking tree (the pollarded tree expends more energy on growing new limbs than on consolidating the trunk). We hope to continue working with David and his team over the coming year to develop a Group Tree Management Plan that will ensure the survival of our veterans for hundreds more years. *Alice Shaell*



Then: mapped oaks 1866 (image © Crown copyright)



Now: Boundary Oak Walk 2018 (image © Google)

CREOS AND GOODGYM: A MIGHTY PAIRING

GoodGym has been helping CREOS increasingly regularly and in increasing numbers over the last couple of years. This month, a splendid 15 GoodGym runners assembled to help and this is what they wrote on their mission report:

“CREOS is a fantastic organisation and has, in various forms, been maintaining this wonderful mini-wilderness well within London metropolitan bounds for around 45 years. Maintaining the wooded areas, the meadows and facilities isn’t just for present enjoyment: without this care, this area of desirable London land might lose its status and fall into the hands of developers”.



FROM THE ARCHIVES: ALLITERATIVE LITTERING (LITERALLY)

A regular task on CREOS workdays is to clear up litter that has accumulated during the past month. This is usually not too difficult – the litter is mainly sweet wrappers and drinks bottles which fill no more than a couple of bin bags. But go back to the early days of CREOS in 1985 and the task of clearing up the site appeared daunting. The amount of accumulated rubbish was considerable, since the council had taken no interest in keeping the area tidy. So in April 1985 volunteers from both CREOS and Shepherds Cot swung into action. Three skips were filled that day with an astonishing collection of car parts, old beds, settees, iron drainpipes as well as the usual bottles and cans. This major effort was reported in the *Hornsey Journal* with the splendidly alliterative

headline ‘CREOS Copes Cheerfully With Crash Clearance Campaign’. Two months later another 24 volunteers turned out, including the local scout troop, and filled another two skips. In addition a derelict car was removed with the assistance of the AA from the area that used to be the Cranley Club (now part of the Woodland Walk). Further clearances continued and eventually a total of 12 skips were filled!

Today the need for a skip is rare, although we still occasionally face the menace of fly-tipping. Hopefully the recent introduction by Shepherds Cot of vehicle barriers and CCTV will continue to reduce such criminal activity. *Rob Jackson*

HELP GROW CREOS’S MEMBERSHIP

CREOS always needs a larger core of active members to support its continuing efforts to maintain the character of the local area. So when you’ve read this edition, do pass it on to anyone you think may be interested in joining CREOS to help preserve the local ‘rural’ areas as a nature haven for wildlife and walkers. **Please return this completed form with your subscription to CREOS’s Membership Secretary: Alys Elphick c/o 6 Barrington Road, London N8 8QS**

If you pay UK income tax, CREOS can claim Gift Aid. This is 25% of your subscription. When you send your membership form we will ask you to complete a Gift Aid form.

I wish to join CREOS I wish to renew my membership

I enclose payment for: Family membership £12 Individual membership £9 Unwaged or Senior Citizen £3

Name: _____ Address: _____

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I consent to my data being stored by CREOS so that I can be kept informed about CREOS-related activities only, including an annual request for membership renewal. I understand that my data will be safely stored and will not be shared with, or passed to, any third party