

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.

CREOS AGM 2020 postponed

Due to the Covid 19 pandemic and ongoing lockdown, we are sorry to report that the 2020 AGM has been postponed. There will be one change to the current committee. Alice Shaell is stepping down and will be replaced by John Larkin. We would like to thank Alice for the outstanding contribution she has made during her time on the committee, both for the professionally designed Newsletter and for initiating and implementing the new management plan for biodiversity.

Glenys Law

Unprecedented times for CREOS footpaths.

As our members know, most of the CREOS paths have a surface of wood chips. These are cost-free, easy to lay and much appreciated by walkers and joggers alike for their shock-absorbing **qualities**. During this year's unprecedented winter rainfall, however, when much of the country was flooded, many of the CREOS paths were underwater too, the wood chips and sometimes even the log edges being washed away by the incessant rain and the continuous footfall. One of the unfortunate effects being that walkers, struggling to get through, began to leave the paths in order to find easier and drier routes, thus trampling much of the undergrowth and unwittingly destroying habitats.



Boundary Oak Walk took the biggest hit; it had been flooded in previous winters, due to the runoff from the school field above, but this time it was impassable, even those wearing wellington boots could never be sure whether their next footstep would sink two inches or two feet deep! Something had to be done and urgently. On the January workday, with the help of Good Gym, all the rotting rain-soaked wood chips were removed, in order to

allow the path to drain and hopefully dry. At this point a quick decision was taken to do our best to replace this mud with a hoggin surface like the CREOS Woodland Walk which leads from the

allotments access road to Queens Wood. We calculated that with the path-making expertise the committee have acquired over recent years, we could build a path like the Woodland Walk at a fraction of the cost, by using the energetic workforce provided by CREOS volunteers, Good Gym and TCV.



Work was going slowly but well, when our hopes were dashed by another disaster, the Covid 19 outbreak. At first this reduced the number of workday volunteers able to attend, then workdays themselves had to be cancelled, and eventually even those who gave up their time to do a few hours every day, were forced by the lockdown to down tools and to stop work.



The current position is that the path has been widened and given new log edges; a drainage ditch has been dug alongside the path, leading to two underground drainage pipes which will take all future rainfall away from the surface of the path; and a rubble and hard-core base has been laid along two thirds of the path. When work resumes this base layer will be continued, then the funding provided by our generous donors will be used to buy hoggin for the surface. If the fundraiser were to exceed the total requested, the work could be continued more rapidly by using both volunteers and paid workers.

Glenys Law

Fundraiser and Social Media

CREOS launched a fundraising campaign for the Boundary Oak Walk on 31st January 2020. The goal was to raise £1,200 to cover materials, tool hire and some paid labour in order to complete the work on the March work day. Unfortunately due to the current circumstances all activity has been postponed but we have extended the length of the fundraiser so we can complete the path swiftly as soon as we are able. We would like to thank everyone who sent a donation and we are happy to say we are 94% of the way there (as of 14th April). Many of these are from our incredible members but thanks to our ever growing Instagram and Facebook pages we are now reaching a wider audience, people who may not have known of

CREOS before. We hope to continue building our social media following to spread the word and encourage more people to join CREOS and help out at our work days.

<https://www.givey.com/helpusrebuildtheboundaryoakwalk>

www.facebook.com/crouchendopenspace

www.instagram.com/crouchendopenspace

Alys Elphick.

Finance matters

In the 12 months to 31 March 2020, CREOS achieved a modest surplus. This is due mainly to some strenuous fundraising for our footpath work.

Subscriptions have been increased for the first time in ten years. The new rates are £5 for unwaged and senior citizens, £10 for individuals and £15 for families.

With the benefit coming from increased subscription income, CREOS will hopefully have sufficient resources for the management tasks and other activities of 2020.

Julian Sherwood.

A Share in the Playing Fields

We received an interesting enquiry in March from a correspondent living in Sussex who had inherited an old share certificate dating from 1940. It had belonged to his father, who had been born in Crouch End in 1911 and lived here until the late 1930s. It was a certificate for 10 shares of £1 each in the now defunct company *Crouch End Playing Fields Ltd*, which at one time owned the Crouch End Open Space. Although the CREOS archives do not have any documents from this company, we do have some records of its history. It was created in 1927 by public subscription, with 15,000 shares being made available to the local population. There was no difficulty finding buyers for these - the offer was oversubscribed. The creation of the company with so many local shareholders afforded the playing fields protection from potential developers for several decades. However, as time passed, the shares gradually changed hands, losing much of the local connection, and some of the newer shareholders had different motives. The company itself became a potential developer, so fresh action was needed to safeguard the fields. This was done by buying out the land from the company. First, the Council compulsorily purchased what is now the school playing field; and second, Shepherds Cot Trust was created to purchase the remaining land owned by the company. The company was eventually wound up. So while that share certificate has much historic interest, sadly it no longer has any financial value.

Rob Jackson

Guy Simmonds (chair of CREOS from 1991 to 1994)

CREOS members will be sorry to hear of the passing of Guy Simmonds who died at the end of last year. It was Guy who thought up the name CREOS as an alternative to the rather cumbersome official name, Crouch End Playing Fields Protection Society, bestowed when the society was originally created in 1973. Guy said there was not sufficient space for the name when writing out a cheque, not to mention that CREOS was more easily remembered by journalists and public alike.

Guy, whose Wood Vale house overlooked the Fields, attended the public meeting which led to the Society's revival in 1984. He immediately joined up and was enrolled for the committee, becoming one of CREOS's most enthusiastic and loyal members and eventually its chairman. Guy had made his career in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office where, as a staff inspector, he had worked with the older daughter of another

early pillar of CREOS, Hilda Johnston. He devoted part of his enormous energies to the Society and the upkeep of the Fields, taking an active part in the early workdays.

Guy had an admirable clarity of vision when dealing with (and sometimes getting the better of) Council bureaucracy and when helping to extend the Society's public profile. His rather authoritarian nature and forthright language sometimes led to clashes with committee members who had differing views, but they enabled him to provide the necessary firm leadership during his period as chairman.

We pass on our heartfelt condolences to his widow, Sheila, and his family.

Peter Barber



Spotted:

Field mouse near
the steps to the hazel
Coppice.

Photo: John Larkin