

## **FoSPA AGM 27 April 2026**

### **Archaeology report, April 2025- March 2026**

FoSPA archaeology walks took place in September, as part of Birmingham Heritage Week, focussing on the subdivisions of the medieval deer park in Keepers Valley, and in October in Longmoor Valley. The walk on 28<sup>th</sup> March 2026 includes part of the Roman road and the medieval deer park boundary. Joint experts' walks included archaeological features in Gum Slade, in August, and around Blackroot Pool, in December.

Matt Beamish of University of Leicester Archaeological Services gave a FoSPA talk in September, as part of Birmingham Heritage Week, about the detailed survey of the Roman road by lidar (aerial survey by laser) and photogrammetry (overlapping photos to produce a digital 3D record), supplemented by ground survey and a condition survey. The survey was commissioned by FoSPA and mainly funded by a grant from Sutton Coldfield Town Council. A talk about the origins and boundaries of Sutton Park was given at Holy Trinity church in August. The FoSPA archaeology talk in February was about medieval parks in Sutton Chase, the extensive hunting area in which the Park lies.

The Roman road and other archaeological sites in the Park were included in talks about Ryknield Street to the Lickey Hills Local History Society and the Friends of Letocetum, and in a talk about the prehistoric and Roman periods in Birmingham and the Black Country.

FoSPA supports the Ranger-led volunteer team, the History and Archaeology Taskforce (HAT) which meets monthly to clear intrusive vegetation from archaeological sites and to protect sites from erosion (particularly caused by off-road mountain biking) by constructing dead hedges. HAT also records sites by measured surveys and undertakes condition surveys, and walkover surveys to locate hitherto unrecorded sites. Over the past 12 months HAT's work has included the racecourse on Holly Knoll, the Roman road near Streetly Gate, the first World War practice trenches near Bracebridge Pool car park (which were found to be more extensive than previously thought and to include multiple trench lines), Darnel Hurst, Blackroot Glade, Rose Cottage, Holly Hurst, Wyndley Glade, Hill Hurst, Lower Nut Hurst, and the Arena Field. HAT also assisted the Rangers in reconstructing a Bronze Age sweat lodge.

Sites added to the Sutton Park part of the Historic Environment Record, Birmingham City Council's archaeology database, are now included in the online mapping at <https://maps.birmingham.gov.uk/webapps/her/>. Modifications to existing records, to included new information about them, have yet to be incorporated in this.

Site visits for the inclusion of archaeological sites in the National Nature Reserve's Assets Inventory and for a description of archaeological sites within each management compartment, have been completed, except for inaccessible locations, and the results are being collated. The assets inventory and compartment descriptions form part of the Management Plan.

Additional features have been observed during these visits. These include the original extent of Blackroot Pool, north of the railway, the boundary of land around Four Oaks lodge, holloways in Gum Slade, and holloways near the Ancient Encampment which predate the railway and head down to a bridge over the Ebrook. A square platform in the Events Field near the Scout Hut is probably the site of a building, parchmarks were noted on grassland near Four Oaks Gate, and an irregular ground surface near Crown Lane Gate. A previously unrecorded platform was noted in Pool Hollies, possible peat cutting near Little Bracebridge Pool, and parallel gullies, probably

former drainage ditches, near Streetly Wood. Fragments of concrete from a World War I Camp were exposed by fire near Boldmere Gate.

“Sutton Park: the origins, components and afterlife of a medieval deer park” is a report being prepared for publication by Mike Hodder in conjunction with Dr Andrew Watkins, who is a medieval historian. It is the culmination of many years’ research on the Park itself and on comparisons with medieval deer parks elsewhere in the country. It includes the layout and extent of the park boundary, its relationship to pools and the manor house, and the subdivisions, which may be related to hunting by beaters driving deer along valleys to archers. It expands on information in the book *The Archaeology of Sutton Park*, and on the “Background to the flora” chapter in *The Flora of Sutton Park*. Both of these books are still available. Mike Hodder is also writing a new book on the archaeology of Sutton Park.