



Friends of Ecclesall Woods

Newsletter Oct 2010.



Chair/Editor: Linda Evans, 2585346

Membership: Lorna Baker, 2369025

Autumn is here, with wonderful colours. True reds from rowan berries, rose hips, arums. Gold and yellow from turning leaves. Fungi in every colour but green. Thumps as chestnuts fall. Drive along Whirlowdale Crescent at the end of September for terrific leaf colour.

NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

: Thursday 11 November 2010, at 8.00 p.m.
At Holy Trinity Church Hall, Grove Road

Ann Le Sage will speak on the restoration of Shepherd Wheel, led by Friends of the Porter Valley. She is known as an excellent and inspiring speaker.

The agenda for the AGM, and last year's minutes, are on p. 4

APPEAL FOR COMMITTEE MEMBERS, p.4

SOUTH YORKSHIRE WOOD FAIR

Saturday 25 September
Endcliffe Park, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Every year the South Yorkshire Forests Partnership hosts the South Yorkshire Wood Fair, a massive community event where members of the public can find out about their local wooded environment and how it can be used as a sustainable resource for biodiversity, leisure and industry. There are demonstrations from local timber workers, wildlife walks, wood crafts and the opportunity to get involved with local action or environment groups. .

Beauchief Environment Group Meetings

Saturday 9th October. 7.30 p.m at St. Peter's Parish Centre, Reney Avenue, Greenhill. Talk "A Pictorial Journey through the Byways of Holmesfield", by Nick Ward

Saturday 13th November. 7.30 p.m at St. Peter's Parish Centre, Reney Avenue, Greenhill
An Illustrated talk, "British Wildlife" by Paul Medforth

Friends of the Porter Valley Events

Saturday 2nd October. "Finding Fungi", a walk led by Ziggy Senkens. Meet at Wire Mill Dam car park at 10.30 a.m.

Sunday 31st October. Halloween Party, with lanterns and children's fancy dress competition. Endcliffe Park Café, 6-8 p.m.

Wednesday 3rd November. Annual General Meeting, and "Sheffield before the Industrial Revolution", a talk by Prof. David Hey. 7.30 p.m. at Bents Green Methodist Church Hall.

Saturday 6th November. "Springtails and other Mini-beasts". A walk led by Dr. Paul Ardron. Meet at Wire Mill Dam car park at 10.30 a.m.

Nether Edge Wildlife Group Meetings

Wednesday 6th October: "No Nettles Required: The Reassuring Truth about Wildlife Gardening". Talk by Dr. Ken Thompson.

Wednesday 3rd November. "Fruit Growing: an Illustrated talk, with tastings of a few of our 2000 traditional varieties of apple". Talk by Julian Brandram, expert nurseryman with many years' experience producing fruit trees locally.

Wednesday 1st December. Christmas Quiz and Social Evening.

All at 7.30 p.m. at King's Centre, Union Road.

Events at the Sawmill, Abbey Lane

Saturday 30 October. **Gathering Winter Fuel.** 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Info and demos on logs and wood burning technology.

Re-launch of Site Shop. During December, there will be Christmas trees for sale, locally crafted gifts, and seasonal festivities at weekends.

Courses Contact www.lowimpact.org for more information and booking.

Basket Making, starting 18th Sept.

Green Woodworking, starting 6th Nov.

Living Willow Structures, starting 4th December.

GREEN FLAG

Ecclesall Woods has been awarded the Green Flag for the fifth or sixth year running. For the first few years, there was a formal inspection of the Woods. Our then-Chairman, Bill Smyllie, and Nick Sellwood and later John Gilpin, from Parks and Countryside, walked round the Woods with the assessment team. Now the formal inspection has stopped, and a free-form inspection is conducted without notice. This is obviously a more demanding criterion, so well-done to all who work on the Woods and all those who use them.

One of the criteria is the amount of rubbish lying around. By comparison with some other woods, we don't have much. I think there is still too much, and one discarded plastic bottle in bright colours can spoil a view very effectively. So can little plastic bags with dog dirt, hung on bushes. This is just so stupid – nothing will decay in this situation, and the bags will stay for years if someone else doesn't clear them up.

Walks.

The “other half” of the walk on 17 July started from the Sawmill, and was attended by Sorby members and led by Bill Smyllie. They walked to the Donkey Field, but were distracted on the way by finding considerable numbers of insects. At the Donkey Field, on the many hogweed umbels, there were many wasps, and a few bumble bees, hover flies, and honey bees. Only one soldier beetle was found. The day was overcast. On two visits 7 days before, and 2 days after, Bill found that in bright sun there were many more soldier beetles on both occasions. On the later visit, there were still plenty of wasps, but no honey bees and few bumble bees and hover flies. There can obviously be considerable difference in visible insects depending on temperature, and possibly predation.

The walk on 21 August was a joint walk with a total of 17 members of FEW, Beauchief Environment Group, and the Sorby. Bill Smyllie led the walk. It was a warm sunny morning in the Donkey Field. By this time the hogweed was mainly over, but there was wild angelica, not yet in full flower, creeping thistle, mainly over, and Rosebay and Great willowherbs. Many insects were seen – Bob Clinging, of the Sorby, listed about 20. Hoverflies preferred the umbellifers, hogweed and wild angelica, and we saw the Marmalade hoverfly (*Episyrphus balteatus*) and the Pied hoverfly (*Vollucella pellucens*). Other species of hoverfly don't have common names. Butterflies seen included Peacock, Comma, Small Copper, Gate Keeper, Meadow Brown, and Speckled Wood. Bill was disappointed in the small numbers of these butterflies, especially since there were many Peacock caterpillars seen on nettle plants in earlier walks. However, it is plain that the Donkey Field, now managed to provide mainly open ground with some scrub, is proving attractive to many insect species.

From my observations, I think it's been the summer of nipplewort. Round the edges of the woods, on streets, in my garden where it's never been seen before, there have been many plants of this tall, dusty, rather sparse weeds with nipple-shaped buds developing into small yellow flowers. No room for a picture.

AGENDA FOR THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

1. Apologies
2. Minutes of Last AGM (next page)
3. Chairman's Report
4. Financial Report and Accounts
5. Membership Report
6. Footpath Report
7. Ecology Report
8. Archaeology Report
9. Any Other Business
10. Date of next AGM.

Committee Members.

The Committee, in 2009-10, was made up of:

Linda Evans, Chairman

Ken Marshall, Treasurer

Lorna Baker, Membership Secretary

Monica Rorison, Minutes Secretary and Ecology Group

Jane Beresford, Footpath Group

Geoffrey Hartland, Archaeology Group.

As you can see, everyone on the Committee has a specialised function, and we REALLY need more general members. The Committee meets every 2 months, and the meetings last 1-2 hours. Please consider whether you, as a member of FEW, could serve on the Committee. You would not need to do more than attend meetings, unless you wished to do so. What you could do is represent the views of the membership.

If you were willing to think of this, please contact Monica Rorison, on 2366979.
(Linda Evans is away for the whole of October)

Minutes of Annual General Meeting, 8 Oct 2009.

The meeting was preceded by a talk on Woodland Fungi by Patrick Harding and there was a display of work by the Footpath Group.

Apologies were received from Mr. and Mrs. G. Hartland, Mr. and Mrs. D. Wilmshurst, Dr. Trevor Watson, Paul Thompson and Pete Severs.

The minutes of the last AGM were accepted as a true record. Proposed by Clem Thompson and passed unanimously.

Financial Report.

Linda Evans presented the accounts. The overall situation is very good.

Membership Report.

Lorna Baker said that we had 173 paid-up members, which is considered very good.

Footpaths Report.

Jane Beresford said that it had been a very busy year. First, the Group cleared rhododendrons on the south edge of the Bird Sanctuary. Then, with aid from Tom, a Ranger from the Sawmill, the Group started coppicing and clearing in the Donkey Field. The plan for this area was devised by John Gilpin, the Woodland Manager, and aimed to create a new habitat of meadow and open field to encourage a different kind of wildlife. Ash samplings and willow were cleared from part of the area, and some bramble cleared in February. There will be a regularly mown area of grass by a bench. The ash poles were sold at a special "Beanpole Day" organised by the Sawmill staff, at which FEW was represented.

The Pond project was directed by John Hudson. The site was cleared, and the pond deepened. A liner was put in place and covered, and a drain and culvert under the footpath constructed. The pond filled naturally, and left to settle. Planting will begin in spring. A detailed report of these projects is available from Jane Beresford.

Ecology Report.

Monica said that in 2007-9 there was a 2-year project, on remarkable trees with their flora and fauna, and on the distribution of sedges and rushes. The latter was difficult, but a distribution map of Remote and Pendulous Sedge was started, and will be completed later. The tree project had some very interesting results. The largest oak had a girth of 12 feet at 5' height. Trunks were rich with algae, lichens, fungi and mosses, and there were sapling trees, shrubs, and herbaceous plants below them. We also did a vegetation survey in the newly cleared Donkey Field. A copy of the report is available from Monica Rorison.

Archaeology Report.

Geoffrey Hartland said that an ancient carved stone, found recently, had been taken for examination. Otherwise, the year was quiet.

Election of Chairman and Treasurer.

Dr. Bill Smyllie retired after 16 years, first as Secretary and then as Chairman. Jane Beresford presented a wooden holly bowl, made by an artist at the Sawmill, as a gesture of thanks and appreciation for his dedication and hard work during those years.

Dr. Linda Evans succeeded him as Chairman. Ken Marshall will be the Treasurer. There is no Secretary, but Lorna will continue to act as Membership Secretary and Monica will act as Minutes Secretary.

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Hornbeam

Hornbeams are an introduced tree in Ecclesall Woods. They were probably planted because their wood is excellent for making cogs in wooden machinery, like water wheels. In the 1960's, a survey showed 38 trees in the woods. It would be interesting to know whether there are now more or fewer than this. This time of year is good for spotting hornbeams, because their very distinctive fruit is being dropped.



It isn't easy to distinguish between hornbeams and beech. Hornbeam leaves are characteristically pleated, and beech leaves are not - but the leaves of young beeches can have a very similar pleated look. Hornbeam and beech bark are very different; while beech is uniform elephant grey, hornbeam has coloured striations. I don't know how old a hornbeam has to be before it develops its distinctive bark. The fruits are very different. So is the appearance of next year's buds in late autumn; beech buds are long, pointed, russet-coloured, whereas hornbeam buds are plumper, shorter, and show some green colour. Hornbeam, at least in Ecclesall Woods, comes into leaf earlier than beech, by 2-3 weeks.

Competition. There will be a small prize for the person who has spotted the largest number of hornbeam trees by the AGM.

New Health Walks

Sarah Chapman, at the Sawmill site, would like to start a new, regular health walk. Health walks through the Woods already take place every Tuesday, starting at Abbeydale Hamlet, and these attract up to 50 walkers. There is obviously demand for these health walks. Sarah is looking for volunteers to train as leaders for the new walk; if you are interested, contact her on 0114 2356348.

FEW Website.

Our new website, at www.friendsofecclesallwoods.org.uk, should be going live before the end of September. Do have a look. Any comments, critical or positive, to Linda Evans at francis.evans@btinternet.com

Next Newsletter January 2011. All Contributions Gratefully Received.

