



Chair/Editor: Linda Evans, 2585346
Membership: Lorna Baker, 2369025.

Hazel catkins are growing. Grass, snowdrops, bluebells are starting to shoot. Woodpeckers are drumming. Nights are getting (a little) shorter. And more outdoor activities, in Woods and elsewhere, are feasible.

ROLL ON SPRING

FEW Meetings

Saturday 26 March, 10 am. Bird Identification Walk, guided by Paul Medforth. Meet at the Sawmill site (in main part, not Abbey Lane entrance)

Saturday 7 May, 10 am. Archaeological walk, led by Geoffrey Hartland. Meet at bridleway entrance to Wood 2 on Whirlowdale Road. Lasts about 2½ hours. Part of Sheffield Environment Weeks

Saturday 14 May, 10 am. Bluebell Walk, led by Monica Rorison. Meet at bridleway entrance to Wood 2 on Whirlowdale Road. Part of Sheffield Environment Weeks

Art Group.

Sunday 3 April. 2 pm. Dobcroft Road entrance.

Thursday 28 April. 2 pm. Ryecroft Glen Road entrance.

Further meetings will be arranged after these two.

Beauchief Environment Group Events

Saturday 12 March, 7.30 pm at St. Peter's Parish Centre, Reney Avenue, Greenhill. John and Judith Gilbert talk on "Exploring Ethiopia". £2 including refreshments

Saturday 16 April. Annual Spring Clean. Working morning. Met at 9.30 am at Beauchief Abbey Farm yard

Saturday 7 May. Environment Month Event; Family Activity Morning. Starts at 10 am, by Beauchief Ponds behind Beauchief Abbey. Fun for everyone, with an environmental theme; make an insect hotel, pond dipping, bug sweep, treasure hunt, bird feeders.

Friends of the Porter Valley Activities

Saturday 5 February, 10.30 am. Walk, details to be announced

Monday 25 April, 11 am to 4 pm. Great Easter Duck Race, Endcliffe Park. Stalls, competitions, etc.

Friends of Millhouses Park

Monday 21 February, 10 am to 4 pm. Living Willow Den Building. Meet next to Splash Park in Millhouses Park. Call Tom to book a place on 07989409333.

Tuesday 22 February, 10 am to 3 pm. Community Tree Planting. Meet Sports Field, Topley end of Millhouses Park.

Update on J. G. Graves Woodland Discovery Centre Building, and Sawmill Site

The building works will now be completed by the Leeds office of Lumsden and Carroll Construction, who previously won an Environmental Award for their work on Thorncliffe Park. They plan to start work again in January, with completion in early summer.

The shop on the Sawmill site is now closed, and seems unlikely to re-open in the foreseeable future. It is still possible to buy logs and kindling on the site.

FEW Ecology Group.

The Annual Review meeting was held in January, as the original December date was cancelled because of snow. Reports from plant surveyors in their different areas were reviewed. We agreed that next year's survey will concentrate on rarer trees in the woods – Scots pine, larch, yew, hornbeam, crab-apple, and possibly others.

There are several areas which need a volunteer surveyor. Don't worry if you can't recognise these trees at the moment – help is given. It's an interesting and not-too-demanding task, which really gets you thoroughly acquainted with you area of the Woods. So PLEASE VOLUNTEER. Ring Monica on 2366979

FEW Footpath Group.

In spite of the cold, the Footpath Group has met and worked almost every Tuesday since the heaviest of the snow. They have cleared and cut trees and bushes which were broken or damaged by the snow, and there were many of these. They have also

continued to remove cherry laurel, and a few stray rhododendrons. While these large bushes are beautiful in the right place, they can easily swamp native plants in the Woods. We meet at 9.30 am every Tuesday morning in our container/room on the Sawmill Site. Ring Jane on 2368867 for more information.

Time Travellers.

John Baker's new group met for the first time on Wednesday 19 Jan for a field trip in the Woods. 11 people were present. After a fascinating trip through the Woods, they decided that the next two meetings would be a trip to Manor Lodge, to hear about the archaeological work there, and a meeting in the Dore Village Society rooms to look at matters of interest in the Archive.

Coppicing in Wood 1.



Ecclesall Woods, like most ancient woodlands, was used for coppicing for much of its life. This means that a young tree is cut back to a stump, 6-12" above ground, and then puts up many shoots. Over 10-15 years, these shoots grow into usable poles; these can be cut for use, and the process can be repeated indefinitely.

15 years ago, an area in Wood 1 was coppiced. The first year or two, there was a great flowering of bluebell, yellow archangel, snowdrops, and other flowers because of the increased light. These were then choked out by brambles. In the past, brambles would have been cut back and used – often for fires at home, sometimes for animal feed in hard times. In this area of coppice, the brambles were not controlled, and swamped the flowers and deterred some of the trees from growing well.

A further cycle has now been started. Last November, (2010), the area was cleared. It was found that several of the original coppiced trees had in fact grown well. The photo shows two of these coppice stools, cut back to start again. Learning from the last cycle, it is planned to keep the brambles in this area under control for at least the next 10-15 years. John Gilpin, Woodland Manager for Ecclesall Woods, expects to see snowdrops, bluebells, and other wild flowers in plenty this year – some can already be seen sprouting.

This is a demonstration of one of the major uses of woodland. You might expect that coppicing would sap the tree's strength and shorten its life, but this is wrong. Coppiced trees live longer than timber trees. As a timber tree grows, it produces more and more branches and wood, and this gradually becomes too much for the tree roots to support. Such a mature tree is easily destroyed by high winds, or can simply fall over. Coppicing, essentially, resets the growth clock every time, and the coppiced tree can outlive the timber tree by several hundred years.

