



Friends of Ecclesall Woods

Newsletter January 2013.

[www.friendsofecclesallwoods.org.uk](http://www.friendsofecclesallwoods.org.uk)



Arum Italicum, growing, 1<sup>st</sup> Jan 2013.

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A new year is always hopeful. My hopes for FEW include more fun meetings – like those rained off last year – and more serious stuff, like archaeological work, more footpath volunteers for more improvement work, and more rewarding involvement for more members.

### **MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL TIME.**

If there is a membership form included, and you're getting this by post,

**PLEASE RENEW NOW**

#### **FEW Events and Activities**

January and February are pretty bare of activities and events, not only for us but for other groups. Note for the future:

**20 April. Dawn chorus walk with Paul Medforth. Meet at Wood 3 entrance opposite Beauchief Gardens, on Abbeydale Road South, at 6 am**

**4 May. Environment Week Bluebell Walk, led by Monica Rorison. Meet at the Woodland Discovery Centre at 10 am.**

**11 May. Environment Week Archaeology Walk, led by Geoffrey Hartland. Meet at the Woodland Discovery Centre at 10 am.**

**18 May. Bird Song Walk, led by Paul Medforth. Meet at Wood 3 entrance opposite Beauchief Gardens, on Abbeydale Road South, at 8 am**

**Weekly Meeting of the Footpath Group, every Tuesday. Meet at our store on the Sawmill site at 9.30 am.**

## Craft Courses at the Woodland Discovery Centre

**Saturday 2 March. 9.30am to 4pm. Bronze Smelting, Casting and Making.**

**Sunday 10 March, 9.30am to 3.30pm. Frame Basket Making**

**Saturday 16 March, 10am to 4pm. Walking Stick Course**

**Wednesday 20 March, 9.30am to 4pm. Basic Green Wood Craft.**

**Sunday 7 April, 10am to 3pm. Kids' Easter Carving.**

**For more information, and to book, go to [ecclesallwoodscraftcourses.co.uk](http://ecclesallwoodscraftcourses.co.uk), or phone 0114 235 6348.**

## Annual General Meeting, 11 October 2012, at the Woodland Discovery Centre.

The meeting was preceded by an illustrated talk on Woodland Fungi by Ziggy, Michael Senkens, which was thoroughly interesting and very well received. We elected a new Treasurer, John Fitzpatrick, so this vital role is now filled by an accountant and member of the Footpath Group.



There was no Archaeology Group progress to report, so Geoffrey Hartland brought along a recently discovered carved stone, thought to be earlier than the cup-and-ring stones. The picture shows it as found, by the side of a path in Wood 1. It is now kept by South Yorkshire Archaeology Service, and seldom on view.



The photographic competition was won by Kathryn Foreman, here shown getting here prize of a digital camera from Linda Evans. The camera prize was donated by Harrison's.

The entries were very high quality overall, and we decided to put some into a calendar for 2013. This has now been done: if you haven't yet got a calendar, you should hurry! From the Woodland Centre, Ecclesall Library, or Linda Evans



### **Footpath Group.**

The footpath group has continued to work every Tuesday morning, in spite of the generally horrible weather. They have mostly been working on clearing the drains throughout the wood, which have tended to flood, and the pipes under bridges which have tended to block up with debris. One pipe, at the top of Wood 1, was blocked by a dog's tennis ball, which held back a wedge of other debris.

We also had a Christmas lunch for members of the group; bring-and-share in the Woodland Discovery Centre.

### **Ecology Group Report from Monica Rorison.**

The group had its annual meeting on the last Saturday in November, 2012. The results of our plant survey on the distribution of Bluebell was mapped and compared with the survey 1999. Unfortunately there is clearly a decline particularly in Wood 1, near Parkhead, and in Wood 3 near Abbeydale Road. The group suggested the spread of Bramble, Climate Change and the denser tree canopy are possible causes. There will be some effort to look into methods to minimise Bramble.

For the plant survey 2013 we decided to look at flowering plants, that is trees shrubs and herbaceous plants. This can be recorded over the growing season starting in February and through to September on a sort of spreadsheet.

We also want to find where our ash trees are, because of the spread of the fungus disease which threatens them.

If there are enough people to form a "Nature into Art group" we shall book a start event in March at the Woodland Discovery Centre. So far we have a hand full of interested members.

### **Heavy Horses Working in the Woods.**



If you enter the Woods from Cow Lane, almost opposite the Rising Sun pub, the turn left and walk on the path towards Parkhead, the area on your left, between the path and the houses on Abbey Lane, is being thinned. This is part of the Council's "Woodland Improvement for Birds" project, funded by the Forestry Commission and

supported by the RSPB. Woodland bird populations have been declining over the last 25 years; some, like the Lesser Spotted Woodpecker and the Willow Tit have lost more than half the earlier population. Much of this decline can be attributed to changes in woodland management. In order to thrive, birds need a complex woodland structure with a ground layer, a shrub layer, and a canopy. The young sycamores in this area will improve the area for wildlife and increase diversity in the Woods.

Traditional methods for extracting the timber are being used, involving Clydesdale heavy horses. In this way timber can be extracted without damage to the remaining trees, and minimising damage to the soil structure and the flora. This is a productive bluebell area. The Clydesdale is a very old breed of working horse, and today is a Rare Breed. It was originally used for agriculture and heavy hauling, and today Clydesdales are still used for draught purposes, agriculture, logging, and driving.

On the day when I went to take pictures, the horses were unable to work, as someone had parked across the Cow Lane entrance and the equipment needed couldn't get into the Woods. So the first picture shows a resting Clydesdale. The other is a pile of logs extracted the day before, when the horses were working. I shall try to get pictures of working horses; see the next Newsletter.

#### **Heritage Open Day at the Woodland Discovery Centre, 28 Oct. 2012.**



This picture shows the smelting of iron in a bloomery. The bloomery is clay, and it's filled with iron ore, charcoal, and a flux. What comes out when the furnace is tapped and cooled is a spongy mass of iron, which has to be reheated and hammered by a blacksmith to turn it into usable iron.

This was an exciting demonstration in a day full of them, with blacksmithing, charcoal making, Architecture students building a structure over the container FEW uses for the footpath group, heritage wood crafts like turning on a pole lathe, trug making, and basket weaving. We had a display of competition photos and sold calendars. There were roaming musicians.

Even though the day was overcast and slightly rainy, about 500 visitors turned up, and felt glad they'd done so.

There will be another Open Day this spring; date and events to be announced.

## HLF Grant.



The planned actions on this project are swinging along. We have an Education Officer, 2 days a week, seconded from Sheffield Wildlife Trust. I am working on the information boards we're going to put up by points of interest in the Woods.

One of these points is the orange outflow that bubbles up from the ground and flows under the bridleway into the Limb Brook.

We get more questions about this than almost anything else. It is drainage from old coal mines in the fields above it, on the way to Dore, where there were mines in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and probably before.

The stream which runs past Ryecroft Mill begins, above the cottage and on the way to the Picnic Area, as outflow from a large pipe. This drains the landfill in the Picnic Area, and is also orange when the flow is low. I would really like a picture of this sparse orange outflow, rather than the picture above after the recent heavy rains.

**PLEASE CAN ANYONE HELP WITH A PHOTO?**

Another action involves the use of GPS receivers to map archaeological features in the Woods. Jon Dallow is working with the University Archaeology Department to produce a programme, which will train students over the next five years. There is still so much we don't know about the Woods.

### **Pilates for the Independent Older Adult**

Carolyn Jolley is offering a 1-hr taster class, free, on Mon 4<sup>th</sup> February, 2.30 to 3.30 pm. A 6-week block of classes starts a week later, Mon 11 Feb, at 2.30 pm, also at the Woodland Discovery Centre. Prices for this are £6 per class for the block, £5 concessions, and £7 for drop-ins. Contact Carolyn on 07788174203, or at [carolyn\\_jolley@hotmail.com](mailto:carolyn_jolley@hotmail.com)

**DON'T FORGET TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP**