



www.friendsofecclesallwoods.org.uk

Newsletter July 2023

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I hope you have all renewed your subscriptions.

This year celebrates **30 years of FEW**. It was formed at a time when local government had to change the way woods and parks were managed. Tendering was forced on them and it seems that general maintenance of footpaths was neglected so the origin of the Footpath Group. It was also a time of change in woodland management, by leaving fallen timbers and branches, it added to the habitat for wild life and allowed gradual decay. Tidiness was no longer the goal though hard for some to accept. The first FEW records I have is of the ecology group, under Monica Rorison, carrying out plant surveys following the hot summer and wet autumn of 1995. They recorded the increased fungal infection in sweet chestnuts and also surveyed Himalayan balsam, bracken and bramble.

Future events

- **FEW AGM Wednesday 18th October 7pm at the Discovery Centre**
Caroline Hobart will talk about Fungi especially the 'beneath the ground features' we do not see.
Followed by refreshments and the AGM
- **Fungi Trail Saturday 14th October 10am** organised by FEW
- **Pumpkin Trail Saturday 29th October**

- **Find out about our woods and their trees and plants with Fran Halsall**

Sunday 10th September at 2:30pm

Sunday 8th October at 2:00pm

Saturday 4th November at 1:30pm

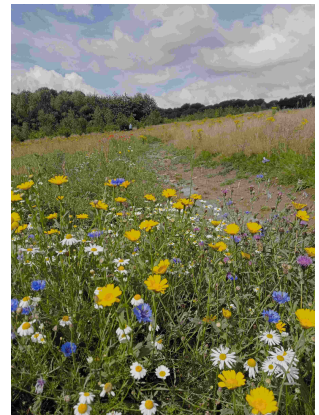
Adult tickets £8.30 including booking fee. Children free
More details of these and other events will be circulated later.

Projects in and around the woods

“Slowing the flow” in the Limb Valley.

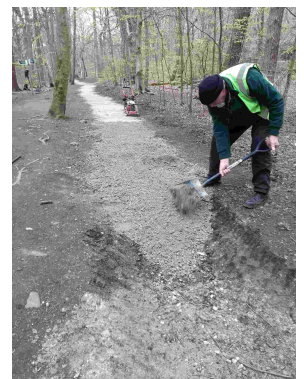
The project was led by Sheffield and Rotherham Wild Life trust (SRWT) then handed over to Sheffield Parks and Countryside (SP&C) at the end of March. Our rangers and volunteers have worked hard this year to complete the development of the swales on the Whirlow meadows at the lower end of the playing field. Seeds were spread and some plants added around the ponds. The Local Area Committee (LAC) gave us a grant for the materials to enclose one of the upper ponds and SRWT enclosed the other. We will survey the return of flora and fauna and compare with the other unfenced ponds.

Dr Kevin Spence of Hallam University will continue to monitor the flow and rainfall and you are still encouraged to take photos especially after rain at the designated posts.



Footpath Repairs

FEW provided one load of footpath material and a LAC grant gave us a second load. Ranger Tom hired a dumper truck and tamper to transport and level the material but not before some potentially back breaking wheel barrowing of one pile helped to restore the footpath between Cow Lane and Parkhead



Further material was added to the partially restored path by the concrete bridge. Most of the material was used to fill in the runnel from the Iron Age Fort area down the hill. There is still plenty to do but we have to share the limited ranger's time with other areas which we are told are more needy than Ecclesall Woods.

Other activities

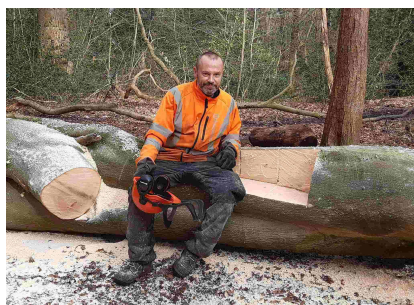
Mulching of the new plantings in Whirlow field continued this spring and we were pleased to note how many had survived last year's dry summer. The footpath group continue to clear drains but are also working to allow drains to hold back water as a general 'slowing of the flow' without causing water to back up on to paths. In other areas where water careers down paths in heavy rain eroding them, it is hoped various types of diversions can be constructed to lead the water into vegetation.



The FP group is now doing the summer job of controlling Himalayan Balsam. Some members have spent weeks tidying up around the Discovery Centre.

Spring in the wood was another successful day despite being unseasonably cold. Youngsters enjoyed bashing leaves and flowers collected by Jane Berrisford on to material cut up by Jane. She soon ran out of the 300 pieces of material that she had brought.

Unseasonal weather's influence on the woods!



An unexpected heavy snow in March lead to the breaking of many branches and the falling over of some favourite trees. Rain then followed and a water logged playing field meant yet again postponement of planned projects. The cold April that followed slowed down the flowering of the bluebells and other spring flowers.

First aid Course for Volunteers

The Footpath group has hardly had to deal with any any injury during its 30 year history. However, rather than rest on its laurels, it was decided that a first aid refresher course would increase confidence about what to do if something untoward happened. Twelve of us including Whirlowbrook Park friends were put through our paces on a half day course. We were brought up to date with the latest CPR advice, use of bandages and anything else to hand, checked what was in our first aid kits and tried out **what3words (W3W)** which could help to mark the position of a casualty. Bob Parkinson has now produced a map with entrances marked with their W3W.

Other volunteers

We were grateful to have quite a few people released by their firms to give some volunteer time. A team from Waterman Aspen had to be postponed because of snow and rain but eventually were able to put their muscle into fencing the pond.



The **Millhouses scouts, cubs and explorers** have also given their time with litter picking, clearing and cutting back vegetation along the Abbey Lane and Whirlowdale pavements adjacent to the woods.

The cubs have enjoyed pond dipping and making a bug house in the wood with advice from Ranger Nell.

The scouts took part in a tree identifying activity towards their Foresters' Badge.

They only had to identify 8 trees but between and including their hut on the corner of Dobcroft and Whirlowdale Road and the Discovery Centre grounds over 20 species were seen even if they were not all named or pointed out.

How many of these trees could you identify?

Alder Ash Beech Birch Cherry (Cypress – in gardens)

Douglas Fir Elder Field Maple

Hawthorn Hazel Holly Hornbeam Horse Chestnut

Larch Lime London Plane

Norwegian Maple Poplar Rowan (Mountain Ash)

Oak Scots Pine Sweet Chestnut Spruce Sycamore

Willow Yew

If you are a bit shaky on recognising trees join **Fran Halsall on one of her woodland walks**. See future events. Full details will be sent out later.

Ecology

The bluebells were not fully out for the bluebell walk at the end of April. However, I did note that in a 2013 news letter there was a report of a very cold walk when I and 2 others joined Monica Rorison on the 6th May. Only 3 bluebell flowers were found.

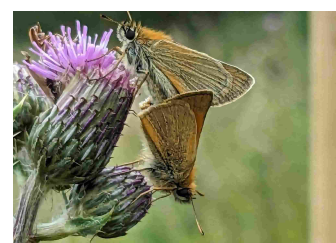


Sue Jackson continues to lead surveys in the Donkey field and was pleased to note the presence of just one southern marsh orchid.

Ros Hancock is still photographing and identifying a fascinating range of insects.

Dry and then wet conditions have been good for fungi especially the edible 'chicken in the woods'.

The Whirlow meadow has been surveyed for plants and there have been many comments on the profusion of flowers.



Ornithology

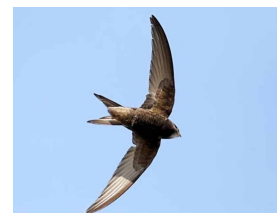
Pete Brown led our walk this year. 30 species were noted including: swift, green and greater spotted woodpecker, willow warbler, goldcrest, goldfinch and pied flycatcher.

Pete passed on his honorarium to Ches Cunago who runs **Sheffield Swift Rescue**. She was very grateful and had already rescued 4 exhausted swifts even before nest building had started. Ches is also an apprentice bird ringer under Phil May.

Phil reports this year that 12 heron nests were noted in February.

However, by the time of the bird walk there seemed to be fewer. There was speculation that some would not have survived the snow. Phil's bird box findings were that 16 of the 18 nest boxes had now fledged. 12 boxes had been used by great tits - 9 being successful. Of the other 4 boxes, only 1 blue tit success. 3 nests had been used by blue tits but wood mice appeared to have taken the eggs.

Sadly bat boxes, which were donated and put up in the early spring, have not survived gnawing by squirrels. The owl boxes had all fallen to pieces.

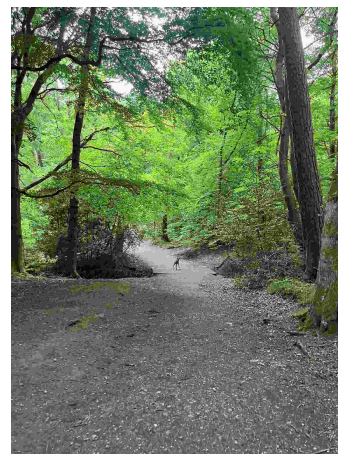


Other sightings

We had several reports of possibly young deer being seen in wood 2 and 3 in June. It is thought that the heavy fire on the moor may have frightened them into moving down the valley.

Archaeology

Some Victorian pottery was found during the Whirlow playing field excavations but nothing of significance. The field had previously been the site of bell pits for coal mining. This area was levelled by the council to create the playing fields.



Abbey Lane Crossing Group

Sadly for us our lead council transport officer left in May,

Another planner had a period of sickness and the lead councillor who had approved and supported the project relinquished her role in the council reshuffle. We hope that Councillor Dan Miskell, who now has the transport brief, will give his support.

Meanwhile we are back to further lobbying.

Charitable status

Friends of Whirlowdale Park have just achieved charitable status. Dealings with the Charity Commission appear to be a fairly drawn out process but it has been suggested that we should consider seeking charitable status.

Have any of our members any comments, advice or expertise?

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to our photographers whose photos were mainly taken from our Facebook album.