



www.friendsofecclesallwoods.org.uk

Newsletter February 2023

Chair

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Subscriptions are now due

If you have not yet renewed please pay by **bank transfer** or set up a **standing order**

£10 to **FEW** ref surname & initials

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to the **Membership Secretary**

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Frosty day December 2022



Frogs on the move February 2023

Future events – and walks during Sheffield Environment Weeks

Saturday /Sunday March 25th/26th Exhibition of pictures by **Richard Johnson**.

Woodland Discovery Centre 10am -5pm Free to attend

Sunday April 23th Spring in the Woods 10am -4pm Free to attend.

Jane Beresford will be supervising 'leaf bashing' for children

Saturday April 29th A walk led by **Sue Jackson**

to see **Bluebells and Spring Flowers**

Free to members £3 for non-members.

Meet outside The Discovery Centre at 10 am



Saturday May 6th A Bird walk led by **Pete Brown** 8am -10am

Meet outside the Discovery Centre. Free to members. £3 for non members.

Booking required. Further details on booking to follow.



AGM November 23rd 2022

We were back in the Discovery Centre after 2 years on Zoom. Unfortunately it coincided with the arrival of the Christmas trees and so we had to put security measures on the gate.

We welcomed our speaker Fran Halsall, also FEW webmaster. Fran was formerly a professional nature photographer who mapped the major trees in Ecclesall Woods in 2016. Since the Covid outbreak she has turned her attention to growing food and using her landscape architectural skills to design market gardens for some of the local charities.

Fran gave a very interesting talk on her journey from being knowledgeable about woodlands and wildlife gardening to her passion for growing food in a sustainable way.

Minutes of the AGM will be sent out separately. We are bringing forward next year's AGM to **Wednesday 18th October** when we hope lighter evenings will encourage more people to attend and we don't have to worry about Christmas trees.

Abbey Lane Crossing Group

The plans have been published and went out to consultation. The team had to sift through 400 replies. Since the last newsletter money has become available and an extra pot has been added so plans have been modified. This all takes time.

Larch felling and the heronry

Most people were devastated by the scale of the removal of the diseased larches in the Rough Standhills plantation- a course forced on the council, as landowner, by the finding of a forestry commission aerial survey showing leaf changes caused by *Phytophthora Ramorum*.

This autumn hundreds of native saplings have been planted. Tree trunks have been laid across the site to discourage water and soil run off while new growth takes hold.



Planting of saplings at Rough Standhills

Although it will take some years to fully establish a mix of trees, it should mean that there will never again be such a wholesale removal of trees. With a plantation, that is always a possibility for reasons of commerce or disease.

The same survey showed that some of the larch plantings in Ecclesall Woods notably in the heronry also showed signs of the disease. Negotiation with the forestry commission resulted in some trees being felled but others being ring barked i.e. where a ring of the outer bark and trunk is removed. This prevents the upper flow of water and nutrients so halting the growth of new leaves. The trees themselves will

stand for some years and hopefully continue be used by the herons. Many pairs have returned this year. We are looking into the possibility of building platforms on some of the nearby trees that could be used by nesting herons in the future. Leaving the felled trees on the ground does not increase the spread of the fungus.



Ring barking a larch

Slowing the Flow

Work has continued on the playing fields. We had to wait until the autumn to see how well the ponds and swales coped with torrential rain. Some adjustments have been made but we were pleased to see that the turfs placed in the swales to encourage growth are doing well. It is more likely that scattered seeds will have been washed away.

The trench draining the bottom pond and leading down towards the Limb has coped well so now that water is not pouring on to the path below, it can be repaired.

Leaky dams have been installed along the length of the Limb within the woods. You are encouraged to take photos at several points.



Photo point 14

We have a LAC grant to fence one of the ponds to encourage cover and wild life. Sheffield and Rotherham Wildlife Trust will fence another pond. That leaves 4 unfenced ponds for comparison.



Round up of other Autumn and Winter Activities

The footpath group continued with their tasks though priorities changed as dried out footpaths became waterlogged then frost bound. Some planned tasks such as bramble pulling in certain areas will have to wait until next year as work in the playing fields took up a good deal of time but is already showing great results.

Jane Beresford reported that the **footpath group had clocked up 1616 volunteer hours in 2022**

September and October

The footpath group continued to work at Whirlow as well as carrying out their routine tasks. A notable construction was a dead hedge for the smaller pond.

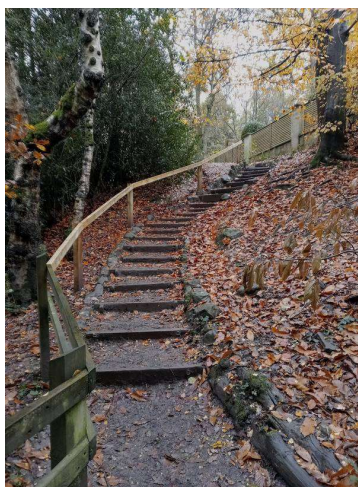
Fungi were abundant in the early autumn. Our Facebook album has a wonderful set of fungi pictures. There are photos by Fran Halsall of all the fungi on the very well supported fungi trail - including this wood bluit.



The Discovery Centre staff organised the final **Feast in the Forest**. Jane Beresford and her team helped 300 children bash leaf patterns on to material to make interesting patterns of leaf and flower sap. Fran Halsall led tree identification walks. Many other interesting events took place and there was a Collier's Market.

November and December

Hazel whips have been planted where the footpath group have fenced the triangle adjacent to the concrete bridge. We hope to encourage the spring flowers which at one time grew in profusion. Other plantings of hawthorn whips, acorns and oak seedlings have taken place through out the woods.



A hand rail was installed by the steps in wood 1 when the ground was soft enough to drive in the posts.. It had been on the 'to do' list since the summer.

A large number of hollies along side the footpath from Dobcroft Road to Whirlowdale Road have been pruned back allowing more light light to encourage dormant bulbs and other flora to grow.



As well as maintenance work within the woods the footpath group cut willow for the craft centre, holly and other foliage for the wreath making, all contributing to the activities on offer to the public.

Our only snow so far was in early December. Christmas trees, lights and a well stocked Hector's House gave a festive air to the Discovery Centre. Rachel Hutton and her craft team worked very hard to make it a success. Sadly once all the Christmas trees and wood had been sold the Wood Store closed. Pete will no longer be patiently waiting for business.



January and February

We were lucky with the weather when on a Saturday morning Abbeydale Rotary met with members of other groups who use the woods, to pull up the bramble close to the Abbey Lane /Whirlowdale Road entrance. The ground was damp after rain and it was the day before hard frosts. With a greater number of volunteers we were able to extend the cleared area. We hope more people will join us next year



Some of the Sat morning gang

Collier's pond has been cleared of some of the pond weed 'Parrot's Feather' and there is still plenty left for cover for the toads and frogs arriving soon.

Thankfully it is not as invasive as the crassula helmsii or 'NewZealand Pygmy weed' found in the donkey field pond.



In January we collected 5 bat boxes made by employees of the company working on the Hope Valley railway line.

Phil May has now installed them in a clearing in the Bird Sanctuary.



Future tasks Bramble and holly pruning is over now that the bluebell foliage is coming through and birds are pairing up for nesting. So time to think about improving some of the footpaths.

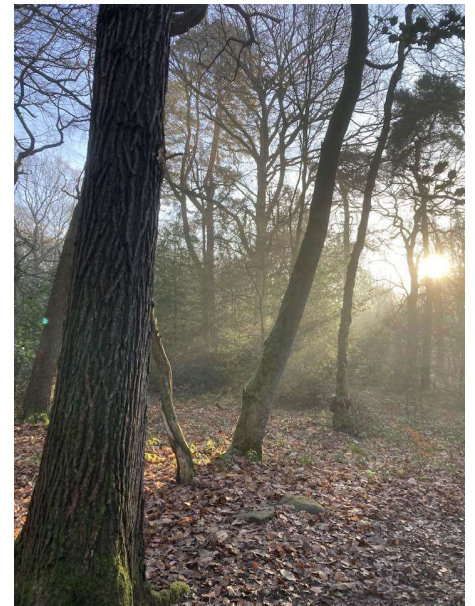
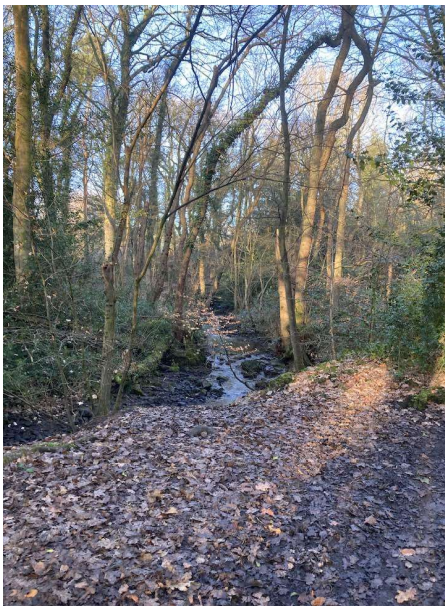
We have used FEW funds and a LAC grant to purchase footpath material. There are plenty of paths needing maintenance. Hopefully we will be able to show some before and after pictures in the next newsletter



Snow in early December

Thanks to Ros Hancock her for her December spider's web and February frog

Thanks to Cathy Webster for photos of a sunny day in February.



Ecclesall Woods
Woodland Discovery Centre
Abbey Lane, Sheffield S7 2QZ

Cafe • Food Stalls • Woodland Crafts • Cooking on Fire

**Sunday 23rd April 10am
4pm**

**Spring
in the Woods**

Children's Activities • Woodland Trails

A celebration of
Spring in the woods.

Join us for food, crafts and activities • For further information ring 235 6348

Sheffield City Council
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