



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

## Newsletter February 2024

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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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*Redwing 20th January Robert Scoular*



*Greater spotted woodpecker 20<sup>th</sup> January*

## Future events and walks during Sheffield Environment Weeks

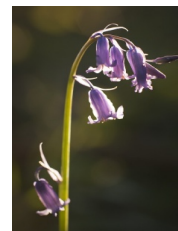
**Sunday April 28th Spring in the Woods 10am -4pm** Free to attend.

Jane Beresford will be supervising 'leaf bashing' for children.

**Saturday May 4<sup>th</sup>** A walk led by **Gerry Firkins**

to see **Bluebells and Spring Flowers 10am – 12 noon**

Meet outside The Discovery Centre

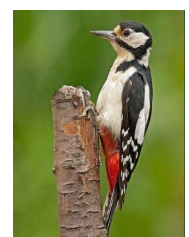


**Saturday May 11<sup>th</sup>** A **Bird walk** led by **Jim Clarke 8am -10am**

Meet outside The Discovery Centre.

Free to members. £5 for non members.

Booking required. Further details on booking to follow.





## **Retirement of John Gilpin**

We were very sorry to learn that John Gilpin, our countryside officer, is retiring. He has steered the woods through many changes both in terms of managing the woods and also watching nature take its course, too often outside any management plan. His knowledge of individual trees and also the wider view has been a great source of guidance and inspiration to us. We wish him a happy retirement.

## **AGM 18th October 2023**

There was a record attendance for Caroline Hobart's talk on 'fungi through the year' Apologies to anyone who attended and had to stand. Hopefully we can sort out more seating for next year.

## **Other autumn and winter events**

We had a good display of fungi in all the woods with many recorded on FaceBook. Our fungi trail was again very successful with over 200 visitors. The pumpkin trail organised by ranger Nell was also popular. Wreath making was held over 2 days for the first time.



## **Abbey Lane Crossing Group**

We are assured that work is still being done on the plans, and that there is still a pot of money for the project.

## **Rangers and Footpath Group**





After the hot dry spell in early summer, rain seemed to be the feature for the rest of 2023 and so far in 2024 with only a couple of days when it was snow rather than rain. Sometimes it was torrential and windy, giving us dramatic water scenes and damage to trees, with many being uprooted. Where they fall into the woods they are generally left, but any hanging over or landing on the official paths are removed.



The volunteers have spent many hours clearing the debris but had to wait for rangers and contractors to chain saw larger trunks. It was helpful when fallen trees were reported with their 'what 3 word' position.

Some paths that had recently been resurfaced were totally flooded, so it was a great relief to see them intact when the flood waters receded.

Clearing of cross drains seemed to be a recurrent theme each week in an aim to redirect water off the paths and minimise erosion damage.

The group did manage their annual tasks such as collecting willow and foliage for the craft team and wreath making. Some planned bramble clearing and holly pruning has been postponed as already bluebell leaves are appearing.



We are very grateful to have received a grant from the LAC for footpath material so there will be plenty of work to be done in further restoration of the footpaths.

The annual bramble clearing by Abbeydale Rotary took place in January on a slightly frosty day, but the ground was still soft enough to pull up the brambles. We had hoped that Friends would turn out to give us a more effective joint effort. Perhaps next year we can persuade more of you to join us. It is the one chance for Friends, who cannot commit to a Tuesday morning, to come along and increase the area we can clear so allowing more bluebells to flourish.

## **Whirlow playing fields and 'Slowing the flow'**

The footpath group has recently staked with marker posts and laid a dead hedge to discourage people from trampling newly planted whips along the side of the playing field.

We are pleased to see that the ponds on Whirlow field which were fenced are showing more signs of pond life compared with the unfenced ponds.

Unfortunately some of the leaky dams which had not had time to become embedded were washed away.

The Ecclesall Woods team has taken on the responsibility of two fields adjacent to the Whirlow playing fields. For many years they have been leased to a local farmer for grazing. They also have a considerable amount of Himalayan Balsam which grows adjacent to a stream. It is now hoped that the fields will be managed as scrubland. Whips will be planted this spring to form a hawthorn hedge in the hope of attracting willow tits which we know are in the vicinity.

## **Other Autumn and Winter Activities**

One of the apprentices, who is seconded to the woods for 3 months, did her bit to help Nell clear typha (related to bulrush) from one of the ponds in willow meadow. Collier's pond was partially cleared of Parrot's Feather but with enough left as cover to encourage toads to come back and breed. After a prolific presence of toads in 2022, last year was disappointing. We hope there will be a better breeding season in 2024.



## **Ecology group**

Sue Jackson and friends continue to monitor the Donkey Field.

No specific ecology surveys have been carried out in the woods but together with Countryside Management we have commissioned Julie Riley to carry out an ecology survey of woods 1 and 2 and the recently acquired fields. Julie surveyed wood 3 in 2021. This will give us a good base line for future ecology surveys.



**Some features in the woods that you might not have seen posted by Jane Bartholemew  
and the welcome signs of spring as seen by Frances o'Connor at the end of January**

Grateful thanks to the contributors to FB for the photos.

Jane Bartholomew

Frances O'Connor

Robert Scoular

Julia Waterhouse

Cathy Webster

Ros Hancock

Rangers and members of the footpath group

Check on FB to see:

Frances O'Connor's video record of The Limb in full spate in October and Jane Bartholemew's video of the herons returning to their nesting site in January.



*A coin tree . Not to be encouraged*



*St John's Parish boundary marker*



*Which fungi are these?*

