



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

## Newsletter July 2024

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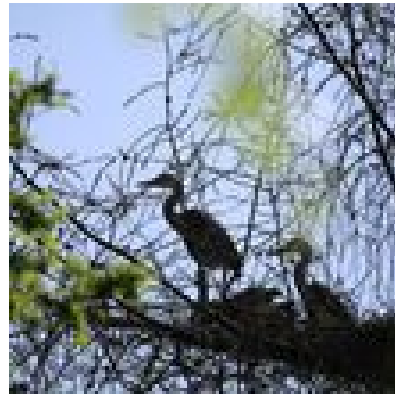
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**I hope you have all renewed your subscriptions.**

It is a lovely British style summer's day with the cumulus clouds scudding across the sky. The paths have dried but earlier rain means the foliage has grown tall with nettles, native hogweed and angelica towering above us as we walk through the donkey field. In case you are worried, the non native giant hogweed is not yet found in the woods.

## Future Events

- **FEW AGM Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> October 7pm at the Discovery Centre**
- **Gerry Firkins**, who led our spring flower walk, will give a talk **The Amazing World of Plants**
- **Followed by refreshments and the AGM**
- **Fungi Trail Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> October 10am** organised by FEW
- **Details of the Pumpkin Trail, Bird and Tree walks, Wreath Making** to be circulated later.



## Activities in the Woods

- **Spring in the woods** was almost washed out in the morning but luckily it dried up enough for children to enjoy leaf bashing supervised by FEW members.



- By the following Saturday the bluebells were looking magnificent and Gerry Firkins walk **‘Spring flowers and other plants’** was an interesting insight into the flora of the woods.

- It was still dry the following weekend for the **bird walk** led by Jim Clarke. He explained how different habitats suit different birds so over on Whirlow meadows we expected to see or hear birds which liked lower level trees and open spaces. The garden warbler and black cap obliged. The herons were back nesting in the heronry despite the felling of some of the larches.



- **‘Look what we have found’** was a very successful display of items of archaeological interest found in and near to the woods. Members of Time Travellers including our archaeology group members showed off their finds. The footpath group had an eclectic mix of rubbish and interesting objects found during routine litter picks.



- **‘Looking for Insects’** On a sunny morning Ros Hancock led a select number looking for insects mainly around the Discovery Centre and Donkey Field. Although most of us were impressed by what we had seen Ros thought it was a poor year. Unfortunately, she did manage to be bitten by a horsefly.



- **The Footpath Group Report**

### **Sorry to start the report with this warning**

**A member of the group had picked up a tick on the inside of her arm without noticing it. Later she did notice a strange spot. Three weeks later she went to see the GP with a rapidly expanding and blistering rash radiating from the spot. It was diagnosed as Lyme’s Disease and she is now being treated with a heavy dose of antibiotics.**

She was very unlucky. Ticks are not very prolific in the woods and most will not carry the Lyme disease bacteria. If they are removed within the first 48 hours before embedding they are unlikely to cause a problem. The rash appears a few weeks later but, as in this case, does not always always show a bullseye like ring. **So the advice**, if you are brushing up against plants as opposed to walking on a

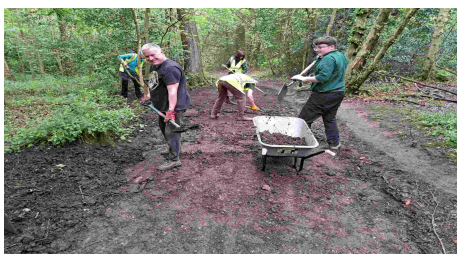
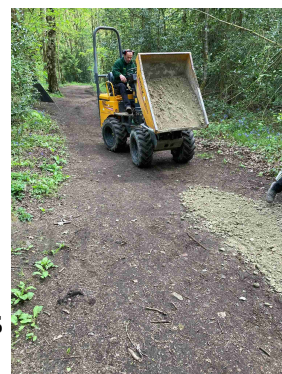
wide path is -cover up, use insect repellent and check particularly the softer parts of your body afterwards.

Dogs can pick ticks up too but it seems they are much more unlikely to develop Lyme's disease from infected ticks.



### Other news from the group

80 tons of footpath material arrived at the end of March funded by our Local Area Committee (SW LAC) The majority of it was used to re lay the bridle way to Beauchief Gardens. First the paths were scraped. Then when Tom had access to a loader and tampers, the group worked shifts to lay the path.



Maintenance work continued in the playing fields, replanting grass in the swales and digging out an island in one of the ponds.

Because of rot, the brown notice board near Beauchief Gardens was removed and the board at the bottom of Abbey lane was resited to be more visible.



Another group has spent many hours tidying up around the Discovery Centre and removing undergrowth beneath Hector's House.

There was plenty of other work to do with gales and torrential rain continuing to bring down trees and damage cross drains

The group dug ponds and swales in the recently taken over square field and is now into Himalayan Balsam removal.



Andy Burgess is posting a weekly report on the groups activities on our FB page so you can see photos showing the hard work carried out by the FP group every Tuesday morning.

### Ecology and Ornithology

- Sue Jackson continues to monitor the Donkey Field and Ros Hancock adds her insect recordings to the data base
- Sue has posted a recent picture of the prolific lesser knotweed (a garden escapee) found at the back of the field



- Phil May reported on the nest boxes. 8 had been taken by great tits with 37 fledgling and 3 by blue tits with 26 fledgling. One blue tit nest raised 13 chicks

### **Abbey Lane Crossing Group**

We are assured that progress has been made. The preliminary design stage has been completed and the project now has to go to the detailed design stage.

### **Sheffield Green Spaces Forum (SGSF)**

Summer meetings are being hosted by different friends' groups. We hosted the July meeting for about 40 members, luckily on a sunny summer's evening. Jane Beresford led one group to see Q pits, Collier's pond and the charcoal burner's Grave as well as talking about our work in the woods. The other group were rather route marched to the Whirlow Playing field to see the meadow and new ponds.

Our SGSF chair, Tom Talbot, was on the staff of P&C when the Discovery Centre was planned and built. He remembers going to Leeds with Bill Smyllie, our then chair, to plead the case for lottery funding and was impressed with Bill's persuasive abilities.

### **P&C staff changes**

Our ranger Nell who spent most of her time between us and Shirebrook has now gone over to Shirebrook on an 18<sup>th</sup> month secondment to work on the Shirebrook Heritage Lottery Project. We will miss her enthusiasm but the project will definitely benefit from her input. Meanwhile, ranger Tom will have various rangers on different days to help spread the load. Tom is very long suffering and we will hope not to burden him with too many requests.

At some point Rachel Hutton will be handing over the day to day running of the Discovery Centre. She too will be missed as someone who always seems to be able 'to fixit'. We hope we will still see her in her other roll as a talented crafts person and organiser of courses. We are told that an appointment has been made to a new post of Business Development Manager for the Discovery Centre and the Dorothy Fox Centre at the Botanical Gardens.

Jon Dallow is working hard on the Parkwood Springs Project as well as keeping an eye on the Discovery Centre Site. John Gilpin has not yet been replaced. Woodland officer Richard Gill is also covering the woods. Woodland manager Rowan Longhurst said at the SGSF meeting that she expects budgets to get even tighter.

Meanwhile, it would not be quite true to say that we just get on and do what we think is needed .....



Thanks to our photographers including Jo Otten, Robert Scoular Ros Hancock and Jane Bartholemew