

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

## Newsletter February 2025

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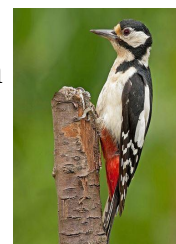
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Frances O'Connor

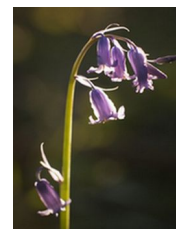
## Future events and walks during Sheffield Environment Weeks

- **Saturday April 26th A Bird walk** led by **Pete Brown** 8am -10am  
Meet outside the Discovery Centre. Free to members. Non members £5  
Booking required as places are limited. Please sign up at  
**friends.ew1993@gmail.com** with name and number in your party.



- **Sunday April 27th Spring in the Woods** 10am -4pm Free to attend.  
Jane Beresford will be supervising 'leaf bashing' for children

- **Saturday May 3rd A walk** led by **Gerry Firkins**  
to see **Bluebells and Spring Flowers** 10am -12noon  
Meet outside The Discovery Centre. Free to members Non members £5  
Booking required as places are limited. Please sign up at  
**friends.ew1993@gmail.com** with name and number in your party.



## Staff Changes

There has been a lot of pressure on the staff we work with especially Jon Dallow and Tom Collier as new appointments never immediately follow on from vacancies.

Budget cuts continue to take their toll.

We hope that John Gilpin's replacement will start in April. **Kate Hughes** joined the Discovery Centre team in October with the title of Development Officer.

Newly appointed **Laura Alston** is now Kate's manager and also the 'friends groups' liaison officer.

Another recent recruit is ranger **Hannah Lumb** who is now working with the footpath group on Tuesday mornings.

Other changes are expected as staff try to share out their many responsibilities.

## AGM 16<sup>th</sup> October 2024

We were very pleased to welcome Gerry Firkins whose enthusiasm and knowledge of plants is inspirational. He gave a talk on 'The amazing world of plants'.

Gerry will be leading a walk on the 3<sup>rd</sup> May enlightening us on the plants in our woods.

The committee members, who are all prepared to continue, reported on activities. We are rather thinly spread hence newsletters only twice a year, only occasional walks and recently rather limited ecology and archaeology surveys.

However, the footpath(FP) group under Jane Beresford is thriving, with support and new ideas from more recent members. The area they cover has now increased with 'slow the flow' ponds and swales on the lower playing fields and the additional adjacent fields

## Abbey Lane Crossing Group

On Thurs 13<sup>th</sup> Feb a group wearing high vis jackets was seen wandering down Abbey Lane with detailed plans for the crossings in hand. It is rumoured that work will start in October. The price to pay will be lots of roadworks which will not be appreciated by the car driving population.

## Round up of activities and events

Although most of the FP group spend their time in the woods and the playing fields area, a small band have spent their Tuesday mornings cutting back and pulling up the exuberant growth around the Discovery Centre site. Another volunteer has cleaned all the boards and signposts.



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## August and September

After spring and summer rain the undergrowth was prolific.

Removing Himalayan balsam is always high on the agenda. Most of the usual areas are under control but by August the field adjacent to the playing field recently under Ecclesall Woods management was covered and beyond meaningful intervention!



Another invasive plant from America is found on the edge of the footpaths in wood 2. It is the large leaved aven.

The footpath group pulled up 20 bagfuls during one session. It was first noted in 2020 by Sue Jackson. We did not realise then how invasive it would be. It is related to the wood aven, also known as 'herb bennet' from the original mediaeval name of 'herbal benidicta'. The roots of both were widely used in herbal medicine.

The FP group have to be flexible, with planned work postponed to deal with flooding and trees down in any season.



## October and November



After a wet year late Autumn was dry with little wind. Leaves were still on the trees when snow fell in November adding to the magic of the woods.

A local artist chose a secluded spot to decorate the ground with leaves. It had plenty of likes on FB though there was some disquiet that this might not be appropriate in our woods. My view is that the leaf sculpture made a comparatively fleeting

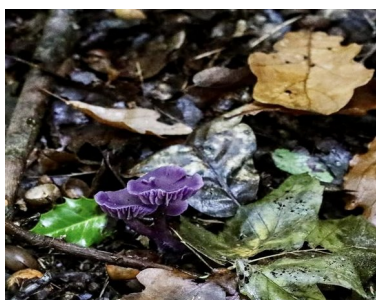


appearance whereas dog poo, dog poo bags of various colours and introduced plants, whether or not intentionally are a much greater and ongoing concern.

The FP group replaced the fence parallel with Abbeydale Road. Chestnut palings do not last for ever. A nearby main drain was also cleared So much needs continual maintenance. Hence the need for our volunteer group's weekly interventions. .



There was a good selection of fungi in the woods and many people enjoyed the fungi trail in October



The donkey field had a tidying up session, later than hoped for, as ranger Tom and the group waited for some fine weather.

Sue Jackson continues to record the flora and fauna. On checking her records she noted the increase in alien species mainly in the proximity of neighbouring houses.

The native bramble is also doing too well though usually there is a good crop of blackberries



A FEW member reported that Cow Lane was becoming difficult to walk on for some because of its uneven surface. Although the responsibility of Rights of Way, the footpath group investigated and realised that the lane had become over grown. Dave Jackson and the craft team are now coppicing the hazel.



## Cow Lane before and after some potentially back breaking work



Two weeks later, early snow and a late leaf fall gave us some magical days until storm Bertie came along and blew down leaves and trees

The FP group had some early snow clearing around the cafe and then lots of tidying up after the storm.



## December

Life around the Discovery Centre was busy. Rachel Hutton organised Hector's House for local crafts people to show off their work. The cafe increased their festive offerings, wreath making continues to be very popular and Christmas trees were on sale.

The Discovery Centre and Cafe then closed for a Christmas break and recharge.





## January and February

A heavy snowfall gave the FP group some more hard work clearing the drive and car park. The woods looked lovely but the paths could be difficult. Those people with 'yaktrax' under their shoes were able to step out with confidence.



At last the group were able to start on removing overhanging holly and brambles in wood 3 where there was unfair competition with the bluebells for light!

Abbeydale Rotary with FEW support had to postpone their bramble removal. The ground had just softened enough by the following Saturday.

Sadly contractors have been busy too felling more infected larch trees.



## SUMMER

View of the millpond after a litter pick along the wood

Julie Gay

21.7.24



## AUTUMN

Leaf sculpture

Chris Smith

29.10.25



## WINTER

Green dye to check for leaks

Mike Andrews

17.1.25

