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## Newsletter July 2025

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Wild flowers in the Donkey Field

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

**A dry spring and early summer has meant that most of the woods have been easily accessible. Just remember to watch out for tick bites, if you have had bare arms and legs.**

**The warm dry spring was good for our walks. They are free for members and you always learn something new even if you think you know the woods well.**

## Future Events

- **FEW AGM Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> October 7pm**  
at the Discovery Centre  
**Simon Ogden**, who is very involved with the Castlegate project and opening up the Sheaf, will give us a talk on Sheffield's rivers.  
**Followed by refreshments and the AGM**
- **Fungi Trail Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> October 10am** organised by FEW
- **Details of the Pumpkin Trail, Bird and Tree walks, Wreath Making** to be circulated later.
- **John Baker has resumed Archaeological walks and will circulate dates.**

## News

**Jon Dallow** has changed his role and is now the southern area woodland and country side manager. This includes Ecclesall Woods and our neighbouring woods.

**Julie Riley** has been recording the ecology in woods 1 and 2 and the square fields. She abandoned last year's attempt to record in the square fields as the Himalayan balsam had taken over. On an earlier visit this year, she was impressed by the number of species found in the spring before the fields were overwhelmed by Himalayan balsam. Julie has given advice on tackling it. To trim or not? It is a daunting task to bring it under control.

### Abbey Lane crossing

Many of you will be wondering if this is ever going to happen.

Approval was given in April 2021 for a feasibility study for crossings between the woods on Abbey Lane. Apparently there have been hiccups but at last it is now in the detailed design stage which should be completed by October 2025.

### Nesting Boxes

Phil May checks the boxes and rings fledglings when possible. 10 of the 18 boxes were used. There were 6 successful great tits nests fledgling 37 young but 2 failed at the egg stage. 2 blue tit nests were both successful with 12 in one nest and 6 in the other.

**Handspring designs** who are based at the side of the Discovery Centre kindly remade the notice board opposite Beauchief Gardens.

### Footpath group

Jane Beresford is delighted that volunteer Lesley Hall has offered to take over organising the group. At present Lesley is shadowing Jane and finding out just how much Jane knows about the woods.

There are now about 28 volunteers with 15 -18 turning up each week.

### FEW Chair

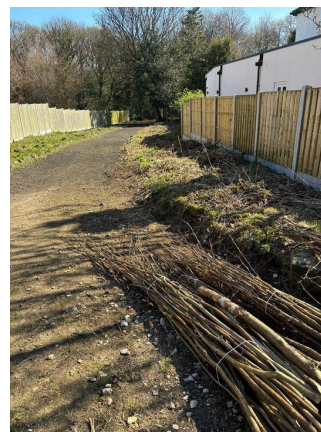
I, too, would be delighted if someone volunteered to take over from me or even helped with some of the tasks such as newsletters and organising walks.

## Round up of activities in the woods

Late February saw the last of the heavy rains requiring ditch clearance. After the FP group cleared the Cow Lane path, the wood craft team coppiced the hazel with some help from the FP group.



Cow Lane will not look bare for long. Dave Jackson expects about 4 to 6 ft of hazel growth this year.





Some coppiced hazel, not suitable for wood working, was used to remake a dead hedge on Abbey Lane



Remaining footpath material was used to fill in pot holes especially the Discovery Centre entrance, the drive and car park.

Other members of the team have worked weekly around the Discovery Centre area. As well as weekly clearing and cutting back exuberant growth, clearing around the foundations of the outbuildings, they did a spring clean on the cafe area.



The gabions have not supported a successful flowering since 2017 and the wooden logs bordering the edges are rotting. In the spring the team started working on them but by July it was decided that more drastic action had to be taken.





Some of the group have been concentrating on removing 'invasives' in areas not previously tackled:

- lesser knotweed at the back of the Donkey field,
- large leaved avens mainly in wood 2
- rampant Himalayan balsam on the square fields which are now back under P&C management. STOP PRESS 30<sup>th</sup> July -removal completed. WELL DONE



## Nature Notes

### Late Feb and March



Scarlet elf cap near limb Lane



Jelly eared elf cap in the Donkey Field



Comma butterfly in the Donkey Field

Reed mace on a Whirlow Pond



Donkey Field Pond



End of March saw action in the Donkey Field pond. Lots of croaking with frogs clambering about across the pond surface, undeterred by the pygmy weed blanket.



The first sightings of golden saxifrage, celandine and wood anemone are always a pleasure. Butterflies were about and the first bluebell to be noted was on 27<sup>th</sup> March. Ubiquitous forget me knots are found in the woods and around the Discovery Centre



## **April**

**Spring in the Woods** thankfully had dry weather this year. Leaf bashing supervised by FEW members is still very popular with children.

**Pete Brown** led the bird walk. 26 species were recorded.

The herons were back but this year chose to nest in deciduous trees rather than the dying ring barked trees.

More larches and other diseased trees have been felled.

## **May**

Early May the bluebells were looking magnificent and Gerry Firkins' walk

**Spring flowers and other plants** was an interesting insight into the flora of the woods.

## **June and July**

Fledgling wrens left their nest in the cafe area.

A good year for early fungi. Is it chicken in the wood? Not to be confused with hen in the wood though both are edible.





- **‘Looking for Insects’** A select group led by Ros Hancock watched out for the many insects on the flowers around the Discovery Centre and the Donkey Field. Notable were :-
- the mainly **white bottomed bumble bees** and a few with **orange bottoms**. hover flies some with very interesting markings such as the commonly named **football hoverfly**.
- **7spot ladybirds** though on orange backs rather than red backs. **Harlequin ladybirds**, once so common were rarely seen this year.
- **Cinnabar caterpillars** on ragwort. Feeding on ragwort means they become poisonous to possible predators.
- Despite many flowering nettles there were no signs of **lesser tortoiseshell eggs** on the flowers or **tortoiseshell butterflies** flitting about. Has anyone seen them?



Syrphus hoverfly



Cinnabar caterpillar



Football hoverfly



Collete bee

**Look what we have found** this year moved to Dore. Several of our members showed off what they had found while furling about in Ecclesall Woods, often in the brooks and streams.



A view on to Whirlow meadow and thanks to all our photographers who post on FB and whose photos I have copied.