www.friendsofecclesallwoods.org.uk

Newsletter July 2026

Chair:
Marilyn Small 07801 350479
friends.ew1993@gmail.com
Membership Secretary:
John Baker 0114 2369025
johnrbaker8@gmail.com
Footpath coordinator:
Jane Beresford 07518 750262
janeanden@gmail.com
Discovery Centre Enquiries:
woodland.discovery@sheffield.gov.uk

I hope you have all renewed your subscriptions.

Future Events

- **What Can You Find? Saturday 25th July 10am -3pm**

Visit the exhibition at the Discovery Centre. See what people have found locally or bring along your own finds.

- **Walk in the Woods Monday 14th September 10.30** FEW organised walk as part of the Sheffield Walking Festival. Full programme and booking details to follow

- **FEW AGM Wednesday 21st October 7pm**
  at the Discovery Centre
  Local ornithologist and Spring Watch presenter **Jack Baddams** will give us a talk on **The Making of Spring Watch**
  Followed by refreshments and the AGM

- **Fungi Trail Saturday 24th October 10am** organised by FEW

- **Details of other activities in the woods** can be found on the website under events
  http://www.friendsofecclesallwoods.org.uk/

Climate Change Dry hot summers and wet and warmer autumns and winters are no longer an occasional occurrence but becoming relatively normal this century. This makes life difficult for all of us looking after green spaces whether woods, parks or gardens – too wet for many tasks in the winter and too dry in the summer! However, our marvellous volunteers have done their best in often taxing conditions.

Work in the woods
Woodland Volunteers (formerly referred to as The Footpath Group)

Under **Gerry Firkins** guidance the volunteers are pulling up more non native garden escapees including the Yellow archangel, a shade loving, ground spreading plant with variegated leaves, Solomon seal, Cotoneaster, Montbretia, Large leaved avens and Cherry laurel. There is a concerted effort to eradicate Himalayan Balsam. in the square fields by strimming and pulling out by rangers, our volunteers, school and rotary groups.

Weeding of yellow archangel and large leaved avens seems a never ending task. How much can the volunteers be expected to do? Should we accept that they will dominate certain areas or be persuaded to battle on? Weeding is not the favourite occupation for some of our volunteers!
The lower photo is the native archangel found in small patches in the woods.

In square fields, we have been pulling up self set saplings with our new Tree Poppers.
.
Two rough rocky paths in wood 3 have been smoothed out and improved and then resurfaced.
Large dangerous dens have been dismantled in all woods and one campsite cleared of table, chair, saucepan, fairy lights and tarpaulin.

We have cooperated with the Dore Time Travellers group by clearing archaeological features in wood 1 so that they can be studied and viewed more easily.

In the Woodland Discovery site the volunteers have weeded and tidied the cafe area, swept and cutback the driveway, lawn and car park areas and prepared the way for our newly installed historical ‘memorial fountain’
Jane Beresford Volunteer Coordinator

We are sorry to say good bye to ranger **Hannah Lumb** who is moving on to Gleadless to be part of a regeneration scheme with funding until 2028. We are pleased to welcome back ranger **Nell Dixon** who was seconded to work on the Shire Brook Valley project. We hope that, with her enhanced skills and legendary enthusiasm, she

can help us renew some of the leaky dams of the ‘slow the flow’ project that were washed away before they could become established.
Our tree inspector has identified 70 trees that need removal or reducing in size. The work will take place in the autumn.
Work done last year in wood 3 to crown lift holly resulted in a splendid and increased display of bluebells this year. We hope that this year’s work in wood 2 will result in better undergrowth and bluebell cover next year.

Ornithology notes from Phil May
In the nest boxes the blue tits did not do well but the great tits had a successful season
Great tits :7 successful nests, 1 failed
Blue tits: both nests predated at a young stage
One box was taken over by bumblebees
Four other boxes with nests built completely or partially, but did not go onto have eggs laid.
Pete Brown led the April bird walk. 21 different species were spotted including a tawny owl in the heronry.

Ecology
Our walks with **Fran Halsall on trees and Gerry Firkins on spring plants (and anything else that took his interest)** were both fully booked. Next year Gerry will guide 2 walks to reduce the numbers on a walk.
Sue Jackson continues her regular visits recording the Donkey field flora and fauna.. She was surprised to find bonfire remains, possibly thrown out from a garden, including partially burnt documents with the name and address still clear.
Marilyn Small and ranger Hannah surveyed an area in wood 1 recording bluebells. The area of bluebells and other wild flowers had greatly increased in the area behind the coppicing information board since it was re coppiced in 2019. The volunteers have continued to clear bramble on a regular basis.
Other areas have seen a considerable spread of holly trees with bare ground beneath. On a recent trip to the New Forest I noted plenty of undergrowth under the holly as the trees were all kept at ‘pony’ height
Julie Riley had noticed in her survey of woods 1and 2 that there were very few young oak trees compared with sycamore, beech, ash and sweet chestnut.
RosHancock continues to add photos of insects to our FB page but they have not been so prolific this year. Ticks were plentiful in April. Now in dry July not so many?

Yellow faced bee

Peacock Caterpillar on nettles

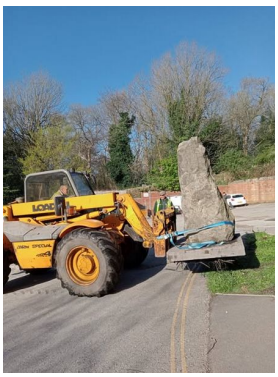
Buff tailed bumble bee

Peacock Butterfly in April

We were sorry to hear that **Sylvia Dunkley** had died in May. She was a former councillor and a good friend to our group. Sylvia features on our Collier's Pond information board when she announced the winning pond name in 2009. While Lord Mayor she opened the Discovery Centre in 2011 and planted a pink flowering hawthorn tree.

Opening ceremony in 2009

A memorial fountain to Mabel Frances Vickers was dumped, many years ago, at



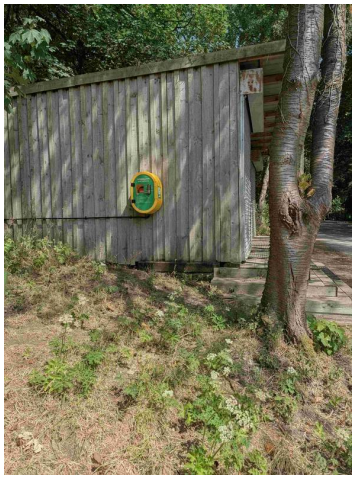
the top far end corner of what was then the saw mill. Pam Price, one of the early volunteers, was very keen to have it moved. When she died in 2019, it was hoped to use contributions from friends and family to move the memorial to a more prominent place but work around the Discovery Centre delayed the move. Together with the plinth it weighed over 2 tons so we were unable to move it to a place on the lawn. Instead a suitable site by the car park was chosen. We do not see how it can ever have been used as a fountain! An information board will be installed.

Crossing Abbey Lane

The consultation finished on January22nd. We understand that there were 2 objections, so the design had to go back to the committee. Annoyingly for us meetings were postponed because of electionsand the first meeting of the new committee was 15th July. The official outcome is not yet known but we understand from the new chair of the committee that he is keen that the project will go ahead.

Defibrillator

Thanks to the Thursday Wood Run group. They collected enough funds from their weekly £3 contributions to buy and install the defibrillator, placed at the side of the wood shed for the best phone signal



Discovery Centre Staff Changes
We were sorry to lose the Discovery Centre Staff Laura and Kate who had both been very helpful to FEW.
We now welcome Michaella Hulley and Nicola Allen who organise the Discovery Centre and Woodland Events but at present split their time between us and the Botanical Gardens as well as having other responsibilities.

Thanks to our photographers and face book contributers. The photos are much better on Facebook

Volunteers at work

Work on dead hedgeing

Lifting stones to smooth out the path

Tree poppers in action!

Call outs to remove fallen trees (if not too big) and branches