

# Friends of Judy Woods

## Newsletter Winter 2020

Welcome to our last newsletter of 2020. What a year it has been - and still continues to be - for everyone in the world. The Friends of Judy Woods, like all other organisations, has had to cancel activities. However, we have managed to continue with our Practical Tasks Group, albeit in a limited way. We hope that our efforts in keeping the place tidy have been appreciated by the increased number of people who are enjoying their wonderful local amenity.

Our newsletter editor, Ian Downey, has done another great job in providing us with interesting articles on a wide variety of issues, and our thanks also go to all those members who have also contributed useful information. When I asked my wife, Mary, if there was anything I might mention in my letter, she said how about "Forest bathing"? As I didn't really know what she was talking about I invited her to write something about it. Over to you, Mary!

Forest bathing or 'shinrin-yoku' was first developed in Japan in the 1980s, following scientific studies conducted by the government. The results showed that two hours of mindful exploration in a forest could reduce blood pressure, lower cortisol (stress hormone) levels and improve concentration and memory. They also found that trees release chemicals called phytoncides, which have an anti-microbial effect on human bodies, boosting the immune system. As a result of this research, the Japanese government introduced 'shinrin-yoku' as a national health programme. Forest bathing is no more complicated than simply going for a wander in your local woods or park. The only difference is that rather than walking for exercise, you take the time to really focus on the natural world around you: from the rays of sunlight catching the leaves to birdsong echoing from the canopy. I've taken this information from the National Trust's website, and if you'd like to read their tips follow this link.

<https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/lists/a-beginners-guide-to-forest-bathing>

Thanks Mary.

*Geoff Twentyman* (Chairman)

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## Ed Brightman update

In my previous newsletter I indicated that our new contact with the council was Ed Brightman who is Assistant Trees and Woodlands Manager. Due to the COVID situation we, of course, have had little contact with him, I guess things will improve when we have a more normal world - whenever that is.

## Interpretation of the regulations

The reduced attendance during restrictions have put a heavier load on the PTG. This is exacerbated by the heavier use of the woods by members of the public, dog walkers etc. so a big thank you to the regulars who took the strain during this difficult time. Our interpretation of the government regulations indicate that, as long as we are following the distancing and numbers rules, volunteers & workers are exempt from restrictions and we fit into in both categories.

## Birds of the Season

Two birds of the season this time, but they are both winter visitors, both from the same family and both often seen together - the redwing and the fieldfare. You're unlikely to see them in the middle of the woods as they feed on berries and in open fields so you're much more likely to come across them on the edge of the woodland.

They are members of the thrush family, like our two native thrushes and the blackbird, but more colourful. They breed in Scandinavia but start arriving in numbers in October to spend the winter here and can be seen throughout the winter months, almost always in flocks.

The redwing is the smaller of the two, about the size a song thrush from which it can be distinguished by its red flanks and underwing and by its conspicuous eyestripe.

The fieldfare is about mistle thrush sized and has a grey head, rufous-brown back and a dark tail.

If you come across marauding flocks of medium-sized birds during winter, it's very likely that they will be redwings and/or fieldfares.



**Redwing**



**Fieldfare**

## Late Summer Balsam

Balsam Bashing continued into the summer. Once the plants have seeded it becomes a pointless exercise, however, some of the more steeper slopes on the Norwood Green side of the beck were cleared with the help of a climbing rope and harness, usually Ian on one end and Chris & Brian on the other. Some areas that we have never attempted before, with the help of this climbing kit, have become accessible. We will know next balsam season if our efforts have partially eradicated the problem in these difficult areas - let's hope.

## Road markings

With the increased use of the woods the parking problems on Station Road have worsened. The road between the kissing gate on the main path and the right angle bend at the end of the rail bridge now has double lines. There are still significant parking infringements - up to 20 cars illegally parked. We assume that the logistics/trucking company further down the road have complained as they have trouble getting their trucks through if parking occurs on or near the corner.

We have been in contact with Ward Officer for the Wyke area, Rada Mijailovic and she has been in consultation with the local community police regarding the problem. We have suggested posting notices at regular intervals in the double lines area and windscreen wiper leafleting the cars in this area - notices have appeared, leaflets have not.

Opinions differ but authorities could always use the existing rules and ticket offenders. I am sure that the offenders know that they are parking illegally, perhaps they believe they will escape prosecution? Safety issues are paramount here, dogs, children, pedestrians on a narrow pavement - an accident waiting to happen.

## Vandalism of Walls

The kissing gate north of the top of the 99 steps has been damaged and the adjacent wall had been knocked down probably by quad bikers attempting to gain access to the woods. Chris, Ian & Brian spent a morning retrieving much of the walling stone from the immediate area and from the base of the culvert. This was piled up and the rebuilding was left to the walling team headed by Kevin Walker. It lasted a week before it was knocked down again - we build it up, they knock it down!

### Kevin & the Wallers (Sounds like a 70s rock band)

The wallers led by Kevin have had other projects on the go for the last few weeks but have returned to the woods in mid November to continue with some damaged wall in Royds Hall Lane - a welcome back to them.



Here in mid- November the trees have lost most of the leaves so we are in the throes of clearing paths, culverts etc. The leaky dams that we have put in place, as recommended by the flood protection experts, are getting clogged up with leaves, and need to be cleared out, rakes and hooked 3 pronged cultivators to the fore.

Here is an after picture of the 99 steps - I should have done a before & after picture showing the improvement.

## Culvert Clearance

The culvert adjacent to the 99 steps kissing gate was blocked during the last winter wet spell. The water flowing off the farmer's field was flowing through the wall and washing away the surface of the path above the culvert, and there seemed to be nothing we could do to stop the massive amount of water flowing off the field and causing a lot of damage in the immediate area. We examined the outflow but couldn't see any blockage so we were at a loss. Late October the team were examining the work completed on the kissing gate wall and noticed that the water was flowing freely through the culvert. The boggy area beyond the wall on the farmer's side wasn't boggy any more, so it looks like the farmer has sorted the problem.

## All Fit & Well

We in the PTG, unlike the PM, fortunately have not experienced any positive COVID issues. We are aware of the potential dangers and work hard to stay within the recommendations/rules keeping to the 2 metre distancing, we are outside in any case so viral dilution works - this plan, so far, is a success.

## PTG - New Recruits - Welcome

We have had a number of new volunteers join us on a Wednesday morning this year. Ken, who now buddies up with long term member Paul, empty the bin at the junction of the main path and High Fernley Road. Liz and Roger, who were introduced by Sally, concentrate on litter picking over a wide area of the woods, it is rare for them to miss a week. Tina, our most recent recruit, again concentrates on litter mainly in the areas close to Station Road.

## Welcome Back

Mike, now retired, has returned as a regular attendee after the resolution of his health issues earlier in the year.

Due to COVID and other health issues Lynda & Tony have been absent during the lock-down periods, the committee wish them well and will welcome them back when restrictions are eased and health matters resolved. The "Heavy Gang" really miss Tony with his wall building and cement mixing skills.

A big thank you goes out to all PTG members, to those who have managed to attend during the difficult times and those, due to location or other circumstances, who have not - but wish they could. A great team.

## The Woodside End

Long term members, Sally and Sue, often work from the Woodside end of the woods, an area that we have neglected from time to time where they are frequently joined by Joyce and Catherine. Recently they have been concentrating on the beck in their area where a diverse collection of rubbish, some of it large, has been recovered. They have been occasionally helped with larger, heavier items by Chris, Ian & Brian. When the beck is in full flow, the rubbish gets tangled up with wire, tarpaulin, rope, tree branches etc. which can create dams.



Supermarket Trolley and Other Junk



After Halloween we were surprised to discover a collection of pumpkin lanterns "artistically" positioned near the Station Road entrance and further up the main path.

## See you in the Woods

The woods have had a lot more use during the lock-down and we hope that those who have discovered/rediscovered the woods will continue to use them, enjoy their splendour and work to protect them for the future benefit of themselves and others.

## Events - Check the Website

When the committee meet again, hopefully early in the New Year, we will be starting to plan our events for 2021. This will clearly depend on the circumstances relating to COVID, keep an eye on our website for up to date news.

## A Seasonal Greeting

Wishing members and friends a pleasant time over the festive season - we have to think that we are going to get one. Stay positive & Safe.