

Friends of Judy Woods Newsletter Winter 2019



*"Doctor, Doctor, I keep seeing red spots in front of my eyes."
"Let me think. Have you been walking in Judy Woods recently?"
"Yes, I was in there the other day"
"And did you see a lot of trees with red spots on?"
"Oh, yes I did. That must be the cause!"*

OK it sounds daft, but if you walk in Low Wood (Station Road) you will see many trees with a red spot on their trunk. And that is serious. Those trees have been marked by Bradford Council, and will shortly be felled. And if you look carefully you may see why. The trees have an inky stain, which is indicative of a pathogen called *Phytophthora cambivora*. It attacks beech, oak and chestnut trees and causes them to rot, leaving them in a dangerous condition. Hence the Council's concern as many of the trees are on well-used routes in our woods. To read more about the condition have a look at our website.



The trees' removal will obviously leave large gaps but as it has been pointed out to us, nature has a way of renewing itself and within a reasonably short time there will be new life emerging. Many of the affected beech trees are already around 200 years old and in their last natural phase of life.



The above problem had not been highlighted when Mary and I met up in the woods with Andrew Edwards of Radio Leeds. Andrew has a Saturday morning show which includes a spot called "Secret Spaces". Listeners let him know about places which mean something special to them, and a number of people had drawn his attention to Judy Woods. We had a short walk into Low Wood where he recorded an interview with us both. He was obviously impressed with the woods themselves and with the work we do, and we were pleased with how it came over on the radio. If you want to listen to it the link is on our website under "News".

As we reach the end of another year I want to say a big thank you to the Practical Tasks Group whose members meet just about every Wednesday morning throughout the year, come rain and (most recently occasional) shine. Here's a sort of seasonal summary of some of their work this year.

***On the 12th day of Christmas the Friends Group picked for me
400 rubbish bags, 12 car tyres, 11 old cushions, 10 kiddies' bikes, 9 lengths of rope, 8 car seats, 7 electric sockets,
6 metal tubes. 5 wooden chairs, 4 gas cylinders, 3 petrol cans, 2 sofa beds, 1 perambulator
and a ton or so of bagged dog poo!***

All the best to everyone for Christmas and the New Year and thank you for your continuing support.

Geoff Twentyman - Chairman

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August Ramble to Robinson's Tea Rooms

Our August ramble, led by Geoff and Mary, took us away from our usual haunts and into Calderdale's territory, where we enjoyed a scenic walk around Shelf/Northowram. Rain showers before we started had mercifully ceased so all 10 of us enjoyed fair weather and a chance to chat and take in aspects of another district's heritage. To encourage us on our 3 mile saunter, we were promised the delights of Robinson's Tea Rooms at the end and these did not disappoint, Teas/coffees and some wonderfully fancy cakes were thoroughly enjoyed by all. An excellent way to round off a lovely afternoon in the countryside.

Bat Walk 13th September

A clear sky and a full moon heralded the start of our annual bat walk - perfect conditions for bats as there was no wind. We met at the Harold Club for an informative talk from Ian Butterfield on the different species of bats present in our area and were given good details of how they locate, collect and feed on their prey - moths, midges and other night flying insects. Following this, we assembled outside and made our way towards Park Dam, 23 adults and 4 children making up our group. The children were delighted to be given the bat detectors to hold and having set them to the correct frequency, pipistrelles were the first species to be both seen and heard. Continuing onto the dam, Daubenton's bats were present in large numbers over the water and time was spent watching them as they hurtled about just over our heads. Our walk then took us into the woods, returning via High Fernley and the main road. On our way we also detected the presence of noctule bats which was a welcome addition to our list. One of our younger members also kindly rescued a toad from the middle of the road, placing it carefully on the grass verge thus saving it from a possibly painful end. An excellent evening made all the more productive by the calm weather conditions.

Bird of the Season Nuthatch

A single loud call frequently repeated many times betrays the presence of what for many is the iconic bird of our woods - the Nuthatch, an attractive, plumpish bird about the size of a great tit, grey-blue above and pale orangey below with a long pointed bill. A local resident, the bird can be heard on any day of the year but it's not as easily seen as it spends most of its time high in the trees. A better chance to see a Nuthatch is when it works its way down a tree trunk looking for food. If you see a Nuthatch working its way up a tree then it's almost certainly a Treecreeper, the bird featured in our Spring 2019 newsletter.



Interesting Fact

The Nuthatch has the habit of wedging a large food item in a crevice then hacks at it with its strong bill this gives the bird its English name.

PTG News :- The PTG are planning a meeting to organise a programme of future projects, there are a number of proposals regarding path building over boggy areas etc. but we need to ensure we have the manpower on a regular basis to accomplish such an ambitious programme. We need to ensure we can obtain the materials from the council, such work is difficult and - none of us are getting any younger.



In September the second meeting of the newly formed Friends Group, organised by Andrew Cutts, took place at Northcliffe Woods. Several Bradford area groups were represented. Val Harris and two colleagues guided us round the extensive woods and fields and informed us about the mining history in the area, as well as the current work which is going on. Our evening was rounded off by a visit to the bowling hut, which hosts the Northcliffe group, where we viewed poster displays of the history of the woods and present-day activities.

Mary and Geoff Twentyman have been particularly busy recently. They led the Robinson's tea room walk, they did the BBC Radio Leeds radio interview with Andrew Edwards in the "Secret Spaces" spot. Mary also hosted a visit from the Archaeology Section of the Bradford U3A following on from a talk she had given at one of their Day Schools. U3A members were surprised at the evidence of mining still visible, from the mineral line embankments and cuttings to specimens of ironstone nodules in the soil.

Vandalism

In the last newsletter I highlighted the damage done to the metal gate off High Fernley Road near where it meets the main path. This was reported to the council and it has subsequently been replaced with a new one. The work team, who installed it, have also moved a large section of fallen tree in front of the gate to protect it and discourage any further damage.

The information board at the entrance to the woods at the Woodside end has been severely damaged again. During the last committee we discussed this and considered not replacing the board as it is a costly exercise, in addition to the damage to the board itself the supporting posts, which were partially rusted, are now bent. In interests of safety they would have to be removed as well as the board. No final decision was made.

The Autumn Clear Up

The autumn period involves the removal of lots of leaves from paths and steps. The 99 steps have been cleared twice, as well as the plank bridges on the perimeter path and the steps down to Judy bridge. We have resolved to ensure they are cleaned on a regular basis, if we leave them too long the build up of rubbish doubles the cleaning time.

We have a continuing problem with the banking next to Station Road, people seem to want to throw anything and everything over the fence. The fallen leaves this time of the year make rubbish difficult to see and difficult to reach even if we do see it. Recent notable removals include two eight inch diameter by three foot-six long gas cylinders and a number of bags of vinyl wallpaper that had been stripped from someone's room. We, in addition, invariably find the spent compost from Cannabis cultivation in various containers.

Fungi Walk

We welcomed Varsha Patel to our annual fungus foray on what turned out to be a very pleasant, dry day. Our group of 15 plus one little one started off our search from the Station Road end and over the course of the afternoon Varsha was called from one find to another as our eagle eyed hunters spotted increasing numbers of fungi. Questions were posed and answered willingly by Varsha, who provided us with a wealth of information on the mysterious world of fungi. We spotted our usual suspects of fly agaric (a fine specimen), dead man's fingers, candlesnuff, bracket fungus, fairy bonnets, honey fungus and slime mould. Excellent examples of pestle puffballs were noted and some porcelain fungus was seen growing on the branch of a decaying tree. A star find was a stinkhorn egg which was an intriguing addition to our list. All in all a very productive afternoon, thoroughly enjoyed by all.

Planning meetings with Andrew Cutts

Alan and Ian had 2 meetings with Andrew Cutts, and joined by Brian on one occasion. Points discussed with Andrew were as follows:-

The tree disease *Phytophthora cambivora* (root rot of forest trees) has been discovered in some of our Beech trees these ultimately will need to be felled. It costs £600 per tree to do this, the council are still undecided as to the best way forward.

We were considering a sapling planting programme, but in the main have decided not to proceed with this plan. There are lots of self-seeded saplings in and amongst the fallen or felled trees. This accomplishes the natural regeneration of the woods without any intervention by ourselves.

The resurfacing of the Main Path is being considered but no decision has yet been made, cost is a determinant factor.

A culvert/ land drain appears to be blocked in the open field at the kissing gate near the top of the 99 steps. A stream of water is running from this field and eroding the path to the kissing gate, making it very slippery and causing damage to the wall. Run off from the cattle in the field is a contamination concern issue for water quality in the beck.

Events in 2019

Wintertime in Judy Woods - For our last event of the year ten people enjoyed a fine afternoon's walk with Sally & Stuart focusing on winter food sources. We were surprised to see the number of diseased beech trees which the council have earmarked for felling which must number at least a couple of dozen.

Our events programme for 2020 will be finalised at our next committee meeting and will be published on our website and in the next newsletter.

Seasons Greetings Walk

Just a reminder that the Seasons Greetings Walk which was due to be held on Saturday 28th December has been cancelled due to the unavailability of our entertainment teams and their supporters. We are very sorry to have to disappoint you.

And Finally

Andrew Cutts (Assistant Trees and Woodlands Manager), is leaving Bradford area to take up another woodland post in North Wales; we have built up a wonderful working relationship with Andrew and we are obviously sorry to see him leave. The committee and the PTG wish him all the best in his new appointment.

In journalistic tradition - A Merry Christmas & Happy New Year to all our readers.