

Friends of Judy Woods

Newsletter Winter 2023

My piece in this edition could be called "*Stalking and Talking*".

Firstly, the stalking activity. Once a month between March and October Sally, Mary and I don our wellies and paddle about the stream near Judy Bridge. We are armed with a small fishing net, a bucket, a plastic tray, a Party Susan (a large divided-up plastic tray), a magnifying glass and other sundry items. One of us holds a stopwatch, and another stands in a chosen area and kicks the stream bed whilst holding the net in front of them. When a minute is up, we repeat the same exercise twice in nearby areas. And then we do it all again slightly further upstream. So, what are we up to? Well, some of you already know.

We are looking for insect life (larvae) which live in the stream bed. We are part of the Calder Rivers Health Project. Our stream eventually feeds into the River Calder. There are many volunteers who take samples in the tributaries and in the river itself. The objective is to count the approximate number of larvae in the samples, which give an indication whether or not there is any noticeable pollution of the water. Our results form part of the Calder project. Wherever there might be cause for concern the Trust, and other bodies including the Environment Agency, will carry out further testing and investigations. We are pleased to inform FOJW members that none of our samples, with one exception a few years ago, have reached the trigger point for further investigation. In other words, there is no exceptional pollution from sewage or run-off from adjoining land.

You may be wondering what tiny creatures, hidden in the stream bed, make up our samples. Well, we find lots and lots of freshwater shrimps, then we have to look far more carefully to spot the likes of agile darters (olives), stoneflies, Heptagenia (mayflies), and cased and caseless caddis flies. All good fun - but it requires quite a bit of patience and keen eyes.

So, from stalking to talking. Mary has been giving illustrated talks about our woods and activities since 2003. Over these twenty years she has visited 165 groups in West Yorkshire. With very few exceptions every group has had members who know where Judy Woods are, and many people have walked in them and still do. Some older people who now have limited mobility love to share their memories from their younger days - "*Ee we did our courting in there*" is not an usual comment.

Mary constantly updates her talks and if any group heard her a few years back she has plenty of new information and would be happy to re-visit them.

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Bird of the Season - Waxwing

This edition's bird is really one for the season, as we only see them in winter and whilst it's unlikely that we'll see a waxwing in the woods, as we don't have many berry trees, it's well worth looking out for them elsewhere at this time of the year. These birds arrive here from Scandinavia in seasons when berries are not in good supply there and as flocks have already been seen here this autumn it could well be a good year for these exotic-looking birds. The best place to see them is probably in supermarket car parks where mountain ash trees are often planted, but they can turn up anywhere where berries are plentiful. They tend to fly in chattering flocks and can easily be mistaken for starlings in poor light so check out any flocks of similar-sized birds over the coming months, you will be very well rewarded if they turn out to be waxwings.

Waxwing



Report of the Bat Walk by Sally

The power of social media and a late announcement to the pupils at the local primary school produced an amazing turnout of 49 adults and 27 children. There could however have been more as there were so many it was difficult to keep count although Angela did her best! Additional chairs were sought for Ian Butterfield's introductory talk which gave everyone an overview of the bats' feeding habits, how they locate their food source and favourite roost locations. After the talk Ian led us into the woods as dusk was beginning to fall, suitably armed with bat detectors, so we could pick up the echo locations of the bats. There was much fun to be had by the children with their torches as darkness fell and then, as we stood in a clearing, we were rewarded with the sound of bats. The two species we heard were common and soprano pipistrelle which regularly roost in the dead trees in our woods. It was pleasing to have a successful result and I am sure both the children and adults learnt much about the importance of this amazing species.

Report of the Fungi Foray by Sally

It was a beautiful autumnal afternoon as we commenced our annual foray. Our 2 experts for this event were John Gavaghan and Nick Kirby who were both kept busy by an enthusiastic group of 19 adults and 4 children keen to learn about the treasures that our woods contain. There was plenty to find as we made our way towards Judy Bridge and the children were all enthusiastic hunters for any evidence of newly emerged fungi. A mass of honey fungus was found at the base of one of our dead trees, with the usual suspects of beech jelly ear, birch polypore and turkey tail found on the numerous logs that litter the undergrowth. The fly agarics had yet to fully emerge but common earthballs seemed to be in plentiful supply. From the bridge we climbed the 99 steps returning through the top field and back down the ravine path to emerge back on Station Road. In total we saw 24 species, which provided sufficient interest for all our participants. Many thanks must go to John and Nick for their expertise in identifying all of those 24.

Snippets

Welcome to new PTG member Sandra, who has been a member of other local volunteer groups apparently, but has decided to join us - welcome again Sandra.

Up stream of the bridge we discovered a natural leaky dam with massive pond behind it - perhaps deep enough for "wild swimming".

The damage to the main path edging was completed in mid November using some of our existing stock of timber.

Peter Walker Memorial Walk 20th May 2023

At the time of reading this article the temperature outside will no doubt be fairly cool and the daylight in rather short supply. So let me take you back to a lovely spring day - Saturday 20th May 2023 - and tell you what the Friends of Judy Woods and other people got up on that occasion.

It was the day that we celebrated the life of our first FOJW chairman Peter Walker, also often known as "Mr Wyke" for his services to the community. Friends and family members joined us for a walk which linked places associated with Peter.

We walked down Station Road as far as the public footpath just before the Pear Tree Inn. I had been aware that the path was often overgrown, so the day before I had strimmed it and felt pleased with myself. A good start I thought; however, I had overlooked that there were two sections of the path, separated by a field. The second section - although only a few yards long - was a challenge! We made it unscathed, except for a few nettle stings and blackberry bush scratches! After that it was far less adventurous.

Our route took us over the railway near the former Norwood Green cricket field and down to Whitehall Road by Nordgreen Nursery. Then down the fields to Bailiff Bridge and eventually over to Lower Wyke Lane. From here we followed the path across to Scholes. We had originally intended to do a left turn up the path which emerges near the Moravian Church, where Peter was a leading member, but we realised that one overgrown path was enough for one day.

Our lunch stop was prebooked at the Café CC in Scholes and they did us proud, whilst we shared our memories of Peter. We then descended to Whitehall Road, and followed Knowle Lane into Wyke, emerging at Hobson Fold, where Peter and Shirley had lived. We concluded our event just a few hundred yards up the road at Wyke Green, where the family gathered for a photo round the memorial stone and tree installed in 2022.

It was a good get-together with Peter's family and friends, and we felt we had been able to celebrate his life and his selfless devotion to the local community - a man we are proud to have known.

Geoff Twentyman

Elephant Hawk Moth

Brian and Ian were involved in some late in the season Balsam Bashing in the field just downstream of Judy's bridge. Not strictly speaking our responsibility but the balsam close to the beck will inevitably distribute seeds there, and cause havoc further downstream. During the course of the mornings work Ian came across a strange looking creature, a large intimidating looking caterpillar. After some research by Denis we confirmed that it was the caterpillar of the Elephant Hawk Moth. Pictures attached of the caterpillar on a work glove, to enable you to appreciate the size, and a stock picture of the moth that it develops into. A very attractive moth by any standards. None of us had ever seen anything like this before - and may never see again in the flesh.



Motorcycle Collection

A joint effort between the Woodside Workers & The Heavy Gang, seen here pulling a rusty motorcycle up hill, before leaving it at the council pickup point. Note from the editor, I was on holiday at the time and so missed all of this. Just think if you joined the FoJW PTG you could be having fun like this every Wednesday - what an incentive to become a participating member!!



Camp site Relocation

The Woodside Workers + Chairman Geoff removed a camp site at the Woodside end. Tent, sleeping bag, poly sheet plus other diverse pieces of camping kit were relocated to the council dumping point. The site had apparently been abandoned for at least a week.

The Stile Council

The stile into the farmers field was repaired in late October, we were watched, occasionally hampered by a small herd young bovines who were very interested in proceedings. The picture shows that in the end we had a stamp of approval on our efforts.



High Impact

We have recently purchased a high power cordless high impact screwdriver, this twinned with the existing cordless drill, makes our battery tool kit complete.

Archaeological Items

Denis and his archaeological team have had much success in discovering artefacts in Judy's garden, and is convinced they have uncovered part of the wall of Judy's Cottage. Other discoveries include some rusted cast iron items relating to a kitchen range.

PTG Xmas Lunch

PTG members and partners will be enjoying, as usual, their Christmas lunch at the Guide Post Hotel on Wednesday 13th December. Numbers in excess of thirty on this occasion. PTG attendees are reminded that it will be appropriate to wear decorated seasonal jumpers, earrings, hats etc. not mandatory - but let's enter into the festive spirit?

Winter Walk & Warble

The annual Seasons Greetings meet up, called this year Winter Walk & Warble, will take place, between Christmas and New Year. The venue will be the Pear Tree Station Road, Norwood Green HX3 8QD, on Wednesday December 27th. The Pear Tree will be open from 12:00am and the walk in the woods will commence at 1:00 pm followed at 2:00pm by some entertainment (specifics not yet finalised) followed by a carol sing. Soup and a roll or other such simple food will be available at the pub. All are welcome, come along and enjoy our most popular event of the year. Let us hope that the walking conditions are not too muddy. Check the website for updates.

Seasons Greetings

On behalf of the committee and PTG may I wish FoJW members the best for the season and trust that we will all have a pleasant, prosperous and above all healthy New Year.