

Friends of Judy Woods

Newsletter Winter 2024



Well, where did the time go once again? 2024 seems to have gone in a flash for many of us. Is it something to do with getting older? Many of our volunteers are (well) beyond what was once classed as retirement age. Some of us are still blessed with reasonably good health, but a few are suffering from conditions that restrict them in some ways from taking regular active part in our Wednesday morning get-togethers. We wish them all the best and are so grateful for the input they have contributed over the years.

Looking back over the last year we as a group have achieved an awful lot again, although on some occasions we might have thought we were running to keep standing still. Inside this edition you can read about our most recent activities, which include continuing maintenance and our well-appreciated themed walks. Our relationship with the Bradford Council remains good, but the departure of Deputy Woodland Manager, Ed Brightman, and his, as yet, non-replacement has put more work on to its remaining staff. We look forward to meeting with a new officer soon.

We are most grateful to our contributors to this newsletter and their first-hand accounts of events and happenings. Sadly, there isn't space to include more things in detail, so I will just say thank you for a few things. John Waterman and colleagues carried out more repairs to the walls in High Fernley Road and Royds Hall Lane. Judy's garden was weeded and tidied up, alongside archaeological investigations conducted by Denis Waudby and his "team". And the Woodside end PTG team, had another big clean up around Royds Hall dam area.

Wishing you all the best for Christmas and 2025.

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Bird of the Season - Scarlet Tanager

Copy by Stuart Tordoff

Many of our visitors entering the woods from the Wyke end never stray beyond Judy Bridge and so are unaware of the delights of the woods beyond. Those visitors who enter the woods from the Shelf end will probably do so by walking down Bridle Stile from Halifax Road. Off Bridle Stile is a quiet cul-de-sac called Bridle Dene. If you had walked down that way in mid-November you would perhaps have wondered why the place was overrun by twitchers (keen bird watchers) with their binoculars and spotting scopes - it was reported that several hundred people, from all parts of the UK, had descended on that spot over a few days. The answer was to see a bird that had been blown off course from its migratory course from the north to the south of the USA - a scarlet tanager. This sighting was only the 9th record of the bird being spotted in this country and the news made local and national TV. Although the male bird is scarlet when breeding, juveniles and females are yellow and this example was yellow. Being so close to Judy Woods it's not too fanciful to think that perhaps the bird did visit our woods and so we're claiming it as our bird of the season!



Scarlet tanager in breeding plumage



Scarlet tanager The female or juvenile in yellow plumage

Bat Walk - Led by Sally Tetlow, Report by Sally Tetlow

Our walk this year followed on from a beautiful sunny afternoon which boded well for a good showing of bats and we weren't disappointed. Ian Butterfield gave his usual introductory talk to an assembled audience of over 50 participants. It was wonderful to have such a good turnout and even more rewarding to see so many enthusiastic youngsters amongst this number.

We then assembled to commence our walk with Ian distributing his bat detectors so that these could be tuned into the appropriate frequency for detecting particular species. Our walk took us into the woods through the Meadway entrance and as we worked our way around our route, we were rewarded at various points with good sightings of both pipistrelle and soprano pipistrelle bats. This produced gasps of delight from all particularly as some of these 'fly-pasts' were low! Towards the end of our walk one of our eagle-eyed youngsters spotted a toad on the pathway, which was moved to the safety of some leaf litter. An excellent evening particularly as the weather conditions were in our favour for once.

Fungi Walk - Led by Sally Tetlow, report by Sally Tetlow

What a glorious autumn day it was for our annual fungi foray. Our group of 20 met our leaders, John Gavaghan and Nick Kirby, at the top of Sowden Lane in Norwood Green to commence our foray. We were also joined by 2 eagle-eyed youngsters who proved extremely adept at locating a range of finds to challenge our experts. The lane itself provided much to discuss before we even reached the woods. I listed in excess of 25 species over the course of our foray, 2 of which were new to John these being golden scalycap and trumpet chanterelle. Amongst our other finds were peeling oysterling, porcelain fungus, sheathed woodtuft, shaggy scalycap, hebeloma, fly agaric, ochre brittlegill and a range of brackets and crusts. The woods looked beautiful in the autumn sunshine showing off the changing colours of the trees to perfection. It was agreed by all that it had been an immensely satisfying few hours with much having been learnt about the fascinating world of this much under-appreciated and misunderstood facet of our natural world.

Autumn Leaf Blowing.

It is that time of the year again when the leaves are coming down like confetti potentially making paths and steps slippery and hazardous. Stuart D brought his powerful leaf blower over in mid November and with a bit of minimal help from Tony & Ian cleared the leaves from the path & steps down to Judy bridge. Also the path from Judy bridge to the foot of the 99 steps, the 99 steps, and most of the main path from the S bend to the entrance kissing gate. It is a powerful machine and when expertly operated it provides impressive results. It took one person a whole morning a couple of years ago to clear the 99 steps, it took Stuart 12 minutes.



Before



After

River Fly Survey

Mary, Geoff & Sally have been involved with the River Fly Survey, the count and water quality have been deemed satisfactory, i.e. had met the indicator levels. Mary & Geoff attended a meeting at Calderdale Rivers Trust where, although the fly count was OK, it was not as high as other teams, however our attendance was 100% along with 4 other groups. Although our beck may not be as clean and consequently the fly species not as diverse, at least we were sufficiently keen to ensure that the tests were conducted as per the prescribed protocol.

Mr John Chege Death & Inquest

The inquest relating to the death of John Chege, took place in mid November. This sad event was documented in the previous newsletter, as some members of the PTG were involved in the search for Mr Chege. It appears that he had recently returned from Kenya and "he had changed, and was not himself" he was also having some medical issues, a change of medication and some employment changes at work, where he was a pharmacist. The Assistant Coroner, Caroline Chandler, deemed that Mr Chege had taken his own life and "on the balance of probabilities he died as a deliberate act and intended for it to be fatal".

Unblocking the Culvert

The culvert in the farmers field up from the far kissing gate was partially blocked again, four members of the heavy gang eventually succeeded in the unblocking. One worker, who shall remain nameless, was stripped to the waist with his full arm down the culvert to remove the debris that was blocking the entrance. A selfless act of dedication consistent with the high work ethic standards of the PTG.

A Late Growth Spurt

Subsequent to the July Balsam Bash Saturday, the dreaded plant had a late flowering and growth spurt. Further concentrated efforts were carried out close to the pylons and in particular many Station Road members gathered at the Woodside end to attack a field of balsam. The quantity was overwhelming but we had some success. A more concentrated effort next season might show some improvement.

Stuart Davis Joins the Committee

At the latest committee meeting, Stuart Davis came along as an observer and was invited to join the committee, he was proposed and seconded, so welcome Stuart.



Mentioned in the July newsletter, the gate into Judy's garden was vandalised and the council took responsibility for the replacement, the job has been completed, sourced and fitted and looks good. Thanks again to Peter W and his team.

The Wrong Sleeper

Denis and his team found a wooden railway sleeper and, with some difficulty, as it was located in an awkward place next to the beck, was retrieved. It was initially presumed it was from the mineral line but in fact on retrieval it transpires that it is a full size sleeper and due to the location and spacing of the holes is consistent with standard gauge.

A Bridge - So Far

A plank bridge on the perimeter path was getting dangerous so it was decided to replace it with 2 new railway sleepers. This was accomplished in 2 stages: week one, taking the sleepers over to the site from the container area, and week two removing the existing damaged planks and fitting the new ones. A third stage will be completed when a thick wire mesh, supplied by Stuart T, is fitted to the surface of the planks to prevent slipping on the wet or leaf-covered surface.



Our regular **Balsam bash** and social took place on July 27th and was attended by 16 volunteers. We then met up at the Pear Tree pub for pizza and chips. It was hard, but we devastated our designated work areas. The weather was ideal, and we had our social time outside in the sun.



Cheers before the food arrives.

Welcome to Holly - a New Member

Work Hard - Play Hard

The last Wednesday of the month is deemed Whet Your Whistle Wednesday when PTG members head for the Pear Tree pub for a drink and social meet up. One of the bar staff at the pub, Holly, has become a new member of the team, she is keen and by far the youngest member, and has already become the go to person for the rope dangling when clearing rubbish from the Station Road slope. She has climbing experience and doesn't seem to be reluctant to "muck in" and has been involved with helping to carry railway sleepers to the plank bridge area. It is gratifying for us not so young members to have a new member of more tender years to share the fun.

The Death of Peter Fawcett

A special mention for Peter Fawcett. Peter had been helpful in the past with the loan of his 4X4 truck moving bags of sand hardcore, ballast etc. down to areas where we had been working releasing the rest of us from having to wheelbarrow large items long distances, his contribution was invaluable. I am sorry to say that Peter passed away recently after a long illness, four PTG members attended his funeral service along with many other mourners. The post funeral get together was at South Bradford Golf Club. Those of us who worked with him were so sorry to hear of his death and we extend our best wishes and sympathy to his family. The service at Shay Grange Crematorium, included a moving personal eulogy full of anecdotes celebrating his life. RIP Peter.

PTG Festive Meal

The PTG Christmas Meal will be taking place on Wednesday 4th December at the usual venue. A big thank-you goes out to Brian for organising the lunch, getting the menu and two of the most important things, ensuring that our choices from the menu are noted, collecting and paying the money. So thanks again Brian. And may I take this opportunity to wish all of the members of the Friends of Judy Woods a super time over the festive season and hope for a healthy and prosperous New Year.

Forthcoming Events 2024

Saturday 28th December 1.00pm

Seasonal Winter Walk - A chance to walk off those Christmas calories - meet Sally Tetlow at the Old White Beare, for a woodland stroll followed by refreshments and a sing-along back at the Norwood Green Community Hall HX3 8QN. Those attendees who fancy an alcoholic drink are free to take their own beer, wine etc. those who would like to drink some draught the hall is close to the The Olde White Beare pub where such beverages can be purchased. As last year, the entertainment will be provided by Ken & Sandie, Ken on Guitar and Vocals and Sandie on hammer dulcimer. The afternoon will be rounded off by a carol sing led by Geoff & Mary.