

Friends of Judy Woods

Newsletter Summer 2024



What a variety of subjects that once again make up our newsletter copy. I suppose we would be one page lighter if we didn't have to report on vandalism and fly tipping, but it is all part of the work that we do in our wonderful woodland. The reported death was very sad and we send out our sympathy to the family of Mr Chege.

After the long-drawn-out wet winter and spring and a consequent cancelled walk, we finally got going with two well supported strolls, respectively involving ecology and cream cakes! You can read about them inside this newsletter.

The Bird of the Season article surprised me this time, as I personally have never seen a dipper in our stream. My eyes will be peeled from now on as I love watching that bird foraging for food under the water. I look forward to a future entry which would make my day - a kingfisher. Perhaps one day!

Some of you will know that local singer/songwriter composed a song about Judy Woods which appears on You Tube - ref - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8YL6HhKb4e8> (or put in "Roger Davies + Judy Woods"). I also knew that Roger is a talented artist, who has had his work on show at local venues. I was thus highly delighted to see that he has produced, in his own style, several paintings of the entrance to Judy Woods. This is one of them. Many thanks Roger for allowing us to reproduce it here. I understand that you can see copies of his paintings at the Harrison Lord Gallery in Brighouse. For direct purchases please contact Roger at www.rogerdaviesart.com.

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Bird of the Season-Dipper

Whenever you are near the beck, keep a sharp lookout for a dipper and you may be rewarded by the sight of this lovely bird flashing past. If you're quiet and lucky, you may even see one perching on a rock looking for its food of water insects, which it gets by diving into the stream and walking about under the water. A UK resident, and confined to the North, the dipper lives near fast-flowing streams where it breeds, often under a bridge or waterfall. A dark bird with a white breast, it's about the size of a song thrush but much chunkier. Dippers have bred in the past at Kester Hole waterfall further upstream near Shelf.



A dipper with water insects in its beak.

3J's Walk

Due to take place on Saturday 16th March, the 3J's walk was cancelled due to heavy mud and waterlogged ground. The result of the dreadful wet weather we had been experiencing early in the year.

Tea Shop Walk Led by Sally Tetlow, Report by Sally Tetlow

Although rain was forecast, we were lucky, enjoying a fine spring walk through the fields leading from Norwood Green up to Lightcliffe. We had an excellent turnout with 12 participants who were keen to be tempted by the delicious cakes and scones that Lightcliffe Tea Rooms had to offer. Eileen and Peter met us at our destination and it was good to catch up with them both. The spring flora was out in all its glory with the cow parsley and buttercups providing an eye-catching combination. Our return route took us through Priestley Green, where we caught sight of the local beekeeper's hives and admired the horses, as we headed back towards our starting point. Our thanks to Carolyn and staff for making us so welcome. Such prompt service and with so many mouth-watering treats to choose from that I am sure it will not be long before a return visit is called for.

Walk With an Ecologist Led by Nick Kirby, Report by Sally Tetlow

It was a fine afternoon as 20 of us, plus one youngster, gathered for our ecology walk with Nick Kirby. It was evident from the start that Nick had much to impart from the studies he had undertaken at university and more recently from his extensive work in data collection. Seeing our woods through a fresh pair of eyes is always a treat and we were not disappointed as he regaled us with some fascinating facts relating to the woodland habitat. Sadly the stillness of the afternoon was disturbed by 3 trail bikes, a troublesome nuisance that we seem unable to deter. No matter Nick patiently dealt with all our questions giving us all much useful information on the relationship between our ecosystem and the management that we as a group undertake. It was a fascinating couple of hours which went all too quickly.

Sapling/Beech Whip Puller

There are a lot of self-seeded young beech tree saplings in our woods, known as beech whips. Their number cause a problem and their removal is hard work. The purchase of a Sapling/Beech Whip Puller was agreed in committee, the order was placed by Brian and the tool arrived in mid July and looks a substantial piece of kit. A disorderly queue is already forming to play with it. On a more serious note, it should make the irksome task of beech whip removal much more pleasant.

Bramble removal

Over the last few years there has been a lot of Himalayan balsam under the pylons at the Woodside end of the woods. Removal has been hampered by the presence of brambles so John and Alan went over to help the Woodside Workers with the cutting back. Once the brambles are no longer a problem, the balsam, hopefully, can be eradicated from this area.

John Chege reported missing Tuesday April 16th

We were surprised, when arriving at our Station Road site on Wednesday 17th April, to find a number of police, emergency vehicles and the Incident Control Vehicle of the Calderdale Search and Rescue group on site. We were told that a man had been reported missing by his family on Tuesday 16th April and his car was found parked nearby. Consequently, the presumption was that he had gone into the woods. We continued with our scheduled work and resolved to keep an eye open for any possible sightings of Mr Chege, but our team had no success and, at our leaving time, neither had the official search teams. Just before we left the site, some of the family of Mr Chege arrived and went into the woods to search. Information from the newspaper report and the police website follows - Police conducted searches in several locations, including Judy Woods in Wyke. In an update on Thursday evening, a spokesperson for the force said: "Police investigating the disappearance of John Chege have found the body of a man. The body was found at just after 3.02pm today, Thursday 18th, in a wooded area close to Station Road in Wyke, Bradford". The funeral service was on Tuesday the 7th of May at St. Wilfrid's Church, BD7 2LU commencing at 10.00 am. His burial service took place on Wednesday 15th May at Wangige, Kiambu County, Kenya. As we in the PTG had been involved in the search, the co-ordinator of Calderdale Search & Rescue was asked to keep us informed of any developments, but no information was forthcoming, even after an email request.

Station Road - Fly Tipping

On Wednesday 10th July we arrived at Station Road to discover a fly tipping incident had occurred. There were a number of doors, wardrobe panels, a chair, bags of rubbish and other bits of wood that had been dumped down the Station Road banking. Four of the "Heavy Gang" went to the base of the slope and safely retrieved it all, dragged it back up to the path, over to the road next to the stile entrance. Brian had already contacted Peter Willman at the council to report the incident. He volunteered to come over with a truck and trailer and arrived promptly. We all set to and completed loading the trailer in no time. Another successful collaboration between our group and the council, so a big special thank you to Peter.



Countryside Apprentice

We had the first visit of a young man, Quais (Kes), who is a countryside apprentice/trainee. Bradford Trident contacted us, as well as other groups, to give him access to the woodland volunteer groups in the area, so he could get an idea of what we do. Unfortunately, his first visit coincided with the search for John Chege (reported elsewhere in this newsletter). All he experienced that day was a walk around the woods so he could get a feel of the place. His last visit was on May 29th where we did some fence repairs, so it was deemed a success in the end.

Quad Bike

Liz & Roger spotted a burned out quad bike in Old Hannah Wood off Royds Hall Lane. The Heavy Gang went the following week to attempt a retrieval. Even after the removal of some of the loose parts which were wheel barrowed back to Station Road, the remains were still too heavy to move any distance. It was dragged behind the wall next to the lane and the council were informed of its position.



The Friends of Judy Woods AGM Thurs 11th April

During the formal part of the meeting the existing officials and committee members were reappointed. Thanks were extended to Sheila Lum who had resigned from the committee due to ill health and family commitments. To close the AGM a fascinating talk relating to Silk Nettle and its connection with the region was given by Denis Waudby our deputy chairman.

Gate Vandalised

The gate into Judy's garden has been vandalised again. Last year the council replaced a rotten gate post, subsequently some of the bars on the gate were vandalised. As the damage was not extensive a repair was carried out using plates and brackets. Unfortunately, I have to report that the vandals have been active again and, more extensive, damage has been caused to the gate. A number of solutions have been suggested. If the PTG are contemplating the repair this involves the problem of taking the materials to the site and obtaining the correct size of wood. The council have now said that the gate is their responsibility, and they will do the work.

Tramway Rail Bases

Denis has organised the retrieval of stones that were used as a base for the tramway system on the mineral line. They have been relocated to areas adjacent to the main paths so can be appreciated by visitors to the woods as historic artefacts.

Snippets

Edging has been replaced in a number of areas on the main path and the stile path.

Work has been almost completed on the refurbishment of the 99 steps. Steps have been turned to achieve a safer undamaged front edge or replaced with new steps. More edging has been added to ensure stability.

River Fly sampling continues with Mary, Geoff & Sally, the count and water quality is satisfactory.

At the far kissing gate we have temporarily abandoned the idea of replacing the fence immediately adjacent to the gate - still on the back burner. However the fence further along has had a new fence post and rails fitted, and a number of the existing posts have been stabilised with stakes and angled bracing.

Ongoing work continues on Judy's garden.

Denis and his archaeology crew continue with digs in the Judy's cottage area and continue to find interesting artefacts. Also, they have started some survey work on the mineral line - more info in the next newsletter.

Forthcoming Events 2024

Saturday 27th July at 9.30am

Balsam Bashing - meet at the Station Road entrance, off Huddersfield Road, Wyke BD12 8LA for a morning of balsam bashing followed by a complimentary lunch at the Pear Tree.

Friday 6th September 7.00pm

Bat Walk - meet Ian Butterfield at the Woodside Village Centre, 82 Fenwick Drive, Woodside, Bradford BD6 2RZ, at 7pm for an introductory talk before going in woods about 7.45 pm.

Saturday 19th October 1.30pm

Fungi Walk - meet Sally Tetlow at the top of Sowden Lane, Norwood Green, HX3 8QR where we will be joined by our experts John Gavaghan and Nick Kirby in our quest.

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.