



Registered Charity Number 117184



Newsletter No. 31 – Autumn 2022

The Year of the Working Party!

Since Spring we have had more Working Parties than usual. Your support at these is really appreciated and our thanks go to all those volunteers who have come along to help.

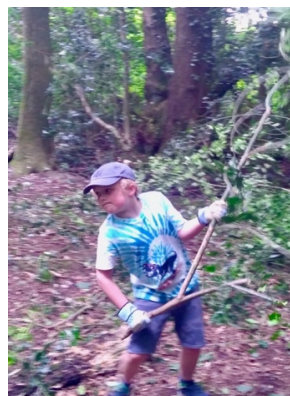
What follows is a short report and a few photos on each of these working Parties.

Summer Family Working Party

On Thursday the 4th of August a group of us gathered around the banks of the stream in the Wood to tackle the holly trees. The weather was perfect for some sawing, lopping and hacking; dry but not too hot!

Katherine and Steve, along with working party regulars Anne and John Quinn and Steve Bell were joined by several families of enthusiastic volunteers. There were plenty of pruning saws and other tools available along with gloves for the children, so that everyone could join in. Katherine and Steve also demonstrated safe use of the tools before we began.

My children Elsie, Cassian and Maggie-Sue welcomed the opportunity to use some of my cutting tools! Karen Vernon-Smith brought along Tristan and Aaron who immediately got stuck in tackling some of the bigger trees along the edge of the stream.



Emma Knight came with her two sons, Bertie and Stanley whose industrious attitude to the task was impressive! Tilly the Labradoodle watched the proceedings with an air of nonchalance, occasionally chewing at the cuttings.



Chocolate biscuits provided by Katherine were a welcome snack, politely distributed by Aaron. All of the children (and adults!) seemed to thoroughly enjoy the task and the location was buzzing with activity for several hours. We managed to free up a sizeable area along the bank from the overgrown holly, and standing back to admire our hard work was very satisfying when the rumbling of tummies signalled that it was time to clear up and go home for lunch! 'It was brilliant!' commented Cassian on our return home.

As Katherine explained to the children on the morning, it is hoped that this clearance will allow for a greater variety of plants such as wild flowers and other native woodland plants to become established. A very successful and fun morning; as the saying goes '*many hands make light work*' and we hope to hold more family working parties during the Autumn.



Jess Hitchmough

Autumn Working Parties

Working parties usually start for me with a day in the New Wood helping Derek take down some diseased trees or trees growing too close to each other for both to grow to maturity, and so it was this year. Many thanks to Derek for volunteering with his chainsaw yet again, as most of the Ash which need taking down due to ash die-back disease are too big to easily cut down with a bow-saw.



This autumn we had two public working parties one on Saturday 15th October and one on Thursday 27th which was half term, as an opportunity for any parents to come along with their children. Both times we had lovely weather, warm and sunny even though the forecast for Thursday had been some rain.

On the Saturday we had a good turn-out despite some of our regular stalwarts being away or unwell. Bob and Andy cleared up several of the felled Ash. Then we were joined by Sean and Joy to clear more felled Ash further into the wood into habitat piles. These allow more varied habitats for insects, amphibians etc. and also to keep the wood floor safe for walking in and to allow further management as needed. Unfelled trees just left become a hazard in the next and subsequent years.



Unfortunately on Thursday no-one was available to join us but Stephen and I still had a lovely morning sorting the holly trees Derek had felled along the stream into habitat piles. This is part of the planned wildflower glade which was started by Steve, Mike and myself in the Spring and

continued by the mums and children in the Summer. We had got to a thicket with a larger tree, again not easily felled with a bow-saw. We are now ready for further hard-work to finish clearing along the stream.

Katherine Hutchinson

Working party 12 Nov 2022

We have been lucky with the weather for our working parties this autumn, and this one was particularly well attended.

My thanks to Anne and Fred Morris, Joy and Sean Pendleton, Steve Bell, Jess Hitchmough, Andy Moore and Stephen Hutchinson for a busy morning in the New Wood.



We cut down a few of the severely squirrel- damaged oaks adjacent to the second stand of ash and tidied them away into habitat piles and also finished clearing up the dying ash that Derek had felled a few weeks ago, together with a few branches which had not previously been tidied into piles and were becoming rather a trip hazard.



We also managed to do some “formative pruning” of a few of the lime trees which have been allowed to grow with some nasty bifurcations and trifurcations. What happens is when the young trees are transplanted the roots (and especially the microscopic root hairs which is where most of the water uptake the tree needs occurs) are obviously slightly damaged even though we were careful to preserve them as well as we could; this then tends to cause a slight die-back of the “leader” which is the main central tallest shoot of a young tree. If the leader dies then the plant hormone (auxin) it sends to the rest of the plant obviously ceases to circulate. This auxin inhibits other tree cells from forming new leaders, and so when it is no longer there the tree makes several new leaders. This is a good adaptive mechanism for a tree which clearly needs a mechanism for continuing to grow if it does lose the leader due to some misadventure; frost or wind damage, disease, animal attack etc. All gardeners will be aware of this tendency in plant shoots. It is the science behind most pruning that we do in a garden and

explains why for example a hawthorn can grow a straight pole for 3 metres if we leave it, but equally can branch into a 1 metre high hedge if we cut it. However, if several shoots develop at the same level with only a small angle between them then as they grow and become wider there is no room for the widening branch which can then damage the tree and may cause rotting in the split between the two (or more) branches. It is a bit late to be doing this. However, advice seems to be that if we do not do it then the trees cannot make fully grown mature specimens and therefore the slight risk of rot which cutting them at this late stage is still the best option.

That's probably the last working party for this year as weekends in December tend to get busy for us all, however if this is disappointing fear not- there will be more working parties in the spring. Hoping to see you all then.

Katherine Hutchinson

Fencing for the pond

Regular visitors to the new part of the Wood will have noticed the new fencing for our new pond, which was installed in early September. Hopefully this will make it safe for all young children and less likely that dogs will get so muddy. In addition, we rather hope it will deter anyone from throwing branches from the log piles in the wood into the pond. These can be quite difficult to get out owing to the slippery mud, so if you do happen to see or know anyone who likes throwing branches into the pond could you please explain that this is a wildlife pond and we are trying not to disturb the area so that frogs, newts and other species can live in the area. Also, preventing dogs and other larger animals from approaching the pond increases the chances of amphibians and their eggs remaining undisturbed so fulfil our hope of increasing biodiversity in our woodland.

We have also added a 'Deep Water' warning sign as the pond was dug out right down to the level of the nearby stream around three metres below to try to make sure it does not dry out. With possible subsidence around the sides we are no longer quite sure how deep it is, but certainly children could get into difficulties so we strongly suggest that children are encouraged to stay away from the fence and certainly not to climb it.



We have installed a gate which is currently locked, but in future years we hope that pond dipping will be an interesting activity for any organised group who would like to request a trip.



Katherine Hutchinson

Fallen Branch

Several weeks ago a summer storm combined with the dry weather, which causes water stress in older trees, caused a large branch to break from an old Ash tree near the A49 entrance to the Wood. This remained “hung-up” in the other branches of the tree in a rather precarious position too high for non-specialists to reach or deal with. We therefore asked our local contractor to move it urgently, unfortunately he has not had time to do this and in a further high wind in late September it came down onto the footpath and adjacent fence, fortunately no-one was close at the time but this does reinforce our warning notices not to enter the wood in high winds.



Once it was on the ground it was not too large to cut up with bow-saws and pile up within the wood so the footpath is now clear again and we only need to purchase some new rails and fix them to the fence to make this good.

We do know that the upper part of the wood is prone to drying out in long dry summers, so possibly this will be an on-going problem with the changing climate- we shall just have to respond as best we can.

Katherine Hutchinson

Alder beetles

Walking through the wood the other day I noticed some very holey leaves of a young Alder tree and, looking closer, I noticed several Alder beetles on the leaves. These are fairly common “garden pests”, so nothing particularly remarkable, yet in our Wood they are part of the biodiversity we are trying to encourage.

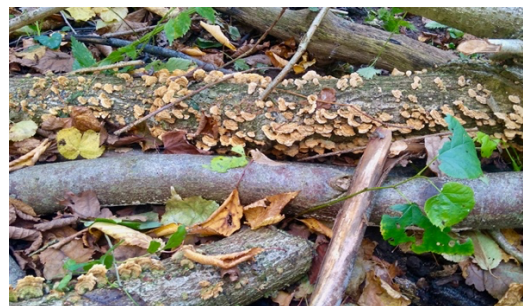


These beetles do no harm to the trees beyond causing holes in the leaves and who knows- maybe one day they will find a useful medicine from analysing these beetles? So maybe we can all take a little time to think whether we need to kill our “Garden Pests”, or whether actually they do no major harm and we can adopt a “live and let live” approach. I must say this will not extend to Cabbage White caterpillars on my cabbages- mind you I notice that given a chance they don’t believe in sharing either!

Katherine Hutchinson

Fungi

Recently spotted in the Wood is some interesting Bracket Fungi growing on some of the wood piles.



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Website

Our website is now up to date so please do take a look at

www.sadlerswellswood.org.uk

In particular there are more photos in the “Gallery” section. If anyone has any other photographs taken in the Wood or indeed any other photos or articles that are relevant to the Wood, I would be delighted to hear from you.

Dave Clapperton

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Friends of the Wood

The annual subscription remains a minimum of £5.00 per person and the 2022/23 subscription became due on 1st April. The Wood produces no income itself and we therefore have to raise all the money needed to pay for insurance, maintenance, etc. Your subscriptions are therefore very valuable to us, not only in themselves but also because they show a commitment from the local community.

If you have not yet paid for this year and wish to continue to subscribe then please complete the subscription form on the following page.

If you are paying by cash or cheque then please return the form and subscription to Dave Clapperton, Bob Harris or any of the other Contacts whose details are given above.

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