



FRIENDS OF ASHENGROUND AND BOLNORE WOODS

CONSERVATION : PROTECTION : ENHANCEMENT : ENJOYMENT

NEWSLETTER - SUMMER 2013



Butterflies have struggled this year – so it is always good to see them in our Woods – whether ones with bright colours like the Blues and the Red Admirals or subtle colours like this Meadow Brown

I am writing this Newsletter in very hot weather – another period of extremes that appear to have been frequent over the past year. Spring saw beautiful carpets of daffodils, bluebells and wood anemones, with the marsh marigolds giving an extra good display this year. Early summer has seen different wild flowers gradually emerge along railway path and within the remaining meadow areas to the North of Ashenground Wood, including my personal favourite the musk mallows. On the negative side, we have sadly experienced vandalism – read about this on p.2 and in the article about the Hawthorn Hedge on p.3. North Ashenground Woods has parcels of land that will be handed over to MSDC by the developers – learn more about this from Gill in her piece on p.3. On p.2 Stuart provides a fascinating insight into the geology of the area of which our reserve is a part.

Janice Tipping

Stop Press - A Cloud with a Silver Lining

Bolnore Village was conceived nearly 30 years ago, with the Masterplan for the final two phases approved by the Secretary of State in 2008. This incorporated changes to protect our woods which FoABW pressed for with strong support from our members, and help from Sussex Wildlife Trust.

In recent years, we have built up a closer working relationship with Crest, which has led to better woodland management. Unfortunately, Crest management changes meant we have had less contact with them in the past year. Recently, Crest held a Consultation meeting to propose major changes to the Masterplan. FoABW and others raised strong objections to the proposal. This led to frank discussions, and we now understand that Crest will not be making these changes. Sticking with the original Masterplan is good news for our woods and for local wildlife.

Some clouds do have silver linings, and we are increasingly confident we can build up a similarly useful working relationship with Crest's new Managing Director, Iain McPherson, as we had with his predecessor.

Stuart Meier

The Stone Beneath our Feet

Digging my allotment last autumn, it was typical soggy weather and typical soggy Wealden clay. But under our feet there is also a lot of hard stone, laid down millions of years ago. Some of it can be seen in Rocky Lane, in Quarry Hollow (you need to know exactly where to look) and in winter it is visible where the railway cuts through it near Ashenground Bridge.

While the stone outcrops in some places, in others it lies hundreds of feet deeper, because of giant earthquakes in the past when the earth was forming. These quakes shook the land but also drove a huge dyke of stone upwards, with geological fault lines near Rocky Lane and underneath Ashenground and Bolnore. Don't worry, this was MILLIONS of years ago!

Because of these changes – so long ago – the soils which have formed above have differences in composition which influence the plants which grow on them. For example, Four Acre Wood has a lot of 'Tormentil' which favours acid conditions caused by the geology. These differences in the soil are one of the reasons for the wide biodiversity in our woods.



Tormentil

The huge "dyke" created a barrier to water escaping, creating a lake between the Bridleway and the A272, before the water cut through the rock near the Railway Bridge, forming the 'ghyll woodland' near where the bridleway crosses Foundry Brook.

So the shape of our land depends on the stone beneath our feet.

Stuart Meier

Vandalism

Late autumn/early spring saw a spate of vandalism and theft in Ashenground Wood, manifesting itself in the destruction of sections of fencing, placed to encourage regrowth in areas of footfall where all ground vegetation had been trampled to compacted earth.



Temporary fencing constructed from natural materials – since vandalised

The damage to the fences was pre-planned as tools were used to dismantle some of the fences, a saw being used for example to cut through and destroy one fence. The police are involved in detection of the perpetrator, as fence sections and bolts were taken away which is theft and therefore a criminal offence.

The sections of fence do not prevent access into the surrounding woodland as you can walk around them should you wish to do so. They will not be permanent.

I am sure that you will have also seen the notices on the boards within the woods relating to acts of vandalism to the trees in the glade in Ashenground Wood. The police patrolled the woods shortly after this outbreak of vandalism, and although the perpetrators were not caught, the periodic police presence in the woods seems to be working and no further damage has been done to the trees in the glade.

Should you witness any such incidents within the woods, please telephone 101 Police Call Centre and make a report.

Lorraine Maynard

Hawthorn Hedge

A beautiful Hawthorn hedge was laid on the perimeter of Quarry Hollow and 4Acre Wood. This hedge was to become a much needed 'pathway' link for small mammals to gain access from Reading Wood into Ashenground Wood. These small mammals include the dormouse, woodmouse and vole. As well as providing a link between the woodlands, the hedge was also designed to provide an invaluable source of berries in the autumn and winter.



The Hawthorn hedge before damage

Unfortunately the hedge has been systematically lopped at root level in several places along its length, and all the Hawthorn saplings, planted to fill in the gaps in the growing hedge, have been pulled out of the ground and discarded in the brambles. It would seem that the person(s) responsible for this terrible act of vandalism had come prepared with tools specifically to cause as much damage as possible to the hedge.

Should you witness any such incidents within the woods, please telephone 101 Police Call Centre and make a report.

Lorraine Maynard

North Ashenground Woods

These are the parcels of woodland which the developers will hand over to MSDC. They will eventually, we hope, complete our local nature reserve. Some of them are already very familiar to us - 4Acre Wood, Quarry Hollow, and the Bridleway. Brief notes about the others follow.

Railway Shaw. This runs from Ashenground Bridge to the bottom of

Wealden Way, along the railway edge. A good deal of tree work has taken place here recently, particularly at the north end, as Peter explained in the last issue. This created more light along the top path, making it pleasant to walk along, and we have two small clearings – both in the north part of the Shaw. At the moment bramble and ferns dominate but we look forward to what next Spring may bring. The path below the scarp of the Shaw will one day run all the way to Wealden Way. In the Spring this was a joy to walk along, with wood sorrel, mosses and bugle. There have also been yellow archangel, red campion and an aromatic carpet of ground ivy, with regenerating stools of hazel. The northern part of the path (still grassy) has a beautifully varied woodland edge, with guelder rose, hawthorn and hazel. This path will eventually have a good surface, and be suitable for cycling.



Guelder Rose

Pond Meadow. This is the Lag (or at least the part of it without the balancing ponds is what remains of the Lag). It is still soggy in places, even in the heat, and is now showing the benefit of the tree clearance carried out last year. The extra light has brought back many of the flowers we had begun to lose. Buttercups and thistles, ragwort and bedstraw, with water pepper and water mint having replaced the bright Spring show of bugle and speedwell. The pond area is still unfinished, but the creatures are already using this welcome source of water – among them a heron! The ponds have been designed to slow the surface water from new housing so that it flows gradually into the stream. We hope they will also be of great benefit to our wildlife.

Gill Rogers

How to Get Involved

We welcome active and non-active members. But if you would like to get involved then here are a few ideas.

- Make reports of birds or other flora and fauna to Lorraine (see below) to help us build up a picture over time of what can be seen and heard in the woods.
- Come along to one of our special events (see details of our Bug Hunt below).
- Join us on one of our conservation work events. A warm welcome awaits. (see details below and on the Notice Boards).
- Spread the word and set an example about enjoying the woods responsibly as a pedestrian, dog walker, runner or family.
- Take photographs.
- Look at our website to find out more about our nature reserve: www.foabw.com
- Interact with us on our facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/FoABW> (contact Jason if you need further information: jason.peters@me.com).
- Report any acts of vandalism or irresponsible behaviour that you see (either to us or if you think you may have witnessed a crime contact the police on 101).
- Join the Committee (contact Lorraine on 01444 450997).

Conservation Work and Special Events

FoABW would like you to **report sightings of both common and unusual birds and other flora and fauna to Lorraine**. As Lorraine says 'nothing is too common to report'. Reports to **Lorraine** - 01444 450997 or e-mail: lorrainemaynard04@gmail.com

We have recently held a Spring Flower Walk and a Nature Photography Afternoon led by photographer Linda Howard. In August we have a Bug Hunt.

Sunday 18th August. 2.00 p.m. on Ashenground Bridge. Dr. Martin Hall of the Natural History Museum is kindly leading another **Bug Hunt**. A popular event suitable for all ages (children must be accompanied by an adult). No charge. No need to book.



Searching for Bugs on a Bug Hunt



On the Nature Photography Afternoon with Photographer Linda Howard

Do join us for **Conservation Work**. We meet each month on the **1st Sunday** (meeting place Ashenground Bridge) and **3rd Saturday** (meeting place the Thatched Cottage in Bolnore Village). Meeting time is 10.00 a.m. No expertise or tools needed. We will give you a warm welcome. Helpers needed for light and heavier work. There is a refreshment break.

See our **Programmes** on the notice boards. Look at our website: www.foabw.com And of course don't forget our Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/FoABW>

General Information – Contact Janice on 07752 003529 or janicetipping@aol.com

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