

## Friends of Park Wood Newsletter Spring 2025

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### Park Wood Spring Work Parties



With the bird nesting season upon us we have decided to only hold the Sunday Work parties for the next few months until the meadow cutting is due in the late summer.

The next few work parties will be held on the following Sundays starting at 10 a.m. and going on until lunchtime. If you can spare a bit of time to help, you will be very welcome to come and join the group.

The Sunday dates for your diary are:  
May 25th, June 29th and July 27th.

Jobs will include invasive non-native plant species removal (Spanish bluebells and laurel), path maintenance, clearing ditches, litter picking and any other minor repairs needed to any other structures in the wood.



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### Bins Update



Over the first three months of this year, you would have been aware of the bin removal issue and the controversy that it generated. The whole issue was further complicated by the lack of clarity when Woodland Trust Headquarters were contacted, and their Operations Team gave different answers as to why the Trust felt the need to remove the bins. Our chair wrote to the CEO Dr Darren Moorcroft who apologised for the lack of clarity, and he arranged for a meeting between Pete and the Estates Manager.

The bins were removed in early February. Apparently the Trust operates a no bins policy on all their sites in the Southeast region including urban woods in their estates. Pete sought clarity on what the new arrangements would be. Phil our woodland trust site manager has confirmed the arrangements for dealing with litter as follows:

*- For small-scale litter picks, please keep litter picking on the Friends risk assessment and as these are classed as small-scale, volunteer-led, community-style litter picks, you can dispose of small amounts of waste in the nearest municipal bin or take it home to put in your own bin.*

Keep Britain Tidy refers to a carrier bag of waste as being small-scale although this isn't definitive.

- For larger amounts of litter, manageable and safe to pick by the Friends members, please bag this up and contact me to arrange collection and disposal by a contractor.

- For larger amounts of litter, where not manageable and/or safe to pick by the Friends members (e.g. heavy bulky items/fly-tip/hazardous waste), please contact me and I will arrange for a contractor to collect and dispose of it.

The Woodland Trust anticipate that the first option will cater for most of the time, with the other two options only required on rare occasions, which is what they typically experience at other sites.

Whatever you feel about the removal of the bins we are where we are, so let us see if this system works, hopefully it will.

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## Yggdrasil – The Viking name for the Tree of Life - The Ash



Any of you who ventured into Park Wood in late January and early February of this year would have seen the contractors at work felling several large Ash trees as well as a Holly and a Poplar all of which had been identified as dangerous or in the case of the Ash trees suffering with *Charlara fraxinea* or better known as Ash Die Back.

This disease was first seen in Europe in the early 1990s in the Baltic States, it has since spread across the continent and first appeared in Kent in 2012. The disease is caused by a microscopic fungus – *Hymenoscyphus fraxineus* which colonises leaves and twigs and produces a chemical in the summer that is toxic to the tree. The fungus then spreads by spores in the autumn.

The symptoms of Ash Die Back include wilted leaves, dark strips of bark on twigs and diamond shaped lesions on the stems.

On the continent some 70% of Ash trees are infected by the fungus, which is thought to have originated in the far east, where it co-exists with native varieties of Ash. It is having a devastating impact on the European Ash *Fraxinus excelsior*. Estimates for the impact of the disease in the UK could be as high as 15 billion pounds from the loss of forestry timber, replanting and establishment of other species, the cost of felling and the environmental impact due to the loss of trees.

Anyone of an age like me can remember when Dutch Elm disease tore through the population of our English Elms, once the grandest of our native broadleaves now only seen as short-lived saplings sucker grown from the rootstock of trees that were felled 40 to 50 years ago. Ash which seeds freely and grows quickly (indeed so much so that in the past Foresters often considered them a weed tree), filled the gaps left by the loss of Elms in our woods and hedgerows.



Ash Die Back is having a huge effect on our woodland landscape as the only practical control of the disease currently available to most landowners is felling infected trees before the fungus can release its spores.

Ash is one of the most versatile native trees that we have, for a start, it burns green so makes good firewood. Ash timber splits very easily and is also easy to steam bend. Traditionally it has been used for furniture making, creating handles, wooden utensils, oars, frames for creeves (lobster pots), bows and arrows, sport sticks such as billiard cues and hockey sticks, walking sticks, even frames for sports cars and coaches. The loss of Ash timber will be felt in many different industries.



The Woodland Trust is focused on identifying infected trees in all its estate and trying to prevent the spread or at least slow down the spread of Ash Die Back.

Unfortunately, I doubt whether this will be the last time that we will see Ash trees in our wood succumb to the disease and I am sure we will witness further felling.

There is some hope that some trees will prove to be genetically resistant to the disease leading to us possibly

seeing disease resistant Ash being propagated and planted in the distant future. For now, evidence would point to about 1% of Ash trees being resistant. However, research suggests that Ash grown in more open conditions in France where the tree experiences warmer climatic conditions, the trees remain healthier than in dense woodland stands of Ash as the fungus is less easily spread and cannot survive temperatures over 35 degrees C.

With luck, there may yet be hope that the Ash can remain Yggdrasil the tree of Life – I do hope so as to lose it from the British landscape would be sad, lost not just for us but for future generations.

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## **Annual General Meeting – Monday 9th June 2025**

On Monday 9th June at 7pm we will be holding our AGM to elect a new committee and have a talk from our guest speaker Tristan Norton. Tristan is the ecologist at Havant Borough Council who will be talking about the natural habitats of the local area and steps that the council is taking to improve and enhance the ecology of the borough.

Please attend the meeting which is being held in the Pike Room at Waterlooville Baptist Church on London Road at 7pm.

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## **Connect to the Friends of Park Wood**

For many years the group has had a website but as of this month we now have both a Facebook and an Instagram page – Friends of Park Wood - Waterlooville. Check us out, like and join the group.

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Pete Hodges  
Chair of the Friends of Park Wood

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