

Friends of Park Wood Newsletter

Spring & Summer 2023

Work Parties

The weather is warming up, the trees are coming into leaf, flowers are beginning to bloom, hopefully warmer and milder days are upon us. Spring and early summer is a great time to be out and about. Everything is greener and Park Wood is looking at its best in bright new foliage. So, it's a good time to be out working in the wood.



Work Party Dates

Wednesday 5th April
Sunday 30th April
Wednesday 3rd May
Sunday 25th June
Wednesday 5th July
Sunday 30th July
Wednesday 2nd August
Sunday 27th August

Jobs will include processing the coppice materials cut earlier in the year, managing our two meadows, maintaining safe public access, and keeping our water ditches working and the wood litter free. The recent wet weather has meant the paths have become very waterlogged and this year we will be making a special effort to ensure they are in better order before next winter.

Work parties begin at 10 am and finish around lunch time. Tea and coffee are provided as are tools and equipment.

You don't need any special skills as there is always an experienced volunteer leading the work party. Please remember to wear suitable clothing and footwear for working outside in a woodland setting. (Please note no Sunday task in May or on the Wednesday in June, just go out and enjoy a walk in the wood instead!)

AGM 2023

Our annual general meeting will be held on Tuesday 11th July at 7 pm in the Wood. Please meet in the beech wood glade. Our guest speaker will be Terry Smith co-ordinator of the Havant Tree Wardens and he will be telling us about the involvement of local people as tree wardens and the contribution that they make to caring and improving the state of trees across the borough.

Our group constitution was drawn up when we started in 2000; it now needs amending as circumstances have changed, meaning that the constitution is no longer entirely accurate. We will be circulating the existing and proposed revised constitution nearer to the meeting.

The AGM is when we elect our new committee for the coming year. Although the present 6 members have said they are happy to continue, we would welcome any members who feel they would like to be involved in the committee to put their names forward. The committee meets 3 to 6 times a year for a meeting lasting no more than 2 hours to discuss planned workdays, publicity, or other group activities.

The committee is important; it enables us to ensure that the group is run safely, finances are kept sound and that we work within our agreement with the Woodland Trust. Under our constitution can have up to 12 committee members. If you are willing to join the committee or would like to know more about what it involves, please speak to Pete, Maureen, Andy, John, Meg or Gary or put your name forward to our secretary Maureen (contact details on Membership Application Form at the end of Newsletter) before the AGM.

Traditional Woodland Produce



Until the industrial revolution, most everyday products that the average person owned were made of wood. Our native woodlands provided nearly everything from bowls and spoons to the timber frames of buildings.

Today after 200 years of industrialisation and mass production our native forests are now regarded as pleasant natural spaces for informal recreation and nature conservation rather than being important for timber. Modern forestry means the conifer plantations owned by the Forestry Authority or large private companies like Tilhill

Forestry. In these, woodlands conifer species such as larch or spruce are grown. They grow fast and produce straight timber. Softwood conifers are easier to fell and process than our native hardwoods. These conifers do not coppice, the land is quickly replanted after felling.

The impact of the first world war created the modern forestry industry. The western front used a huge amount of timber. Trenches needed revetment timbers and wooden boardwalks, pit props to support dugouts and for the tunnels dug under no-man's land to lay massive mines under the German trenches. Wood was used to make rifle butts, gun carriages, vehicle and aircraft frames.



War production consumed vast amounts of timber from both our native forests and from overseas. In 1919 the Forestry Commission was founded to ensure a strategic supply of timber and in the last 100 years it has planted thousands of acres of mainly conifer plantations. Before 1914 our woodland industry was based around the use of our native hardwoods.

Much of the work was done as it had been for generations, either human or horse powered, and on a small scale with people living and working in the woods - bodgers working at shave horses and pole laths to produce chair legs, turners working on their pole laths to turn bowls and cups, spoon carvers, hurdle makers, thatching spar makers. All making use of native hardwoods. In some woods there are still depressions of old saw pits where the sawyers would saw planks and beams. The sawyer working on the top of the timber and his apprentice being the unlucky one working underneath the timber.

Post Second World War, mechanisation, and the forestry industry growing conifers for timber, plus new manmade materials being available, was killing off the demand for our traditional woodland products. By the 1970's, our native woodlands were in a serious state of decline. Many small woods had been felled for farming improvements as fields were enlarged for modern

agricultural machinery. In turn the traditional agricultural market for woodland products like sheep hurdles and hedging stakes had disappeared as farmers opted for the easy to install wire fencing with treated softwood posts replacing sheep hurdles and laid hedges.



The expansion of urban areas meant that increasing numbers of woods were no longer connected to rural landscapes and land-based communities. Now they were green spaces in new townscapes where the urban community had little or no knowledge about

the traditional management of our native woodland. Most of our remaining native woods were by this time in semi-derelict state as coppicing and thinning regimes had been ended decades earlier.

I'm glad to say that times are changing. Since the 1970's conservation has become much more part of our national consciousness. Volunteers began the real change in the fortunes of our native woods, establishing local conservation groups. One such group of friends in Devon meeting around the kitchen table of retired farmer Kenneth Watkins started the Woodland Trust in 1972.

Over the last 40 years conservation careers became possible with both charities and local authorities employing countryside rangers and other conservation officers. Conservation management is now mainstream.



Public attitudes to the state of our native woods have changed. In towns, woods provide a green oasis from the pressures of modern life, during the pandemic our green open spaces became much more appreciated by everyone.

Today, traditional woodland crafts are being revived. There are now more greenwood workers than there have been for years. You can now do courses to learn the art of spoon carving, chair making or bowl turning, and there are new conservation and horticultural markets for coppice products like bean poles, pea sticks, garden obelisks, hurdles, hedging stakes and binders.

Over the winter months our volunteers in Park Wood have been coppicing hazel. Some of it was processed into hedging stakes and binders for use by volunteers in Purbrook who were hedge laying. The rest of the arisings from the coppicing will be moved to form a brash pile around the edge of the newly coppiced area to allow woodland flora to bloom and the hazel stools to regenerate.



Finally, pea sticks, bean poles and flower canes will be available this spring. If you want some for your garden, please contact Gary Smith on a workday or send us an e-mail. Donations would be welcome.

Other conservation events happening in and around Waterloooville.

Havant Borough Big Green Week 10 - 18 June

A series of events and displays will be up around the Borough to celebrate local green initiatives and raise public awareness of environmental issues and local action for the environment. For more information go to <https://havantclimatealliance.com>

Saturday 29th April, Spring in Your Step – Hurstwood

Free morning woodland walk led by Havant Borough Tree Wardens as part of The Tree Council's spring festival to celebrate our local trees. Meet at 10.00am at the Crystal Way end of Sapphire Ridge (off Tempest Avenue) Waterloooville PO7 8NY.

Get Up & Go – Free guided walks at Leigh Park Gardens.

These take place on the first and third Tuesday of the month. Taking in the stunning views and vistas of the Parkland. Walkers can choose from two themed walks focused on the 'Flora and Fauna' or the 'History and Heritage of the Park'. The first Tuesday of each month will be a 'Heritage' walk and the third Tuesday will be 'Flora and Fauna'. Meet at the Coach House/Visitor Centre for a 10.15am start.

Pete Hodges
Chair of the Friends of Park Wood

Membership

Just a reminder that membership of the Friends of Park Wood runs from the 1st of April to 31st March each year.

Membership Application

Membership is due annually on 1st April each year. It is open to all those who are interested in or care for Park Wood. All friends will receive regular Newsletters with updated information on Park Wood.

NAME

ADDRESS

POSTCODE **TELEPHONE No**

E-MAIL

I / we support the objectives of the Park Wood Project and apply to join The Friends of Park Wood. Membership covers everyone living at the same address. I enclose a donation towards the Friends of Park Wood; a minimum donation of £5.00 is suggested.

Signed