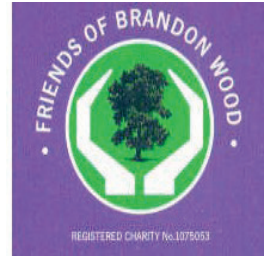


# Friends of Brandon Wood

## New Year Newsletter 2015



The scene in the wood last January

## Happy New Year to all our Members

**Yes. It is true, another year has passed. So what have we achieved in the last year and what lies ahead for 2015?**

Over the summer our working parties, led by Andrew Ireland, have been making significant improvements to a number of the paths in the wood. Hopefully we will see the benefit of this over the winter with better surfaces over areas which have previously been wet and muddy.

This has been undertaken in addition to the routine maintenance tasks which keep the paths clear of obstruction and ensure that any unsafe trees or overhanging branches are made safe for people using the wood.

Other articles in this Newsletter describe some of the survey work we have been doing to ensure that we know what conservation impact our work is having on the habitat for the flora and fauna living around us in the wood.

We have also been reviewing the way in which the required thinning of the dense areas in the wood can be undertaken in ways that cause less damage and disruption. After some very careful thought and research we decided to purchase our own equipment to enable the working party to fell and remove trees so that this can be done gradually with minimal damage to paths and plants and less disruption for visitors and resident wildlife.

This will be extra work for our volunteers and mean developing new skills but we hope that it helps us to do the necessary thinning a less intrusive way and reduces concerns that members have felt over thinning being done with heavy equipment by outside contractors.

You can keep track of new developments and what we are doing during the year by visiting our re-designed web site ([www.brandonwood.org](http://www.brandonwood.org)) or on Facebook. Do have a look at the new website.



## SURVEYS 2014

**We have undertaken several surveys this last year and the results have been both informative and interesting.** The information will be used to plan the work in the wood, making sure that habitats are protected and enhanced and the flora, fauna and fungi are encouraged and safeguarded.

### Moth Survey

This project was done with the help of specialist outside experts and created great excitement amongst the group who did the survey. They do similar surveys all over the country but their excitement in Brandon Wood was like children in a sweet shop .

Eight traps were set at about 8pm on June 2<sup>nd</sup>, a perfect evening as the weather was dry and mild. The survey group then retired to the pub until it was dark, the moths were about and being attracted to the lights in the boxes.

Altogether 1,359 moths were attracted to the boxes but the main excitement was caused by the rare moths who were present in some numbers.

The two that caused the most excitement were :-

14 Lobster Moths. Only 2 found before in Oakley Wood and apart from those, the moths in our wood are the only ones recorded in Warwickshire.

22 Pale Oak Beauty (below) - apparently an indicator of a healthy and well managed wood!



**A Brilliant evening for the FOBW!**

### Great Crested Newt Survey

We only managed to do one survey of newts this year but the Jubilee Pond continues to yield good results. We found one female Great Crested newt and four males. An increase from the previous year.

### Bat Survey

We now have two bat detectors plus the software to differentiate between the various types of bat. Three surveys were undertaken and on each occasion bats were detected, mainly Pipistrelle. Rob Cardus is busy getting to grips with the interpreting software so we will have fuller information next year.

### Dragonflies and Damselflies



**A Migrant Hawker Dragonfly**

Last year, for the first time ever, we monitored Dragonflies and Damselflies in the wood.

Peter Reeve, Coordinator of the Warwickshire Dragonfly Group, and his wife, very kindly joined us in the wood one summer evening. Their amazing knowledge and enthusiasm for these lovely creatures was infectious.

We learned about the habitats and characteristics of a variety of dragonflies and damselflies and which ones we are most likely to see in our wood. Identifying different species is not easy. However it is our intention to monitor the dragonflies and damselflies around our main ponds in the future.

We now know that **Azure damselflies, Migrant Hawker, Southern Hawker, Broad-bodied Chaser and Ruddy Darter dragonflies** are just a few of the species that colonise our wood.

## School News

The Friends have maintained contact with the local schools throughout last year to encourage interest in the environment.

In March, 80 Dormouse tubes were placed in Brandon Little Wood by the Dormouse Group. These tubes are designed to attract Dormice to nest (if there are any) and are monitored regularly. The children from Binley Woods School are involved not by dealing with the boxes (only qualified people are allowed) but by being kept informed. Two members of Brandon Marsh spoke to the children about Dormice; what they look like, their life cycle and their habitats.



We checked the boxes in July and again in November but to our dis-appointment there were no signs of Dormice. Wood mice and birds had taken up residence in two boxes. We will be continuing to check the tubes every so often.

Later in the year we enlisted the help of the children to encourage dog walkers to Pick Up after their dogs. The problem, and the reason why it is important to clear up was explained during a morning assembly and the children were encouraged to help us by producing posters. We hope you noticed the posters and appreciated the improvement in cleanliness that followed.

Small prizes were given for the best posters.

**Note:** The hazel dormouse has golden-brown fur and large, black eyes. It is a nocturnal creature and spends most of its waking hours among the branches of trees looking for food. It will make long detours rather than come down to the ground and expose itself to danger.

## Monitoring Butterflies in the Wood

Our loyal group of volunteers has continued to monitor butterflies in the wood. A weekly count was carried out from the beginning of April until the end of September. 20 different species of butterfly were recorded this year. I am pleased to tell you that we had confirmed sightings of the beautiful **Silver-washed Fritillary** in several sections of the wood. We hope it has colonised in our wood so look out for it next year!



Silver-washed Fritillary

The year started well with a fairly large number of butterflies being recorded in April, the **Peacock** being most prevalent. May was not such a good month but the yellow **Brimstone** brightened the dull days on many occasions. June saw the emergence of both **Speckled Wood** and **Ringlet** especially along the Main Ride. Large numbers of **Ringlet** fluttered busily along the Main Ride in July with further **Peacocks** enjoying the sunny path. August and September were disappointing, the **Speckled Wood** being the only butterfly to flourish.

Although 2014 was not as good a year for butterflies as 2013, the decrease in numbers may have been due to the wet winter and wet windy days throughout the butterfly season. The abundance of butterflies along the Main Ride compared to other sections of the wood indicates that the scallops created along the ride have attracted these lovely creatures.

**Vivien Wood**

**Note:** The Silver-washed Fritillary (*Argynnis paphia*) is a member of the Nymphalidae family of butterflies. In Britain it is concentrated in the south-western areas but is gradually spreading and has been previously seen in Ryton Wood. It is the largest of the fritillaries and gets its name from the beautiful streaks of silver found on the underside of the wings.



## Woodland Management

We have now moved into the winter phase of our plans. The hard labour of paths improvements work over the summer months should give benefits for visitors, who may be able to look ahead more instead of at their feet!

We have our new forwarding trailer and winch, and are equipped to do our own harvesting of (mostly) Corsican Pine to continue the thinning programme; much needed to reduce canopy shade.

As we have our own kit, we can carry out work when conditions are favourable, and without the need for the huge harvester and forwarder. We'll take a bit longer but there'll be less obvious damage impact.

Our team of keen volunteers has, as always, been ignoring doubtful weather and working hard to try



to keep up with our demanding list of tasks. The work sessions are nevertheless social and fun!

We have recently been clearing areas of brambles and bracken to prevent choking of bluebells and to give diverse plants room to grow next spring.

Tree inspections have identified ailing and unsafe trees, some needed branches removing, but those threatening to fall on paths in high winds have had to be felled.

Don't forget that we do sell logs – contact Andrew Kirby for enquiries (07976 266 208)

Thank you those who have recognised the work we do and who have made encouraging comments in passing.

**Andrew Ireland**

## Our New Equipment in Action:



## Did you make any New Year Resolutions?

### Maybe you want to get fit?

Forget about going to the gym. Why not join our working party instead! Its completely free and there's not even any joining fee!

### Just want to take a bit more exercise?

What better way to do it than going for a walk in Brandon Wood! Get some fresh air and enjoy the beauty of the wood at the same time. Alternatively you could join our band of collectors and deliver some of newsletters to your neighbours!

### Want to put your IT interest to practical use for our local community?

Perhaps you could help us maintain our Facebook page or website.

### Ways to contact us:

Web page: [www.brandonwood.org](http://www.brandonwood.org)

On Facebook: /FriendsBrandonWood

e-mail: [info.brandonwood@gmail.com](mailto:info.brandonwood@gmail.com)

Phone (local rate): 03 301 239 215

### Acknowledgments

Information from UK Butterflies - [www.ukbutterflies.co.uk](http://www.ukbutterflies.co.uk)

and Butterfly Conservation – [butterfly-conservation.org](http://butterfly-conservation.org)

Photographs from [astro snaps.co.uk](http://astro snaps.co.uk)

Plus wikipedia, of course