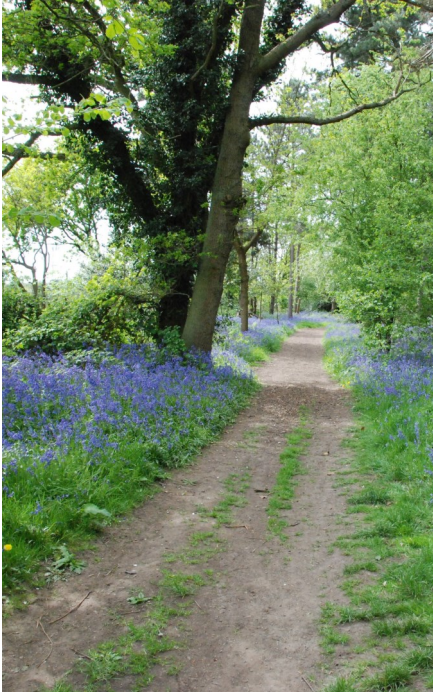


Friends of Brandon Wood Newsletter



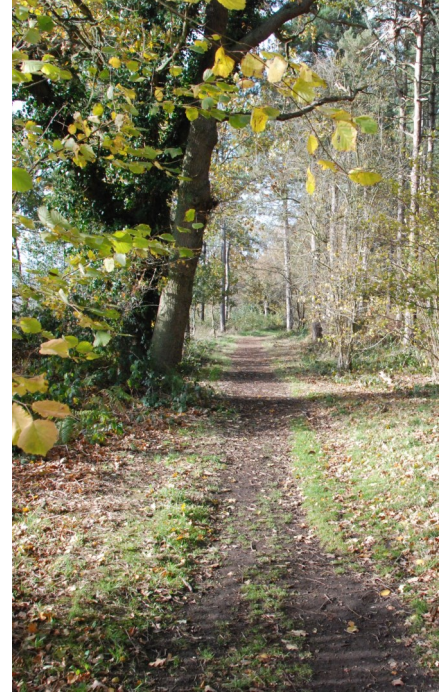
November 2020



Spring



Summer



Autumn

Photographs by Brian Camfield

2020 A Changed World

When we produced our last Newsletter, who would have thought that 2020 would change the way we live so drastically. We have all been affected in many ways by this terrible Pandemic. Isn't it wonderful that our natural world has continued to move through the seasons, bringing peace, joy and wonder to us all? Brandon Wood has definitely played its part in helping many people through very difficult times.

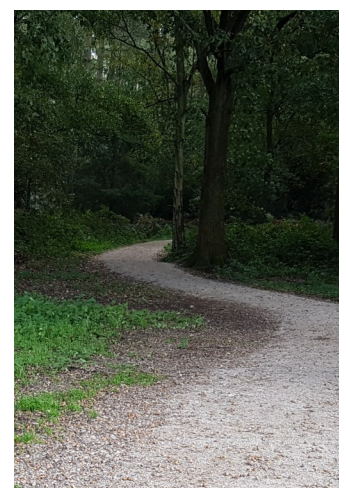
Refurbished All Ability Path

We are delighted with the work done to refurbish the All-ability Path at the Ferndale Road entrance to Brandon Wood. This was a costly project but 80% was funded by the Dunsmore Living Landscapes (DLL) scheme. If you ventured into the wood in the early days you might well have been shocked by the bright white of

the limestone top-dressing. However wind, rain and the trees themselves have mellowed the colour of the path so it is now looking much more natural. The new surface has been very well received by visitors to the wood especially those with mobility difficulties or using wheelchairs or pushchairs. We have received many very appreciative comments.



Early days



A softer look

Woodland Management during the Pandemic

We have been fortunate in a number of ways. As I write, there have been low numbers of Covid 19 cases locally. and we are now able to work in the wood out in the open, taking appropriate precautions, guided by the Government and common sense.

For a few weeks during lockdown none of us took part in activities in the wood. When Government guidelines changed, we were able to start working separately on small tasks until the guidelines meant we could work in socially distanced small groups.

Everyone was pleased to see the bluebells and wildflowers during these difficult times.

The tasks have been continuing well, and the planned programme has continued unabated. Our butterfly and moth counts and reporting have taken place with few restrictions.

Felling contractors will not be coming this winter.

The new All-ability Path has matured and has made access from the Ferndale Road entrance much easier for less-able visitors to the wood. Further benches will be provided just off this path – an opportunity to stop and enjoy the quietness.

Culverts make walking easier too, and we have had a noticeably higher visitor footfall this year. Paths throughout the wood have been improved gradually and this has been appreciated.

Litter is always a concern, but we have regular pickers who keep the whole wood as clean as it can be. A big 'thank you' to everyone who has helped keep the wood tidy.

The wood is a great place to visit and enjoy as the seasons pass. Good for mental health and the soul. There is more diversity now and much to look forward to.

Andrew Ireland

Membership

We are delighted that so many of you have chosen to pay for Membership by Standing Order this year. Due to the Pandemic, it was not safe for our volunteer Collectors to collect cash as we have done in the past. We know that paying by Standing Order does not suit everyone and consequently we have lost a number of our members. We will review the situation next year but in the meantime, thank you so much for your contributions.

Vivien Wood

The Wagon Project



Rear and wheels in progress

Had it not been for Covid 19, the wagon would have been completed and in Brandon Wood this summer. For some weeks it was not possible for volunteers to work together on this project. However, work has restarted with reduced volunteers and we will be putting tyres on the 3rd and 4th wheels before the end of November. Final assembly is planned for December and rollout to the wood in March.



Forecarriage near completion

Andrew Kirby

Three Ponds Project

A project to improve habitat and in particular to encourage the number of great crested newts is underway in and around three neglected ponds adjacent to Brandon Wood Farm. While great crested newts have been recorded in other ponds in the wood their presence in these ponds was unknown.

Habitat Regulations (2017) afford specific protection of great crested newts. In January, a member of staff from Warwickshire Newt and Reptile Team along with an Ecologist from Warwickshire Ecology came to advise us about how to minimise any potential adverse impacts on newts and other wildlife when working in and around the ponds. Using an Ecological Method Statement the working party were shown where newts and other creatures were likely to shelter or hibernate. They also advised about suitable routes for carrying cut material and locations for stacking it.

In May two Ecologists undertook an eDNA survey to establish whether great crested newts were actually present. They did this by taking pond samples for laboratory analysis. It was a challenging job as water had to be taken from twenty different areas of the pond. Many were difficult to access due to dense scrub and steep banks but with persistence and some ingenuity (attaching extensions to the test tubes) the task was completed. The results were positive meaning that great crested newts were present or had been recently. The restoration project continues through the Winter and is set to be completed by 2021.



Taking pond samples

Anne Sinclair-Taylor

Local Fungus Report

With the arrival of Covid-19 and the lockdown, there was general optimism that it would be a good season for wild life. However, from the fungus point of view, it did not happen.

There were a few regular fungi but even these were poor specimens. One interesting occurrence on a lawn in Craven Avenue was the appearance of ten fruit bodies of the red and white Fly Agaric and one of Peppery Bolete which has an undetermined relationship with the former. Six Shaggy Inkcaps, also known as Lawyer's Wig, were present in the village. Several of these also appeared on the South Path West in Brandon Wood.



Lawyer's Wig

The most common Toadstool in Brandon Wood was Sulphur Tuft which grows on wood/woodchips. The dying Corsican pine next to the path to the dog pond was still home to Dyer's Mazegill and Purplepore Bracket.

Near the north ditch the golden yellow Birch Web Cap has done spectacularly well this year.

Let us hope that there is still time for more fungi to appear.

John Sells

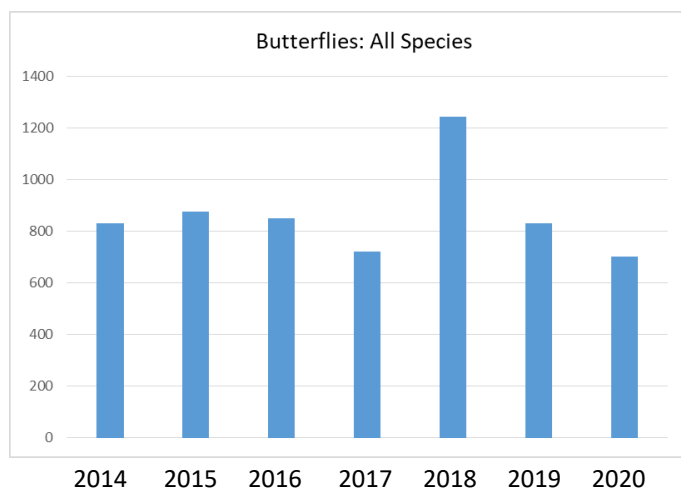
Need some firewood?

Call **Andrew Kirby** on **07976 266208**
for good quality timber from our woodland

Butterflies

Our beautiful butterflies always bring pleasure to walkers in the countryside. This year many visitors to the wood enjoyed the sight of these colourful creatures but is their existence threatened?

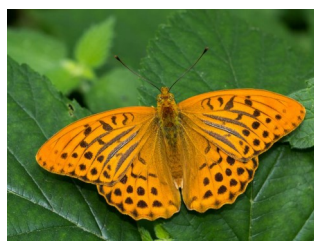
Throughout the country, there have been reports of decline in the butterfly population. This is a worrying trend and this year I am sorry to report a decline in some species in Brandon Wood. The weather may be partly responsible. The warm sunny Spring encouraged plant growth so that flowers and fruit appeared earlier than usual. Butterfly lifecycles may not have been synchronised with their food plants. Only time will tell.



Although the trend overall was down in Brandon Wood the Small White and Silver-washed Fritillary appeared in greater numbers this year.



Small White



Silver-washed Fritillary

FoBW Contact Details

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Moth Night

Our annual moth night took place in September this time. Chosen to be a good time to witness the Clifden NonPareil, we were not disappointed.



Clifden NonPareil

Although we were confined to a group of six, and the overall count only 24 macro moths, low because of a cold breeze, we were thrilled to trap one of these beauties in the evening and two more during the night. (They were released unharmed).

The 9cm span is impressive and the blue underwing striking. This is a rare moth which relies on poplar (aspen) and is gradually spreading north owing to climate change

New Path

In the next few months, look out for a newly signposted path linking Brandon Marsh, Brandon Reach, Piles Coppice and the western edge of Brandon Wood. This is part of new developments by Warwickshire Wildlife Trust/DLL.

Annual General Meeting

Unfortunately, due to Covid 19 restrictions, we were unable to hold the Friends of Brandon Wood AGM as planned in June. The Meeting has been postponed until June 2021.

In the meantime, the Trustees, who have been holding virtual monthly meetings using Zoom, would like to wish you all the very best for the forthcoming season. **We hope you all stay safe and continue to enjoy our lovely woodland.**