

The Friends of Duchess Wood

Members' Newsletter No. 13 (September 2013)

AGM of the FODW

Monday 21st October 2013

7.30 p.m. in the Sports Centre of Lomond School

The FODW Annual General Meeting will be held at 7.30 pm on **Monday, 21st. October** at 7.30 p.m. in the **Sports Centre of Lomond School**, located in Rhu Road Higher. There is ample parking space there.

Papers for the formal part of the session will be sent to members in advance. That part of the AGM will be followed by a talk by guest speaker **Fiona Baker** entitled "**The woods of Ardencaple Castle**" (see right).

Refreshments. Everyone welcome. Please bring friends and family.

Reminder : Any motions from paid-up members for the AGM should be sent to the Secretary, FODW, 40 West Montrose Street, Helensburgh, G84 9PF, proposed and seconded by registered members, by 27th September.



Fiona Baker will be our guest speaker at the AGM on the topic "**The woods of Ardencaple Castle**". She is Director of Firat Archaeological Services. She has lived in the Helensburgh/Rhu area for over 40 years and knows Duchess Wood well. Her archaeological and historical talk will include Castle Wood.

THE FLOWERS OF DUCHESS WOOD

The range of flowers in Duchess Wood is extensive. They are itemised in the FODW checklist of flowers by both their common and their scientific names. There are 66 recorded so far. We say 'so far' because the checklists are living documents held electronically and they can be adapted at any time. If you see any flower not on the list, please let us know and we will contact Alison Rutherford, a local expert, who prepared our present list.

FLOWER WALK

It was fate. The day of the Flower Walk around Duchess Wood was the wettest Saturday of May. However, Alison Rutherford (pictured right) kindly led it, though the rain had deterred most people.

As a follow-up to Alison's superbly informed guided tour, FODW has transcribed Alison's notes so they can form the basis for self-guided walks in the future



Alison in the Wood

INVASIVE PLANTS

Bracken, brambles and sycamores contribute to the biodiversity of the Wood and some of the brambles are rare and unusual. So, while protecting those that need it, they still have to be controlled when they become dominant in certain areas. That's why FODW work parties have put much effort into trampling bracken, cutting brambles and pulling up or cutting down sycamore saplings.

Then there is the great evil of Japanese knotweed. Fortunately there are just four small patches, but they can spread. Members will have seen that preliminary spraying has been carried out by Argyll and Bute Council at the car park and Rhu Road Higher entrance, but we await further action.

EVENTS IN DUCHESS WOOD

There's been a national growth in popularity of challenging activities in the countryside. Examples are white water rafting, adventure racing, paragliding, and so on. Some are competitive (e.g. races), some not. Some are amateur, arranged by clubs, while some are commercial. Most people would view such activities favourably because they get people outdoors and improve fitness.

However, they need to be held in suitable places with controls and only some will be appropriate for Duchess Wood.

The Council's Duchess Wood LNR Committee has decided to permit two. One (on August 17th,) will be over by the time you receive this newsletter. The other (likely to be on October 19th) has yet to be finalised, but it may be a night-time race through Duchess Wood and onto paths above the railway for over 100 runners. Watch local press for details. And yes – we said night-time.

It is possible that some **John Muir Trust** conservation activities may also be held.

Walking Theatre. Feedback on the performance of "A Midsummer Night's Dream" in the Wood last October was positive. This year the Walking Theatre will be presenting an adaptation of Stevenson's "Treasure Island" on Sunday 20th October. We'll email more details when they are known.

Outdoor nursery. This is still being considered, but the organisation Stramash is in discussions about the possibility of running an outdoor, year-round nursery school in part of Duchess Wood, starting in the autumn next year. Watch out for further details.

