

# The Friends of Duchess Wood

Members' Newsletter No. 20 (April 2017)

## TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF FRIENDS OF DUCHESS WOOD



Sandy Kerr

**The inaugural meeting of the Friends of Duchess Wood (FODW) was held in July 2007, chaired by Sandy Kerr. So this year sees its tenth anniversary.**

There had been a less formal committee of local enthusiasts before that, but with the help of the Scottish Natural Heritage, Argyll and Bute Council created its Duchess Wood Local Nature Reserve Committee (DWLNRC) to supervise the management of the Wood. Sandy Kerr and Alastair Macbeth then initiated the Friends to support the DWLNRC in both management and practical work. FODW represents the local community on the DWLNRC. Councillor Al Reay became convener of DWLNRC and established the relationship between the two organisations.



Councillor Al Reay

That relationship has worked well with the council providing continuity, policy, insurance and the facility to deal with major work, while the Friends carry out day-to-day safeguarding and other maintenance, under the umbrella of the DWLNRC. Thus FODW contributes towards the upkeep of paths, bridges, culverts, tree planting, research, education, relationship with the public and a range of other tasks. The Friends became a registered charity in 2008. FODW helps to sustain and to enhance a vital facility. We will announce later how we intend to mark ten years of action.



Current Convener, Stewart Campbell, says "The achievements of FODW in the past decade have been considerable. The key to that success has been partnership with a wide range of other organisations and people, especially, of course, with the council's Duchess Wood LNR Committee. I would like to thank the many people who have contributed."



### Double trouble at the car park bridge

Those using the car park to get to the Wood will have noticed that part of the Victorian bridge has collapsed. The Council is talking with Luss Estates and Lomond School about what action to take and FODW will post progress on its website. The dilemma is whether vehicles can cross the bridge safely to the Rugby pitch.

Also, a big sweet chestnut tree has fallen across the burn just upstream from the bridge. FODW in conjunction with Community Payback, have cleared most of the branches so that the stream will not get clogged. Some cutting of burrs to make bowls and other items has been carried out by Galgael. For further details about Galgael, see column 3 of the next page.

### NEWS IN BRIEF

#### Ponds progress

Willow has been planted around the ponds and other improvements. There have been sightings of palmate newts and frog-spawn. [See page 2 for details of night investigation – members are invited.](#)

#### Facebook

Our new Facebook page is at [@FODW1](#).

#### Garage repairs

FODW has a rented garage in which to store equipment. Overhanging trees have been removed and repairs are in train.

#### Repair muddy entry

Work is planned to provide temporary repair to the worn and muddy entry point at the south-east corner by Rhu Road Higher.

#### Information facilities

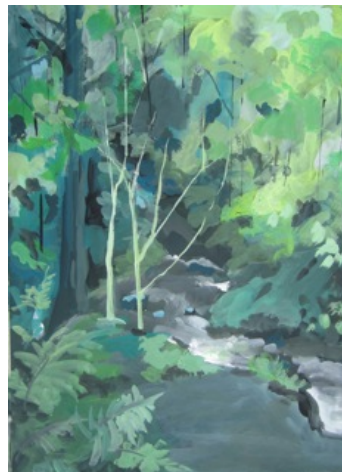
Two map boards are under repair at present and new leaflet holders will be placed in the Wood shortly.

### The four seasons of Duchess Wood in paint



Spring

FODW member and local artist, Mary-Jane Selwood, has painted the four seasons in Duchess Wood and has kindly permitted FODW to convert them into greetings cards for sale, the income to go to FODW. Here are spring and summer. We will copy autumn and winter in the next newsletter. When they have been printed as cards we will circulate a special note to FODW members and explain on our website how to obtain the cards.



Summer



## Timber work in Duchess Wood

Since the last newsletter there have been two experiments in managing trees for the future of Duchess Wood. These are distinct from crisis responses to storm damage and precautionary measures.



### **Sycamore felling in Lower Wood**

The first has been the felling of 40 sycamores in the Lower Wood below the garages. The photo top left shows the timber taken by the contractors. A few problems came to light, among them the job of clearing the brash which took three FODW work parties to do (see photo top right). We have learnt some lessons from the experiment. However, a start has been made in planting replacement Scots pine saplings. (See photo left.)

### **Plank-making by Galgael**

Galgael, is a social enterprise charity which uses timber in the workplace to assist young people who have problems. Galgael has equipment which enables it to fell trees and to convert trunks into planks. This can be done on-site. They have worked on two trees in DW, one a fallen birch tree near the bridge to the west of the Pony Field, the other on parts of the fallen chestnut near the car park (see page 1. regarding that tree).



*Scots pine sapling*

Members are invited to join Pete Minting of the Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (ARC) Trust on Saturday 6 May, for a night-time walk to the new ponds at Duchess Wood. Torch, wellies and waterproofs are recommended. The main aim of the visit is to determine which species of amphibian are colonising the ponds. As amphibians are largely active after dusk, it will be a late start at 9.30pm. Please meet Pete in the main car park by Kathleen Park. Free printed copies of ARC's amphibian and reptile identification guides will also be available. Booking is not necessary but for any queries please email [pete.minting@arc-trust.org](mailto:pete.minting@arc-trust.org) or phone Pete on 07747 270581.

### Night investigation of ponds. Members invited.



*Frogspawn*



## 2016 Annual General Meeting

The FODW Annual General Meeting was held on 26th October 2016 with a considerable turnout of members. Stewart Campbell summarised the highlights of a successful year which had met several challenges. He thanked Cllr. Aileen Morton for her work as Chair of the Council's Duchess Wood Local Nature Reserve Committee. The following were elected to the FODW committee of trustees : Stewart Campbell (Chair), Alastair Macbeth (Secretary), Bill Hassall (Treasurer), Morag Young, Rachel Bailey, David Lewin, Richard Horrell, Pete Minting, Paul Blackburn. Accounts were approved.

The formal session was followed by a fascinating talk by **Paula Baker** who is the **Site Manager of RSPB Loch Lomond**. This Wetlands, Woodlands and Wildlife Reserve was purchased by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds in 2012. Paula illustrated her talk and described the fantastic wildlife on the site, current work and the RSPB's plans for its future.

The FODW email address is [fodwg84@gmail.com](mailto:fodwg84@gmail.com). The website shows the contact email as [enquiry@duchesswood.org.uk](mailto:enquiry@duchesswood.org.uk), and this forwards emails to the fodwg84 address. Facebook page is at @FODW1.

Website. [www.duchesswood.org.uk](http://www.duchesswood.org.uk)

FODW is a voluntary, non-political local community group and a registered charity. It works co-operatively with other groups such as the Lower Clyde Greenspace, Community Payback, the Access Trust, the Green Belt Group, and a range of other bodies especially, of course, the Council's Duchess Wood Local Nature Reserve Committee which is responsible for the Wood. We are grateful to them for the contributions they have made to make the Wood so special.