



The Friends of Duchess Wood

Spring Newsletter 2018

FODW 2017/18 Annual General Meeting: Please note the date.

Refreshments. Everyone welcome. Please bring friends and family.

The 2017/18 FODW Annual General Meeting will be held at 7.30 pm on Wednesday 24th October in the Parish Church Hall, Colquhoun Square. Papers for the session will be sent to members in advance.

This follows on from the successful AGM held in January where approximately 40 members attended and were treated to a talk entitled "A Forester's View of Duchess Wood" by David Robertson. David commented favourably on the management plan commitments and made some helpful suggestions for day to day improvements to the wood.

Any motions from paid-up members for the AGM should be sent to the Secretary, FODW, 17 Queens Point, Shandon, G84 8QZ proposed and seconded by registered members, by 21st September 2018 (or by e-mail to martin.grafton@outlook.com)

MAINTENANCE CONTINUES DESPITE POOR WEATHER



It has been an interesting winter, with the heaviest snowfall and hardest frost for seven to eight years, several maintenance parties had to be cancelled. Luckily the wood hasn't suffered too much damage as far as we can tell. All the trees and flowers are around three weeks late into blossom, but by the end of April the celandines, primroses, wood anemones and wood sorrel had begun to appear. Last year's planting of narcissus and primula (donated by the Helensburgh and Gareloch Horticultural Society) has made a bright splash of colour to the car park.

In the lower pine wood, near the Rhu Road Higher entrance, the patch of mouse-tail arum, a fascinating wee plant, has re-emerged in the area opened up by tree-felling. The wood anemone in the area seems to be spreading – possibly because of the better light at ground level.

Redwings and Fieldfare have returned to the woods in significant numbers again this winter and buzzards and herons have been scouting around. There has been no sign of Woodcock this year: in previous snowy winters they have come down into the wood. Frogs were back in the upper pond quite early and there is frogspawn there. The position in the lower pond isn't clear yet, but we are expecting frogs and newts in both ponds. There have been sightings of lizards and toads on the warmer days taking advantage of the sun in the warmer corners of the wood. The mining bees nesting off the path on the west side of the rugby pitch are already active.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Disabled Car Park slot

One of the car park bays now has a disabled sign for use of our more infirm visitors.

Major grant bid

Our application for a Woodlands in and around Towns (WIAT) Grant has passed the first hurdle and our Woodland Management Plan has been submitted to the Forestry Commission and is now being considered. Whilst the outcome is uncertain, whatever happens, we now have the knowledge and information to consider further woodland management – particularly the control of ash and sycamore trees – by a suitable contractor. There remains one big stumbling block to this (and this will apply to any WIAT work as well) – where to store and load felled timber. If any members have any suggestions to help with this, the committee would be glad to hear them.

Work Parties

We try to have a Duchess Wood work party on the last Sunday of each month from 2 – 4pm. We recently surveyed members to see if there was a better day/time but following a limited response we concluded that Sunday afternoon remained the best. Do please come along if you have a spare afternoon. No previous experience is required and you will be made very welcome.

Picnic Benches

Following restoration by the Community Payback Team these have been reinstated in the Pony Field. It is hoped to install some benches from the James Street garden during the spring.

Duchess Wood Cards

We started marketing our Duchess Wood four season cards last summer after Mary-Jane Selwood, a local artist, kindly allowed us to reproduce paintings she had done of Duchess Wood.

They are on sale at £1.99 each in the Scandinavian shop, Sinclair Street, and Ardarden Farm shop. They can be purchased in larger quantities, at a discount, by contacting Morag Young at moragyoung@ymail.com. All proceeds go to FODW.

Persimmon Homes planning application. Despite the FODW and Helensburgh Green Belt Group jointly arguing that this proposed housing estate, contiguous with Duchess Wood, should have a deeper wildlife corridor to the north of it and an improved footpath, the Council approved the application and work has started on clearing the site in preparation for building construction.

TOP DOGS DAY OUT

At the end of March a Responsible Dog Ownership fun event was held in the Pony Field with approximately 30 dogs and their owners taking part. The Dogs' Trust, Cani-fit and the SSPCA all provided stands with the Dogs' Trust offering advice on dog care and even provided a free micro-chipping service. Taster training sessions were also held which were thoroughly enjoyed by all. The event was deemed a great success and it is intended to repeat it next year on the last Sunday of March 2019.

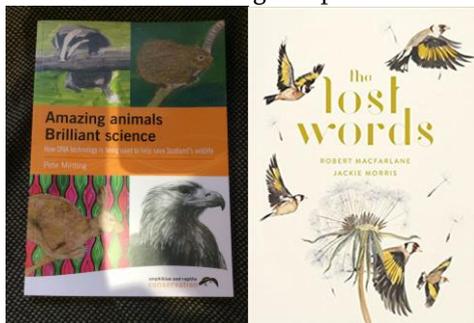


Bat Detector

In December FODW received a grant of £500 to purchase bat detection equipment as part of an initiative to promote Citizen Science. The Echo Meter Touch 2 bat detector plugs into an iPad mini and in real time compares actual bat calls to a library of bat calls and identifies the species flying around. During the next few months, and once bats in the wood become active again, we will organize bat walks so that members can learn about the various species we have. We will also be able to carry out survey work and input this to the Bat Conservation Trust which maps bat populations across the UK.

Books

One of our members, Pete Minting, who has taken the lead on the development of the ponds, has recently written a fascinating and interesting book entitled "Amazing animals, Brilliant science" (ISBN 978-0-9566717-2-1) which has been published by the Amphibians and Reptiles Conservation Trust (www.arc-trust.org). The book looks at the role that DNA technology is playing in wildlife conservation, and in particular how it is helping save or study wildlife in Scotland. The book is illustrated and enhanced by children from across Scotland, who entered a wildlife art and writing competition.



Another book that has had a lot of coverage recently is "The Lost Words" by Robert MacFarlane and Jackie Morris and there are plans to put a copy into every primary school in Scotland. It looks at "natural" words which have been removed from the Oxford Junior Dictionary over the past ten years and challenges this process. Of the twenty or so words covered in the book, we have at least fourteen commonly found in the wood, including "bluebell", "bramble", "wren", "newt" and "acorn" and we are looking at ways in which we might use these ideas. The John Muir Trust has published an Explorers Guide to the book which is available through this link:

https://www.johnmuirtrust.org/assets/000/002/837/LOST_WORDS_Explorers-Guide_original.pdf?1515059070

Citizen Science Projects

We would like to take a more active role in Citizen Science projects and would like to join some of the main conservation charities – particularly the Bat Conservation Trust, Buglife, Plantlife and the Butterfly and Moths Conservation Trust. These memberships have to be on an individual basis, so if any member would like to take on a membership on behalf of The Friends please let the secretary know. FODW would, of course, pay any subscription. A member taking on a charity membership could keep members updated and suggest ways in which we could improve our knowledge of the species we encounter in the wood.

General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

GDPR comes into force on 25 May 2018 and is designed to ensure organisations gain consent and inform individuals on how their data will be used. Attached is a form for you to sign indicating how you would wish us to communicate with you and to spell out how we will handle your data.

YOUR VIEWS

The FODW email address is fodwg84@gmail.com. The website shows the contact email as enquiry@duchesswood.org.uk, and this forwards emails to the fodwg84 address.

Website: www.duchesswood.org.uk
Facebook: [@FODW1](https://www.facebook.com/FODW1)

FODW is a voluntary, non-political local community group and a registered charity. It works co-operatively with other groups such as 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.

Current FODW Trustees are Stewart Campbell (Chairman), Martin Grafton (Secretary), Bill Hassall (Treasurer), Morag Young (Membership Secretary), Rachel Bailey, David Lewin, Richard Horrell, Paul Blackburn and Pete Minting.