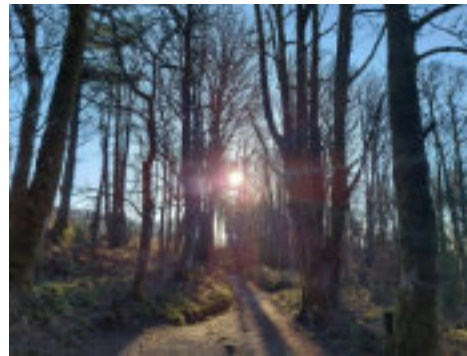


Friends of Duchess Wood

Spring Newsletter 2021



News in brief

Maintenance

The social distancing requirements of Covid-19 lock down has meant that there have been limited routine maintenance work parties over the last nine months. However there have been some ad - hoc work by individual members. Now that Lockdown restrictions are easing monthly work parties (held at 2pm on last Sunday of each month) are being reinstated. Contact David Lewin if you are interested in getting involved.

LNR Status

We continue to campaign for the Wood to retain its Local Nature Reserve status and are engaging with a number of local groups to elicit their support.

Committee vacancy

Our Treasurer for many years, Bill Hassall, resigned last year. Bill had steered the finances of FODW from its foundation in 2007, initially as Financial Examiner and from 2013 as Treasurer. Since his resignation Stewart Campbell, a previous Chair of the FODW, has stepped in as Acting Treasurer. However we urgently would like someone to take over from Stewart as soon as possible. As a small registered charity the role of Treasurer, whilst essential, is quite straightforward and you definitely don't need an accountancy qualification to do it! Please contact the Chairman if you feel you can help or know of someone who could.

Lastly the FODW gave Bill a token of their appreciation in a small gift which was presented (at a distance) to Bill by David Lewin.

Garden waste dumped in Wood

Over the last few weeks we saw garden waste was being dumped on the west facing slope above the Thurgood Bridge at the Patterson Drive entrance. The vegetation stretches down the slope almost to the level of the bridge. If you see anything similar please report it to one of the Trustees so that appropriate action can be taken.

New Chair's thoughts

Duchess Wood, more than ever since the pandemic began, has proved its worth as a place for people to visit for their physical and mental wellbeing. In order to ensure people want to continue visiting we need to maintain and improve the fabric of the Wood ie paths, fences, seating, etc and enhance biodiversity.

However, all this costs money and volunteer time. Therefore, in my first year as Chair my main objective is to increase membership and volunteer numbers. In addition, I want to build on the working relationship we have begun with Luss Estates Company and seek their help and support for those things we can't do such as hazardous tree felling,

I would also like to encourage more events such as guided walks. A trial herb walk is being planned for May. Also ex Chair Stewart Campbell's garden will be open to the public on Sunday 16 May as part of the Scotland's Gardens scheme. As his property backs on to Duchess Wood we will also be organising short guided wildflower walks into the Wood with a portion of the entry fees going to FODW. A couple of events for children in the school holidays could be considered if we can get help from Teachers with this. More herb, bat identification and pond life walks/tours are possible for later in the year but all of this is dependent on any restrictions on gatherings.

Please continue to enjoy the Wood, tell others about it and let us know any ideas you have.

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, Branching Out and a range of other bodies especially Luss Estates Company which is responsible for the Wood. We are grateful to them for the contributions they make to the successful running of the Wood.

Membership of FODW costs £10 per household per year and requires no obligations although volunteers to help with simple maintenance tasks are always welcome.

Current FODW Trustees are:
David Lewin (Chairman) david.lewin26@gmail.com
Martin Grafton (Secretary) martin.grafton@outlook.com
Stewart Campbell (Acting Treasurer) stewart.campbell@zen.co.uk
Morag Young (Membership Secretary) moragyong@ymail.com
Laura Baird, Paul Blackburn, Richard Horrell, Pete Minting and Miriam Walker.

YOUR VIEWS

The FODW email address is admin@duchesswood.org.uk .
Website - www.duchesswood.org.uk
Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/FODW1/>

Charity number SC039527

New Trustees

At the AGM two new Trustees were elected - Laura Baird and Miriam Walker. Both have provided a brief pen picture describing their interest in the Wood. We look forward to benefitting from their inputs into the running of the Wood.

Laura

Laura has lived in Helensburgh for the past ten years, within easy walking distance of the Wood where she is a regular visitor, appreciating the positive health benefits of this natural environment.

Laura is a keen amateur photographer and painter and finds inspiration from the constantly changing colours in the Wood throughout the seasons. Laura also recognises the importance of protecting the rich variety of wildlife in the woods and hopes that by contributing to the work of the committee, she will be able to play a part in protecting and maintaining this special place for the wildlife and everyone who visits the Wood.

Miriam

Since moving to Helensburgh in 2011 Miriam has been a huge fan of Duchess Wood and loves how it has given her two young children the opportunity to climb trees, build dens, forage and bird spot as well as much needed calm in their busy lives!

Miriam is keen to promote the endless outdoor learning opportunities for children and their families within Duchess Wood.

Miriam teaches at Rhu Primary School and also directs the local Military Wives Choir. She has grand ideas for community woodland singing so get those vocal chords warmed up!

Vandalism

Sadly we are still experiencing vandalism in the Wood.

Over the Christmas period vandals dumped a bench in the burn. We are grateful to those individuals that help remedy the vandalism, pick up litter / bottles and report incidents / suspicious activity to Police Scotland on 101



Life in the Wood

by Nicky Brownrigg

As a member of FODW, you probably experience the positive influence that being in the Wood has on your wellbeing - fresh air, exercise, a friendly 'hello', a sense of awe - but are you aware that many of the plants you walk past have traditional medicinal uses which could directly benefit your health?

By the time you read this, there will be at least 40 herbs in leaf or blooming in the Wood - plants that have a medicinal, culinary or domestic use. The Wood is a veritable medicine chest, with plants to ease pain (willow bark), soothe bruises (daisy) and even



coughs (honeysuckle flowers, left, NOT the poisonous berries!) or colds (elder flowers, right).

Our ancestors would have foraged for their remedies:

eating raw leaves, or maybe chewing leaves and then spitting them out onto their skin to form a rudimentary poultice; making teas and cold infusions to drink, or from which to make a compress; or soaking herbs in alcohol, honey or vinegar to preserve them through the winter months. This knowledge has been passed down through the centuries and now over 7,000 medical compounds used in modern pharmaceuticals are derived from plants.

It is really important that you can identify herbs correctly, forage sustainably and avoid popular pee spots! One of the safest ways to learn about herbs is to go on a walk with a qualified herbologist and we hope to be able to offer herb walks later this year. Details will be posted on our Facebook page and website.

Annual General Meeting

The 2020 AGM was held on Tuesday 26th January 2021 at 7:30pm by Zoom. Fifteen members were present.

At the meeting two new Trustees were elected (Laura Baird and Miriam Walker) and David Lewin was elected Chair.

New footpath

Following promises of funding from Persimmon Homes, Luss Estates Company and Lomond School we plan to start constructing a new footpath from the north-east corner of Duchess Gait to the main path round the Wood in late May. In addition, and subject to sufficient funds being available, we also plan to resurface the lower path from the car park round to Rhu Road Higher at some point this year.

Both these projects will result in some disruption and restrict the main car park use for a time as this is where path materials (aggregate) will be stored. Also when lorries deliver aggregate the car park will be closed for safety reasons.

We ask you to avoid visiting the Wood by car during this time. More information will be sent out and posters displayed nearer the time.

Tree nursery

In early December children from Rhu Primary School and their teachers visited the Wood and planted over 100 native deciduous saplings.

You can see these saplings in the nursery situated adjacent to the lower pond. Many thanks to Miriam Walker and her colleagues for organising these visits and to the Woodland Trust for donating the saplings. We know many children have already been back to see how their particular sapling is getting on.

