**CHAIR’S REPORT**

**AGM of FRIENDS OF PARK WOOD**

**11th Feb 2015**

Introduction

I am happy to say again: We have had a very good year!

I would like to summarise our achievements, thank some individuals and organisations, and look forward to the coming year.

Achievements

Over the course of the year we have run **five** **work parties** on the first Saturday of the month meeting at 10am at the bottom of Dale View Grove. Bad weather caused the cancellation of sessions in Sept, Oct and Jan. July's was cancelled due to the Tour de France and June's because of illness. Average attendance: five.

These five work parties have:

* improved access to the wood from Kendal Street
* removed all the litter from the large quarry and the area around Heather hill
* repaired the footpath near the top wall of the wood
* cleared the gulleys either side of the cobbled path from the very top of the wood down to the first stile
* collected over 15 bags of litter.

FoPW has agreed an **Action Plan** to improve the biodiversity of the wood. This informs a Work Plan to structure work over the year. We now have high-visibility **tabards** that clearly display 'Friends of Park Wood' and our website address written on the backs in a very nice font.

In Spring we were treated to two **dawn chorus birdwalks** led by Mark Doveston of Dovenature. On the first one in just two hours 23 species were identified including treecreeper, nuthatch, blackcap and siskin.

In June and August **grand tours** were organised, first of the nature reserve at Low Wood in Riddlesden and then of Park Wood. This was a great way to link up the friends of each wood (and of each other!) across the landscape.

Over the year we alerted the Council to **two dangerous trees and a vandalised gate**. The Council dealt with everything promptly. The Council also promptly removed rubbish bags collected by the work parties.

Local people, and other who have moved away - even as far as Australia - are writing to us in response to Liz Fisher's letter in The Keighley News requesting people's reminiscences about the wood. This is the beginning of a valuable **historical archive**.

Our **website** continues to inform people about the wood, its wildlife and heritage, as well as giving updates on the activities of the group.

We have held **five** **meetings**. Average attendance: nine. All here at Long Lee Village Hall.

We now have a **formalised membership** and a Membership Secretary, Liz Fisher. Personal data is kept secure.

10 members and two guests enjoyed our **Christmas Party** on Dec 17th at Dickie Bird's pub.

We have joined Keighley and Ilkley Voluntary and Community Action (**KIVKA**).

Thanks

I would like to thank all members of *Friends of Park Wood* for their support.

I would like to thank the Committee for their hard work: FRANCE-LEIGH HADRYSIAK our secretary, RICHARD FISHER treasurer, LIZ FISHER membership secretary and EVELYN SHIRE.

I would also like to say thank you to John Preshaw the warden at Low Wood, June Keeler of Long Lee Village Hall, Barbara Archer of BANDAG, Mark Doveston of DoveNature and the Keighley Walking Initiative.

Last but not least I would like to say a big thank you to Colin Whitfield of the Trees and Woodlands department of the Council.

Welcome to the coming year!

We have a number of projects and challenges to look forward to.

Projects

* **Dry stone walling course**. Would you like to learn this traditional skill? Increasing the capacity of our group enables us to carry out our own repairs. It's also fun and good exercise. This project also trains up members of Keighley Youth Co-op.
* **Glade creation**. Selectively felling a few large trees opens up a glade and lets the light in. The fallen trees rot providing food for invertebrates that in turn are food for birds. The extra light and food supply encourages a range of plants and animals to start to move in.
* **Pond creation**. A small body of standing water significantly increases the biodiversity of the whole area. Some invertebrates cannot reproduce without standing water.
* **Signage**. Informative and also shows the wood is valued.

Challenges

* Registering our footpaths as Rights of Way and working with Cliffe Castle Conservation Group and others to provide a network of paths across Keighley.
* Performing baseline surveys in the project areas so we can measure our progress towards increased biodiversity
* Being vigilant for signs of tree diseases - ash die-back and sudden-oak-death
* Scrutinising planning applications for developments closing-in on the wood
* Joining the steering committee of Big Local
* Having woody social events
* Remembering to enjoy the wood ourselves - it shouldn't all be work!
* Liaising with young offenders groups to include them in work parties

Conclusion

I am very optimistic about our group. We are not many in number but we are much better organised, connected and confident than we were a year ago.

Eric Yaffey

Chair

6th Feb 2015