

## FOLW AGM – 6<sup>th</sup> April 2018 – Site Wardens Report

**1. DURING 2017** – During the year we had nine Site Wardens working as Greensand Trust Volunteers, but some did have health issues reducing the number of patrols, however we made over 300 patrols, involving around 500 hours of volunteer time. Our thanks also go to Dave Munn for all the valuable assistance he gives in the woodland work and in reporting any problems he finds.

### **The Wardens Dealt with:-**

**a. Litter** – Overall we collected around 8 black plastic bags of litter. This figure continues to be low, but we are aware that some of our regular visitors collect litter when they find it. So fortunately with frequent patrols, the woodland usually appears free of litter. A number of incidents of fly tipping in the Stoke Road laybys were reported to CBC during the year. On one occasion my wife and I saw a man dumping rubbish in the layby, driving off as we approached. Our report to CBC was followed up by them but we were unable to provide sufficient evidence for them to prosecute.

### **b. Incidents we dealt with included :-**

- Whilst we only had a few bonfire sites to deal with and tidy up, we did have a major incident when a dog walker had to call the Fire Brigade out to deal with several trees being burnt by flammable fluid on the ground around them, and with long strips of toilet paper being thrown up into the trees and set on fire. Later that night two site wardens drove around the site to check all was OK.

- A large deep hole was dug in the new woodland which the Ranger and Dave Munn filled in. The vandals did leave a spade which will be a useful addition to the tool kit.

- Four tree shelters or dens, and several partly built ones were dismantled by the Wardens. All these structures are deemed unsafe for other users. We do not want other young children to enter them when the den may fall onto them. One of the dens was so well hidden that it took sometime before it was found and reported to the wardens by a dog walker. It was so well constructed it took the Ranger and three of us sometime to clear the site. The Landrover was full with tables, chairs, sheeting and rubbish.

- 12 small branches were cleared from paths, by the wardens after winds, four other awkward branches were dealt with by the Ranger. After high winds the Ranger was called to deal with a fallen tree in the Stoke Road Layby and another on the path near the Stoke Road entrance.

- We had a several incidents of vandalism. The FOLW bench in the new picnic area was attacked and partly dismantled. At the same time the vandals completely removed the adjacent old seat, throwing it into the bushes nearby. This has all now being sorted out by the Ranger and Malcom.

- Letters in red paint were found on a tree where the path to the old wood meets the bridleway, which the Ranger dealt with.

- Blue paint was sprayed over most of the wooden plank walls at Knaves Hill entrance. Also a kind soul tipped a load of liquid plaster over the path too. The Town Council obligingly arranged for all of it to be spray washed away.

- One of the Old Wood Conservation signs was completely taken away without trace and another was nearly removed. A replacement was donated by myself and installed, along with the other one being re-fixed by the Ranger and myself.

**3. CONTRACTORS ACTIVITY** – In March Contractors brush cut the briars in the ditches at Alwyns Gate. This has improved the drainage in the ditch. The briars and the habitat they create are growing back.

In December a contractor for one of the radio mast companies was seen by a dog walker. They had parked near Knaves Hill gate and managed to badly damage the noticeboard as they apparently left, probably reversed into it. They seem to have re-erected it. My wife and I managed to tape it together to keep it in use, but the noticeboard is now awaiting replacement, but there appears to be no funds available.

**4. WILDLIFE** - The Rookery reached its peak of 54 nests in 2009, before the shooters arrived in the bio mass field. After they left, the much reduced Rookery made a good recovery with 34 nests in 2016. Since then it declined again but in 2017 we had 15 nests with 10 in use. We continue to have sightings of deer, mostly Muntjac, but Roe deer are now being seen more often. The Badger activity continues but is in decline. Sparrowhawks successfully bred again in the old wood.

In July a medium sized Elm tree in the old wood suddenly lost its leaves over a fortnight. Steve Halton confirmed it was the re-emergence of the Dutch Elm disease that struck the woodland back in the 1980's. It never really goes away.

It is hoped that this Ancient Woodland will gain Local Nature Reserve status in the near future to give it further protection. Steve Halton is guiding it though the legal mine field.

**5. VISITORS** - My wife Sue and I have counted the number of people we have seen during our visits since 2007. The results in the table below show the number seen per visit averaged over each year :-

| Year     | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 |
|----------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Adults   | 2.7  | 3.5  | 6.4  | 6.0  | 9.2  | 8.72 | 8.41 | 8.54 | 9.15 | 9.11 | 9.31 |
| Children | 0.9  | 0.3  | 1.0  | 0.6  | 1.5  | 0.74 | 1.63 | 1.77 | 1.49 | 1.94 | 2.15 |
| Dogs     | 2.0  | 3.0  | 3.9  | 4.5  | 5.7  | 5.76 | 5.39 | 4.9  | 6.54 | 6.0  | 5.08 |

The increase in the number of adults and dogs visiting the woodland since CBC brought the wood in 2009, has continued, mainly dog walkers who seem happy to contend with the increasingly muddy paths. It is good to see the number of children continuing to increase, particularly well behaved ones.

**Overall another busy year.**

Could I finish by thanking our Ranger John Creasey for his patience, sense of humour and support throughout the year to his volunteer wardens.

**Presented to the 2018 AGM by Dave Booth**