

FOLW AGM – 12th April 2019 – Site Wardens Report

1. Since the Last AGM – We had eight Site Wardens working as Greensand Trust Volunteers, but one has had the year off due to other commitments. However we made over 500 patrols, involving around 1000 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.

2. The Wardens Dealt with:-

a. Litter – Overall we collected around 10 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. Of interest one tent was left behind in the woodland, a large blanket was left at another time, and someone else had a bonfire but supplied their own split logs in a string bag as sold in shops as firewood.

b. Incidents we dealt with included:-

- Just a few bonfire sites to deal with and tidy up, we had less than most years.
- Six 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 dens which may then fall onto them.
- The Wardens only found couple of fallen trees and a couple of large branches felled by the winds, requiring just a bit of tidying up to clear the footpaths.
- The Stoke Road verge to the Old Wood experienced some damage in May, when a vehicle of some sort demolished a few small trees on part of the verge. Wardens cleared up the debris and trimmed a couple of saplings.
- Two sleeping men were observed in the Old Wood in September, as they were not causing any problems, they were left to the GST Duty Ranger to check on later.
- While push bikes are legally allowed on the bridleway, we do still get the odd one causing a nuisance elsewhere.
- A motorbike was observed by one Warden recently in the new woodland making a mess of the footpaths, but it was difficult to stop or photograph with no registration plates to identify it.

3. Contractor Activity – Following a contractors vehicle damaging the noticeboard at Knaves Hill entrance a while ago, John Creasey our GST Ranger provided a replacement in October.

Network Rail had a contractor working in wood over the railway tunnel during December. They were checking on the safety of old access shafts used in the original construction of the main tunnel. The shafts had been capped and buried underground, but they managed to locate and check them. All was OK.

Recently CBC conducted a tree safety inspection of the Old Wood. This resulted in 17 mature trees being felled, mostly with internal disease, 11 others were topped or trimmed. 7 young trees were felled in the course of this work, as they seem to have been in the way.

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 recently in March we counted 16 nests with at least 10 in use, so hopefully an improvement this year. We continue to have reported sightings of deer, and foxes. Badger activity continues with four holes in use in one Sett. Sparrowhawks successfully bred again in the old wood in 2018. My Wife and I had a good sighting of a young Tawny Owlet at the entrance of the nest box in the Old Wood in May last year.

The Bio Mass field on Stoke Road alongside the new woodland has again been cut recently with the debris being removed. Maybe this is an opportunity for Skylarks to nest again, as they once did regularly. They have already been heard singing in the area.

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	2018
Adults	2.7	3.5	6.4	6.0	9.2	8.72	8.41	8.54	9.15	9.11	9.31	8.97
Children	0.9	0.3	1.0	0.6	1.5	0.74	1.63	1.77	1.49	1.94	2.15	1.46
Dogs	2.0	3.0	3.9	4.5	5.7	5.76	5.39	4.9	6.54	6.0	5.08	5.93

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 children in the wood, particularly well behaved ones, but interestingly the number has fallen slightly recently like the number of adults, maybe it was too hot in the summer.

6. Guided History Walks – The GST organised two walk and talks again this year, which I led, assisted by Sue my wife, who managed to sell 10 History Booklets raising £40 for the FOLW.

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.

**Compiled for the 2019 AGM by Dave Booth
and presented at the AGM by Judith Knight**