

## Friends of Linslade Woods - 2019 summary


Dear fellow member of FoLW the time has come to reflect on the past year. 2019 marked the 10th anniversary since CBC - Central Beds Council (Beds County Council as it was then) became the proud owners of Linslade Woods. This enabled a more sustained management of the area and of the volunteers who, since the creation of FoLW in 2006, turn out month by month to cut back overgrown brambles from paths, collect rubbish and coppicing. Over the years some of you have had to withdraw from physical activity but still support the group with your membership subscription. Sadly, it gets ever harder to recruit new volunteers or even new membership support. Fortunately the scouts get involved with hazel coppicing, guided by the Greensands Trust Ranger, and we can only hope that some of them will become our future volunteers!

Very early in 2019, saw some heavy duty work being carried out on behalf of British Rail, undertaking a shallow excavation to locate and ascertain the condition of the potential hidden shaft and its associated 'cap'. This work took just under a week and the area was returned to its prior condition including accesses and pathways.



Meanwhile, the monthly maintenance chores continue including the very welcome hedge laying expertise of the Tiddenfoot Friends who have finished the Stoke Road section and a large stretch along the top of the Bio field - there you will find a newly placed rustic bench. A lovely place to sit and contemplate uninterrupted views across to St Mary's church.

Noticeboards have been replaced where necessary, cleaned and information updated. No Cycling signs have been put in the areas of the woods where cycling is illegal.

The AGM in April was well attended at the Forster Institute. The guest speaker on this occasion was Bob Hook, who fascinated and educated us on the life and biology of Swifts and the growing need for their protection and how we can all help these little birds by fixing a swift box. Anyone willing to support this cause should contact Bob for advice and/or arrange for a swift box to be put up. Bob's email is: [bobhook864@btinternet.com](mailto:bobhook864@btinternet.com) The group is called Bedfordshire Swifts. 

More recently, you may have noticed some serious cutting back of scrub and trees along a section of the main ride to the east of the bridleway, south of the old wood where it gets extremely muddy and slippery. This is in preparation for the contractor to come and do the heavy digging work to put in French drains to re-direct the excess water away to a more suitable area. The project is organised by CBC and the costs shared with FoLW - to this end the Tesco "bags of help" grant allocated to FoLW has been committed. Digging of drains was programmed for November and work begun as agreed but had to be abandoned due to bad weather, to be resumed as soon as weather and rescheduling permits.

On a positive note, during 2019 we enjoyed the customary and popular Spring and Bluebell walks. The wood was also 'Mystery Shopped' with good results, yet again awarded the Green Flag Award, and CBC have provided a new memorial bench - it's location yet to be determined.

On a less positive note, the Canal Festival in July was very well attended but, our small stand did not generate much interest and we would welcome some input from you as to how to improve our

visuals, interaction with the public and generally make our cause relevant in the hurly-burly of food stalls and live music! We were unable to participate in the November 'Christmas Tree Festival' at All Saints Church, but hope to get artistic support from the Friends next year!

However, we are lucky to rely on the wardens who, as always, keep a watchful eye over building proposals, engineering works and wood surveillance. Many thanks to them for taking the time and trouble.



The year closed with the last Working Day on Saturday 21st December and the traditional jacket potato and sausages lunch. We were blessed with a glorious dry morning which lasted until just after 2pm, by which time we were all ready to take our happy aching limbs home!



... **Marching**

**on to 2020**

As we begin a new decade, with new challenges ahead we hope that many of you will join us on working days to enjoy the open space, camaraderie and occasional muscle aches after some physical activity. The first Activity Day for 2020 is Thursday 30th January, do join us at the top of the Soulbury Road Bridleway entrance, all tools are supplied, just be sure to have some strong gardening gloves and suitable footwear for possible wet muddy ground.

We shall continue to clear paths, collect litter and generally enjoy being close to nature. However, more serious work will also be taking place. Network Rail Arboricultural Team want to do some necessary work along the railway to the adjacent Tunnel Mouths and to the Bankside vegetation (north and south along the track). Some of the trees are getting very large and could cause serious damage if they fall onto the track or the power lines.

Over the next few years there will be a survey carried out regarding the health of the woods. Ash Die-back is an all too common disease and Linslade Woods are full of Ash, both planted and self-seeded. The survey, under the direction of CBC tree specialist will be undertaken by the wardens and committee to see how badly affected we are, and what proportion of the wood is comprised of unhealthy trees of other species. It's a worrying time for woodland guardians!

You might find this video clip interesting: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8sI7hgFZ-4g>

Finally, please put the AGM date in your diaries

**Friday 24th April 7.30pm**

**The Forster Institute**

**Guest Speaker** (to be confirmed)

**Dr Chris Brierley**

**Professor in Climate Science at University College, London**