

The Friends of Duchess Wood

Members' Newsletter No. 16 (April 2015)

This newsletter describes the work of FODW. Please read our item on page 2 about the Council's Duchess Wood Local Nature Reserve Committee which is responsible for the management of the Wood.

NEW INFORMATION CENTRE

Sandy Kerr unveils the new information boards



On 1st April Sandy Kerr, the former chairman of the Friends of Duchess Wood (FODW), unveiled the new information boards erected in the Pony Field.

Sandy outlined the history of the Wood, going back several million years, but fast-forwarding to the 19th century and Ann, Duchess of Argyll, after whom the Wood is named. Then to 1998 when Magnus Magnusson declared Duchess Wood to be a Local Nature Reserve and to 2007 when the Friends of Duchess Wood was established.

He drew attention to the exceptional value of the Wood to the community and praised the volunteers who help to maintain it.

As current chairman, Stewart thanked Sandy and all who had helped to create the information centre, especially Babcock International, constructor of the display panels. Joyce MacGinley, its PR Manager, was there along with Babcock graphic designer Kenny Steele and joiners Davie Thomson and Michael McCann. Stewart also thanked the Community Payback team for physical help and Helensburgh Round Table for funding.



Courses for horses – and other stream crossings

A programme of improvements to stream crossings has started. The picture below shows the first horse ford (beside the bridge east of the pony field). FODW has made gradients on both banks more gradual. FODW is in discussions with Community Payback to replace the temporary SW wooden bridge.



Top : Sandy Kerr declares the boards open by unveiling them. Centre left : Stewart makes a point while thanking all who assisted in the construction and installation of the information site. Centre right, Babcock International staff at the opening ceremony. Left : The western side of the boards showing some of the features to be seen in Duchess Wood.

It rained on the day, of course, but like an April Fool's trick in reverse, sunshine suddenly appeared at the crucial moment. So everyone repaired in good humour to the Rugby Club where there were coffee and cakes.

Visitors will also see soon new map information boards at the four main entrances to the Wood and additional waymarkers for the main red route around the Wood.

FODW is improving drainage in damp areas. We have provided a narrow drain around the new information boards and work has been done repairing other ditches. The photo right shows work near the car park.



FODW Spring Flower Walk leaflet

FODW has published a leaflet to accompany its Spring Flower Walk which is marked out by numbered posts in the lower part of the Wood.



The walk was devised by Alison Rutherford for the FODW. The blooms mentioned are mostly seen in May and June. Leaflet holders have been placed in the car park and the Millig Street entrance to the Wood. It is intended to hold a further guided flower walk at some point in the summer.

Tree planting has continued to be a priority for FODW with a significant number of native fruiting trees planted around the Pony Field. If any Member would like to donate £17.50 for a native fruiting tree to be planted, FODW

will arrange purchase and planting. Please contact us at fodwg84@gmail.com



Stewart Campbell and Morag Young with a grant certificate.

Grants

FODW seeks lesser grants to assist its work, and to supplement the council's task of obtaining larger-scale grants to meet the Management Plan objectives. Tree planting has been a key reason for FODW grants. David Lewin is FODW's grant-hunter-in-chief.

IT COULD HAVE BEEN WORSE Storms this winter were not as bad as the winter before and the number of trees fallen fewer.

The picture shows a tree which fell east of the bridge by the Pony Field. Robert McKendry sliced up the trunk, and FODW removed debris.



Logs for next winter.

FODW now has a stock of dried timber suitable for logging. If any Member would like a trailer load for a donation to FODW please contact us on fodwg84@gmail.com



the contractors who gave assurances that any damage would be repaired. We understand that the work was contracted by the rail authorities and the fence itself is very welcome

"WHAT'S THIS MESS?" YOU ASKED FODW has received queries and grumbles in April about damage by tracked vehicles and disruption. **It was in a good cause** : a long-requested fence between the Wood and the railway for the safety of the public was being erected. But access actions were a bit crude so FODW held a meeting with



YOUR VIEWS

As a result of updates to the website, the FODW email address is now fodwg84@gmail.com. The website shows the contact email as enquiry@duchesswood.org.uk, and this forwards emails to the fodwg84 address.

Website. www.duchesswood.org.uk

THANKS TO ARGYLL AND BUTE COUNCIL

This newsletter is about the Friends of Duchess Wood (FODW) and it is written for its members.

But it is important to remember that Argyll and Bute Council (A&BC) manages the Wood by agreement with the landowners, Luss Estates. Management is vested in the Council's Duchess Wood LNR Committee (DWLNRC) chaired by Cllr. Aileen Morton.

The work of the DWLNRC includes :

- Negotiating with external bodies
- Completing the Wood's 5-year plans
- Seeking major grants for the Wood
- Ensuring safety in the Wood
- Removing dangerous trees and branches
- Dealing with invasive species (e.g. Japanese knotweed)
- Insurance (including for FODW)
- Laying down terms for events held in DW
- Approval (or refusal) of requests for events (e.g. cross-country competitions, the Forest School, the 'Enchanted Wood', etc.)
- Regularly clearing of the litter bins
- A wide variety of other functions

FODW's role is one of voluntary support to the DWLNRC, not main management.

FODW has two places on the DWLNRC to represent the public and to get approval for its work in support of the DWLNRC.

FODW is a voluntary, non-political local community group and a registered charity. It works co-operatively with other groups such as the Lower Clyde Greenspace, the Employability Team, Community Payback, the Access Trust, the Green Belt Group, and a range of other bodies especially, of course, the Council's Duchess Wood Local Nature Reserve Committee which is responsible for the Wood. We are grateful to them for the contributions they have made to make the Wood so special.

Current FODW Trustees are Stewart Campbell (Chairman), Alastair Macbeth (Secretary), Bill Hassall (Treasurer), Morag Young, Margaret Paul, Rachel Bailey, Kevin Johnson, David Lewin, Richard Horrell.