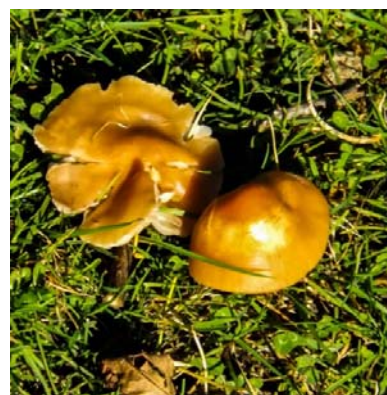


# Friends of Gedling House Woods

## Annual Report 2014



*A selection of fungi found in the woods during the last year*



*Cover photographs by Tony Morris*

## *News and updates*

*What has been happening in the woods and meadows over the past year . . .*

In 2013, the meadow yielded about 44 large bales of hay, which again went to a local farm.



The meadows are in the best condition they have been in since FGHW took over the management of the site. Despite the very wet winter, where some well-trodden paths in the meadows were in danger of becoming waterlogged mud, they have recovered well. The warm spring has seen meadow flowers come into their own, both on the margins and in the meadow itself. The spring brought many bluebells, patches of wood anemone and wild garlic (pictured) in the woods, too.



The committee has recently undertaken a major revision of FGHW's risk assessments for volunteer work in the woods, including those for using hand tools and using machinery. These reflect best practice seen in other organisations of this type. Members will soon be able to access these on our website if they wish.



Regretfully we have had to deal with vandalism to trees at the top of Wood Lane, opposite 65 and 67 Wood Lane. It is really disappointing that young, recently planted trees, well in from the fence, have been cut down. These are the very ones that will regenerate the woodland as the older trees closest to the road reach the end of their lives. The damage was reported to the police and was followed up informally; hopefully no further incidents will occur.

FGHW is in the process of applying for a further 10-year funding programme from Natural England. Primarily to support farmers, FGHW is eligible for both the entry and higher level schemes because we manage nearly six hectares of meadows. We have been working with a consultant in the farmed environment to put together an application, which is likely to be accepted. As part of this scheme, we have to allow educational visits, which can include visits from the local nursery on Wood Lane, and each visit generates a small income. This is particularly important now Gedling Borough Council is not able to fund FGHW in the way it has done in the past. We have met with GBC officers and they have indicated their continued support for the group, including offering advice on a renewed plan for woodland management, and extending FGHW's contract for a further period to match Natural England's 10-year plan.

To support educational visits from the Daisies Day Nursery, we have installed a gate from the second meadow to Military Road, which is kept locked except when used for Nursery children to enter and leave the field. Unfortunately, the lock was stolen a few weeks ago, leaving open access, which is neither desirable nor intended. A more substantial lock was fitted, but this too has been stolen, again leaving the gate unlocked. The theft has been reported formally to the police and they are investigating. Meanwhile, members of the committee are meeting residents to try to resolve the concerns they have about the gate.

Visitors will have noticed the Hebridean black sheep again this year, shown here resting after a hard morning's grazing. They visited the meadows for a few weeks from November.



Photo: Tony Morris

Schools and nurseries made 10 educational visits to the woods and meadows this year. The committee thanks Anne Richards for her continuing contribution, along with Dave Richards, to ensuring these visits go smoothly.

## ***Local improvement scheme***

*Work on the scheme is underway . . .*

As we reported last year, FGHW's application to clear and reseed the glade and to clear the brambles from the sloping D-shaped area above the meadow further from the road was successful. This area was originally part of the ancient meadow on the site, but has been overgrown with bramble and elder for many years.

Those members who braved the muddy paths this winter to walk in the woods will have seen the radical changes taking place in the area uphill from the second meadow. Much of the work has now been completed and the D-section of meadow has been cleared and prepared for seeding in the autumn.



*Before*



*After*

Work started at the end of January 2014, clearing a way through for a new fence round the D-section to match those surrounding the lower two meadows. The work had to be done in winter, despite the difficulties caused by the excessive rain, to avoid disturbing nesting birds. Gates have been installed to allow access to the meadow once it matures but, until then, this upper D section will be closed.



*Anthills*



*New fencing*

Some of the more mature trees (mostly hawthorn with some ash) remain, as in the other two meadows. With the woodland and shrubs that border the meadow just outside the new fence, these will continue to provide shelter and food for birds and insects. The meadow also contains some nests of yellow ants at its lowest point near the fence, and this area has been cleared by hand to avoid disturbing the anthills.

## *The aims of Friends of Gedling House Woods*

*A reminder of what we are here for . . .*

To protect, maintain and develop the local natural environment of Gedling House Woods Local Nature Reserve and its immediate surroundings, including wildlife, woods, adjacent meadowland, hedgerows trees and verges.