

Friends of Gedling House Woods

Annual Report 2012



Spring



Summer



Autumn



Winter



News and updates

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

Volunteers undertook a big clearance in the top 'D' section in July, with a bonfire to get rid of the large amount of vegetation removed. This area has been left to re-seed itself naturally.

The seat was moved to the glade in May 2011 and now provides a resting place for quiet reflection and observation. Unlike other areas where nearby grass allows re-seeding to take place naturally, the location of the glade means that we shall be removing the weeds and re-seeding in the autumn.



During the year we arranged for an inspection of trees close to the path. As a result, several dead and damaged trees were felled. These were cut and left in much longer lengths of wood than usual. We are trying this approach to ensure we can continue to provide a good habitat for invertebrates, and also deter visitors removing logs for their own purposes, often not realising why the wood needs to remain on site.

The top of the bank on the bend has also been cleared, together with a small area at the northern edge of the wood. These have been replanted with whips of native trees. These smaller saplings were used as the area is very dry and there may not have been enough water to support larger plants.

Some fence posts and wire fencing have been repaired, both along Military Road and from the end of that road round to the meadow, where falling trees damaged both fence and posts.

Visitors will have notice that no sheep have been present this year. This was entirely due to the small growth of grass caused by the dry summer. We managed only three large bales of hay this year, compared with the usual 40! We now have a consultant farmer to support us in our maintenance of the meadow – David Prince.

We have had some stones laid at the lower field gate to avoid the narrow pedestrian entrance to the field becoming a mud-bath in wet weather. The stones provide much better drainage and eventually, we expect them to grass over, as has happened close to the vehicle gate.

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.

Education report

The Friends of Gedling House Woods are lucky to have among our members Ann and Dave Richards, who ensure that local schools are able to make use of the woods through their hard work, interest and experience in working with children and young people.

Since we began several years ago, 2011 has probably been the busiest year with our work with schools.

We now have established links with all of the schools within walking distance in the Gedling area and are delighted to have welcomed both Willow Farm and All Hallows Primary Schools to the site for the first time this year. Our involvement with our schools includes a pre-visit to the school to talk to the children, a site visit and a follow-up visit to talk to staff and children after the visit, when required.

As well as the usual discussions about the season's flora and fauna, we aim to make the visits relevant to the needs and curriculum of the school. We consult the schools to find out if they have any particular areas that they would like us to deal with. As well as the obvious seasonal variations, this year we have focused on butterflies and moths, shelter building, and the hunt for 'minibeasts'. You would be surprised how much the children learn from the search for such things as earwigs, ants, and woodlice and their detailed examination of them when they find them!

We are most grateful for the help given to us by members of the committee who help us by preparing the site for the children's visits. Anne and I are very grateful to Carol, David and John for the help that we are given. Signs are put up, entrances are cleared for parking and the grass cut on the picnic areas. We always have to make preparations for the very popular summer picnics which are always a highlight of the summer term.

We continue to have problems with dogs fouling the field but we repeat what we said last year – the great majority of dog owners are really most co-operative.

We look forward to another busy year showing our local children around this excellent site and giving them experiences that they might never have had.

Ivy

Ivy is always controversial, as the debate about whether it damages buildings and trees seem to run and run . . . Carol Whiteley dispels some myths.

Over the years, quite a few people have said to committee members that the ivy in Gedling House Woods is killing the trees. As a result, the committee, which manages the woods and meadow on behalf of Gedling Borough Council, has sought professional advice on this (and on many other matters as well). The experts say the ivy should remain, as it provides food and shelter for a wide range of birds, insects and mammals. Here's what they told us.

Ivy is not parasitic and supplies itself with water and nutrients. It only uses the tree as a means of support. It is the only native British evergreen climbing shrub. When mature it bears yellow-green flowers in autumn. These provide the last supply of pollen and nectar for bees.

Many other insects, including butterflies, take advantage of these late flowers. Black-coloured berries form the following spring. These have a high fat content and provide birds with an early source of food.

Ivy provides nesting and roosting places at this time. During the winter months the evergreen leaves of the ivy provides a safe haven for wildlife, particularly in deciduous woods like ours.

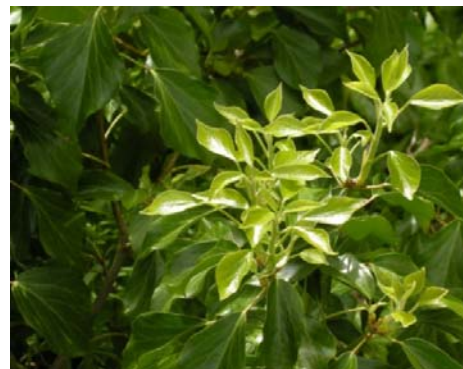
In parks and gardens ivy is often discouraged and trees are loved for the beauty of the bark and perfect form. Here, we like to see ivy using trees for support.

Sometimes trees fall when covered with ivy. This is not caused by the ivy damaging the trees, as the experts tell us that these would have been poor specimens anyway. Sometimes the wind is part of the problem. A lot of ivy at the top of a weak tree can act as a sail and cause the tree to fall on a windy day, particularly if it is in an exposed spot. Regular inspections are undertaken by arboriculturists to make sure that trees growing at the side of paths in the woods are safe.

The next time you are walking in the woods, look at the two different shapes of the leaf. The juvenile leaf has the characteristic lobed 'ivy-leaf' shape. A mature plant produces side branches with elliptical leaves and flowering shoots.



Juvenile leaves



New growth of mature leaves