



FRIENDS OF RIDGE WOOD

Informal Meeting and AGM

Community Meeting Room, Tesco Extra, Yate

Start time: 7.45pm

Monday 23rd May

PRESENT: Sarah Hardcastle Chair
Jill Hows Vice Chair
David Barlow Secretary / webmaster
Geoff Millard Treasurer
Dianne Millard
Dai Edwards

Apologies: Richard Aston
Emma Morrison
Edward Wrighton
Jeanette Wrighton
Roger McLean

1. **Introductions / apologies**
2. **Minutes from last meeting**

Minutes circulated, agreed.

3. Annual General Meeting

Chair's report 2015-16

Sarah summarised the group's activities over the past year. The committee structure has remained the same apart from the addition of the new post of publicity officer. All agreed that this has helped to ensure all events are well publicised and has reduced the work of the chair: a vote of thanks was given to Emma for her hard work so far.

Public events during the year have included Forest Fun Time, Moth Discovery Evening and Evening Chorus walk. Forest Fun Time 2015 was the first time in some years that a family event has been held in the woodland, and all agreed that it was very successful. The Evening Chorus walk has also proved to be excellent and very popular on two occasions now, and will probably become an annual fixture. The Moth Discovery evening was disappointing in terms of the number of moths but would be a good event to run again in future years, slightly earlier in the season (late summer / early Autumn). It was noted that collecting voluntary donations at the Evening Chorus walk enabled around two thirds of Ed Drewitt's fee for leading the walk to be covered without dipping into group funds.

6 work mornings were held during the year (August, September, November, January, February and April). Tasks completed have included litter picking, vegetation clearance, dead hedging and clearing Spanish bluebells from the woodland – it was very encouraging to see an excellent display of native bluebells this year and very few remaining Spanish bluebells. There was perhaps less woodland management carried out by the Friends this year (e.g. no coppicing), mainly due to lack of expertise on many workdays. Attracting new volunteers to help out on workdays, as well as increasing skill levels within the group, remain key priorities.

Other achievement during this year included obtaining an SGC grant to fund the purchase of new tools, and producing / distributing an annual newsletter to raise awareness of our activities locally.

Thanks were offered to all committee members for their help over the past year.

Treasurer's report (GM)

Accounts summary was circulated. Current balance of the account is £1,543.89 – this includes the £400 donation recently received from Hanson's to fund Forest Fun Time 2016. Expenditure items included fees paid to the leaders of our events, our insurance policy, website hosting costs and room hire charges (noting that our current meeting venue is free). Income was generated from donations at the Forest Fun Time and Evening Chorus events, and interest on the account. Accounts were recently audited and found to be satisfactory.

Secretary's report (DB)

There are currently 79 members on the mailing list. This includes 5 new contacts acquired this year; 1 contact moved away from the area. The annual newsletter generated some new members.

This year the Friends were contacted by the Chipping Sodbury Tourist Information centre who produced a window display on the woodland in February, and BBC Radio Bristol who expressed interest in attending a work morning as part of their program "Clueless" – hopefully this may still happen on a future date.

Members of the public have contacted the FORW regarding overhanging trees and injury to a dog on broken glass inside the woodland – they were redirected to the appropriate contacts at SGC.

Website activity overall appears to be reducing – DB proposed moving the domain to a cheaper host company (currently website hosting costs the group £80/year) and setting up a single information page which would link to facebook / Twitter. EM is currently working on a FORW facebook page (covered later). However this would need to be run past RA / SGC and it may be that some members might appreciate a traditional website in addition to social media presence. This can be discussed again at our next meeting.

Nominations for committee posts

Chair – nomination of Sarah Hardcastle to continue; proposed by Geoff, seconded by David – all agreed

Vice-chair – nomination to continue Jill Hows; proposed by Sarah, seconded by David – all agreed

Treasurer – nomination to continue Geoff Millard; proposed by Jill, seconded by Dai – all agreed

Secretary / webmaster – nomination to continue David Barlow; proposed by Dianne, seconded by Sarah – all agreed

Publicity – nomination to continue Emma Morrison; proposed by Sarah, seconded by Jill – all agreed

Regular Friends of Ridge Wood Meeting – chaired by Sarah

4. Matters Arising

- Tool purchase: SH informed the group that Tudor Environmental have agreed to make their trade prices available to us, resulting in a reduction in the cost of our planned tool purchase. Currently this stands at £640.86, leaving a shortfall of £71.60 to be funded from the group account. However, she also stated that it would be possible to purchase some gloves in sizes appropriate for women at a higher cost: all agreed that this would be sensible given the number of female volunteers within the group. Therefore SH will request a final quote with 15 pairs of mens' and 15 pairs of womens' gloves: this is likely to increase the total cost by around £40. GM will then arrange for a bank cheque to be issued as payment – delivery of the tools will be free. Once the delivery date is known we will ask EM to contact Ali Womack at the Gazette to hopefully arrange a photograph and short article promoting our work.

Actions: SH, GM, EM

- Photography competition: Some entries have already been received for this. Following a meeting between JH and Waitrose CS's community matters representative, it was verbally agreed that Waitrose would supply prizes for this competition which is great news. The possibility of a Waitrose company director judging the competition was also discussed; nobody raised any objections to this. However, we have yet to receive any more details or confirmation in writing; JH will continue to chase. If unsuccessful, other suggestions for judges include JH's niece who runs a design company and DH / DB, but alternative prizes would have to be found, possibly by approaching local companies within the Yate Riverside development. DB has produced an excellent poster advertising the competition, which will go onto the woodland noticeboards for the next few weeks. SH will ask EM to distribute the poster more widely (e.g. to Yate shopping centre and other local places where we have publicised other FORW events). DE will take a poster to St John's Mead school and GM/ DM will take copies to Broadway Infants and The Ridge Junior schools.

Actions: JH, EM, DE, GM, DM

- Facebook page: EM has confirmed that she is working on this. She has asked whether the group would prefer the page to be titled "Ridge Wood" or "Friends of Ridge Wood" – the latter was more popular. DB will arrange to send some pictures to EM which may be suitable for the front page. SH and JH would be happy to be granted rights to update the page in addition to EM. DB will put a link on the FORW website to the facebook page once up and running.

Actions: EM, DB

- Volunteer hours: SH confirmed that these have now been submitted to SGC as follows: July-Sept 15 115.25 hours, Oct-Dec 15 43 hours, Jan-Mar 16 81.5 hours. Please could everyone please continue to keep a note of their hours and give to SH at the end of the next quarter (April-June).

Actions: All

5. Events

- The Evening chorus walk which took place recently was again felt to be a great success.
- Forest Fun Time, our family event for 2016, was discussed. The date for this event is confirmed as Thursday 18th August. Last year we held a separate dedicated planning meeting for this, but it was felt that as we are running the event along similar lines as last year this would not be needed this time. All agreed to keep the timings of the event the same (2-4.30pm). The event will again be aimed at accompanied children up to age 11. The activities that Forest Schools will be asked to provide were discussed with reference to last year's list: it was felt that leaf printing, leaf mosaics and a bug hunt would be the best choices. SH will liaise with forest schools about this. SH presented some ideas for varying the quiz trail stations which everyone was happy with – she will circulate the final stations around the committee before printing. The trail will follow the same route as last year, but in the reverse direction. As the event is sponsored by Hanson's it was agreed that it should remain free but voluntary donations for refreshments will be collected on the day (noting that this year Forest Schools will charge £400 so refreshments and any additional expenses will need to be funded from the FORW account). JH volunteered to purchase the refreshments again. GM and DM will again put together an information board for the glade, and SH also suggested having a sign-up sheet in case parents attending with their children wish to join the Friends. SH will check that RA is available again to provide hot drinks using the storm kettle. It was also agreed that the welcome desk will be situated just inside the woodland this year rather than in Jubilee Gardens as some attendees had trouble locating it last time. As per last year, we will aim to do a litter pick on the Sunday before the event (14th August) to ensure the woodland looks at its best. DB will produce a poster (same as last year with new date) and this will be distributed to local schools alongside the photo competition information. The event will also be publicised via all of the usual avenues.
- SH confirmed that our bat walk will take place on the evening of Wednesday 21st September at 7pm as part of the Discover festival (registered this week). Registration will be via the SGC website, and the event will be limited to 40 attendees (at the request of Avon Bat group).
- Regarding future events, it was noted that Ian McGuire is running owl prowls again this season, and that apparently some owl activity has been detected in the woodland recently.

Action: All

6. Summer work programme

2 dates have been agreed for work mornings on 3rd July and 4th September, continuing our work programme over the summer. Originally the aim was to use these mornings to re-gravel the steps / paths in the woodland using gravel supplied

by Hanson's. However RA is now unable to attend the July date, and overall it is felt that we do not have sufficient volunteers or time to undertake this work. Therefore SH/JH will liaise with RA regarding whether there are other tasks which could usefully be completed in July; if not then this workday may be cancelled. The September date will remain in place as Autumn work can likely begin at this stage.

7. AOB

- Concern was expressed about the building work now underway at the Quarry Rd entrance which encroaches on the wildflower area surrounding the standing stone. By the time the group became aware of what was planned (recent email from RA) it was too late to raise any objection. It is disappointing that nobody informed us directly about this planned work to give us an opportunity to comment. We will aim to discuss this further with RA at our next meeting.
- SH will liaise with RA regarding the tree planting which was discussed at our last meeting, in particular aiming to fill the gap that has been left by a fallen tree that was removed near to the main path towards Quarry Rd.
- SH mentioned the volunteers' celebration event run by SGC which will take place on the evening of 9th June this year. Unfortunately no committee members are available to attend.
- SH mentioned that via the BBC's Easterwatch program she has discovered a website called "Do-it" that advertises volunteering opportunities. This could be a way of potentially attracting more volunteers to workdays. She will look into getting the group registered on this site.

Action: SH

8. Date of next meeting

- This will be set via doodle poll aiming to find a date that all of the committee plus RA can make (ideally a Wednesday in September).

Action: SH