

Friends of Oxleas Woodlands

July 2023 NEWSLETTER



from the
FOW Steering Group

Hello Friends,

It's the time of year when our roses are scenting the air and looking spectacular.

I'm pleased to report that in Castle Wood we didn't lose any to frosts this winter and all are now blooming wonderfully for their second or third summer since volunteers replaced them.

The manure that we added to the beds last year has really made a difference, enriching the soil and maintaining some moisture in the hot weather that we have had recently. Unfortunately, we didn't receive any bark chippings, which would have added an extra layer of protection from the sun.

In an effort to control weeds, two of the beds have now been planted with *Saxifraga x urbium* (London Pride) and a third has some *Stachys byzantina* (Lamb's Ear). The hope is that these will spread over time below the roses to reduce the amount of exposed soil where weeds flourish. It will mean that we spend less time weeding.

The remaining roses in Jack Wood are also in bloom. There are less and less of them each year as they are very old now and the soil around their roots is poor and shallow. Unfortunately, we don't currently have enough volunteers to properly look after this garden. Perhaps you could join us? To find out more email oxleas.volunteers@gmail.com

Katie Barretta
Steering Group Member

Pathways Project Video

Have you seen our new video?

It features some of our volunteers explaining the problems facing our woods, and why we are repairing and improving the footpaths.

Watch it on YouTube youtu.be/xPfU7OZ4pu8

Lower Path Fundraising

We now have over 600 members - that's 600+ people reading this newsletter. Please help us raise the next £50,000 that we need to complete the Lower Path in Jack Wood. You can also spread the word to other people who care about the woods.

We've reached our first £1,000 on JustGiving AND have received an additional £1,500 in off-line donations. Thank you!

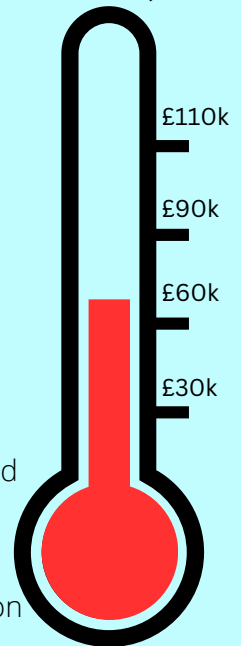
If you're able to make a donation please use

justgiving.com/crowdfunding/friends-of-oxleas-woodlands-1

or email Sue for alternative ways to donate

oxleas.members@gmail.com

£150,000



To become a member of the Friends of Oxleas Woodland please complete the membership application form www.oxleaswoodlands.uk/contact-us

www.oxleaswoodlands.uk

For More Information

@OxleasFriends

Friends of Oxleas Woodlands

Oxleas London Pride

When we heard that Eltham Palace were thinning out their *Saxifraga × urbium* (London Pride) last Autumn we leapt at the chance of giving some of the plants a new home. As the rose garden is close to the SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest) area and within the nature reserve, we do have to be careful about where plants come from, and specifically whether they might have pests, disease or traces of chemicals. Knowing this to be a safe source, we quarantined the plants over winter with a volunteer then planted them this spring as ground cover below the roses in Jack Wood. They are already looking great.



Lower Path Improvements

Complete Ecology contractors began work on Lower Path in Jack Wood during June. They have created a new entrance at the Oxleas Meadow end, replaced one bridge and improved the approaches to the second bridge. A top layer of self-compacting gravel will be laid on top of the base - visible in the photographs below.



Fencing

Whilst out and about, you may notice some fences have been put up. On the advice of the Ecology expert that we engaged last year, we will be putting up more fences. These will be temporary and will allow the vegetation to recover by reducing erosion, compaction and trampling. Please respect these boundaries and enjoy other areas in the woodlands.

Castle Wood Meadow

Whilst the birds have been nesting, our conservation volunteers have been staying out of the woodlands and have instead donated many hours of their time and energy to Castle Wood Meadow.

If you're out for a walk in the area, you will probably notice that the paths are much wider and the bin is much more accessible. By cutting back the undergrowth that had grown across the tarmac, we encourage people to stay on the path and allow the verges to be a safe place for wildlife. The boundaries between two habitats, in this case Meadow and Woods, are known as Ecotones. By clearing old brambles, we encourage fresh growth and increased biodiversity.

You might also notice we've cut back some low-hanging branches and you probably won't notice that we've started removing saplings from below the mature trees. This will help them thrive for another 200 years. The whole meadow is planned to be mowed this summer.



Volunteering Dates

July

Friday 14th, 10am-1pm Woodland Conservation
Friday 21st, 2-4pm Rose Garden
Saturday 22nd, 10am-noon Litter Picking
Friday 28th, 10am-1pm Woodland Conservation

August

Friday 11th, 2-4pm Rose Garden
Saturday 12th, 10am-1pm SHWWP*
Friday 18th, 10am-1pm Woodland Conservation
Saturday 19th, 10am-noon Litter Picking
Sunday 20th, 10am-noon Rose Garden

*Shooters Hill Woodlands Working Party

For all the volunteer sessions and events planned for 2023 please see the calendar issued with June's newsletter.

oxleas.volunteers@gmail.com

If you would like to join us as a volunteer please contact us on oxleas.volunteers@gmail.com

Friends of Oxleas Woodlands

FOW Walks & Events

Family Explorer

Sunday 9th July, 10:15am

Families with primary-aged children are invited to join Sue Houghton to explore the woods around Severndroog Castle, where we'll be inspired by the beauty of nature, from the giant trees to the tiny insects.



Woodland Walk

Sunday 16th July, 10am **FULL**

Join botanist, Richard Price, for a meander around the woodlands. Our eagle-eyed walk leader has fantastic knowledge; you'll be surprised at what can be learnt. Richard identifies and describes the plants and their uses - and some of the lore and legends that accompany them.

Woodland History Walk

Sunday 20th August, 3pm

Ever wondered why the Oxleas Woodlands are still there? Come and join historian and FOW Chair Tom Wareham on a ramble around the woodlands as he outlines their history and some of the historical features that remain. Discover sculptures of nature and the impacts by man against a backdrop of changing scenery.

Houses in the Woods Walk

Sunday 27th August, 3pm

Join Tom Wareham and explore the locations of six of the great houses which once stood in the woodlands.

Using images and anecdotes, Tom will tell the story of the houses and introduce you to some of the fascinating people who once lived in them.

Booking is essential for all walks. Please contact Mike oxleas.events@gmail.com or use the QR code to book directly. Walks are free, donations are welcome.



Fires

Last year, we had some devastating fires in Hotel Field and extensively in Shepherdleas Wood - where the damage to spring bulbs may never recover.

Please remember that fires & BBQs are not permitted in any part of Oxleas Woodlands; the ground is just too dry for a fire to be put out safely, however 'safe' you think it might be.



If you do come across a fire or a piece of ground that is smouldering, please call the fire brigade. You might want to use [What3Words](#) to help them locate you and the fire.

Water

During hot dry weather, it is hard for animals to find water in the woodlands. If you have a garden, consider putting water out for birds and other wildlife.

Hedgehogs wander an average of 2km every night so make a 10cm hole in your fence and look out for prickly nocturnal visitors.

Amphibians

The rain at the end of June encouraged toadlets to leave the pond they were born in and to set off to find new homes. They will hibernate over winter in leaf mulch before returning to their birth-pond in spring.



Members' Meeting

Wednesday 21st was our Members' Meeting. We had the first viewing of the [Pathways Fundraising Film](#). An update from the Steering Group included the council deeming a Jack Wood Terrace alcove unsafe, plus the consideration of a safe-guarding policy. Steve Bolton from Butterfly Conservation then spoke about how to improve our grasslands.



If you would like to join us as a volunteer please contact us on oxleas.volunteers@gmail.com