

Report for the Parish Council Meeting from the
Friends of Island Pond Wood Ltd
2020/2021

This report covers the activities of both the Friends of Island Pond Wood Ltd and the Friends of Island Pond Wood Association. The Association was formed in 2008 with the limited company being formed later as the legal entity required to hold the lease from The Woodland Trust. Following the retirement from the Association committee of the long standing founding members, Maureen and Bob Roberts and Judy Taylor, the decision was taken to merge the two separate branches. More about this later in this report.

In common with most of the rest of the world, since March 2020 the limited company Board meetings have been held via Zoom. Public liability insurance was renewed with Zurich costing £325.53, with additional insurance via the Angling Trust covering fishing activity in the sum of £62. The Parish Council continued to fund the grass cutting in the wood, which the limited company is responsible for under the terms of the lease, at a cost of £384 for the year. Our membership of The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) was maintained, once again at no cost this year thanks to their funding from the National Lottery. In the absence of specific proposals for major externally-funded projects, explorations of fundraising have been in abeyance during 2020/2021.

Association activity in the wood was inevitably affected by the on-going Covid-19 pandemic. Nevertheless some maintenance work was managed by breaking the work down into small tasks which could be done by couples as part of their exercise regime. As Bicester Green Gym were unable to work in some of their usual locations last year they could join us for more sessions and so total volunteer hours were close to previous years at 346 hours.

Contractor activity was equally impacted by Covid so the only work possible in addition to the regular mowing and annual meadow cut was pollarding the third and final willow by the pond. Additional bird boxes were installed during 2020 but no maintenance was done to the existing boxes. We have been unable to check occupancy at the end of the season because of the later lockdowns. A new venture this year has been the installation of Fairy Doors along the hard path near the pond. This has encouraged many visits to the wood by families. There was also a FIPW entry in the village scarecrow competition when Robin Hood guarded the entrance and handed out membership leaflets. Many thanks to Annie Sparks and her companions for organising this initiative.

Yellow rattle continues to flourish and spread in the meadow area at the top of the wood. Two new patches have been cleared and seed sown to encourage further growth. Some pre-grown wild flowers were planted in the wood in spring but a virtual drought made for difficult growing conditions and not all survived. This year we had another dedicated pond work session in September. Our regular maintenance regime includes a two year cycle of keeping the banks clear of excessive growth and cutting back the rather invasive reeds as well as leaving some areas for the wildlife. The pond level was again so low this year that we were able to cut back reeds from the bank rather than a boat. A canoe was used to work round the island clearing abandoned fishing tackle and pruning some trailing branches.

As mentioned at the beginning of this report Maureen, Bob and Judy retired from the association committee at the AGM in January 2021. They expressed their thanks and appreciation to all those who were involved this year, whether participating in the work parties, providing administrative support (many thanks to Tracey Johnson for this), or for simply walking round and enjoying the wood. Thanks also to those people who made donations to the woodland through the year, some small, some large, which enable us to tackle the various projects. Those attending the AGM then expressed their thanks and appreciation to the outgoing committee for their many years of hard work and dedication to the wood, and flowers and cards were presented (by Bob and Richard as of course we were on Zoom!). Members and villagers had donated to a collection and later this year a bench will be purchased and placed in the wood as a permanent thank you in particular to Maureen. My personal thanks go to Maureen as I have based a large part of this report on her AGM one, which in previous years she would have used to present to this meeting.

Going forward, as the association has been merged with the limited company, a new Friends and Families Group has been set up to carry on the work of the association. A new committee has been formed (details were given in the April issue of Launton Lines) who will be continuing the work of maintaining the wood and also to arrange events which we hope will involve villagers of all ages (all Covid restrictions permitting of course). So watch this space!

Liz Turvey
Director and Treasurer
Friends of Island Pond Wood Ltd