

Summer 2018

St Albans Woodland Burial Trust



Friends Newsletter - Issue 12



Fungi

Nature's natural decomposers.
The essential recyclers working
with the trees and woodland,
usually...

New Glades!

What a transformation!
Spectacular results in such a
short time.

Flora & Fauna OF THE WOODLAND

Restoring a woodland, an ecosystem, a way of
life. The challenges, the heartaches, the rewards...



When dreams become reality

Eleven years of dedication, phenomenal effort and transformation.

This year has seen remarkable progress for us a Woodland Burial Trust. When we started woodland burial at Keysoe 11 years ago we managed to make use of only one glade in the centre of our what was only a two acre site. The rest of our little woodland was heavily infested with brambles and we knew we would have to work slowly to manage the amazing asset which we had acquired with so many trees.

This year we have not only got on top of our two acres, with the help of our hands on woodland manager Will Saunders, we have achieved a remarkable transformation of ten additional acres. As trustees we never thought that this would be possible in such a short time. It is a remarkable achievement which has only been possible because so many people have chosen to come to our woodland for burial or interment of cremated remains. This has enabled us to invest in professional management which has cut back the brambles which were choking trees and thinned out diseased ash and other weak trees.

We have received many compliments and this has been a record year for people choosing the woodland. However not everybody has been delighted! A few people have expressed concerns and have suggested that the woodland should have been left without management. When forests covered England it was entirely appropriate to leave them to their own devices and storms or disease created spaces where trees could grow and diverse habitats could be naturally created. Today

however small woodlands such as ours require sensitive management to allow native woodland plants and animals to survive and thrive. Neglecting to cut back the brambles was creating a serious threat to the welfare of many of our trees, including a large number of exceptionally precious oaks. These trees have now been freed from danger and we have gained access to previously inaccessible areas. Splendid tree specimens have been recognised and given the room they require to reach their full potential. Will Saunders has supervised the careful inspection of every tree and where necessary thinning or pruning has taken place to remove branches and allow the trees to grow properly. It is a careful balance to work with nature and allow trees to develop better crowns, without making the woodland sparse.

As we have cleared away the brambles this has provided the opportunity for woodland wild flowers to survive once more among the trees and it has been especially rewarding to see the number of orchids which have now broken through to fill the gaps. The first 5 – 10 metres of a woodland edge is where the majority of the flora and fauna thrives. For this reason the glades are essential to the future development of woodland edge plants, together with a wide variety of insects, birds and animals.

As a charity, the trustees invest all of our resources in protecting and caring for the woodland, to ensure that it is a very special place for generations to come.

We are deeply indebted to all of our

volunteers but especially Linda Parry our Administrator and her husband Edward who continue their dedicated support for our bereaved families and all aspects of the management of funerals.

Please will you also help us preserve the woodland as a place of natural beauty and environmental protection? One important way that you can do this is to ensure that you follow our rules and regulations, particularly with regard to not planting on graves or leaving artificial flowers, tubs, vases or other items. We will remove them in due course, but it is something which we would rather not have to do.

We hope that you will visit often, together we will ensure that this extraordinary place will lift the spirits of all who come here and be a fitting tribute to the ones we love who rest in peace.

Charles Royden
Chair of St Albans Woodland Burial Trust

The Latest Statistics

Our busiest year to date. In the last 3 weeks alone there have been 7 burials and 25 reservations in the new glades.

Ashes **199**

Burials **345**

Reservations **494**

Actual burial, interments and reservations as at May 2018

New Glades, new map, more options



A revised map drafted during the early development of the new glades. A useful guide pending some fine tweaking!

The Woodland - a perfect host

The woodland remains the perfect location for those looking to offer a more personalised send off.

We have witnessed some truly gorgeous and moving ceremonies over the past 12 months.

These photos allow us the opportunity to share just a few of those moments and memories with you.

The atmosphere of a woodland burial is just so different to the normal municipal experience. Many feel

it helps with the grieving process, describing it as tranquil & uplifting.



The Fire Service were there for a colleague.



A stunning horse drawn hearse.



The little girl's pony that came to see her off.

NATURE COM

Conservation is at the heart of everything we do. Restoring ancient woodland reverses habitat loss and the effects of intensive modern farming techniques. The knock on effect reaches far and wide, allowing nature to simply get on with the job that it does so well.

Whilst we are doing all that we can, have you thought how you maybe able to help at home and work?

People across the country are beginning to realise that they are part of a bigger picture, one influenced by their personal actions. Resources need to be respected and used wisely, new habits must be learnt and ways found to work towards a common goal.

Changes in the way we shop will influence retailers & manufacturers. Avoiding items packaged in plastic and purchasing environmentally friendly alternatives will soon have a bearing!

Finding those alternatives may not be as difficult as you think...

<https://everything-eco.co.uk> is just one online resource where you will find eco-friendly alternatives to so many things (e.g. Bamboo Cotton buds, Toothbrushes, hairbrushes, makeup, recycled materials for the home and garden etc).

Together, we can make a difference...



Ditch the Old Search Engines!

If only the money made by the big search engines was used to plant trees...

Well, your wish has just been granted. Introducing Ecosia, a new search engine that does just that.

All Ad revenue is ploughed straight back into the environment with new trees being planted at the rate of 1 every second or less!

With over 31,000,000 trees planted so far, it's worth a look:-

<https://www.ecosia.org>



CONSERVATION

Ecological Apocalypse

Chris Packham recently made headlines when he pointed out that Britain is increasingly “a green and unpleasant land”.

He also went on to say that “our generation is presiding over an ecological apocalypse which we have somehow or other normalised”.

Wild flowers have vanished, insect life diminished and bird populations have been decimated - Britain has lost 90 million wild birds since 1970, with populations such as turtle doves down 95% since 1990 alone.



Turtle Dove - Mike Pennington

By coming together we have proved that our woodland is making a difference. But we can also do so much more individually.

Habitat loss, and intensive farming methods are threatening pollinator populations with butterflies, moths, bees, wasps and beetles, our primary pollinators, struggling. This then has a knock on effect throughout the food chain.

Gardens can offer a lifeline with nearly 90% of the population having access to one. Sadly many are sterile, tarmacked over, or just set aside for grass.

Create a sanctuary in your garden with nectar plants, even if its just in pots or vertically using hanging baskets. Whatever you do, it will help in the overall scheme of things.

Look online for inspiration too, maybe have a look at some like these:-

<https://butterfly-conservation.org>

<https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk>

Plastic & Pollution



Plastic pollution seems to be perpetually in the headlines these days, rightfully so.

Approximately 13 billion plastic bottles are used each year in the UK - only 7.5 billion are recycled. That leaves 5.5 billion floating around taking 450 years or more to decompose... Our grandchildren will be thrilled with us!

42 UK businesses have now signed up to WRAPS ambitious UK Plastics Pact including Tesco, Lidl, Asda and CokaCola, although many argue that it's too little too late when you witness the devastating effect it's having on marine life.

Sadly humanity never seems to learn from it's mistakes and to this day remains primarily reactive instead of proactive. It takes disasters on this scale to galvanise a response.

For our part we must continue to be meticulous, recycle everything you can. It may seem like a drop in the ocean compared to the raging rivers of plastic pouring into the ocean on the Asian continents, but together it's genuinely making a massive difference.

Gardens Count

Supporting insects and environment



Insect life is struggling and our sterile gardens are doing nothing to help. Dedicate sections of your garden to nectar plants and create a little oasis for them all...

Photo courtesy of Benjamin Combs @b3njamin



Rhytisma acerinum (Tar Spot Fungus)

Rhytisma acerinum is a fungus pathogen that most commonly affects trees of the Acer genus in late summer and autumn, causing tar spot.

The leaf above is from a Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) a non-native tree but a common sight in the UK countryside.

These unsightly 'tar spots' are a sign of fungus (*Rhytisma acerinum*) affecting the leaves.

It is a sophisticated biotrophic fungus, one that has learnt to establish a long-term feeding relationship with the living cells of their hosts rather than killing them.

Whilst unsightly to us, the fungus does no harm (or good) to the tree.

Oddly the fungus is very sensitive to pollution, especially nitrogen dioxide and it's presence is actually an indicator of good local air quality!



FUNGI

THE GOOD, THE BAD & THE UGLY

A woodland is an ideal place to observe and learn about Fungi - depending on your point of view, it doesn't take long to realise that whilst they all have their place, some are nicer than others!

Fungi evolved about 2 billion years ago and there are now estimated to be around 1.5 million species. Like animals, humans and most bacteria, all are heterotrophs which means they get their energy from eating organic substances.

Oddly, despite having much more in common with animals than plants, mycology, the study of fungi, is often seen as a branch of botany.

Fungi vary in size. Some can only be seen under a microscope whilst at the other end of the spectrum lies the largest living organism on the planet, a Humongous Fungus, *Armillaria ostoyae* which now covers over 4 square miles!



➡ *Armillaria ostoyae*, current holder of the largest organism on the planet!

Some fungi like the Humongous Fungus are pathogenic and cause disease - in this example living off the roots of specific tree species, killing them in the process.

Yeast on the other-hand is a great example of the microscopic, used in the food and drink industry for centuries now to make bread, beer and wine.

Penicillin is another amazing fungus, saving countless lives thanks to its discovery by Alexander Fleming in 1929. It took over a decade to refine before it's introduction in the 1940s hailed the start of the antibiotic era, and the end of many life threatening infections.

Fungi in the Woodland

We have witnessed some lovely examples of fungi throughout the woodland, evidence of a healthy ecosystem developing.

The Shaggy Inkcap (*Coprinus comatus*) can be seen in many places across the woodland. Whilst *Coprinus* is a small genus of mushroom forming fungi which likes living on dung, that is not the case here. A black ink-like liquid is discharged from the gills when the spores are released, hence their common name.



➡ The Shaggy Ink Cap mushroom, *Coprinus comatus*. Apparently tasty... but I wouldn't risk it!

Another common sight are *Inocybe* which are a large genus of mushroom forming fungi and difficult to identify at the best of times. It is often found near broad-leaf trees and best avoided given it's toxic nature



➡ *Inocybe* - difficult to distinguish between the toxic and non toxic... so avoid!

Woodland Flora & Fauna

...a few more images from our woodland



Here are just a few of the stars that have been putting in an appearance at the Woodland this year. The orchids are back and a few clumps of Bluebells are beginning to spread.



Dactylorhiza fuchsii - Spotted Orchid



Wild Cherry Tree Blossom



Knapweed



Primrose



Native Bluebell



Oxeye Daisy



Buttercup

I WOULD LIKE TO BECOME A FRIEND OF THE ST ALBANS WOODLAND BURIAL TRUST £25 (5 YEARS)

(If enclosing a cheque, please make payable to St Albans Woodland Burial Trust)

Name

Address

(These details will NOT be passed onto third parties)

Email Address

Telephone Number

Please Gift Aid my donation (Yes / No)

(I am a UK taxpayer and understand that if I pay less Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax than the amount of Gift Aid on all my donations, it is my responsibility to pay any difference)

Please return to:

The Administrator, St Albans Woodland Burial Trust, St Mark's Church Community Centre, Calder Rise, Bedford MK41 7UY

Email: office@woodlandburialtrust.com

website: <http://woodlandburialtrust.com>

Tel. Number (01234) 342613

News Snippets!

Data Protection

With the plethora of emails & media coverage very few people could avoid hearing about GDPR.

We were not immune either as the Trust needs to obtain and retain personal information in order to offer the services that it does and comply with current legislation. A detailed Privacy Notice now resides on our website for you to check at your leisure.

ico.
Information Commissioner's Office

 The Authority overseeing data privacy.

Woodland Diary Online



Our diary is now online (via the Contact tab) and already proving a useful resource for funeral directors as they look to book funerals.

People attending burials and interments are also finding it a useful tool for double checking times and location.

This is all part of our desire to ensure that the website provides as much information as possible.

It is our intention that in the future there will be a record of all burials and internments on the website together with the location of the corresponding graves, so watch this space!


Owl Boxes - Update!

The Owl boxes have proved extremely popular - with everything except Owls. No pigeons this year, just Woodpeckers and Squirrels!

I am sure that our patience will be rewarded one of these days, hopefully before the boxes disintegrate!

Luckily the woodland now offers plenty of natural alternatives.



 Everything except Owls...



Linda Parry, Administrator.

After our busiest year and one of the wettest winters we can recall the Woodland is, once again, glorious in the sunshine.

It can be something of a shock when water lies on the glades but be reassured that it is only because the Bedford Clay prevents drainage.

The ground can be uneven and slippery in places especially when wet so please be sure to wear appropriate footwear and clothing.

Linda's Highlights

The wooden monuments do take a hammering over the years, especially with the seasonal extremes in temperature. Don't be tempted to use varnish, it's not eco-friendly and doesn't last. Just use a light oil on a rag.

The Woodland is a natural environment and frequented by wildlife. Please do not leave ornamentation at the graveside other than one of our biodegradable pots. Animals can become very ill if they eat the wrong things and mowers can be damaged.

3 more glades have opened since our last open day, Woodpecker, Merlin and Skylark Rill, names chosen by those who participated in the selection last year.

I am pleased to report that Skylarks have returned, their glorious song remaining the quintessential sound of an early British summer.

Will Saunders has been working like a trooper

as always and eradicated the Ash die-back (we hope!) and Bluebells, cowslips and orchids are back in greater numbers than ever before.

Some great news on the road too, it will be regraded by Simon Bates in recognition of the significant traffic flow generated by the Equestrian Centre.

On another note, it's lovely to see that a number of families now picnic in the glades to celebrate birthdays/anniversaries of their loved ones. One family even had afternoon tea at the funeral - with Mum being laid to rest afterwards!

Thank you, as always, for preserving the natural state of the woodland for our loved ones.

Oh, and don't forget to follow us on social media and help spread the word!

Best wishes

Linda



St Albans Woodland Burial Trust

A not for profit charity restoring native woodland, fauna and wildlife in conjunction with woodland burials. Registered Charity No 1118216

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