



# THE FRIENDS OF CHARNWOOD FOREST



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President: Mrs Janie Martin

## NEWSLETTER: September 2020

Dear Member

I hope you are all well and are coping with the restrictions that we have to endure during these dreadful times. So many organisations have had to temporarily close which of course includes the Friends of Charnwood Forest. The Committee are now looking at 2021 to start our regular meetings. Marilyn has been busy getting a number of speakers for next year, so here's hoping we can get back to normal (whatever that will be) in the new year.

The committee is meeting via Zoom which seemed very strange to me but thanks to Toby it worked well. At our last meeting we decided to send out this Newsletter emphasising the issues below.

I look forward to hopefully seeing you all again in the New Year.

Paul Day  
Chairman

### Coronavirus

When the Coronavirus struck in March this year, we cancelled both our indoor and outdoor events,

Although the lockdown has now been relaxed, the Committee does not feel it is possible to resume lectures in Woodhouse Eaves Village Hall before the end of the year, and that lectures by Zoom would not be very popular. However, we hope to resume lectures in the Hall early in the New Year, all things being equal.

The Committee also hopes that Members will understand that it has not been possible to hold an AGM during 2020.

### Events 2021

On January 18th, David Robinson has agreed to give his twice-postponed talk on 'Charnwood Forest and its Visitors, 1500-1900'. Roger Willson will give his lecture on 'Churches of Charnwood Forest' on February 15th. The AGM is planned for Monday March 15th, and hopefully this will be followed by either a talk on 'Trees

of Charnwood Forest’ or ‘Diversification in Charnwood Forest’. More details will follow when we know if these can go ahead.

During lockdown, several members watched an excellent webinar given by Jack Meadows from the University of Oxford on the Geology of Charnwood Forest – the audience included Roger Mason, the discoverer of the first Charnia fossil. The new Charnwood Forest Landscape Partnership was awarded a large NHLF grant recently to enhance the understanding of the unique geology of the Forest. We are hoping to obtain a recording of this webinar but copyright issues have to be sorted out.

## **Membership**

Because we have been unable to deliver our Programme of events for this year, we are giving all Members a free year – your membership for 2020 will cover 2021 as well.

## **Planning Issues**

The Committee continue to keep an eye on local development proposals.

There is a proposal to remove gravel at Quorn Lodge Farm to the south-east of Loughborough (close to the A6/A6004 roundabout). We decided not to take any action, after consulting with Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust, as the area was outside the Forest Boundary and the land to be developed was uninteresting agricultural land that would be restored with some wildlife interest after the extraction had finished,

Earlier this year there was a proposal to develop land off Maplewell Road on the outskirts of Woodhouse Eaves with 50 houses; this was rejected on appeal. The developers are now proposing a smaller development of 36 houses on this land, and the Committee are still concerned about the effects on Woodhouse Eaves, particularly on traffic on Maplewell Road. We await the formal planning proposal when we can make representations to Charnwood Borough Council.

The Committee is also concerned about the amount of fly-tipping across the Forest.

## **Sponsorship of kissing gates**

The Committee has decided to sponsor three “kissing gates” on Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust nature reserves. One of these is at Charnwood Lodge (which some members visited in 2015) on a permissive path, and the other two in Charley Woods on public rights of Way. After spending £1,400 on these gates we still have a bank balance of nearly £7,000 and the Committee continue to look for ways to utilise this surplus.

## Ulverscroft Valley Wildlife Corridor: The Corridor Club

*Our Treasurer, Kim Turner, writes:*

During the Covid shutdown, we all had more time to reflect and some of us were lucky enough to spend more time in our gardens than usual. Over the last few years there has been a drastic reduction in the insect population. For example, 30 years ago, the car windscreen would be covered in squashed flies etc. but this is now rarely a problem as we have lost over 70% of our insect life since the 1970s.

Insects are so important to our existence; not only do they make our gardens interesting and busy places, they keep pests down in gardens and on farm crops, they are essential for pollination and ensuring the sustainability of productive soil - and they need our help!

Everyone can help – we just need to make it easier for insects to thrive. Simply leaving an area in your garden or farm uncultivated, free of pesticides and quiet (especially from March to August) will support biodiversity. Insects can then find food, shelter and so reproduce and become more abundant. Making habitat piles, planting hawthorn, guelder rose, hazel and other native plants and then leaving it untended will give insects the places and spaces they need.



*The Ulverscroft Valley: a view from the Chitterman Hills across to Cover Cloud*

As I live in the Ulverscroft valley, which has the greatest biodiversity in Leicestershire, I felt that something needed to be done, so I started the “Corridor Club” to bring together people of a like mind in a practical and social way to ensure a diverse insect population for future generations.

And what better place to launch the Corridor Club than in our own Charnwood Forest? The Club’s aim is to link patches of uncultivated insect-friendly habitat throughout the Ulverscroft Valley: a corridor where insects can roam, feed and reproduce, safe from intrusions and insecticides. So far, every person I have approached has been enthusiastic and supportive with ponds, hedges, fields and planting.

The launch and first meeting of the corridor club was on the 11th February when myself and two of my neighbouring land owners met with Neil Pilcher and Uta Hamzaoui of the Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust; they helped to clarify our aims and objectives and gave expert advice. And if this is successful it can be expanded throughout Charnwood Forest and ultimately across Leicestershire and beyond.

So you can help by doing next to nothing and have some fun on the way. Please join in, get together with your neighbours and make a difference so that at least one positive thing comes out of this pandemic.