

Issue
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Friends of Storeton Woods

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NEWSLEAF



Autumn Issue

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CHAIRMAN'S REPORT –

Tim Kirwin has stepped down as our Woodland Trust Officer and will be carrying on as a private consultant to the W.T. Taking over as site manager is Clare Burnside; who we have all met before and was at our A.G.M. in 2009. We look forward to working with her for the future of Storeton Woods. Thank you Tim for all your hard work and your bat walks.

In June this year we had a lot of household rubbish in bags thrown into our woods over Rest Hill boundary. Thank you to those people who helped me to dispose of them.

I had to apologise to Ann Jones and her Wednesday walkers for getting the date wrong for a flower walk but managed to get David Casement to fill in for me with a history walk instead. Thank you David and sorry Ann.

We seem to have a lot of new walkers with their dogs recently judging by the amount of dog mess on the paths. If you see these people please ask them to follow our own good example of bagging it and putting it in the bins at either entrance.

Are there any younger member's out there who want to come on to our committee? We are not getting any younger. Some of us have been here over 20 years. We don't bite and you will meet lots of new friends. Come and meet us on our Workdays on Sunday 18th September or 20th November 2011 and 15th January 2012. Tea and biscuits are provided and it's only for a couple of hours starting at 10.00 a.m. at Rest Hill entrance. Hope to see you soon.

Eric Forsyth (Chairman)

From Clare Burnside of The Woodland Trust:-

Hello to all members of FOSW, I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself as the new site manager for Storeton Woods. I look forward to working with you all and managing this significant site in the Wirral Peninsula. In the meantime I hope you continue to enjoy this beautiful community woodland.

Kind Regards, Clare

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

Last year at this time we had 653 members and the previous year it was 699. The current membership figure is 644 with 123 having renewed for 2012. It is very rewarding to see that our membership numbers are holding up nicely at a time when some charities are really struggling. Thank you for your continued support.

The WOODLAND TRUST own and care for STORETON WOODS with the help and support of 'FRIENDS OF STORETON WOODS'.
The Woodland Trust, Autumn Park, Dysart Road, Grantham,
Lincolnshire, NG31 6LL Tel 01476 581111



Himalayan Balsam

On the last two workdays we have been attempting to eradicate, or at least control, an outbreak of Himalayan Balsam by pulling it up while it was only just in flower and before it set this year's seed. This weed has established itself in a 10 metre wide strip between the top wall and the dense shade of the woods, particularly in the area opposite to the speed camera on Mount Road. We presume that the seed has wafted off a vehicle some years ago - probably an open trailer, passing by the woods on its way to the tip.

Himalayan Balsam is quite an attractive plant with pale pink flowers and red fleshy stems with little "honeydew droplets" on the stem and was originally imported into the UK in 1839 about the same time as Giant Hogweed and Japanese Knotweed. It was commonly grown as a pot plant in the 1970's and I remember, when I was a lad, that my dad had a Balsam pot plant in his front bay window and it was a bit of a talking point as it was unlike any familiar British plant. He had been given a handful of seed by someone he knew.

Unlike Japanese Knotweed that can sprout through tarmac and even concrete – at least Himalayan Balsam can be pulled up by hand easily enough. Only time will tell how long the seed can remain viable in the rich leaf mould near the top boundary of the woods but I suspect we will be pulling it up for many years to come.

Also unlike Japanese Knotweed it has been shown that Himalayan Balsam is bee friendly. I have heard that bee keepers in areas where the weed is prolific have analysed the content of their honey and found that Himalayan Balsam nectar constitutes a major proportion and it makes a delicious, sweet and very fragrant honey. Some people have said it is a very welcome nectar source at a time when bees are under stress.

However, the plant is considered a pernicious weed and as a consequence, it is now listed under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and it is an offence to plant or allow this species to grow in the wild. The plant spreads very rapidly because it forms about 2000 seeds per plant which it fires from its seed pods with an explosive action which can throw the seed many yards. It likes open sunny conditions and especially loves to follow watercourses where it crowds out native species during the summer but dies back in winter offering no protection from erosion. Most land owners are trying to at least stop its spread. I was at Quarry Bank Mill early in the summer and the Environment Agency had a stall where they were giving away free gifts of small promotional merchandise in exchange for an armful of the weed (before it had set seed) to dog walkers and families out for some exercise along the paths through the estate.

If you see odd plants of Himalayan Balsam in your walks through our woods and you are CERTAIN that you are capable of CORRECTLY IDENTIFYING the plant (we don't want you pulling up any British native wildflowers by mistake) then please feel free to pull up any bits that you see BUT LEAVE IT WHERE YOU FIND IT. If you carry the plant anywhere you will be spreading the seed wherever you go so please leave it where it is.

Paul Wallington

Tightening up the Reserves Policy

Some two years ago, the Committee published a policy identifying two purposes for holding financial reserves. Funds have to be set aside in case we have the opportunity to improve Hancock's Woods but our primary purpose is to be able to maintain our own (Scott's) Woods for the foreseeable future. Although over the last few years our annual income has been sufficient to cover routine maintenance, this may not be the case in the future. If our income were to drop through a fall in subscriptions and donations, we would be obliged to use our reserves to cover the shortfall. In addition, provision has to be made for any exceptional expense. For example the boundary wall or the footpaths may require extensive renovation.

Following a query at the last AGM the committee has had much discussion, spread over three meetings, deciding how our funds should be divided between these two competing claims. At the time of writing our funds amount to about £73,000. It was decided that £40,000 should be reserved for Scott's Woods and £30,000 earmarked for Hancock's Woods. As the financial situation can change very rapidly, this allocation will be reviewed annually.

Peter Golby (Treasurer)

'DID NATURE FORGET TO PAINT THEM?'

I once thought that moths were merely dull, grey, unattractive creatures - the larva of which eat away at our clothes, but I was surprised to learn how striking some of them are and how necessary certain trees and plants are for their existence.

The 'Peach blossom moth' is so named because of the attractive, blossom-like pattern on its delicate wings, and it is common enough in the woodlands. The larva needs brambles to feed on, and it is about 35mm. This is a really pretty moth.

Another contender for the moth beauty stakes is the Merveille-du-jour, and this one likes the oak trees. The striking looking forewings match the bark of the oak tree, nature's subtle way of making it difficult for enemies to spot its presence. Its larva eats the oak leaves, and it is about 45mm. If the oak woodlands were to disappear then it would be a pity to lose this attractively winged creature.

Another moth that likes the oak, as it feeds inside a rolled-up oak leaf, is the Green oak tortrix. It may be only a dainty 20mm, but it can look after itself. If an enemy should disturb it, the green oak tortrix, has been known to suspend itself skilfully from a silken thread. A successful high wire act, you could say.

No - nature did not 'forget' to paint the moth in the brighter hues of the butterflies that usually delight us more, but these fascinating creatures of the natural world, the fluttering moths, do possess their own charm to hold our interest.

Linda Tilston

Newsleaf by email ?

If any member would like to receive their newsletter as a pdf document via email please let us know by emailing us through the F.O.S.W. website. If there is sufficient demand we will look at modifying our distribution methods.

BADGES AND TEA TOWELS

Our Tea Towels and Badges make splendid presents and each one sold makes a small contribution to F.O.S.W. funds. Tea Towels are £3 each and Badges are £2. For information contact George or Garnette Bowler on the number listed below.

Views expressed in Newsleaf **are those of the contributor** and are not necessarily those of the committee or members of Friends of StoretonWoods.

Dates For Your Diary

COPY DATE for next NEWSLEAF – 7th November 2011 for December issue. Your news, views and photographs are most welcome.

WORKDAYS - 18th September 2011. 20th November 2011 and 15th January 2012. (There are 6 workdays a year and they are held on the third Sunday of each alternate month starting with January – please mark up your diary with future dates). Meet at Rest Hill entrance at 10.00 am. Please be there to do your share. Stout footwear and gloves are recommended. Jobs for all capabilities. A warm welcome and good company is assured together with tea & biscuits.

		<u>COMMITTEE</u>		
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Secretary	Barrie Old			
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