

A Message from your Chairman (David Briggs)

Hello everyone.

With the onset of Coronavirus it is yet another challenge for us all. It is always our policy to put the Health and Safety of all our members first. We will try to continue to run limited work parties if possible with members under the age of 70.

Please watch out for news on our web site. Be careful and stay safe by carrying out the instructions issued by the Government.

It has been a busy and stormy winter so far this year and the work parties have been disrupted, but well attended when possible.

The wild flowers have made their appearance. It is always a delight to see them to announce that spring is coming. Please get your exercise and walk the woods keeping your distance from one another as advised.

Thank you GWCP. **Please stay safe and if anyone requires assistance please contact GWCP**

Gunton Wood (Andrew Bretton)

The first three months of 2020 have been challenging, both wet and windy and we have experienced some tree damage, but compared to some parts of the country we have been very lucky. Some trees were lost near the Church and down the main path, this has kept Colin and his team busy and has meant we have gathered more spoils than we can use in our habitats. David organised through Norse the use of their chipping machine and operator which duly arrived on the morning of 5th March. The main group gathered fallen wood and brush to a central point near the coffee table, the pile was massive. A second smaller group worked with the chipper near the church clearing storm damaged trees. We ended the morning with a large pile of useful chippings.



On a cold January morning after a considerable delay we were pleased to welcome members of our council and Steve Chilvers (an ex Shell worker) along to officially open our new storage container. They had all given donations to purchase it. The tape was cut, speeches made and then as is tradition in GWCP, cake was eaten.

Laying chippings on the side paths and in Moore's lane has kept the group busy on a number of mornings. This task is now made a little easier using the Tractor to ferry chippings, although our trusty wheel barrows still have a vital role to play getting to areas the tractor cannot reach.

One Thursday in February a work party was held in Foxburrow wood. The main task was to remove brambles from the bluebell area which was successfully completed. The chain saw team were kept busy clearing three trees that had fallen across a path during the recent storms. A small party swept the board walks which were covered in mud. Additional work to replace cross planks and bearers which are starting to rot will be done when the weather is drier.

Unfortunately Vinnie's bridge has had to be removed as it was becoming dangerous with planks and supports rotting. A new bridge has been installed using parts of the old bridge as well as new timbers. The banks on either side were shored up using concrete filled sand bags and vertical stakes before timber sleepers were in place. Hand rails were then fitted to the bridge.

Work will continue in Gunton Wood when the current position allows. If lone workers are able to work and lay chippings as an exercise that may be possible. Please let any committee member know before starting.

Events

The trip to Snape Cats Show on 23rd May is cancelled. There will be a full refund to all who have purchased tickets.

Holiday to Bournemouth Fri 8th to Mon 11th May 2020. This trip has also been cancelled. Refunds will be made as soon as possible.

Look out for - by Janet Field

One of the best known and loved of our wildflowers is the bluebell, a welcome sight and scent in spring and early summer. Its azure blue elongated, bell-shaped flowers grow on a long one-sided stalk which droops at the tip. The Spanish version is more robust. It has much broader leaves and larger pale blue flowers growing around an erect spike. One of our members does a Spanish bluebell cull each year after flowering.



Green Alkanet, a bushy plant, is very prolific in Gunton Wood. Its size is surprising in that its bright blue flowers with white centres are so small in comparison, only 8-10mm across. It flowers in April to July and the large hairy, pointed leaves could be a useful addition to the compost bin or heap.

Common self-heal, a low creeping blue/violet wildflower grows in grassy places or on bare ground from June to September. It is a perennial herb roughly 30cms high and can be discovered in meadows, woods and sometimes in roadside verges. You might even find some in your lawn. The name suggests it might have been used for medicinal purposes in the past. Dog violet, wood forget-me-not and bugle are among many other bluish flowers in Gunton wood.

Research has indicated that women are more adept at distinguishing the subtle difference between shades of colours, particularly in the yellow/blue range. This may be because women have two genes on the X chromosome whereas men have only one. Other theories have been suggested. But don't worry men - you are better at tracking fast moving objects...from your "hunter gatherer" past.

Nature Notes *The Oak's Best Friend* (Barry Shimmield)

Since Pleasurewood Hills stopped cutting their meadow on the North side of Moore's Lane the natural order of vegetation has begun to re-establish itself, a practice known as **re-wilding**. Perhaps one of the most striking outcomes is the emergence of dozens of oak trees ranging from tiny seedlings to sturdy saplings, some of which are now more than 5 feet tall. The story behind this is a fascinating example of two branches of the natural world enjoying a symbiotic relationship by giving each other a helping hand.



Gunton Wood is home to at least one pair of **Jays**, or *Garrulus glandarius* to give them their full Latin name. When you discover that "glandarius" means "of acorns" the penny drops. **Jays just love acorns.** From April onwards, carrying up to six at a time in a stacking system down its gullet, the jay will search for an open field where it buries many hundreds of acorns, hammering them into the ground where they are hidden from mice and squirrels. By June the baby oaks will have produced their first leaves just as the jay returns in search for food for their young. When a jay finds an oak seedling it grasps the stem in its beak and pulls it upwards to expose the fleshy primal, nutrient rich leaves called cotyledons, which it strips to feed them to its chicks. Because of the strength of the oak's taproots most seedlings, especially those that grew from large acorns, survive this rough treatment and, in fact, they even benefit from it. So it seems that sacrificing its cotyledons is the oak's reward to the jay for being such a successful midwife.



If you search you might see the scar or the twist in the stem where the jay had picked it up by its beak!

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Sponsored by Pleasurewood Hills

