



Worcestershire Wildlife Trust

Stourbridge & Hagley Local Group Newsletter Spring 2021



Ribbesford church

Welcome to your spring newsletter. I was hoping to have good news about meeting again but it seems that this will not be happening soon, so I hope that everyone stays safe and well until we're back to 'normal'.

It's early February and with no prospect of holding meetings at St. Saviours in the near future our talks will continue to be online - for details and how to book visit www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/whats-on There are two walks booked for later in the year and they may go ahead if the situation improves (details will be online when confirmed and in the next newsletter).

Looking forward to a time when we can get out and about again, read on as Wendy Larmour takes us on one of her favourite walks round Ribbesford Woods in wonderful Worcestershire.

In our next look at other local conservation groups, Hayley Guest tells us about Wild About Stourbridge, a fairly new but very active group in our area.

We have our usual Penorchard update and Richard Sabell tells us how he became a new Penorchard volunteer.

Wonderful Worcestershire Ribbesford Woods, Bewdley

Some of you will have walked this way with me on a circular route from Bewdley but now I suggest you park at Blackstone Country Park by the River Severn (just across the road from Ribbesford church and not



the one on the Wribbenhall side). The approach to both Ribbesford House and the church next door is magnificently lined with horse chestnuts. From the back of the church the path is steep but stepped, initially, through the graveyard. From early summer onwards it is a paradise of wildflowers and is especially delightful when the ox-eye

daisies are in full bloom. Thoughtfully placed at the boundary wall, a bench affords distant views towards nature reserves with which some of you may be more familiar, The Devil's Spittleful and Burlish Top.

The path through the gate continues straight up an open field which is fairly steep but the contents of the meadow provide a good distraction and reason to stop a moment or two. At the edge of the woods you are

offered a choice. I go left across the top of the field, giving a last glance back at the view before heading through a brief area of scrubby woodland. The open space onto which this emerges brings you to a forest track and what appears to have been an old quarry or maybe just a turning area for lorries. Here again, especially in summer, it's the different flora that halt me in my tracks. There is always something to photograph for identification later, although I now have an app that helps me on the spot. I can't single out a tree for you to see here, far too many.

The routeway, which is gentler here but still uphill I'm afraid, has much to delight along its boundaries. Just when you think you've had enough of it, a path branches off to the left leading straight down towards a caravan park. The trees here are varied and the sun can shine through in places. There is much to see depending on your interest but the path narrows and can be slippery towards the bottom. Take care. At the bottom, turn left on a comparatively level path back towards the church again. I've photographed some interesting fungi along here and I know that some years ago a dormouse project was set up somewhere but I can't imagine just where and have heard nothing of it since.

If you have time, or it starts to rain, why not pop into the church and look for the fiddling pig carved into the pulpit, the tree trunks supporting the south aisle, the amazing Edward Burne-Jones window and much more besides. It's never all just about the trees!

Wendy Larmour

Wild About Stourbridge

As I write this, it's been a whole year since I was invited along to the Stourbridge & Hagley Wildlife Trust meeting to talk about the organisation that I coordinate; Wild About Stourbridge (WAS), and what a year it's been! It has tested us all in many different ways and I expect I'm not alone when I say that I'm longing for some normality now. One thing I'm happy to report though is that Wild About Stourbridge has continued to grow and expand its reach throughout the year, despite not being able to meet in person. We have had lots of conversations with people who have developed a much deeper connection with their local wild spaces over the last year and how much more important those places have become to them and their families.

Prior to Covid-19 our aim was to bring people together to improve our community spaces for wildlife and people. We ran several events in Mary Stevens Park in Stourbridge, providing hands-on activities and creative workshops for families to learn about local wildlife and connect with nature where they live. The team, which is made up of six regular volunteers, also

ran a workshop with a local primary school, where we worked with 90 eight and nine year olds to make bird feeders, conducted a habitat survey on school grounds and created some eco-flags.



We had been planning to build on this work throughout 2020 but, as March found us all in full lockdown, we had to get creative with

how we engaged with our communities. In April my three boys, a nine-year-old and six-year-old twins, and I created over 100 activity packs that we delivered to families around Stourbridge. They were given arts and nature activities along with wildflower seeds to sow. Families shared their creations on our Facebook page and it helped to build a sense of community despite not being together in person. Through this we were also able to extend our reach on social media, which has opened up some new opportunities for networking with other groups and local wildlife experts.

We continued to share ideas, articles and information about our local wildlife throughout the year. As we neared the end of 2020, I was encouraged to put forward a proposal to Creative Black Country for an idea that I was keen to develop with local young people. We were successful in gaining support from CBC to pilot a young film-makers project and we're now in the midst of the creative process with 18 children and their families. The project involves the children heading out to record sound and images from their local wild spaces and we're working with professional artists to bring together a soundscape and short film. It's an exciting and positive start to 2021 and the children's enthusiasm for nature is wonderfully inspiring. I'm looking forward to developing this project further in the future.

As we move forward into warmer spring days, the WAS team is keen to focus on the healing power of nature and how crucial it is for people to spend time outdoors and connect with their local patch. It is so beneficial for our physical and mental health. Our upcoming project will encourage Stourbridge residents to create a more wildlife-friendly garden and join our campaign to make our town more welcoming to the daily garden visitors; the hedgehogs, foxes, sparrows, robins, bees, butterflies, the buzzards circling high above and so many more! We'll be sending out seeds along with information about creating habitats and the importance of local biodiversity. Perhaps most importantly we want our community to feel empowered by the knowledge that by improving their individual garden for wildlife, they can be part of a positive collective effect across the whole town.

Connect with us at Wild About Stourbridge on Facebook, or email us at wildaboutstourbridge@gmail.com

Hayley Guest

Lockdown therapy

When lockdown number one happened in April 2020 it became obvious that my part-time job that entailed visiting customers at their homes was not possible and it seemed the ideal time to retire (for the second time).

My wife, Diane, had been a Trust volunteer for a number of years and we were aware that it would be helpful to the Trust for us, as local residents, to keep an eye on the nearby site at Penorchard. We visited weekly, trying to tidy up the fields for future grazing and really enjoyed fighting the brambles, although we knew who would win! To see the changing seasons during our visits has been something that so many have found beneficial at this time.

Joining the group each month seemed to be the obvious next step and I guess I then became a member. As I had been banned from having bonfires in my garden some years ago the chance to help the regular pyromaniacs on the first Monday of the winter months was an added bonus.

Richard Sabell

Penorchard update

Socially distanced work parties continued in November and December. The tasks in November were removal of an encroaching blackthorn thicket and control of both bramble and blackthorn regrowth in the upper church field. Later in the month we had a call for emergency fence repairs, it appears that fireworks set off nearby caused three horses to bolt for a gap in the hedge line and they ran straight through the stock fence. When the horses were recovered two of them had incurred injuries which fortunately were not serious. A small group of volunteers made good the repair.

December saw a retreat to higher and drier ground in the new fields where we continued the familiar tasks of fencing, scrub removal and removal of debris from the old barn site.

Since lockdown at the beginning of the year work parties have been cancelled but those members of the group who live locally have maintained a 'wardening' presence as part of their daily exercise: removing litter and doing other essential tasks. Many thanks to all involved.

Ian Williams

Volunteer days at Penorchard Meadows

Work parties are held on Mondays 10am – 3pm on

April 12 th	May 10 th	June 7 th
July 5 th	August 2 nd	

When work parties resume current volunteers will get an email giving details of our meeting place for each work party, new volunteers should contact Andy Harris on andyh@worcestershireswildlifetrust.org.

Bring lunch and a drink for mid-morning and for lunchtime if you are staying all day.