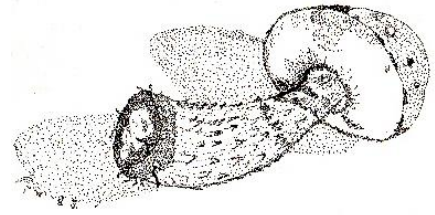




Worcestershire Wildlife Trust

Stourbridge & Hagley Local Group

Newsletter Winter 2021



Welcome to the winter newsletter. I hope you are all well and looking forward to meeting again. Good news! Our meetings at St. Saviours will start again in January 2022, see details below. This of course depends on the situation at the time so please check the WWT website for information.

www.worcestershirowildlifetrust.co.uk/whats-on

*Stourbridge & Hagley local group programme
January - April 2022*

Talks

28th January

Paul Wilkinson, senior ecologist with the Canals and Rivers Trust, will give us a talk entitled "**Flying Mice**"

25th February

Gary Farmer from the Redditch Group and keen entomologist will talk about "**Weevils in the Haystack**"

25th March

John Medlock will take us to the wilds of South America with his illustrated talk entitled "**The Jaguar Kingdom, Birds and Mammals of Central Brazil**"

22nd April

John Tilt will give us a foretaste of summer with his talk about "**Searching for British Orchids**"

Walk

Saturday 23rd April at 11am

Bluebells in Buckpool Dingle

Join John Homer in this walk through Buckpool Nature Reserve, where nature has reclaimed this former industrial landscape, to Foot's Hole Pool. Return via the Stourbridge Canal to the starting point where refreshments are available. Meet at the historic Red House Cone in Wordsley, which is 1½ miles north of Stourbridge on the A491. OS Map 139. Grid Ref. SO894865.

Wendy's walk: 10th September 2021

Stop, look, listen! Beyond the tracks in Hagley

11 smiling faces greeted Wendy Larmour as we met on the car park in the centre of Hagley for our first group meeting since February 2020. There was a lot of catching up to do! Wendy pointed out the trees alongside the path as we walked to the station. We crossed the railway tracks via the footbridge, made famous by Hornby, and set off on a circular walk taking us along lanes, tracks, across fields and crossing the Elan Valley pipeline on the way. It was Wendy's walk so, of course, we looked at a lot of trees but also paused to watch a wheatear, ravens and buzzards. At

the highest point of the walk we had a 360° panoramic view of our surroundings. Wendy pointed out Walton Hill, the Clent Hills, Abberley clock tower, the Wyre Forest, Kinver Edge and Ridgewood High School where our group used to meet and where she taught for several years. Wendy



pointed out the route of a *windhofer* or *windhofre*, an Anglo-Saxon trackway, a term new to us all. We walked at a leisurely pace along County Lane and Brake Lane back to our starting point after 2½ hours having had good weather, good company and with a better knowledge of our local area. Many thanks to Wendy for another most enjoyable and informative walk.

Avril Williams

LOOKING BACK to 1984

There are few reports in the local press about our local group but on 25th October 1984 the County Express published a short piece about the volunteers in Chance Wood. The heading, Under Beech Wood, is a little misleading. It was planted as an ornamental woodland for Stourton Court and has a variety of species with beech, oak, hornbeam and sweet chestnut. A photograph shows a group of eight volunteers including the chairman David Holds, Peter Barraclough, Anne Daly and Derek Rudd. The volunteers "have spent much of their spare time over the last four years caring for Chance Wood."

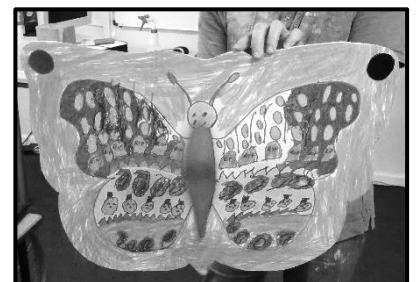
Roger Pannell became warden in 2009 and held regular work mornings there until he stepped down in 2017. Since then the Penorchard Meadows volunteer group go to Chance Wood when work is required.

Avril Williams

An Autumn of Change

This Autumn term, Wild About Stourbridge is

taking nature engagement directly to young people at a Stourbridge secondary school. Thanks to funding from Creative Black Country, we are working with local professional artists to provide creative workshops

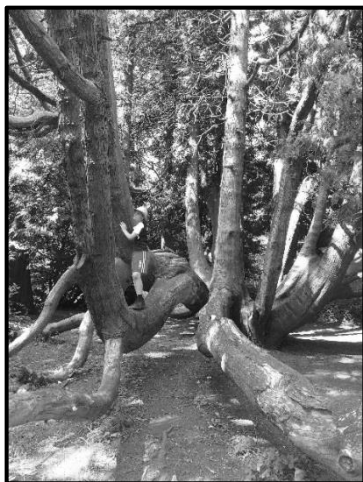


including painting, photography, craft and music. All of the artists are exploring the theme of metamorphosis, using the inspiration of the journey from caterpillar to butterfly, and looking more generally into how we all transform and change throughout our lives. We started the project by planting a new wildflower border with the students, transforming an unloved patch by the visitor car park into what will be a beautiful display of flowers for pollinators by spring. We'll be working with the same group of students throughout the project, allowing us to track and reflect on their individual journeys along the way. We'll be sharing updates and pictures on our Facebook page, so do head there to see what we've been up to!

Hayley Guest

*Saltwells Nature Reserve, Netherton
The Western Red Cedar*

You may be surprised at this choice of an urban reserve when all we want is to escape to the country but many, I find, have never thought to pay Saltwells a visit. Go when it's bluebell time and the air is heady with its scent. Hopefully, if you do, you'll be as delighted as I



am every time I return. So, turn your back on Merry Hill Shopping Centre because across the dual carriageway is this amazing tree, which could certainly tell a tale or two. 'Survival of the fittest' is a phrase that comes to mind for more reason than one. It is not the prettiest of trees but I admire it for its fortitude. It stands in the middle of the

remains of an ancient woodland, part of the wider reserve now proudly bearing the title of 'National Nature Reserve'. If it seems somewhat 'out of keeping', an intruder in a natural landscape, forgotten in time maybe, then check out the history of Saltwells House, the surrounding geology and industries and the brine springs that raised certain hope of attracting visitors and wealth but never did. Saltwells reserve is worthy of a visit for its history alone but it is its nature that draws me back time and time again. I hope you are tempted too. Download a trail from dudley.gov.uk or just park up by The Saltwells Inn and follow the paths.

Wendy Larmour

Penorchard Meadows update

The volunteer group had a change of scenery in July as we had an away day at Chance Wood to repel the invasion of Himalayan balsam from the meadow by the River Stour.

We returned to Penorchard Meadows for the August work party where we found a large amount of growth had occurred. This produced jungle-like conditions particularly along the public footpath at the bottom of Big Fox Field, making it almost impassable.

Most of the effort was concentrated on cutting back the giant bracken to make this path usable. A litter pick was done, ragwort was removed from the field and two large trailer loads of scrap metal were taken away. We also noted that a section of fence had collapsed under the weight of bramble growth. In mid-August a small group cut back the bramble, found what remained of the fence and effected a repair.

In September we began our autumn/winter tasks by removing some of the self-seeded, mainly oak, saplings that were forming a thicket at the lower end of Big Fox Field. In addition the brushcutter was used to delineate the public footpath across the upper South Staffs fields.

In October we continued removal of the oak thicket and scrub in Big Fox Field and disposed of large amounts of brush. The process was made easier by Steve and his chainsaw. A



comparison of aerial photographs of the area with ones taken 20+ years ago emphasised the amount of encroachment that had occurred. Meanwhile Andy was employed with the brushcutter in Little Fox Field, cutting back encroaching bramble.

There were 20 volunteers at our October work party, our biggest number yet. There is still much to do so we would welcome new faces in the group. Come along to a work day to see what we do, details below.

Ian Williams

Volunteer days at Penorchard Meadows



The end of the day at Penorchard Meadows: October 2021

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

December 6th January 10th
February 7th March 7th April 4th

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.