

Work in the Wood – This is a quiet time for nature in the wood with few new sightings even of fungi. However, Homo Sapiens has been pretty active over the past month or two and if you walk in the wood you will have seen the results.

FSW Muddy Paths Project – Tony was busy again throughout December laying woodchip and gravel in the muddy places. Green Squares on the map overleaf indicate 22 locations where repairs are completed and no further attention is necessary at present. All of the worst muddy puddles have been addressed. The red number 24 on the map indicates the number of gravel bags ready to spread when conditions are muddy enough. For some reason the puddle which usually forms at that location has not yet developed this year. In total, 405 bags of gravel have been spread to date and one bag was unaccountably stolen from the store of bags at the top of the car park field. There is now no gravel there but a third of a cubic metre of woodchip remains for contingencies. In total 430 bags of gravel and 6 cubic metres of woodchip were received. The total cost of this material would have been £1012 but the cost to FSW after grants and gifts was only £ 282.00. The initial batch of gravel was funded by our local Councillor, Sara Bashford from her Community Budget (£432) and the second batch was a donation from Woodside Timber and Spring Lane Builders Merchants. Thus, all we paid for was the final batch of materials, on which Spring Lane Builders Merchants also gave us a handsome discount.

We have had much appreciation from walkers for the dramatic improvements in many locations. We are delighted to pass this on to Sara and the Council, to the companies who have been so supportive and especially to Tony Flecchia who has done the bulk of the work of distributing and laying the materials. A full report of the work with many photographs is available on the Projects page of the website.

Winter Work by the Council – Unfortunately while we have been working to improve the walking conditions, the work by Council Contractors has considerably worsened them in some areas. Throughout December many massive vehicles were driven along some of the rides, notably The Wend and Leafy Grove/West Gorse. These were involved in the felling of many trees flanking those pathways and transporting the timber to the logstore at the end of Vincent Avenue. Inevitably these vehicles churned up the ground and although Tony Flecchia has been able to even out some of the worst ruts, these paths have been left very muddy and are likely to remain so for the rest of this season. However, we are hopeful that next summer should see things settle down again and we are looking forward to seeing an increase in the number and variety of wildflowers and fungi that the new lighter conditions will foster.

Winter Work by FSW – Our own winter workday activities have taken place in the Gorses area. This has become very overgrown since the larch plot on the site was felled in 2009. Although the new growth of gorse looked spectacular for the first few years it has now become very tall and leggy and tangled with brambles. It is thus being cut back right to the ground in the sure knowledge that it will quickly recover. Naturally occurring gorse is adapted to frequent burning. The upper parts burn freely and the seeds germinate most readily after fire but the roots are very resistant to burning and shoots readily return. It could be dangerous to freely burn our gorse as fire could spread to the rest of the wood so we must take the harder route and cut it back by hand. We have been assisted this winter by TCV (The Conservation Volunteers) working under the supervision of Peter Underwood (Senior Project Officer - Croydon & Surrey). They put in a couple of days' work at the end of November and made a big impact, including cutting an avenue through from Middle to East Gorse. This photograph of their bonfire shows how well the gorse burns. We shall be continuing our work on the next few workdays and TCV will be back again in January or February to clear more of the plot.



We still have a couple of FSW 2017 Calendars left - £5 – If you would like one please get in touch.

