



Have you renewed your FSW Membership for 2026 - Our Membership year runs from January 1st to December 31st, and it would be very helpful to us if you could pay your 2026 subs as soon as possible. Many thanks to those of you who have already done so and to those of you who have standing orders - we really value this as it certainly makes our life much easier. Please pay by SO or bank transfer to: Friends of Selsdon Wood at Barclays Bank, Croydon Branch, Account No. 80883832, Sort Code 20-24-61.

And also thanks to those who have contributed to our Just Giving page - especially to a generous overseas donor.

Winter Walks – A couple of years ago the paths were so bad that we decided to abandon guided walks in the winter months as the paths were too muddy and slippery. However, there are information sheets about the Red and Green Walking Routes on the website and a version of the guides may be accessed on your smartphone using the QR codes attached to the numbered wooden posts.

First Sightings – As last year, we spotted Bluebell shoots peeping through the leaf litter on the 1st of January. 20 species of bird and 14 species of fungi have already been photographed – see the Sightings page of the website <https://www.friendsofselsdonwood.co.uk/sightings.php>. The pages also have check sheets for each category so if you manage to capture photos of any species not seen yet, do please send them in to us or post them on the FB page.

Work Sessions in January 2025 - This month we have cleared more Laurel. Where possible cuttings were hung up to prevent re-rooting. For more information about this shrub see overleaf.

We also laid more of the woodchip at the top of Great Field and we gritted the remainder of the car park.

We received a donation of Kidney Vetch seeds from Bill Downey (chair of Butterfly Conservation) and he and Daniel Bound joined Valerie to plant the seeds in numerous suitable locations in David's Crook. Kidney Vetch is the sole food plant for the caterpillars of the Small Blue butterfly so we are looking forward to seeing them in the future.

Another task this month was to repair the fence that is protecting the Junipers which were planted last year (see photograph). This had been broken, perhaps by deer which like to eat Juniper leaves.

Work on Baker Boy Lane

Over the past month there has been much activity in Baker Boy Lane with barriers preventing access. This lane is not part of Selsdon Wood but as it runs alongside the wood it is much used by those who walk here. On 28th January the barriers were removed but a new pile of fine topsoil was delivered - probably the third delivery recently. A mini-digger was seen taking multiple scoops of this soil and placing it in a small dumper truck which then drove up the lane. It is difficult to say what actual work is being done, but we assume it is over the whole length of the lane. We would love to hear from you if you know more about this.



Laurel - *prunus laurocerasus*

Laurel is dispersed throughout Selsdon Wood being most common in the northern section. However, it is less widespread than it was as the Friends of Selsdon Wood are working to control or eradicate it. Laurel is a Mediterranean species, probably introduced into Court Wood to give cover for game birds. It is spreading steadily by suckering, layering and seeding and it is inhibiting the growth of other plants, poisoning the ground beneath it (see photo to the right, taken 14/5/12).



Laurel is an evergreen shrub or small tree having large, dark green, leathery leaves with a finely toothed edge. The bark, leaves and the stones in the fruit are poisonous as they contain cyanolipids that are capable of releasing cyanide and benzaldehyde. Hence the leaves when crushed have the characteristic almond smell of cyanide. Entomologists seal specimens in a jar with crushed Laurel leaves as a way of killing them without causing physical damage and the use of the leaves in cooking by mistaking them for Bay Laurel - the culinary Bay - has been known to result in poisoning.



The tiny creamy white flowers have 5 petals and are borne in spikes called racemes in late spring or early summer (right 13/5/12). The fruit is a small black cherry (photo 30/8/14 shows ripening fruit at yellow and purple stages) containing a single stone which is disseminated by birds in the droppings. The flesh of the fruit is not poisonous to birds.

The best time to spot Laurel is in the winter when its evergreen leaves stand out against the bare branches around them. So take a winter walk and look out for the Laurel. If you spot any please let us know the location so that we can remove it.

