

FRIENDS OF COOMBE WOOD



Newsletter 37 Summer 2016

www.friendsofcoombewood.org.uk

Chairman: Terry Isherwood 01268 757945
Treasurer: Terry Tokeley 01268 753302
Secretary: John Rostron 01268 757984

From your Chairman

It has been some time since our last newsletter. We are sending you a copy because you are currently a member of Friends of Coombe Wood (FOC) or have supported us in the past.

First, an update on what has been happening in Coombe Wood since the last newsletter.

The fences on the northern part of Coombe Wood have been taken down. The Allens, who own the land that was fenced in, agreed to the removal of the southern fence panels so there is now free access from the southern section of Coombe Wood although the uprights remain. They also agreed to the complete removal of the fence alongside the graveyard, this has resulted in free access to Coombe Wood from the graveyard and there is now a nice path along this edge. The Northern fence adjoining the Church field is still in place as it is believed to be on Church land. It would be nice if the Church removed this allowing free access between Coombe Wood and the Church field.

Coombe Wood is covered by an Article 4 Directive which requires anyone wishing to erect a fence to apply for planning permission even if it is on their own land that is not part of the Village Green. Recently Mark Evans put forward a planning application to renew the fence around his land to the right at the bottom of Lake Drive and to the left of the Coombe Wood Drive entrance; full marks to Mark for following the correct procedure. This area is not part of the VG as it did not meet the requirements for VG registration. Unfortunately Mark mistakenly included an additional area of land which he does own but which is part of the VG. This was picked up by Friends of Coombe Wood

by Terry Isherwood

and Mark duly altered his application to exclude this area. The Council subsequently approved the application.

There are two new bridleways in Coombewood. One from the bottom of Lake Drive, into the woods and then turning right alongside Mark Evan's land to meet the existing made-up bridleway. The second from the bottom of Lake Drive, into the woods and then straight on and up the bank to go alongside the bungalow and come out on Bread and Cheese hill where there is already a dropped kerb. Essex County Council, who are responsible for maintaining the bridleways, intend to clear these and make them passable by horse. There will be a bridge over the stream.

Your committee has been taking stock of the position of FOC in the light of the current situation, what we set out to achieve and what we can do in the future.

We started in 2000 to protect our historic use Coombe Wood and prevent any development. This has been achieved after two public enquiries which resulted in all of what we think of as Coombe Wood being granted Village Green status. We now have the right in law to use Coombe Wood as we have always done in the past. In this respect FOC has achieved its prime objective and we now need to look to the future. Your committee has discussed this at length, remembering that the ownership of Coombe Wood remains with the multiplicity of landowners as it was sold off as plots many years ago; there is no one person or organisation to liaise with (unlike West Wood) and we only have the right to use it.

We see no more legal battles but we do see a need to continue FOC for the following reasons

- Essex County Council, Castle Point Borough Council, and the Open Spaces Society, who supported us so well in our Village Green applications and throughout the enquiries, view FOC as the contact point for all Coombe Wood matters. Equally they view FOC as speaking on behalf of the residents for all Coombe Wood matters.
- We have a fantastic web site for Coombe Wood and it would be nice to continue this.
- We have erected notice boards at the entrances to Coombe Wood through a

Annual General Meeting.

The proposed date is Monday 21st November 2016 at a venue to be decided. If you wish to attend please let us know, by contacting a committee member by email or telephone, so that dependent upon the number of attendees, we can organise a suitable venue and notify you of the location and start time.

The agenda for the AGM is as follows:

1. Officers

Your committee has indicated that they are prepared to continue in their current roles

Terry Isherwood: Chairman

Terry Tokeley: Treasurer

John Rostron: Secretary

Sue Speakman and Gwyn Jordan: Committee Members

Memories of Coombe Wood

I have been asked to dredge my memory banks and recall something of my boyhood nearly sixty years ago, when I was privileged to live down Thundersley Grove in a bungalow backing onto Coombe Wood. Thundersley Grove in those days was still unmade and our bungalow, (now a large house), was on the corner of Thundersley Grove and Lake Drive, with its front gate in Thundersley Grove and its double, garage gates at the bottom of the garden leading onto Lake Drive.

neighbourhood grant and we need to keep these in good repair and up to date.

Keeping the entrances clear and safe is essential.

- Organising litter picks will keep Coombe Wood tidy.
- Keeping an eye on any encroachment or infringement of our rights is vital.
- To encourage and promote the use of Coombe Wood.

We have a wonderful amenity right on our doorstep but it would be so easy for all our hard won efforts to just drift away and therefore we seek your support for FOC.

If anyone else wishes to be considered for these roles, or to serve on the committee, please let us know. It is recommended that the committee meets quarterly unless unforeseen matters of an urgent nature require the Chairman to call a special meeting.

2. Affiliations

Open Spaces Society: £40

Castle Point Association of Voluntary Services

Website domain – To continue the web site hosting/domain name: £60

3. Membership fees

To maintain the membership fees at £5 per household per year or to offer 3 year membership.

4. Any Other Business

by Trevor Coates

Looking back at those times, I guess I was something of a loner and my best friend was undoubtedly my Border Collie, Laddie, and he and I seemed to spend most of our days in Coombe Wood, walking and running together – him chasing squirrels, (and sometimes foxes), and me climbing trees, damming streams and building dens. Also, because parts of the wood were so steep, it was a great place to drive home-made go-carts at breakneck speed, (or so it seemed at the time),

down narrow winding paths trying desperately to avoid the trees and taking the thing back home for yet another repair on the occasions when the trees were not avoided!

I am the youngest in my family and neither my brother, nor my sister, really wanted to be bothered with a little brother, which was fine by me and left me free to explore the woods on my own, which I did with relish and, consequently, got to know it really well.

It was in those days, completely accessible and I was able to roam anywhere and everywhere at will. It was also very quiet and I would often spend whole days there without seeing another person.

The pond then was much bigger than it is now, with a large mound in its centre which became an island when it rained heavily. It then became even more of an adventure simply getting across onto it using bits of fallen trees as a bridge and allowing the imagination to run riot about pirates boarding treasure islands and the like. (Do children still do things like that these days?)

It was here, in Coombe Wood that my burgeoning love of nature developed and I still remember something of the thrill of my first Great Spotted Woodpecker and sitting breathlessly still, watching foxes play while hanging on to Laddie who desperately wanted to go and play as well. I don't remember many rabbits, but saw my first squirrels in the wood and also my first badgers and my first grass snake.

The stream that ran from somewhere near St. Peters Church to Rhoda Road North was a favourite area to explore and again it was here I saw my first stoat. There was a big, half-hollow oak that overhung the stream with a sort of platform halfway up where a branch had once been and I would sometimes sit up there, not doing anything, but simply enjoying being on my own and a bit invisible. And it was whilst doing this one day that the stoat ran across a log that spanned the stream just below me. It was years before I saw another stoat, so that remains very vivid in my memory.

It was also on the far side of the stream, where the woods were at their most impenetrable and few folk ever went, that I built my biggest and best den which remained mine, and undetected by anyone else for years.

I have talked about walking the woods with Laddie, but he was not always my only companion. I also had a tabby cat called Sherry. A half-wild animal who was also my special friend and he would often accompany Laddie and me on our walks. Marching along beside us with his tail lifted high. Very much his own master, he would often dive off after some hapless little animal hiding in the undergrowth, or climbing the occasional tree, only to reappear as suddenly as he had gone and continue his walk with us as if nothing else had happened.

I remember three particular animal stories from my childhood in Thundersley Grove. One involving Sherry, one involving a neighbour's dog and one involving a squirrel.

The front door of our bungalow opened on the side of the house, facing the front door of our next door neighbour. This was a single lady who worked in London. She would sometimes take Sherry into her house. I guess she was a bit lonely, but it was occasionally frustrating when I wanted Sherry with me, but in spite of calling him, and being fairly sure he was in my neighbour's house, she would make no effort to release him. I guess it was something of this frustration which was partly responsible for me behaving as I did on this occasion.

It was an early morning when I opened the front door of our house, just as my neighbour opened hers as she left on her way to work. As she opened her door, I saw Sherry run into her house, but she didn't. She therefore shut the door and started off down her drive. I called out to her, "Excuse me Miss ..., you have just shut my cat in your house". She hesitated for a moment and then said, "Oh I am late for work, I can't worry about that now", and off she went. Now I admit to being quite fed up by this. It would not have taken her a moment to come back and open the door and because she worked in London, she was not going to be back home until evening, several hours away. So in my frustration I thought to myself, "My poor cat. He's going to be shut up in there all on his own all day. He's going to be very lonely. He is also going to be very hungry". I therefore fed him: a whole tin of Kit-e-Kat, through her letter-box. Nothing was ever said!

To be continued

The Wildlife of Coombe Wood: Autumn and Winter

by John Rostron

In the previous newsletters, I looked at the wood in Spring and Summer. This time, I shall look at what you can see in Autumn and Winter. This is the time to see fungi in the wood. Although there are a good range of fungi that can be seen in the wood, their appearance can be very erratic, with even common species like the



Clouded Agaric being rare one year and abundant the next. This largely will depend on the weather in the late summer and early autumn – a warm, dry summer will inhibit the development of the *mycellium* – the mass of fine threads that make up the bulk of the fungus organism.

In many years, the most abundant toadstools are the Bonnets, especially the Rosy Bonnet, the Angel's Bonnet (shown here) and the Common Bonnet. These are typical 'toadstools' with thin stalks and a flat or conical cap. Some, such as the Rosy Bonnet, are found on the woodland floor, but the Angel's Bonnet grows on fallen wood as above.



Another common mushroom is the Wood Blewit which can show varying amounts of bluish-purple on the cap and stem. The Amethyst Deceiver is a toadstool with similar coloration.

Two less-common, but striking toadstools are the Magpie Fungus (right) and the Rooting Shank (below).

The Magpie Fungus is related to the ink-caps, and the cap will gradually dissolve into a black, ink-like mess. The Rooting Shank is so-called because



the stipe (or stem) penetrates deep into the ground.



In addition to the typical mushrooms and toadstools, there are numerous other types of fungi, notably the brackets. The Dryad's Saddle is the most spectacular of these. Although most of the larger

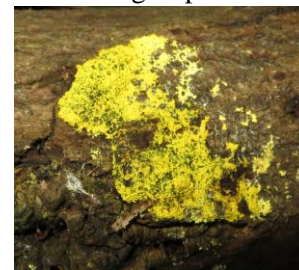


brackets are on tree trunks, this tends to be found on stumps or fallen logs.

Another fungus unrelated to the usual mushrooms and toadstools is the Candlesnuff Fungus. This resembles groups of snuffed-out candle wicks growing on fallen branches.



One final group worth a mention



are the Slime-moulds. These are neither plant nor fungus and are more related to animals. Like the fungi, they live on decaying matter, but when conditions are right they erupt on the surface as a slimy mass. This one is known as Dog's Vomit because of its bright yellow colouration! It typically grows on rotting tree stumps such as this one.