

New England Wood Managers Report March 2019 – March 2020 – Patrick Letschka

This year has seen some challenging weather which has made our weekly volunteers meetings quite difficult at times. In late spring 2019, we managed to replace three of the four entrances to the wood, establishing its boundaries and making it feel more secure from horses and motorbikes, we hope.



Stile, South Entrance



New 5 Bar gate and Kissing gate North Entrance



Squeeze, East Entrance

As spring 2019 turned into a hot summer, we focused on making and repairing paths and John Pilkington very kindly converted fallen oak trees into planks of wood to repair bridge treads and other construction projects. I attended a one day chain saw course run by Small Woods organisation at Telford in order to attend to light cutting jobs. The volunteer group also focused on scything around an area called *Ash Coppice* (see map) and keeping paths free from encroaching brambles.



John Pilkington - planking oak



Chainsaw instruction at Small Woods.org

The wood hosted a few visiting groups during 2019. The University of Brighton, Master of Arts-Craft came for a day in December and made a variety of objects from local wood. UK Power Network sent a group of volunteers to make two benches sited in *Lime Grove* in July 2019. Both groups left with a deeper understanding of how a small wood is managed and the huge variety of tree species we have growing here.



MA Craft students



Mid Sussex Times 4th July 2019

As the headline in the mid Sussex Times suggests, the rain slowly began falling in autumn 2019 and continued on and off for the rest of the year. The Monday volunteers started coppicing in late October in the *Ash Coppice* area, which had been previously prepared. Because the weather was so wet, it took much longer than expected but we just managed to finish cutting before the Coronavirus pandemic hit us in March 2020 and we could no longer meet. The area looks clear of coppice stools – now protected by brash – with wild flowers popping up everywhere and a carpet of bluebells. It will be at least seven years before we cut in this area again.



A clear area in Ash Grove



Wood stacked and prepared for building paths

As the new year 2020 began, rain and storms came wave after wave across the Atlantic and took its toll on some of our trees. Some paths became flooded and impassable in places, it will take a while to catch up when we can return to our Monday morning sessions.



A large tree fallen at the South entrance



a domino effect – three fallen trees

It is important to mention Ash Dieback and how this will affect our wood. We have a great many ash trees of different sizes and ages throughout the whole wood. In late December 2019, the volunteers took the opportunity of surveying exactly how many we have and where they are. It maybe that in the future, as the trees are either cut down for safety or fall down, we will need to move the paths to avoid the most potentially dangerous trees.



Father Christmas blesses our annual party.

During 2019, John Butterworth retired from the Monday volunteer group. John has been incredibly generous with his time, enthusiasm and knowledge, we and the wood, owe him a great deal of gratitude. Please come back and see us as often as you want. New members have joined us and are also becoming valuable members of the team. Thank you to everyone who gives up a morning to help out, for your good humour and energy. The purpose is always to take care of the wood, its wildlife and leave as little sign of our presence as possible. Thank you also to the Cuckfield Woodlander supporters for your generous regular contributions and to all our individual supporters who make all this work possible.

Please note that our blog site - has moved to Instagram, look for – *Cuckfield Woodlanders*

