HOB HEY WOOD FRIENDS GROUP REVIEW 2021



Introduction

As can be seen in the summary and the main body of this report, Hob Hey Wood Friends Group continues to be extremely active in maintaining and improving the wood for the benefits of visitors and the wildlife that lives there. The chair would like to extend an invitation to any councillors to visit the wood and talk about the group's progress over the past four years. Please contact Mark O'Sullivan to arrange is this is something you would like to do.

Summary

- Over 200 volunteer hours.
- Planted 210 trees.
- Planted disease-resistant elm tree to help white-letter hairstreak butterfly colony.
- Maintenance tasks: fallen tree removal; path clearing; drain clearance; mesh replacement; boardwalk repair.
- Other tasks: litter picking, invasive sycamore removal, bramble clearance.
- Excellent social media engagement. Facebook page now has over 780 members.
- Constructed and maintained a noticeboard in the woodland to give information about the wood and the group.
- Built a fence at the main bridge to prevent people falling.
- Sold Hob Hey Wood Calendars to raise funds.
- Income: £489 (calendar sales). Expenditure: £1137.
- Regular feedback to FTC Amenities Committee.

- Talk given as part of Great Big Green Week.
- Biological recording: over 400 species identified in Hob Hey added to iRecord.



Volunteer activities

Eleven volunteer days were completed in 2021 compared with only five in 2020 (which was severely impacted by COVID restrictions). Several members performed solo tasks in the wood during the year.

210 trees, obtained free of charge from the Woodland Trust's 'Free Trees for Schools and Communities' scheme were planted. These were all native species that will enhance the biodiversity of the woodland. The trees were used to fill areas cleared of invasive sycamore and bramble as well as being used to build hedges to delineate paths in the wood (in an attempt to keep visitors to the paths), providing homes and food for the wildlife that lives here.

The volunteers performed many varied activities throughout the year. These included the removal of several trees that fell across paths during storms. Repair of boardwalk mesh and boards. Cleaning of paths and steps of fallen leaves and soil. Litter picking. Invasive sycamore saplings were again tackled. These grow fast and take over suitable areas so quite a few were removed to open up the canopy and provide space for new (native trees to be planted).

To provide information to visitors to the wood, a large noticeboard was constructed and populated with posters about the wood and the group. This has been updated since, with seasonal information. Feedback indicated that this was appreciated by visitors.

Bluebell seeds were once again collected in summer and scattered over suitable areas during autumn.

To encourage wildflowers to the orchard, a 'hay cut' was performed in autumn, paid for by Hob Hey Wood Friends Group. Several tonnes of cuttings were then removed by the group during a volunteer morning.

During spring, a horse rider reported that the branches of a hazel tree had grown across the bridlepath, making it difficult for horses to pass. This was removed during a volunteer morning.

Lots of other tasks were carried out making good use of the over 200 volunteer hours.

Social media and 'outreach' activities

The group maintains a website (hobheywood.wixsite.com/friends) which contains a huge amount of information on the wood and the group's activities including maps and directed walks. This was expanded significantly in 2021.

Our Facebook page, updated almost daily with photos and stories about the wood and its inhabitants has once again proven very popular with many appreciative comments about the wood and the group. The page now has over 750 'members'.

Our social media efforts did result in us welcoming several new volunteers to the group. Hopefully, this will continue into 2022.

Our 'Flickr' page now has over 180 pictures of the wood.

As part of the Great Big Green Week, Mark O'Sullivan gave a talk at Frodsham Methodist Church about the wood and the group.

Once again, when talking to people, many had never heard of Hob Hey or knew where it is. Our work has increased the number of people visiting the wood (and hopefully, the number of people who care about it).

Article published in Butterfly Conservation newsletter about Hob Hey Wood's white-letter hairstreak butterflies.

Finances

The only source of income for 2021 was the sales of the 2021 Hob Hey Wood Friends Group calendar. By year end this had brought in £489 sales (income in 2022 raised this to £829.53).

Expenditure was as follows:

Hay cut in meadow	£288
Materials for boardwalk repairs	£273.42
Post for broken gate	£12.39
Calendar printing costs	£564

Hob Hey Wood Friends Group Account		20-82-13	13539962	
Statement 31/12/2021	Opening balance 01/01/2021			2058.45
	Closing balance 31/12/2021			1410.17
Date:	Reference:	Description:	Income:	Payment:
23/04/21	B Webber	Materials		81.55
26/05/21	B Webber	Materials		191.87
11/10/21	T Blundell	Post for gate		12.39
08/11/21	Eco Land Management	Hay cut		288
08/11/21	Hawk Publications	Calendar printing costs		564
	Calendar sales		489.53	

Wildlife recording

Hob Hey Wood, because it is ancient woodland, is an incredibly biodiverse place. However, the site has not been subjected to many visits from biological recorders, so information about exactly what lives there is very scant.

So, a project was commenced, at the beginning of 2021, to identify and record as many species as possible living in and around the wood, inputting them into the biological recording database 'iRecord'.

In total, 408 species were identified and recorded. Many species were not able to be identified so the total number seen was much higher.

The species seen ranged from extremely common to incredibly rare with notables including white-letter hairstreak butterfly, Nathusius' pipistrelle, and the very rare tiered tooth fungus.

These records have been added and have put our little woodland 'on the map. Species recording will continue in 2022.

Disease resistant elm planting

In the 1970s, Dutch elm disease destroyed around 60 million British elms, changing the landscape drastically. The white-letter hairstreak, which lives solely on elm trees saw its population crash by 99%. This once common butterfly is now very rare in Cheshire.

These butterflies were discovered living in Hob Hey in 2020. This gave the group another conservation goal: maintaining and improving the habitat for this butterfly. It was noted that Dutch elm disease is still killing trees in the wood so the butterfly colony needs all the help it can get.

Through tree warden Tom Blundell, we entered a competition to win a disease-resistant elm tree. We were successful and, on 8th March 2021, this tree was planted in Hob Hey Wood, hopefully helping to secure the future of this rare butterfly in Frodsham's ancient woodland.

Plans for 2022

We will continue with a similar programme of work as with 2021 including:

Leading a walk as part of Frodsham Festival of Walks.

Giving talks on the wood to interested groups (e.g. Rotary Club in February 2022).

South west path construction.

Biological recording.

Maintenance tasks: boardwalk repair; drain clearance; invasive species removal; litter picking; step clearance; step repairs; pruning overhanging branches.
Tree planting.

Bluebell seed collection and planting.

Promotion of the wood via social media.

Regular feedback to FTC.

2023 Calendar to raise funds.

Mark O'Sullivan

Chair of Hob Hey Wood Friends Group

02/03/2022

