



WINTER 2012 - Greetings from your Committee Members

Waitrose Green Tokens

STOP PRESS – FoKW are in the Waitrose Community Collection (Green Tokens) along with Waterside Park and Stanbridge Meadows. **Please visit Leighton Buzzard Waitrose and get spending (in lots of small amounts) and put your Green Tokens in the FoKW box.** This could add significantly to our funds.

November Work Party

We had a good turn out to our November work party to remove some of the low lying scrub on the eastern edge of the woods. This area has a lovely display of bluebells in the spring so we gently cleared the scrub to keep them looking their best. Many thanks to all those involved in keeping the woodland looking so good.

Friends of Knolls Wood Work Party – Sunday 26th February 2012

The Friends of Knolls Wood and The Greensand Trust have arranged a work party on the 26th February when we hope to do scrub clearance before the birds start to nest, improve the Sandy Lane entrance and generally spruce things up. We invite anyone to come and give us a helping hand under the skilled supervision of John Creasey our local GST Ranger.

Please meet outside 55 Redwood Glade at 11 am.

Our Recent Door to Door Collection

Thank you. The request for donations in our Autumn Newsletter and the collection brought a most encouraging response. Well over a thousand pounds was raised. A reminder that the funds will help us to; implement our management plan, replace ageing and dying trees, plant additional specimen trees, continue to work with local schools to organise children's activities and improve the information boards at the entrance to the woods. In addition to our appeal, we were successful in securing a grant from the Town Council of three hundred pounds which will make a significant contribution to the cost of a new notice board soon to be constructed and installed near the Sandy Lane / Heath Park Road entrance. The Committee would like to extend our thanks and appreciation to all who made a contribution.

If you missed out on the collection it is not too late to send a cheque made payable to: "Friends of Knolls Wood" to: The Treasurer, Blair Drummond, Heath Park Road, Leighton Buzzard, LU7 3BB

The Rhododendron Debate – Where do you stand?

The FoKW committee are divided between those who think the wood's rhododendrons are a creeping menace and those who see them as attractive shrubs. We agree that the plant has attractive flowers, and is evergreen so provides some cover in the winter, beyond this we diverge. For some they can do no wrong and should be given free rein, for others this foreign invasive species needs to be kept under control.

We know that Knolls Wood is not natural woodland and (from the History section of our website) in 1871 it contained more than 250 species. It is likely that this early planting contained rhododendron, possibly in the spaces between the Chilean Pines (Monkey Puzzle trees) along the pathway. The Common Rhododendron was introduced into Britain in 1763 so would have been available however it may not have been the intended variety. Here are some arguments for and against the Common Rhododendron (rhododendron ponticum).



For

- The rhododendrons are beautiful when in flower in the spring and help to make the woods special. (The Duke of Bedford obviously feels the same.)
- With their dark, glossy leaves they are handsome shrubs even when not in flower.
- They are not a native species, true, but then nor are the redwoods, monkey puzzles and sweet chestnuts. Before John Dollin Bassett started the plantation, the area was heathland.
- It's true that rhododendrons spread, but so what? They can't 'escape' beyond the boundaries of the wood and they don't harm the mature trees.
- If they are grubbed up what replaces them? Brambles and nettles. What would you rather see?

Against:

- The Common Rhododendron is hardy and vigorous so it is often used as rootstock for more attractive species. The problem is that the rootstock produces its own shoots (suckers) which can take over from the intended shrub.
- It spreads by both windblown seeds and by production of new roots where a branch touches the ground. In this way they gradually creep across the ground as well producing new plants some distance away.
- Virtually nothing will grow under a rhododendron (have a look for yourself) so they are bad for biodiversity.
- When rhododendrons are cleared it makes sense to encourage or plant more desirable species in the area rather than let it revert to bramble and nettle or whatever.

There you have it, some pros and cons. Let's hear your opinion via the FoKW website at:

www.knollswood.com