

# Gifford Community Woodland

Protecting Speedy & Fawn Woods for the benefit of the local community

## Summer Update

June 2023

We thought we'd kick-off this newsletter with something a bit different. The Woods can only survive because of the work and support of a huge number of people, so if you've not got involved yet but would be keen to - here is a quick list of four ways you could help us care for Gifford Woods! And see inside and on the back cover for even more ways to get involved...

### 1. Walk & Weed!

We've made some great progress re-planting both the areas of Fawn Wood impacted by storm Arwen, and Speedy Wood where we had Ash Dieback. But these new trees now have a fight on their hands to survive...and the best way to help them is to gently pull away some of the other foliage from around their base. If everybody did one each time they walked in the woods we would soon get there! (Gloves recommended.)

### 2. Take only memories, leave only footprints.

We have had some issues recently with dog fouling, and people leaving waste bags in neighbouring gardens. You may have noticed a new Council managed bin appear just by the sign so please do dispose of all waste responsibly, and encourage others to do the same. Also please be aware in these drier months with cigarette butts as there is a real risk of fire which could be devastating.

### 3. Become a Woodland Trustee?

As a registered charity we are required to have a group of Trustees to officially run the organisation, and we're looking for two new members! You don't need ANY experience, just a love for the woods - and it's not even too onerous, just a few meetings each quarter. You can hear more inside as we've an interview with outgoing Trustee Vi, or visit our website or email [gifford.woodseh41@gmail.com](mailto:gifford.woodseh41@gmail.com).

### 4. Join one of the many Volunteering activities.

Throughout the year we run a range of volunteering opportunities, more details of which can be found on the back of this newsletter. So whether you want to chop logs, help the kids at Forest School or learn a new skill like First Aid or Chain sawing (the hope is the two groups never meet!) we've love to have you join in. Or why not come along to any of our Open Woodland Meetings to find out more...

# An Interview with a Volunteer...Charity Trustee Vi Monelle

## ***When did you first become involved with the community woodland?***

Since I moved to Gifford in 2007, I have walked in the woods several times a week and loved their beauty and peace, so naturally when I heard there was a proposal to buy the woods as a community resource I became involved in supporting this process. We were fortunate to have people on board with brilliant skills in fund-raising, form-filling, finance, law and community engagement, because this process is long, complicated and hard work. There was also strong community support. After we were awarded the grant, the hard work really began! The woods need to be safe and we wanted to improve public accessibility by creating a loop of all-weather paths (not cheap!). We had to raise a percentage of our purchase price through pledges by local people. Above all we always had to try to keep a balance between the roles of the wood as a community resource and our conservation and biodiversity responsibilities.

## ***What has your trustee role involved?***

In the early days there was a committee of anyone who wanted to be involved and a smaller group of trustees, required by law to be responsible for the running of the land company/charity. Trustees had to step down after 3 years (we have since amended this rule) so eventually I filled a vacancy to become a trustee. As a committee member I'd been very involved in planning the AGM and community events and also trying to keep the community informed and enthused. So it was natural that this was my focus as a trustee and also as a member of the communications group.

I think our creation and promotion of the 'Friends' scheme has been a great achievement, a really important source of income and demonstration of the support and generosity of the people of Gifford. It will be even more important when our main funding ends next year, so we are always encouraging people who love the woods to pledge a sum, however small, on a regular basis.

Another really important achievement is the production of our quarterly newsletter which we hope is interesting and informative, and which is hand-delivered to every single household in our area.

We have faced unexpected challenges - such as Storm Arwen and ash dieback disease - as well as all the ongoing demanding tasks of managing and conserving our woods. However our secret weapons to deal with anything life throws at us are Nev, our fantastic and expert woodsman Project Manager, our Admin Jill and our amazing team of volunteers.



## An Interview with a Volunteer...cont...

### ***What have you enjoyed most about being a trustee?***

I have been a trustee for 3 years and it's time for me to make way for someone with new skills and energy. I'm now spending more time in London with my two year old granddaughter and her parents, but my love for the woods will never change. I've learned such a lot about the challenges, hard work - and pleasure - involved in caring for woods. I've got to know more people in this wonderful community and am filled with admiration for the hard work and skills of our trustees.

Our woods have changed since we bought them for the community. Paths have opened up and made more accessible areas of the wood that were once impenetrable. We have lost some trees, but planted many more for the enjoyment of all in a few years. We are clearing invasive rhododendron to make way for native species (that made what I called our ugly 'elephants graveyard' in parts of Speedy Wood, but that is a temporary eyesore that we are disposing of!) We have a pond which will create a new habitat for more species, our young people all have education and adventures in the forest school and our woods are safe forever from felling and development. The woods belong to the community and we will always treasure and protect their wildness, peace and beauty as a core commitment, just as important as conservation and education.

Just to have had a tiny part in shaping this has been a great privilege and of course I will be continuing to be a 'Friend', to be on the Comms group delivering the newsletters and to be an enthusiastic spokesperson for the woods whenever I get a chance!

### **Fruit Trees Update.**

The fruit trees are doing well! All of the apples blossomed at their expected times. The last two in flower are the Bramley and the Ellison's Orange (a type of russet). The damson, which was little more than a stick when it went in, has loads of branches peeping out the top of its tube. The trees need watered during dry spells and the group would like thank Alan for keeping the Water Storage IBC topped up. There is also a lot of weeding to do!

If you would like to help, please email [gifford.woodseh41@gmail.com](mailto:gifford.woodseh41@gmail.com).



### **Are you a Friend of Gifford Woods?**

**Whilst we currently have Heritage Lottery Funding, we're preparing for Gifford Woods to become financially sustainable by 2024. If you've not yet signed-up to become a Friend, find out more & sign-up online via the QR code or go to [giffordcommunitywoodland.com/become-a-friend/](http://giffordcommunitywoodland.com/become-a-friend/).**

**We appreciate finances are tight for many people, so we have a range of flexible donation options to suit all budgets.**

# Dates for your Diary:

| Event  | When                                 | Details / How to Book  |
|--|--------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Women's Woodland Jogging Group</b><br>meets informally on Mondays in the Village Square for a run around the woods. | Every Monday at 7.30pm               | Anyone who wants to be added to the WhatsApp group can email <a href="mailto:gifford.woodseh41@gmail.com">gifford.woodseh41@gmail.com</a> .                          |
| <b>Volunteer Day</b><br>Weeding and tidying. Lunch provided.   | Sun 18th June<br>10.30am - 4pm       | All welcome. Please let us know if you're coming by email.   |
| <b>Family Volunteer Day</b><br>Family-friendly tasks and snacks!   | Fri 23rd June<br>2pm - 4.30pm        | All welcome. Please let us know if you're coming by email.   |
| <b>Forest School Summer Camp</b><br>Runs daily for 1 week with spaces for up to 15 children aged 6 - 10.               | 10th - 14th July<br>9.30am - 11.30am | Suggested donation of £50 per child for the week. For booking information, please email <a href="mailto:gifford.woodseh41@gmail.com">gifford.woodseh41@gmail.com</a> |
| <b>Gifford Flower Show:</b> we'll be running a stand and selling tea and cake on the Sunday in Gifford Village Hall.   | 19th & 20th August                   | Timings will be published in the Flower Show schedule.<br><b>Volunteers needed to bake &amp; serve if you'd like to help?</b>  |
| <b>Volunteer Day</b><br>Rhododendron clearance with Lothian Conservation Volunteers.                                   | Sun 20th August<br>10am - 4.30pm     | All welcome. Please let us know if you're coming by email.   |
| <b>Woods AGM.</b> Join us in the woods with catering from Buck & Birch.  | Sun 27th August<br>5pm - 7pm         | All welcome. Find out what's been happening and help us plan for the future.   |
| <b>Fungi Foray with Nev Kilkenny.</b> Learn about wild fungi and see what you can find on this guided woodland walk.   | Sat 9th Sept<br>10am - 2pm           | Tickets available on Eventbrite. Suggested donations £30 (Adult) / £15 (Child).  |
| <b>Volunteer Day</b><br>Rhododendron clearance with Lothian Conservation Volunteers.                                   | Sun 10th Sept<br>10am - 4.30m        | All welcome. Please let us know if you're coming by email.   |
| <b>Volunteer Day</b><br>Rhododendron clearance with Lothian Conservation Volunteers.                                   | Sat 23rd Sept<br>10am - 4.30pm       | All welcome. Please let us know if you're coming by email.   |
| <b>Woodland Cinema:</b> An early screening for little ones / families, later screening for 12+!                        | Sat 30th Sept<br>Timings tbc         | Free community event.<br><b>And our films are not yet decided, so any suggestions then let us know!</b>  |
| <b>Open Woods Meeting</b><br>Gifford Bowling Club  | Mon 27th Nov<br>7.30pm - 9pm         | All welcome.   |

If you have any further thoughts or comments, please get in touch using details below.