

Friends of Weir Wood Newsletter

Newsletter No. 88

Spring 2020



Welcome!

FRIENDS – 2020 AGM *by Bob Johnson*

38 members attended the AGM formal business at the Community Centre, Forest Row on 13th March, with a full house of 60 for the Guest Speaker's talk. My thanks to all those who came along and supported us. The business covered the following:

1. Apologies for absence
2. Approval of 2019 AGM Minutes
3. Matters arising
4. Chairman's Report
5. Membership Secretary & Website Editor's Report
6. Treasurer's Report & Approval of 2019 Accounts and acceptance of the Auditor.
7. Election of Officers and Committee
8. Any Other Business.

There were no major changes to the running of the Society or your Committee which was re-elected unchanged:

Honorary Officers: Chairman - Bob Johnson,
Treasurer - Bob Hastings,
Website & Facebook Editor – Tom Howard-Jones,
Membership Secretary – Tom Howard-Jones,
General/Minute Secretary – Vacant and currently being covered by the Chairman.
General Committee: Shaun Taylor, Glenn Tocher, Alan Caulkett, Peter Johnson, Phil Holland.

The full AGM minutes of the meeting is available to view on our website.

Our AGM was followed by a talk from our Guest Speaker, Penny Green who is the Ecologist for the Knepp Estate. Penny gave us a very interesting and informative talk on the now renowned Re-wilding Project that she has been managing at Knepp, covering the early history to the eventual success, with results better than even the optimistic could have predicted.

My thanks to Penny for making it a very interesting and enjoyable evening for all. My thanks also to all the helpers involved with running the event, refreshments team and those organising equipment, so that everything went smoothly on the night.

Forthcoming Events Cancelled

The Bluebell walk on Saturday 25th April and an intended walk led by Bob Johnson on the 6th May with an SOS Group, where our members were welcome to come along, have both been cancelled due to the current Coronavirus (Covid 19) restrictions.

The Open Day on Sunday 12th July may also be cancelled, unless restrictions are lifted before that date. However, a final decision on this will be made nearer the time.

Some Weir Wood History *by Judy Johnson*

If you look at the Ordnance Survey map for Weir Wood Reservoir, you may notice a public footpath that leads from the sharp bend in Legsheath Lane to the south bank of the reservoir, ending in what seems to be the middle of nowhere. This is the old track to the old hamlet of Walesbeech (sometimes spelt Whalesbeech or Whalesbeach), the site of which lies under the water.

Walesbeech is mentioned in the Domesday Book (1086) as 'Waslebie'. Before the Norman Conquest it belonged to East Lavant (being part of land owned by the Archbishop of Canterbury) and was farmed by a man called Folki. By the time of Domesday it had become part of the land of the Count of Mortain and was held by Ralph, who also held Brambletye. At that time it was inhabited by two 'villans', a class of peasants living in a village, and there was enough ploughland for three teams of oxen.

Moving on to the Census of 1881, there was a farm and cottage here. At the farm lived William Tester, his wife Mary Ann and their two daughters, Annette and Alice. William formerly from Worth stated he was a farmer of 220 acres. Also living at the farm were three agricultural labourers, John Barry, James Weller, and William Styles and Jane Simmons, a lodger. In the cottage lived George Williams, agricultural labourer, Mary his wife and their two sons, William and George.

In 1891 the Testers and the Williams were still in residence. There was now a second cottage inhabited by Mary Smith, a widow, and her two daughters.

In 1901 the farm was occupied by Walter Winnfrith, a farm bailiff, his wife Ann, three daughters and William Holder, a farm labourer. In one cottage lived James Leppard, a farm carter, his wife Emily and their two sons, and in the other Oliver Chatsfield, a domestic gardener, his wife Mary and their son Oliver.

By 1911 only the farm and one cottage were occupied by members of the Bond family, all agricultural labourers. At the farm, Frederick Bond, his wife Elizabeth and son Frederick. At the cottage James Bond and his wife Mary Ann.

I cannot find Walesbeech in the 1939 Register. Maybe it was not included because it was unoccupied at that time. The buildings seem to have been demolished some time before the reservoir was built.

This is an ongoing research, so if anyone has any additional information please feel free to contact me either through info@weirwood.me.uk or judyjohnson@tiscali.co.uk

Little Grebe - 2 on 1/1, 1 on 3/1, 3 on 12/1, 1 on 14/1, up to 3 from 1/2 to 10/2, 2 on 21/2, 1/3 & 16/3, 1 on 23/3.
Great Crested Grebe – Regular (counts over 5) – 7 on 12/1 & 5/2, 10 on 7/2, 9 on 10/2, 8 on 27/2, 9 on 8/3, 10 on 18/3, 12 on 22/3, 13 on 23/3.
Cormorant – Regularly up to 20 (counts over) 33 on 3/1, 27 on 12/1, 45 on 10/2, 28 on 21/2, 34 on 22/2, 53 on 6/3, 38 on 8/3, 21 on 13/3, 30 on 23/3 when 11 active nests noted within heronry.
Grey Heron – Up to 3 until 7 on 12/1, 8 on 19/1, 24 on 27/1, 26 on 28/1, 27 on 31/1, up to 31 from 2/2 to 7/2, 40 on 10/2, up to 41 from 17/2 to 27/2, 45 on 8/3, 20 on 14/3, 13 on 23/3 (48 nests noted on 16/3 many with birds sitting and 6 nests had young). A leucistic very light bird is also on a nest with a normally coloured partner.
Mute Swan – 1 on 2/2, 5 on 7/2, 4 on 10/2, 1 on 13/2, 18/2 & 4/3, 4 on 15/3 & 19/3, 5 from 20/3 onwards.
Greylag Goose – 185 on 3/1, 205 on 10/1, 185 on 12/1, 210 on 19/1, 90 on 27/1, 101 on 31/1, 190 on 7/2, 136 on 10/2, 122 on 21/2, 20 on 27/2, 26 on 8/3, 14 on 13/3, 13 on 14/3, 1 on 20/3, 3 on 23/3.
Canada Goose – Regular (counts over 2), 6 on 10/1, 22 on 12/1, 5 on 19/1, 15 on 2/2, 4 on 5/2, 37 on 7/2, 23 on 10/2, 10 on 8/3, 4 on 13/3, 23 on 15/3, 42 on 20/3, 8 on 22/3, 5 on 23/3. & 1 Canada/Greylag hybrid on 12/1 & 19/1.
Egyptian Goose – (Up to 2 regularly – counts over) 3 on 1/1, 4 on 28/1, 6 on 21/2, 5 on 22/2, 3 on 13/3 & 14/3, 4 on 20/3 & 23/3.
Shoveler – 1 on 27/1.
Gadwall - 5 on 1/1, 2 on 6/1, 3 on 12/1 & 14/1, 2 on 5/2, 3 on 7/2, 23/2 & 27/2, 2 on 2/3, 1 on 13/3, 14/3 & 17/3, 3 on 23/3.
Mandarin – (Up to 2 Regularly - counts over) 6 on 29/12, 3 on 31/12, 15 on 1/1, 4 on 10/1, 15 on 12/1, 3 on 14/1, 4 on 19/1, 10 on 21/1, 15 on 27/1, 8 on 28/1 & 1/2, 3 on 2/2, 5 on 5/2, 6 on 10/2, 3 on 15/3, 5 on 23/3.
Teal – 6 on 12/1.
Mallard - Resident - (counts over 8) 10 on 3/1 & 12/1, 16 on 27/1, 21 on 31/1, 25 on 10/2, 23 on 13/2, 10 on 21/2 & 27/2, 45 on 6/3, 42 on 8/3, 22 on 13/3, 20 on 23/3. Also 1 Feral Domestic hybrid Mallard on 3/1, 10/2, 8/3 & 23/3.
Tufted Duck - Up to 2 regularly (counts over), 3 on 6/1 & 5/2, 9 on 7/2 & 22/2, 4 on 14/3, 17 on 15/3, 3 on 17/3, 15 on 18/3, 4 on 19/3 & 20/3.
Pochard – 3 on 31/12 & 1/1, 6 on 6/1, 2 on 10/1, 3 on 12/1 & 14/1, 5 on 19/1, 2 on 27/1 & 28/1, 6 from 31/1 to 7/2, 5 on 10/2, 7 on 13/2, 1 on 17/2, 4 on 21/2 & 22/2, 3 on 23/2, 2 on 27/2, 1 on 29/2, 2 from 1/3 to 8/3.
Wigeon - 1 on 27/1. **Common Scoter** – 1 on 20/3
Red Kite – 1 on 8/3, 13/3 & 23/3. **Merlin** – 1 on 6/1.
Peregrine – 1 on 12/1, 21/1, 2/2 & 10/2, 1 on 1/3.
Sparrowhawk – 1 on 30/12, 1/1, 12/1 & 21/1, 1 on 2/2 & 4/2, 2 on 10/2, 1 on 8/3, 2 on 13/3, 1 on 14/3, 16/3 & 20/3.
Kestrel - 2 on 15/3, 1 on 23/3.
Buzzard - 1 on 29/12, 1/1 & 10/1 then up to 2 regularly (counts over), 3 on 28/1, 4 on 10/2, 3 on 17/2, 6 on 22/2, 4 on 29/2, 1/3, 3/3 & 8/3, 6 on 13/3, 5 on 15/3, 4 on 23/3.
Pheasant - Regular and resident - (counts over 5), 10 on 12/1, 6 on 23/3.
Moorhen - Resident (Counts over 2), 7 on 12/1, 4 on 27/1, 3 on 5/2, 5 on 10/2, 3 on 22/2 & 27/2, 4 on 8/3.
Coot – 1 on 23/3.
Water Rail – 1 on 30/12, 2 on 1/1, 1 on 12/1, 1 on 11/2 & 8/3.
Lapwing – 40 on 10/2.
Common Snipe – 1 on 19/1, 6 on 21/1 & 11/2, 1 on 18/2 & 22/3, 7 on 23/3.
Little Ringed Plover – 2 on 23/3. **Green Sandpiper** - 1 on 22/3.
Little Gull – 2 on 23/3.
Black Headed Gull - (counts over 10) c1500 roost count on 3/1, 25 on 10/1, 43 on 12/1, 722 roost on 7/2, 21 on 10/2, 57 on 21/2, 24 on 8/3, 12 on 13/3, 30 on 14/3, 22 on 15/3.
Common Gull – 1 on 31/12 & 1/1, 25 on 3/1, 12 on 10/1, 6 on 12/1, 7 on 19/1, 15 on 4/2, 3 on 5/2, 22 on 7/2, 2 on 10/2, 3 on 21/2, 10 on 23/2, 38 on 29/2, 8 on 1/3, 10 on 2/3, 2 on 8/3, 8 on 13/3, 46 on 14/3, 16 on 15/3, 4 on 16/3, 1 on 22/3, 7 on 23/3.
LBB Gull – 1 on 4/3, 2 on 20/3, 1 on 23/3.
Herring Gull – 15 on 3/1, 1 on 10/1 & 10/2, 1 on 1/3, 10 on 8/3, 6 on 13/3, 3 on 15/3, 19 on 22/3, 2 on 23/3.
Kittiwake – 1 on 13/3.
Stock Dove – 2 on 1/1, 5 on 12/1, 3 on 21/2, 1 on 27/2, 2 on 8/3, 3 on 13/3, 1 on 14/3, 5 on 15/3, 7 on 23/3.
Wood Pigeon – Ubiquitous (counts over 10), 250 flyover on 29/12, 89 on 8/3, 60 on 23/3.
Tawny Owl – 1 on 12/1.
Kingfisher – 2 on 31/12, 1 on 3/1, 2 on 12/1, 1 on 19/1, 2 on 21/1.
Green Woodpecker – 1 on 30/12, 1/1 & 31/1, 1 on 10/2, 2 on 1/3, 1 on 8/3, 16/3 & 22/3.
Gt Spotted Woodpecker – 1 regularly (counts over) 2 on 12/1 & 18/2, 4 on 3/3 & 8/3, 2 on 23/3.
Grey Wagtail – 1 on 15/3 & 16/3, 2 on 23/3.
Pied Wagtail – 1 on 12/1, 10/2 & 13/2, 2 on 1/3 & 8/3, 1 on 15/3, 2 on 20/3, 3 on 23/3.
Sand Martin - 2 on 18/3, 60 on 20/3, 9 on 22/3.
Meadow Pipit – 4 on 10/2. **Wheatear** – 1 on 18/3.
Duncock - Up to 2 intermittently (counts over), 3 on 10/2.
Blackbird - Up to 2 regularly (counts over), 3 on 10/1, 9 on 12/1, 3 on 27/1, 9 on 22/3.
Wren & Robin – Regular and resident reported in low numbers, (no count over 2).
Song Thrush – 1 on 31/12, 2 on 3/1, 1 on 12/1, 3 on 10/2, 1 on 8/3, 15/3 & 16/3, 5 on 22/3.
Mistle Thrush – 1 on 1/1, 2 on 12/1, 1 on 13/2 & 8/3, 3 on 16/3, 1 on 23/3.
Stonechat – 1 on 1/1 & 12/1, 1 on 1/3.
Redwing – 2 on 29/12, 4 on 1/1, 60 on 12/1, 10 on 10/2, 25 on 8/3, 1 on 15/3, 8 on 22/3.
Fieldfare - 3 on 29/12, 57 on 30/12, 1 on 1/1, 59 on 12/1, 30 on 10/2, 40 on 8/3, 39 on 15/3, 1 on 16/3, 26 on 22/3.
Chiffchaff – 1 on 14/3, 6 on 15/3, 2 on 16/3, 16 on 22/3.
Goldcrest - 2 on 29/12, 1/1 & 12/1, 1 on 10/2 & 17/2, 3 on 15/3.
Marsh Tit - 1 Regularly throughout period (counts over) 3 on 6/1, 12/1 & 2/2, 2 on 10/2.

L.T. Tit – 1 on 29/12 & 10/1, 8 on 12/1, 3 on 14/1 & 19/1, 2 on 21/1, 4 on 31/1, 3 on 7/2, 2 on 10/2 & 8/3, 1 on 13/3 to 15/3, 2 on 22/3.
Coal Tit – 1 Regularly throughout period (counts over), 2 on 31/12 & 21/2, 3 on 14/3.
Blue Tit - Regular in good numbers (counts over 8), 13 on 29/12, 12 on 10/1, 10 on 19/1, 21/1 & 31/1, 20 on 27/1, 30 on 10/2, 10 on 21/2 & 27/2, 12 on 8/3.
Great Tit – Up to 5 regularly (counts over), 8 on 12/1, 14 on 10/2.
Nuthatch – 1 on 31/12, 12/1, 19/1, 21/1 & 27/1, 1 on 4/2 & 21/2, 1 on 3/3, 8/3 & 23/3.
Tree Creeper – 1 on 29/12, 6 on 1/1, 1 on 12/1, 2 on 21/1, 1 on 10/2, 18/2 & 23/2, 1 on 3/3, 22/3 & 23/3.
Jay – 1 on 31/12, 8/1, 2 on 1/1, 5 on 12/1, 2 on 10/2, 4 on 1/3, 2 on 8/3, 7 on 22/3.
Magpie – Resident & regular (counts over 5), 8 on 17/3 & 22/3.
Jackdaw – (counts over 2), 50 on 12/1 & 7/2, 10 on 10/2.
Rook - 2 on 30/12, 1 on 10/2, 22 on 8/3, 1 on 13/3, 14/3 & 22/3. (13 nests seen at Dam end Rookery).
Carrion Crow – Resident in low numbers (no counts over 5).
Raven - 2 on 29/12, 1 on 12/1 & 29/2, 3 on 1/3, 1 on 15/3.
Starling – [Estimated Murmuration counts over Whillet's – 3000 on 1/1, 4000 on 4/1], 25 on 12/1, 15 on 10/2, 36 on 1/3, 30 on 8/3, 4 on 15/3, 120 on 20/3.
Chaffinch – Regular (counts over 2), 3 on 29/12, 4 on 30/12, 9 on 1/1, 7 on 10/1 & 12/1, 3 on 19/1, 12 on 28/1, 6 on 7/2, 8 on 10/2, 3 on 17/2, 7 on 18/2 & 25/2, 3 on 8/3, 4 on 13/3, 19 on 22/3.
Goldfinch – Regular in low numbers (counts over 2), 6 on 29/12, 4 on 17/2, 12 on 8/3, 3 on 13/3 8 on 15/3.
Bullfinch – 3 on 1/1, 5 on 12/1, 1 on 14/1 & 10/2, 3 on 8/3, 5 on 15/3, 7 on 22/3.
Lesser Redpoll – 1 on 1/1, 12/1 & 13/3, 30 on 15/3.
Siskin – 2 on 8/3. **Yellowhammer** - 1 on 15/3 & 22/3.
Reed Bunting – (Roost counts 82 on 1/1, 67 on 12/1), 2 on 15/3, 1 on 22/3.

Nature Reserve News*by Bob Johnson***Spring 2020**

Since the last newsletter, the predominant problems at the reserve have all been storm related. We had reports from the Fishery that at the height of some storms, waves at the dam end were so big, the spray was going over the top of the dam wall.

Gales have blown down trees across paths and fences. The amount of rain has raised reservoir levels to unprecedented heights, backing up the river water in the meadows. We have seen the river up to 30cm higher than its normal high water marks making the meadows into a lake from Whillet's Pool to the lower lying parts of the second meadow at times. Our refugia tins were all moving around in the flow, log piles spread everywhere. Meadow Pond has had masses of earth from surrounding fields washed into it which has silted it badly. In the main reserve feed streams became blocked, Plaw Hatch Stream bridge lifted and moved. A culvert was damaged and needed repairs.

With the cessation of all work parties etc. due to the Coronavirus, we have dealt with the work we could do at this time. Other work also started includes: We intended to do clearance work and fit a new access gate on North Bank opposite the viewing platform with the intention of getting a tractor to the open area. We would then be able to regularly cut back the bracken and bramble scrub to bring some of it back to meadow flower grassland. Some of the clearance work and the fitting of the new access gate was completed. We have ring-barked further non-native Grey Alder trees in the study area as these are an invasive suckering species that have little wildlife value. Those of you that walk the North Bank public footpath should find the views from the picnic area improved as we have cut back some of the invading bramble and trimmed hedges at this area.

The weather has not affected the Heronry which is doing well and up on last year with 48 nests, some already holding young by 16th March. However, the winter wildfowl counts particularly Great Crested Grebes have been low, maybe partly due to the high water levels.

We fear the flooding within the meadows may have an effect on the numbers of our meadow butterfly species this summer, such as Ringlet & Meadow Brown as they over winter as caterpillars at the base/roots of grasses, the flood waters may well have drowned quite a lot of them.

Coronavirus and the Nature Reserve

It seems ironic that after all the recent storms and crises, with gales and flooding, when it was so unpleasant few wanted to go out, that now when the weather finally relents to a week of dry warm sunshine and we want to go out, we are hit with another crisis where we cannot. This time it's a pandemic virus where we all must stay indoors to save lives.

Since 17th March all our work parties and the attendance of our ESCC Rangers have had to be cancelled until the restrictions are officially lifted. This is vital as many of our volunteers are in that 70+ vulnerable group.

I must reiterate that anyone who visits the Nature Reserve Car Park or North bank picnic area as part of any legal exercise, is reminded they must observe the government's restrictions on no close contact, particularly at the hide or visitor seats and we trust people will use common sense.

The birds are singing, nature is blooming heralding spring, This is normally the point where we begin our wildlife nest box recording season and also ready the reserve for summer. Luckily nature can happily soldier on without

us recording it. So we now just have to wait and look forward to the point where we can start recording numbers of young seen on the wing, as experts are predicting restrictions will not be lifted until at least early June, and by then much of the nest box season for small passerines will be over!!!

Meanwhile we hope all our members keep safe and well at this difficult time, so they too can come down to the reserve to enjoy looking for our new young wildlife.

Membership News

Spring 2020

Membership Fees for 2019 *by Tom Howard-Jones.*

Membership fees for 2019 are due from the first of January. Those still outstanding should get a reminder slip with this newsletter.

If you wish to renew your membership, and/or you would like to pay by bank transfer - or just want to check if you have renewed - please contact me.

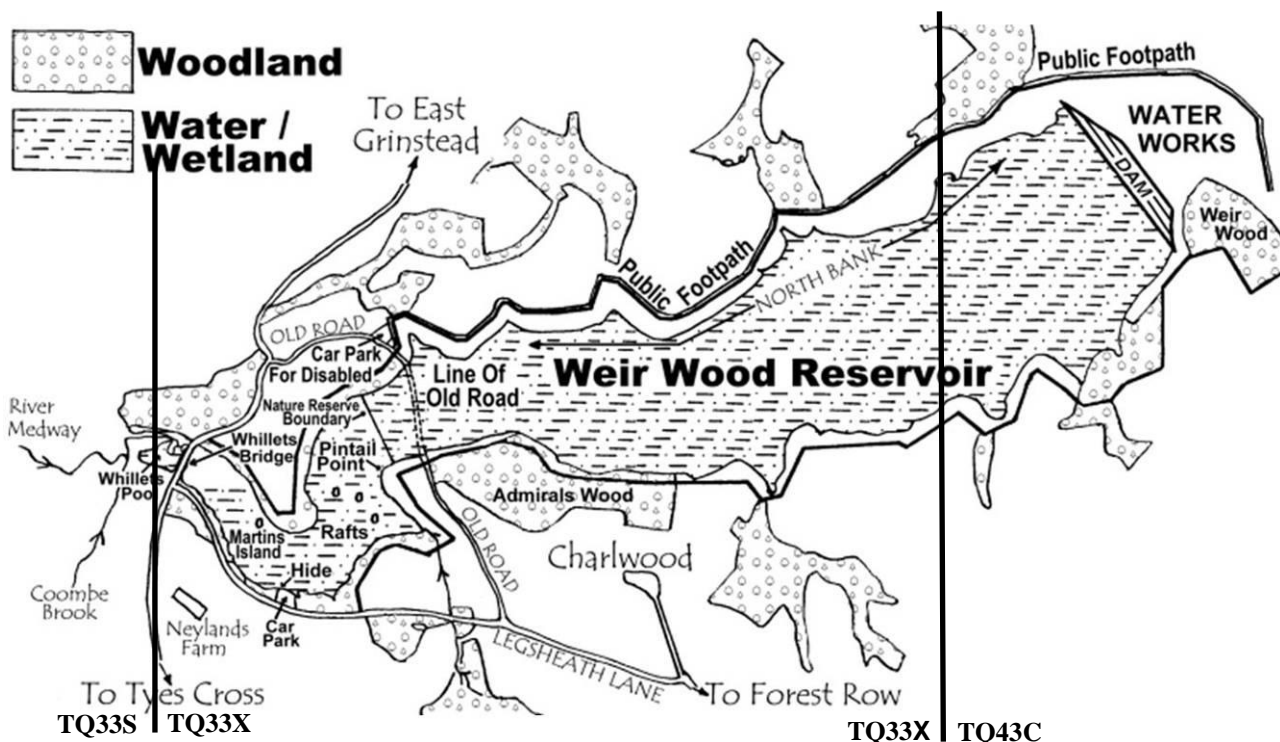
Tom Howard-Jones email: membership@weirwood.me.uk

FOWW 25th Anniversary Book Update *by Tom Howard-Jones*

Our goal remains to finish the book by the end of this year so that it can go on sale at the start of our silver anniversary year in 2021. We have completed the outline design; we have selected a preferred printer and we have settled on the publishing software we are going to use.

Our small team of writers have produced at least one draft for all the text and we are collecting the photographs we will use. It is not too late for you to contribute with either words or pictures.

If you are interested please contact our Membership Secretary. He will be happy to give you more details and to explore how you can add to our content.



Friends of Weir Wood Society General Information

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