



Friends of Sharphill Wood

2025 Annual Report

May 2025

Founded 22 January 2008: Seventeenth Annual Report

We met on 7 occasions having decided not to stick rigidly to our monthly schedule. At our AGM on 14 May 2024 the following Officers were elected:

i.	Chairperson	Chrissie Wells
ii.	Vice Chair	Mike Rivett
iii.	Secretary	Bill Logan
iv.	Treasurer	Chrissie Wells
v.	Publicity Officer	Mike Rivett
vi.	Work Party Coordinator	John Elwell
vii.	Deputy Work Party Coordinator (2)	Richard Elliott, Mike Rivett
viii.	Equipment Manager	David Nicholson-Cole

There were 87 Friends on the circulation list in May 2025.

Chair's Report

"Teamwork divides the work and multiplies the success"

That works for the Friends of Sharphill Wood!

Our Management Plan sets out an ideal of what the Management Team partners want to achieve over the years, however Conservation is not an exact science and there are different ways of working and it requires discipline, patience and tact to come to a consensus over each aim we tackle. We have learned to listen to and respect each other. The first job is of course to determine each task's priority. It is tempting to tackle easy jobs first and those we enjoy doing.



Our main priority should of course be involvement of the community in everything we do, and education in conservation, especially of young people and children. No member of the core officer team is under 70 although we do attract younger people to the work parties. For the Friends Group to sustain itself into the future and remain operative, good organisation is critical. It is tempting to be task focused and forget that working in an inclusive way much more important and valuable than just getting the job done. It's a hard lesson to take on board.

Regular monthly work party volunteer hours were approximately 200 hours for the year which demonstrates the support from the community for work parties, notwithstanding cancellation of some this year due to bad weather. Although we shouldn't single out important jobs, arguably the most crucial is the Work Party Coordinator. John Elwell carries out this responsibility immaculately, publicising the dates, leading on planning priority

tasks, issuing risk assessments and ensuring that people who join the parties are safe and well informed as well as thoroughly enjoying themselves. Of course, in this he is supported by other officers.

Always keen to attract new volunteers, a well-received talk was given in April to the Dunster Road Neighbourhood Watch Group, although no new members were recruited. In May we hosted a coffee morning at West Bridgford Methodist Church to raise funds but also to talk to people about the Friends and our activities. In September we were invited to take part in the Holy Rood Church, Edwaltham "Love the World" weekend for which we prepared a display and attended in person to talk to parishioners. The Church had previously given us a donation towards 2 new scythe sets, (see donations under Treasurer's report) which were very gratefully received. On 15th October we hosted a U3A Geology Walk. As well as the flora and fauna, members were of course interested in the history of the area going back thousands of years as evidenced by the soils and stones.

The increasingly popular Dawn Chorus Walk took place in late April ably led as always by John Elwell. Then in the Autumn months we acceded to a request by Rushcliffe Borough Council to count footfall (heads and tails!) over 3 separate hours per day, for 2 Fridays and 2 Saturdays per month over 3 months. The results were interesting although the methodology was not perfect. The results were needed as a baseline for future counts, and to support funding applications and Green Flag Award, when work is needed. We intend to carry out another count this summer. Apart from anything else it was interesting to talk to walkers and explain what we were doing and why.

In November we attended a residents' meeting from the new housing to the east of the Wood, at which Councillors Hetvi Parekh, Gordon Wheeler and Jonathan Wheeler were present along with Nottinghamshire Police. We spoke about the Friends' Group and what we do, and there was some interest but no recruitment. However, we are aware that some residents have joined work parties over the year.

One of our regrets was not being able to carry out joint work with Rosecliffe Spencer School, however we know that the children are using the Wood regularly and during 2025 we hope to support them in activities.

Despite our objections, and attendance at the Notts County Council Planning Committee meeting, several tons off topsoil were removed from the yet to be created community park area onto the fields to the west of the Wood. The "Wildlife Corridor Hedge" cannot be completed until the topsoil issue is finalised.

We must be doing something right, as we achieved the Green Flag Award for the second year running on the basis of a “Mystery Shopper” visit. Of course the hard work put in by Alastair Glenn, Manager of Rushcliffe Country Park Manager in 2023 played a big part. Recognition is always welcome.

Fans of one time Nottingham resident and famous author T.M. Logan may remember his novel “The Curfew” which features Beacon Hill Wood, AKA Sharphill Wood. Chrissie attended a talk by Tim at Bromley House Library in November to launch his latest book and he kindly signed a copy of The Curfew as an Honorary Friend of Sharphill Wood!



For the whole of the year we were able to hold our meetings at Edwalton Manor Care Home in comfort! Very grateful thanks must go to both Matt Brown and Louise Green, past and present Customer Care Managers and to the staff. Thanks also to the Campbell Clinic who, unsolicited, carried out a litter pick in October.

Although our numbers attending meetings and work parties is relatively small, it is clear that we are nevertheless able to reach quite a significant number of people in many other ways, in our ultimate goal of educating and involving them in the conservation work carried out in the precious resource that is Sharphill Wood!

Management Plan



Our usual annual meeting with the Council and Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust to discuss the Sharphill Wood Management Plan took place in August. However, due to a separate Woodland Management Plan being drawn up to tackle ash dieback in the Wood, we continue to adhere to the 2018-2023 Sharphill Plan. We have commented on the draft Woodland Management Plan, which aims to ensure that the Wood is as resilient as possible to future threats from climate change and pests and diseases. We await the final document and have been assured we will be consulted throughout its implementation. Early in the

year Rushcliffe Council secured funding to improve the Central Path, which despite efforts by Friends remained quite muddy in places. Hence the UKSPF (Shared Prosperity Funding) path restoration project. This resulted in a press release and visit by Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Business and Growth Cllr Abby Brennan in May.

Mitigating Measures

In the absence of contact with the developers responsible for mitigating measures, Vistry, we have been pursuing these through local councillors, including restoring the buffer zone around the games area, establishing an official entrance on the east side and ensuring that the hedge between the Wood and Old Road is planted as promised in 2025. We have dropped the request to restore the boundary fence as it is prone to collapse from falling trees. Construction of the community hall, including a tool store for the Group, is due to commence this year.

Publicity

Our Facebook presence, along with news items on our web site, remains our primary method for communicating with the public. Our Facebook ‘Follower’ numbers remain high at 591 and a steady

flow of posts (approx 4 per month) has been maintained. Our posts have also been shared by South Notts Wildlife and also sent to other Facebook groups, including Compton Acres and Edwalton Community in Action. We benefitted from Rushcliffe Borough Council's publicity around the Green Flag award, which was picked up by West Bridgford Wire and the "InYourArea" online newsfeed. Our Chair made contact with T.M. Logan, author of "Curfew", which largely takes place in a version of Sharphill Wood, and this was featured in "West Bridgford Local News". In addition to our entry in The Big Green Book we are now in Notts County Council's "NottsHelpYourself" facility.

Nature Surveys

Bill Logan and Barry Cunnison Barry carried out a 4th earthworm survey on Tuesday 8 October 2024. The findings showed fewer worms than in April 2024, but still much more than in 2023. In total, there were 25 adults and 33 juveniles making 1450 per sqm, still well above the average of 200 sqm.

Nest box inspections were carried out again during spring 2024, led by John Elwell and ably assisted on different visits by Bob Craig, Janet Crowe (twice), Mike Rivett, Sarah Garvey, Simon Jackson (twice), Tim Carney and Zdena Parish. A total of 9 visits were made between 16th April and 16th June. In some ways it was a strange year, with many of the boxes being used, but many failing at the nest building, egg or young stage, and those nests that succeeded (9 boxes out of 31) producing fewer fledglings than would normally be expected (3.3 per box). Ups and downs can, of course, be expected, and this relatively disappointing year followed two very successful years. It was notable that there seemed to be fewer Great Tit nests than normal (the vast majority were Blue Tit) and boxes at the northern end of the site seemed to be ahead of those further south. This work involved 35 volunteer-hours on site. All observations have been entered into the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) Nest Record Scheme database, and all visits complied with the BTO code of conduct. The 2025 nest box inspections have already commenced.

As in recent years, John Elwell conducted a series of bird surveys at roughly 2-week intervals from late March to early June, leading to publication of a report 'Spring Birds of Sharphill Wood 2024'. It gives a broad picture of birds present at the site during the breeding season and very rough estimates of the number of pairs of most species. A similar report had been produced each year since 2018, although the 2020 report had been somewhat limited in scope because of lock-down restrictions. The quantity and diversity of birds recorded in 2024 was not significantly different from recent years, although the species count of 33 beat the previous record of 32 in 2019. Although several species recorded in the past were not recorded, every species recorded annually since 2018 was recorded again in 2024. This survey involved 31.5 volunteer-hours on site. Thanks to Dave and Jenni Manning-Ohren, Hilary Mansfield and Tim Carney for helping on some visits. The 2025 survey visits have already commenced.

Richard carried out a further flora survey in the wood during 2024, to complement earlier surveys. The 2023/2024 winter season was mild and consistently wet, with only occasional periods of drier weather between October 2023 and March/April 2024. In the spring and early summer, temperatures were near normal, although cool winds were frequent. The weather remained mild and damp throughout the summer and early autumn. As in 2023, the summer was generally warm, not hot as in 2022, with some woodland plants continuing to flower though September and into October.

In summary, 95 species of wildflower, 30 species of tree and 17 species of grass, sedge, rush and fern were identified in 2024 (a total of 142 species), including some not previously recorded, a similar (albeit slightly higher) count to those in previous years. The flora survey was based on 12 visits to the wood between 22nd February and 16th November 2024, involving around 40 volunteer-hours. The 2025 survey is currently underway.

Work Parties

During the period April 2024 to March 2025 we held regular work parties in May, June, July, October (2), January, February and March. Unfortunately, some work parties had to be cancelled. We were

unable to operate a work party in April, partly because jobs that needed doing were unsuitable for carrying out during the bird nesting season, but also because there was no qualified first aider available. The latter issue has since been rectified, with several of us going on a first aid refresher course. The September work party was postponed until early October because of difficult conditions and a lack of volunteers. Both the November and December work parties had to be cancelled because they coincided with named storms, and an additional work party planned for early January had to be cancelled because of snow and ice, making the hill up to the wood rather treacherous with wheelbarrows. We also held 3 mini-work parties in November and December to carry out nest box maintenance. John Elwell, helped by Tim Carney, Mike Rivett and Chris Ritzmann respectively, cleared away vegetation to make access to nest boxes easier, installed 3 new nest boxes, kindly made and donated by John Randall, and checked and cleared out all the existing nest boxes.

The growth of understory following a wet winter and spring was quite vigorous, giving us plenty to do during the May, June and July work parties. We were proud to use our new scythes to keep vegetation off the paths, in addition to using shears in places. Low hanging branches that limited headroom were also dealt with, and we did a certain amount of clearing around canopy trees planted in recent years, and around some of the whips along the boundary.

During the reduced number of autumn/winter work parties, we focused mainly on improving path edging at the northern end of the eastern path, making use of fallen trees and branches as well as some small trees coppiced for the purpose. We also had to deal with the impact of anti-social behaviour, including the removal of bike humps and the dismantling of dens. At the February work party we planted 50 Hawthorn whips kindly donated by TCV.

Participation at the regular work parties was disappointing, with no Duke of Edinburgh award candidates this year and particularly poor turnouts for the two work parties in October. Total participation, including the main work parties, the mini work parties and numerous casual visits by individuals doing site inspections, litter picking, stone spreading on paths, etc., amounted to 283 volunteer-hours.

A big thank you to all who have been involved.

Finance

Treasurer's Report 2024 to 2025

We have had some very generous donations this year. These sums are free for us to spend on whatever we need including small items which are often difficult to fund. As regards grants for specific purposes, Councillor Dellar granted us £200 for tools, and a Rushcliffe Council biodiversity grant of £250.00 paid for most of our ever-increasing Public Liability Insurance Premium.

Of course, Edwalton Manor Care Home (Hamberley Homes) continued to host us for our monthly meetings at no charge, which is a substantial donation in kind. Huge thanks are due for our funders' generosity which has left us in a healthy financial position going forward into 2025 and 2026.

The major expense aside from PLI was a couple of much needed Scythe Sets for tackling summer growth. These were funded by a Holy Rood Church grant which appeared in the previous year's accounts.

Waiting in the wings is the Section 106 monies that the Building Developers will make available to rectify any works needed as a result of the Development in the Area. We have drafted a wish list and the first purchase is likely to be replacement of the Ladder Boards, which will not see many more summers! Also our notice boards are in need of a refurb. This funding is to cover the next 10 years.

Grateful thanks as always go to Gordon Dyne who has been our auditor ever since records began!

AMOUNT	DONOR	COMMENT
£130.00	Barclays Bank	Match funding from the previous year for our Poetry Project
£70	St. Paul's Church	Donated last year late March but we enjoyed the benefit in 2024
£10	Dunster Road Neighbourhood Watch AGM	A presentation and talk was carried out
£150.00	Coffee morning at West Bridgford Methodist Church	Friends had a display table and helped in the kitchen and cake sale
£8.00	Customers of Vale Cycles Boundary Road	Collection tin left on the counter for several weeks
£150.00	Holy Rood Church Edwalton Love the World weekend	The Church offered us a display table which was manned some of the time, and we shared the collections with another charity.
£50.00	Hodges family for planting and looking after an oak tree.	

Acknowledgements

Thanks as usual are again due to Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust, especially Ben Driver, Paul Phillips of Rushcliffe Borough Council and Valerie Holt of the South Notts Group for their continued advice and support. We are also grateful to Cllr. Jonathan Wheeler for hosting the regular Stakeholders' meetings and trying to keep us updated between meetings as regards Developers' issues.

Chrissie Wells (Chair & Treasurer), Mike Rivett (Vice-Chair, Publicity Officer & Deputy Work Party Coordinator), John Elwell (Work Party Coordinator), Richard Elliott (Deputy Work Party Coordinator), David Nicolson-Cole (Equipment Manager) and Bill Logan (Secretary).