



# Friends of Darrick and Newstead Woods



## Introduction

The Covid 19 crisis has not just been a disaster for the UK. There is now a pandemic raging across the world. Inevitably this has severely affected the activities of the Friends. We have had to cancel our public meetings. Volunteer activities are attenuated. Thursday volunteer work in the reserve has continued and all participants are congratulated. We will not get back to normal for sometime even though the lockdown is being eased. Hopefully, we will not see another national wave of the virus appearing over the horizon.

The reserve has now become much more of a place for social gatherings rather than for dog walkers and people just exercising. Families and friends are now using the reserve to find a place where they can meet in relative safety because the fresh air helps to disperse infected droplets.

More intensive human activity adds to the environmental pressures on the plants and animals using the reserve but it is refreshing to see that the park can still support iconic orchid species such as the bee orchid. So many thanks to Alan Oliver and Mary for making reports of Bee Orchids in the reserve and Christine Wallace for continuing her work with plant observations.

We have not set up trail cameras to photograph the badgers, this season, for fear of exposing their setts to the increased number of human visitors to the reserve.

It is not just human activity that could pose problems. There has been an infestation of the oak processionary moth on Tugmutton common. This infestation is but a stone's throw away. Members could assist by watching out for the caterpillars and nests. Members should also beware of contact with the caterpillars and their hairs and watch out for their dogs. The caterpillars are a danger to public health. We have a considerable number of oak trees in the woods, so watch out please.

[https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/trees-woods-and-wildlife/tree-pests-and-diseases/key-tree-pests-and-diseases/oak-processionary-moth/?gclid=EAIaIQobChMI0dmSrOSm6gIVh7PtCh3bKAaMEAAAYAAEgLVmPD\\_BwE&gclid=aw.ds](https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/trees-woods-and-wildlife/tree-pests-and-diseases/key-tree-pests-and-diseases/oak-processionary-moth/?gclid=EAIaIQobChMI0dmSrOSm6gIVh7PtCh3bKAaMEAAAYAAEgLVmPD_BwE&gclid=aw.ds)

Hopefully, the increasing numbers of people using the reserve will appreciate what a wonderful resource it is and that they will see the need for it to be preserved for future generations.

Lastly, Angela Wood, our ranger from Idverde, is now on maternity leave; so best wishes to Angela and her family. We welcome ED Burgin back into the fold and he has written an article for us about the benefits of letting Ivy grow rather than uprooting it.

## Tranquillity wins for some brief moments by Trevor Morgan

When the lockdown was imposed, I saw it as an unwelcome but necessary infringement of my liberty. There was, however, for me some benefit. On March 23rd 2020 an air of tranquillity fell onto the whole community. The traffic stopped and the planes of Biggin Hill were grounded. Darrick and Newstead Woods fell silent except for the sounds of the rest of nature.

We could walk from our house and around the woods and hear ourselves breathe, the bird song sounded much more clear and penetrated the woods for much longer distances. We could easily hear the breeze shifting the branches. For me it was a bit of a shock but my mind soon drifted back to my youth; the tranquillity reminded me of days in Pembrokeshire where I could run to school without the fear of being knocked over. I could cross the road with my eyes closed and hear a car coming from miles away.

Now, at home if we replaced the television set, computers and phones with just a valve radio then we could easily go back to the past.

During the tranquillity I wondered how the birds and other animal life were getting on with their new found freedom from human noise. Birds use song to defend territory, find a mate and find their nests and chicks. They communicate food sources to one another via bird song. Audio signals are so important for birds to help them thrive.

Insects and amphibians also use auditory signals in a similar vein to birds. Did the temporary tranquillity improve their survival chances?

Human beings also communicated more and became more friendly, but from a distance. Perhaps the tranquillity encouraged everyone to say “good morning” along the way. Would a little more tranquillity improve our survival chances? Modern life could prevent us from ever knowing.

If the silence helped, then it did not do so for long. When the lockdown was eased, sound levels quickly returned to normal. In some respect they increased as more and more people started to use the reserve and have parties with portable sound systems.

I now begin to wonder whether modern day people can appreciate some silence. Sometimes when we visit the depths of rural France we stay in places which are completely quiet and where we can hear the most shallow of breathing. We can hear the owls at night from miles away and we can hear cuckoos signalling to each other from long distances. We can hear the dawn chorus loud and clear. At first the silence is a bit disturbing but soon we are relieved by it and begin to love it.

It would be possible to return the tranquillity to our lives if we made a little effort and showed a little appreciation. If this happened, for me, it would be the only good thing inspired by the epidemic.

## The benefits of Ivy – by Ed Burgin

### Ivy (*Hedera helix*)

A Clingy, luscious, misunderstood plant: Ivy has long been accused of strangling trees, but it doesn't harm the tree at all, and even supports at least 50 species of wildlife

Ivy is a common sight throughout the UK, climbing up buildings and walls or through tree canopies. The woody-stemmed, evergreen self-clinging plant grows quickly, both as a climber and as a trailing, ground-cover plant.

There have been many discussions about the pros and cons of ivy among architectural conservationists, gardeners and wildlife enthusiasts. There are two native subspecies of ivy in the British Isles: *Hedera helix* ssp. *helix* and *Hedera helix* ssp. *Hibernica*. The subspecies *hibernica* does not climb but spreads across the ground.

**Here are a number of reasons for you to abandon the loppers, sit back and enjoy the benefits of ivy:**

#### 1) Ivy doesn't harm trees

The biggest myth concerning ivy is that it damages trees, but this isn't necessarily true. Ivy is not a parasite – it lays down roots, meaning it doesn't need to take sustenance from the tree. Ivy doesn't suffocate or strangle a tree, but simply uses it to climb up in its endeavour to reach the light.

A negative effect that ivy can have on a healthy tree is reducing the tree's capacity to produce energy. If ivy climbs through a tree's canopy, it can smother the leafing branches, which would limit the tree's ability to photosynthesise.

This alone isn't enough to kill a tree, but ivy may target weakened trees. Ivy-clad trees that topple over in strong winds are usually diseased or in decline.

#### 2) It's an invaluable late-season nectar source



Late flowering ivy provides valuable nectar for insects (credit: Mike McCarthy / flickr)

In autumn ivy has small yellow flowers, providing valuable nectar for an array of insects when few other pollinating flowers or sources of nectar are available.

Wasps, hornets, hoverflies, bumblebees, small tortoiseshells, peacock butterflies and red admirals all make use of ivy's late-season bounty. The nectar provides essential reserves needed by the adult admiral butterfly to hibernate over winter.

#### 3) Ivy provides year-round shelter

A dense evergreen ivy, such as *Hedera helix*, provides a continuous refuge for UK birds and other small animals in which they can hide, roost, nest and hibernate.

#### 4) A winter lifeline for wildlife

Ivy is the plant equivalent of a 24/7 grocery store for animals. The dark berries provide an essential food source through the harsh winter months for many birds including blackbirds, thrushes and wood pigeons. It also provides shelter for invertebrates which hide in the leaves and stems acting like a larder storage for the birds to feed on over winter.

Ivy also has an additional benefit of serving as year-round ground cover. It roots at many points, with stems that cover a wide area. This notably reduces the effect of frost hardening the ground in winter months, which means animals can continue to forage in the leaf litter during bitter weather.

## The benefits of Ivy –by Ed Burgin ....continued

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### 6) A winter lifeline for wildlife

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Ivy berries provide a life line through harsh winters (credit: Andrew Kitchen / flickr)

### 7) Ivy can protect buildings

The effect of ivy on historic monuments was such a significant issue that English Heritage carried out a three-year project with Oxford University to determine the true effects of ivy growing on walls.

The findings were good news for ivy-lovers: in winter ivy keeps walls 15% warmer than other parts of the building, and in summer, walls were recorded to be 36% cooler. Ivy's protective properties also preserve walls from frost, salt and pollution.

As with trees, if there is any existing damage to a structure, ivy will add to the problem as it roots into cracks and crevices. So unless your walls or trees are vulnerable, there's no need to remove ivy.

Article adapted from Rebecca Bungay's article for the BBC

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/earth/story/20141008-why-should-i-love-ivy>

and the woodland trust article

<https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/trees-woods-and-wildlife/plants/wild-flowers/ivy/#:~:text=Ben%20Lee%20%2F%20WTML-,Value%20to%20wildlife,bats%20and%20other%20small%20mammals>

## The Bird Survey by Trevor Morgan

We have changed the frequency of the Bird Survey from weekly to monthly. This is because we have probably reached the limit of the number of species that can be recorded regularly (40+). Unofficially we have recorded a Siskin which is a finch species which we're expecting to see but it is exceptionally well camouflaged.

During the lockdown we have not been recording the usual numbers or variety of species, this is probably because of the noise of increased visits to the reserve.

On one of my runs, in late June, I saw a spectacular murmuration or clattering of Jackdaws. I am attaching a portable 'phone picture which does not do it justice. I first noticed the murmuration when I heard the birds approaching; they were making quite a racket which other reserve users noticed. I have never seen Jackdaws assembling like this before during broad daylight. Jackdaws often roost for the night in Darrick Wood and flock in small numbers before settling. The murmuration that I saw contained well over 300 birds and they circled over the reserve for at least half an hour before they flew off. I have only seen Jackdaws assembling like this at dusk in Pembrokeshire where I was born. The Jackdaws there flock in large numbers with Rooks at dusk. A contact at Bromley RSPB suggested that a raptor might have disturbed the birds but I could not see a Sparrowhawk or Hobby trying to intercept the birds. The Jackdaw is one of my favourite birds and I was delighted to see such a large flock of birds performing aerobatics and forming three dimensional patterns all around me.

Members are observing increased sightings of Buzzards near to the reserve so please keep an eye out for them. Buzzards are now resident in High Elms and can easily cruise over to Darrick Wood to look for small rodents, large insects and worms.

The author has been seeing red kites flyover his house; these raptors are usually on the look out for carrion. Red Kites are now resident in the Westerham area. We could be seeing a lot more of them as they spread out across the UK.



**Special Edition July 2020****Future Events****Thursdays 10.00-1200 hrs**

Darrick Wood work day. This takes place weekly and is led by Ed Burgin of Idverde UK. See Notice board or Website for assembly location.

**Links & Contacts****Useful Numbers**

Ward Security	0845 847 6180
Willow Wild Life	0795 647 2284
Fox Project	01892 731 565
RSPCA	0300 1234 999
High Elms Rangers	01689 862 815
Safer Neighbourhood Team	07920 233 856

**Websites**

Friends of High Elms: [www.highelmscountrypark.btck.co.uk/](http://www.highelmscountrypark.btck.co.uk/)

Friends of Jubilee Country Park: [www.jubileecountrypark.btck.co.uk/](http://www.jubileecountrypark.btck.co.uk/)

Friends of Keston Common: [www.friendsofkestoncommon.btck.co.uk/](http://www.friendsofkestoncommon.btck.co.uk/)

Friends Forum: [www.bromleyfriendsforum.org/](http://www.bromleyfriendsforum.org/)

**Friends of Darrick & Newstead Woods Website**

The Friends of Darrick and Newstead Woods now have a Website:

[www.friendsofdarrickandnewsteadwoods.co.uk](http://www.friendsofdarrickandnewsteadwoods.co.uk)

This is quite a long address so it is recommended you put it in your favourites list.

In addition we have an email address, where you can contact members of the committee:

[fodnw@outlook.com](mailto:fodnw@outlook.com)

Membership Form

Membership of the Friends of Darrick & Newstead Woods includes the whole household. If you would like to join, please complete the slip below and send it to: Friends of Darrick & Newstead Woods, 6 Bucks Cross Cottages, Bucks Cross Road, Chelsfield Village, BR6 7RN, Kent.

There is no subscription, but donations will be most welcome. All money will be used to support the work of the Friends: sending information, publicity for Friends events, and other activities. Please make sure that all members of the family who wish to be included are listed.

Please make cheques payable to 'Friends of Darrick and Newstead Woods' and write your address on the back.

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I/We would like to join the Friends of Darrick & Newstead Woods

Names \*

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\*Under 16? Parent or Guardian's permission required..

Signed Parent or Guardian :

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Address

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Postcode..... Telephone.....

Mobile..... E-mail.....

Donation..... Date.....

Under GDPR rules you have the right to see , amend or have deleted any information that FODNW holds about you.