

Big Wood Nature Reserve

PETER FALK

The Friends of Big Wood have restarted Activity Mornings in the wood. Over the autumn/winter months we carry out a programme of works agreed with Barnet to clear the six glades, do selected coppicing and erect hurdle fencing or dead hedging to protect certain areas of the wood so wild flowers and trees saplings can prosper without being trampled on. The Friends also clear the ditches and paths with hand tools so Barnet do not need to come in with machinery which, in the past, has both damaged the understory adjacent to the paths and/or blown all the leaves into the ditches re-blocking them.

On November 24th, the AGM of the Friends took place at Fellowship House and there was an interesting talk by Jeff Duckett on the Bryophyte survey we are carrying out in the wood. (Bryophytes are species such as types of liverwort or mosses. Bryophytes are important as they colonise sterile soils, absorb nutrients and water and slowly release back into the eco-system.)

The Friends have also started Forest School sessions in the wood to help promote interest and educate the younger generation in the importance of ancient broadleaf woods for the future of the eco system. We have paid for committee members to receive Forest school training and held our first session in the wood in September with a second session taking place in December. The morning sessions are for local children aged 4-10 managed by a fully qualified team who take care that sessions are fun while ensuring activities do not damage the structure of the wood. We plan to have at least 4 or 5 sessions in 2022.

We are currently, in conjunction with Barnet trees section, dealing with two subsidence claims from insurance companies who allege that roots from Big Wood trees are undermining and causing subsidence to properties on the edge of Big Wood. Together with Barnet, we are resisting demands to cut down seven trees in the wood. It is the Friends' view, that there is little or no justification in claiming trees should be felled. All the properties adjoining the wood were built long after most of the trees were well established.

The law does not adequately protect the environment, so we are trying to be constructive with the insurance companies by suggesting solutions such as a root barrier or reducing the crown of one/two trees.



Photo: Sarah Falk

The Woodland Trust tried to get support for an amendment to the environmental bill, going through Parliament, to give specific legal protection to ancient woodlands/nature reserves. Despite appeals to our MP Mike Freer, the Government rejected the amendment. It is an irony that despite trumpeting the vital importance of planting new trees, the Government and society are quite content to continue to fell existing trees even though it will take many years before new trees have a similar foliage to the existing tree stock.

Anyone interested to learn more about the Friends and the new five year plan for the wood can visit the website FriendsOfBigWood.com.

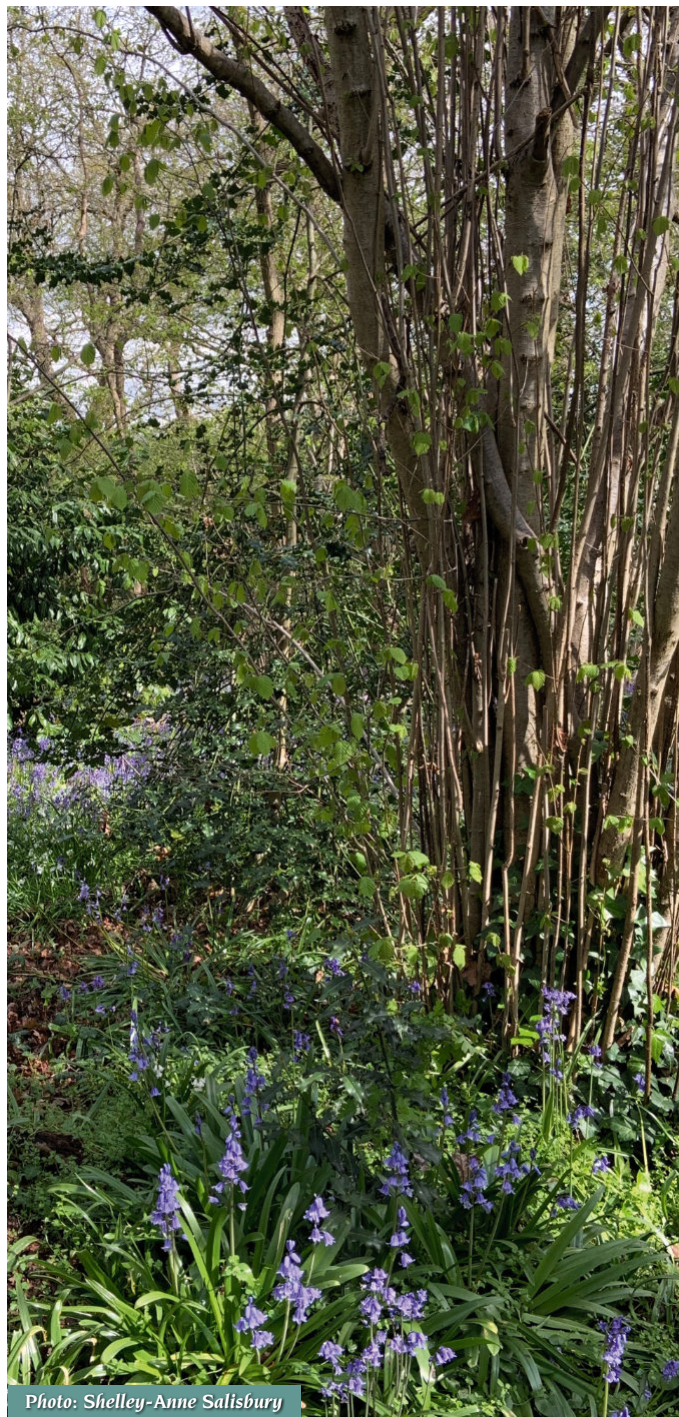
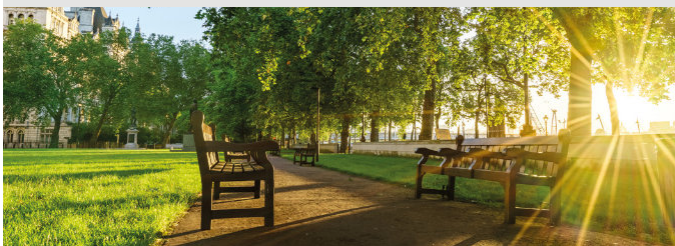


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