

Porter Valley News

The newsletter of Friends of the Porter Valley - Registered Charity No. 1069865



Issue 102

July 2021

Happy 70th Birthday!



She may not have had balloons and party poppers plus all the pomp and ceremony to mark a special birthday, but the FoPV volunteers have been hard at work to spruce up the “old girl” for her 70th birthday. Before you start wondering to which of our members I may be referring, I should point out it is the grand old lady herself, Festival Woodland, or to give it its official name, Festival of Britain Woodland, opened on 18th May 1951 by the Lord Mayor Keeble Hawson.

FoPV volunteers had worked hard over the last year clearing the sight lines to restore the view to the dam when walking through the woodland, but now it was time to turn our attention to the paths running through the woodland itself. They had become overgrown with encroaching soil and grass, narrowing the paths, and presenting a rather unkempt and forlorn look, not something any 70 year old would relish! Armed with lawn edgers, spades, wheelbarrows and brushes, the volunteers have cut back the grass to expose the path edges and restore neat lines to the main path. Special attention was paid to the main entrance on the corner of Quiet Lane/School Green Lane/Whitely Lane. After all, which 70 year old would not want her best face on to celebrate a special birthday!

We hope you agree it was worth all the effort.

Lyndon Porter



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Bingham Park

Wilson's Field in Bingham Park was used in past times for grazing animals. It was rented from the Council by the grandfather of Linda Sibley, one of the founder members of BPCG. This ended in the 1950s. Following an initial proposal from Peter Bayliss, members of the local community decided to plant some wild flowers on the field, adding variety to the buttercups. FoPV volunteers and local residents have started clearing patches of brambles on the edges of the field. Sheffield Council Parks supervisor Darron Lingard has agreed to create paths for better access allowing children to visit the site. A reporter from the local press has visited the site and photos and interviews have been featured in the Sheffield Star.

The picnic table is now on site near the pay-to-play tennis courts; some graffiti has appeared. I am considering asking a young artist to create an artwork for the table. The crowd funding appeal has raised a considerable amount of money as well as creating a lot of community interest in Bingham Park. BPCG have received grants from the Sheffield Town Trust and JG Graves. We are now able to fund a new basketball/netball court; work should be starting shortly. Free football coaching sessions for young people were provided on the astroturf in 2019 and we hope to repeat the sessions in the 2021 school summer holiday.

A ring box has been found in Bingham Park woods containing some coins. Please contact FoPV to arrange collection.

Glyn Mansell

Piles of Wood

FoPV volunteers have been working hard—clearing self-sets, fallen and rogue trees, and masses of brambles—to improve the appearance of the Festival Woodland. This has resulted in large amounts of brash and chopped branches and twigs being piled around the area. My daughter Emma, who is a garden designer, saw the piles and immediately suggested things could look so much better if we tried to follow a design which we could see on the website of Professor Nigel Dunnett. Prof. Dunnett is the Sheffield University academic who designed flower planting for



the Olympic Games in London and for many other gardens and public spaces, some in Sheffield.

Armed only with hand saws and a picture from the website, we set about chopping any straight pieces of wood from the piles and arranging them as shown in the photograph. It is still early on in the project and I'm sure we will improve our technique but I hope you think our arranged piles look so much better and that they will provide a possible home for some of the wildlife that occupy the Woodland.

Chris Nicholson

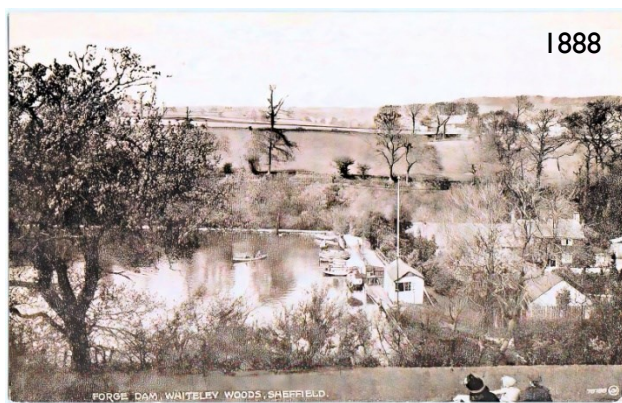
Forge Dam

We have procured Sanctus Ltd to undertake the restoration works at Forge Dam through to completion. They are being appointed initially for final site investigations, design and costing. Sanctus are an award-winning environmental consultant and contractor whose previous projects include transforming former power stations into renewable energy hubs, creating new wetland habitats and turning thousands of tons of asbestos-filled soils into flower meadows. Over the past 2 years they have been short-listed for more than 20 awards and were named as Best Green Business in the 2020 Business Leaders Awards. They have a history over the past 18 years of completing almost 4000 environmental/engineering projects. We look forward to a successful collaboration with Sanctus.

Walks resumed! For the return of our guided monthly walks, Ros Hancock led a butterfly search up the valley on July the 3rd. Unfortunately, in the heavy rain, the butterflies weren't playing ball (or anything else!) and none were seen. By way of compensation, an Alder Leaf Beetle was spotted at Forge Dam. Once considered extinct in Britain, it reappeared in the Manchester area as recently as 2004 and has obviously crossed the Pennines.

Lyndon Porter

Forge Dam Cafe/Whiteley Wood Tea Gardens



The building below the dam wall in 1888 was a tearoom accommodating 150 people. It was part of what we now know as Forge Dam, but was then called Whiteley Wood Tea Gardens, the house of which was formerly called The Old Forge House. The booth was erected by Herbert Maxfield. He was originally a file grinder who had acquired the Old Forge works to follow his trade, but decided to convert it into a pleasure ground.

In 1888 he applied for a public dancing, singing and music licence. His premises had been opened as tea gardens, and he provided ornamental lakes and boats. He considered whether, if there could be band music and dancing, the enjoyment of visitors would be increased. His place had this summer been visited by various Sunday schools, and he had frequently been asked to make arrangements for dancing.

Mr Maxfield's representative, Mr A Muir Wilson, called Mr Henry Morris, local manager for the Waterbury Watch Company, and Mr H.B. Knowles, of independent means, who had been lodging at Mr Maxfield's for several weeks past, who both spoke of the respectable way in which the gardens had so far been conducted. The application was opposed by Mr J.C. Clegg, who presented petitions against it bearing some 180 signatures. He said that "though the grounds had been visited by respectable people up to the present, the question arose as to what they would become if this licence were granted."

Mr Wilson offered to withdraw the part of the application for singing and dancing, but the Mayor, acting as chairman, said the revised application would have to be resubmitted, "when the residents of the neighbourhood could express their opinion on that application." In 1896 Mr Maxfield applied for a beer licence, but the application was swiftly dismissed.

Peter Bayliss

Shepherd Wheel: Hooray! At last, after nearly 15 months of closure, Shepherd Wheel is open again. The rear yard has a one-way system, with the necessary regulations in place, and visitors, on both sides of the building, can see the machinery in operation through the open doors and windows. New and returning visitors are enjoying the site greatly. Success! However, to keep the site open volunteers are urgently required. All that's asked is two hours of your time, at weekends and Bank Holidays, your choice of dates and times. If you enjoy meeting people and talking about Sheffield's heritage, then please apply via the FoPV website. I look forward to meeting you!

Maggie Marsh

Surveys in the Valley

FoPV has been asked to collaborate with the Wildlife Trust in organising surveys of some of the wildlife in our valley. The Volunteer Coordinator from the Trust is Jess Mason and she suggests that any monitoring we take on has to be suitable for us in the long term. Initially it has been proposed that we concentrate on birds and butterflies.

For the birds: We could set up a point count survey, where pre-determined points would be visited once a month, and all bird species within 50m of that point are recorded over 5-10 minutes. This could be continued all year round even in the winter months. For the butterflies: This would involve walking a pre-determined route through the Valley, recording all the species seen. This would need to be carried out once per month from early Spring until the Autumn.

It will be interesting to compare the data we collect with earlier surveys in the Valley. The Trust can provide training for volunteers and we should consider how this important survey can be continued.

Chris Nicholson

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Annual Membership:

Single: £10
Family: £15
Concession: £5

Membership forms
available from
David Young
(tel. 2307909)
or on our website

Editorial: Two signs of the slow progress back to normality: this newsletter contains an activities list comprising work mornings and walks. Second, your committee actually met face to face in June, rather than via Zoom, in a garden with the requisite social distancing. Covid precautions however brought risks of exposure as the evening became chillier by the minute!

The Committee:

Ann le Sage
Chair
David Young
Treasurer
Glynis Jones
Secretary / newsletter
Dave Clegg
Conservation work
Les Greenwood
Newsletter
Mike Halliwell
Website / membership
Glyn Mansell
Bingham Park
Maggie Marsh
Shepherd Wheel open days
Chris Nicholson
Walks
Lyndon Porter
Conservation / walks
Flora Owen
Talks



Cards/notelets for sale

The picture of *Spring in the Porter Valley* by Martin Decent is one of two designs of cards which have been packed up and are now on sale at £4 for a pack of 5. The other design features the painting by Tim Rose of Shepherd Wheel. They are available from Forge Dam Café, Endcliffe Park Café, Shepherd Wheel and the FoPV shop. All proceeds will go to the Forge Dam Fund. The cards could be used as notelets or birthday cards and are excellent value! Pick up a pack when you are next in the Porter Valley.

Hilary White

In case anyone wondered whether it might be possible to hold an open meeting in August...no we cannot. But as soon as details on Forge Dam remediation are available we will start communications including open meetings so that you can all ask questions 'live'. There will also be members' updates, messages by Facebook and Twitter, reports on the website, specific walks on site and signage in the Valley. We are confident that the November AGM, with a talk on progress with the remediation, will be possible (Covid restrictions permitting and Bents Green Hall being available as usual). It will be so good to see friends again!

Ann le Sage

Activities for July to November

Any changes in the following details will be available on the website

When and Where	What and Who
Tuesday 27 th July, 10 am	Conservation work morning Prior booking essential – see below
Saturday 7 th August, 10 am -12 noon Whiteley Woods, Common Lane	<i>Boulsover Country*</i> A walk led by Chris Bullivant
Sunday 8 th August, 1.30-3 pm Forge Dam	<i>Forge Dam to Shepherd Wheel*</i> – A walk led by Chris Bullivant (suitable for buggies and mobility scooters)
Thursday 12 th August, 10 am	Conservation work morning Prior booking essential – see below
Tuesday 24 th August, 10 am	Conservation work morning Prior booking essential – see below
Saturday 4 th September, 10 am -12 noon Bingham Park	<i>Bingham Park Past and Future*</i> A walk led by Glyn Mansell
Thursday 9 th September, 10 am	Conservation work morning Prior booking essential – see below
Sunday 12 th September Shepherd Wheel	Shepherd Wheel activities and Hangingwater allotments sale
Thursday 28 th September, 10 am	Conservation work morning Prior booking essential – see below
Saturday 2 nd October, 10.30 am -2 pm Wire Mill Dam	<i>Discovering the roughs*</i> A walk led by Maggie Marsh
Thursday 14 th October, 10 am	Conservation work morning Prior booking essential – see below
Tuesday 26 th October, 10 am	Conservation work morning Prior booking essential – see below
Wednesday 3 rd November, 7.30 pm Bents Green Methodist Church Hall	<i>Forge Dam Remediation</i> (TBC) AGM and open meeting
Saturday 13 th November, 10-12 noon Endcliffe Park	<i>Tiptoe through the toadstools*</i> A walk led by Michael 'Ziggy' Senkans

Conservation work mornings: prior booking essential – for details and booking, please contact Dave Clegg orielclegg@aol.com or Lyndon Porter lyndon@the-porters.me.uk or via our website FOPV.org.uk

*Walks: These are ticket events – for details and registration, visit our website walks page FOPV.org.uk
Registration opens two weeks before the walk.