

## Work Resumes in Melwood, October 2022

Despite the drought, there has been quite a lot of growth in Melwood and to give spring bulbs some clear space when they start to emerge, the old vegetation on the wood floor needs to be cut back, so over the autumn period the conservation group have been working to cut and rake clear the central areas of the wood. Further cutting in smaller areas will progress during the remainder of 2022. The very warm October weather may result in the snowdrops appearing earlier than usual.

In past years we have sometimes been a bit late in checking and cleaning the nest boxes in the wood but this year most have been done during October. All of these had apparently been used and contained old nest material, One also contained 4 abandoned eggs tentatively identified as those of a bluetit. There remain a few to clean and a few more to be added to replace those too badly damaged to be repaired. The bat boxes that were taken down for repair will be in place by the end of November – too late to be any use for hibernation this winter but available as soon as the bats resume activity in spring.

3 small dead trees will be cut down and the trunks of 2 of these will be used to mark the edge of the paths. The third has apparently been killed by honey fungus and the roots will need to be dug up and destroyed, along with any soil that can be removed from adjacent to the roots. There is no treatment available to cure this highly invasive disease so hygiene is the only option. Fortunately, a young Hornbeam planted not far from the affected tree is in the top group of species for resistance to infection, Hazel, however, is at the other end of the scale, so we must not let infected material get anywhere any the many Hazel bushes in the wood.



*Armillaria mellea*

Although it is not easy to see fish in the river, the Little Egret that regularly visits the river in winter has returned and the occasional kingfisher can be seen in quieter periods.

The bonfire site at the back of the wood is being used later into the winter than is usually the case and it is sad to report that the litter left following those visits is increasing. A green plastic chair left beside the site was smashed in what appears senseless vandalism. It has also been noted that the revellers seem partial to the use of laughing gas (nitrous oxide) to stimulate their activities. Blue canisters used by the bakery industry were found in the ditch behind the site. One has to hope that the visitors were sufficiently recovered to avoid trains before attempting to return home across the railway line

Dog faeces remains a problem for the workers in the wood, as some bagged poo is just thrown into the bushes and more is left uncovered off the sides of the paths. Please bag it all and take it away with you.

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