

NEWSLETTER SUMMER 2024

# FRIENDS OF ABBEY FIELDS

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Welcome to the Summer Newsletter!

2024 continues to bring changes to Abbey Fields. During a visit in May, the burgeoning flora and fauna sparred uneasily with the resumption of the pool construction work. A tall drilling rig overlooked the loftiest trees and punctuated the usual tranquillity. Discomfort, I thought, often accompanies a time of transformation.

Change has come to our small Society, too, with the retirement of our Chair, Ojars Bartmanis. Bart has been a member of the FOAF Committee for 10 years, 7 of which were at the helm. As the news spread, members expressed appreciation for Bart's work in our community, speaking of his "boundless enthusiasm" and "inspiring approach". We are deeply grateful to Bart for his significant

contributions to FOAF over the years, and we are glad that he continues to be a valuable member of the Society.

I am serving as Deputy Chair, or "accidental chair", as I like to call it, until the AGM in September. Please contact me if you think you may be able to help and if you want to learn more about the role of Chair. In the short time I have been associated with FOAF, I have appreciated the energy and dedication of every member of the committee. I wholeheartedly recommend getting more involved—it's a truly rewarding experience.

We are sure you will enjoy reading our Summer Newsletter!

Antony (chair@friendsofabbeyfields.org.uk)

*Friends of Abbey Fields*

## News in Brief

### Cycle Path

At the time of writing, there is no further progress to report on the Cycle Path plans that are being prepared, but we have repeated our view that the area around the duck-feeding platform should be signed "cyclists dismount" for safety reasons.

### Toilets

In May, the temporary toilets were closed due to a water supply issue which also affected the Swimming Pool building site.

### Membership Year

A new FOAF year began on 1 July 2024. Have you renewed your membership yet? The subscription fee remains at £7.50. A standing order or BACS payment should be made to "Friends of Abbey Fields", account number 813 302 09, sort code 40-26-04. Please use your surname and postcode as a reference.

### Funfair

Following concern over its impact on trees and the ground beneath, the Kenilworth Funfair (first held in 1927) was moved from its usual location to the Forrest Road side of Abbey Fields. It seems likely that this will become the regular site.

### Swings

In May, the WDC Green Spaces Team advised us that the swings in the main Abbey Fields' Play Area were removed following an independent safety check, which revealed problems with the supporting framework.

## Nature Day



Our inaugural Children's Nature Day Event took place on Monday, 25th March in Abbey Fields. The event was designed to welcome more children into the Friends of Abbey Fields community. It was led by the experienced conservationist, Jo Harper, with support from our own Fern Arnold and two dedicated helpers from Kenilworth Sixth Form. The children enjoyed a day filled with learning, exploration, and discovery about nature.

Despite the damp conditions, our young adventurers embraced the elements. They ventured outdoors to explore the hedgerows, lake, and meadows, immersing themselves in the rich tapestry of habitats within Abbey Fields. Under Jo Harper's guidance, they were treated to a treasure trove of knowledge about the local fauna and flora.

We received very positive feedback from parents, and we are thrilled that our young explorers had a marvellous time and are eager for more adventures.

## Bench Refurbishment



If your favourite bench has disappeared from Abbey Fields it's because Warwick District Council are in the process of refurbishing 33 of them during 2024. This is being done on a rolling programme to avoid areas of the park being left without seating. In addition, 2 timber benches have been replaced.

The contractor takes each bench off-site, inspects it, strips the paint, makes repairs where necessary, and then repaints it with the metal frame in black and the slats painted "invisible green" to match those in Leamington's Pump Room Gardens.



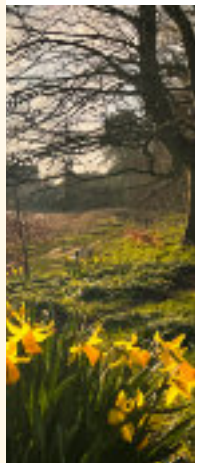
## 2025 Calendar



As you may know, we gather photographs from our members and others locals who kindly allow us to use their work for our calendar.

The image shown here is from Jenny Radford, a garden landscape designer from Kenilworth, and one of the contributors to our project. She takes photos on her phone when dog walking in Abbey Fields and says she can regularly be seen standing in the middle of a bramble or nettle thicket to get the right shot—that's dedication!

Thanks for your images of Abbey Fields, showcasing its beauty in all four seasons!



## Award of Merit



Fern Arnold, the FOAF treasurer, was recently honoured with a *Mayor's Award of Merit* for her outstanding achievement and valuable service to the community. Alix Dearing praised Fern for her “long-standing and all-round support of Town Council initiatives.”

In addition to her role with FOAF, Fern is a founding member of *Bee Friendly Kenilworth*, serves on the Kenilworth Town Council Climate Committee, and is actively involved in other voluntary community endeavours.

The awards apparently date back to WWII, when the firemen who rescued victims of the air attacks at Abbey End were honoured.

Congratulations to Fern and the other recipients on their well-deserved awards!

## Holes in the Trees

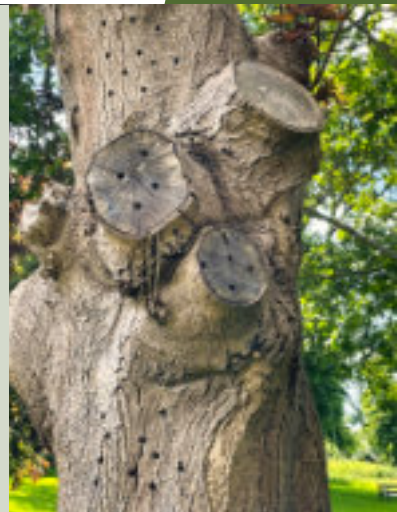
There are around 270 types of bees in the UK, and almost 250 types are solitary. Most of these nest in the ground, but many nest aerially in places like trees, walls, and soil banks.

Some people now have “bee hotels” in their gardens to help solitary bees. Commercially available ones are often unsuitable because we still have a lot to learn about the perfect habitat. Drilling deep holes of various diameters in a block of wood and attaching it to a south-facing wall or fence in full sun can be just as good.

In Abbey Fields, holes have been bored into a tree as a habitat for solitary bees (see photo).

In 2021 Friends of Abbey Fields commissioned a survey on insects in Abbey Fields by Steven Falk, and he found 72 types of bee, which he said was “impressive for a suburban park in the Midlands.”

[www.friendsofabbeyfields.org.uk/insects-study/](http://www.friendsofabbeyfields.org.uk/insects-study/)



## Swans on the Lake (val whiteman)

Photo: Jonathan Corbett



Currently, there are four mute swans on the lake in Abbey Fields, two adults and two cygnets. A couple are shown here. Swans mate for life; their cygnets take about three months to reach near adult size and another year or so to get adult plumage. The cob (the male) has a larger swelling on the beak, and he is the aggressive one, defending his brood against all comers. Swans are very territorial, and the cob will greet trespassers with his “busking” (paddling jerkily towards the intruder while putting his head back and half lifting his wings).

The pen (the female) has been brooding the eggs at the end of the lake by the swimming pool for about 60 days, and we hope the pair will return to breed again next year.

## Ox-Eye Daisy

From June to September, look out for the ox-eye daisy, which is particularly prevalent in the meadow planted by FOAF in 2012. The meadow lies south of Finham Brook and is bordered by the diagonal path up to Abbey Hill. The ox-eye daisy is a perennial wildflower. It has a medium to tall stem topped by a solitary daisy flower. The daisy spreads easily, both by new roots coming off the rhizome, and from the yellow centre florets maturing and creating seeds. The flower is one of the most important plants for pollinators in the UK.



## Forthcoming Events

Once again, we have a full program of events this year. We have already held successful Bird, Tree, and Meadow walks and are now looking forward to our evening events.

We will hold our bat walk on 17 July at 9:15 pm, and the Moth Evening is on 9 August at 9:00 pm. Meet in the car park for these events.

Remember our litter picks, held on the first Saturday of each month through to October. Meet at 9:30 am.

Our working parties are advertised by email and on our noticeboard. We carry out various tasks, helping to keep the Fields in good condition!

Please remember too, our Annual General Meeting on Wednesday 25 September at 7:00 pm at Kenilworth Senior Citizens' Club.



## “No-Mow May”

Several areas of the Fields were designated for the “No-Mow May” treatment! They have now been cut after several weeks of growth (see the area surrounding the Cow Path in our photo). The idea is to help species, including daisies, clover, dandelions and grasses, to flower and provide a source of pollen and nectar for pollinating insects.

## Meet & Greet

Join us for our annual "meet and greet" event at Abbey Fields on Saturday, 17 August. Members are invited to enjoy free coffee and cake while getting to know each other in a relaxed setting. We'll have chairs set out near the church at the top of the car park from 10 am to noon. Feel free to bring a friend along, especially if you think they might be interested in joining FOAF!

Please remember the date – Saturday 17 August 10:00 am – noon.



## Membership & Contact

Become a member and join our regular activities in supporting Abbey Fields! Contact Clare: [membership@friendsofabbeyfields.org.uk](mailto:membership@friendsofabbeyfields.org.uk) or visit our website:

[www.friendsofabbeyfields.org.uk](http://www.friendsofabbeyfields.org.uk)

For other enquiries, please contact Judith: [info@friendsofabbeyfields.org.uk](mailto:info@friendsofabbeyfields.org.uk)

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