

FRIENDS OF ABBEY FIELDS

PROTECT | EDUCATE | CELEBRATE

In taking on the role of chair, I have inherited the excellent legacies of Ojars Bartmanis and Antony Corbett, into whose shoes I have now stepped, batons picked up, etc. Of course, Friends of Abbey Fields is nothing without its members and the dedicated committee that organises and manages our activities. I'm pleased to write that Antony continues to be a member of the Committee as Webmaster. He has been instrumental in producing this year's splendid calendar. His handover briefing and documentation to me were very thorough. I'm still digesting it and wondering what I have let myself in for. Bart remains available for advice and help, particularly on school groups.

The seasons roll on, and autumn in Abbey Fields is a delight of colour. I see from the FOAF leaflet *The Trees of Abbey Fields* that we have over 60 species of trees. "Autumn in the fields features the fine autumn purples of Claret Ash, the bright yellow of the Norway Maple at the top of Abbey Hill, the oranges of the various cherries, the soft olive-brown of the English Oaks and the bright red berries of the rowans." More can be found on our website.

I'm in Abbey Fields most days and usually find something new or different to look and marvel at in the resource we have on our doorsteps. We face challenges and opportunities over the next couple of years or so. These include the eventual completion and opening of the new swimming pool, the development of the cycle path and new technology in the form of the Augmented Reality project for Abbey Fields, which aims to boost visitor numbers. As 'Friends', we play an advisory and consultative role in influencing such activities. In my first few weeks as chair, I have been involved in various meetings and discussions with WDC's *Green Spaces Team* and others. The foundation laid by previous chairs means that we are listened to and can influence what happens in Abbey Fields with our positive and constructive contributions.

Finally, I endorse Antony's valedictory message in our summer newsletter: "I wholeheartedly recommend getting more involved - it's a truly rewarding experience". We hope you enjoy reading our Autumn Newsletter.

— Nick Booker (Chair)

Friends of Abbey Fields

News in Brief

Toilets

The saga continues, but the water supply has been absent for over 160 days since May. FOAF has contacted Chris Elliott, Chief Executive of Warwick District Council; Liv Garfield, Chief Executive of Severn Trent Water; Sir Jeremy Wright MP; and local councillors.

A temporary water supply pipe was laid from High Street to the gatehouse, but the work has now been abandoned. The preferred option is now to bring a feed from Bridge Street, subject to the agreement of all parties.

Cycle Path

WDC plans to share its draft proposal for the cycle path before public consultation. We intend to meet with Graham Folkes-Skinner, the Council's Climate Change Team Leader, and Councillor Lowell Williams, as soon as possible.

FOAF does not support a route that allows cyclists to pass the swimming pool without dismounting. At the junction with the diagonal path from the church, cyclists would need to push their bikes across the plaza, behind the pool, around the duck feeding platform, and across the bridge, then remount several meters away.

Toddlers' Playground

The toddlers' playground is now accessible via the matting laid by the main entrance to the building site and tennis courts. The area can be accessed throughout the week and not just at weekends. A gate has been installed and we have asked for the "No Dogs" sign to be attached.

Himalayan Balsam

While FOAF has worked on removing this invasive species from the Abbey Fields, Kier, the swimming pool contractor, is to employ a specialist to provide a management and removal plan for Himalayan Balsam around the site.

AGM Highlights

On a very wet evening in September, 29 Members attended the AGM. The deputy chair highlighted the activities under our topical headings – *Protect, Educate, Celebrate*. Special thanks were given to Bart, who had stepped down after seven years as Chair and was described as an enthusiastic and inspiring leader who was the driving force behind many recent innovations, including the idea of using the Pavilion as a nature centre.



Some Key Messages

Our finances remain healthy

203 members at the end of June

50 unique website visitors per week

7 litter picks saw an average of 19 volunteers

5 nature walks attracted an average of 25 to each event

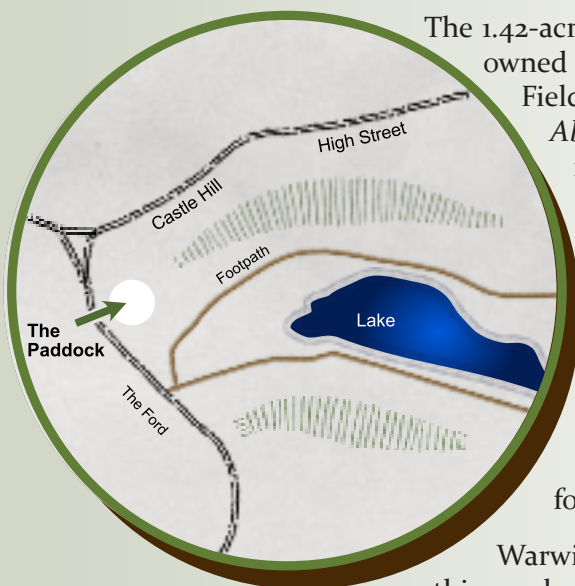
11 working parties averaged 11 volunteers with 45 individuals participating

A new Chair was elected – Nick Booker – and the remaining members of the Committee were also re-elected.

The Mayor was present at the AGM, and he took the opportunity to provide brief details of his augmented reality project for Abbey Fields. This interactive experience promises to combine the real world with computer-generated 3D content, allowing visitors to see the Abbey as it was in its medieval splendour, with the resident Canons going about their daily tasks alongside other town inhabitants. Local actors in authentic costumes will be filmed and incorporated into the “AR” experience.

After the official business, Mike Slater, Chairman of British Butterfly Conservation Warwickshire, concluded the evening with an engaging talk on the “Butterflies of Abbey Fields and Warwickshire”.

The Paddock—A New Start



The 1.42-acre field behind Little Virginia, known as “The Paddock”, has been owned and maintained by Warwick District Council as part of Abbey Fields since 1974, and it is included for meadow management in the *Abbey Fields Management Plan*. For many years, it was grazed by two miniature donkeys housed in an adjacent property, but this stopped when the owner moved. Since then, the Paddock has seen occasional grazing, but the last time was in 2016.

Paddock grazing has chiefly been “aftermath grazing”, meaning that the livestock is put into the meadow after the hay has been cut and removed and the grass has grown sufficiently to keep the livestock fed. Once all the grass has been eaten, usually within two to three months, the livestock is removed. The effect of this grazing is that the quality of the meadow is improved for the following year.

Warwick District Council has cut the Paddock hay for many years and, this year has initiated talks with a local farmer about placing a few sheep in the meadow. The farmer is currently waiting for the necessary permission code from DEFRA to graze a small flock of sheep here, and hopefully, by the time this Newsletter is published, they will be in situ.

New Leadership—Welcoming our Chair

Nick Booker, our new chair, has lived in Kenilworth for nearly 20 years. Originally from Bristol, where the 442 acres of Clifton Down and Durdham Down ('the Downs') are one of the area's finest assets and function as the 'lungs of Bristol', he thinks the description could equally apply to Kenilworth's Abbey Fields.

Before he retired, Nick spent some 30 years as a marketing and business development consultant, latterly specialising in the visitor attractions sector, including museums and stately homes, mainly in the UK. Prior to that, he worked for several well-known companies in the business development role. He's been on the trustee boards of two museums, and several of his consultancy projects involved the countryside and landscapes, and how to ensure access without compromising their unique characteristics.

Nick is married to Jill. They have owned dogs for most of their time in Kenilworth and currently have a miniature Schnauzer, Dora, who enjoys Abbey Fields very much.



2025 Unveiled—New FOAF Calendar



Want another copy of the FOAF 2025 calendar?

- Order one online using this QR code.
- Go to our website and order one there.
- Visit our stall in Talisman Square on 16th November or 14th December.
- Pick up a copy from one of several stockists in Kenilworth.

Blossoming Tribute—Flower Borders

This year, the planting around the War Memorial has been changed – the surrounding border has been planted with tough, drought-resistant plants, which are all bee and nectar-friendly, together with recycled rocks.

A new frame has also been included to make it easier to accommodate poppies. The frame can be moved with all its plants as a unit in time for the November Armistice Day parade and returned when required after the crosses have been removed.

Designed and installed by the WDC Green Spaces team!



The Enigmatic World of Mothing

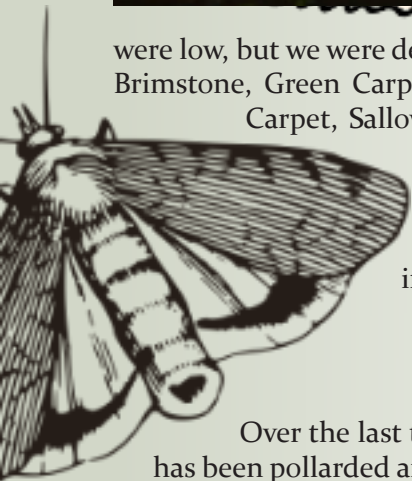


36 people—young and old—attended our 2024 Moth Evening, and about half were new to mothing. At 9:30 p.m., David Brown, County Moth Recorder, led the group to a sheltered area of Abbey Fields and set up the moth traps. Equipment consisted of 80W mercury vapour lamps, a generator, and some hand-crafted boxes with egg-tray beds to provide a comfortable refuge for the moths attracted to the light.

David explained that the cold, wet spring and winter months meant that moth numbers were low, but we were delighted to find a handful of species, including Brimstone, Green Carpet (shown right), Common Rustic, Common Carpet, Sallow Kitten, Ruby Tiger, Dusky Thorn and Dark Arches. Each find was carefully checked against a reference guide and then released.



We thank David Brown, who began mothing in the late 1960s and eventually turned his hobby into a career.

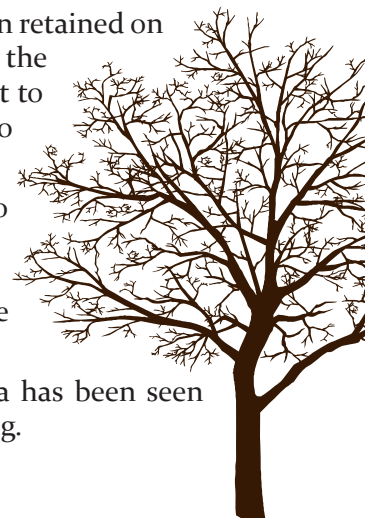


Tree Works

Over the last three months, essential work has been carried out on two large Oak trees. One has been pollarded and its height reduced to 8 metres. The smaller branches have been retained on site to create “dead hedges”, helping to save all the invertebrates that currently live on the branches. As the dead timber decays, it provides a habitat for additional insects. Subject to ground conditions, the large timber will remain in Abbey Fields and be moved around to provide habitat.

The work on the second tree was delayed to allow a nesting Great Spotted Woodpecker to raise its brood and see them fledge. This tree has now been pollarded and reduced to a monolith 4 metres high. All the timber was hand-lowered and then moved out to a waiting trailer to be taken away as there was nowhere on site to accommodate such a large quantity.

As both of the Oak trees are on the north side of the lake, the path around that area has been seen excessive wear in some places and remedial works will take place on the path in the spring.



Share Your Moments

Please send us your photos of Abbey Fields for our Facebook page!

If you have suitable shots and you're happy for us to publish them on social media, please send them by email to photos@friendsofabbeyfields.org.uk

Membership & Contact

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

www.friendsofabbeyfields.org.uk

For other enquiries, please contact Judith: info@friendsofabbeyfields.org.uk

