



Minutes from the Meeting of the Friends Group held at Mary's on Monday Sept 4th, 2023

Those attending were: Mary Lewis, Angie Flack, Pete Statham, Ian Knight, Fred Ballard, Ann Beven and Leonie Wilkinson.

Apologies from: Mike Bettel, Denis Brown, Sarah Pearce and Andrew Jordan.

1. Pete gave a detailed account of: The activities of the work team since the January meeting.

- Repair, maintain and create hedges. Blackthorn reduced.
- Weeding, mulching and pruning trees.
- Pruning trees in the Orchard. Outside involvement was resisted as we can cope well with the task. We will let Robert and Sarah Beetham know next time for the spurs for propagation.
- Planted out young trees and removed leaves around the spring bulbs.
- Lifting, splitting and transplanting snowdrops. Planted species daffodils and lifted, split and replanted primroses.
- Brushcutter and hedge trimmer work. Weeding, bramble and nettle management and general maintenance.

He then highlighted the activities planned up to the next meeting held in January.

- Keeping paths clear and leaf removal.
- Brushcutter and trimmer activity. Grass cutting. Timber removal.
- Weeding and maintaining trees.
- Commence hedging work.
- Tree and bulb planting.
- Birdbox survey.
- Wetland, flood prevention activity.

2. Wetland Project

Since all the activity earlier in the year we haven't had a lot of information from SGC on the project moving forward. We have yet to find out if the wetland will be cut this year and if so which third. We felt the bund end would be our choice to allow a view of the bund to see its efficacy. An email to the SGC officers has been sent.

We were told that as part of the SGC Flood Management Plan it would be good to create 'Leaky Dams'. This is where trees that may fall into the stream slightly restricting the flow through to the Frome River and hence the City are left, rather than removed as we have in the past. This has naturally occurred in a couple of places on the Leap Stream, and we will leave them and just collect the rubbish forming around them. We feel it would not be good to have leaky dams close to the stone bridge on the the wetland side, as the force of the water being held back would possibly cause damage to the bridge.

3. Risk Assessment

Kirsty from SGC, kindly helped us fill in the daunting new Annual Risk Assessment Forms in April.

Pete is attending a Wetland Training Day on the 13th of Sept.

4. Orchard

It is truly a bumper crop this year, especially the apples. Angie has contacted the Cider Consortium whose trees we manage on their behalf, to see if this year they have plans to pick and process them. They have indicated that they will.

Angie has labeled all the trees again and Mary has put up more signs to enable the public to know which trees the eaters are, to prevent wastage of sour cider apples.

To add to Ian's excellent tree map which is on the website, we will photograph the big new trees put in by ourselves and those of the council. This will give Ian a GPS of their position to add to the map.

5. Website

Ian kindly gave us a fascinating insight into the 'views' of the website, from which countries they have come from and what time of the day is popular. There are an average of 20-30 views per week. Ongoing updating and possible creation of a new gallery will be undertaken during the winter.

6. Finances

Our treasurer Andrew gave us the current amount held in the Friends bank account. Whilst this isn't large it may enable some bulbs and seeds to be purchased along with next year's website subscription.

7. South Glos Friends Forum

Mary and Angie regularly attend the Forum meetings held in the Bean Tree Café, Page Park. These are very informative meetings with subjects relative to all groups. Networking between groups is helpful if they are of a similar type of site. The group were invited to visit Three Brooks Nature Reserve at Bradley Stoke. Mike and Angie attended a very wet visit, but it was still well worth it to see what another group has and how they manage it. We hope to host the Forum for a visit to our Valley soon.

8. Wildlife News

Very healthy foxes have been seen several times. A gentleman walking his dog saw a slowworm and kindly sent a picture and we have put it on the website. No one has seen or heard the Sparrowhawk this year. They have often nested in the valley. The Egret has been seen early in the year sometimes two. We have plans to put the wildlife camera out again now schools are back.

9. A.O.B.

Our parish council is to discuss the Local Nature Action Plan as promoted by SGC. We will wait to hear if one of the councilors wishes to undertake responsibility for this role and what it means for us here in the Valley.

The ongoing problems of traffic jams due to the Badminton Road Motorway Bridge were discussed. A shuttle bus to the far side of the bridge to enable passengers to link up with the M3 Metro bus into town is being planned by the council.

We were wondering when our orchard and valley would be mown. Last year it was the end of July, which was far too early, not allowing the seeds to mature and drop. This year they have, and on cue today the mower was in the orchard and wildflower patch. Hopefully tomorrow the valley floor will be mown.

10. Next Meeting

The next meeting is planned for January 15th at 7pm at Angies. This will be the AGM.