



# FRIENDS OF SHIRTCLIFFE

*Newsletter No.53  
Winter 2018*

## **Foreword: Winter 2018**

Only a short Foreword this time – our computer is acting up, so everything is taking much longer than it should!

First of all, we'd like to thank all our volunteers for their efforts in 2018. It's not been an easy year, not helped by the disheartening amount of fly tipping below Severnside Drive - dumped there every month. Through all the problems, you've been cheerful and hard-working – and amazingly enthusiastic.

We have a proposed schedule for the FoS workdays in 2019. However, the number of Ranger days we are allocated may be reduced because of Council budgetary cuts. Let's all keep our fingers crossed that the cuts aren't too drastic! We will let you all know as soon as we know.

To those of you struggling with health problems (including Pat), we hope you enjoy a speedy recovery. It would be good to see you back down the valley, but your health is more important – so, please do take your time.

We'd like to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

*Pat & Mike Howells.*

## **Friends of Shirtcliffe Website and Facebook Page**

For those who do not already know, FoS have our very own website. It is at [www.friendsofshirtcliffe.co.uk](http://www.friendsofshirtcliffe.co.uk).

Please do have a look and, if you have any ideas for changes or additions, then use the Contacts/Problems tab on the website to let us know (or just tell Mick in any way you wish).

Have you had a look at the FoS Facebook page? Andrew has done us proud – he works hard at keeping the articles up-to-date. Do have a gander at the photographs he has included – they are wonderful!

Visit and “Like” us on the Facebook page: [www.facebook.com/FriendsofShirtcliffe](https://www.facebook.com/FriendsofShirtcliffe)

You can spread the word, like, share and comment on FOS posts and activities.

## **List of Officers**

Secretary: Andrew Virgin

Treasurer: Pat Howells ([fos@howells.force9.net](mailto:fos@howells.force9.net))

## **Litter picking along the TPT (part 1) 6<sup>th</sup> October 2018**

It had been a horribly wet morning, and it was still somewhat soggy in the afternoon.

However, nothing short of a full-blown typhoon can dampen the fervour of a determined Friends of Shirtcliffe gang.

First things first: Nick the Ranger, Sue, and Tony spent half an hour clearing litter from Shirtcliffe Brook in Smelter Wood.

Having bottomed this, they moved up to the somewhat drier TPT to continue their labours. Sue had already cleared the rubbish out of the subway on her way down to meet the others. So, the rest of the afternoon was spent filling bin bags and lopping off overhanging branches. They started at the subway and worked their way along the TPT all the way to the Stradbroke Road access gate - a fair distance.

Nick had parked the Ranger van on the TPT just by the subway. The filled bags were heaped up at the side of the path, handily placed for Nick to pack them into the van as he drove away at the end of the session.

You have to admire what 3 dedicated people can accomplish in a couple of hours or so - never have so few collected so much rubbish in so short a time! (Sadly, they were too busy to take any photographs.)

## **Litter picking along the TPT (part 2) 10<sup>th</sup> November 2018**

As well as finishing off the TPT, it was decided to tackle the rubbish strewn down the embankment from the Mosborough Parkway.

Luckily, we had a good turnout to address this challenging task. There were 7 volunteers: Sue, Patrick, Andrew, Tony, Chris, Mick & Pat. James Smith was the supervising Ranger.

The group met up at the subway, where James had parked the Ranger van. Tools were handed out: loppers and bowsaw for Patrick, loppers and bin bags for Pat, and the others equip themselves with bin bags and litter pickers.

Patrick and Pat trimmed back overhanging branches, as well as removing litter from along the TPT. Patrick even managed to pollard a small Oak tree which had seeded itself in the verge.



The others managed to fight their way through the vicious bushes to get onto the embankment – don't try this at home! It was a real struggle to clear the litter and debris thrown from the cars driving along the Mosborough Parkway - disgusting! Half the problem was constantly having to disentangle oneself from the clawing hawthorn bushes just to reach the offending articles. We've decided that hawthorns hate us!

James collected all the filled bags and packed them into the van. The debris included a couple of ratty rattan chairs which Sue and Mick had dragged all the way from the Richmond Road access gate. (This furniture had been annoying Sue ever since it had been dumped a few weeks earlier.)

Around 2:35 PM it began to rain quite heavily, so the workers called it a day. They gathered their goods and chattels, along with the filled binbags, and toted them back to the van.

Yet another of the ongoing (and surprisingly arduous) tasks undertaken by Friends of Shirtcliffe. Still, it's all in a good cause!



## New Tools 4<sup>th</sup> December 2018

In November, Sally Hyslop (Don Catchment Rivers Trust) contacted Friends of Shirtcliffe. The DCRT had a little budget left from their project funding, which they would like to use to help support other groups along the river Don. The suggestion was that they would purchase tools/equipment to aid these groups in their conservation work - and Friends of Shirtcliffe were invited to apply (since they had worked on joint events).



The FoS committee was very grateful for this opportunity, as much of the FoS equipment is beginning to wear out. So, Pat Howells was asked to submit an application for loppers & bow saws. The good news is that our application was successful. As a result, Pat & Mick Howells went and collected 2 loppers and 2 bow saws from DCRT on the 4<sup>th</sup> December.



Friends of Shirtcliffe would like to thank the Don Catchment Rivers Trust for their ongoing support and efforts (especially in Flockton Park). The new tools have already been put to good use on the FoS December workday.

## Brook Unblocking and Litter Picking 8<sup>th</sup> December 2018

Two activities had been earmarked for this work day:

As usual, there was a large amount of fly-tipped rubbish strewn across the bank below Severnside Drive. Team 1 consisted of FoS volunteers, Andrew and Gareth,



with the invaluable assistance of Rangers James Smith, Tom Broadhead, and their colleague. Their afternoon was taken up in packing away the mess into black bin bags. The filled bags were then dragged up the slope and loaded into the Ranger vans. No count was kept of the number of bags, but a reasonable estimate would put it around 20.



Team 2 (Pat, Chris, and Tony) set out from Schubert Bridge to undertake a 'Brook Unblocking' operation right the way through Shirtcliffe Woods. In practice, the whole of the afternoon was spent on dissecting just one huge jam, upstream of the Little Footbridge (cue theme from the 'Dam Busters'). The obstruction over-topped Chris and Tony, even when they were standing on the stream bank! They made full use of the new loppers and bow saws (kindly provided by the DCRT). They succeeded in reducing the blockage by three quarters, and opened up a channel to let the water flow through the middle.



Since Pat is still not allowed to paddle, she stood on the stream bank and hooked out a great pile of leaves and branches from the pool just upstream of the dam. There was a little bit of litter too, which went straight into a bin bag. Then she went and cleared the drainpipe which runs under the path by the first bench.



Mick was delegated to be the runner between the 2 teams. He grabbed a bin bag and litter picker and set off along the Valley bottom path – braving the quagmire! The ‘pickings’ were sparser than he expected, and easily fitted in just one bin bag. However, he managed to get some reasonable photographs of the workers, along with pictures of various interesting botanical specimens.

This was the final FoS work day of the year, and proved to be a satisfying (though strenuous) ending to 2018.



## **Friends of Shirtcliffe schedule for 2019:**

The week before each workday, FoS Officers undertake a Risk Assessment walk. If you spot any problems in the intervening period, please let one of the committee members know.

**Ranger-supervised Workdays** (*Working from 1pm to 3pm.*)

*Please note: some paths may be slippery, so do wear suitable footwear and take care*

### **Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> January - Opening up glades in Shirtcliffe Woods (1pm to 3pm)**

The glades in Shirtcliffe Woods are becoming overrun again by brambles – which neither flower nor fruit. If we don't do something about it, they will gradually kill off the underlying vegetation (e.g. bluebells, ferns, greater stitchwort). The brambles will have to be dug out carefully, so we do not disturb too many bulbs.

We will start at Schubert Bridge (SK 40813 85708), doing one glade at a time. If we get a really good turnout we should manage to clear several glades in the 2 hour slot.

As usual, tools will be provided. (We recommend wearing armour plating, as the brambles are really vicious!)

### **Future Workdays:**

February	9th
March	9th
April	13th
May	11th
June	1st
July	13th
August	<i>holiday</i>
September	7th
October	12th
November	9th
December	14th

*Any alterations will be published on our website and Facebook.*

