**Open Spaces Summary Feb 2022- May 2023**

**TREES**

During this period a lot of volunteer time has been spent tending all the trees planted in 2019. All the trees were small ‘whips’ when planted and are in open spaces without a readily available water supply, causing significant issues during the summer.

On Sophie Watsons Garden where the commemorative soldiers’ trees are planted a nearby resident kindly offered the use of a hosepipe. This still entailed regular site visits during the very hot summer and was successful until the hosepipe ban. Fortunately, all but a couple of these ‘whips’ survived.

The 36 trees planted in Hersey Nature reserve have also been tended throughout this period and, here again, all but a couple have survived. This work, together with all the other issues associated with this site, are undertaken by its 17 or so volunteers.

On the recreation ground one of the two remaining Oaks (four whips were originally planted) was removed as it was in a vulnerable area. It had been kept, with the hope of finding a new location for it.

Another slightly larger Oak tree was planted on the recreation ground in March 2023. It is well protected by fencing and looks healthy at present.

A Bird Cherry was planted in Sophie Watsons Garden in the spring 2022 to commemorate the Queens Platinum Jubilee. A commemorative plaque was made by Men in Sheds and formal event was held by the tree at the beginning of the Jubilee celebrations. There were concerns about this tree during the summer drought. But it has survived.

Some of the Silver Birch planted in the school grounds have died. These were replaced in September.

The Hazel trees alongside Sirius Close and the Ash Trees in Ansells Copse are doing well.

In September all the trees were weeded and mulched.

There are still many other areas in the Parish that would benefit from trees. However, as described here, planting is just one stage, looking after the trees requires significant volunteer input.

**SOPHIE WATSONS GARDEN**

A nationwide initiative ‘no mow May’ was instigated in Sophie Watsons Garden and carried on for the next few months. This decision met with mixed feelings and, in any case, the drought in July and August necessitated cutting the grass to eliminate a potential fire risk.

The open spaces group have met to discuss how to proceed on this open space in order to increase biodiversity.

A hand written sign with a brief explanation of the background to the soldiers’ trees is being replaced by a more robust sign, which is being crafted by Patric Maude (Men in Sheds). A larger structure containing more information about the garden and its background is still on our to do list.

PUCKPOOL

A new sign explaining the revised planting by the café, together with photos of some of the species planted was finally installed in the latter part of the year.

BARNSLEY TRAIL

Men in Sheds have produced fabulous squirrel way marking signs for the trail and the Parish Council have funded the production of leaflets. A community walk of the trail is being considered for this autumn subject to its condition (it’s very muddy in places).

**Future plans**

Increase the number of trees and bulbs

Working with Brighstone landscaping and the IW Council with the aim of more sympathetic strimming, cutting and mowing regimes.

And an aspiration to develop an understanding of the importance of the conservation of wild areas in our parish and to embrace wild flowers (weeds) as vital parts of biodiversity.