

We had a wonderful day in the wood on Sunday. It was damp and the sun didn't break through the clouds, but that didn't matter, we volunteers enjoyed it. Sharing Tracey's delicious flapjacks and my apple pie after a couple of hours' work in the morning, we were all chatting and laughing and happy to go out again.

I confess, though, I didn't actually do much work. I was too busy wandering along the paths with Glyn, a very observant lad who pointed out all sorts of interesting things that I might not have noticed. We have all ages in the wood on volunteer days: I am at least eight times as old as Glyn but it doesn't matter. We're both fascinated by the variety of lifeforms that flourish in the wood.

Now the autumn rain has set in, fungi are everywhere. We didn't have a formal fungus foray this year and we couldn't identify everything we saw, but most people will recognise the red and white fly agaric (*Amanita muscaria*). We found a beautiful specimen - look at that frilly skirt around the stem! But we won't eat it, it would make us very sick indeed. The most frequent fungi we saw were brown roll rims (*Paxillus involutus*): Ugly. Poisonous. Avoid. But there were also tawny grisettes (*Amanita fulva*), which are both beautiful and delicious.

Many of the mushrooms were part eaten, probably by mice, maybe squirrels too. They're feasting in the wood right now, building up their fat stores in preparation for winter. There are loads of chestnuts, too small for humans to bother with but perfect for little woodland animals that stay hidden while we're crashing around but dart out to feed when they think we've gone.

There's plenty of food to go round. The birds are feasting on a wealth of berries as well as nuts. What birds need us to provide is nest boxes, because most of our trees are too young to have suitable safe havens for nesting birds. Fortunately, the volunteers made a whole lot of them on Sunday and anyone can ask for a memorial birdbox to be put up in the wood in return for a small donation. Just contact the office if you're interested.

Whilst I delight in all the wild life in the wood, I am aware that not everyone feels the same way. We know we can't

please everybody. When we set up the Eternal Forest, we were aiming to offer burials in a wild wood and that's what we have; every contract points out that graves will be allowed to return to a natural state – and that can mean brambles and tangled vegetation. It does not mean tidy. Nature abhors tidy.

This doesn't cause problems with people who love nature; if they want to clear the brambles off a loved one's grave they will, or they may choose to let everything go wild, uncontrolled. That's fine by us.

Not only can the Charity not afford to pay to keep the ground clear, but this would be against our whole philosophy. We will try to help if you can't find a loved one's grave in the undergrowth but please understand that it is up to you to keep it clear of brambles and other vegetation, if that's what you want to do.

Boduan Sanctuary is not a conventional cemetery, it is a natural wood. That's why people choose to bury their loved ones there. We don't allow anything that isn't native to the area. We don't allow people to bring in plants or ornaments to leave on graves.

We don't want people to mark out graves in any way, other than by placing a simple rough headstone of the type we provide. And we will remove objects that are not in keeping with natural woodland. But we do do our very best to keep the paths open so that anyone can visit at any time, and enjoy the peace and wonder of the wood.

You can help! The next volunteer day is November 1st – All Saints' Day in Christian tradition. It is a day to honour the dead and we shall do so by caring for this beautiful burial site.

We'll be there from 11 until 3 and there will be food and drink to share. Do come if you can.
Bella



Glyn with Fly Agaric



Tawny Grisettes



Half eaten nuts



Bird boxes

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