

Freedown Wood.

On Thursday, March 5th, I was shown around part of Freedown Wood by your chairperson, Mrs Wilson, and I was asked to comment on a possible future management scheme to make the wood more accessible to visitors. I understood that at present it is used primarily by dog-walkers and horse riders.

My first impression of the wood was that it was exhibiting features of long-term neglect and was in urgent need of some form of arboreal remedial action. During my tour I noted many fallen trees; many overhanging branches; a totally uncontrolled growth of understory bramble and some recently uprooted trees.

I will comment on features of the forest that I consider in urgent need of attention and I will suggest some immediate and long-term action that should be take. I think that you are very fortunate to have such a natural feature on your doorstep and I hope that it will become a source of pride to your village.

IVY. This is a common feature of woodlands and is an ideal habitat for insects, bats, rodents and other living creatures. *Ivy does no harm to the tree.* I suggest that it is removed only on trees adjacent to paths.

UNDERGROWTH. Remove as much as possible and establish glades which can be furnished with seats.

TREES. Remove all fallen and partially fallen trees and create more open spaces. The sawn timber from these trees should be sold as firewood, after drying, and the money generated used to pay for casual labour to complete the task of felling.

RUBBISH. Forest work generates huge stacks of vegetation such as bark, ivy and fallen branches. This has to be removed from the wood and burned. *You may need to seek permission for this.*

CONCLUSIONS. Kingsdown and Ringwould have an enviable asset in the form of Freedown Wood and a concerted effort by a gang with chainsaws and some coarse mowing equipment could transform this neglected woodland into a thing of beauty. It requires finance and I am not in a position to comment on this. However, the sale of cut timber is profitable and should be explored. I wish you well in your future efforts.

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