

Bearsted Woodland Trust



Newsletter No. 15

2008



Pauline Moore formally opens the new paths.

‘Grand Opening’

www.bearstedwoodlandtrust.org

Registered Charity 1103585

Hundreds Turn Out For Grand Opening

The official opening of the new path on Saturday 12th July was attended by more than two hundred members and friends of BWT. Cloudy skies opened up to a beautiful afternoon, enjoyed by children, parents, grandparents and dogs alike!

Leader of Kent County Council, Paul Carter and Mid-Kent MP, Hugh Robertson, spoke of their admiration for the commitment and efforts of the volunteers. Pauline Moore said that Bearsted Woodland Trust had put her mind at ease for the future security of her land against developers.

After the speeches and the cutting of the tape, guests walked the new paths before returning to the tents for light refreshments.



With great regret, Lord Sandy Bruce- Lockhart, who was due to perform the opening ceremony on July 12th, was too ill to attend and has since passed away. Lord Bruce-Lockhart was a stalwart advocate of BWT. He will be greatly missed.

Royal Engineers To Build Barn

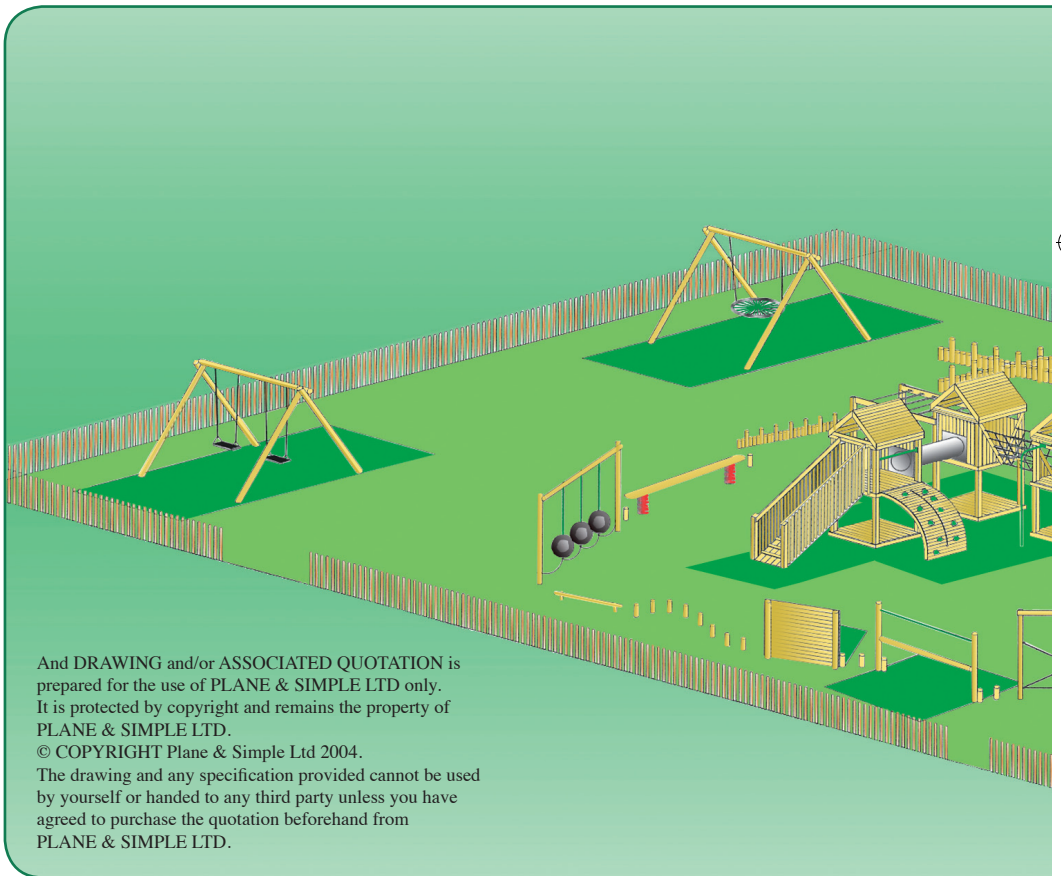
BWT is proud to announce that 36 Field Regiment, Royal Engineers will build our Tractor Barn, commencing in mid-January 2009. It was unanimously agreed at the AGM to go to all the village for an appeal to help raise funds for this very important project. Please see 4-page Barn Appeal leaflet enclosed with this newsletter.

Fossil Find By New Paths by Gareth George

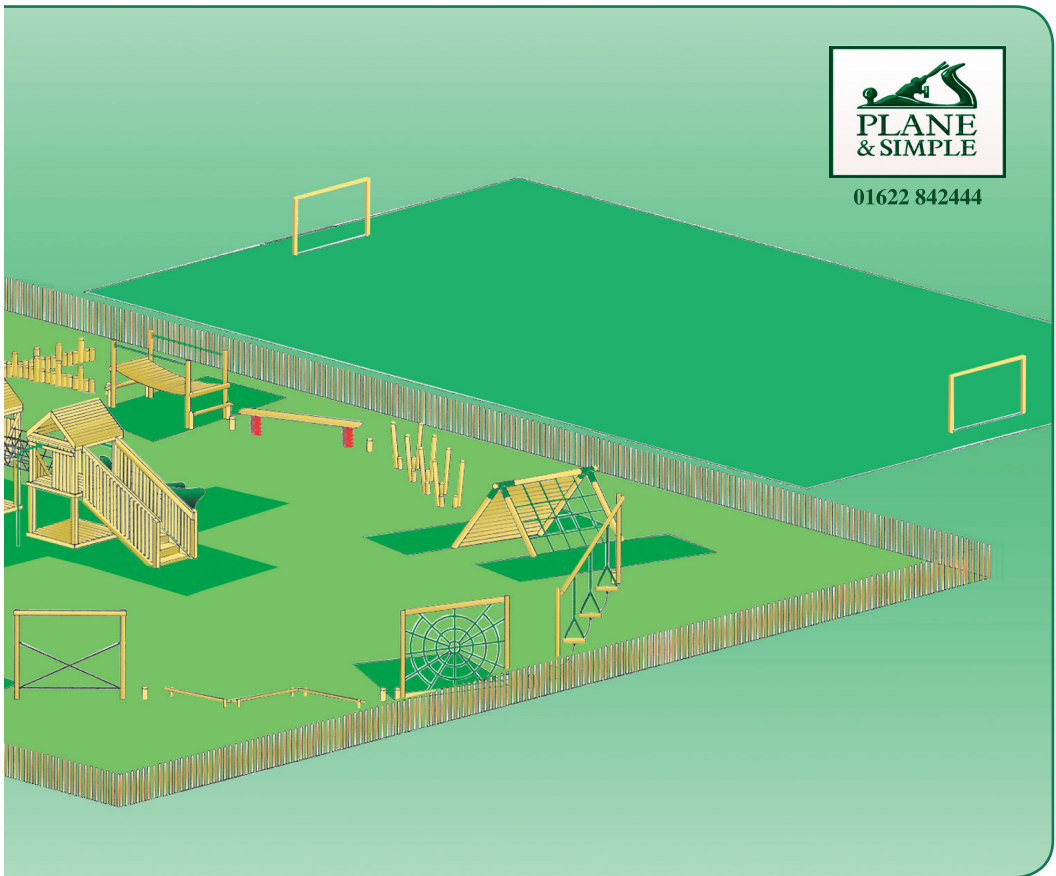
Next time you take a walk in the BWT you can touch and examine 120-million-year-old fossils, which once formed an oyster bed in a subtropical, shallow Lower Cretaceous sea. 145–100 million years ago, dinosaurs were still roaming the continents, particularly the vegetated plains of the Weald of Kent. These interesting fossilized oysters, found in a rock known as the Kentish Ragstone, have come to light as a result of recent work providing the new paths and the bridge across the Lilk stream. This limestone is composed almost entirely of the remains of an extinct oyster known by its Latin name *Exogyra*, a fossil related to *Gryphaea* (commonly known as the 'Devil's toenail'). Individual specimens within the bed vary in size from a couple of centimetres to large forms up to 15 cm in length. Some of the shells are in their original life position (flat side up), but others have been moved as a result of strong currents active during the formation of the oyster bank. You can also find the occasional remains of other fossils such as torpedo-shaped belemnites ('thunderbolts'), shell debris, and burrows left by invertebrates that lived within the sediment. If you visit the site please confine your examination to the limestone blocks on the flat grassy areas and do not climb the bank below the outcrop, near the boundary fence with the angling club. The best block to examine is located behind the tree sponsored by Richard & Ann Lemon. In the interests of geo-conservation, please do not hammer or remove large specimens from this important locality, which could possibly be designated as a Regionally Important Geological Site (RIGS) in the future.

Playzone Proposal

Members of the BWT Management Committee and the Parish Council have conducted extensive discussions about the design of the proposed playzone on BWT land off Church Landway, just south of the junior football pitch. It is important that any structures are carefully designed to fit in with the BWT environment which is woodland/countryside rather than urban. The facilities should also be easy to manage/maintain and their use should not cause disturbance to users of BWT or nearby properties. The picture below shows the design proposed by the BWT Committee and the Parish Council. It includes an adventure trail using structures built from natural wood and enclosed with a 1m high wooden fence (to keep dogs out of an area to be used



by young children). Between this area and the Church Landway hedge the proposal includes a ball court with simple natural wooden goals and a safagrass surface (rubber matting which allows grass to grow through it). The Parish Council will be conducting a public consultation exercise about this proposal. If this results in a positive response the funds are available to the Parish from Maidstone Borough Council. Final approval from BWT will be a matter for the Trustees who will take full account of opinions expressed by BWT members and the results of the consultation with the public. If it is decided to proceed, the area will be managed by the Parish under an extension of the lease already granted for the junior football pitch.



Ensuring 'The Sanctuary' Has a Long Life

by Sharon Bayne

To the north of the track, near the main gate is an area which has been named 'The Sanctuary'. Most people will remember it as the area of trees which was felled by Ward Homes back in 2003. The cynical destruction of this area and the outcry which followed was the catalyst which led Richard and Dena Ashness to purchase the land to save it, and which ultimately resulted in the formation of the Bearsted Woodland Trust. The rest, as they say, is history! Now the trees have regrown, and everything on casual inspection looks as if nature has won the day. However, the area hides a secret. The way the trees were felled at around 2 feet from the ground has shortened their life. It means that the stumps are rotting, and the branches which have regrown are splitting away from the weakened trunks. The silver birches are particularly badly affected. This area is an important part of the site and holds a special significance, but without action the trees will suffer a decline, gradually dying. The aim therefore, is to help a native woodland to establish gradually on this area, saving it for the long term. To do this, some of the trees which were felled by Wards need to be cut down, and new young trees will be planted in the gaps. Over time, as the weakened trees die off, the new young ones will have grown up to take their place. The work will begin this autumn. It will be phased over several years in order to ensure that it is done sensitively to nature and that only small pockets are opened up at any one time. So if you see tree felling, this time it is for a positive reason, and will help to secure this area for the future.



Our 1000th Member

Very recently BWT reached a considerable landmark when we attained our 1000th family membership. We are very proud that so many people are enjoying our lovely land and appreciate all that has been achieved by our volunteers over the last five years. Our

1,000th member is Mrs Claudine Singer who very sadly lost her younger son, Dan, in 1999. Dan Singer grew up near Ashford and then lived in Rolvenden. He had been working for a number of years at Maidstone Borough Council when he died. As Claudine now lives in Maidstone and her elder son and his family live in Bearsted, she felt that



the Bearsted Woodland Trust was a fitting place to have a memorial to a much loved son. Claudine has sponsored a bench in Church Meadow, she has joined as a Life Member and has also joined her elder son and family as Life Members.

BWT relies on the monies derived from the membership fees to fund the ongoing maintenance and upkeep of our land. Membership renewals were due on the 1st July and we still have 100 outstanding payees. Family membership is £5 a year, which can be paid by standing order. Alternatively, why not take out a life membership for a one-off payment of £100.

Bearsted Parish Plan

The parish plan committee has asked us to remind all Bearsted residents to complete and return their questionnaires

2008 Annual General Meeting

Bearsted Tennis Club kindly provided the venue once again for the 5th AGM of the Trust which took place on 25 September. Over 60 members attended to hear reports on the year's activities from members of the committee and to see an especially interesting environmental presentation from countryside management expert Sharon Bayne. The existing six members of the Management Committee were re-elected along with their co-opted colleagues Chris Street, Dave Johnson and Jo Tuck. Plans for the new tractor barn and playzone were discussed and the meeting concluded with a Q&A session. During the Q&A session it was suggested that funds might be raised for the tractor barn by a village appeal. The committee had been reluctant to consider another request to members following the very successful bridge appeal in 2007, but almost all present supported the idea. As you may have read on Page 3, or in the Tractor Barn Appeal leaflet, thanks to the Army's voluntary contribution, BWT has been able to undertake this building work much sooner than originally hoped.

Delivery Volunteer Needed

Two members have just joined the delivery team - our thanks to Barbara Long and John Smith. Is there anyone living in Aldington Road, Hampson Way, Mynn Crescent, or Hill Brow who would like to join the delivery team? For more details please contact Chris on 739713 or chris@bearstedwoodlandtrust.org

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