

BWT Awaits Green Pennant Award Decision **By Peter Willson**

The Green Flag Award Scheme is the benchmark of excellence for parks and green spaces based on a national standard in the UK.

This award is for community led projects. It recognises all the work that volunteer groups do to protect their open spaces and the work carried out by all involved.

Awards are given on an annual basis and winners must apply each year to renew their green flag status. It is realised that all green spaces are different and this diversity is welcomed, with each site being judged on its own merits and suitability to the community.

Our inspection was carried out on 28 April with many criteria which were judged. The tour was conducted by Peter Willson, Jeff Winn and Dave Johnson. Later questions were also asked regarding the many areas of our volunteers' work, from memberships to land management and even the editorial team received special mention from the judge!

All visits of the near 1,300 sites around the country will be completed by the 10 June, with the awards scheduled for announcement at the end of July during Love Parks Week. Once the awards have been announced, the public will be able to vote for the People's Choice Award. Voting for the People's Choice will close at the end of September and the overall winner will be announced at the beginning of October 2011. Once again, BWT will be in need of the

voting power of its supporters. Look out for guidance nearer the time. Hopefully by the end of the summer we will proudly be flying the flag of excellence!



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BWT ENHANCING THE LIVES OF LOCAL CHILDREN

As a key part of their science and environmental studies, more than 80 pupils from three Year 2 Classes (age 6-7 years) from Thurnham Infants School visited BWT on 30 March.

After a welcome and introduction, the children were taken round the site in class groups.

Judging by the show of hands, more than 90% of the children told us they had already visited the site, some on a regular basis. This is very heartening for us all.

As always, the children were very enthusiastic and interested in the numbers and types of trees, the animal burrows (and droppings!) and also the way BWT re-uses its natural materials around the site. They were struck by the fact that some trees were very old, but others were planted less than seven years ago - some after their own date of birth. The bonfire heap was also a source of interest ("Is that where you cook your dinner?")

The Thurnham School tree on Oak Avenue was soon found after a short search.

The children counted the steps down to the Lilk Stream bridge (always a competitive exercise!) but the favourite activity was to stand shoulder to shoulder around the "President's Tree" beyond Gore Cottage.

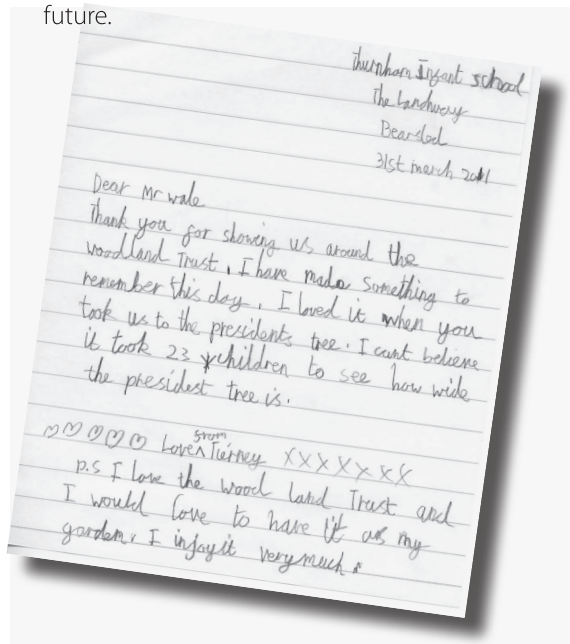
They were amazed it took more than half the class to do this!

They later walked back via the Manning Maze, always popular, and several demonstrated their skill.

"I come every week," said one boy who arrived at the centre long before anyone else.

They all enjoyed the visit, thanked us cheerily on the day, and sent us some lovely letters of appreciation.

We look forward to seeing next year's class groups; BWT is an important part of their future.



MANAGING FARM WOODS FOR WILDLIFE

BY JOHN WALE

Several of our volunteers, including our Life President Peter Willson and Environmental Consultant Sharon Bayne, attended a Wildlife Seminar day at East Malling Research on 4 November 2010. The event was the culmination of a two-year project funded by the Esmee Fairbairn Trust and fronted by Bearsted Woodland Trust, involving 10 other wildlife and environmental organisations.

The objectives were to learn about “best practice” in managing our site, especially the woodland, in order to enrich ecology and wildlife, which is one of BWT’s long-term aims.

The morning session involved talks by experts on the evaluation of woodland areas for wildlife; birds and butterflies of farm woods; living landscapes, and how best to manage them.

The booklet which accompanied the

seminar summarised a number of case histories, including BWT’s “People’s Wood” planted in 2004, and now developing well with a variety of densely-planted trees gradually providing ground cover for insects, beetles and other wildlife.

The afternoon session took the form of a woodland visit to Comfort’s Wood, near Cranbrook. Despite the persistent rain, our group were able walk around the woods, which were sown using different techniques in 1990 (tree planting and direct seeding) and 1991 (broadcast sowing of oak and hazel). The differences were very clear to see, the former being lighter and more open, the latter very dense and dark, with very little other vegetation able to survive.



The day was very useful, and we now see why it is necessary to “grade” the areas around our woodland so that the edges go from tall trees, to shrubs and leaving an area of longer grass in order to encourage different plants and wildlife, which depend upon each other. BWT Members will hopefully see some subtle changes in our maintenance patterns and a gradual enrichment of wildlife over the next few years.

Keep looking, and tell us if you spot anything unusual!

BWT has also been host to recent Easter celebrations with the annual local churches’ egg hunt and the joint churches Easter service. It’s great to see different parts of the local community getting so much use and value from the site.



A WOODLAND ROYAL WEDDING

Bearsted celebrated the Royal Wedding on 28 April in style with a congregation of hundreds of local adults and children for a truly memorable family picnic on BWT.



The day was the brainchild of local mum, Lynne Spears, who soon found able and willing volunteers in Lisa Felstead and Rhonda Moore and 'dab hand' local event organiser, June Wilkins. The group managed to source all manner of equipment from other local organisations as well as printing 3,000 invitations at a minimal cost, which were then distributed to all the local schools.

Jubilee Church joined forces to provide a number of fun activities on the day, including running races, football and rounders.



Arts and crafts tents were led by young volunteers Rachael Knatchbull and Annie Savage with an enthusiasm that kept the children coming back for more all day long. Other activities included a treasure hunt, face painting and tattoos; all at no cost to the grateful recipients.

The WI provided a refreshments tent, where such low prices were causing people to refuse their change and the ice cream man donated 20% of his profits.

Donations were gratefully received from Holy Cross Church, the Parish Council and BWT also donated towards the event. Together, with the church bells rung beautifully by the Holy Cross campanologists, all helped to make it a thoroughly enjoyable and memorable day.



PROJECTS AND MAINTENANCE

BY DAVE JOHNSON

There were 3 main areas of work during the autumn and winter:

(i) Removing and replacing a number of dead trees around the trust. Some had succumbed in the very dry weather but the water bowser has proved very useful and has helped to reduce losses. The severe snow and icy conditions in November and December 2011 affected some smaller trees but losses were surprisingly few.

(ii) Now that the tractor barn is fully operational, the annual service of the tractor and the overhaul of the flail attachment were able to be done 'in house' by volunteers, instead of sending it away. This has resulted in a considerable financial saving.

(iii) Project work included the fencing near the Church Landway entrance; construction of hard surfacing at the entrance to the Children's Play Area (which BWT carried out as a good-will gesture for Bearsted PC); and installation of a much needed cut-off drain in the bellmouth area of the Church Landway entrance. Several over-exuberant dogs (and one or two owners) had their footprints set in concrete around the

drain edges, Hollywood-style!

At the time of writing the only work remaining other than routine summer maintenance is the refurbishment of the gate and fence between the Elizabeth Harvie Field and Church Meadow; BWT offered to do this for Bearsted Parish Council.

Finally, we are very pleased to welcome three new volunteers to the maintenance rota. They are Marie-Anne Harstad, Jackie Greig and Mike Henderson. With all 16 of last years volunteers 'signed up' for 2011, the mowing rota now totals a very healthy number of 19. All are working to the more environmentally-friendly regime for summer maintenance (less mowing, enriched longer-term ecology) which was explained at last year's AGM.

New volunteers (male and female) are always very welcome, so please come along to the tractor barn if you can. Alternatively, please contact Dave Johnson on 01622 730321, David Ward 01622 737133 or Jeff Winn 01622 730477 for more information.

BWT BUGGY IN ACTION

The first hiring of the disabled buggy on 18 May was by Geoff and Hayley Rush from Maidstone, who have since joined BWT as a result of the hire option. Hayley, who suffers from MS, was so grateful that she hopes to become a regular user alongside Geoff. In previous visits they have made, they have only been able to venture as far as the roller bench.

If you would like to hire the mobility scooter for use on the site, please call the BWT mobile on 07807 917533.



COMMUNITY TREE AND HEDGE PLANTING IN OCTOBER / NOVEMBER

Plans are now in place for this large project in late autumn. It will be along the Ashford Road from the Gore Cottage entrance right across to Roundwell, shielding the whole area from the Ashford Road.

It is proposed that we will be planting some 4,000 specimens of hawthorn and blackthorn, hazel, holly, field maple, Guelder rose, wild cherry etc. These will be planted with a view to layering in about five years time from 60cm bare root hedging.

It is also proposed to add hedgerow trees every 50m which will be allowed to grow naturally. Pauline Moore thought it would be a good idea to start the project in her lifetime so that it will be well established when her bequeathed land eventually passes to BWT.

This will be a community-led project headed by a team from BWT and, hopefully, involving at least a hundred volunteers of all ages. Funding so far has been pledged from several areas (subject to final approval). Further details will be published later in the year.

HEDGE PLAN



MEMBERSHIP DRIVE REAPS REWARDS

Throughout March and April, 2860 leaflets were delivered to Bearsted and Bearsted Park non-members.

The feedback has been very positive. To date we have had 62 new families, including eight life memberships. This takes our total membership up to 1136 families, of which 331 are life.

We'd also like to thank new members, Mike and Sue Henderson, who have volunteered to join the 'delivery team' who will be covering the whole of Bearsted Park.

**62
NEW FAMILY
MEMBERSHIPS**

In response to our last newsletter, a few members have opted to receive their newsletters by email rather than the paper version. To help us save trees, if you'd like to convert to this format, please email Chris at membership@bearstedwoodlandtrust.org.

Membership renewals are due on the 1 July. Family membership is a minimum of £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.



BWT NOW MEDIA READY

For any local groups, organisations or societies wishing to know more about the history and work of Bearsted Woodland Trust, we have now acquired ICT equipment and presentations to enable this. Volunteers will be able to give presentations to any groups wishing to know more, including schools or donating companies. They will include all fund raising, building projects, tree and hedge planting, official openings and a full history going back to 2003 when our founder trustees bought the land and gave it to the village.

We are also making a short video covering all the above points to show the work that is carried out by BWT both on and off the site.

BWT would like to thank all those who donated - Bearsted Parish Council, Richard Ash and Allan Bradshaw (their devolved budgets), Paul Carter (KCC member community grant), Bearsted Veterinary Surgery and Maidstone Soroptomists who organised a quiz evening to raise funds for this project. Thanks also to Moira Mitchell of Mitchell Media UK Ltd for producing it all at well below cost.

Further details can be obtained by contacting Peter Willson on 01622 632682 or peter@bearstedwoodlandtrust.org

YOUR WOODLAND TRUST

This issue's feature letter is from Miss Elizabeth Vickers of Shirley Way:

'Dear Editors,

I wonder if you may be interested in this for the newsletter.

In October, near the main gate, on the cinder path, I saw a caterpillar the like of which I have never seen before. (As a 19th Century naturalist might say.) It was about 1 ½ inches long, turquoise with large round yellow spots and hairy.

I told him / her "You walk on this path and you'll get squashed." I never touch hairy caterpillars but I put down a piece of paper and he/she co-operated by walking onto it and was released among the trees and the thicket.

I cannot see it in my 'Collins Field Guide, Insects'. The nearest is the 'Lackey Moth' but that does not show the yellow patches.

Can anyone help?

Yours Sincerely,

Elizabeth Vickers'



Miss Vickers, at the time of going to print, we have sadly been unable to identify your mystery caterpillar. However, we will continue to search and will report on it in the next issue. **If any of our readers can help with identification, please get in touch!**

NOTICES

Bearsted and Thurnham Fayre, Saturday 25 June 2011. Come along to this year's display stall.

Make a date in your diaries for the 2011 **AGM** on the afternoon of **Sunday 9 October**, exact time and venue to be confirmed.

Stunning BWT notelets are now available. Packs of 8 notelets will include two each of four designs taken from original paintings by Rob Ward. We will be asking for a donation of £3 for one pack or 2 packs for £5.

Please contact Chris Street on 01622 739713 or Dave Ward on 01622 737133.

They will also be available at the Bearsted & Thurnham Fayre and Vintage Car Show on the Green, 25 September.

Your Newsletter (Issue 20) has been brought to you by the editorial team of Fiona Marriner, Sandra Knatchbull and John Wale.

Design & Production is by Mitchell Media UK Ltd.

Please forward your feedback and comments to: editor@bearstedwoodlandtrust.org

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