

HEDGE PLANTING: 'A project by the community for the community'

OUR PRESIDENT, PETER WILLSON GIVES AN INSIGHT:

On 26 and 29 November 2011 more than 3,000 mixed tree whips were planted by local residents. What made this event very special was that hedges were planted on land which in time will be bequeathed to the Bearsted Woodland Trust by Pauline Moore. Pauline wanted the hedge to be planted during her lifetime so that it is well established when the land is passed over to the trust in perpetuity. Some established trees were also planted.



The core of BWT maintenance volunteers led by Dave Johnson, Dave Ward, Peter Schmoeger, and Jeff Winn had spent in excess of 500 hours preparing the site from late spring onwards. The 600 metre-length of hedge along Ashford Road from Gore Cottage entrance right round to Hillbeck House in Roundwell had been mechanically dug with Peter's digger, and tons of manure had been added and rotovated prior to planting; finally the whole stretch had been



thoroughly watered by the Trust's water bowser. Other preparation work included fencing and gates (140 posts, 1400 metres of electrical tape) to keep horses separate from the area.

The weather was kind and on Saturday 26 November 195 residents of Bearsted and Thurnham and surrounding villages turned out to plant Phase One. *continued on page 2...*

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We were delighted to have the Mayor and Mayoress of Maidstone present to help plant a short section with local children, and it was also wonderful to see so many families with their children, and the Cub Scouts and Beaver groups. People of all ages turned up from pre-school to two in their nineties!!! Many said how much fun they had and what a lovely 'community spirit' they felt.



With such high numbers, we arranged for each of the Saturday groups to plant about a two metres (ten whips, five per metre) every 50 metres as examples at different numbered stations for the first 350 metres. As volunteers turned up they were assigned to different stations where there was at least one BWT volunteer to show how the planting was done. This was very important because the mix of Hawthorn, Blackthorn, Hazel, Holly, Field Maple, Guelder Rose, Wild Cherry, Sloe,

Mirabelle etc, had to be planted in strict rotation to offer maximum benefit for future wildlife. The young whips were supported with canes and protected by pvc mesh, to give them all a good chance of survival. By mid-morning the Saturday task was virtually complete.

On Tuesday 29 November more fine dry weather enabled another 65 residents to complete Phase Two of the planting, from Ashford Road to Roundwell. In fact the area planted exceeded our own expectations! (Editor's update: all the hedge whips can now be seen in bud, from the Ashford Road to Roundwell; by the time you receive the Newsletter they will all be in leaf!)

DONATIONS TO THE HEDGE PROJECT:

The Trust would like to thank the following sponsors for this very large project: the Phillips Foundation, BTCV through the Heritage Lottery Fund (who also joined us as a joint venture), The Tree Council and Kent County Councillor Jenny Whittle through her KCC Member's Grant.

Finally a big "thank you" to all the children and parents for their lovely letters, posters, emails and phone calls expressing their thoughts and thanks.



AGM 2011: 9 OCTOBER 2:30pm BEARSTED AND THURNHAM BOWLS CLUB

BWT's Chairman, Richard Ashness welcomed more than 85 Members and Friends at the 2011 AGM, held on a Sunday afternoon, following suggestions in 2010.

Richard reported a very active and rewarding year, mentioning:

- Achievement of Green Flag Status, with the highest category possible.
- Grant Funding for the Hedgerow Project along the Ashford Road (see full report by Peter Willson).
- A "History and Milestones of BWT" computer-based package on BWT since its formation in 2003: this will meet the increasing demand for presentations to local groups.
- Publication of two editions of the Newsletter - with special thanks to Sandra Knatchbull and Fiona Marriner, who were standing down as Editors after 4 years in the role. John Wale would continue as BWT's link with the new Editor, Moira Mitchell.
- Bernard Head's careful and sound financial management.
- Pauline Moore for her sustained and enthusiastic support.
- Dave Johnson and his Projects/Maintenance Teams of volunteers led by Jeff Winn, Peter Schmoeger and David Ward for their hard work in maintaining the site throughout the year.
- David Ward for his continuing hard work for sponsored Trees and Benches, a scheme which brings in valuable income.
- Chris Street, who puts in a huge amount of time as Membership Secretary and manages the distribution of the Newsletter and Leaflets to more than 1100 members and families in Bearsted and a wider area. In this way our Magazine Distributor volunteers form a vital link with BWT members and friends.
- Sharon Bayne - Environment and Countryside Consultant - whose professional skills over 7 years had shaped the site and helped to create the increasingly attractive site we have today, as well as a valuable link to grants and the mysteries of application forms!
- Sharon was now standing down from the Management Committee. In recognition of all her excellent work for BWT, Richard proposed she be made an Honorary Life Member and this was agreed enthusiastically by all. A tree would recognise her good work over several years. All other members of the Management Committee were re-elected.
- Rodney Dale, the farmer who carries out the hay-cut of meadows in July.
- The Chairman also mentioned significant community events held on BWT, particularly the Palm Sunday procession to Holy Cross Church, and the Royal Wedding Picnic on 29 April; both events had demonstrated the Trust's value to the wider community.
- The major project currently in progress is the Hedge Planting in Pauline Moore's Field. Work on the proposed Wildflower Meadow is still at development stage.

Richard thanked everyone for coming and for their continuing support. Peter Willson concluded by quoting from the Green Flag assessment Report: "[BWT] is a great example of the community working together to achieve a high quality site."

MONEY MATTERS INCLUDING FINANCIAL REPORT

BWT's Treasurer, Bernard Head, presented figures for the year ended 30 June 2011; it had been a very good year, and BWT was in a sound financial position. Bernard also stressed the importance of Gift Aid tax recovery which enabled the Trust to recover £4169 in the past year, and a further £2400 to date in 2011/12. Reserves were still healthy and were being held for the future, especially should there be a need to face payments for maintenance work around the site. Bernard concluded by announcing a bequest to BWT from a local resident, and asked members present to consider making bequests.

TREES AND BENCHES

David Ward said that 30 trees had been sponsored, as well as benches, with 13 new Life Memberships resulting. There is a waiting list for new trees this autumn; 40 trees and 1 bench were available for sponsorship. David stressed the benefits of having a water bowser on site and the good service from the engraver. Some tree plaques were corroding and would need renewing, so we were looking at samples for future replacement.

MAINTENANCE AND PROJECTS 2011

Dave Johnson mentioned the wide variety of projects completed by volunteers during the year:

Wooden fencing near the main entrance.

Cut-off drain near the main entrance (which had proved very effective).

Construction of hard entrance path at the Children's Play Area, improving access for all.

Installation of Security System in the Tractor Barn.

Trimming and maintenance of the Church Landway hedge for Bearsted Parish Council.

Mowing of designated areas of BWT on Tuesday/Wednesday from April to late October by 19 volunteers on rota, 9 of whom travel from outside Bearsted.

Dave mentioned that there had been a reduction in volunteers at Thursday work-ins; he also noted that some of the maintenance work was now more physically demanding, a point to bear in mind for future needs and planning.

Everyone was delighted by the high marks received for Green Flag, and we all felt this reflected well on the maintenance regime at BWT.

We now had a Hadlow College student working ½ day per week, and this is proving mutually beneficial. Finally, Dave mentioned that David Bourner, former BWT volunteer, was now working for Tenterden Town Council, as a result of skills learned at BWT.

SUMMARY OF WINTER PROJECTS 2011/2012

In addition to the Hedge Planting, other projects completed during the winter include

Repairs to the steps leading to the Lilk Stream.

Clearance and bulb planting in the bank above the path from the Elizabeth Harvie Field to the Lilk Stream.

Planting of replacement trees for the few which had died last winter.

Planting of Oak Trees near the Gore Cottage entrance.

Widening of the main pedestrian access from Church Landway March 2012.



Planting of a staggered line of Himalayan Birches near the path on the rise from Lilk Stream to Gore Cottage and Barn Meadow. In the longer term they will form a canopy over the path as it winds towards the top of the valley. (Note: The planting work was memorable for all the volunteers who took part, since it was done in arguably the wettest three days in January – it has hardly rained at all since then!

Repairs to woodland paths and mulching of trees and hedges using recycled bark chips.

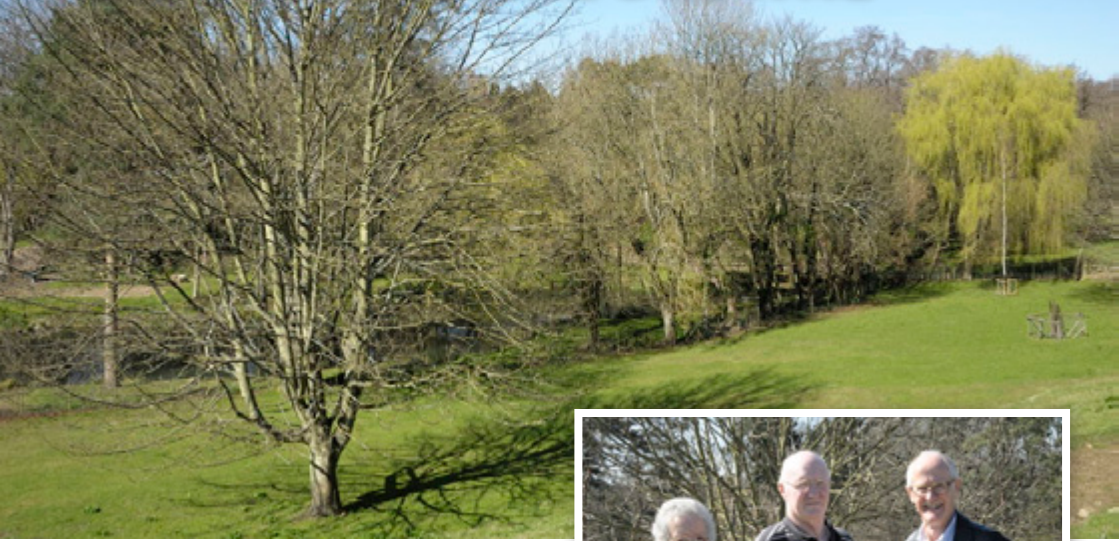
Selective management of the area of brambles between the Roller Bench and Dolobran.



DONATION FROM BEARSTED VETERINARY SURGERY

Thanks are due to all at Bearsted Veterinary Surgery for the kind donation of £140 raised by sales of drugs for pets, the second such donation from them in recent years.

BEQUEST OF LAND FROM DAVID AND CLAIRE BROWNE



We are very grateful to David, Claire and Nick Brown for their decision to leave over an acre of their land to the Trust. This is their second act of generosity to our charity, having donated a strip of land five years ago to enable us to widen the link to Gore Meadow. This peaceful area adjacent to Majors Lake will now be protected as green space in perpetuity, along with all the other land in the stewardship of BWT.

The photos show David and Claire our President, Peter Willson, and also the very attractive valley slope looking north towards the path near the Lilk Stream; this is the land to be bequeathed by the Browne's to BWT. They explained their reasons below:

"It was our son Nick's idea to give our little bit of pasture land (one acre plus) to Bearsted Woodland Trust when we die. Nick said: "It is so peaceful, and tranquil. It is such a wonderful place from which to watch the wildlife on the lake. It would be wrong to put houses on it. Dave and I have loved our bit of countryside for nearly forty years and plan to continue to treasure it for some time into the future.

"We would like to thank our neighbours, the Major's Lakes Fishing Syndicate for all the free logs off their site and our other neighbours Bearsted Woodland Trust for mowing the flat part of the pasture for us, and the Buttercups Goat Sanctuary for lending us enough goats to trim the slopes for us."

If you would like any further information on Buttercups Sanctuary for Goats please go to their web site www.buttercups.org.uk

TREVOR COULTER'S GENEROUS BEQUEST OF £116,000 TO THE TRUST

A very generous bequest totaling £116,000 has been left to the Trust in the will of Mr Trevor Coulter.

Trevor was born at 6 Cavendish Way in 1949. His grandparents Archie and Phoebe Hadlow owned the shop next door at number 4, called Cavendish Stores. The living accommodation was combined. Today the premises is known as 'Yummy's', a Chinese takeaway. At the back of no. 6 there was a lady's hairdressing salon called Valerie's which was run by his mother Olga. His father worked for Charles Arkcolls, a wholesale grocery business. In 1972 Trevor moved with

his parents to Plantation Lane following the death of his grandfather. Trevor worked as an electrical engineer and took early retirement, but sadly contracted cancer.

We were not aware of this bequest prior to Mr Coulter's death. We can only assume that his decision to leave part of his estate to the Trust was his way of showing appreciation of our village, and a desire to help with protecting Bearsted into the future. Our treasurer, Bernard Head, explains below how this bequest and any others will be put to good use.

NOTE FROM BWT'S TREASURER BERNARD HEAD ON THE MANAGEMENT OF BWT FINANCIAL RESERVES

The generous bequest from Mr Trevor Coulter has resulted in a significant increase in the financial reserves of the Trust, and it therefore seems appropriate to reiterate our financial strategy.

- 1) Significant capital investment in providing access for all to Pauline Moore's land at some future date.
- 2) As a capital sum to generate interest income to cover operating expenses in the future if it becomes necessary to employ maintenance staff in a post volunteer era.
- 3) To fund the acquisition of other land to protect Bearsted if it should become available. Whilst being completely unknown, this could involve very substantial sums.

We aim to cover day-to-day running costs out of annual membership donations, supplemented by grant applications for particular projects.

Separately, we have the objective of building a substantial capital reserve fund which is intended to be used for the following purposes:

Adding a bequest to BWT to your will is very simple and could be a tax efficient way of showing your appreciation of life in this very special village and helping to protect it well into the future. Bernard would be pleased to advise anyone considering such a move.

SCHOOL VISITS 2011 AND 2012

Continuing the tradition of working with local schools, we entertained Year 3 Roseacre Junior School pupils on 13 October 2011, and Thurnham Year 2 on 22 March 2012. The weather was kind on both occasions, and as usual our visitors were keen to learn about the site, and asked many questions about the landscape, trees and the wildlife as they walked around. Many young people from both schools (80-90% based on a show of hands) come to BWT regularly, and a significant number of families have taken part in planting activities over the past few years, which is heartening.

For the Thurnham pupils, the visit was part of their geography and environment curriculum. Dave Johnson pointed out to them that Bearsted Woodland Trust came into being the year that they were born, ie 2004; this gave them much to reflect on! The boys and girls were, as always, interested and well-behaved, and sent Dave Johnson and his team lovely letters of appreciation.

WILDFLOWER MEADOW PROJECT

After background research and testing of soil types, BWT is going ahead with trials for wildflower meadows. Visitors can see evidence of this in several areas and notice boards explain what we are doing. The longer term aim is to attract a wider variety of butterflies, bees and other insects, which in turn will enrich and attract other wildlife on our site. Following clearance of several small areas the bare soil will be left to see what will grow naturally, and we shall also be spreading wildflower carpets to judge the success rate in the different areas.

If the trials are successful, we will then draw up a plan for much larger wildflower meadows around the site.

MEMBERSHIP

In September 2011 Membership stood at 1136 members and families, reflecting about one-third of the community of about 9,000 people – a remarkable proportion. There were 342 Life Members (plus two received on the day of the AGM.) 37 Life Memberships had been received, and the Leaflet Drop earlier in the year had generated 60 new members, a very worthwhile figure. 96 Members have yet to renew their subscriptions, and had been reminded. Membership figures to March 2012 have risen to 1164 family memberships, which includes 369 life memberships.

Chris thanks all BWT's volunteer distributors who play such an important role for BWT; we also welcome John Hale as a new addition to the delivery team: good to have you with us!

DIARY DATE:

**The Bearsted and
Thurnham Fayre is on
Saturday 30 June 2012**

**BWT will be there
for information,
membership renewals,
notelets and prints.**

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editor@bearstedwoodlandtrust.org

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