

Update on Pauline Moore's Land

As we outlined in the last newsletter, we have conducted a survey of views on the ways in which the land should be managed. Thank you to everyone who contributed to the 115 responses. It has certainly helped us to understand what friends of the Trust and of Pauline would like to see happen to her land, and in this edition we would like to explain what emerged from the process.

Key findings from the consultation

The consultation generated a long list of one off ideas - each of which might provide inspiration for something unusual, either now or in the future. The most original was 'beach volleyball on the sand school!' There were also many suggestions which had two or three proponents, but here we summarise the issues which were raised by 10 or more respondents.

The most widely supported idea was that a good proportion of the land should remain as open meadow, leaving the countryside feel that Pauline had fought to keep. This links in with a desire to see wild flowers and to have a natural countryside rather than being over-managed.

There was significant support for the planting of trees, hedges, bushes and shrubs. Selective planting would not be inconsistent with leaving open meadow, and how the two features can work together is being considered, see under 'The Next Steps'. There was also support for features to attract bird life, the creation of a pond and the protection/planting of bluebells (primrose and violets). There was a general tone throughout of not over-developing.



The second most widely supported idea was the provision of surfaced paths to provide an extended circular walk with access for all. Several respondents noted specific opposition to surfaced paths, seeing them as an intrusion on the countryside...although the number in favour was five times the number against. Similarly, although a few were opposed to a car park, 10 times more respondents suggested that one should be built. There was considerable support for the provision of seating and some for picnic tables.

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There was no consensus regarding the provision of formal play facilities for young people - a significant number were completely opposed whilst the larger number in favour suggested about 20 different types of facility. Again, many of the more common suggestions could be grouped as a 'natural' provision (logs etc) or a sympathetic wooden construction. Continued equestrian use had some support, again with a diverse range of suggestions. Several respondents suggested a nature trail or information boards. Others felt that the countryside itself had enough scope for children's adventure.

Naming the land after Pauline was widely supported as was the provision of a memorial plaque or plinth near 'her' oak and/or a newly planted one. There was also support for the inclusion of her donation on welcome entrance boards. The possibility of an equine sculpture generated more of a debate, as explained later.

Pauline's wishes

Pauline thought very carefully before deciding to leave her land to BWT. She took time to get to know key members of our

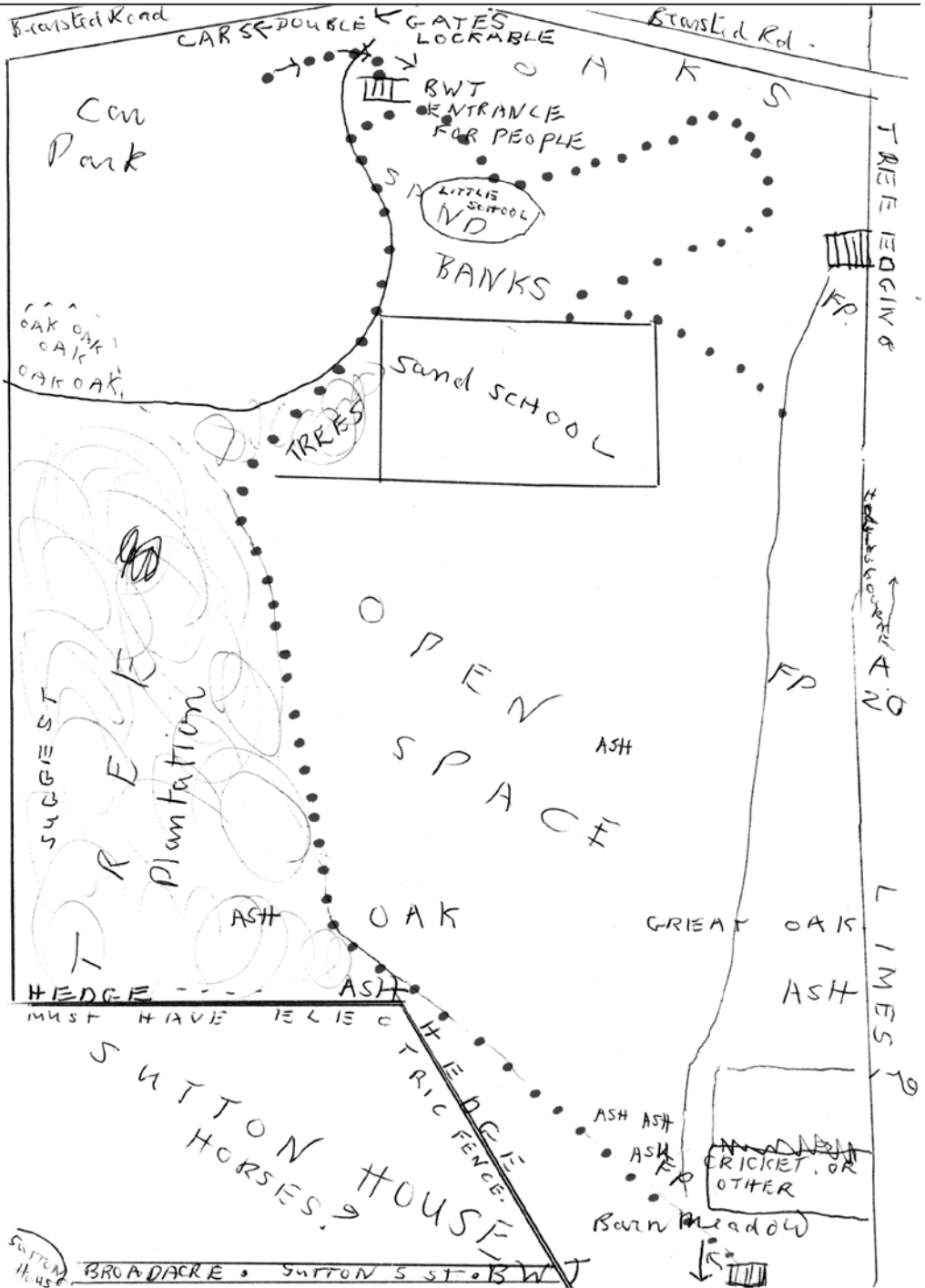
team and to understand our ethos. Having decided that she could trust the Charity to look after her land in the long term, she became a very enthusiastic member of our Management Committee.

Her primary objective was to protect her land from the possibility of building development after her death. The open space had given pleasure to generations of young people under her custodianship and she wanted it to continue to do so. She did not want to be over-prescriptive about how the space should be used, although was (to our initial amazement) adamant that 'the horses would have to go'.

Despite her reluctance, we persuaded her to think further about a plan for the land and her sketch outlining her ideas is reproduced here: (see next page)

The key features of Pauline's plan are: open space; tree planting (a wood to the north and boundary planting along Ashford Road); a circular path (shown in dots); a car park; and some form of play facilities (expressed as 'cricket or other'). This is remarkably consistent with the results of our survey.

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The next steps

Early this year Trust maintenance volunteers undertook some preliminary clearance of Pauline's land in order to ensure the safety of the area. However, we were asked by the solicitors not to do any further work prior to ownership being transferred to BWT. In the meantime we have asked our land management and environmental consultant, Sharon Bayne, to prepare a management plan for the land based on Pauline's wishes and the consultation results. Our view is only to progress aspects where there is clear support at this stage. On issues where opinion is more divided, it is considered better to do nothing for the time being, whilst allowing time for further thought and debate.

It is clear that there is a dominant view that the land should remain as countryside rather than become a park. The preferred option is for most of the area remaining as open space with the grass allowed to grow until an annual summer hay cut. We are exploring

the scope for the creation of a wild flower meadow, but will need to wait and see how the grass grows in its first season without being grazed and to test soil samples before determining whether this will be possible.

Sharon is preparing plans for planting trees to the north (an area that Pauline had begun to name "Rider's Wood") and for boundary planting to shield the land from the Ashford Road. We are working on the selection of a route for a surfaced path and exploring the scope for providing a car park (there are issues of access from the highway and risks of abuse by travellers). Options for the maintenance and future use of the sand school and sand banks are also being considered.

Other ideas may be developed as time progresses.

Funding

Thanks to the great work previously done by all who helped to plant the perimeter hedge in November 2011, there will be no



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costs for fencing. However, the access for all path will be very expensive and there could be significant costs for creating wild flower meadows, a car park and any building. Additional costs will be involved in the planting programme, signs, benches, new access points and any memorial features. The total project cost could be as high as £200,000.

Peter Willson and Sharon Bayne have worked wonders in the past in raising grant funding to develop BWT and, despite the difficult economic environment, will again be working hard to persuade potential funders. In addition, we are delighted that Barbara Long has volunteered to join the funding sub-committee and is exploring previously untapped sources.

Some matters for ongoing debate

Horses

We were initially very surprised at Pauline's insistence that there could be no future for

horses on her land. Her explanation was that horses require a great deal of space, and a barn to store winter food...and that the amount of professional management required would be beyond us. In addition, her vision was that the future of her land was as public open space to be enjoyed by all, not just a few.

Pauline decided to leave two acres of land with her house so that a future owner would have the scope to keep horses if they wished, hence the reference to 'horses?' and an electric fence in the bottom corner of her sketch. At the same time, she was careful to protect the land remaining with the house from development by the creation of a non-development covenant in favour of BWT.

Our consultation did show a level of interest in maintaining a horse connection with several different ideas put forward. Horse grazing is ruled out for the reasons stipulated by Pauline. Ideas such as a riding school or club, riding events or hiring out the land for



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equestrian use are not consistent with the wild flower meadow envisaged.

We have looked very seriously at the idea of providing a riding track or circuit around the land which is an idea proposed by people close to Pauline.

Questions addressed include:

- Where would the entry and exit point be, and would it be used?
- How much would a track restrict our planting plans?
- Would a large amount of space be allocated to a few users?
- Could we achieve effective separation from other site users, especially dogs?
- How would the track surface be maintained?
- Could the high cost be financed?

We have obtained some feedback from others who have attempted to provide such a facility and this has focussed more on problems than successes.

Memorial feature

This is a very sensitive issue which has required careful thought. Prior to Pauline falling ill, the BWT team had been discussing with her the possibility of commissioning a life-size horse sculpture to be placed in a prominent position on her land during her lifetime, to ensure that the equestrian heritage of the land would be remembered for years to come. Plenty of practical difficulties had been identified, not least the danger of vandalism, and no conclusion had

been reached by the time Pauline became unwell. A large number of people suggested an equine sculpture in our consultation, but a group of her friends feel strongly that such a feature would be perceived as an ostentatious memorial to Pauline, which she would not have wanted.

Building

The survey threw up a variety of ideas for some form of building on the site including: a village hall, an educational and information chalet, a tea room, toilets, facilities for maintenance volunteers, a folly or gazebo and rain shelters. There was no consensus for any particular type of building. There was also strong opposition from many to the principle of any building.

Issues for further consideration include:

- Would a building destroy the 'feel' of the area, and would Pauline have approved?
- Would planning permission be obtained if BWT applied?
- Should additional services or facilities be focussed on the already more developed end of the BWT site? (ie the 16 acres)
- Would a building necessitate a large car park?
- How would the needs of maintenance activities and volunteers be met?

There is clearly much work still to do, but the questionnaire responses have helped us enormously in looking at options which will be in keeping with the site and the area, and benefit future generations in the way Pauline would have wished.

STOP PRESS! Just as we were going to print, we were advised that the solicitor handling Pauline's estate intends to transfer the land to BWT at the same time as the sale of Pauline's house is completed.

Other news and recent visits

The annual walkabouts by Thurnham CE Infant School's Year 2 took place in March 2013 and Roseacre Junior School's Year 6 visited on 21 May. The pupils were, as always, well-behaved and are well-informed about BWT. More than 90% had been before, most with parents and family. Many children noted that they were born in the year that BWT had been formed (2004), and that they were the same age as some of the trees! They had sent lovely letters and signed cards of appreciation to their guides at BWT.

Junior Football Pitch

The Junior Football Pitch is now being put to regular use; since April 2013 BWT is mowing the playing area weekly on a trial basis. With the (short-lived!) improvement in the spring weather we are seeing ad-hoc picnics and visits by nursery school groups. The Parish Council Play Area and the Manning Maze are always popular.

The Marriot Hotel, Tudor Park

The Marriot Hotel, Tudor Park, has twice sent a group of 10 employees for a team-building exercise in repairing bark paths; they liked it so much they are booked for a third visit in the summer of 2013!

Green Flag Inspection

The Green Flag inspection will be carried out during the summer, and we shall post the date (when known) on our website.

Bark in the Park

A fun afternoon for dogs and their owners – was organised on the Bearsted PC Football Pitch by KCC Community Wardens and Maidstone BC on the afternoon of 18 May. (photo below)



Winter visitors

During the week commencing 21 January, with deep snow around the site, about 20 Waxwings were spotted on BWT. These beautiful birds were visitors from northern Europe and were looking for berries, which at that time were in abundance in parts of southern England. The waxwings are plump, upright, eye-catching birds with a pale reddish-brown body and a distinctive crest on the top of the head and a yellow tip on the tail. They are very sociable and move around in groups, like starlings. A waxwing was also seen stripping berries in a garden in Clarendon Close later the same week.



Maintenance

During the winter and early spring the Maintenance Teams have replenished bark chips on most of the paths, carried out some clearance and replanting, and refurbished the main notice board near the Church Landway entrance. Early season mowing has been carried out in accordance with the Three-year Maintenance Plan which we described in the last Newsletter.

Future Dates for your Diary

- **Bearsted and Thurnham Village Fayre: 29 June 2013**
Come and visit our stand on the Green. You can renew your membership, buy BWT notelets and prints, and chat to our volunteers.
- **AGM 29 September 2013, Bowls Club, Church Landway, 2.30 pm**

Newsletter via -mail

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