

BWT CELEBRATES ITS 10 YEAR ANNIVERSARY

In this edition we celebrate 10 years of Bearsted Woodland Trust. It is hard to take in all that has happened during this time, but what we see now around the 26 acres is a testament to all the imagination, thoughtful planning and hard work which has transformed the area. The hedgerows and planted woodlands are maturing, and the landscape is moving imperceptibly into its next phase.

After the wettest winter in memory, the mild spring temperatures have seen early budding of trees; the blossom in Church Meadow and Willson Avenue, preceded by daffodils and followed by bluebells, has been truly wonderful. Those walking around Moore Meadow near Roundwell will have seen the daffodils and bluebells at their best in this newer part of our site.

In 10 years BWT has come to mean so much to so many people in different ways: it is there for everyone to enjoy, and to marvel at what has been achieved.



**A DATE
FOR YOUR DIARY**
On Saturday 2 August we
will be holding a 10 year
celebration event at BWT.
More details to
follow.

All those who have contributed, in whatever way, deserve our thanks, for what we have is a huge community asset. It is sad that David Johnson and Peter Willson, Pauline Moore and Frank Manning are not with us as we celebrate the 10th anniversary of BWT; however their efforts and example, and the sustained help given by all the volunteers and Friends of BWT, have played a major part in creating what we have. Most importantly, it is a tangible legacy for us, for our young people, and for the future.

DAVE JOHNSON - tribute to his work for BWT



On 23 November Holy Cross Church was full for a service to celebrate the life of Dave Johnson, who died in October following lengthy treatment for a brain tumour.

Dave was at the heart of projects and maintenance in BWT. He was the reason

many of the volunteers joined the team. His professional skills and experience, together with his amazing “can do” attitude were an inspiration to us all.

Dave had a long and successful career as a project engineer, and put his experience to good use, joining BWT’s Management Committee when the Trust had been in existence for three years; Dave added fresh impetus, bringing in a new team of volunteers and establishing the 3 mornings-per-week work programme. He led the team of over 20 regular volunteers by example, and also taught many of the volunteers to use the equipment and to keep safe working practices for power tools. He also put in place the systems which enabled BWT to gain the Green Flag award for well managed public green spaces.

In addition to devoting time to regular maintenance, he spent a great deal of time on the management of major projects, including the hard-surfaced circular path, the Lilk Bridge, the tractor barn, and

the hedge around Pauline Moore’s land. Dave’s dogged determination and considerable professional expertise played a big part in making it all happen in a way which was beneficial to BWT and its members.

Dave was also an active member of the Tennis Club: he served on the Management Committee for several years; a stint on the social committee; was Chairman 1993-1995; Maintenance Team Leader 2000-2004; and President 2010-2013. A lover of the outdoor life, Dave, with help from his wife Pauline led the club’s New Year’s Day Walk for many years... a popular event for all.

At BWT we do miss Dave’s self-effacing humour, his energy, and his fund of new ideas; he believed we should work hard but celebrate success. The sycamore bench in the glade overlooking the Lilk Valley is a fitting memorial for Dave and a lovely place for Pauline and the family to reflect. As Dave often said: “why would you want to be anywhere else...”



It is a tribute to Dave’s leadership that the team he created has continued to perform without him to the high standards that he established. For many, he is still there with us, and if we have a problem, we ask ourselves “now what would Dave have done...”

Planting of Riders' Wood: Phase 1 December 2013

Pauline Moore's wish was for a wood to be created at the northern edge of the 10 acres of land she bequeathed to BWT; she wanted the wood for the enjoyment of many who would walk around this area with its wide open views and scattering of mature trees. Throughout the summer and autumn in 2013 volunteers cleared stock fences, replaced other boundary fences, removed tyres, and mowed paths around the site. Old farm machinery and horse jumps were kept as features and permanent reminders of past usage.

Sharon Bayne produced a comprehensive planting scheme for native species: these included oak, ash, birch, cherry, hazel, field maple and hawthorn. The planting days were arranged for December 2013, two years after the southern boundary hedges had been planted. With good weather (for the time

of year), more than 80 families, friends and volunteers planted more than 500 whips and trees on Saturday 14 December and Tuesday 17 December. Carefully coded canes made it easier to follow the planting scheme, and within four days the area was transformed. The area has a mown path through the centre, and this will be retained as the whips mature.



The exceptionally wet winter has helped the whips, and by April/May 2014 they were all in bud and looking healthy.

The next phase of planting will be a smaller number of trees near the southern

boundary of the site, and is being planned for winter 2014. BWT has prepared a scheme and has submitted a grant application to the Tree Council. When we have more information we will post notices around the BWT site.



Memorial Bench for Pauline Moore

The photos below show the newly installed seat in honour of Pauline Moore. Pauline bequeathed 10 acres of land to BWT, and the Pride in Maidstone scheme provided the funds for this distinctive seat which is located in a prominent position above the former horses' sand school. Pictured centre behind the seat is Pauline's cousin, Captain Ian Bruce-Russell with other friends from BWT.

The bench has two inscriptions as follows:

“Pauline Moore generously donated this land to Bearsted Woodland Trust for the recreation and enjoyment of everyone”



...and also the words of Pauline herself:

“Oh what happy, happy days we had on this loved and treasured land.”

Hay-cutting 2014

BWT's Management Committee has agreed that we join RAMSAK (Ring of Agricultural Machinery in Sussex and Kent) an agricultural consortium which can provide machinery and expertise in hay-cutting and baling. At reasonable cost, BWT can be sure that the hay-cut in designated areas will be carried out at the appropriate time. All mowing will be in areas shown on the three-year plan.

Projects and Maintenance:

Autumn 2013-Spring 2014

The work is now managed by Jeff Winn, Peter Schmoeger and David Ward. The team comprises about 20 regular volunteers and occasional helpers from the community. During the winter we welcomed Robert Gingell and John Gregory as volunteers and both have been very active in helping with planned mowing and maintenance in line with the three-year plan 2012-2014.

Surprisingly, the ravages of winter left BWT barely touched by southerly gales and the sustained periods of torrential rain. It is at times like these that we learn much about our site and terrain, particularly drainage and impact of wind direction. Several large boughs were broken but we lost hardly any trees, although on the south-facing plateau near the Lilk Stream a spruce had to be winched back into an upright position and tethered with lines attached to soil anchors.

Other works and projects carried out include:

- Refurbishment of the Notice Board at the Church Landway entrance (to be followed by similar work on others)
- Hedge cutting along boundaries and on slopes near Gore Cottage
- Clearance of flood debris on several occasions from the Lilk Stream near the Ghurka's Bridge
- Planned coppicing of five trees behind the roller bench, logs being stored in piles for wildlife
- Maintenance of mowers, cutting blades and other equipment
- Clearance of debris from cut-off drains
- Regular renovation of bark paths by BWT and also by volunteers from Marriott Tudor Park and KCC
- Purchase and siting of the commemorative bench for Pauline Moore

Operation Pollinator – Marriott Tudor Park Golf Course

Staff from the Marriott Tudor Park Hotel have taken part in a number of team building days at BWT, helping with general maintenance including relaying of bark paths. BWT volunteers have in turn been involved in planting of a wildflower area on Tudor Park Golf Course, as part of a national initiative known as "Operation Pollinator". The overall purpose is to encourage bees and pollinating insects in the U.K. On the morning of 15 April, 10 volunteers helped spread the seed around specially prepared areas of the Golf Course. It will be a year or so before initial results may be seen.

Visit By Year 2 Thurnham CE Infant School

The annual visit by Year 2 pupils took place on the morning of 11 March 2014.

90 pupils, age six to seven years (and therefore born after BWT was formed) were led by class teachers, assistants and helpers after walking from school. Many had been to BWT before with families and friends, and they were keen to learn about trees,

wildlife and habitats. They saw coppicing of trees behind the roller bench, and from a safe distance they all shouted "timber" as a branch was brought down. Jeff Winn, Derek Hawkins and John Wale then led each class around the site, pointing out animal burrows and evidence, special trees, plant and wildlife display boards, and the goats in the sanctuary near the Lilk Stream. They formed a circle around the President's Tree, made a special stop at the "Thurnham School Tree" in Oak Avenue, and counted steps along the footpaths.



Back at school the children wrote lovely letters of appreciation to the volunteers giving their memories and favourite moments of the visit. They also used the information they had gleaned in the Year Group's submission to the Geographical Association. We await the outcome!

Treasurer: Bernard Head has been honorary treasurer of BWT since the charity was founded 10 years ago, and the time is approaching where he would like to gradually reduce his workload. We are therefore hoping to find from amongst the friends of BWT an accountant who would be prepared to assist Bernard in the short-term with a view to gradually taking over the role. If anyone would like to discuss this volunteering opportunity, please do call Bernard 739287 or Richard Ashness 734191.

DATE FOR THE DIARY: 28 June 2014
Bearsted and Thurnham Fayre

- BWT will be on the 2-pitch site near the Street
- Come and talk to our volunteers
- Renew your subscriptions
- Get your friends to take out Memberships – only £5!!

**TREES
AND BENCHES:**

David Ward reports that since January 2014 we have had seven tree sponsorships and two benches; we now make our own benches on site from prepared and pre-treated timber.

Kingfishers!!

During February there were 3 confirmed sightings of Kingfishers by different observers. These small, unmistakable bright blue and orange birds fly rapidly over slow-moving or still water and hunt for fish from riverside perches.

They were spotted flying upstream beyond the Ghurka's Bridge, two solo, and one pair. Additionally we have anecdotal information from a regular fisherman at Major's Lake that they have been seen perching on a fixed rod!

This is wonderful news, since Kingfishers are protected species. They are found by still or slow flowing water in lowland areas. It is likely that they have small nests in the sides of stream or river banks; the first clutch of six to seven eggs is laid in March/April, feeding on aquatic insects and fish.

Please keep a look-out near the Lilk and the River Len and let us know if you have any sightings.



Welcome to Roseacre Raiders Football Team!

Bearsted Parish Council and BWT have agreed that Roseacre Raiders Under-9 teams can use the leased football pitch on Saturday mornings. They will be the second team to make use of the space, the first being Bearsted Rangers Junior Teams who have played on Sundays since 2011. BWT is delighted that there is good use of this area, which is mown weekly during the summer period and as needed during winter; the moles are more non-committal - they just carry on... and on...)

Beaver Scouts Clear Rubbish

As part of their outdoor challenge badge, the beavers carried out a clean-up of the areas near to and including Bearsted Woodland Trust on 28 March; amazingly they collected 10 bags of litter! We attach a photo kindly provided by Dave Cakebread, their leader.



NEWSLETTERS Via E-MAIL:

IF YOU WOULD PREFER TO RECEIVE FUTURE NEWSLETTERS BY E-MAIL PLEASE LET OUR MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY CHRIS STREET KNOW, AND THIS CAN BE ARRANGED AT membership@bearstedwoodlandtrust.org

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