

## Visit from Year 2, Thurnham Infant School

The new Year 2 classes of Thurnham Infants visited the woodland earlier in the school year, and so we are featuring children's comments in two consecutive issues. John Wale, Jeff Winn and Derek Hawkins led the groups in September, and everyone enjoyed it very much.



These excerpts come from the children's thank you letters. We assure the children that all their letters will be read in full by the committee and the maintenance team, and all their questions will be answered, but we only have room for a selection here.

You made the woodland trust trip sound very, very, fun. **Rose**

The fallen down tree I thort it looked like an ice cream cone. **Bella**

And the rabbits. **Sophie**

I wish I coud live in the woodlentrust be cos it was amazing. **Maisie**

I also liked the slow worms as well even though we didn't see them. **Jacob**

The Thurnham School tree (at the north west end of Oak Avenue) was planted in December 2004, but we don't remember who planted it. The big turkey oak tree fell in a storm in October 2014. The goats are various ages from 6 to 15; one of the youngest, called Lucas, is the boss! Slow worms can be any age up to 20 years.

I liked learning about the different trees. **Briony**

I enjoyed the maze because it made me feel dizzy. **Rowan**

I licke the maze beacos I cood choos wich wai I can go. **Ella**

I liked the cising gate because one person cood go throu. **Sophia**

I would be intrested if you now how many years ago did the tree fall down it dose not matter you don't know? **Theo**

Who planted the thurnham school tree? **Oscar**

How old are the goats and the slow worms? **Evelyn**

# Our first Treasurer, Bernard Head



Bernard was one of the early forces behind BWT, being a trustee, treasurer, and active management committee member. He did an enormous amount of work for the Trust, but for him it was just one of a series of volunteer roles he undertook in the service of his community. He was also involved in many other clubs, charities and community organisations.

The Trust was particularly lucky to benefit from Bernard's expertise in charity matters where he ensured that compliance was of the highest order. He kept charge of our finances with great skill and enthusiasm and the strong financial position of the Trust is testament to his abilities. It wasn't just the bookkeeping, but also the passion for boosting our finances via fund raising, grant submissions, seeking legacies and making gift aid reclaims.

In addition to offering specific skills in finance and charity matters, Bernard provided very wise council to the Management Committee, often correctly reigning in those of us with a more gung-ho approach!

Bernard died in July 2015 following the slow decline of his physical capabilities brought on by motor neurone disease. To the end his brain remained razor sharp and he continued to act as our Treasurer until a few weeks before his death. We shall miss him greatly.

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## Wooden animals to be carved in the big fallen oak tree

After careful research and thought, BWT has commissioned a tree artist to create animals and birds within the fallen oak on the south side of Moore Meadow in Bernard's memory.

The work will be carried out by Steve Andrews, from Canterbury, who has been doing chainsaw wood carving since 2011, and has already carved larger sculptures for Barton's Point at Sheerness, and Ellington Park, Ramsgate.

For our tree Steve is going to create woodland animals and birds (in realistic style like this hegehog) within the trunk and branches of the oak, which will be left in-situ. The work will begin in early



November, so may be finished before this newsletter reaches you.

# Our 2015 Annual Meeting

37 members attended the annual meeting on Sunday 27th September at Bearsted Bowls Club. The trust has 1177 family memberships including 458 life memberships. 70 annual membership renewals were awaited.

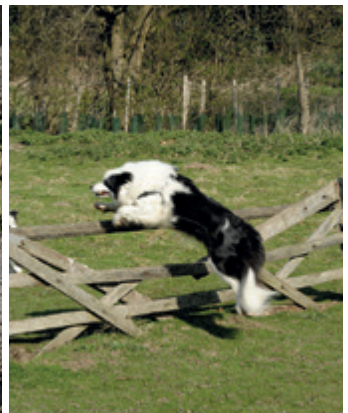
The annual accounts for the year ending in June 2015 have, as usual, been approved by an independent examiner.

Acting Treasurer, Richard Ashness began by paying tribute to the sterling work of the late Bernard Head, Treasurer since 2004, who will be greatly missed. He went on to report that the income from membership and sponsored trees and benches continued to cover running costs, and although the necessary resurfacing of Willson Avenue was a major

capital expenditure resulting in an in-year deficit of £6,705 and bank interest rates are still low, the trust still has satisfactory reserves for any unforeseen maintenance costs or emergencies in the future.

The Deputy Chairman reported that, after a great deal of form filling to prove that we satisfied all conditions, we were awarded a Green Flag again in 2015, achieving the highest category for the fifth consecutive year.

After some discussion from the floor about "Access for All" it was decided that, since the new restricted area (where owners are asked to keep their dogs on leads) had only been marked with gates and notices for under a year, it was too early to assess the effects of the scheme.



## The new dogs on leads area

We are very grateful to all our members and visitors who put their dogs on leads in the newly designated area inside the clearly marked gates, to avoid accidents with fragile, very young or vulnerable walkers. Dogs can of course be let loose on the remaining large area, where, as you can see, some enjoy climbing trees and others soar over Pauline's old pony jump!

# Maintenance during 2015

Our team of 24 maintenance volunteers, working on three mornings every week, have continued to follow Sharon's 3 year plan cutting grass, trimming hedges, repairing fences, improving drainage and surfacing paths with wood chip when necessary. We are very lucky to have so many regular volunteers, and you will be able to read more about them in our Spring issue next year.



## Tree plaques

The committee have decided that plaques for trees will be changed from labels on posts to new ones fixed to the tree itself. This makes grass cutting under a tree much easier, and removes damp and rotting posts. It can only be done when the trunk has a diameter of approximately 8 inches, so the new scheme has been started in Oak Avenue. You will see more and more of the new plaques as time goes on.

# The Hay Cut of 2015

Hay cutting has, yet again, proved to be a headache. For 2015, instead of paying a contractor and missing the best cutting weather because he was busy elsewhere, we decided to borrow equipment from the Medway Valley Countryside Partnership (who have recently bought a tractor with a cutter, rake and baler) and cut the hay ourselves. After a demonstration, we managed (with difficulties) to transport the equipment, but found it needed constant minor repairs. Finally, after a week of very hard work, we managed to cut and bale three of our five hay meadows. But the whole process was far from easy, and we are looking at other cutting possibilities for next year.



Most of our hay was collected by the Buttercups goat sanctuary. Mr and Mrs Browne had some for their goats next door. Cobtree Young Farmers took some as well, and made us a donation of £40.

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## New gates at Roundwell

The double gates into Moore Meadow from Roundwell have been moved in by 5 metres to enable safe access (while turning off the road) for maintenance vehicles when necessary. A new pedestrian gate has been added beside them, and this entrance is now well used!



# Facts about the Goats near the Lilk Bridge, and Leo our own Goat (for a year)

We sent about 130 bales of hay to the Buttercups goat sanctuary at Boughton Monchelsea, who were very grateful. They told us it will feed their 150 goats for a month and save the charity £240.

As a mark of their gratitude we have been officially appointed guardians, for one year, of Leo, a long haired pygmy goat. And we have an adoption certificate which lasts until July 2016.

If any reader is visiting Buttercups, at Wierton Hall, before next July, they will be sure to introduce you to Leo (below) if you tell them you belong to the Bearsted Woodland Trust!



Thurnham school children asked us to tell them more about the goats by the Lilk bridge owned or adopted by Mr and Mrs Browne, so here is what Mrs Browne has written for them.

## GOAT FACTS

We foster three brownish Toggenberg goats with white markings on their faces and legs for Buttercups. They came originally from a city farm in London, and are aged about 11 or 12.

- Cassie (floppy ears, big stomach) and her sister,
- Honeybun (blue collar, long feathers on her back legs).
- Sophie (looks like Honeybun but no feathers).

We also foster two pigmy goats, brothers, aged about 6.

- Lucas is brown and white, very round, and rules the herd.
- Felix, black-and-white, medium round, is a little bit lame, but can still run up and down the hills.

Latest arrivals a few weeks ago are two more pigmies, possibly as old as 15, also fostered for Buttercups.

- Jack - brown and white, and his sister,
- Jill, white with splotches. She has tiny little legs, and says our hills are a bit steep.

# Old Farm Machinery in Moore Meadow

Following the success of our roller seat near the Church Landway entrance, and the kissing gate above the fishing lake we have arranged, and safely secured, the old farm machinery in Moore Meadow as a further historic feature. The most elegant piece is a Bamford's horse rake. Bearsted people who lived in Sutton Street between the wars remember it being used, and it would be wonderful if

anyone still owns an old photo. The rake was made by Bamfords International Farm Machinery, founded in 1871 at Uttoxeter in Staffordshire by Henry Bamford, great grandfather of Joseph Cyril Bamford of JCB. Bamfords were one of the country's major agricultural equipment suppliers, and they made hay rakes of this design, designed to be pulled by one horse, in the late 19th century.



## Reptiles from Dartford

The slow worms which the children didn't manage to see were some lizards and slow worms made homeless by new buildings near Dartford. They travelled to Bearsted in cardboard boxes in August, and were released at the Roundwell end of Moore Meadow, where the terrain is most suitable for them, and we hope they will flourish.

# Common Ivy, an under-rated asset!

Our Bearsted woodland has been planted to provide plenty of berries to feed wildlife in the colder weather. Many are more colourful, so we might forget that the berries of common ivy provide essential food for a variety of birds. Also, ivy flowers late, in September and October. The flowers in small green clusters (found on mature plants) are not showy, but they provide a boost of

nectar just when other plants are setting seed. This is important for honey bees, which are suffering high rates of decline. A recent study by the University of Sussex found that over 80% of both pollen and nectar collected by honey bees in early autumn was from ivy plants. If you want to give an extra life-line to our honey bees, allow more ivy to mature and flower, instead of tidying it away.



- **Ivy berries ripen November to January, providing bird food in the most severe winter months**
- **Ivy doesn't directly damage healthy trees and it provides hiding, roosting, hibernating and nesting places for various animals, birds and insects during the winter. The Royal Horticultural Society suggests leaving growing ivy on trees for its wildlife benefit.**
- **As a woodland ground cover plant, ivy reduces frost and helps woodland creatures to continue to forage in leaf litter.**
- **But please note that all parts of the plant are toxic to humans.**

We are grateful to John Wale for all his work on the last ten issues of this newsletter in addition to his other activities for the trust, and for Thurnham School. He remains Deputy Chairman as well as a member of the maintenance team. Thank you, John!

Your newsletter (Issue 28) has been brought to you by Mitchell Media UK Ltd.

Further information about the trust can be found at [www.bearstedwoodlandtrust.org](http://www.bearstedwoodlandtrust.org)

Please forward your feedback and comments to [editor@bearstedwoodlandtrust.org](mailto:editor@bearstedwoodlandtrust.org)

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