



Dependable Volunteers who keep our BWT land in good shape

Our maintenance volunteers are mostly men and mostly retired. As well as a fair number of engineers, others used to teach or work in food buying, banking, insurance, surveying and accounting. They all agree that they joined the team for healthy outdoor exercise (cheaper than a gym!) and to make a contribution to a beautiful local amenity enjoyed by people of all ages.

“Everyone gets on so well and there is an amazing rapport within the team. At times, it may seem a bit like “Last of the Summer Wine”, but I think we are less accident prone and far more productive!”

You may see the teams out working on Tuesdays, Wednesdays or Thursdays. Most of them give BWT one day of their valuable time, some do two or three, but

they all work on extra days when needed. They enjoy learning to drive the tractor, and other new skills, and being able to see the results of their work, which was not always so easy in their earlier careers.

“Many of the people I first started with are no longer with us, but as I work around the trust I remember tasks and jobs we did together, so they are never forgotten.”

Hazards have included wasp stings, bumps, bruises, scratches, the occasional friendly insult, bonfire spark holes in clothes, and even a singed fringe (for a female volunteer - fringes are rare among the men) - but those haven't put anyone off! You can see a larger version of this photo, complete with names, on the BWT website.

Stewardship of BWT's Trees

As well as advising about new planting, BWT's Adviser Sharon Bayne trains our maintenance teams to look after our existing trees of all types and sizes. Some coppicing has been done in the woodland behind the roller seat, but there are other problems to be considered.

The Orchard near the Maze: In Spring 2016 Malcolm Withnall kindly pruned fruit trees near the maze, and he has also provided us with valuable advice. Malcolm, whom you may have heard on the loudspeakers at Bearsted Fayre, is an apple expert; a distinguished writer of fruit industry books. He says that, since most of the original BWT land was orchard, the apple canker they suffer from will have been caught from older trees now gone.

BWT policy is organic, so we cannot spray to ameliorate the disease, which will eventually kill them, although substantial mulching around healthy trees may give them longer life. The Committee have invited Malcolm to be "Hon. Orchard Manager," a new role, which he has accepted.



BWT Ash Trees: The ash tree that snapped recently in strong winds had been rotten for some time and probably wasn't affected by Ash dieback disease. Ash dieback (*Chalara*) is being monitored by DEFRA and has been found in the Ashford area with isolated outbreaks nearer to Maidstone.

It is too soon yet to know how many BWT trees might be affected, but we shall be inspecting and mapping all our ashes when the leaves come out, to help compile Maidstone Council's map of infected trees.

Walking a Dog on BWT land

Our 2014 survey revealed that a large number of people want to be able to visit BWT without fear of unwanted approaches from dogs. Since the publication of the survey results we have engaged in a great deal of consultation with dog walkers, but have not received any proposals which would resolve this issue other than a dogs on leads zone. However, our request that dogs be kept on a lead on 40% of Trust land has been widely ignored.



Our founders donated the land as green space for the whole community and we are determined to do our utmost to provide safe access for everyone. We remain open to any alternative proposals which achieve this, but in the absence of such proposals, we will seek ways of making the dogs on leads zone effective. If efforts to achieve voluntary compliance fail, there is the possibility of requesting

MBC to put in place a Public Space Protection Order. This would lead to a public consultation and if the order were put in place officers from MBC and KCC assisting with enforcement.

In the meantime, the northern edge of Church Meadow has been fenced to create an off-leads avenue from the Church car park down to the lake.

BWT's first Guided Wildlife Walk

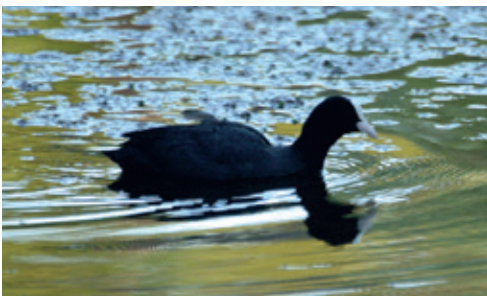


In the evening on 4th May thirteen BWT members joined in an experimental guided wildlife walk organised by Deputy Chairman John Wale. Our leader was Simon Ginnaw, whose grandfather, Ranger of Mote Park, often took him on his inspections. Simon, who told us he was hooked on the Collins Bird Guide aged 3 and given his first pair of binoculars when he was 6, also has impeccable qualifications from Imperial College. We began by stopping to listen

to birdsong, identifying song thrushes, robins, blackbirds and woodpeckers by their different calls.

Down by Major's Lake we watched for and saw an early (because hungry) pipistrelle bat, a wren, coots and a coot nest. In Moore Meadow we admired the fresh beech leaves and blossom, and discussed the age of the fallen turkey oak (probably over 400 years) before learning that its dead branches shelter and feed innumerable beetles and other insects. One beetle spends nine years as a grub and a mere two months as a beetle!

Near Roundwell we learnt that the British Isles boast 30% of Europe's bluebells, probably because wild boar (who love eating the sweet bulbs) are extinct here. Badgers like bluebell bulbs too, and in medieval times they were used as



glue in bookbinding. In Rider's Wood we discovered that very large molehills mark maternity chambers underneath whereas the normal sized one merely indicate tunnels. On our return walk we saw Herring gulls flying to the Medway estuary and a heron returning from fishing to its roost in a tree.

It was brilliant to have the opportunity of learning what to look out for, ask questions galore, and actually see on our

own doorstep (and understand too) all manner of wildlife. The editor, who would have missed out on more than half those sights in the past, is going to enjoy her walks very much more in future!

We plan to arrange more guided walks, so if you are a BWT member and interested in joining one, please email us from our website www.bearstedwoodlandtrust.org. And watch our nature notes forum as well.

The Wise Old Owl of Thurnham School

Since Steve Andrews carved our fallen turkey oak, he has completed a sculpture for Brenchley and Matfield Primary School and made a big crocodile horse jump for the Chilham Park cross country course. Meanwhile BWT asked him to carve this owl for Thurnham Infant School. The poem on the books he is sitting on runs:

*"A wise old owl sat in an oak;
The more he heard the less he
spoke; the less he spoke, the more
he heard; Why aren't we all like that
wise old bird?"*

Thank you letters from the school can be seen on our BWT website, but here are three of the children's comments:

Jacob wrote

*"Thank you for the brilliant owl.
I like the way the stiky up ears
stik up;"*

Rose wrote

*"I like the way the top book
stikes out"*

and Bella wrote

*"We thought the person who
carved it should have 3 claps!"*

We agree with the children, and Steve is coming back to enhance the broken Ash in Moore Meadow very soon.



The Mote Estate; History from Kate Kersey

Much of the land owned by Bearsted Woodland Trust, which has changed hands many times, once belonged to Leeds Priory, and was known as the manor of Mote. During Henry VIII's reign, the lands passed to the Dean and Chapter of Rochester Cathedral, who leased the property to generate an income.

In the reign of Mary I, George Stonehouse from Milgate (Clerk of the Green Cloth in charge of the monarch's household accounts) was granted a lease on a larger parcel of lands which included the manor of Mote.

Church Farm was part of that manor, and this sketch shows the farm buildings with Holy Cross in the background, around 1844.



Reproduced courtesy of Bearsted & District Local History Society.

After leasing Church Farm to several prominent local families for 350 years, the Dean and Chapter of Rochester sold in 1885. Herbert Sankey of Margate bought it, but only stayed for 5 years. At the date of the 1890 sale it comprised ninety three acres, and a great number of associated buildings including some land behind Mote Hall Villas, a brickyard at Roundwell, and an oast house with eight kilns which still exists by Bearsted Green today. Barely three years later, Walter Fremlin bought Church Farm and it is believed that he re-named it "Mote Hall".

In 1930, theatre director Sir Gordon Craig, son of architect Edward Godwin and the actress Ellen Terry, became the new owner of Mote Hall. He enjoyed Bearsted life, but before long sold to Lt Commander Richard Jessel RN and his wife Winnie. They changed the name back to "Mote House" and stayed until 1952. Other owners since then have included the Coss, Ireland-Blackburne and Sparkes families.

Handsome Donation from Beaton Family

The Beaton family, Malcolm and Jean and their daughters Hannah and Eve, who have lived in Hill Brow since the 1970s, have all supported and appreciated BWT. So, for his 70th Birthday in 2013 Malcolm Beaton's wife Jean, Hannah and Eve gave him a silver birch in Barn Meadow. And soon afterwards, Malcolm (who had trained at Camberwell Art College and was an inspired water-colourist) painted this view of it. Sadly, it was to be one of his last paintings, and now very precious, because he died very suddenly in October 2014.



Just over a year later, at Eve's wedding, Jean was to be surprised, and deeply moved, by the news (a surprise at the wedding reception) that her new son-in-law was going to auction two tickets for the X-Factor final and donate the proceeds to BWT in Malcolm's name! Jean is delighted that the family were able to donate £1800 to BWT in December 2015, as an extra contribution to the woodland, such an important resource in Bearsted, that her husband loved so much.

NATURE NOTES:

Look out for bats if your walk is early or late. Pipistrelles can be spotted on our land. They hibernate all winter, coming out in warm weather in May, and can be seen at dusk and dawn. The Daubentons bat also flies during the day. There are 1100 species of bat in the world, which means that no less than a quarter of all mammal species are bats! We only have 18 species in England, 13 of which live in Kent. The Kent Bat Group would like to hear from anyone who sees a bat.

There is plenty of ragwort in Moore Meadow, which may be covered in the gold and black striped Cinnabar Moth caterpillars when the flowers are out. Ragwort is poisonous to animals and birds, so the caterpillars and moths (also poisonous) are protected from being eaten.

Our new website includes a Nature Notes forum, so that Members of BWT can share their sightings with all. Please have a look and email us if you would like to contribute!

DIARY DATES:

Do come and visit our BWT stand at the Bearsted and Thurnham Fayre during the afternoon of Saturday 25 June 2016. You can buy souvenirs, sign up for the nature notes forum on our new website, or renew your membership.

BWT's Annual General Meeting this year will be held on Sunday 2nd October 2016 at 2.30pm in the clubhouse of Bearsted Bowls Club, opposite our main entrance in Church Landway.

The bar will be available from 2.00pm. Anyone interested in joining the

Management Committee is very welcome to contact the Chairman for an informal discussion. Formally, any nominations for new candidates should be sent to the Deputy Chairman at least 10 days before the meeting.

Up to the minute news and a great deal of further information about Bearsted Woodland Trust can be found at www.bearstedwoodlandtrust.org which now has a members-only nature notes forum.

The website contact page is the easiest way to send us messages!

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Further information about the trust can be found at www.bearstedwoodlandtrust.org

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

If you would prefer to receive this newsletter by email please contact membership@bearstedwoodlandtrust.org

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