



Delivering our news to your homes

BWT has 1,180 family memberships. Our 40 plus volunteer newsletter distributors walk up to the top of steep hills and down to the bottom of shady dips, coping with all types of letter box. Even the posting provides “keep fit” bends as boxes come at all levels from knee height to upwards stretch! Gloves are a help as protection from the springs and brushes (to keep out the draughts) which tear newsletters and pinch fingers. A small stick is a useful tool to hold a box open while carefully sliding the paper through!

Allowing for the fact that 48 families (9 of them abroad) choose digital newsletters by email, the delivery team are chiefly struck by the many houses where we don't deliver, in between the ones belonging to members.

If your neighbours live in one of those houses that don't have a newsletter... do encourage them become members!

We deliver on foot to the whole of Bearsted, Bearsted Park, Grove Green and Downswood; about 900 homes divided into 28 rounds. 22 members of our team (at least three of them in their 80s) have been delivering since 2005! If they all wore pedometers all the time we'd have even more zeros to print on these statistics.

BWT (and especially Chris Street who masterminds the deliveries) thank them all for being so reliable, and never grumbling, in all weathers! To see a larger version of our group photo (with names of the whole team, present and absent) look at our website.

Headlines from the 2016 AGM

Our AGM was attended by 63 people, including trustees, management committee and BWT members.

Full minutes of the meeting can be found on our website.

- Another successful year, with **audited accounts** showing a surplus of £14,714; costs were kept to a minimum through efforts of volunteers.
- **Capital expenditure** of £1809 was for Steve Andrews's well received woodland sculptures, dedicated to the memory of BWT's much loved former treasurer, Bernard Head.
- **Maintenance** and projects were influenced by the very wet spring and long dry summer; work centred the three-year Plan, with mowing, strimming, in designated areas, path maintenance, and improved drainage at the eastern end of Willson Avenue. Staff from the Marriott Tudor Park had helped to plant trees in Moore Meadow in June. The steps from Old Avenue to the Lilk Valley had been renovated to make access easier.
- The **Hay Cut** had been carried out efficiently by a local farmer, and 404 bales of hay were collected by Buttercups Goat Sanctuary.
- A steady turnover on **Trees and Benches** had generated income of £7000, with 13 new life memberships. With remaining space at a premium, new areas were being looked at within our land. Six additional picnic benches were on order.
- BWT now has 1180 Family **Memberships**, including 482 Life Memberships.
- BWT's visit by a Green Flag Judge in June had resulted in a **Community Award** within the highest category, 85% plus; this referred to the hard work and careful planning which goes in to our site.
- The **Management Committee** were all reappointed.
- The Deputy Chairman gave an update on **Access for All** and referred to the deep differences in views which exist between some dog walkers and the Trust. The additional off leads channel opposite the Elizabeth Harvie Field had been installed following a suggestion in March from Maidstone Borough Council. Repeater notices reminding walkers of the code had been subject to criminal damage and theft. A founder trustee gave a detailed personal statement setting out the rationale for the present code; this was followed by extensive and wide ranging comments and questions. It was clear that this issue is a cause of sadness and concern to everyone present.

The Green Man

In May Steve Andrews, who created the birds and animals on our turkey oak, returned to carve an ash tree that had snapped in a recent storm. Watching Steve at work is fascinating, because the dead (but not seasoned) wood he is working on is so unpredictable. After sketching his design on the surface, he cuts deeper with a small chain saw, and if he hits a soft patch the design has to be adapted! Our wooden Green Man is much admired. Although he can hardly last as long as the leaf-clad stone statue of Dionysus in Naples, dating back to about 420 BC, we hope he continues to brighten our walks for many decades.



Popular Dog Show in our main field

Maidstone Borough Council organised a dog show in our main field in June. It was very popular, with a good selection of doggie stalls, an agility course, and numerous entries in the competitions, which included fancy dress. BWT were grateful for a donation of £178.50 afterwards.



Bearsted Fayre and a successful raffle



BWT have occupied a stall at Bearsted Fayre for 11 years now, and the committee, having learnt that making an early start is essential, begin setting it up at 08.30. Two canvas gazebos allowed space for the sale of souvenirs and raffle tickets, renewal of subscriptions and display of photographs. The only problem occurred around lunchtime when a sudden downpour caused water to leak through the gap, but the display boards were quickly moved, and later the sun reappeared.

This year we were joined by Claire Browne with her beautifully presented nature table to launch the nature notes section on our new website.

We also displayed and raffled a beautiful wooden platter made by Rod Litherland, a member of the Kent Woodturners who lives in Bearsted. Rod turned the dish from a piece of the fallen turkey oak, and generously gave it to BWT to raise funds. In spite of the rain the raffle attracted so much notice that we sold £145 worth of tickets.





The winners were Glenn and Deborah Wilkins of Thurnham Lane, who came to the Fayre specifically to find the BWT stall and join the Friends! Having added 15 tickets to their first subscription, they were delighted with their “beginners’ luck” and hope that it might encourage new Friends! You can see more of Rod’s work at the Oad Street Craft Centre and the Kent Woodturners’ sales at Aylesford Priory.

Local charities working together

Buttercups goats love our gourmet hay, and we sent them another 400 bales this year. Stable Manager, Sam, tells us that it is very fresh, green and sweet-smelling with a lot of seed heads in it, which is very nourishing. Goats are very selective eaters, and prefer our hay to less delicious bales from elsewhere, so most of ours is saved for winter months when the grass outside is sparse. But the elderly goats are allowed it all the time, in



the peace and quiet of their own sheds, away from naughty younger competitors who push and shove to steal the best bits. Buttercups keep about 140 goats at Wierton and place the same number out in foster homes. They need about 2,000 bales of hay a year at a cost of £3.50 a bale, and since their only funds come from private donations, they are very grateful for the “free bales”.

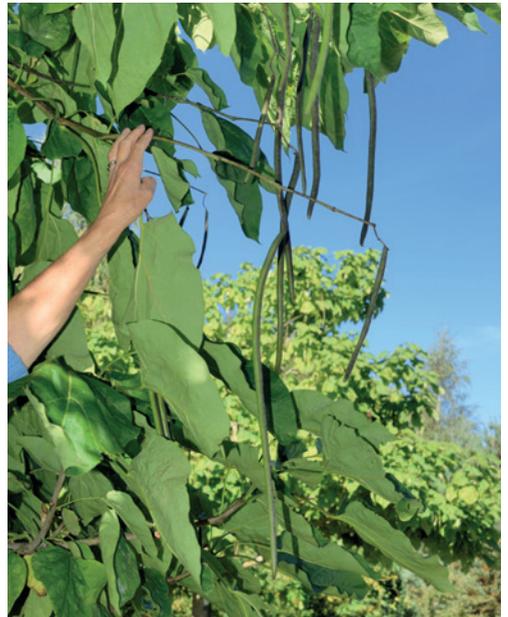
Indian Bean Trees near the roller bench



Back in 2005, in our second planting phase, no fewer that seven Indian Bean Trees were sponsored, one of them by children of Madginford Park Juniors. So it's very appropriate that children of Thurnham School, on their annual tour of BWT in September, were especially intrigued with this year's magnificent bean crop; "How long do the Indian beans get?" asked Ezra. Pretty long.

The longest bean in this photo is about 13 inches. However, they are definitely NOT edible. The roots of this tree are poisonous and the flowers apparently have a horrid smell, so it is best to admire it, at all seasons, from a safe distance! You can read more of the delightful comments the children made in their thank-you letters on our website.

Catalpa Bignonioides, a North American species, produces showy flowers after about three years, and beans after about five, but their wood is quite soft, which is why our largest specimen has needed support. The large leaves are popular with birds, providing them with good shelter from rain and wind.



The Church Landway by Kate Kersey

It wasn't until the early 1980s that Church Landway, originally a private track leading from Ashford Road to Holy Cross church, became the area we know today, which has very recently been enhanced with taller lights.

For many years this part of Bearsted was orchard, once farmed by the Terry family. In the 1970s, it had become neglected, and on warm summer nights it was a popular, unofficial, meeting place for groups of teenagers to sit around chatting over bottles of White's lemonade from the off-licence at the Yeoman shops. Then Bearsted Parish Council bought it, with some land on its western side, and turned part of the land into allotments. But what was to be done with the rest?



View of the Church Landway looking towards Holy Cross, showing the new, taller lights installed in Summer 2016.

amount of dedicated fundraising, the Scout Group moved into their first purpose-built hut. They were followed, next door, by the Girl Guides who opened their permanent headquarters on 31 January 1993. A few apple trees from the original orchard can still be spotted in the Scouts' and Guides' areas!

A survey by Bearsted & Thurnham Residents' Association indicated that there was great interest in setting up a new tennis club, so the parish council leased some of the land to Bearsted and Thurnham Lawn Tennis Club which officially opened in September 1979. In 1982 Bearsted and Thurnham Bowls Club also started leasing land, and their green was officially opened in June 1983, with a pavilion building in May 1987.

Bearsted Scout Group (founded in 1912) had met in several locations in the village, including Plantation Lane and The Glebe. On 11 June 1988 after signing a lease with the Parish Council, and an enormous



NATURE NOTES:

Do you know who made these holes in the sand bank?

The answer to the mystery photo is on our website's nature notes page, and we are looking for more contributors!

Such pages always take time to get going, but it is good to have somewhere we can all access, to share our sightings of wildlife on BWT land with other visitors.

Any member of the Friends can contribute to our notes, and logging in is very easy. So far topics include flowers, birds, caterpillars, bats, mice, toadstools and seasonal things to look out for on your walk.

DIARY DATE:

On 5th March 2017 BWT will be helping yet another charity when the Stroke Association organise a "Resolution Run" entirely on our land. They will map out a 5km route and runners can choose to complete 1, 2 or 3 laps. You can run, jog or walk the route - Resolution Runs are for everyone! Check our website for information if you want to run, watch or visit the various stalls on the day.

Editor: Judy Buckley Design: Paul J Street Printed by Reed Printers, Rochester

Judy thanks Claire Browne, Michael Buckley, Kate Kersey, Chris Street and John Wale for help with this issue.

www.bearstedwoodlandtrust.org has a contact form to use if you wish to receive your newsletters by email, send comments or get in touch with us easily for any reason.

Telephone **07807 917533** Please leave your name, number and message, and we'll return your call.

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