

Roller Bench Wood



In February and early March this year our maintenance volunteers undertook a major refurbishment of the area now known as Roller Bench Wood, which was probably self-sown in the 1980s. BWT aims to keep this area mixed native woodland, but hawthorn has been taking over. This year's project involved the removal of a lot of hawthorn and other bushes that, over the years, despite clearing in 2008, have become unmanageable. We have also removed several diseased silver birches that were severely damaged by Wards before BWT took over.

Peter Schmoeger, our chainsaw expert, worked very hard on the tree surgery. Smaller branches, miscellaneous twigs and undergrowth were burnt, and two

tidy piles of wood have been left for essential creepy crawlies to feel at home in. The two large areas cleared within the wood have been planted with fifty "whips" (seedlings up to five feet) of mixed varieties including Oak, Beech, Rowan, Field Maple and Silver Birch. Existing older trees should now be able to prosper, and we hope bluebells will flourish in the extra light.

New tree barked paths have been created to provide an enjoyable meander through a more inviting woodland walk. Once this area was orchard, but only one apple survives, near the roller bench. It is about 80 years old, but was not part of the original orchard. If you look carefully it has no graft, so must have seeded itself.

The Terry Family Fruit Farm

In the early 1930s Frank and Ellen Terry moved from Wyatt Street in Maidstone to Bearsted in a horse and cart to work 15 acres of orchard, rented from the Jessells, the owners of Mote House. They lived at 159 Ashford Road at the end of the Church Landway for the rest of their lives.

By 1939 their younger son Douglas was helping them. During WW2 a young Roy Datson from the Old Bakery in Bearsted Street took some apples home. "Where did you get those?" asked his father, who was ARP Warden, "You've been scrumping!" "No, I haven't." "Yes you have, because I've just seen Mr Terry and he recognised you!" It's good to report that Roy has now repaid that small debt by volunteering for BWT!



Frank and Ellen Terry celebrated their Golden Wedding in 1958.

After service in the Royal Artillery in France, Doug came home to work with his father, and married Irene Shoebridge in 1946. In 1947, admiring the new MG TC sports car at Haynes in Mill Street, he told a friend "if we have a bumper apple crop this year I'm going to buy one of those!" And he did, although petrol was still rationed.

Frank bought the land which they were renting in 1952. It was bounded by the Church Landway, Mote Hall garden, the footpath from the church to Majors Lakes, and the back fences of the gardens of houses in the Ashford Road. Most of it was planted with old Bramley apple trees planted 9 metres apart, and the grass between them was grazed by sheep belonging to a local farmer. The Terrys also grew runner beans (on wires) and raspberries (on hoops about 5ft 6 in high) and strawberries, both in the open and in



cloches. All the produce (except that sold straight from the nursery) was collected daily for the London market.

Doug's nephew, Rob Naylor, who used to help pick and pack fruit in his school holidays, says what great fun his aunt and uncle used to be, and how fond they were of their Miniature Schnauzers, Emma and Sophie, who were well known in Bearsted. In 1983 Doug helped found Bearsted Bowls Club to whom he gave a cup. He was a keen bowler and Rene used to send delicious cakes for club teas, and ring a loud bell to summon him if he was late going home.



After Frank died in 1984, Doug concentrated mainly on apples, then, aged 63, decided to sell up and retire. Since we joined the EU in 1973 imported apples had been flooding the market, new varieties grown on dwarfing stock were taking over and nobody wanted old Bramleys on a mere 15 acres. Only a developer would buy a plot that size with no planning permission or public access, in an area where housing was desperately needed. It wasn't long before the Terry orchard, part of Wards land bank, was as sadly derelict as the area west of the Church Landway had been in 1974 when the Parish Council purchased it. But now it has been saved, and at the end of the Oak Avenue (at the southeast corner of what used be their land) a tree donated by Rene's sister Barbara remains to commemorate the happy days of the Terry fruit farm in Bearsted.

New 2017 Dogs Policy at BWT

Over the years BWT has struggled to come up with a policy which meets the needs of both dog walkers and those who wish to visit the site without unwanted approaches by dogs. The policy of designating part of the site a 'dogs on leads' area has not worked, because many dog walkers have refused to adhere to the rule and BWT does not have powers of enforcement.

The Management Committee has therefore decided that in future the policy

will be to request all dog owners to keep their dog on a lead, unless they are certain that it will not approach others. Logically this policy will apply, not just in one area, but throughout the site.

This will mean that owners of well behaved dogs are not restricted and we hope that they will join us in ensuring that dogs which are not well controlled are kept on a lead so that all site users can enjoy their visits to BWT.



Management Committee Changes

John Wale and Sharon Bayne will co- chair the Management Committee from this summer. Judy Buckley, newsletter editor and website coordinator, will join the Committee, as will Adrian Bouwens who has been a maintenance volunteer for several years. Richard Ashness will no longer be a Committee member, but will continue to act as Treasurer until a replacement is found.

Stepping Logs with Woodland Pictures

Last month Steve Andrews (who carved the trees in Moore Meadow) returned to engrave some wooden stepping logs with insect and animal pictures. They will soon be fixed securely in a suitable arrangement on the path through the ancient woodland near the Maze. The stepping logs have been funded

by a donation from the Barnes family in memory of Nicole who died aged 13 in 2008. Nicole was at Thurnham and Roseacre schools, so it is especially appropriate that the logs will be enjoyed by all children and also groups of pupils from those schools on their regular visits.



Abandoned Charity Run was successful in Mote Park

The Stroke Association run on BWT land which was cancelled after heavy rain in March was finally held in Mote Park on 30th April. Everyone who had registered to run at BWT was automatically entered with the same number on their purple shirts, so they just needed to turn up. 240 runners raised £18,000!

Roseacre Raiders

Roseacre Raiders formed a new Under-10 team last summer, and they play all their home matches on the pitch in Main Field. The Under-9 team also use our football pitch for training and to play their home matches in the Maidstone Invicta Primary League. Over the summer the pitch will also be used for friendlies, until the league starts again. The Club is very grateful for the work of the BWT maintenance team on the pitch, and visiting teams have admired our lovely, scenic venue!



The Under-10s team on the roller bench. Photo courtesy of Roseacre Raiders

Bearsted Churches Easter Egg Hunt

Around 215 children, with their of parents, took part in the ninth Bearsted Area Churches Together Easter Egg Hunt, and someone commented that it was “a Proper Community Event.” It’s a chance for people from all or no church to get together, get out and explore our Bearsted Woodland (looking particularly fine with the new leaves and blossom), consider the meaning of Easter through the clues set out, enjoy being together and meet others over a cup of tea at the end.

Plants of the Sandy Banks by Sharon Bayne

Not only are the mounds of white silica sand in Moore Meadow a fascinating geological feature, they are home to plant species which are not found elsewhere at BWT.

The soils on the sandy outcrop are very thin and lying over pure sand means they are also very free draining and consequently very dry. The soil throughout Moore Meadow is acidic and the soil on the sandy banks is no exception. This makes conditions for plants on the sandy banks quite hostile, but it does mean that a few specialised plants can grow.

Gardeners will be familiar with some of the acid-loving plants which can tolerate the conditions, such as broom and gorse, but you will need to get down on your hands and knees to spot others. One is the diminutive changing forget-me-not (*Myosotis discolor*). The flowers of this pretty little forget-me-not open from May onwards and change from yellow to blue, but you will need to look closely as they are only 2mm across. The plant can grow to 20cm but does not reach anywhere near this height on the sand banks. You can also find sheeps sorrel *Rumex acetosella* which is another smaller version of the common docks which plague farmers' fields. It can be used in salads, but the choice is yours as one of its common names is sour weed!



Photos (from top to bottom)

1. *Myosotis discolor* by Harry Rose

2. *Myosotis discolor* by Tico

3. Sheeps Sorrel by Leslie Seaton



MYSTERY PHOTO

Do you know which tree these seed pods belong to?

The answer is on our website homepage.

DIARY DATES:

Saturday 24 June 2017

Come and visit our BWT stand at the Bearsted and Thurnham Fayre during the afternoon. You can buy souvenirs, sign up to contribute nature notes on our website, or renew your membership.

Sunday 1st October 2017

The Annual General Meeting this year will be held at 2.30 pm in the clubhouse of Bearsted Bowls Club, opposite our main entrance in Church Landway. The bar will be available from 2.00 pm.

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

Judy thanks the Naylor family, John Baxter, Claire Browne, Michael Buckley, Odysseus Hadjiphanis, Kate Kersey and Chris Street for help with this issue.

Up to date news and further information about Bearsted Woodland Trust can be found at www.bearstedwoodlandtrust.org which now has a members-only nature notes page.

The website contact page is the easiest way to send us messages or to request this newsletter by email.

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

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