

Sadlers Wells Community Woodland

Registered Charity Number 1105117



Supported by the
Heritage Lottery Fund

Newsletter No. 17 – Autumn 2014

Recent News

1. We had our usual stall on Village Day and we are pleased to say that it was very successful. A new banner advertised our presence and the Quiz was this year based on Brazilian wildlife to follow the Village Day World Cup theme. We were somewhat surprised by the number of correct entries and the Prize Draw for these entries was won by Jen Duckett for the adults and Daniel Totty for the children. Eight new Friends of the Wood joined on Village Day and we are grateful for the assistance on the day of Sue Conway and Barbara Webster who helped Katherine Hutchinson, Andy Fairclough and myself to man the stall.

2. We have started thinning out the trees in the New Plantation with the help of the Scouts and a report of this by Bob Harris follows later. The work will continue over the next few years,

3. The work removing the damaged trees has now been completed and the Trust are very grateful to Dan Hinde of the tree surgeons Monkey Business who has not charged for a lot of the work done as he says that he wishes to support what we do. The loss of the trees near the entrance to the Wood has let in a lot of light which has had the unfortunate result of encouraging the growth of nettles near the seat. These are difficult to eradicate as we are reluctant to use chemical weedkillers.

4. We have been approached by ITV about the possibility of filming a scene in the Wood about a lost dog for their forthcoming series to be called "Home Fires" based on the book "Jambusters" by Julie Summers regarding home life at the start of the Second World War. At the time of writing, nothing further has been heard from them but it is understood that they will be coming back to the Village to shoot further scenes in the next few weeks.

5. We have recently found that the boundary fence which we put up round the new plantation needs considerable repair. It has now been up for over eight and a half years. Perhaps with the benefit of hindsight, a stronger fence should have been put in at the start as

we shall have to make the existing fence stronger. We are now considering what action should be taken. A quotation has been requested from Richard Reeves.

Meet the Trustees **No. 9 – Peter Tonge**

I was pleased to be co-opted to the board of trustees in 2013 as a result of my work with the Cheshire Landscape Trust.



I have been working in countryside conservation in Cheshire for the last eight years.

My main areas of interest in this respect are woodland, hedgerow and orchard management - since becoming a trustee I have run a tree felling workshop for the Bunbury scouts in the woods. This was part of the ongoing management plan which requires the thinning out of the most

recently planted trees in order to leave enough space for the stronger trees to flourish.

Based in Chester with my partner Katie, and our one year old daughter Charlotte, I propagate old varieties of apple trees, principally Cheshire varieties. Katie and I also run workshops for tree grafting, pruning and hedge laying as well as planning and installing orchards. (Katie has the knowledge, I do the grafting)

I have worked extensively with Cheshire Landscape Trust and the Conservation volunteers over the years - I laid my first hedge with BTCV some thirty five years ago.

Although I have always been interested in conservation I spent some years in the merchant navy and over twenty years as a contracts manager in the construction industry, based in London

where I surprised a few tree officers with my enthusiasm for protecting trees - unusual in a builder!

I also have two older children, Clare (who lives in Derby with her husband and my grand-daughter) and Mark who lives in London.

Peter Tonge

Thinning the trees in the New Planatation

On July 1st a work party for Bunbury Scouts took place in the woods. It was led by Peter Tonge of the Cheshire Landscape Trust who was assisted by several Trustees of the Woodland and a large group of scout leaders.

The aim of the work party was to begin the thinning out of the most recent plantings in the new section of the wood. An area of ash trees was chosen because they have grown the quickest and also where the luxuriant growth of nettles was not too restrictive.

After an initial talk by Peter, who explained the tools to be used and the techniques of selecting trees to be removed, he went on to demonstrate the best way to bring the trees down. At all points he stressed the safety elements of using the tools and felling what are already trees of considerable size.

Then the Scouts split into pairs and after selecting a suitable tree they set to work, supervised by the adults. It was not long before the shouts of 'timber' began to ring out and much needed daylight poured into the wood. Once the trees had been felled Peter showed how to cut off the branches and use the foliage to create potential wildlife habitats.

When the light began to fade and the midges became intolerable, this most enjoyable evening was ended and it was arranged that the scouts would return the following week to complete the creation of the wildlife havens.

Many thanks must go to Peter Tonge, and Ian Adkins of the Scouts, for organising the event which we hope to repeat later in the year.

Bob Harris

Nest Box Survey

On 23rd October, Bob Harris, Andy Moore and I checked and cleaned the nest boxes in the Wood. All the hole fronted boxes had been occupied, although one had been abandoned leaving a nest with ten blue tit eggs. One of the two treecreeper boxes had been used for the first time and the owl box and the bat box had been used again. Again, none of the open fronted nest boxes had been used although Bob Harris did find a tennis ball in one of them which was high enough off the ground to be out of reach! The robin boxes were not used but one was full of dirt rather than nesting materials and this will have to be taken down for investigation and a thorough cleaning.

Mike Bourne

The Rowan

The rowan or mountain ash (*sorbus aucuparia*) is a native species, a small to medium sized tree growing up to sixty feet in height and being found in woodland and open areas as well as the



mountains from which it gets its name. Its bark is silvery grey and mostly smooth and its leaves hang in 5/8 pairs on each stem. The flowers form dense heads of creamy white blossom in spring followed by red berries in autumn which can remain on the tree for quite a long time if the birds don't get them first. It is also used in gardens because of its comparatively small size.

The rowan prefers a reasonably dry spot and we have planted a number of small specimens in the upper part of the old Wood at the suggestion of the Cheshire Wildlife Trust with the intention that they may provide a bit of variety from the dominant holly in the under storey.

The rowan has a long history in British folklore as providing protection against witchcraft and in parts of Scotland it is still considered unlucky to cut down a rowan near to a house. In the Isle of Man, crosses of broken (never cut) twigs are hung above the lintel of house doors on May Eve with primroses in the house, if possible.

Similar rowan crosses have been carried round in pockets in areas as far apart as Scotland and Cornwall. The red colour of its berries was held to protect against enchantment and the tiny five pointed star or pentagram on each berry opposite the stalk was also thought to contribute to its magical properties. The rowan also appears in Greek and Norse mythology. According to Greek myth, an eagle was sent by the gods to retrieve a magic chalice which had got into the hands of some demons, and after a fight, it succeeded in doing so. The feathers and blood which the eagle lost in the battle fell to earth and were turned into rowan trees which took the shape of feathers for their leaves and the blood red for their berries.

Its wood is strong and suitable for carving and has been made into walking sticks, tool handles and spinning wheels. The berries can be made into a jelly traditionally eaten with game. The berries were made into strong drink in Celtic countries; the Scots make a wine and also a string spirit, the Welsh made ale and the Irish used rowan to flavour mead.

Friends of the Wood

The annual subscription is a minimum of £5-00 each and the 2014/15 subscription became due on 1st April. The wood produces no income itself and we therefore have to raise all the money needed to pay for insurance, maintenance, etc. Your subscriptions are therefore very valuable to us. Those who have not paid will have received a reminder in July. Payment of any outstanding subscriptions can be made with the slip at the end of this Newsletter either to Michael Bourne or Bob Harris whose details are given below; cheques should be made payable to Sadlers Wells Community Woodland. Gift Aid is a valuable source of income and we would appreciate subscriptions being gift aided if you are able to do so and have not already done it. The amount of Gift Aid on a single subscription is only small but the total amount we get each year is significant.

And finally

If anyone has any comments or queries regarding this Newsletter or the wood generally, please write or e-mail our Chairman, Michael Bourne. We would appreciate response from members to let us know whether we are heading in the right direction. As mentioned in previous newsletters, if you see anything unusual or interesting in the wood, please let us know by telephone or e-mail as we would like to make a record.

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Trustees of the Charity Michael Bourne (Chairman), Bob Harris
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Fairclough, Ron Pulford and Peter Tonge

Friends of Sadlers Wells Wood -- Subscription 2014/15

Name(s)

Amount (min. £5 per person)

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Woodland.