

Sadlers Wells Community Woodland

Registered Charity Number 1105117



Newsletter No. 1 - September 2006

Welcome to the first newsletter of Sadlers Wells Community Woodland. The Trust was originally formed around ten years ago to try to negotiate the purchase of Sadlers Wells Wood as a result of the concern which was caused by the proposal of the Peckforton Estate to clear fell the Wood. The Trust was formally constituted by a Declaration of Trust on 14th August 2001, and is now a registered Charity.

The present trustees are Ernest Croley (Chairman), Michael Bourne (also Clerk to the Charity), Bob Price and Tony Gentil (who between them have considerable experience in woodland management), Eric Lord and Dr Katherine Hutchinson (nominated by Bunbury Parish Council & Spurstow Parish Council respectively) and Mrs. Alison Phillips (Head of Bunbury Aldersey CE Primary School).

Purchase of the Wood

After lengthy negotiations, we were eventually able to complete the purchase on 23rd January this year. The Trust acquired 3.25 acres of ancient semi-natural woodland which includes a good variety of native broadleaved trees and is bounded on the southerly side by the stream which is part of the River Gowy. The wood lies to the west of Bunbury Village and to the east of the main A49 Tarporley - Whitchurch main road. An additional area of 2.12 acres was also purchased at the same time which is on the other side of the stream and in the adjoining Parish of Spurstow with the intention that this should be planted up with approximately 800 young trees of locally sourced pedunculate oak, ash, small leaved lime, wild cherry, field maple and crab apple.

We had been hoping to have completed the purchase much earlier, and we were left with very little time to get the planting done before the current planting season (which is governed by the need to have the plants established before the summer) ended on 31st March.

Fortunately, Richard Reeves were able to give us an early slot to put up the fencing needed and our Countryside Contractor, Stewart Sim of Christleton, was able to fit in the planting so that everything was duly completed in time. We are extremely grateful to both of them for fitting us into their schedules so promptly as it would have been very disappointing if the planting had to be deferred until the autumn. We are also grateful to Philip Posnett of Haughton Hall for his generous gift of the young oak trees.

The purchase of the wood was completed with the aid of a substantial grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund. The Trustees also gratefully acknowledge the help, advice, donations and assistance given by the Cheshire County Council, Cheshire Landscape Trust, Cheshire Community Council, Cheshire Wildlife Trust, the Cheshire EConet Project, Crewe & Nantwich Borough Council, Bunbury Parish Council, Spurstow Parish Council, the Bunbury Society and the many friends and colleagues who have helped and continue to help us. A grant has also been received from The Forestry Commission under the English Woodlands Grants Scheme towards the costs of the new planting.

The young trees have been growing well within their plastic protectors and it is hoped that the recent hot weather does not cause too many problems.

Ecological surveys

After the planting, one of the first things we have done is to arrange ecological surveys to establish what we have in the wood and to give a guide as to the way forward regarding conservation and improvement of the habitat we have available. The surveys have been carried out by Tony Gentil and his wife Liz (who is a qualified ecologist) and also by Dr Brian Jeffcoat who is a retired biologist and botanist and now does surveys and recording for the Cheshire Wildlife Trust, and the results of the spring surveys have just been received. A summary of these is at the end of this Newsletter.

The results of these surveys show a need to remove a lot of the holly and sycamore and some of the nettles and bramble from the under storey of the wood to increase the opportunity for the spread of other plants and flowers which at the moment do not get a chance to prosper

as they are crowded out. The Trust are therefore preparing plans to decide how much is to be taken out and how it is to be done.

Further surveys will be carried out in different seasons to record any changes.

Dr Jeffcoat very kindly led a walk round the wood at the beginning of July and gave those members present more information on what our wood has to offer.

Your help is also needed. A survey can only record what there was during the couple of hours or so when the survey actually took place and any reports of anything unusual would be gratefully received as these would add to our knowledge of the wood. We would like reports of the less common birds such as owls, buzzard, tree sparrows, bullfinches, etc., unusual flowers and fauna such as foxes, badgers, voles, etc. You should give dates, numbers, species and any other details you may be able to provide, and the information should be sent to Mike Bourne, details as below.

The Sandstone Ridge EConet Partnership (SREP)

SREP is part of the Cheshire EConet project run by Cheshire County Council with the objective of improving and linking together wildlife habitats throughout the County. SREP is particularly aimed at Mid-Cheshire and the sandstone ridge formed by the hills running through from Larkton in the south to Helsby and Frodsham in the north. Some of you may have heard the talk which its Development Officer, Mike Wellman, gave to us at Bunbury Mill at the end of May. He is offering us much encouragement (not to mention finance) to help the project along. Our thanks should also go to United Utilities for allowing us to use Bunbury Mill for our Public Meetings.

Bunbury Aldersev CE Primary School.

The School intend to use the wood as part of the National Curriculum for Natural History, Art and other similar studies and it is hoped that they will find the wood very useful as the Trustees are very keen that the wood should be used for educational purposes as much as practicable.

The Friends of Sadlers Wells Wood

An organization of Friends has been formed for anyone who would like to support Sadlers Wells Wood and what the Trust are trying to achieve. New supporters will be very welcome and should contact either Ernest Croley or Mike Bourne whose contact details are given at the end of this newsletter. You can show your support by attending meetings, providing volunteer labour or by way of a cash donation. A minimum donation of £5 per annum would be greatly appreciated towards costs of newsletters, meetings, etc. Friends will receive copies of newsletters, and advance details of meetings. We would like to be able to send out information by e-mail where possible to save expense and if any Friend of the wood did not get this newsletter by e-mail but would like to be on our e-mail list, please provide the relevant e-mail address to Mike Bourne for future use. Any information will not be passed on to other organizations!

Bunbury Village Day

We had a stall at Village Day on 17th June to advertise our existence, and a number of people agreed to become one of our Friends. Ernest Croley also organized two competitions. The one for adults was the identification of trees and of fifty or so entries, four were all correct and these were from David Black, Gwyneth Burrows, Kay Cowin and David Mayers. The junior competition was about the identification of woodland birds and successful entries came from Max Illingworth, Chloe Johnson and Poppy Rathbone. As the youngest entrant, Chloe received the children's prize and David Black received a bottle of wine from the adult prize winners' draw. The stall was set up and manned by Gordon Fairbairn and Ted Fowles.

Website

We now have our own website which can be found under www.sadlerswellswood.co.uk and we intend to add to this news of any meetings, working parties and other gatherings as well as incorporating copies of newsletters, etc. We are also arranging to have a notice board on the wall of the Village Hall to provide notice of

public meetings and keep everyone in the Village informed of what is going on.

Access to the Wood

Access to the wood is pedestrian only and car parking is only available on suitable parts of the nearby public highways. Visitors are very welcome but please avoid disturbance and respect the local wildlife and plantlife. A public footpath runs along the northerly boundary of the wood, and visitors may use the pathways within the wood, although there are no public rights of way over them

While reasonable precautions are taken to ensure the safety of visitors, they should take care as the ground may be rough, slippery, sloping or uneven, and when near to the stream, especially during or after inclement weather. Please take extra care with children. A wood is a living entity and conditions can vary from day to day.

Next meeting

It is proposed to have a public meeting at Bunbury Aldersey School on Wednesday 11th October 2006 at 7.00 p.m. All are invited. Further details will follow

Finally, what's to be done next

The immediate priorities are: -

1. Safety and maintenance work to the existing wood which will be carried out by a contractor in the next few weeks.
2. The removal of some of the existing under storey as indicated by the recent ecological surveys
3. The building of a bridge to link the new part of the wood with the old. We are pleased to report that SREP have made a grant towards the cost of the materials.
4. The design and construction of some additional footpaths around the new wood and linking with the paths in the old wood.

Contact us:

Ernest Croley; Tel 01829-260344 E-mail
ernest.croley@homecall.co.uk
Michael Bourne; Tel 01829-260944 E-mail
mike@thebournes249.wanadoo.co.uk

Summary of the Spring surveys

Sadlers Wells Wood in Bunbury is a fragment of the woodland that would once have covered this area of mid-Cheshire. As it has been under estate management for several centuries it cannot be classified as ancient woodland except that according to historical documents, it has been a continuous wooded site since records began and probably since the last ice age.

The current wood is a very attractive place with a wide range of different trees and an interesting ground cover of wildflowers. None of these are rare species but they nevertheless make a very attractive sight in the spring. Some of the trees may need to be removed in order to ensure the health of the others and to maintain the diversity of the species present. This will create temporary glades which will encourage butterflies and provide additional light to penetrate to the woodland floor.

The new woodland area has been well planted and should develop its own habitat over the next few decades. The stream that divides these two areas provides a particularly important habitat with several wet grassland species of wildflowers and waterside trees.

There is some work to do to maintain the woodland in good health and to preserve and enhance the wildflower populations. There will be opportunities for volunteers to help with a programme of work and for people enjoying the woodland walks to contribute to gathering ongoing information about the biodiversity of the wood, in particular the bird and insect population sharing the site.

It is interesting that although there are patches of bluebells in Sadlers Wells Wood these are not the precious native English bluebell but are a hybrid between that and the Spanish bluebell. This is slightly disappointing but there is at the moment no plan to try to eradicate the hybrid in favour of the native plant.