

Sadlers Wells Community Woodland

Registered Charity Number 1105117



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Heritage Lottery Fund

Newsletter No. 4 - Spring 2008

Welcome to the fourth newsletter of Sadlers Wells Community Woodland. News since the last newsletter includes: -

1. The bridge between the original wood and the new plantation has now been completed and we are extremely grateful to Phil Mayers and his brother David for their voluntary work in providing this as it is a vital link between the two parts of the wood. We are now thinking of putting in a short length of boardwalk over the old ditch which runs down through the middle of the new plantation along the line of the old hedge.

2. A wooden seat has also been made and given to the Trust by Mr Bill Mayers and this has been installed in the area of new planting. We are extremely grateful to him also.

3. The other seat which we were going to put near the entrance to the wood has still not yet been installed. As mentioned in the last Newsletter, its installation last summer was postponed because two beech trees fell just where it was going to be put, and there was another large beech tree immediately adjacent which gave rise to concern that it also might be affected by the instability of the ground which caused the other two trees to fall. Because the existing wood is affected by a Tree Preservation Order, we needed to notify the local Council to carry out any major work to an existing tree but no decision was received. We have now decided that we are free to go ahead on the basis that there has been no objection to our proposal.

4. We had a letter from the Forestry Commission recently regarding regulations which came into force last August giving increased protection for certain protected species including the dormouse, great crested newt, otter, sand lizard, smooth snake and all 17 species of bat. As far as we know, we only have bats in the Wood from this list of protected species. It was previously an offence to kill or cause significant disturbance to these species, to deliberately destroy their eggs, or to destroy or damage a breeding site or resting place used by them. It is now also an offence to accidentally damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place so that extra care is needed before any action is taken which might cause disturbance.

5. A woodcock was seen flying over the wood during the Christmas period. Buzzards have been seen on numerous occasions and on the Wednesday before Easter while putting up the last of the nest boxes, a peregrine was briefly seen over the wood, a great spotted woodpecker was heard drumming and a stoat was seen hunting along the bank of the stream.

6. Further nest boxes have now been put up in the wood which we hope will give a wide choice for our feathered friends. There are now nest boxes with holes 25mm in diameter for blue tits and 32mm for great tits and similar birds, some with triangular holes at the top for robins and wrens and others open fronted for blackbirds and others. We have also put up boxes for tree creepers, and one for tawny owls and one for kestrels. In addition to the bird boxes, we have put up a couple of bat boxes and boxes for lacewings, bees and other insects. We hope that the desirable residences provided will encourage the wildlife in the wood to put them into good use. The cost of the boxes was met by a grant kindly provided by the Cheshire County Council EConet project.

7. You may remember that Mike Wellman gave us a talk on the EConet project a couple of years or so ago emphasising its aims to provide physical links between areas of habitat to enable wildlife to move from one to another. He retired last year and Ellie Soper has been appointed to head the project in his place. She has expressed an interest in coming out to see the wood, and we look forward to meeting her in the near future.

8. We have approached the Cheshire Wildlife Trust to enquire whether the wood can be included in their register of Sites of Biological Interest ("SBI"). SBIs are sites which are important from a County point of view as distinct from Sites of Scientific Interest which are those nationally important. An SBI is an informal designation which does not impose any maintenance obligations as is the case with an SSI. Its advantage to us would be that the wood would have some recognition of its status as wildlife habitat which may well assist us in getting grants and outside advice on management. The fact that it is informal means that we could ask to be removed from the scheme at any time, if we felt that it was not of advantage to us.

9. We have made a clearing in the old wood to create a glade by removing some of the sterile holly undergrowth and we hope that the light that we have let in will encourage the growth in the area of wildflowers and other plants which have previously been crowded out by the holly and the lack of light. It will be interesting to see what plants naturally recolonize the space which has been opened up, if any.

10. Crewe and Nantwich Borough Council have provided a dog loo at the entrance to the wood from Sadlers Wells in view of the complaints of fouling recently received. We hope that it will be put to good use.

Introducing the trustees

No. 3 Mike Bourne

Mike is from a farming background and has lived in the Parish of Bunbury nearly all his life, having been born in Haughton and then living in Spurstow. After a short period in Tattenhall, he came to live in Wyche Lane in 1990. He retired from his work as a Solicitor, where he dealt particularly with agricultural and property transactions, in 1991. He took over acting as Clerk to the Trust in June 2003 when Mary Evans retired from the post and was appointed a trustee of the Charity in October 2005.

He has always been interested in Natural History and kindred subjects and is a member of several organisations, including the RSPB, Cheshire Wildlife Trust and the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust. Other interests include family history research and gardening and in younger days played cricket and badminton. He is still a keen supporter of Cholmondeley Cricket Club and is a life member.

Summer visitors

One thing nearly everyone looks for is the arrival in spring of the summer visitors most of whom will have spent our winter sunning themselves under African skies, and almost everyone's favourite harbinger of summer is the swallow, now officially known as the barn swallow as it has been decided by the powers that be that we cannot have our birds known by a single name when there are other species of the bird in other parts of the world. They normally arrive in our part of the country in early April, although with earlier springs earlier arrivals may be expected provided that their insect food is also here in sufficient quantities. The average date for the earliest arrivals recorded in Cheshire is 13th March over the past dozen or so years. Swallows normally raise a couple of broods taking advantage of the myriad forms of insect life that Britain has to offer before disappearing again for the winter. Two hundred years or so ago where they went for the winter was a matter of much speculation, and the alternatives being considered included holes in trees, holes in the ground and even in the mud at the bottom of lakes! They never thought in those days that such a small bird could fly all the way to the southern tip of Africa and return next spring to the same area. Swallows also used to be protected by superstition as it was believed to be unlucky to disturb a swallow's nest or harm swallows in any way as those who did so could suffer from blood appearing in their cow's milk or their hens might stop laying. Swallows may

appear dark when they are swooping around the sky but if you see them close to and in good light, their backs are a shiny metallic blue- black and their face and throat a reddish chestnut.

Their cousins the sand martins arrive about the same time; as their name suggests, they like to nest in colonies in sandy banks, but I do not know the nearest colony to Bunbury. Sand martins are similar to house martins, but are brown and white rather than black and white. The house martin is a familiar bird which nests under the eaves of houses; it is stockier than a swallow with a short stubby forked tail compared with the fairly long streamers of the swallow. House martins also have white throats and prominent white rumps which are often evident to aid identification in flight. They even get a mention in Shakespeare (Act 1 scene 6 of Macbeth) when Banquo tells King Duncan that the martins or martlets favour his fine castle by saying: -

“ This guest of summer, the temple-haunting martlet, does approve by his loved mansionry that the heaven’s breath smells woingly here.”

Sand martins winter in the southerly parts of West Africa including the Sahel area of the Southern Sahara, Mali and the upper parts of the Niger River. The winter quarters of the house martins are still surprisingly a matter of some speculation with only a small number of observations scattered over a very wide area of sub- Saharan Africa which may indicate that they spend most of the time at high altitudes eating and sleeping on the wing like swifts.

Mike Bourne

The way of the wind

There has been a fashion in tree planting in the last few years of using the “short stake method”. This is a technique whereby a newly planted standard tree is supported by a stake driven into the ground with about 18” remaining above ground. The traditional staking practice is to use a much longer stake with 4’ 0” or 5’0” above ground and the tree tied to it just under the head.

The short staking idea was formulated by a well-known arboricultural researcher called David Patch. It is based on the principle that when a tree is transplanted, it is important that the root system is anchored until it has produced sufficient new roots to establish itself. All staking methods agree on this point. Derek Patch contends that the tree benefits if the trunk above the point of attachment to the stake can flex. This won’t be the case when a tall stake is used.

When the trunk sways in the wind, the cells on the windward side are stretched and those on the opposite side compressed. It is likened to human beings flexing their muscles to increase their strength. So far, I have no problem with the short stake theory. However for a flexing trunk to grow vertically, it needs the wind

to blow equally from all four quarters. This is not the case in the British Isles because our prevailing winds come from the west. For the majority of the time a short staked tree will be bending to the east and hence becoming banana shaped. I always stake standard and half-standard trees with long stakes.

How then does a tree manage to grow straight when it is self sown? As it stretches up from a seed, the root system develops in response to the winds acting on the tree above ground; the stronger the winds, the greater the anchorage. The trunk develops at a pace in tandem with the roots and is drawn vertically towards the sunlight.

The roots of most trees will not survive in water-logged soil or penetrate solid rock. Furthermore in a woodland situation the trees shelter one another and also exert an influence on each other as to the direction that the trunks and branches grow. When a gap in the canopy is created by felling, tree death or wind-blow, the root systems of the remaining trees may experience forces for which they have not adapted. This happens in Sadlers Wells Wood when the wind gets into the crowns of trees in full leaf and the soil is waterlogged and trees go over.

A woodland like Sadlers Wells needs constant vigilance and some replanting to maintain the status quo. Even the newly planted section may have problems in the years to come. It was all planted at one time and so will develop as an even-aged woodland. This has its own particular problems as the trees all age together. There will need to be an ongoing programme of replanting to ensure a healthy mixed age woodland is inherited by future generations.

Tony Gentil

Living landscapes

The Winter issue of Natural World, the magazine produced on behalf of all the Wildlife Trusts for the country, contained an article on Living Landscapes which included the following: -

“A green and vibrant countryside is, quite simply, good for people. A growing body of research is showing that a regular walk in a wood, for example, can be as effective in relieving stress and tension as therapy or drugs. Seeing the passage of the seasons, hearing birdsong, watching a butterfly on the buddleia in the garden – all these experiences enrich our lives immeasurably and enhance our sense of place and belonging.

As well as benefits to mental health, a Living Landscape has physical benefits too. Children with access to safe but exciting green space will spend less time in front of the television or computers, and may be fitter and less vulnerable to asthma and allergies. Safe and enjoyable places to walk and cycle can provide more exercise and combat obesity in people of all ages, reducing rates of diabetes and heart disease. And keeping physically active outdoors as we age is good for our general health – and keeps us mentally alert, too.

Our children can learn lots from a Living Landscape. It's a wonderful way to study biology and geography for real. It makes the history of places and people come alive. For younger children, it's an easy place to make basic literacy and numeracy exciting. For adults, it can enrich our lives by developing our understanding of our location, and bring home our interdependence with the natural world."

I hope that they do not mind me reproducing these extracts, but I feel that this article summarizes well the benefits which we hope Sadlers Wells Wood can provide although we cannot offer space for cycling. Join us on our working parties and you can get exercise as well. Details of when these will take place will be posted on our notice board on the Village Hall as well as e-mail notifications for those who have it. No special skills are needed, but if you can assist, please complete and return the attached form

Forthcoming events for your diaries

1. There will be a talk on the subject of British Bats on Monday 21st April at 8.00 p.m. at Bunbury Mill to be given by Mr G. Ryan of the Cheshire Bat Group. Coffee/Tea and refreshments will be available before the talk. There will be no admission fee but donations to the Cheshire Bat Group would be appreciated.
2. Tony and Liz Gentil have offered to host a woodland walk at Sadlers Wells on Wednesday 28th May starting at 7.00 p.m. with particular emphasis on the wildflowers out at the time.

Friends of the Wood

. The annual subscription for the year commencing 1st April 2008 is now due and is £5-00 each. As previously mentioned, 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, not only in themselves but also because they show a commitment from the local community which is a great help when we approach funding organisations for any grants available to enable the Trust to carry out its work. We are grateful to those of you who have already paid and early payment of the remaining subscriptions would be greatly appreciated; payment can be made either to Ernest Croley or Michael Bourne whose details are given at the end of this Newsletter. There is also a tear-off strip to accompany any payment. **New members** (who would like to support our work to maintain and improve the amenity of the wood and to make it available for educational projects by the School and others) would be greatly appreciated. Please

send your name, address (including e-mail address where applicable) and subscription to either of the above. All contributions will be gratefully received.

If anyone has any comments or queries regarding this Newsletter or the wood generally, please write or e-mail our Clerk, Michael Bourne.

Contact us:

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Newsletter editor Mike Bourne

Trustees of the Charity Ernest Croley (Chairman), Michael Bourne (Clerk), Bob Price, Tony Gentil, Eric Lord, Alison Phillips and Dr Katherine Hutchinson.

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Friends of Sadlers Wells Wood - Subscriptions 2008/9

Name(s)

Amount

Sadlers Wells Community Woodland Working Parties Spring 08

From the start of our project, it was the intention that much of the running of the Wood might be carried out by working parties. The economics depend upon it and there is also the opportunity to learn about woodland and enjoy some not too onerous outdoor activity. The working parties to date have been successful and have done some useful work but we now wish to put them on a more systematic basis. We are, accordingly, preparing a list of people who are able and willing to participate in future working parties. If that is you, then perhaps you could return this questionnaire to either Ernest Croley, 2, The Square, 01829260344 or Michael Bourne, Long Acre, Wyche Lane, 01829260944.

My name is:

Address, phone no. & E.mail (if poss.)

I would be most likely to be available (tick)

Saturday am

Midweek Please state days