

Sadlers Wells Community Woodland

Registered Charity Number 1105117



Supported by the
Heritage Lottery Fund

Newsletter No. 7 - Autumn 2009

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

1. Our new notice board at the entrance to the wood has now been in place for several months.

2. At Easter, some 500 small native bluebells were planted in various parts of the existing wood and we hope that they will spread over the next few years to make a good display. Some plants already appear to have been lost to predators. It was also interesting to see some individual bluebells flowering in the new plantation in the area towards the main road. We assume that they must previously been dormant in the ground as bluebells normally take at least three years to flower from seed and it is therefore too soon for them to have grown from seed since the planting was established.

3. Tony and Liz Gentil and Bob Price hosted another woodland walk on June 9th. The new planting again showed plenty of new growth and some of the saplings are already getting quite tall considering that they were only planted three years ago. The contrast between the plantation and the adjoining farm land is now quite considerable, bearing in mind that the plantation was also farm land when we started. Amongst other things, two fungi were found, namely Chicken of the Woods (*Laetiporus sulphureus*) - pictured on right - and Jelly Ear (*Auricularia auricularia-judae*). The latter and similar Asian species are an important part of Chinese cuisine because of their Jelly-like texture. The flowers found included Greater Celandine (*Chelidonium Majus*) – no relation of the common Lesser Celandine, Brooklime (with the splendid Latin name of *Veronica Beccabunga*), Bugle (*Ajuga reptans*), a variety of Bedstraw, Hedge Garlic (otherwise known as Garlic Mustard – *Alliaria Petiolata*) and Wood Avens (*Geum Urbanum*).



4. We again had a stall at Village Day on June 20th; we managed to persuade a number of new members to become Friends of the Wood and our quiz again was popular although several did not really believe that entry was free! The adult quiz was won by Teresa Hodson who was lucky in the draw for the bottle of wine out of fifteen correct entries.

5. The Grassroots grant has gone a long way to covering the cost of footpath moving and nettle strimming in the new plantation.

6. Our website www.sadlerswellswood.co.uk is being updated and new information added, including copies of previous newsletters.

Chairman's Notes

The Wood in My Life

It was there and, as far as I knew, it always had been. No reason to doubt it; woods do not appear and disappear on a whim. Woods are just there, just there for us to enjoy, curse the nettles perhaps, but still there. My relationship with Sadlers Wells was like that. I moved into a house on the Whitchurch Road and it had a wood close by. Nice; hope to get to know you better soon.

Forty years seems a long time in human terms but in that time the Wood has hardly changed and the changes that have happened have been so slow that they have been hardly noticed. The air of permanence was added to by the knowledge that the whole wood was the subject of a TPO (Tree Preservation Order).

The Order was originally drawn up by Bob Price (when he worked for the County Council) and published by the former Crewe & Nantwich BC in January 1983. It is nice to think that the work which Bob did all those years ago eventually bore fruit and that he was able to renew his acquaintanceship with the Wood by becoming a Trustee of the Woodland Charity when it was formed. At that stage we all thought that a TPO was for the life of the tree. It was only later that we discovered that the Forestry Commission could override it if it considered that a development warranted aid under the Woodland Grant Scheme. That knowledge lay in the future.

It, therefore, came as quite a shock in 1996 when the Parish Council was told that the managing agents for the Tollemache Estate, Strutt & Parker, had prepared a refurbishment scheme for the Wood which involved the felling of all but a few trees on the perimeter. It was perhaps more of a shock to find that the few trees that were to be preserved had already been marked with a red spot! What we did not know at the time was that Strutt & Parker was carrying out a survey of all the woods which they managed because of concerns

about safety. As a low income earner funds for the maintenance of Sadlers Wells were not available and as a result the Wood was neglected and needed a good dose of TLC to restore it to prime condition. At the time, although grants for refurbishment were available from the Forestry Commission for the restoration of Woodland, the most attractive solution, financially, was to fell the Wood and take advantage of one of a grant and to clear fell and replant the Wood. As we now found out, work authorised by the Forestry Commission under the Woodland Grant Scheme negated a TPO and if the grant were approved felling could proceed. This was in spite of the fact that the Wood is a Semi natural ancient wood that can never be properly replaced. What the TPO did do was to cause the Forestry Commission to ask the owners to consult with local interests before taking the matter any further. At the time I was the Parish Council's Tree Warden and when asked by the owners "who should we consult", with no authority and no hesitation, I replied "me". A two-letter reply that was to change the direction of my life for some years.

In the event, the Parish Council appointed three representatives to present the point of view of the Village. They were Mary Evans, Philip Mayers and myself. The Village was fortunate in its choice because they all became active in the events that followed. Mary proved to be an able and determined member of the steering group and Phil was a fount of local knowledge and the practical help that he remains to this day. One of the first things that we did was to approach the Woodland Trust. We thought that we had struck gold because they had a target number of woods that they wanted to create to mark the millennium. Following discussions, they agreed that Sadlers Wells fitted their profile perfectly. So it came about that our three-eco warriors met Strutt & Parker, The Woodland Trust, Cheshire County Council and Crewe & Nantwich Council, at a meeting held in February 1997. The only contribution that the County and District Councils made was to tell us that there was an absolute right for the owners to realise the commercial value of the wood. Not much help there. We did however get the impression that, in spite of their proposal, Strutt & Parker were not comfortable with the situation and they did not really want to fell the wood. They were finding it difficult to make a commercial case for retaining it. They and the Woodland Trust eventually withdrew from the meeting for private discussions.

It was agreed that the Woodland Trust would write to the Estate to express an interest in purchasing the Wood.

In the event the Estate decided that it did not wish to sell to an outside organisation. That left us in precisely the situation where we had started. The only change was that the issues had been clarified. It struck me that if the problem of maintenance could be solved then we might be a long way towards a resolution. At the time the Forestry Commission had available what they called challenge funding set aside for the refurbishment of old woodland. We asked Flintshire Woodlands to prepare a scheme for the wood that would meet Commission Requirements for 100% grant aid. It was a happy choice

because Flintshire Woodland had worked with the Estate previously and they were quite prepared to cost out a scheme. There were a lot of details to hammer out and a scheme was finally put to Strutt & Parker who, to their credit, accepted it as the way forward. Finally, in March 1999, the Steering Committee were able to announce to Bunbury Residents and the Press that a scheme had been agreed and that work would commence shortly. Flintshire Woodlands asked me to be present on the first working day, in the event with sound foresight. As soon as the noise of chain saws was heard a protest group began to gather, thinking that we were about to clear fell the wood!

The Wood having been refurbished, the immediate crisis was over because no one would think of felling or even applying to fell a wood on which public funds had been so recently spent. Nonetheless there was still a long-term problem because the same situation might occur again and also it was obvious that the Wood would benefit greatly from sensitive environmental management. How to achieve that was a puzzle. We needed someone to buy it, some money and a willing seller. The obvious answer to the first was to form a trust. An approach to the Charity Commissioners went a long way towards solving the problem. A copy of one of their model constitutions, a computer printer and a tube of glue produced a workable, if not very professional document. Next was to find a team of Trustees. I was keen to have a team of Trustees mostly appointed by organisations that would be on going. The Trustees nominated then are pretty much as they are now. The exception is Mike Bourne. When Mary Evans ceased to be Clerk it was necessary to find a replacement and in 2003 Mike was appointed Clerk to the Charity, a position that he still holds. The Trustees quickly realised that he was too good to risk losing so they appointed him to be a Trustee as well.

By February 2000 the Trust was established and I was able to write to the Peckforton Estate, giving them details of the composition of the Trust and expressing our intention to seek grant funding so that we could make an offer for the Wood. Here we were truly in a chicken and egg situation. We could not make a grant application until we knew how much the land would cost; we could not make an offer until we knew how much grant would be available. Worse, the grant giving authorities were not very interested in giving grants for the purchase of land. From a seat in London it did not really matter whose name was on the top of any particular set of title deeds. We had to demonstrate that there would be other advantages to justify the cost of purchase.....(to be continued)

Ernest Croley

Bunbury Primary School

This year our whole school has been involved with activities in the wood. Year 5 did an outdoor maths project, looking at shape, angles, estimating tree heights, measurement etc. The work from this project was displayed at a celebration event at Tarvin Primary School.

Year 1s went to do story writing and several children had a chance to plant shrubs

Year 3 are about to visit with a focus on natural science looking for plants, natural objects, etc. They are also using the wood to develop their senses and will be looking for different sounds, textures, etc.

Our new Reception children all walked down to the wood with parents this week and just enjoyed the beautiful environment. They did lots of observations.

It's a wonderful resource.

Alyson Thacker – Head teacher

Friends of the Wood

The annual subscription is £5-00 each and the 2009/10 subscription **was 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, 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. **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 either to Ernest Croley or Michael Bourne whose details are given below. All contributions will be gratefully received, and cheques should be made payable to Sadlers Wells Community Woodland.

As mentioned in a previous newsletter, 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.

Forthcoming event
6th October 2009

A reminder that a talk has been arranged for 6th October at Bunbury Mill; the subject is “Woodlands” and the speaker will be Phil Tidy of The Green Wood Centre at Ironbridge. The talk will start at 7.30 pm.

The Green Wood Centre is part of a national woodland charity, The Small Woods Association. The Centre aims to promote sustainable living through a wood based economy by running courses on woodland management and making landscape furniture. The Centre claims in its website to have one of the U.K.’s most efficient timber buildings and to be a centre of excellence in the fields of woodland crafts and coppice.

The benefit of the Great Outdoors

Both the Wildlife Trusts and the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust have recently had in their magazines articles extolling the benefits to mankind of getting closer to nature and showing how far removed most people live from the natural environment. We hope that the availability of Sadlers Wells Wood will give many local people, especially children, the chance to get better acquainted with the natural world. Many facts and figures were quoted, including:-

1. Only 53% of children could identify an oak leaf and one in three had no idea what a magpie looked like.
2. 38% of children could not identify a frog.
3. A 90% decline in the radius of the area within which a nine year old was allowed to play. (A US study)
4. Patients in hospital beds tend to recover more quickly if they have a view of greenery rather other buildings, and require fewer painkillers following operations.
5. Social contact within a community is 90% higher if there is green space available compared with those areas where there is not.
6. In urban tower blocks, reports of violence and vandalism are halved if access to green areas is available, as well as reductions in adult irritability.
7. There can be a 30% reduction in Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder symptoms in children playing in nature rather than the urban outdoors and the reduction is ten times greater compared with indoor activities.
8. Access to nature, or even a nature video, has been shown to reduce stress, blood pressure and muscle tension.

We would like our wood to be enjoyed by the community, and to be a peaceful and relaxing place to spend some time.

And finally

In the same articles, it was revealed that in the year 2006/7, no less than 1067 children were admitted to a hospital casualty department after falling out of trees but this must be compared to 2532 who were similarly admitted after falling out of bed!

If anyone has any comments or queries regarding this Newsletter or the wood generally, please write or e-mail our Clerk, Michael Bourne. We would appreciate response from members to let us know whether we are heading in the right direction.

Contact us:

Ernest Croley; Tel 01829-260344

2 The Square, Bunbury, Cheshire CW6 9PW

E-mail ernest.croley@homecall.co.uk

Michael Bourne; Tel 01829-260944

Long Acre, Wyche Lane, Bunbury, Cheshire CW6 9PS

E-mail mjbourne249@tiscali.co.uk

Newsletter Editor Mike Bourne

Website address www.sadlerswellswood.co.uk

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