

Sadlers Wells Community Woodland

Registered Charity Number 1105117



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Heritage Lottery Fund

Newsletter No. 10 – Spring 2011

Five years on

It is now five years since the Trust acquired Sadlers Wells Wood in January 2006 and it is wonderful to see how the new plantation has grown. It is difficult to believe now that the trees we planted then barely appeared over the tops of their protective tubes. Some must now be getting on for around fifteen feet in height and at this rate will need thinning long before the usual fifteen year period is up. The survival rate has also, so far, been very high and well above average.

Bridges have been built over the stream and over the old ditch in the new plantation to make a circular path. It is hoped that regular use will compact the surface over time but there are plans under consideration to make a few improvements in the near future where appropriate.

It is our intention also to improve both parts of the wood for wildlife. Nearly fifty nest boxes have been put up around the wood, some provided by Bunbury Cubs and others purchased with the aid of a grant from the Cheshire EConet project. Proper English bluebells were planted a couple of years ago to supplement those we already had which were a mixture of true bluebells in the middle of the wood and hybrids nearer the entrance from Sadlers Wells. We hope that the new bluebells will increase over the next few years but no doubt squirrels and other furry friends will take their toll. It was encouraging that bluebells have already appeared and flowered in the new plantation; these must have been there when we took over but heavily grazed by the cattle and not readily visible.

During the next five years, we look to improving the biodiversity of the wood (that is encouraging more variety in the plants, birds, animals and insects) and to improvements in the footpaths.

We intend to have a small celebration in the Wood during the summer and details will be sent out in due course by e-mail to those of you whose addresses we have and notices will be put on the Notice Boards.

Spring visitors – Chiffchaffs and Willow Warblers

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. One of the first visitors to arrive in our area is the chiffchaff who can frequently be heard calling out his name from the tops of various trees from early March. It is not nowadays unusual for the odd chiffchaff and also the occasional blackcap to overwinter here, and save themselves the long journey to Africa and back. The chiffchaff itself is a bird whose call stands out from all others but its plumage is relatively quiet with a grey-brown back, pale undersides and a pale eye stripe. It is very difficult, even for experts, to distinguish it from its cousin the willow warbler which is slightly more buff underneath, slightly larger and with a slightly more prominent eye stripe. A willow warbler has a more melodious warbling song and the two are usually distinguished by their calls, particularly as chiffchaffs often like to sit at the top of trees.

Introducing the trustees **No. 7 Alyson Thacker**

The head of Bunbury Aldersey Primary School is a nominated Trustee of the Charity in view of the close contacts with the School and their use of the wood as part of the children's education; Alyson is the current head teacher having taken over from Alison Phillips a couple of years ago. She was brought up in Winsford and went to University in Birmingham; she is married with two sons.

Her principal hobby is music and is a semi-professional singer who has in the past played a number of leading roles in musicals and operettas. She has also sung as a soloist with several local choirs around the area.

She and her husband are at present renovating a house in France.

Closure of the lower path and subsequent tree damage

We unfortunately had to close part of the lower path just before Christmas as a cherry tree some sixty feet in height was leaning over the path and showing signs of instability, as shown in the photograph. You

can see the gap at the top right hand side of the tree showing that the crown of the tree had moved. Safety precautions therefore demanded the closure of the path until the situation had been investigated. We called on Bob Price as a qualified forester to come and have a look at it and he confirmed that it would have to come down. We next had to notify Cheshire East as the whole of the old wood is subject to a Tree Preservation Order. Whilst technically a dangerous tree can be removed without consent, it is always wise where possible to get the local authority to agree that the tree concerned is dangerous to avoid any later dispute. Their consent was soon obtained and the services of our usual tree surgeon were arranged for Tuesday 8th February for the tree to be cut down.

When we arrived at the wood early in the morning to meet the tree surgeon, it was found that the high winds the previous day had caused considerable further damage. The cherry tree was still standing but there were now cracks in the ground to show that its roots had started to move. Collapse was therefore imminent and action was urgent. It was therefore necessary to take the tree down completely to ground level, although we had previously hoped to leave some ten feet or so of the trunk to coppice it and give it chance to sprout again.

In addition two mature holly trees at the entrance to the wood had blown over and were blocking the top path, and two old dead ivy covered trees at the far end of the wood nearest to the main road had also blown over and were leaning across the boundary. The tree surgeon was fortunately able to cut up and deal with these four casualties at the same time as the cherry.

An old ash tree adjacent to the new plantation also blew right over and fortunately was lying on the ground between the stream and the path so it was not in anyone's way. The kestrel box put up there four years ago came down with the tree and was found to contain an old squirrel drey. The box will be put up elsewhere after refurbishment but there may not be anywhere else suitable at the edge of the wood to attract kestrels. If it goes up in the middle of the wood, we shall have to wait and see who uses it.

Our prickly friend – the hedgehog

The humble hedgehog has been around for some 15,000,000 years, far longer than man. It always seems to have been associated with man from early times. In Babylon, it was linked to the goddess Ishtar and to the ancient Egyptians, it symbolised reincarnation. To the Anglo-Saxons, it was known as an il from the German igel. Their Gaelic name 'graineog' apparently means the horrible one and it was not until the fourteenth Century that the name 'hyeghog' appeared

and this mutated into highoggs, hedgepigs, hoghogs and fuzzipegs. The alternative name of urchin is said to be of Roman origin.

Many legends were built around hedgehogs, mostly without any foundation in fact; They were said to be able to forecast the direction of the wind, to be immune to snake bite, to steal apples and eggs and suckle milk from cows lying down in a field. They however rarely eat fruit nor do they hoard food for the winter, but rely on body fat to see them through hibernation. Milk causes them stomach problems so that it is better to put out dog or cat food if providing food for them. They were considered such a problem in the past that they were persecuted for centuries. Under the Vermin Act of 1532, a bounty of 4d was put on each hedgehog worth over £5 in today's money. They were killed in their thousands but are now given protection under the Wildlife & Countryside Act of 1981. They are themselves occasionally killed by foxes and badgers but their main predator these days is the motor car with many (an estimated 15,000) dying on the roads each year.

People have eaten hedgehogs in the past and gypsies apparently at one time believed that parts of a cooked hedgehog could cure partial blindness, boils, baldness and leprosy. There was also a belief that a cooked hedgehog could cure fits.

Hedgehogs are mainly nocturnal but can be seen around dusk and dawn, especially when feeding up for the winter. They like woodland, hedgerows and gardens. They eat many garden pests such as slugs, caterpillars, and insect larvae. They do take eggs and have proved a problem on some outlying islands taking eggs from nests of waders and other ground nesting birds. They have been known to kill snakes on rare occasions.

Hedgehogs are related, not to porcupines and other spiny mammals, but to shrews and voles. Mating to preserve the species does present a problem but the sow hedgehog has the ability to flatten the spines on her back to make herself accessible. Four or five young are born some five weeks later; at first, the young are pink and smooth but the first spines appear after a few days and the mother will lead them out to forage after three weeks or so. Their initial set of spikes is followed by a set of tougher, harder spines and then the hard longer adult spikes. Hedgehogs do not moult but replace their spines continually throughout their life, a spine lasting about eighteen months.

Helping the Environment

Would you like to help the local environment in a positive way? We are

looking for people to help look after and promote the wood. No special skills are needed, simply enthusiasm, an interest in the natural environment and a willingness to do something for the Village. Only a few hours a year would be involved so that the commitment would not be onerous and several of the jobs could be done at a time to suit.

Volunteers would be greatly appreciated. Please contact either Ernest or myself – details at the end of this Newsletter.

Friends of the Wood

The annual subscription is a minimum of £5-00 each and the 2011/12 subscription **is 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. Please treat this as your subscription reminder. Early payment would be greatly appreciated and payment can be made with the slip at the end of this Newsletter either to Ernest Croley or Michael Bourne 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.

Make a friend a Friend

The tree damage this year has cost the Charity around £350 and will mean that this year income will exceed expenditure by an estimated £600-00. Fortunately, we do not have as much tree damage normally and at present we have sufficient funds in hand to meet the present liability. We clearly however must ensure that income matches expenditure and one way to do this would be to recruit at least another 100 Friends of the Wood. A couple of hundred Friends from the Village should not be too much to expect and, if every existing Friend could recruit another (more than one if possible), we would go a long way to achieving the number we need to make the Charity self-funding. Not much is likely to be available in grants in the current economic climate and they are normally only available for specific projects rather meeting general running costs, which is what

we need to cover.

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, and cheques should be made payable to Sadlers Wells Community Woodland.

A final thought

A civilisation flourishes when people plant trees under which they will never sit.

Greek proverb

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.

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.

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Trustees of the Charity Ernest Croley (Chairman), Michael Bourne (Clerk), Bob Price,

Tony Gentil, Eric Lord, Alyson Thacker and Dr Katherine Hutchinson.

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Friends of Sadlers Wells Wood -- Subscription 2011/12

Name(s)	Amount (min. £5 per person)
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Cheques should be made payable to Sadlers Wells Community Woodland.