

Friends of Towerhouse Wood and of Moorend Spout

Newsletter for summer 2011

This time, in addition to the report on progress at Moorend Spout, I am devoting some space to the Woodland Trust (who own Towerhouse Wood) and to the Forest of Avon Trust (promoting woodland and tree planting in this area, Towerhouse Wood being part of the Forest of Avon). Both of these groups deserve our support in their work. We are also trying to encourage interest in the newly launched North Somerset Tree Warden scheme. Other local groups that help us in our work include the Bristol Naturalists' Society www.bristolnats.org.uk/, the Avon Wildlife Trust www.avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/ and the North Somerset Wildlife Wardens <http://e-voice.org.uk/nspww/>

Moorend Spout

This year we have succeeded in having the cut hay removed from the field. The farmer made about 100 bales from a very large crop. It is necessary to continue with this in order to reduce the nutrient status of the ground to encourage the flowering plants, at the expense of the grasses. It may take 10 years (or even more) of hay crops to achieve this.

NEWT has now submitted a planning application for the establishment of five ponds on the field. This has been organised by Helen Iorwerth (one of our trustees) who can produce maps to the specification required. It has been difficult to satisfy the Environment



Agency that our plan will not impede the flow of water from the site, causing possible flooding. However I believe that we have now reached a satisfactory compromise for this problem, by piling the spoil against the banks of the Land Yeo, which will also serve to strengthen them. We now hope for formal approval from North Somerset Council for our planning application. The statutory bodies involved (Environment Agency, Internal Drainage Board, North Somerset Council and Nailsea Town Council) have been generally supportive of our plans.

We have been able to open up the



Hay making at Moorend Spout
4th July 2011

small stream flowing in a 'mini-ravine' or 'gully' from the carr towards the west, and this provides an interesting landscape feature which we could develop eventually into another pond. ('Carr' is a local term for wet woodland, usually with alder and willow.)

We are very grateful to all of our volunteers and trustees for their hard work in managing this site. Special thanks should be given to Ian Chambers for organising the workdays.

If you would like to be involved please contact Terry Smith (854317), Hilary West (853079) or Ian Chambers (463315) or email t.a.smith@blueyonder.co.uk (other photographs of our recent activities can be seen on our website www.newt.btck.co.uk).

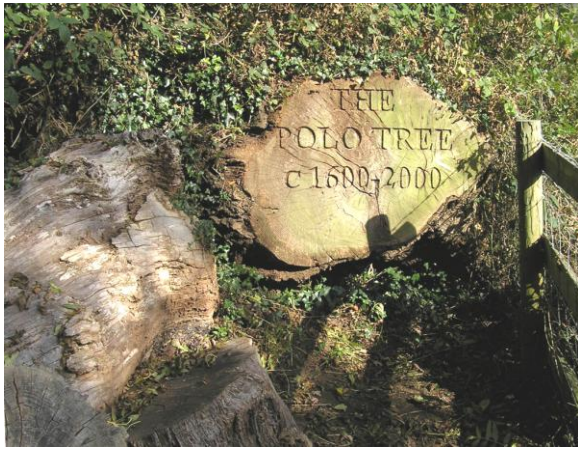
We meet regularly on the first Saturday of each month starting at the entrance to the footpath signposted to Moorend Spout on Pound Lane at **10 am**. Our next workday is on **Saturday 6th August**. If there is doubt about the weather you are advised to phone Ian, Hilary or myself before coming.



Visit of Old Church WI group to Moorend Spout
Photograph by Hilary West 2nd July 2011

The Woodland Trust

Established in 1972, the Woodland Trust is the UK's leading woodland conservation charity. Over nearly 40 years, the Trust has acquired more than 1,000 woodland sites covering over 20,000 hectares (50,000 acres). The Trust also has over 300,000 members and supporters in this work.



The Polo Oak seat in Towerhouse Wood

The Woodland Trust's founder was retired farmer and agricultural machinery producer, Kenneth Watkins. Concerned about the rapidly disappearing small broadleaved woods, spinneys and copses which had been plundered during the 2nd World War or planted with softwoods, he started the Trust with the assistance of three friends in 1972 and built up the Trust's membership with his wife, Mary, from their farm in Devon.

The first woods the Trust acquired were in the south-west of England and soon the Trust owned over 40 hectares (100 acres). However, Kenneth always had plans to expand the Trust outside the South West region. By 1977, the Trust's landholdings had increased to over 22 woods, within six different counties, and by 1978, the

Trust had announced its intention to operate UK-wide. At the same time it took on its first full-time employee, John James, as development director. In 1981 the Trust's headquarters moved from Kenneth's kitchen to a new office in Grantham, near where John lived.

The aims of the Trust are -

- To enable the creation of more native woods and places rich in trees
- To protect native woods, trees and their wildlife for the future
- To inspire everyone to enjoy and value woods and trees

The Trust bought Towerhouse Wood in 1992 with local financial support, most significantly from Nailsea Town Council, Wraxall and Failand Parish Council, the Countryside Commission and many local benefactors. A notable donation was provided by Freda Henry, who now has a stile dedicated to her name to the south of the main footpath.

The 16 acres of ancient woodland is on a south facing slope, to the north of the Land Yeo. The Polo Oak tree fell in the year 2000, and was restored as a seat overlooking Birdcombe valley with funds provided by YANSEC, the distributors of the Community Landfill Tax in this area at that time (other photographs of the Wood can be seen on www.nailseanature.org.uk).

The Woodland is now supervised by Jon Burgess, the Site Manager for Avon and Somerset for the Woodland Trust. Over the last 10 years, we have given conducted tours of the Wood, and Jeffery Boswall, a former BBC wildlife producer, has led annual Dawn Chorus walks in May. We have had demonstrations of charcoal making, wood turning and Hazel coppicing.

Towerhouse Wood is now managed as a low-intervention ancient semi-natural woodland. There are many invasive alien trees and plants, especially in the north section of the Wood (notably Rhododendron, Portugal Laurel, Box Honeysuckle and Turkey Oak), and work is continuing to eliminate these as far as possible. Among many tasks, we remove litter from the Wood, open the paths for access, monitor Dormice and try to prevent damage to the trees. For further information about the Woodland Trust go to <http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk>.



Bluebells in Towerhouse Wood

The Forest of Avon Trust

During the last 15 years over a million trees have been planted within 10 miles of Bristol, as part of the Forest of Avon. This far-sighted work created many green spaces to enjoy and will make a very real contribution to the quality of life of our area in the future

The Forest of Avon Trust was established in 2008 as the local charity to keep this planting going for many years to come, involve as many people as possible in this and to improve and safeguard existing woodlands. The Trust operates in the Bristol & West area (Avon) and also southern Gloucestershire and northern Somerset.

The Trust is fully independent and funded from sources including sponsorship, membership of the Friend's scheme, grants, fees and donations. Work for the people and environment of the local area is expanding.

The objectives of the Trust are to -

- Promote and demonstrate the many benefits of trees to as wide a range of people as possible;
- Get trees planted individually, in gardens, streets, green spaces or as woodlands, with a strong focus on areas of low tree cover;
- Improve the management of woodlands and help safeguard these where they are under threat.

Current work includes -

- Free Trees scheme - free trees and advice to local communities to plant and take action, 2,000 provided as part of 7 schemes 2010/11;
- The Garden Forest - free trees and advice in areas of low tree cover, to raise awareness and improve local amenity; six areas targeted and supported in 2010/11;
- Tree Dedication Scheme - funding from people dedicating trees to support the maintenance of three accessible community woodlands;
- Natural Connections - a 3 year Big Lottery funded programme to work with people with mental health needs and demonstrate the benefits of the natural environment to them;
- Wood School - activities with pre- school and primary children in school grounds and local woodlands to engage them (and their parents) in the natural environment and to support learning; 12 schemes delivered in 2010/11.
- Advice - woodland planting and management advice, including retention of public access within new woodlands; 14 farmers advised in 2010/11.



For further information on the Forest of Avon go to <http://forestofavontrust.org> or contact Jon Clark (Executive Director) tel. 0117 9633383 email jonclark@forestofavontrust.org
The Estate Office, Ashton Court Estate, Bristol BS41 9JN

Tree Wardens

In 2009 the Forest of Avon went through a period of change, and could no longer co-ordinate the network. This has meant that existing tree wardens have been left with little direction or support, and numbers have dwindled. North Somerset Council's Tree Officers (Ian Monger, Jason Cox and Linda Saretok), with the help of David Glynn (Wrington Parish Council) and the input of the Tree Council, have taken up the challenge of giving the tree warden network renewed life.

We plan to re-launch the tree warden scheme in North Somerset, and we now need to have the support of the public. We hope to have a stronger and larger network up and running, and there is now a small steering group to help plan the direction of the network over the coming years. Our aim is for every parish and town to have its own active tree warden, with more in our urban areas.

A tree warden is a volunteer who champions his or her local trees.

They:

- are the eyes and ears of their neighbourhoods;
- play an active role in protecting and improving the treescape;
- report to the parish or town council;
- provide a link with North Somerset Council Tree Officers;
- engage their local community, schools and other groups to plant and care for trees
- work in whatever way they choose;
- fit the work they do within their abilities and around their other commitments;
- do not need to be experts;
- will be provided with support and training to help them in their role as a tree warden;
- do need to be passionate about trees, their local environment and local community.

All parish and town councils have been asked to consider appointing one or more tree wardens. The network will also be open to other groups or people who may wish to be independent of parish and town councils. Your involvement, if you can give it, is very much needed.

It is planned to launch the scheme on **Saturday 10 September 2011** - bringing together the newly-formed North Somerset Tree Warden network for the first time.

- The event will be led by Jon Stokes and North Somerset Council's Tree Officers.
- Every tree warden will receive a starter pack and details of the training programme for the first year.
- There will be ample opportunity to discuss and explore some key tree issues, such as planting, legal protection and tree ownership.



This is the sort of problem that Tree Wardens can solve!

Throughout 2011/12 NSC's Tree Officers will be launching 'North Somerset's Favourite Tree' competition, inviting residents, community groups and schools to send in photos and details of their favourite tree.

- Favourite trees should hold a special place in the minds of the community, should tell a story, mark a moment in history, or simply stand out for all to see.
- The Tree Officers will judge and announce the winning favourite tree of each parish or town, and the very best twelve trees in the whole of North Somerset will then be announced from these winners.

We will be staging a number of training and awareness sessions for wardens during 2011 and 2012 for all ages, beginning with Tree Planting. Other events being planned include Tree Law, Tree Planting, Common Diseases and Winter Tree Identification.



Hilary West and Ines Hughes with some of the Himalayan Balsam from Spilsbury Wood.

Ian Monger (NSC Senior Tree Officer) will be glad to answer your questions by email tree.wardens@n-somerset.gov.uk

Himalayan Balsam

As a result of the work of three groups of volunteers over the last four years, we have almost completely removed the dense stand of Himalayan Balsam that was found in Spilsbury wood. However we subsequently found that it was rampant in a garden to the north of this area, and we have been concentrating our efforts on removing it there for the last two seasons. We are

very anxious to prevent this alien from entering Towerhouse Wood where it could out-compete the bluebells and other native species. It is well known to colonize the banks of rivers, and for the same reason we must prevent establishment in the Land Yeo near to Moorend Spout. Seed lasts for at least two years in the ground, so we must expect to continue monitoring these areas and to remove further growth for several years to come. Please let me know if you are able to help in the elimination of this aggressive alien.

Dormice in Towerhouse Wood

We are fairly certain that there are Dormice here, as Gill Brown has found convincing evidence for their activity in the use of the 20 nesting boxes that have been provided. Gill says that she still looks forward to the time when she will actually hold a 'Towerhouse Dormouse'. This spring the Dormouse boxes were well used by birds, several nests of Blue Tits and one of Wrens fledged successfully. This is quite usual, and Dormice often move into the boxes once the birds have moved out.

Meanwhile we must thank Gill for her perseverance in monitoring these boxes monthly from May to October.

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This is Himalayan Balsam