

# Newsletter for the Friends of Towerhouse Wood and of Moorend Spout

January 2013

On 1<sup>st</sup> December NEWT planted about 50 saplings on Moorend Spout, mainly Alder and Willow to extend the carr. The ground was very wet and there should be no problem in establishing these plants, at least for the present. Later in that week we planted 12 saplings in Spilsbury Wood, mainly Hazel to encourage the dormice which we know are present in the neighbouring Towerhouse Wood. This work was in association with members of the Southfield Road Church. All of these trees were financed by Nailsea Town Council.

I understand from Jon Burgess (Woodland Trust) that we will soon have steps leading from the top path toward the pond, financed by the Forestry Commission. Jon also tells me that he hopes to install a new seat on the upper path (with a back rest!) to replace the single bench made by Piers from a railway sleeper. This is expect to be financed by an anonymous donor and made from timber sourced from a Woodland Trust wood in the SE. [It would have a small plaque with wording provided by the donor.](#)

The ground has been far too wet to consider the excavation of the ponds at Moorend Spout and hopefully we will be able to start that project in 2013.

I am attaching two articles to this Newsletter, both as .pdf files. 'The Hydrology of Nailsea' has implications for Moorend Spout and for Towerhouse Wood. This article is still in a draft form and I would be grateful for any comments, corrections or additions.

The article on Beatrix Potter may not be directly relevant but I believe that the accomplishments of this lady are still not fully appreciated. The article below is quite topical and in it I try to draw attention to the possibility that other native trees might be propagated to provide trees to supplement those Ash which are likely to be lost to the Ash die-back. I also list some of the diseases which are threatening our woodland trees. Any reports of Ash die-back should be sent to the Forestry Commission ([plant.health@forestry.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:plant.health@forestry.gsi.gov.uk); tel: 01904465625 )

## **How can we restore our woodlands if the Ash tree is lost?**

The Ash tree is the UK's third most abundant species of broadleaf tree (after oak and birch), covering 129,000 hectares of woodland. The appearance of Ash die-back (*Chalara fraxinea*) in the English countryside is a worrying development. The loss of our tree cover will be comparable with the demise of the Elm tree in the 1970s. Over 5% of our trees are Ash. Ash die-back was first identified in 1992 in Poland, and has now spread across Europe. An estimate in 2010 showed that between 60 and 90% of the Ash trees in Denmark have been affected by this disease and may eventually be killed. Natural resistance seems to be found in (at most) 5% of the Ash trees studied, but the process of selection and testing resistant Ash trees to replace those lost to the disease is likely to take decades. Vegetative propagation of disease resistant Ash trees is costly and time consuming, since cuttings apparently do not root easily. Micro-vegetative propagation is capital intensive and requires skilled operatives. At present the only suggested remedy is to remove and destroy any infected trees, since there are no known means of treating the disease once it has entered the plants.

The reason why this disease has arisen at this time is still unknown, but it may be due to hybridization of two related fungi, normally geographically separated but which have been allowed to interact due to the common practice of global plant translocation. Climate change may also be implicated. Of course with hindsight it would have been wise to ban imports of Ash trees several years ago, and the same should be said of many of the other plants now

being imported without good reason. Indeed my own garden is full of Ash seedlings, so there is no justification for this. However even without importations, the disease might have entered the country by windblown spores, and the present distribution, which is mainly to the east of England close to mainland Europe, seems to support this.

If we are unable to control this disease, with the predicted demise of the Ash tree in England, one might ask 'What can be done to mitigate the projected loss in tree cover?' If we can afford to be patient, natural regeneration is cost effective, but it may take many years to restore our Ash trees. It is possible that Ash may be replaced by semi-native plants like Sycamore, although this much maligned tree has much to commend it, since it grows fast and has good timber and it supports a large biomass, which in turn supports many of our native wildlife species.

It is suggested that other hardwood trees could be propagated to fill the spaces, at least temporarily (for the next 50 - 100 years, until the Ash has developed resistance!).

Species which might be candidates for Ash replacement in addition to Sycamore are Beech, English Oak, Cherry, Silver Birch, Rowan and Small-leaved Lime, which are all fast growing and produce good timber. Apart from Lime, most can be grown from seed, but cuttings of Small-leaved Lime taken from epicormic growth in May or June are said to root readily. I would encourage others to consider propagating these trees as alternatives to Ash so that we are prepared for any major loss of our tree cover.

The Woodland Trust is working on *Chalara* but they are not yet able to finalize their conclusions. Together with the Forestry Commission (FC), they are debating which trees should now be planted, in view of the prevailing tree diseases and of global warming. The FC is considering sourcing seed from countries to the south of Europe where the trees may be more tolerant of hotter conditions.

Other notable tree diseases and pests listed by the Forestry Commission include -

Acute oak decline - a condition affecting oak trees in parts of England and Wales, in which bacteria, including one species previously unknown to science, are believed to be involved.

Asian longhorn beetle - A wood-boring insect that can cause extensive damage to a range of urban and forest broadleaved trees.

Bleeding canker of horse chestnut caused by the bacterium *Pseudomonas syringae* pathovar *aesculi* - a bacterium that kills many horse chestnut trees.

Chestnut blight, a highly damaging disease caused by the fungus *Cryphonectria parasitica*, which was confirmed in sweet chestnut trees in two nut orchards in Warwickshire and East Sussex in 2011.

Dothistroma needle blight - Formerly known as red band needle blight, and caused by the *Dothistroma septosporum* fungus. Causes mortality and loss of timber yield in pine trees.

Main host is Corsican pine, but lodgepole and Scots pine also increasingly affected.

Great spruce bark beetle (*Dendroctonus micans*) - is present throughout much of the Eurasian region, practically everywhere that spruce trees grow. It was first discovered in Britain in 1982.

Horse chestnut leaf miner (*Cameraria ohridella*) - first found in Britain in 2002 in London, this moth's range has expanded to much of England and Wales.

Oak pinhole borer (*Platypus cylindrus*) - once rare in Britain, populations grew in the south after the 1987 gales, when it took advantage of the glut of suitable breeding material.

Oak processionary moth (*Thaumetopoea processionea*) - severely defoliates oak trees and can weaken them, making them susceptible to other pests and diseases. Outbreaks in west London and Berkshire.

*Phytophthora austrocedrae* - Confirmed as the cause of dieback and deaths of juniper bushes in Northern England in 2011, this pathogen had previously been almost solely associated with

Chilean cedar trees in South America. Juniper's conservation importance makes this a potentially serious development.

*Phytophthora kernoviae* - so far confirmed only in Britain, Ireland and New Zealand, and only in a very few trees. However, the fact that it can infect beech and oak, as well as woodland under-storey species such as bilberry and rhododendron, makes it a forestry concern.

*Phytophthora lateralis* - usually kills most Lawson cypress trees that it infects. First recorded in UK, in Scotland, in 2010, now present in Devon, Yorkshire, Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland.

*Phytophthora ramorum* - a fungus-like organism which attacks many trees and plants. The economically important larch is a host, and large numbers have had to be felled.

Pine tree lappet moth (*Dendrolimus pini*) - has been discovered breeding in Inverness-shire pine plantation forests. It can be a serious defoliator of pines and other conifer trees in some parts of its native range in Europe and Russia.

In addition other diseases which have not yet reached the UK but which may soon enter include -

Plane canker stain (*Ceratocystis platani*) introduced to France from the USA in the 1940s which is killing many Plane trees on continental Europe.

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There seems to be some confusion over the pronunciation of Chalara

Etymology: New Latin, from feminine singular of Greek *chalaros* slack, loose, from *chalan* to loosen, relax; "A genus of imperfect fungi (family Dematiaceae) that reproduce by terminally discharged endospores, one species (*C. fraxinea*) causing the destructive Ash wilt disease"

Some pronounce the 'ch' as in 'church', 'cheese' or 'cherry', often used (I believe incorrectly) on the BBC

There is no sound of 'ch' in Greek. 'Chi' is pronounced as 'h', but 'chalara' is probably from 'kappa' (K).

I believe that it should be pronounced 'k' as in 'choir', 'cholera' or 'chemistry'.

Perhaps this is not important, but it does help in communicating if there is standardization.

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As before, please tell me if you no longer wish to receive the Newsletter.

I would welcome contributions on any aspect of natural history, especially those relevant to Towerhouse Wood or Moorend Spout. Any offer to compile the Newsletter in the future would also be gratefully received.

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[www.newt.btck.co.uk](http://www.newt.btck.co.uk)

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/thingstodo/activities?find-type=location&search-for=Nailsea>

[www.nailseanature.org.uk](http://www.nailseanature.org.uk)

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nature\\_Reserves\\_in\\_Nailsea](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nature_Reserves_in_Nailsea)