



## FRIENDS OF ASHENGROUND AND BOLNORE WOODS

CONSERVATION : PROTECTION : ENHANCEMENT : ENJOYMENT

### Newsletter – Summer/Autumn 2011



**The new Gate at the Ashenground Entrance to the Nature Reserve  
(the notice states ‘Welcome to the Ashenground and Bolnore Woods Nature Reserve’)**

This year summer has been something of an enigma but the woods have as always seen the deciduous trees produce abundant green foliage to provide the summer canopy, and our many summer wildflowers have been on show attracting the butterflies and insects that are part of the eco system apparent in our woods.

FoABW is very pleased that the bridleway upgrade has finally been completed and that in addition we now have a brand new 13 foot wide gate at the Ashenground Road entrance to the Nature Reserve. See the back page for more details of this project. In the past the coppicing and clearing carried out in ancient woodland enabled the wood to be used for a wide variety of items, both large and small. This edition of the newsletter focuses on the **use that has been made of some of the coppiced wood from our woods over time**, including the very recent use that Bolnore Arts have made of oak from Ashenground Wood. It is common knowledge now that the introduction of foreign species of flora and fauna into an area can cause significant problems for native species – on p. 3 Gill Rogers talks about **Himalyan Balsam** and its effect on the environment. Lorraine is continuing to record sightings (and ‘soundings’) of birds in our woods and she is also making a record of the flora and other fauna – see p. 3.

**Janice Tipping**

### Wanted – Newsletter Deliverers

Sadly, three of our most steadfast and loyal deliverers have had to give up because of ill health. If you think you can help, please give me a call on 415339. I need someone (or two) to do Lower Village and Village Heights in Bolnore Village, and one or two to do Sheppeys, Sunnywood Drive and Wood Ride. It only happens three times a year, and numbers per road are fairly low as the newsletter is only delivered to our members. It does help if you can pick up your bundle from me (59 Sussex Road), but it’s not essential!

**Gill Rogers**

## Projects using Wood

Over the years we have coppiced parts of our woods as part of the management plan. In the past activities such as coppicing in woodlands provided a vital, continuous supply of wood products. This had the side effect of continually creating new glades in woodlands to replace those which had grown over with time. This encouraged great biodiversity in the coppiced woodlands. Wildflowers, grasses and bramble would progressively colonize each new glade as the tree canopy opened up. The animal species associated with these plants would also then follow.



Following these traditions, we have tried to put the wood we have coppiced to good use. When we have added items such as benches to the woods we have always tried to source the wood from either our own woods or other local woods. For example, the bench by the local railway used local oak for the top and Sussex oak from a wood near Sedlescombe for the legs. The two benches at the crossroads used oak tops and chestnut legs supplied by BTCV sourced from Kent. The two perches beside the railway track used local oak for the tops and our own chestnut for the legs. The two recent perches in the big glade (above) used our own oak for the tops and our own chestnut for the tops.

As you know we have a number of notice boards at the various entrances to the woods. They all used wood from our woods for the legs. Some of the birch is sadly deteriorating fast and will need replacing.

The 'anti trample fence units' that we featured in our last newsletter again used our own chestnut for both the rails and the legs. You will have seen the dead hedges we have made using tree branches.

A very interesting and imaginative recent project by Bolnore Arts made very good use of wood. Read Louise Smith's article about this work below:

**Janice Tipping**

### ***Arty Oak Furniture from Ashenground Wood***

**Bolnore Arts** is a group of volunteers that want to make our community an even better place to live using art. This last couple of months we have been lucky enough to be running a project working with professional artists from Touchwood Trees, FoABW, MSDC and BVRA to create beautiful pieces of oak furniture for the Bolnore Village Hall site. Thanks to all those of you who have helped make this happen. This will be a legacy for our community and use wood from our lovely woods.

One rainy 5 o'clock start with the birds singing, saw a forest path-friendly forwarder enter the woods over Ashenground Bridge, and carefully extract the old oak by an extremely skilled operator, who made lifting enormous logs look like a child stacking little bridges. Very impressive!



The logs were then moved to the Recreation Ground in Bolnore for milling on site, then the milled pieces were lifted by manpower to the Village Hall site by kind and very strong Bolnore men folk! We also had some pieces milled to FoABW specification for use as benches in the woods.

The milled pieces are now being shaped, sanded and transformed into four pieces of furniture. The first is a substantial long low table with the large trunks making the table top, the second a miniature child size piece, beautifully and naturally shaped with logs for seats, the third piece is a bar/high table

style and the fourth a long low table with lovely shaped benches.



These pieces will be completed this summer and will enhance the village hall site that we have transformed into a garden that the community can use until we have raised funds to build the Village Hall. Look out for pictures of the completed furniture and gardens next time!

Building our community and having fun making strong supportive links are key to our group, we're here to make friends and friendships stronger and hopefully pick up a skill two. We are always looking for people to get involved and have volunteers from all walks of life, people with and without children and of all ages. If you'd like to hear more, please get in touch.

**Louise Smith, Chair Bolnore Arts**  
[maglousmith@hotmail.com](mailto:maglousmith@hotmail.com)

## Himalayan Balsam - aka Policeman's Helmet

Plants and the insects that feed off them live in an uneasy state of truce – the plant builds up chemical defences to deter most creatures, but insects adapt to find ways round this. When plants (or animals) are introduced into a new country they sometimes have no predators, and can flourish unchecked. It takes hundreds of years for such plants to become naturalised, with their own array of dependant creatures. The sycamore has been here for hundreds of years, but has less than a tenth of dependent organisms than the oak, which has been here since the end of the ice age.

Himalayan Balsam was introduced from the Himalayas over 150 years ago. It has blocked water courses all over the country, and grows in most Sussex streams, including our own. Nothing eats it, and it has a brilliantly successful method of seed

dispersal – the ripe pods burst open at the slightest touch, scattering seed for yards. We pull up as much as we can before it flowers to avoid spreading the seed, knowing we can't get rid of it – it grows higher up the water course, so the seeds will come down to us on the water. The picture below shows Himalayan Balsam in Ashenground Wood – pretty but damaging to our environment.



We should thank members of the Vale Road allotments for their recent blitz on the plants growing along the Fel Stream. This water flows into our stream lower down, and in the past has carried the seeds with it. We hope this will make a difference next year!

**Gill Rogers**

## Bird Watching and Listening

Easter Monday saw some of us on the bridge in the early morning for a Bird Watch, ably led by Phil Clay. As hoped, Phil was able to identify a large number of birds in our woods, primarily by having a wealth of expertise and experience about their songs.

Lorraine is continuing to record bird sightings and soundings in our woods – and she is grateful to those of you who have contacted her. Familiar and unfamiliar birds are all of interest (phone Lorraine on 450997 or email [petal1948@aol.com](mailto:petal1948@aol.com) with your sightings). Lorraine keeps a very full record of the whats, wheres and whens to help us monitor the bird population over time and also makes a note of other wildlife reported and of the flora. She reports that there have been lots of sightings of juveniles this quarter – a very good sign for our woods as birds are clearly nesting and rearing young there. A special favourite of Lorraine's is the Song Thrush – she often hears its glorious song as she walks in the woods and wonders how it finds time to feed!

## The Great Gate

This gate was designed by Stuart Meier, built by craftsmen from **Wholewoods** led by Adrian Leaman using traditional woodworking techniques, and sponsored by Crest Nicholson. Wholewoods is an ethical business supporting traditional woodland crafts and sustainable woodland management. Prince Charles visited the craftsmen while they built the gate and declared he was 'very impressed'. The design was inspired by the field gates shown on the 1638 map of the area. It is thought by the craftsmen to be the largest handmade gate of its type constructed in living memory - they are normally only 8 to 10 feet wide but ours is 13 feet wide and 8 feet high.



These young people featured in an article in the Middy about the grand reopening of the bridleway

## Bug Hunt and Count



On the 25<sup>th</sup> June our annual **Bug Hunt** led by Dr Martin Hall took place. This time Martin linked participants into a special project called '**OPAL Bugs Count**'. **Opal** stands for open air laboratory and the bugs count is designed to help scientists learn more about the distribution of invertebrates across the country. (See The Natural History Museum website to find out more) Bugs found on the hunt were classified and recorded by participants on special sheets – at the end of the hunt the completed sheets were returned to Martin for inclusion in the national project. There was much excitement as those attending 'captured' various bugs in special nets and upside down umbrellas. Needless to say, the bugs were returned to the place in which they were found. Thanks to all those who took part – we hope the children enjoyed the special survey packs that Martin provided for them to take home with them.

## Conservation Work and Special Events

See our **Programmes** on the **notice boards** on the Bridge at the Ashenground Road entrance to the woods, and at the entrances to Pierce's, Catts and Bolnore Woods. Do take a look at our **website** for our Newsletters and Programmes plus photographs and details of special events.  
[www.foabw.com](http://www.foabw.com)

We invite you to join us to help with **Conservation Work**. We meet each month on the **1st Sunday** (meeting place Ashenground Bridge) and **3rd Saturday** (meeting place the Thatched Cottage in Bolnore Village). Meeting time 10.00 a.m. The work we do is very varied and you do not need to have any expertise or bring any tools. We have a refreshment break.

For all our events, children must be accompanied by an adult who must take responsibility for their welfare and behaviour. If you have any **ideas for special events** then do get in touch – we want to identify activities that our members and others will enjoy.

General Information – Contact Janice on 01444 414053 or 07752 003529  
Membership - Fleur Carey on 01444 473179

*Published by Friends of Ashenground and Bolnore Woods, c/o Janice Tipping, 17 Pinewood Way, Haywards Heath, West Sussex, RH16 4JU, 01444 414053 or 07752 003529*