



FRIENDS OF ASHENGROUND AND BOLNORE WOODS

CONSERVATION : PROTECTION : ENHANCEMENT : ENJOYMENT

Newsletter – Winter 2010/11



A carpet of Autumn leaves in the November sunshine

With winter upon us our woods enter another phase in their annual cycle. The ever changing woodland vistas are always a joy and the above photograph captures the last part of the Autumn phase before Winter sets in and the last of the dead leaves tumble onto the woodland floor. Whilst the colourful woodland flowers are a bonus during the spring and summer months, it is the trees that are at the heart of our nature reserve. On page 2, Gill waxes lyrical about our glorious **silver birch trees** and she also tells us about the **Jungle Buffer** that provides a mini jungle on our doorstep. Those of you who visit our woods on a regular basis will have seen that the **Bridleway Upgrade** is now happening. On the back page, Stuart explains the progress being made and the work still to be done. Find out about the **Bridleway Gate** and **Archaeological Digs** on page 3, plus an update on **Phases 4 and 5** on page 2.

An exciting new venture is a project to record bird sightings in our woods. In our last newsletter we asked if anyone would like to be our official **Bird Recorder**. Lorraine Maynard kindly stepped forward and is now our official Bird Recorder. Find out how you can help Lorraine in her role by telling her about your own sightings in her piece on page 3. The **Photographic Survey** of the woods has continued to be carried out four times a year and James and I now have a full record of the significant changes that have occurred over the years, including the changes to Railway Path, the regrowth in the coppiced clearings, the impact of the new school and the very new bridleway upgrade.

Janice Tipping

FoABW AGM – Sunday 13th February 2011 – 2.15 p.m.

Yes – another year has passed and the next AGM has been arranged. This will be held on Sunday 13th February 2011 at 2.15 p.m. in the Ashenground Community Centre, Southdown Close, off Vale Road, Haywards Heath. This year we have the added attraction of **Heather McNiven of the Sussex Bee Keepers Association** as our guest speaker. As was mentioned on the front of the last newsletter, bees are an absolutely essential part of our eco system and Heather will be explaining more about them in her talk. We hope to see you there.

Jungle Buffer

We have a mini jungle on our doorstep! Where Bolnore Village School boundary touches Ashenground Wood and the Bridleway a 15 m (on average) strip of land has been retained as a buffer, to help protect the wood. It is itself ancient woodland, and as far as possible was not trashed during building works. It has now grown quite dense in places, and FoABW was part of an exploration party looking at how the school could use this precious asset and still keep it as wild as possible. The going was difficult (by my standards!) – underfoot it was very rough and uneven, and mostly hidden by vegetation, and the centre was a mass of brambles, bracken and young tree growth. The plan that emerged was to make a path, in some places keeping to the bits that had been cleared years ago for sewer works, and elsewhere going through the jungle or beside the ‘swale’ – an artificial ephemeral water course built to assist drainage. On the way the path would go through an existing clearing, which would become an outdoor classroom, and end above the Bridleway pond. This pond lies outside the school boundary, between the school security fence and the high fence on the Bridleway. It is still managed by agents for Crest. A small clearing close to the fence will enable the children to watch dragonflies and other creatures living in and near the pond.

FoABW will help with the management of the school buffer until the school has built up a team to take it on.

Gill Rogers

The Silver Birch

I love this tree – graceful, airy, with wonderful fissured silver bark, and plum coloured winter buds. If you walk up Slugwash Lane in winter, from Wivelsfield Green towards the A272, the woods ahead of you are smokey-purple with birch. It is a pioneer tree, needing light to germinate, and was one of the first arrivals after the last ice age ended. It has a rich collection of associated fungi, some of which enable it to grow on very poor, thin soils. It also flourishes on our heavy clays!

For many northern communities it may have been the only tree, and man has used every part of it. The heartwood rots easily, leaving hollow logs for canoes and buckets. The bark can be used for paper and in tanning

and the wood for spools and bobbins (and everything else where this was the only tree!). Wine can be made from its sap, and green dye and ointment from the leaves. Birch leaf tea is said to be good for almost every complaint!



Traditional Birch Bark Canoe

We have many birches in our woods. In Ashenground they are mostly very middle-aged, having grown up after the last coppicing of the hazel. They produce catkins in early spring, and millions of winged seeds which germinate in their thousands, given some extra light! Birches are host to over 300 different species of insect – almost as many as oak and willow. Poets like it too!

Gill Rogers

Phases 4 and 5 latest

The final components of the latest Bolnore Village Phase 4 & 5 planning applications are now in place with the completion of a Section 106 agreement which, among other things, ensures that the buffer zones and ancient woodland are in due course handed over to MSDC for safeguarding.

A further planning application for a revised detailed design of Phase 4a is imminent. Numerous details are outstanding before Crest can start building, in particular an ‘Ecological Management Plan’ on which FoABW are being consulted.

FoABW is objecting until such time as a wider buffer is provided to King Street Copse, which is now identified as ancient woodland. We are also working on plans for the fencing to protect the large number of ecologically sensitive areas from the inevitable influx of domestic pets and their owners.

Stuart Meier

Your Help needed in Recording Bird Sighting in the Woods

Having attended early morning organised Bird Walks, I was amazed just how many species there are inhabiting the woodland. You may not always see the birds, but I am sure that you have heard and enjoyed many different songs from a variety of birds as you walk through the woods.

People use the woodland for a variety of reasons: walking dogs, short cuts, cycling or just a leisurely stroll. FoABW would like your help in recording species and number of birds and also the general area where they were spotted.

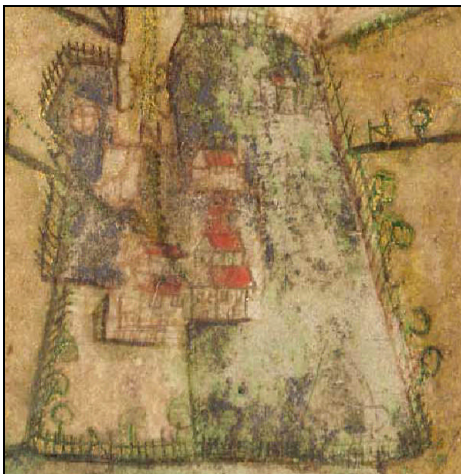
Recordings of sightings or photographs can be e-mailed to me at
petal1948@aol.com
 or you can phone me on 01444 450997 with reports any time, any day.

If you are lucky enough to photograph a bird, it would be fantastic for FoABW to have a copy.

HAPPY SPOTTING!

Lorraine Maynard

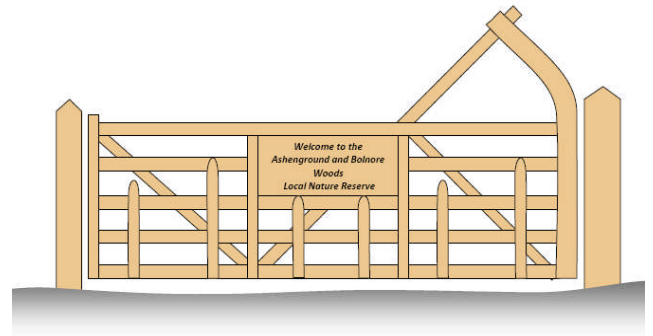
The Bridleway Gate



Part of the 1638 map with fieldgates (e.g. on right near top)

A large new fieldgate at Ashenground Bridge is likely to be the last element of the Bridleway to be completed. This gate is a required part of the planning permission, and FoABW has been working to ensure it is

wooden, and rural in character. It will have to be a very big gate for the occasional lorries which have to access the railway and the electricity supply through the woods!



Gate design proposed

The proposed gate draws its inspiration from the pictures of traditional fieldgates on the 1638 map of the Heyworthe, together with design details from gates at the Weald and Downland Museum. The plan is that it will be made using materials from the woods, and the search is on for a 'roundwood' carpenter to construct it.

Stuart Meier

Archaeology digs

Beginnings of future construction activity on Phase 4 of Bolnore Village has been signalled by archaeologists and a bigger digger carrying out a search in a pattern of large strips on the fields. The project is designed to uncover at an early stage any features of significant archaeological interest.

Early indications are of very limited interest, with a single fragment of medieval pottery discovered in one trench. No Roman villas here it seems, despite the Roman Road being close by!



Map of numbered search trenches for archaeology investigation

Stuart Meier

Bridleway Upgrade - Work is Half Way



The work to upgrade the Bridleway is now more than half complete, with much of the path itself complete. The police are insisting on lighting (low bollards) and Natural England and FoABW are working to ensure the lights are 'bat friendly'. The lights will only provide 'markers' for the path, not lighting to road standards.

We hope that the lights will be triggered by movement, so that they are switched off as much as possible both to conserve energy and to avoid disrupting the flight paths of bats.

There is still much to do where the Bridleway meets roads, both at Ashenground Bridge and at the Thatched Cottage, where Crest have yet to get the necessary newt licence. This means the project will not finally be complete until early summer next year.

Thank you to residents for your forbearance over path closures, and to MACOB, the contractors for the good efforts they have made to allow access wherever possible.

Stuart Meier

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. Don't forget to check out our **website** for our Newsletters and Programmes plus photographs and details of any special events.

www.foabw.com

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 is always 10.00 a.m. The work we do is very varied and you do not need to have any expertise or bring any tools. To help decide priorities for conservation work in the nature reserve, we hold regular **Review Walks**. We have one on **Sunday 30th January** meeting at Ashenground Bridge, and one on **Sunday 27th March** meeting at the Thatched Cottage in Bolnore Village – both 10.00 a.m. starts. We hope to see some of you on these walks.

Special Events are held occasionally throughout the year. Look out for details on the notice boards and our website. On **Sunday 9th January** we will be having a leisurely **Winter Walk (with a break for mulled wine and mince pies)**. Do join us – the walk will start from Ashenground Bridge at 10.00 a.m. On **Easter Monday 25th April** we will be leading a **Spring Flower Walk** – meet at 2.00 p.m. on Ashenground Bridge.

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