



**THE BYTHAMS WOODLAND TRUST**  
**(Registered Charity 1100816)**  
**CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2016/17**

**Introduction**

I am very pleased to be able to introduce the thirteenth Chairman's Report for the Bythams Woodland Trust (BWT). I can only cover a very brief synopsis of the huge amount of work that has gone on behind the scenes, on our many working weekends during the past year and to welcome the continuing increase in visitors as one of the main success stories.

**Constitution**

There were no constitutional changes this year. The annual returns to the Charity Commission are up to date. New Committee co-options were made at the AGM in 2016 and all of these have made a positive contribution to the work of the Trust.

The Management Committee met on six occasions, including the AGM.

**Funding**

It was a successful year in respect of fund raising with our award of £8,000 from the TESCO Bags of Help scheme which came through in July and had to be spent by the end of April 2017.

We were also pleased to receive £1500 funding in June from the Woodland Trust as part of our work to support the Charter for Trees, Woods and People and then a further grant of £1000 in March.

We are always grateful to receive financial support from the Castle Bytham Fair Committee and the Castle and Little Bytham Parish Councils and Careby Parish Meeting. These contributions are vital to help with the day to day running costs of the Spinney, without which, our financial position would be significantly weaker.

We were able to secure a prompt settlement with the NFU who were incredibly helpful after the container break-in and have been able to re-stock on our equipment.

Our on-line text Just Giving has begun to generate a healthy regular amount of income with good potential for further development.

**Site Works**

The main focus of our work remains to keep the site maintained in a good condition to respond to the increase in use by visitors. The BWT work schedule during the year is demanding in terms of general maintenance - mowing, strimming, leaf clearing and gleaning fallen branches, coppicing and general tidying, building new steps. The sensory garden always requires a high degree of maintenance - mainly planting and weeding by hand!

However, with the funding from the Bags of Help Scheme we have been able to upgrade, repair and improve the play equipment that needed maintenance, while we installed a new entrance to the main site and overflow car park and resurfaced the driveway and car park.

The general work on the Meadow is very weather dependent, but it does appear that our seed planting during the past couple of years is working. There is a broad range of grass and wildflower species appearing, and we have had this surveyed to assess the full range of flora. The agreement of a Farm Business Tenancy agreement with John and Guy Turner, who will now manage the meadow on our behalf as part of a Direct Payment Scheme for organically managed habitats has been a good success.

### **Events Tree Dressing Day and Love The Spinney**

We organised a fourth Tree Dressing Day on November 26<sup>th</sup> and once again, Jo Hammond created a wonderful array of christmassy things to put on the tree of your choice (and also to take away) while FOBS provided hot soup, rolls and lots and lots of cakes. FOBS continued with the brilliant idea of starting the day with a fun run for children around the site. This got people in early, warmed up and ready for refreshments. More than 500 people attended even though the weather was not that great, but that did not stop everyone having a good time!

Just before Valentine's Day we organised a 'Love the Spinney' event, but in view of the freezing weather, this was not so well attended. Yet there was a hearty crowd who enjoyed the roaring camp fire.

### **Charter for Trees, Woods and People**

Our work with the Woodland Trust's national campaign to promote the importance and value of trees, woodlands and forests, linked into the historical Charter of the Forest (which will have its 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2017) has proven to be very positive. With the funding we received, we were able to get lots of support at various events for children and adults to tell their stories about trees which we were then able to feed into their programme. This recognises the singular value of what we do to help improve the connections between woodlands, wildlife and people.

As a Community Woodland, we were selected nationally for a filming session with The Bythams School linked into a key sponsorship arrangement that the Woodland Trust had with the Nationwide Building Society. Despite it being a dreary, drizzly day, children and adults seemed to have a great time and built some cracking dens!

### **Publicity and Promotion**

Judging by the numbers of people now visiting the Spinney, our publicity and promotion in all its forms is working extremely well. We are now getting lots of use not only from local people but also many who come in from much wider afield. On some days the main car park and access road are completely full, so the overflow area on the meadow has proven to be a welcome addition.

At the Tree Dressing Day and Love the Spinney event and linking into our Charter work, we have had some good publicity from the Stamford Mercury and Rutland Radio, so thanks to them for getting reports and photographers out.

The BWT organized a promotional stall at the Bythams School May Fete which was very well received. Gavin Pye has updated our website at [www.bythamspinney.co.uk](http://www.bythamspinney.co.uk). We are also on Facebook on [www.facebook.com/bythamsSpinney](http://www.facebook.com/bythamsSpinney) and our 'likes' have reached well over 1500.

We have investigated how best we might optimize voluntary donations through <http://www.charitygiving.co.uk/bythamswoodland>.

### **Health and Safety**

This remains a key priority and a continuing requirement of our insurance arrangements. The Spinney is a natural wild woodland and there will always be an element of adventure in what we do.

We had a fourth ROSPA Play Area Safety Inspection Report in August and it is very pleasing to note that in all areas, there was nothing at a high risk. However, we were able to use the report to carry out the repairs that were identified as needing remediation with the larger ones being funded by our TESCO funding application.

### **Future Plans**

High quality, ongoing site maintenance and upkeep of the woodland will be critical to keep the site in good condition. Though we have had some new funding for repairs, we have discussed a new substantial grant application to one of the major funders for some further works, including the possible installation of some compost loos!

The arrangement with the Turners has secured the future for the Meadow and in time will generate sufficient funds to keep this well managed as a natural wildflower habitat.

A subsidiary project for the BWT has been the establishment of the Clipsham Yew Tree Avenue Trust (CYTAT) which plans to work in partnership with the Forestry Commission to restore and manage this

important and beautiful site. However, and for a number of reasons, progress on the contractual arrangements between the Commission and CYTAT is taking a longer time to complete.

The BWT is always looking for more friends and newcomers to join us to help with what we are trying to achieve for local people. If you have some spare time, or know of someone who does, then please do come and join us!

And of course, while the adults are working, the children who come down to the site take part in some of the most fantastic play experiences that nature can offer - adventurous, dirty, rough, creative, destructive, re-building, active, physical, healthy - the sort of play opportunities many of us probably had twenty or so years ago but sadly do not seem so prevalent today. There is a strong national drive to compensate for what is called the 'nature deficit' for children who do not appreciate the wonders of the natural environment, but it is clear that there is no such deficit at the Spinney.

### Thanks

There are so many people who deserve to be thanked for the tremendous time and effort that they have put into the Spinney. All the Management Committee use their different skills and experience to ensure that the BWT is in a fit organisational state to do what it wants to do. We also have a really solid Saturday morning maintenance crew who put in the time week in, week out. So thanks to Sam, Gavin, Simon G, Richard, Simon C, Luke, Gillian, James and Thomas.

We have had a really good group of Duke of Edinburgh students this year - mainly girls and young women - and they all have worked incredibly hard to help secure the base of the look-out tower and shift tons of bark to put under the play equipment and create new paths.

We have received fantastic support from FOBS, especially Claire Watson and Richard Clarke, the Head Teacher at the Bythams School and Jo Hammond who continues to make some amazing woodland creations at our events.

Thanks to the Castle Inn and Fox and Hounds for allowing us to use their premises for our meetings, the Police who keep an eye out for us, The Glenside News for regularly publishing our news and stories, our District Councillor Martin Wilkinson, Trevor Harris, who services all our mechanical equipment and Tim Rasell, who advises on plants and good horticulture tips.

We are also very appreciative of our funders - the local Parish Councils, the Castle Bytham Fair Committee, TESCO Bags of Help, the Woodland Trust and all those individuals who have made very kind donations throughout the year. Without this support, the Spinney could not function.

A special vote of thanks must go to Judith Smith who has been our Vice Chairman since the BWT was started and before that was part of the FOBS team which came up with the idea of the Spinney. Judith has decided to stand down and we will very much miss her support, and together with her family - Charles, Katriona, Eric and Angus - they have all played key roles over the years to keep the Spinney operational.

Finally, our warmest thanks must go to the local community and especially the children who use the site for their play, adventure or simple relaxation and without whose presence, support and interest, the whole thing would not be worthwhile.

Dr Patrick Candler, Chairman of BWT  
12.06.17



**Charter**  
for Trees, Woods  
and People



