



News

No. 5: Spring 2016

Cycles of Growth and Expansion

Welcome to the fifth edition of News from Knighton Tree Allotments Trust (KTAT). In this newsletter you can find out about the Trust and what we have been doing over the last year.

First of all, we would like to once again thank all our Trustees, Members, Volunteers and Friends for all their hard work, enthusiasm and company. KTAT is an entirely voluntary organisation where *everything* we achieve is due to good people giving up their time to support the aims of the organisation, so **thank you.**



It has been another busy year with some highlights and some setbacks. One of the successes came early on last summer when KTAT held its first distribution of woodland products to its members.

Our woodland management activities in 2 sites had given rise to various stacks of cordwood (4 foot lengths of wood) that we cut into logs and distributed to members, based on volunteer hours. The feedback we received from members was very positive. This was a good learning process about the measuring and allocation of wood which will inform our future distributions.

Our work at the larch plantation at Greenstreete, in Llangunllo, is currently paused as the owners of the site, the Samatha Trust, consider how best to manage the woodland. The plantation is made up of Japanese larch (*pictured left*) which is threatened by the *Phytophthora ramorum* disease currently spreading across the United Kingdom. The plan had been to fell one-tenth of the plantation each year over the next 10 years, replanting each 'coupe' (felling area) with native-species broadleaf trees. However, the high cost of felling small areas of trees on this steep site with difficult access, coupled with the immediacy of the disease threat, means that the Samatha Trust is now considering clear-felling the plantation, and selling the trees as building timber, as the most cost-effective way of transforming it into a broadleaf woodland. The felling would be carried out by a commercial forester once the disease moves closer, with KTAT in a supporting role: KTAT would coppice the plantation's under-storey - in order to protect those trees during the felling of the larch - and then re-plant afterwards. KTAT may also process the larch brash (tree tops and side branches) into firewood.

In the meantime, the Samatha Trust has been keeping us busy on other parts of their land, as described inside.

Full details of all of our exciting developments over the last year can also be found inside, and details about the Trust and how you can get involved are on the back page of this newsletter.

New work sites at Greenstreete

KTAT has been working on some new sites at Greenstreete, after

pausing in our work on the larch plantation there. We started by clearing some windblown trees that had fallen across the path in Greenstreete Wood. We cleared the path and cut the tree limbs into firewood,

stacking it in the woodland to season. The brash (tree tops and side branches) was piled in the woodland to provide a habitat for wildlife until it rots down, nourishing the soil. The main trunks of the trees did not fall upon the path and so have been left in place while we try to find a buyer for these more valuable timbers.



Weather is no object when there is a path to clear!

us to get a crop of wood while increasing the variety of habitats in and around the woodland. Hedgerows provide a good habitat and essential corridors along which wildlife can travel: thick hedges with wide bases that provide plenty of cover are best. This work will allow more light into the edge of Greenstreete Wood - a key area for rich biodiversity -

and the Samatha Trust were also pleased to have the stunning view from the track opened up again. It is always our aim that both KTAT members and wildlife benefit from our activities and we think this is a good example of this in action.



Cutting and stacking logs to season

The Samatha Trust has also asked KTAT to cut back two rows of trees - one just across the woodland track from Greenstreete Wood and one on the very edge of their land. These are former hedgerows that have not been cut for many years and have now become rows of trees with gaps in! The intention is to cut the trees back and plant new saplings of hedge species in the gaps, recreating the original hedges. The trees at the edge of the Samatha Trust's land did look nice hanging over the lane, and two neighbours lamented our cutting them back, but the landowners have a responsibility to stop the trees growing over the road. Cutting the trees back allows



Coppicing to re-establish the hedge

In Spring 2015 KTAT also felled 4 ash trees near the Samatha Trust's buildings as they wished to make a space for memorial plantings to take place.



Firewood arising from felling 4 small ash trees

Progress at Weir Cottage Wood

KTAT has started work on cutting the second coupe at Weir Cottage wood.

The woodland has been divided into 5 coupes (felling areas) which will be managed using a 'coppice with standards' system on a 10 year cycle. This means that the majority of the trees in a coupe are cut back almost to the ground - 'coppiced' - every 10 years to provide a crop of wood, while other trees - the 'standards' - are left to grow to maturity. This system means that we have a woodland with a good mix of recently felled areas, re-growth areas up to 10 years old and a distribution of mature trees throughout the woodland.



Stacking cordwood from the second coupe

In Autumn 2015 we started felling some of the trees in the second coupe. With 5 coupes and a 10 year cycle, we could cut one coupe every other year but we decided to cut the second coupe over 2 years. The work here offers a good range of opportunities for volunteers to practice different skills including tree felling, cross-cutting wood, manual handling of various timber sizes, splitting logs and the correct building of a stack that will allow firewood to season properly.

Weir Cottage, including the woodland in which we work, is currently for sale so our future there is uncertain. We hope that the new owners will continue the existing arrangement so watch this space!

KTAT's Next Steps

KTAT has been approached by several landowners, asking for help with managing their woodlands. The changes at the Greenstreete larch plantation, and the change of ownership at Weir Cottage, has made us realise that we are potentially quite vulnerable to losing access to woodlands. Therefore we welcome this opportunity to increase the woodlands we help to manage and have a more diverse range of projects.

More woodlands would require more workdays and more volunteers - which we believe is quite achievable - but we do have a bottleneck in a lack of workdays leaders. Currently, all KTAT workdays are led by 3 of our volunteers who, quite reasonably, cannot take on additional voluntary work.

KTAT is therefore making grant applications to appoint a part-time self-employed contractor to organise and lead workdays and to recruit further volunteers. This would give KTAT the capacity to take on additional woodlands and the volunteers to



KTAT Members visit a potential woodland site

help manage them. The expansion of KTAT would place it on a more sustainable footing. The medium-term aim is to make KTAT financially self-sufficient through the sale of woodland products, providing training to other individuals and organisations, and possibly consultancy services.

Woodland Conservation Volunteering

Knighton Tree Allotments Trust is a voluntary, not-for-profit group that manages woodlands. In coming together and sharing and learning woodland skills we aim to sustainably manage woodland for the benefit of wildlife and our members.

It is a common misconception that unmanaged woodland is best for wildlife. In fact, by managing the woodland through traditional practices such as coppicing, we increase the variety of habitats and the richness of wildlife. In ensuring that the trees that we fell for fuel or timber are replaced with new plants, we are creating a sustainable supply of woodland products.

In sustainably growing firewood and other woodland products we can meet some of our fuel and timber needs as well as reducing our carbon footprints. At the same time we are joining co-operatively with other local people to enjoy, conserve and enrich our local environment. There are three different ways in which you can support the Knighton Tree Allotments Trust:



Friendly and welcoming volunteers having a break!

1. Volunteer. We are always looking for people who would like to learn about woodland management and ecology. Volunteering with those who are as passionate about a cause as you are is a great way to meet like-minded people. You can get plenty of fresh air and exercise and learn new skills. We need help with hands-on woodland management such as tree planting and firewood processing, regular flora and fauna surveys and administrative tasks.

If you are interested in also having access to woodland products from the Trust, such as logs and

timber, then you could become a Member Volunteer (see below).

2. Become a Member. When you become a member you get a say in how the Trust is run; you can help decide policies that guide how we operate. You'll also become part of an active community of like-minded people who are working towards sustainable development. And that's not all. You can attend members' meetings, such as our AGM, where you can raise issues that are important to you and find out more about how the Trust is doing. Plus, you can vote for someone to represent your views as a Trustee. And if you fancy it, you can even stand for election yourself as a Trustee – it's a great chance to represent your fellow members. Membership costs just £10 a year.

3. Become a Member Volunteer Why not combine volunteering with membership and become a Member Volunteer? It's a great way to actively support the Trust's woodland management activities whilst also having your say in how it is run. Member Volunteers of the Trust can also access the woodland products – such as firewood and timber – generated by our activities.

4. Become a Friend of Knighton Tree Allotments Trust. If you support our aims but are perhaps too busy or too far away to play an active role then you can become a Friend of the Trust. In return for your donation you will receive regular updates on the Trust's work and be invited to our Open Days and events. Donations to support our work are always welcome. If you wish to contribute please send a cheque made payable to "Knighton Tree Allotments Trust" to our registered address below. Thank you!

For more information about KTAT, or to enquire about becoming a member, please ring our Secretary on 01547 520929 or see our website: www.tveg.org.uk/wordpress/what-we-do/woodland-project

KTAT is a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee (Company No 7416851) established for the benefit of local people in and around Knighton and the upper Teme Valley. Registered Office: 6 Church St, Knighton, Powys, LD7 1AG.