



News

No. 6: Spring 2017

Exciting Times for KTAT

Welcome to the sixth 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 say **thank you** to all our Trustees, Members, Volunteers and Friends for all their hard work, enthusiasm and company. KTAT is a voluntary organisation so everything we achieve is due to good people giving up their time.

It has been a year of great change for KTAT since the last newsletter. In 2015 the Trust was approached by a number of other landowners who wanted us to help them bring their woodlands back into management; unfortunately we did not have the volunteer resource to organise these arrangements or to lead additional woodland task days. The Trustees recognised that KTAT had reached its maximum capacity as a purely voluntary organisation without realising its true potential. To address this, we decided to appoint a self-employed part-time worker to increase our resources and try to realise this untapped potential.

Since October 2016 we have used a donation previously restricted to the purchase of woodlands, with the permission of the donor, to fund this contract. The contractor, Gary Cowell, now works an average of 2 days a week: 1 day a week leading the task days that deliver hands-on woodland management training to volunteers and 1 day a week on administrative duties such as organising and promoting the task days, ensuring our compliance with health and safety requirements and recording our work.

This additional time resource means that we have been able to take on the management of additional woodlands: Castlering Wood in Beggar's Bush (pictured left) and Knucklas Castle Wood. We have also moved from infrequent task days with no set pattern to having weekly task days on alternating Thursdays and Sundays - the days most volunteers preferred.

Through the appointment of the worker, KTAT has been able to unlock further resources and make better use of our existing

resources. We have been able to offer more opportunities for volunteering and increase the number of volunteer hours contributed to woodland management. Bringing more woodland into management has increased the availability of woodland products in the local economy. Our tools are made better use of by spending fewer hours idle in the shed and more hours out on workdays. By using our equipment and increasing expertise across a number of small woodlands we are achieving economies of scale that the individual woodlands cannot.

We really hope to continue and expand our activities in this way, but our current funding will be depleted by the end of September 2017. KTAT is currently fundraising to meet the costs of continuing our project, principally to allow the continued appointment of the worker to support us. This would allow us to carry on with our work in the new woods and to pro-actively approach other local woodland owners with a view to bringing their woods back into sustainable management; we would also then be able to carry out recruitment drives for further volunteers in the areas around the new woodlands.

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.

Castlering Wood - our new site

KTAT is delighted to have spent the last winter working in one of our new woodlands - Castlering Wood in Beggar's Bush.

Castlering is named for the ancient hill fort that is nestled in the woodland. The 35 acre site was bought by the owners, Alithea and Rob, just after it had been clear-felled of conifers. They then spent from 1998 to 2002 planting 35,000 hazel and other broadleaf trees to establish a coppice-with-standards woodland.



Coppice products at the end of the day

The woodland now needs its first coppice - cutting the hazel trees back almost to the ground from where they will re-grow, ready to harvest

again in the future. The rest of the woodland is dominated by birch trees so these are being 'thinned' (the process of felling some trees to favour others) to let light in to the remaining, best birch trees and some of the other tree species that are present - primarily oak, rowan and beech. The current birch trees are all tall and thin as they race each other for the light. After thinning, the remaining trees receive more light so they will grow larger and put on girth. The process of selecting trees for thinning on this site is largely determined by seeing which trees have the least squirrel damage.

To quote the owners, their planting was, unintentionally, "mainly for the benefit of the local deer and squirrel population"!

We have had a small, dedicated team of volunteers turning up week in, week out gradually cutting the hazel with bowsaws and loppers and carrying out the wood that we can use. Once the hazel has been coppiced then the birch can be thinned without damaging the hazel. The brash (thin top and side branches) is laid over the coppiced hazel stumps (known as "stools") to offer them some protection from deer browsing as they re-grow.



A volunteer learning how to coppice

As well as our usual firewood, we have been cutting hazel beanpoles that will be available for purchase at Bradford's, Bridge Street, Knighton. Prior to starting on the next coupe (area for cutting) in the autumn, we will research local markets for further coppice products to help KTAT on to a more sustainable financial footing.

The work site is easily accessible and, in a first for a KTAT woodland, is flat! Volunteers have said what a difference this makes to a day. This is also the first time that we have been working a woodland specifically grown as a coppice woodland. This has sharpened our tree recognition skills as we make sure to cut the correct trees. It is exciting for KTAT to be working in this wood, which provides excellent opportunities to learn new practical skills.



Before (left) and after (right) both coppicing the hazel and thinning the birch

News from our other woodland sites

The Samatha Trust's Greenstreete Centre, in Llangunllo, and Weir Cottage Wood, near Knighton, have provided us with some varied work over the last year. Our main focus at Llangunllo has been completing the rejuvenation of a hedge on Hen Cefn Lane at the edge of the Trust's land. The hedge had become a row of trees overhanging the road which we mostly cut back to near-ground level. We then planted the gaps in the hedge with new trees.

Our main focus at Llangunllo has been completing the rejuvenation of a hedge on Hen Cefn Lane at the edge of the Trust's land. The hedge had become a row of trees overhanging the road which we mostly cut back to near-ground level. We then planted the gaps in the hedge with new trees.



Tree planting at Hen Cefn Lane

It has taken us two winters to complete this work. The felling was complicated by the trees being between a fence and overhead telephone wires, making for slow progress. The steepness of the bank we were working on added to the complication and made re-planting quite difficult. Once the coppiced trees and the newly planted trees have both grown sufficiently then the new hedge will probably be laid once more, helping to keep it at hedge height .



Preparing for wood distribution (the 'foreman' is a volunteer's son)

One of the busiest weeks of last summer was when we distributed the wood from Greenstreete. With help from the kind owner of a 4-wheel-drive pickup truck we moved most of the the wood out of our woodshed at the top of the site and built a stack in the car park that was accessible to standard vehicles. We are now busy re-filling the shed by processing the last of the larch trees that were felled in 2013 which have been lying outside the woodshed.



View from the staff canteen

Looking to the future, the Samatha Trust have further plans to involve KTAT in the management of trees on their land. We have been asked to submit a management plan for the Trust's Greenstreete Wood, a native species broadleaf woodland on the north-west of the site. If the management plan is approved then we will start work in the wood during the winter of 2018-2019. Dense stands of same-age ash trees have been shown to be particularly vulnerable to Chalara ash dieback, so we are also to thin a stand of self-sown trees on Hen Cefn Lane, with the intention to create a stand of vigorous, healthy trees that may then have some tolerance of the disease; they may all die of the disease anyway but we want to give them the best chance we can.

We were all concerned last year when the owners of one of our woodland sites, **Weir Cottage Wood**, put their property on the market. We paused in our work there and carried out only essential tasks such as weeding around the new trees while the sale went through. We are therefore delighted to announce that the new owners, Liz and Ian, want KTAT to continue managing the wood in accordance with the management plan agreed with the previous



Weir Cottage weeding

owners. Due to the dedication of two KTAT volunteers the work planned for the 2016-2017 winter has now been done and we are back on track at the site. This coming winter we are due to coppice and thin a third coupe of the wood, as part of a 10-year coppice rotation.

Finally, as we go to press we have news that the owners of **Knucklas Castle Wood**, Knucklas Castle Community Land Partnership, would like KTAT's assistance with managing their woodland. We are pleased to have the chance to work at this historic site with such a community-minded organisation.

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 four 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 as well as administrative tasks such as writing this newsletter.

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 contact woodland@tveg.org.uk or 01547 520374. 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.