

News

No. 7: Spring 2018



Welcome to the latest edition of News from Knighton Tree Allotments Trust (KTAT). In this annual 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 Volunteers, Trustees and Members 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.

KTAT has been very active since our Spring 2017 newsletter. The appointment of a Coordinator to increase our resources and realise our potential as an organisation worked well. We have been busy making progress at Castle Ring Wood in Beggar's Bush and have continued the management of Weir Cottage Wood near Knighton. Management agreements are now in place for us to manage Knuckles Castle Wood and Greenstreete Wood in Llangunllo (pictured above); we have identified priority actions for both woodlands but practical work has not yet started.

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.

KTAT reaches 3,000 hour milestone – and looks to the next 3,000

KTAT is celebrating after reaching a new milestone in its work. Between January 2013 and September 2017 KTAT contributed over 3,000 hours of volunteer time in local woodlands. We are delighted to have achieved this much support for our work and we would like to thank all those volunteers who have contributed to this success. Volunteering with KTAT is a great opportunity to get lots of fresh air and exercise while working with a welcoming group of friendly people. Our volunteer members learn practical woodland skills, improve wildlife habitats and gain access to affordable woodland products such as firewood and timber so we are hoping that more people will join us.



KTAT Volunteers in Castle Ring Wood

The volunteer days in local woodlands are actually only half the story. KTAT has volunteers who help behind the scenes with things like fundraising, promotion, training and keeping the accounts. If you include this, the total volunteer hours contributed so far is almost 6,000. We are always keen to hear from anyone who would like to help the Trust and are currently seeking an experienced volunteer fundraiser to help write funding bids to continue and expand the Trust's work - including training for volunteers and new tools.

News from our woodland sites

KTAT is involved in the management of four woodland sites and has been active in some way in all of them over the last year. In Castle Ring Wood we have continued to coppice the hazel and thin the birch. The woodland owners asked us to thin the birch more heavily in the area that we worked last year so we have spent a lot of time over the last winter doing that, in order to favour the hazel trees by letting more light to them.

Our work in Castle Ring Wood has been greatly aided by 2 new volunteers who have chainsaw qualifications and equipment and have been doing a good job with the birch.



Coppice products and brash in Castle Ring Wood

Regular and long-standing volunteers have also been coming out coppicing week after week, joined this year by quite a high number of new volunteers. We have been selling hazel hedging stakes to a local hedge-layer and are having a trial selling them through CCF - the farmer's cooperative in Knighton. We are also running a trial of selling beanpoles and peasticks through The Plant Centre, Ludlow.

The additional woodland work has been a learning curve for us as we find out how much we are able to manage and our limitations. In autumn 2017 we were still cutting firewood from the winter of 2016-2017 when we should have been coppicing, so we are now trying to get firewood off site from April each year, rather than May or June, in order to make sure that we do not fall behind later in the year.

In Weir Cottage Wood we have now cut the third coupe of five (a "coupe" is sub-division in a woodland e.g. the area that will be coppiced or felled in a year). We are thinning the woodland in order to let more light to the woodland floor. We have also supplemented the natural regeneration of trees with some planted trees in order to increase the diversity of species at the site. By changing the age structure of the wood (creating a greater range of tree ages) and increasing its species mixture we are making the wood more resilient to the threats posed by a plethora of tree diseases and a changing climate.

At the Samatha Centre in Llangunllo we have thinned a self-seeded stand of ash trees. The trees grew up through a gorse patch which protected them from browsing by sheep. Once the ash got above the gorse it shaded the gorse out. This type of evenly aged stand is particularly vulnerable to Chalara dieback of ash, a fungal disease that is predicted to kill the majority of ash trees in Britain. In order to increase air flow through the trees and reduce spore density we have thinned them, leaving the most vigorous trees that should have the greatest tolerance of the disease. Prime specimens, such as those above average size with larger crowns tend to survive best, so thinning tightly packed younger stands can help. We have also now cut up the last of the larch trees we felled at the Samatha Centre in 2013!



The Samatha Centre woodshed in 2013!

In the Samatha Centre's Greenstreete Wood and in Knucklas Castle Wood we have had ancient woodland assessments carried out by the Woodland Trust. These told us that Greenstreete Wood is a Restored Ancient Woodland Site (RAWS). Victorian maps of the site show a mix of broadleaves and conifers but, unusually, the conifers were felled around 1950 leaving the broadleaves to dominate once more. Knucklas Castle Wood is not an ancient woodland but consists largely of self-seeded trees less than a century old. However, there are significantly older areas, such as former hedgerows, supporting quite a range of ancient woodland indicator species, including Early Purple Orchid, and a number of notable trees including an over-mature crab apple. The assessments identified priorities for the woodlands which we can build into the management plans for the woods.



Early Purple Orchid at Knucklas Castle Wood

Fundraising

The greatest challenge for KTAT over the last 12 months has been fundraising. KTAT created the Coordinator role to organise and lead task days and training, and also to do much of the time-consuming administration and assist with fund raising. Having someone in this post has really demonstrated what KTAT can achieve when operating at full capacity: we now have more woodland management agreements in place, have successfully delivered a weekly, rather than occasional, task day programme and the number of new volunteers joining the organisation has increased. The Coordinator role was funded from October 2016 to February 2018 using a private donation and funds successfully raised from The Oakdale Trust, Nisa's Make A Difference Locally, Tesco's Bags of Help, Mid-counties Co-operative's Community Fund and Knighton Town Council.

KTAT has now submitted a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund for a 3 year project to continue and expand our work. If the bid is successful, recognised experts will train volunteers in biodiversity surveying and in how to make woodland products such as hurdles, charcoal, 3-legged stools and hazel baskets. We would also be able to do a lot more outreach work and have the support of Knighton Primary School and local Scout and Guide groups for our bid. Our initial application, submitted in December 2017 was, unfortunately, unsuccessful but we have re-submitted an adjusted bid with a decision due on 31st May 2018. We are currently operating without the support of paid staff while we await the outcome of the bid and look for other funding opportunities.

Outreach

KTAT has always used its Annual General Meeting (AGM) to reach out to the public and help raise awareness of woodlands and our work. A talk on *"Restoring & Protecting Ancient Woodland & Trees"* was the focus of our 2017 AGM, delivered by Vaughan Lewis, the Woodland Trust's Ancient Woodland Restoration Officer for Powys. Our 2018 AGM, due as we go to press, will be accompanied by a talk on *"Historic Woodland Management & Sustainable Land Use - a model for the future?"* by Dr. Jemma Bezant, a Landscape Archaeologist.

In summer 2017, KTAT also benefited from 2 training courses provided by Vaughan Lewis: *"Identification of Ancient Woodland Indicator Species"* at Greenstreete

Wood and *"Tree Identification and an Introduction to Basic Woodland Management Techniques"* in Castle Ring Wood. Both were fully subscribed and attended by a mixture of KTAT members and the general public. The courses not only increased the skills within KTAT but allowed us to raise our profile in the area.



Identification of ancient woodland indicator species course

Introduction to Woodland Management training course

In January 2018 KTAT was commissioned to design and deliver a 3-day training course on *"An Introduction to Woodland Management"*. Lightfoot, a Bishop's Castle based organisation dedicated to helping people to make changes in the way they use energy, asked us for a course that would train local people in the theory and practice of woodland management, with an emphasis on local wood for fuel. Day 1 of the course was classroom based and focussed on the history of woodland in Britain, uses of woodlands and how to develop effective management plans. Days 2 and 3 were based in the woods and covered selecting trees for felling, using hand tools to safely fell a small tree, processing firewood with hand tools and stacking wood to season.

The feedback from the trainees was excellent with comments including *"very good feeling that you'd achieved something practical – and learnt a lot"* and *"Well done, it was an excellent day. You were very thorough and I felt you delivered the session in an inclusive, friendly and professional way – Thank you!"*

KTAT plans to repeat the training course in the future so if you are interested in attending please contact us via email at woodland@tveg.org.uk for further details.

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.