



Up to our necks in muck and culverts

Anyone walking through the woods at the moment can't help but notice it's not looking at its best. There are huge gouges of mud either side of the track leading from the ford into the wood and several parts of the track are churned up.

There is a good reason behind this. The Fire Brigade informed us earlier in the year that it was becoming increasingly difficult to take their vehicles into the woods due to the surface becoming eroded. The main reason for this was rainwater running over the tracks due to blocked culverts or drainage ditches. As access for the Fire Brigade and other services is essential to the maintenance of the woods, we applied for a grant to improve this as soon as possible.

We invited a representative from the Fire Service to point out the problem areas to Paul Winterfeld, a drainage engineer we have used on a number of occasions to do work in the woods. We then commissioned Paul to sort out the drainage problems and fill in some of the holes in the track to rectify the problem.

Unfortunately this has meant that section of the woods looks like a cross between a building site and a scene from the Somme in World War I. If

the work had been done in the winter, then Nature would have hidden all the work done by Spring. We could have made less drastic efforts but that would have been a short term fix. As it is, we have put long term solutions into place that should last for many years.

So please bear with us while this essential work is going on and rest assured that we will do our best to ensure the woods still look natural at the end of it all.



Creating a drainage ditch by the side of the track

Tree o'clock

As part of National Tree Week, BBC Breathing Spaces is organising a mass tree planting event. The idea is for the U.K. to set the Guinness world record for the number of trees to be planted in one hour.

Naturally, we are more than happy to take part so we are busy organising for it.

Make a date in your diary now for **Saturday 5th December** from **11.00 a.m to 12.00 noon**. We intend to plant as many trees as we can so the more the merrier. **It will help us to know in advance how many to expect so we can plan accordingly.**

Up against the wall

For some time we have cherished the idea of restoring the drystone wall that runs from the Mountain Air Gate round the outside of the wood to the gate by the Brân stream. It's in keeping with the area, it doesn't need renewing, it's environmentally friendly, it's robust and it provides a different eco-system for wildlife. We have had a few attempts at working at small sections but Rob Crowshaw has taken on the monumental task of rebuilding the whole thing. "If a journey of a thousand miles begins with just one step," he said, "then a wall of a thousand metres begins with just one stone. You just have to do a bit at a time. The main problem we have is getting the stone to the wall."

So far Rob has restored nearly 50 metres and is still going strong. If you would like to help Rob in his ef-

forts he has a work party on the first Sunday of every month, weather permitting. For more information contact him on 01633 860741.



Rob Crowshaw and his son Kris working on the drystone wall. Rob went on a course especially to learn how to work this ancient craft..



Underneath the larches

If you look hard enough in the woods there is evidence that this was once arable land on which crops were grown and animals kept. A path has been discovered leading from Blaen Brân farmhouse going to the Mountain Air gate. It is defined by an avenue of beeches and can just be made out, although it can be difficult to follow in places. Parts of it were difficult to access and some fallen trees blocked the path but it has been made accessible now. With your back to the Mountain Air gate, you need to turn forty five degrees to the right and the two lines of beech trees can be seen. From the gate by the place where the springs come out and form the start of the Brân river the start is on the right hand side and is indicated by a waymark sign on a tree. This path is not always easy going or simple to follow unlike the tracks making up the main routes through the wood. However, it is well worth the effort if you like secluded walks with occasional breath taking views.



Remains of Blaen Brân farmhouse, found on the trail.

If you visit the area by car please park in the bus terminus, below the Siloam Chapel, and not in The Square.

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WOODLANDS FOR ALL

Blaen Brân Community Woodland is a registered charity, no. 1120995

Sons of beeches

Not everyone is aware of the fact that Blaen Brân Community Woodland extends round the reservoir and includes a copse of mature beech trees which can be seen on the right hand side as you walk up the track that goes to the left of the reservoir and above it. David Parsons, our forestry expert, has taken seedlings of these trees and planted them to extend this wood further.

New planting here

Beech wood here

"It will be very satisfying to add to some of our oldest wood," he commented, "especially as we are using seedlings from the old trees themselves. And we've taken great care that no views from the top track are spoiled".



John Bunce

Many of you will remember John Bunce, the horse logger, who did such sterling work for us two years ago. He also gave a demonstration of the work he did and was always willing to talk about his craft.

Unfortunately, John has had a serious accident which makes it unlikely he will work as a logger again.

We have sent our best wishes to him and hope to organise a fundraising event soon.



John Bunce and his horses in Blaen Brân woods last year.

What's On

Every Sunday and Wednesday a working party doing two hours maintenance in the woods. Meet by Ebenezer Chapel at 10 a.m. Contact John 01633 866287 for more details.
Stonewall building 1st Sunday in the month. Contact Rob on 01633 860741 for details.

Fund raising event at the Queen November 17th 8 p.m. a joint event with Friends of the Earth

Racing Night the Scouts have organised a horse racing night at County Hall 28th November. Entrance £7.50 (includes meal). Contact Martyn 01633 861412 for details

Tree o'clock Saturday 5th December, meet at Ebenezer Chapel 10.30 for a prompt start at 11.00.

For all details of events

Come visit our website

www.blaenbran.org.uk