



Tree o'clock rocks!

11 o'clock Saturday December 5th saw the start of Tree o'clock. The aim was to plant as many trees as possible in one hour. A small army of volunteers made sure that 2400 trees were planted in Blaen Brân woodland, a figure we are given to believe to be the highest in south Wales. Congratulations and many thanks to the 120 or so people who helped achieve this, particularly the large number of Scouts who not only planted with enthusiasm but also helped ferry people to the planting sites.

The aim was to get an entry in the Guinness Book of Records for the most trees ever planted



Carefully planting hawthorn by the Alamo



Planting trees in a hurry near the cabin

in an hour. Unfortunately, this wasn't achieved across the whole of Britain but it wasn't for want of trying on our part.

We are extremely proud of the effort everyone made and are a little annoyed BBC Wales didn't see fit to report on our activities. They did send along two observers when we told them we were planning to plant 2000 trees but we were hoping for Lolo Williams and a camera crew. However they did give an excellent report about us, I am in email contact with Breathing Spaces who dreamt up the project so you never know.

Help plant the

Arboretum!

Planting is to begin in the arboretum on Sunday March 28th. David Parsons thought it would be appropriate to plant trees on Palm Sunday. If you would like to be a part of the planting of the first arboretum of native trees in Wales, meet us by Ebenezer Chapel, the Square, Upper Cwmbran at 10.00 am Sunday march 28th. You will need stout shoes or boots, a spade and appropriate clothing for working in the woods. There are over 200 trees to plant so there should be plenty to go round. Let's hope for good weather!

Arboretum starts to take shape

Work on the arboretum has finally begun. Our forestry expert, David Parsons, has made a plan of what species to plant where. We have looked at the ground and decided what needs to be removed to make enough space for the trees - generally bramble and bracken - and work has begun clearing the ground. David's idea is to plant native British species only and to plant them in families. This way, all the willow will be together in a group, as will all the oak family and so on.

How many native species there are in Britain is something naturalists argue about. Should only trees that colonised Britain before the retreat of the last ice age be included? Should those introduced by man and since

prospered naturally be included? The answer is we don't care that much. David Parsons has selected 47 species that will be planted and, as he has over 50 years of experience in forestry, we're not going to argue with him



Part of the area designated for the arboretum.



The Newsletter of Blaen Brân
Community Woodland

Snow business

The woodland looked lovely over Christmas and the new year covered as it was in a blanket of snow. Many people enjoyed walking and playing in the snow - myself included!

Unfortunately, snow can also be a problem in woods as the weight of snow can cause branches to break or even whole trees to fall. This is of course a perfectly natural occurrence and rotten fallen branches are an essential part of the woodland's ecosystem. However it can be problem if they fall on tracks or even on people or animals. Fortunately, we seem to have got off lightly. There were some broken off branches on the track just above the wood but apart from that, very little damage seems to have been done.



Blaen Brân woodlands in the recent snow

Signs of the times

You may have noticed some signs and symbols appear on trees and gates in the woodland recently. They have been put there to waymark trails. Some trails are historic, some are nature trails and some are either specifically trails for horses or for horses not to use. This is not to restrict people purely to the tracks and waymarked trails but to inform everyone where some specific sites of interest are, to make people aware that horses do use certain parts of the wood and to safeguard the surface of some of the tracks. Tell us what you think.

From the top, signs for nature trail, historic trail and the direction of the trail.

If you go down to the woods today

You're sure of a big surprise and the surprise is how much more wildlife there is now. A naturalist who visited last summer found over 120 species of plant, 14 of which were recognized as being rare or indicators of good habitat quality. There are certainly more birds in the woods now and many of us have enjoyed watching a family of buzzards who have taken up residence in the area.

So the question is, what have you seen in the woods? Let us know by emailing us at fromthewood@vfemail.net and we can compile a survey of the many different birds, insects, mammals and other wildlife we have. Photographs would be very welcome too although we don't guarantee being able to identify anything beyond the obvious - we're amateurs too!



A lizard sunning itself on a pipe last year

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



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



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.

Sunday 28th March Inaugural tree planting in the arboretum. Meet by Ebenezer Chapel at 10 a.m. Contact John 01633 866287 for more details or help with transport

Sunday 11th April Walk the new trails in the wood. Meet by Ebenezer Chapel at 10 a.m. Contact David 01633 870166 for more details

Sunday May 15th A chance to find out about the industrial history of the area from local expert Roy Dixon. Meet by Ebenezer Chapel at 10 a.m. Contact Roy On 01633 766659 for more details

For all details of events

Come visit our website

www.blaenbran.org.uk