



## Unhappy with campers

Up till now we have always allowed camping in the woodland. What could be nicer than a night out under the stars in a local woodland?

Unfortunately, we have suffered unbelievable vandalism as a result of this. There appears to be a rogue element that uses camping as an opportunity to cause as much as damage as possible.



*Commercial timber ruined by being set alight deliberately.*

As you can see from the pictures, this is not lighting a fire to keep warm at night but wanton vandalism.

Added to this, there is a litter problem. We take pride in keeping the woodland fairly free of litter. However, there is little we can do about smashed bottles and the resulting shards of glass causing damage to people and all too often damaging the paws of dogs blissfully unaware of the dangers in the undergrowth.

For these reasons we have had no choice but to ban camping and fires in the woodland. We are sorry for those people who are conscientious when camping but any other system—licences, written permission etc., is too cumbersome and open to abuse for us to operate.

Please help us enforce this in the first place by phoning Dave Higginson on 07787525875 informing him of any



*Here someone has set light to a living tree. It's not living now.*

problems in the woodland. Obviously, the Fire Brigade on 999 is the best option for reporting fires.

If we can largely stamp out the hooligan element, then hopefully we'll be able to allow camping again one day in the future.

## Wood work—still our best subject

Work continues apace in the woodland despite the recent “drought” that soaked everything and made using machinery in the woodland impossible. All the cutting down of trees has finished for the present although you can still see various machines working off the beaten track.



*Stockpile of logs seasoning in the sun, ready for sale next year.*

In order for people to still enjoy the path going through the top larch, the cut trees have been moved away from that path. All the heavy work and machinery is going on in areas away from where the general public walk. These logs are being stockpiled ready for sale.

It's not only been destructive work though. Over 450 new trees have been planted and it's noticeable that wild flowers are growing in the spaces where the larch once shaded all the ground. The flowers will attract insects which will attract birds and before long we'll have a lot more wildlife than we had before.



*Bluebells growing by the new tree planting with the old larch in the background.*

If anyone is interested in ordering larch logs to be used in a wood burning stove, Dave Higginson, woodland manager, is ready to take orders. Phone him on 07787525875 or email [blaenbran@gmail.com](mailto:blaenbran@gmail.com) for more details.



## Ponds and paths

It has long been an ambition to have more ponds in the woodland in order to increase biodiversity. Unfortunately, the area is so riddled with mine workings, previous attempts have resulted in the water rapidly disappearing underground.

Our one successful pond is near the spring at the start of the Brân stream. So we decided to try to turn the whole area between the path and the stream into a wetland area with more ponds and a lot of boggy ground. Ducks have been seen on the pond but foxes are liable to take any eggs. So, if we create new ponds, we can build one with an island



*The pond near the stream—ducks have been seen swimming in it.*

## Birdsong at breakfast

Over the last year it has felt that there are more birds in the woodland than there were – particularly as dense areas of close growing larch have been felled, and as bracken has been kept back for other plants to thrive. There was chance to get some 'expert opinion' when Gwent Ornithological Society held a walk in the wood on Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> May – which we joined. 8 am may not be early for keen 'birders' but it was birdsong at breakfast for us! Bird watching walks tend to go quite slowly as 'spots' are made and binoculars are focused to get a positive identification – but with beautiful weather, plenty of darting birds, and lots of different calls it was no great hardship. Various small wood dwellers were seen – chiff-chaff, chaffinch, red start, stone chat, wren, various tits, dunnoek, etc but for me

the great thrill was to see not one, not two, but three cuckoos! I've heard cuckoos in the wood every year over the past ten years, but this was the first time I'd ever seen the bird itself – and one was pretty close (it flew right over my head). Add to that seeing (at distance) a peregrine falcon soaring above the ridge line and it was a great morning out that I would thoroughly recommend – definitely worth an early breakfast!



*The male cuckoo—often heard, seldom seen.*

## Midsummer madness



*Tanc playing his pyrophone at the Eden project*

This summer will bring the most spectacular event ever to Blaen Brân Community Woodland.. On June 21st, midsummer's day we present Upper Cwmbran resident Tanc and his amazing pyrophone.

There will be a licensed bar from 7 pm, courtesy of Gareth Edwards from the Queen Inn.

The entertainment will begin at about 8 pm and will include various circus style acts, a live band and the amazing pyrophone. It is expected to end at about 10 pm although the bar will be open beyond then.

There will be a raffle and a hat passed round for donations. You may well wish to bring a folding chair to sit on.

## What's On

### Every Sunday

A working party does maintenance in the woods. Meet by Mineslope Cottage from 9.00 Contact Dave 07787525875 or email [blaenbran@gmail.com](mailto:blaenbran@gmail.com) for more details.

### June 21st

### Midsummer madness

See above

### July 15th

### New trails walk

Come and join us to see the new trails that have been constructed recently.

## For all details of events

Come visit our website

[www.blaenbran.org.uk](http://www.blaenbran.org.uk)

Or join us on

facebook

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