Chiltern Woodlands Project

News of the Woods

No 49 Summer 2013 and Annual Report 2012-2013

Chiltern Woodlands Project
A registered charity founded in 1989, it is based in the Chilterns Conservation Board's offices in Chinnor. It works across the Chilterns Natural Area, which includes all the Chilterns AONB. See our webpages at www.chilternsaonb.org/woodlands-project

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ASH DIEBACK
(Chalara fraxinea)

Tree pests and diseases are in the news more frequently than ever. Now ash trees are threatened by a new fungal disease. Ash is the second most common broadleaved tree in the Chilterns, with an estimated 10 million trees in the AONB. Many of these are young ash, which have grown since the storms of 1987 and 1990. There are also many older ash trees found in hedgerows.

Chalara is a new fungal disease. It has been killing large numbers of ash across eastern Europe. It seems to have originated in Poland in the early 1990's but the causal fungus was only identified in 2006. The fungus is wind dispersed, making control very difficult once it becomes established.

This disease has been brought to the UK from Europe on infected ash trees for the nursery trade, and was first found in a Buckinghamshire nursery in February 2012. However it was also been found in ancient woods in Suffolk and Kent, where it may have occurred naturally and been here for a few years. Chalara has not been found in the Chilterns yet, but could appear this summer, or next year? It may take a few years to take hold and cause harm.

There is a dedicated web page showing all the symptoms of this disease and the latest information on: www.forestry.gov.uk/chalara

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The work programme includes

- Field surveys – ecology, timber
- Historical research
- Management guidance publication
- Building local knowledge
- Establishing two propagation centres
- Conservation work parties
- Engaging with woodland managers
- Events programme
- Education pack and activities with schools
- Chilterns Country Walk
- On-site interpretation
- Online materials

Box is a very slow growing evergreen shrub that seems to thrive on dry chalk hillsides. Its timber is very dense (it does not float in water). It is very fine grained and was used in medieval times to produce wood wind instruments and blocks for fine carving. Its timber can be very valuable. The largest box wood in the country is at Kimble and Ellesborough Warrens.

Sarah Wright is the project officer swright@chilternsaonb.org

ASH DIEBACK (Chalara fraxinea)

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Ash is particularly found on chalky soils and has gradually been replacing beech on the Chilterns scarp and elsewhere. It is commonly found in hedgerows and gardens, as well as ancient and recent woodlands.

Ash trees can be male, female (or both) and may change during the life of the tree. They produce numerous wind dispersed seeds (keys). (photo right)

There may be another 10 million seedlings and saplings trying to grow in woods in the Chilterns. If only a small percentage of these are not affected by Chalara then ash will survive and re-establish itself, but this will take time. This could be speeded up if genetically resistant trees are discovered and can be grown by tree nurseries.

Ash has been favoured by foresters in recent years because it is fast growing, has potentially valuable timber and is rarely badly damaged by grey squirrels stripping bark (unlike most other native broadleaved timber trees). It is also sought after at the thinning stage for firewood.

Gaps in the woods will provide new opportunities for other species eg butterflies, birds, flowers, so it may not be all bad news! We need to be patient and wait and see, rather than over react. Nature will (in time) fill the vacuum if we lose ash, but it may not be what we want! However whitebeam, field maple, wych elm, hazel, beech, yew etc are all likely to grow in gaps left by the loss of ash, if deer and rabbit browsing on young saplings can be controlled to allow trees to establish.

Old ash trees on Cholesbury Common

Chilterns Box Woodland Project

This is a new Heritage Lottery Funded project running from Jan 2013 to May 2015. www.chilternsaonb.org/box.html

Box leaves and developing fruit
Annual Report 2012-2013
For the period from 1 April 2012 to 31 March 2013

The Chiltern Woodlands Project is a registered charity which offers an advisory service to help bring woods into management, working in partnership with others including contractors and volunteer groups. The Project can help owners with the preparation of Forestry Commission approved long term management plans, grant and felling licence applications.

The Chilterns AONB is famous for its beech woods. About 60% of these woods are ancient. Ancient woods have been continuously wooded since before 1600AD. They contain species, including the trees, that although influenced by management by man, are semi-natural and reflect the local growing conditions. Plantations on ancient woodland sites are the best place to restore woods to more natural conditions and conifer timber can often be sold, including for wood chip.

The Chiltern Woodlands Project's aim is to promote and encourage the sensitive and sustainable care and management of woodland in the Chilterns.

Work is across five linked themes:

A. Landscape: to protect and enhance the wooded landscape of the Chilterns.

B. Biodiversity: to maintain and enhance nature in the Chilterns.

C. Economy: to promote a sustainable woodland economy in the Chilterns; including the use of timber and wood fuel.

D. Historic Environment: to raise awareness and interest in the history and archaeology of woods across the Chilterns.

E. Community: to increase awareness, understanding, and enjoyment of Chiltern woodland.

Chairman’s Report

The Chiltern Woodlands Project continues to adapt to the times. Much of the work carried out by John now has to be on a fee paying basis as traditional grant support for the charity has declined. A key area of work has been to help woodland owners prepare long term management plans to bring woods into management. These plans attract a £1,000 grant from the Forestry Commission and can lead to felling consent and further grants for work in the woods. Fortunately the demand for firewood and wood fuel means that poorer quality trees can be sold so this can help pay for woodland management.

Last year we successfully completed the ancient woodland survey and the report and results can be seen on the Chilterns AONB website.

John also ran a number of training events for woodland owners and managers, some of these were supported by the LEADER programme.

The demand for the Project's services remains high and new issues such as tree diseases affecting major tree species, including ash and oak, mean that the concern for the health of woods in the Chilterns is increasing. Other introduced pests, such as grey squirrels which strip the bark from broadleaved trees, and the impact of increasing numbers of deer browsing in the woods are also having a major influence on the quality of woods in the area.

Thanks once again to our active Board of Trustees for their efforts and to all our funding partners in this difficult financial climate. We are grateful to the Chilterns Conservation Board for their continuing support and assistance.

Andrew Ingram June 2013
The main areas of work in the last year included:

**Woodland advisory work**

The advisory and paid consultancy work shown in the table in the last year included 4 owners of SSSIs, 6 felling licence applications approved and one further application awaiting approval, 12 Forestry Commission EWGS management plans approved and a further 10 submitted, being drafted or to do. One woodland creation grant was completed for a new wood near Beaconsfield. 6 of the owners were for wooded commons. 25 of the owners had ancient woodland.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Number of owners visited</th>
<th>Area Ha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chiltern</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>409.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wycombe</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>122.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dacorum</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>70.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Bucks</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>South Oxfordshire</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>88.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Three Rivers</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>37.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aylesbury Vale</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Beds</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>785.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**LEADER funded events and information sheets**

The Project contacted local contractors to encourage them to put their details on the MyForest website Directory of forestry businesses. [www.sylva.org.uk/myforest/directories.php](http://www.sylva.org.uk/myforest/directories.php)

The information sheets from the training events can be downloaded from the Chiltern Woodlands Project’s pages on the Chilterns AONB website see [www.chilternsaonb.org/woodlands-project](http://www.chilternsaonb.org/woodlands-project)

**Boxmoor Trust** - A management plan was completed for this estate near Hemel Hempstead. The first phase of work involved felling old spruce and replanting with broadleaved trees. The Trust has recently installed a new wood fuel heating system for their new offices.

**Bolter End Common** – A management plan for these commons was agreed with the Forestry Commission. Roadside trees along the busy B482 at Lane End were cut back and felled by South Bucks Tree Surgeons; some of the firewood was sold.

**Angling Spring Wood** The Project has an agreement to help Chiltern District Council to manage this wood; volunteers from Prestwood Nature have helped cut back dense holly. A similar arrangement covers the management of woods at Chilterns Crematorium at Amersham. Both have agreed long term plans.

**Walkwood, Beaconsfield Town Council** – Dead and dying elms were felled and dense laurel cleared using the Forestry Commission's Woodland Improvement Grants following the production of a management plan.
Ancient Woodland Inventory updated
The Chiltern Woodlands Project helped update the ancient woodland inventory for the whole of the Chilterns AONB. The inventory is maintained by Natural England and used by the Forestry Commission and others to protect this important and irreplaceable habitat.

Ancient woods have been continuously wooded since before 1600AD and cannot be recreated. They contain species, including the trees that although influenced by management by man, are also semi-natural in that they reflect the local growing conditions.

This work added small ancient woods under 2 ha that have not been included before and reviewed and revised the boundaries of other ancient woods. It is part of a programme that has been updating the inventory across South East England in recent years. Victoria Benstead Hume carried out the desk based map work.

A report is available on www.chilternsaonb.org/about-chilterns/woods/ancient-woodland.html

The results are published by Natural England on the ancient woodland maps are available on www.magic.gov.uk and also on the Forestry Commission's Land Information Search www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/infd-6dfkmn

The total area of ancient woodland now identified in the Chilterns AONB is 11,058 hectares, a net increase of 1,231 hectares, covering 13.19% of the AONB.

Woodland archaeology workshops
The Project held another well attended woodland archaeology workshop at Pigotts Wood on 1st March.

The Chilterns Commons Project continues to make its mark across the 200 commons in the Chilterns. Last year we helped with a Tree Safety course at Cholesbury and a Woodland Management training day at Bolter End Common, Lane End, where a mobile sawmill cut up two fallen oaks into planks for a local sign making business to use.

John is a member of the Chilterns LEADER Local Action Group (LAG) which has been offering funding to support forestry across the Chilterns. The current scheme has now been fully spent to the end of 2013. It is hoped that the next round of European funding will continue to make grants available to farmers and woodland owners through the LEADER programme.

Wood Fuel East steering group, covers the Eastern England, including Herts & Beds, with grants to support woodland owners and contractors to invest in harvesting and processing equipment and related infrastructure.

Advisory visits for Wood Fuel East – these visits and report are 80% funded by Wood Fuel East but the programme ends this December, so if you own an unmanaged wood in Hertfordshire or Bedfordshire and want to take advantage of this assessment please get in touch contact John as soon as possible.

See www.woodfueleast.org.uk/

John was asked to chair the Oxon/ Bucks division of the Royal Forestry Society in March 2013. John also attended the Forestry Commission’s Applicants Focus Group which discussed the implementation of the English Woodland Grant Scheme and related subjects; and is a member of the Woodland Initiatives Network steering group.

The map (right) shows part of Ancient Woodland in the Chilterns - Ancient Woodland Inventory Report 2012
Management plan agreed with the Forestry Commission, which gave felling consent to thin out 50% of Scots pine to leave pine plus beech and oak.

- First visit – advice October 2009
- £1,000 FC grant for woodland management plan giving felling consent – fee to project
- Draft management plan to Forestry Commission (FC) May 2010
- Revised management plan agreed Oct 2011
- 3 FC grant contracts agreed by July 2012
- Wood Fuel WIG 60% capital costs – about £5,600 funding.
- Chiltern DC planning consent for hard standing Feb 2012
- Obtained 3 quotes summer 2012
- Arborcare put in new entrance hard standing and new gates Jan 2013
- Felling using harvester started 6 March 2013
- Felling and extraction completed 3 April 2013

Harvester cut every second row of pines. Scots pine cut into 4.5 metre lengths, cut over 650 cubic metres / tonnes.
Board of Directors

Andrew Ingram - Chairman
Adrian Lepper - Company Secretary
Howard Pool - Hon Treasurer
Cherry Aston
Jeremy Hodge - (until AGM Sept 12)
Richard Pushman - Buckinghamshire County Council
Nigel Shepherd - Chiltern District Council
David Harris - Chiltern Society (Vice Chairman)
Keith Muras - Chiltern Society
John Nowell Smith - (until May 2012)
Heather Barrett-Mold - Chilterns Conservation Board
Steve Patrick
Janet Simmonds - (until AGM Sept 12)
Susan Howkins

The AGM to approve the accounts and elect the Board for the coming year will be held on 24 September 2013 in Chinnor.

Staff
John Morris, Director

We are most grateful for the continuing support of the Chilterns Conservation Board, who provide the project with office accommodation in Chinnor.

Officers from key partners are members of the steering group and attend the Board meetings. Our thanks to Steve Rodrick Chief Officer Chilterns Conservation Board, Richard Pearce of the Forestry Commission Mai Neilsen Buckinghamshire County Council and David Stowe of Chiltern District Council who attended these meetings for their help.

Financial Summary
Payroll services were provided by Andrew and Trudy Otter of Avocet Accounting and Business Services Ltd of Longwick, Bucks

Howard Pool carried out the book keeping role on a voluntary basis.

Annual accounts are prepared by George Hay & Co London. Copies of these accounts will be available from the office on request.

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<thead>
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<th>Income 2012/13</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Income</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Expenditure</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Expenditure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss on year</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Book sales continue to generate some income, over £1,250 last year. Both books can be ordered direct from the Project or bought from the Chilternsaonb website.

The Cultural Heritage of Chilterns Woods – an illustrated guide to archaeological features written by John Morris and published by the Chiltern Woodlands Project in April 2009 has sold over 1020 copies.

Special Trees and Woods of the Chilterns was written by volunteers and published in November 2010. Edited by Rachel Sanderson and produced thanks to the efforts of Marie Hanson, an MA graduate from Oxford Brookes University. The Special Trees and Woods book has now sold 660 copies.

Web page statistics
2012-13
www.chilternsaonb.org/woodlands-project

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<tr>
<th>Page</th>
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<td>Chiltern Woodlands Project</td>
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<td>762</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ancient Woodland</td>
<td>428 (since 24 August 2012)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Woods in Wartime (film clips)</td>
<td>109 (since 5 Feb 2013)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total PDF's downloaded</td>
<td>920</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Woodland creation at Holtspur
Coming Events

Sunday 15th September Chilterns Countryside Festival at Ashridge

Chilehns Countryside and Food Festival
from 10am to 4pm
at the National Trust Ashridge Estate
Bridgewater Monument, Near Berkhamsted, Herts HP4 1LT
Adults £4, children free. There is a small charge for some activities
Free parking in the meadow
Museum to see and do for all the family
For more information phone: 01442 851 122 or 07786 49 11 40

Discover the activities, crafts and industries linked with our local countryside

Grown in Britain

This new campaign aims to create a sustainable future for our woods and forests by creating a wood culture that captures personal health and fitness, well-being, community and encourages the use of more wood and forest product. It aims to create a new and stronger market pull for the array of products derived from our woodlands and forests.

www.growninbritain.org/

Photos © John Morris, Chiltern Woodlands Project, unless stated otherwise

Bottom Wood - 30 years

John Morris has now been working in the Chilterns for 30 years, advising owners on woodland management, with a particular focus on small, unmanaged and ancient woods.

On Sunday 29th September at 10.30am and 2.00pm – Bottom Wood walks

John will be leading guided walks in Bottom Wood to explain what has been done over the last 30 years. A new permissive path has been opened up this spring to improve access around the wood away from the muddy bridleway. New information boards were installed at the entrances and a second bench put in looking along the chalk grassland glade on Toothill. If you would like to attend a guided walk, which lasts just over 2 hours, please contact John to book a place.

Bottom Wood is an interesting 14.5 hectare ancient woodland on the boundary of Radnage and Stokenchurch parishes. It was gifted to the Chiltern Society by Mrs Cynthia Ercolani in 1984, to be managed as a nature reserve. Bottom Wood was the base of the Chiltern Society's Small Woodlands Project started by Society chairman Charles Mills in September 1983 and continued until 1988. The Chiltern Woodlands Project then became a charity in its own right. This September 2013 marks 30 years of management of the wood by John and Chiltern Society volunteers. Peter Towersey is the new coordinator for this Chiltern Society woodland. A Forest School group from the local school continues to make use of Bottom Wood for their regular outdoor learning activities.

Grown in Britain Project partners:

Chiltern Woodlands Project partners:

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