



Why we are where we are, and where we're going.

A report to the Community

May 2010

Where it all began The land that is now Tarvin's woodland started off in 1984 as a noise barrier between the village and the new by-pass. It was a piece of open land with trees planted as shelter belt along each long side. All woodlands need to be managed, so the trees were planted on a "three for one" basis, which assumes that after a few years two out of each three trees would be removed to leave the best specimen. The various highway authorities never did this. Jim Grogan established the woodland in 1998 and the community has since planted many young trees but didn't gain control of the trees planted in 1984 until the Trust was established and, in September 2009, signed a 125 year lease. With the lease came a duty for the Trust to manage the whole woodland.

Where we are now Because the trees were never thinned, the woodland now has a large number of ash and sycamore trees that have grown very tall as each has stretched upwards towards the light. This has resulted in many trees that are weak and potentially pose a threat to users. These largely bare trunks mean that the noise reduction is much less effective due to the lack of side branches and leaves. It also means that predators have easy access to the smaller birds because there is little medium height vegetation to encourage and shelter them. Our stated objective is to create a community woodland of native species with open areas and wild flowers that encourages wildlife. Over the last two years we have made a good start. The mower has enabled us to create some grassy areas that improve the vista and, importantly, make it a much safer environment. We have recently installed twenty-two nesting boxes that should prove to be squirrel proof and virtually indestructible. We have also been busy organising finance and seeking a contractor that will enable us, at last, to tackle the drainage problems that principally affect the Broomheath Lane portion. You will see this work being carried out in the near future using finance from an O₂ grant and money from the "section 106" money that developers have paid towards facilities that benefit the community. We have also started to thin the woodland adjacent to Broomheath Lane and several thousand more snowdrops have been planted.

Where we're going Tarvin woodland needs to be managed and maintained at low cost. The major project now is to get the trees back under control so that their future will be more assured. For this we need to ensure the Renovation and Restoration of the shelter belt that will lead to the Rejuvenation of the eco-system; the three R's. We have recently obtained a licence from the Forestry Commission that will allow us to start this process. Over the next few years you will see some quite drastic short term changes in the woodland that have become necessary because of previous neglect. We believe that this is necessary to achieve the longer-term benefits. In other words, some short-term pain will result in longer-term gain, so please be patient. No thinning or removal of commemorative trees will take place. The sycamores will be felled and further growth prevented. Many of the very tall ash trees will be felled to permit them to grow again as coppice. Coppicing is a traditional method of woodland management which takes advantage of the fact that many trees reshoot from the stump or roots if cut down. In a coppiced wood young tree stems are repeatedly cut down to near ground level. In subsequent growth years, many new shoots will emerge, and, after a number of years the coppiced tree is ready to be harvested, and the cycle begins again. Coppicing maintains trees at a juvenile stage, and a regularly coppiced tree will never die of old age. Typically a coppiced woodland is harvested in sections on a rotation. In this way, a crop is available each year somewhere in the woodland. Coppicing has the effect of providing a rich variety of habitats, as the woodland always has a range of different-aged coppice growing in it, which is beneficial for biodiversity. What this all means is that in a few years we will be able to harvest small diameter logs or bean poles that may then be sold to provide some income.

NO THINNING OR REMOVAL OF THE COMMEMORATIVE TREES WILL TAKE PLACE.

The licence applies to the trees planted originally in 1984.

Your part in all this We are absolutely delighted at the number of people who are using the woodland, many with their dogs. Its reputation is growing and there are many visitors from the surrounding towns and villages. During the drainage work the footpath will be under a closure order for a three-week period from May 17th; the alternative will be to use the bridleway. When the tree felling takes place we will endeavour not to have a formal footpath closure unless absolutely necessary but this will rely on co-operation from users. If you are asked to wait a while or to use the bridleway instead, please respect these requests because it will be for your safety. We have had odd instances of people saying that they have an absolute right to go where they want; it will be a great pity if we have to close the path for a lengthy period due to the behaviour of a few.

Dog owners We have had a good response to the recent signs that were put up to stress the risk of toxocara and blindness from dog faeces. There has been a noticeable reduction in fouling. However, yet again there is a small number of people who ignore the signs, persistently remove them at the Broomheath end and even deposited two bucketfuls of dog droppings at the Broomheath end, one of them under the bin. It is intended that parties of schoolchildren from Tarvin and other schools will use the woodland as a valuable educational resource but this will not be possible if the place is not safe. Please apply pressure to anyone you see breaking the law in this way.