

# Protection for Ancient Woodland - Bigwood

The Woodland Trust has been lobbying government throughout this year with their Enough is Enough campaign. It is pressing the government to give ancient woodland the protection it deserves. To qualify as ancient, a site must have been constantly wooded since at least the year 1600. The history of Bigwood can be traced back as far as the Domesday book in 1086 which is why it has been classified as ancient woodland.

Ancient woodland is among our most valuable ecosystems but now covers just 2% of the UK, far less than in most European countries. Yet these woodlands are not adequately protected and a significant proportion of the remaining woods are under threat from infrastructure projects. Bigwood is itself under constant threat from insurance companies who claim that the mature trees in the wood cause subsidence

problems in the adjacent houses round the wood even though most experts agree that removing a mature tree which existed before the house was built causes 'heave' problems over many years to the house and surrounding area. The Bigwood Voluntary Group is supporting the Woodland Trust initiative to press government to give ancient woodland more protection because it is such a valuable resource. Barnet Council now lacks the resources to manage the wood in an active ongoing manner. Luckily for locals, the Trees and Open Spaces subcommittee of the RA has worked closely with Barnet Council over the last few years to protect and manage the wood by forming a volunteer group.

Of course the trees in Bigwood have not been in existence since 1600 let alone since 1086! Most are between 100-150 years old. But we know the area has constantly been a woodland site through the ages. We, therefore, know the soil still holds the seeds and spores of the original native species and that it is why work is continuing in Bigwood to open up glades by coppicing the understory and removing ground bramble and ivy as well as other invasive species such as conifers and rhododendron. This work has been carried out before but has not succeeded because

it was not continued on an ongoing basis.

We now have a group of 50 volunteers or supporters and often have as many as 20 plus volunteers attending the Bigwood Activity mornings during the autumn and winter. But we still need more to ensure Bigwood survives and prospers.

We have left the middle of the wood largely undisturbed because the dappled shade of the central area is an ideal environment for wild service trees. There are over 80 wild service trees in the wood. These trees are characteristic of ancient woods. We have so far planted over 80 oak saplings where there is little or no canopy and watered them over the summer during dry periods. But certain areas have been made into glades and we are already seeing an increase in some wild flowers such as native bluebells, wood anemones, yellow archangel and greater stitchwort.

We are also leaving the cut hazel etc in piles to create habitat for both birds and small mammals. You can hear woodpeckers and in the evening owls when walking round the wood and at dusk one is able to pick up the sound of bats.

We believe that we are creating an exciting new dawn for Bigwood – *your* ancient wood.

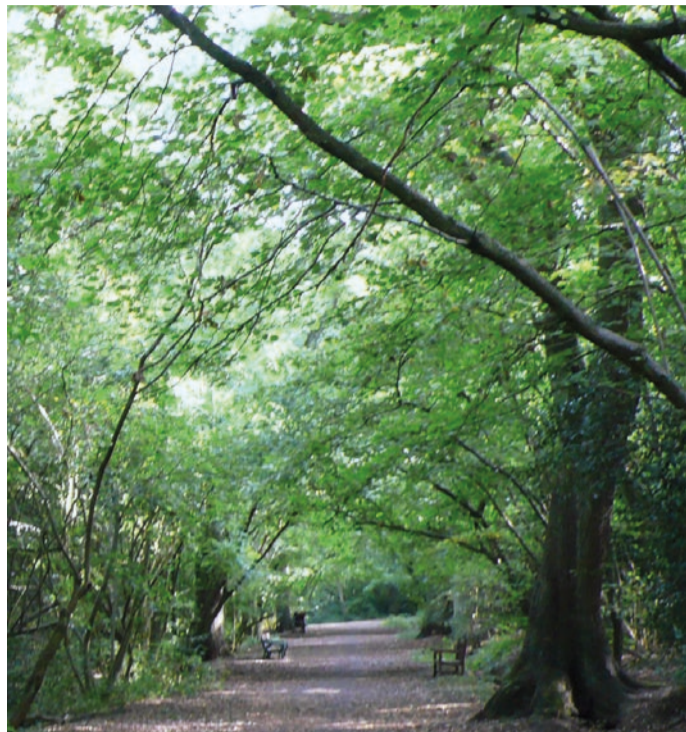
We have applied for a new grant from the Forestry Commission so that we can erect up to date information boards at the main entrance and carry out new surveys to establish more information about the flora, fauna and lichen in the wood.

We are starting work again in the wood in October through

to March 2015. You can contact us through Peter Falk, peter.falk@dsl.pipex.com or 07973 541264, to receive regular information or come to some of our volunteer Saturday mornings. Or, for more details, go to the RA website section Trees and Open Spaces, sub section Bigwood.

PETER FALK

CESAR RODRIGUEZ-DURAN



## Blandford Close Street Party

Blandford Close residents held a street party on Sunday September 21 with the aim of getting to know their neighbours better and fostering community spirit. As one resident reported, "it was a huge success!"

There was a bouncy castle, and arts and crafts for the kids and each household brought delicious home-made foods. There was a fantastic atmosphere and communal feel to the event. Residents already help each

other clear the street of snow each winter to improve street safety, utilising Barnet council's 'Grit My Street' initiative.

Earlier in the year they set up a WhatsApp group which has a steady stream of street-related conversations including ensuring each other's wellbeing when a house alarm goes off – a modern neighbourhood watch!

Blandford Close has really shown a great example of how a street can come together!



NGIGEL SUTTON

Several members of the HGS Horticultural Society summer workshop held at the Garden Suburb Community Library brought their miniature gardens to the flower show



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The RA website is www.hgs.org.uk