

# Backwell Environment Trust

Registered Charity No. 1109406

## Bulletin 12 – June 2008



### Two **BIG** items this month :

**First** : **News of an amazing opportunity.** The chance to buy the 'other half' of Cheston Combe Wood, that is the bit on the right as you motor up the combe; the bit in fact which contains the pre-historic Backwell Cave plus superb views over the disused and replanted Coles quarry and the Bristol Channel to Wales.

**Second** : **an invitation** to all our members to an Open Day on the afternoon of Saturday June 21<sup>st</sup> in the woodland. This will include guided tours, tea and cakes and all kinds of other activities. We shall also be officially opening our Easy Access Trail which allows those not fully mobile to park securely and wander along a smooth flat surface to the magnificent Jubilee Stone viewpoint. There are benches every 60 yards or so to ease the way and on June 21<sup>st</sup> there will be supervised parking, courtesy of our farmer neighbour, in his adjacent hay field.

### More on both of these items below

We also have our regular feature on woodland trees from Dr Terry Smith, some ornithological tips from gap year student Philip Chapman and an article on the limekiln in the woodland .

### MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Most of our members have renewed their membership but a few have not. If you receive a form with this Bulletin it means you are one of the few.

We very much hope you will renew if you have not yet done so.

The size of the membership is an important factor when applying for grants so although we seem to be very well established we do need to be able to demonstrate a wide base of support especially this year when we are trying to extend the Nature Reserve.

Gift Aid is also a very important source of income for us so if possible please tick the relevant box and don't forget to sign the form.

**STOP PRESS** : *If you opted to receive your bulletin electronically you will not have received the leaflet on our wood prepared by the Forest of Avon. If you would like one delivered please e-mail [bill.charnock@btinternet.com](mailto:bill.charnock@btinternet.com)*

## The Chance to Extend Our Nature Reserve!

The quarrying company Cemex has offered BET the South Western part of Cheston Combe Wood. This is the woodland on your right as you proceed up Cheston Combe. It covers 15 acres as compared to the 10 acres which we own and manage as the Jubilee Stone Wood Nature Reserve which is of course on the left as you ascend the combe. It also contains the prehistoric Backwell Cave and affords spectacular views over the replanted Coles quarry across the Bristol Channel to Wales. Furthermore our botanist advisers tell us it is even richer in species than our current reserve.

### This is a wonderful chance to secure this woodland for the parish of Backwell in perpetuity.

The bad news is of course that we have to raise the money to buy it and the price is quite significant, although browsing websites offering woodlands for sale indicates that we are being asked to pay a little less than market value.

Accordingly we are vigorously chasing grant money. It helps in this regard if we can show a large membership with widespread support and I hope that those who have not rejoined for 2008/9 will do so. A membership form should have been delivered with this bulletin if you are in this category.

Naturally we are also seeking donations from members and supporters although we are conscious that some members have already made generous gifts even before this new development opportunity arose.

On the grant front we are a bit unlucky. The Aggregates Levy which would be the obvious choice is undergoing its triennial review so will not be available until the autumn at the earliest. We are thus looking closely at the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Landfill Levy. The latter is a bit unusual in that in some cases it requires 10% of the value of the grant money to be donated back to the landfill company by an independent third party donor.

Controversially perhaps we have also approached Bristol International Airport. If you have any views on this please let us know by contacting one of the trustees. BIA has helped us in the past and is a fact of life in living in North Somerset.

**Please consider making a donation to help us buy the woodland and to underwrite our grant applications. If we are unsuccessful we will return any donations we receive which have been tied to the wood purchase rather than given generally to the Trust. Please use the form below – any donation you can make would be greatly appreciated. Thank you.**

✂.....✂.....✂

Forename : ..... Surname : .....

Address.....

I/We wish to make a donation of £ ..... (cheques payable to 'Backwell Environment Trust')

I/We would like the donation returned should the Trust be unsuccessful in the purchase of the woodland. Please tick here .....

#### **Gift Aid**

I/We would like all payments made to BET since 6<sup>th</sup> April 2000 and all future payments to be Gift Aid until further notice. Please tick here : .....

(To qualify your annual income tax or capital gains tax must equal or exceed the tax BET can claim back. For every pound you give as a donation, **BET can claim an extra 25p from the Inland Revenue**).

Signed : .....

Date : .....

Please return this form to Bill Charnock,  
17 Church Town, Backwell, BS48 3JQ



Backwell Environment Trust

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## BACKWELL ENVIRONMENT TRUST INVITES YOU TO AN AFTERNOON OF WOODLAND FUN & DISCOVERY IN JUBILEE STONE WOOD NATURE RESERVE

**Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> June 1:30pm-5pm**

The programme of events will start at 2pm with the opening of the new easy access path followed by guided walks where you can discover some of the wood's amazing plants, animals and archaeology.

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Refreshments will be available all afternoon  
Join in with the treasure and bug hunts  
Visit the newly excavated & restored limekiln  
Displays of woodland work, archaeology & geology  
Enjoy the spectacular views from the Jubilee Stone  
Car parking sign-posted from the top of Cheston  
Combe or follow the bridleway up from Church Town

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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT:  
BILL OR BARBARA CHARNOCK ON 01275 462083 OR  
IAN OR ANN CHAMBERS ON 01275 463315

## The Ash Tree

By Dr Terry Smith

### Ash *Fraxinus excelsior*

**A**lthough leaves of Ash (which is a member of the Oleaceae - the olive family), are very similar to those of the Walnut, in the latter tree the buds are alternate. In addition, on sectioning the twigs longitudinally in Walnut, it will be seen that the pith is chambered, unlike Ash. Other than the Elder bush (*Sambucus nigra*), which has similar pinnate leaves that could cause some confusion with Ash, no other native trees have opposite buds. All other deciduous native trees have alternate buds.

The Ash tree is probably familiar to all and is a long established native tree in these islands characterised by the large pinnate leaves and black buds (see photograph opposite). Ash is from 'æsc' the Anglo Saxon word for a spear (cf *Acer*) and *fraxinus* is from the Greek 'phrasso' to fence. *Excelsior* – literally - from the heavens meaning 'very tall'. The seed is a samara with a single wing, most unlike that of the closely related olive tree! Other species in the Oleaceae include the jasmine, privet, and lilac, with widely differing morphology.



Ash trees coppice well and the wood is well known as being the best for burning in open fires. The white timber is used for tool handles, wheel rims, and billiard cues. The fungus known as 'King Alfred's Cakes' (*Daldinia concentrica*) will only grow on dead ash wood. Lesions often seen in local woods on the trunks of growing ash trees are caused by the bacterium *Pseudomonas syringae*. The Ash Bark Beetle *Leperisinus varius* is common in this area, and recently a large Ash tree was felled in Nailsea when it became infected with *Perenniporia fraxinea* a large white bracket fungus, which spread to neighbouring Ash trees.

### **Past Events**

On March 8<sup>th</sup> our gap year ornithological expert Philip Chapman led a very well attended (20+) early morning birdsong walk followed by breakfast.

On April 2<sup>nd</sup> a party from Ravenswood School supported by Forest of Avon staff visited the wood using our permissive car park (possibly for the first time) and designed marker posts for our Easy Access Path. These should be on display at our open day.

On February 21<sup>st</sup>, 28<sup>th</sup> & April 17<sup>th</sup> our County Archaeologist, Vince Russett, came and supervised the surveying of the ruined warrener's cottage and limekiln systematically and according to best practice.

On May 8<sup>th</sup> five residents from St Christophers special School, Westbury Park with six care staff visited the Jubilee Stone using our Easy Access Path (see picture opposite) from the permissive car park.



On May 17<sup>th</sup> Philip Chapman again took out a twenty strong party to study birdsong.

On May 25<sup>th</sup> a group of around twenty very willing volunteers from St Andrew's Church helped us with bracken pulling in some of the reserve's wildflower meadows.

### Regular Events

**Activity Days - on the second Thursday and the fourth Saturday of every month** starting at 10 am on both days and continuing for 2 hours or as long as your energy lasts. We always have a break for coffee and biscuits!

The tasks will change as the year progresses and can vary according to your strength and interests. Please wear stout footwear, suitable clothes (long sleeve tops and long jeans or trousers are advisable) and, if possible, bring garden gloves. If it's hot bring a cool drink. Meet at the lower entrance to the wood near 17, Church Town from 09:45 for a 10:00 start – or 'phone in advance (463315) to find out where we shall be working.

Lately the activity group has been restoring the 19<sup>th</sup> century limekiln and has shifted about three tons of rubble.

**And another regular activity.....**

## **Fairtrade cafe and shop**



**2nd Saturday of the month  
10am - 12 noon  
Backwell Parish Hall**



**Why don't you pop in for a great tasting tea or coffee?  
And stock up on Fairtrade goods.  
The café on June 14<sup>th</sup> will include a free bike repair workshop**

This has now become a regular monthly event – and a lively meeting place, with good filter coffee or tea and biscuits. Organisations are invited to run small stalls to advertise their activities. The shop offers a range of Fairtrade goods including tea, coffee, sugar, a range of chocolate, rice, pasta, muesli, biscuits, and various dried fruit and nuts, and there is a stall selling paintings and hand made paper products from Malawi. **So why not call in sometime?**

### Future Events :

The main planned future event so far is our open day on **Saturday June 21<sup>st</sup>** - but it's a BIGGY. See the poster in this bulletin for all the activities planned.

**Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> June** : Backwell Community Plan Open Day in the Parish Hall 10-5pm.

**Saturday July 12<sup>th</sup>** : Bat Survey evening with Avon Bat Group. Meet 8:15pm 17, Church Town. Detectors and guidance will be provided. Contact Avril or Michael Marks, 463244

A charcoal burn will be held sometime in **August**. Watch out for an e-mail or check the notices around the village and woodland.



## Community Owl Project

Look out for e-mails and notices around the village for developments.

### Phil Chapman's Top Tips for listening to, learning and ENJOYING (!) birdsong.

1. **GO OUT AND LISTEN TO BIRDS.** No CD or video, however useful, can beat going outside and listening to real birds. Watching a bird sing (i.e. involving more than one sense) can make it easier to remember which bird has which song, rather than trying to unravel the whole dawn chorus.
2. **LISTEN CASUALLY.** A simple country walk or a stroll down to the shops can be as useful as going out specially to listen songs. Just keep your ears open as you walk along, and take a moment to think, for example "Ah! A singing Robin..." before carrying on.
3. **LEARN IN SMALL CHUNKS.** Many birds have very similar songs or calls to their close relatives (or, confusingly, to completely different types of bird!). Therefore, it helps to group similar songs together in pairs or threes. Then, try and learn the subtle differences within each pair. Perhaps spend a month on each before trying another.
4. **GET A CD OR A BOOK.** There are many CDs, books or videos of bird songs and calls. It is most useful to get a CD or video, as they give actual recordings and footage of the birds. A field guide can have some useful information on songs of unusual species, and is easier to use in the field. However, books must represent vibrant and complex noises in print, which means one call can be printed very differently in different books, and it is often difficult to imagine what a printed noise sounds like.
5. **START SIMPLY.** Don't try and learn all the bird calls in Britain! Just try a few local or garden species.
6. **OBSERVE.** By looking at the behaviour and situation of a singing bird, we can tell a lot about their life cycle, etc. It is often interesting to note the day of year you hear the first and last song from one particular species. For example, is the first Song Thrush of spring getting earlier each year? Is your Robin singing to defend his/her territory or to attract a mate?
7. **EXPECT TO GET RUSTY!** It is easy to forget summer birds' calls and songs over the winter and vice versa. Hence practice is needed in summer /autumn.

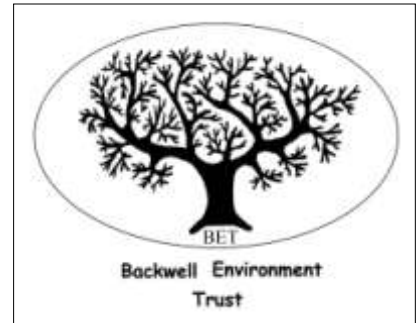


8. ENJOY. Listening to birdsong is a wonderfully peaceful activity. It does not really require any great fitness or agility, is easy to do, and is a good way to connect with nature from your own garden. By getting involved more, learning songs and calls, and observing birds as they sing, it is easy to learn more about their lives.

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### BET Clothing Now Available!

Did you know that you can now show your support for BET by wearing clothing embroidered with the BET name and logo? We have recently negotiated a special rate with Peaks of Backwell (22 West Town Road) where T- shirts start from just £6, sweatshirts from £14 and fleeces from £19 (these prices include **both** VAT **and** the embroidery). You can choose any colour or style of clothing and select an embroidery colour of your choice. Alternatively you can bring in your own clothing and have the embroidery sewn on for just under £5. Peaks offer a huge range of clothes so either pop in for a brochure or look online at [www.propeaks.co.uk](http://www.propeaks.co.uk) - we've always found them extremely friendly and helpful.



### Jubilee Stone Wood's Limekiln

The limekiln in the woodland was constructed sometime between 1843 and 1884 to convert limestone (calcium carbonate) to 'quicklime' or 'lime' (calcium oxide). This material had many uses ranging from the production of lime mortar and lime wash for buildings to its use in agriculture as a soil improver.

#### Limekiln Construction

The kiln has been built from locally extracted, shaped limestone blocks and has been deliberately set into the sloping hillside. This arrangement has the advantages of saving on construction costs whilst also assisting in its ease of operation by being able to load from the top and unload from the bottom. It also ensured the kiln was aligned with the prevailing south-westerly winds which would have helped fan the fire and speed up the conversion process.

The internal bowl of the kiln would undoubtedly have been lined with Pennant sandstone extracted from around Nailsea. Whenever kilns were constructed from limestone blocks it was always necessary to physically separate the limestone used in the main body of the kiln with the fuel otherwise it too would be converted to quicklime during the lengthy firing process.

Directly in front of the kiln are the remains of an open-sided rectangular enclosure which may have served as a storage area for the kiln's labourers or alternatively used as a sheltered loading point for the extracted quicklime.

#### Decline

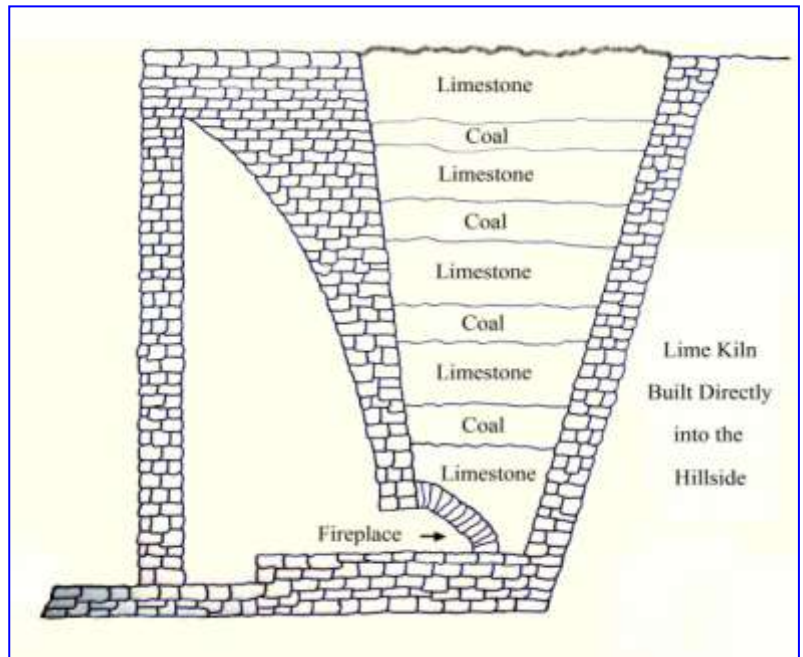
Towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, improvements in transport enabled larger industrial kilns to mass-produce lime at comparatively lower prices whilst the use of cement in the construction industry was becoming increasingly popular.

Historical evidence from old maps indicates that Jubilee Stone Wood's limekiln fell into disuse sometime between 1884 and 1902. The adjacent structure probably collapsed soon after the kiln was abandoned which has clearly helped to preserve the kiln in the excellent condition we find it today.

## Quicklime Production

The manufacture of quicklime was a time consuming, dangerous and labour intensive process. Sufficient limestone and fuel (probably coal and/or wood) would have to be collected and transported, loaded into the kiln in layers (see cross sectional diagram opposite) and set alight. The limestone was then heated in the kiln at temperatures of up to 1000°C for around 3 to 4 days.

The raw materials needed for the process were all available locally. Wood (or charcoal) could be easily sourced from nearby woodlands and coal could be hauled up Cheston Combe from the pits around Nailsea. Limestone was almost certainly mined from the surrounding area and the woodland has several large, square shaped pits where limestone has clearly been extracted.



**BET volunteers are currently in the process of restoring this fascinating part of our local heritage to its former 19<sup>th</sup> century condition with assistance from the County Archaeologist and a local experienced ancient building restorer.**



**Limekiln – Spring 2006**



**Limekiln – Spring 2008**

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**Did You Know?** : If you are on e-mail you can elect to receive your bulletin via the internet in full glorious **COLOUR**. If you are not on e-mail please keep an eye out for notices posted in the village & the woodland giving details of forthcoming events. You will usually find these at Parkers, the library near Backwell crossroads, the vets in Rodney Road & the two main entrances to Jubilee Stone Wood Nature Reserve.