

# **Backwell Environment Trust**

## **Bulletin 25 - Winter 2012**

**[www.backwellenvironmenttrust.org](http://www.backwellenvironmenttrust.org)**



### **A very warm welcome to our latest winter bulletin**

Over the autumn months the BET volunteers have been working hard to complete our brand new community trail in Badgers Wood as well as hand scything our extensive, newly-restored wildflower meadows. The plans to refurbish the BET cabin are now well advanced and our October dormouse survey found the highest number of dormice ever recorded on our reserves.

To help you find your way around our action-packed bulletin the contents are listed below :

**The Chairman's Final Jottings**

**BET Annual Report**

**BET Trustees**

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**The BET Cabin**

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**Deck the Halls .....**

**Green Woodworking**

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**BET's Autumn Hike**



## **The Chairman's Final Jottings**

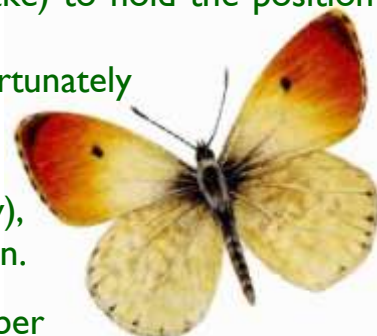


**Goodbye.** These are my last jottings since, as many of you know, I stood down as founder chairman and trustee at the Eighth BET AGM on November 17<sup>th</sup>.

A great deal has happened since 2004 when I was cycling around pushing begging letters through doors urging residents to 'Buy a wood for Backwell'.

There was a generous response and we did raise enough to persuade the Aggregates Levy to grant us the funds. Not many know that the deal was struck at a chance meeting in JSV between Barbara and the owner. It turned out that the agent had not passed on our offer to him because it was thought to be too low. In fact he was very glad to accept it. Then of course we had the palaver of getting a solicitor to act for us pro bono (many thanks to Mike Wadge), ditto a chartered surveyor (Bill Howard) and a local resident (Gary Lake) to hold the position until the grant money arrived.

Well we had the wood and not much idea what to do with it but fortunately our Reserve Warden Ian came along and since then we have made huge strides. A car park and easy access to the Jubilee Stone were installed (courtesy Parish Council and once again the Aggregates Levy), meadows restored, ponds created, nest and bat boxes erected and so on.



Badgers wood is another story. We approached Cemex UK Ltd a number of times and eventually got their attention and an offer to sell to us. After the usual machinations this was agreed and we managed to obtain a grant this time from the Landfill Levy (YANSEC). The snag here was that 10% seed was required but we obtained pledges from our members and from Backwell Parish Council to provide it. Happily we did not have to call in these funds as the good old Aggregates Levy (sadly gone forever, snaffled into North Somerset's general budget) agreed to pay it. Two more snags though. Firstly Cemex UK Ltd found it did not own all the land it was trying to sell us and we had to negotiate separately with a private resident. Secondly it withdrew the three acres around Backwell Cave. We are still living with the latter situation as the proposals for Coles Quarry develop.

Much more to say but had better stop now. Good luck to BET; may it long continue to flourish.

### Other Retirements

John Tarkanyi our treasurer for many years also stood down at this year's AGM. John rescued us five years ago when our accounts were in a parlous state because of the illness of our then treasurer. We have had very tight control of our affairs since and John's contribution is much appreciated.

Similarly Andrew Town retired. Andrew manages the Stockway North Nature reserve in Nailsea, has been a keen observer of Backwell Lake for decades, organises the annual toad patrol in Clevedon and has been a calm and clear adviser to BET. Many thanks Andrew.

### Neighbourhood Plan Local Green Spaces

The Neighbourhood Plan gives the village the opportunity to designate open areas as Local Green Spaces giving them an extra layer of protection from encroachment and development. Ostensibly there are two main options on offer. The Council tends Towards Option A although it maintains it is still open to persuasion. This involves two fields in the Farleigh Fields group of six and three small field off Moor Lane. Option B, favoured by BET and the Backwell Residents Association proposes the whole of Farleigh Fields and a group of 12 fields (some of them very small) at Moor Lane. In terms of the criteria for selecting Local Green Spaces we do not think 'A' is sustainable. It is hard to visualise how an individual field can, *in isolation*, satisfy the criteria of being tranquil, beautiful, of recreational value and particularly from BET's point of view, ecologically biodiverse. All these attributes depend on the adjoining fields.



In addition, Option A implicitly invites piecemeal development of these adjoining fields. Please support Option B which would give the village a permanent, worthwhile and environmentally sound asset.

### **Backwell Allotments**

The allotments are situated behind The George at Farleigh and I am reliably informed that a number of half plot allotments will soon become available. If you are interested in taking one of these please contact Geoff Wells on 462627 or the Parish Council Clerk.

*Signing off - Bill Charnock*

## **BACKWELL ENVIRONMENT TRUST**

### **ANNUAL REPORT**

### **OCTOBER 1<sup>ST</sup> 2011 TO SEPTEMBER 30<sup>TH</sup> 2012**

**REGISTERED CHARITY 1109406**

### **Summary**

This year has been one of consolidation, routine management and improvement of both Jubilee Stone Wood and Badgers Wood Nature Reserves made possible by a regular and enthusiastic volunteer effort. A community path accessible to the less able has been constructed.

The scheme of this report is as follows. Section 1 deals with Events and Activities and Section 2 the work done on the nature reserves, essentially summarising a more detailed account to be found later in this bulletin. A third section covers the topical issue of Local Green Spaces in the Neighbourhood Plan and Section 4 with Coles Quarry adjoining Badgers Wood.

Finally Section 5 deals with Trust administration matters.

### **1. BET Events and Activities**

Weekly Monday morning work sessions have been held throughout the year with typically a dozen volunteers attending. Work on the fourth Saturday of each month continues but the second Thursday sessions have been suspended. Volunteer hours for this reporting period number 2391 compared with 3489 last year. The reduction perhaps shows that we are well on top of undertaking all the routine management tasks needed for maintenance of the wood and have labour to spare to effect improvements in spite of dispensing with our Thursday sessions. We are very grateful to all our many dedicated and energetic volunteers.

Events included a presentation by trustee Andrew Town on Backwell Lake at our AGM in November 2011. In January student Philip Chapman gave an illustrated talk on his ornithological adventures in deepest Borneo the third in an annual series. A Guided autumn fungi walk and a bluebell spring walk were led by trustees Caroline Houlton and Amanda Swannell while trustee Carrie Riches led a winter walk. Amanda and Caroline assisted by other trustees hosted members of Avon Wildlife Trust on a summer walk through our reserves followed by an al fresco tea and cake party at our garage/cabin.

In March, trustee Michael Marks organised a talk on bats and followed it up with a practical bat walk in May. June saw BET members manning a stall at the village 'Picnic in the Park' to celebrate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. This was followed a couple of days later by BET's own celebration





at the Jubilee Stone where rector Margie Campbell blessed the brand new inscription on the stone itself. More than 150 parishioners attended and enjoyed tea and cakes in unexpectedly fine weather. In August, Peter Speight organised an introductory dry stone walling day in Badgers Wood courtesy of the South West England Dry Stone Walling Association and in September trustees assisted the Parish Wildlife Wardens at their Backwell Lake event.

Gill Brown with trustee Ian Chambers and others have continued their monthly dormouse surveys and demonstrated the importance of the reserves for this rare mammal. Trevor Riddle and colleagues of the RSPB once again did their annual springtime inspections and refurbishment of nest boxes in Jubilee Stone Wood while trustee Bill Charnock led a group of volunteers to do the same in Badgers Wood. Many boxes were repaired and new boxes, made by the cubs under the guidance of trustee Mike Marks, were erected.



BET continues to support and collaborate with the North Somerset Parish Wildlife Wardens (notably at a July event at the lake), The Friends of Trendlewood Park, Stockway North Nature Reserve (Nailsea) the Backwell Fairtrade Café, Backwell Access Group (of wheelchair users), TENONS (the environmental network of North Somerset) and Nailsea Environment and Wildlife Trust (NEWT). It also now supports Sustainable Backwell in its activities on transport, energy and food.

## **2. Work in Badgers Wood and Jubilee Stone Wood Nature Reserves**

The trustees have reviewed the working arrangements for managing volunteer workdays and have appointed trustee Ian Chambers as Reserve Warden supported by three deputy leaders to spread the workload. One deputy leader and a regular member volunteer have qualified as first-aiders.

The main project this year has been in Badgers Wood where a new community trail has been constructed linking Church Town close to the Junior School with the cistern pond in Cheston Combe roughly opposite to the entrance to the old tip. At this point the path connects with the bottom of the Fern Way, constructed last year. The gradients on this new path are relatively mild which facilitate use by those not up to tackling the steep ascents of Backwell Hill. The path is also convenient for use by the Junior School.

Two notice boards have been bought and erected in Badgers Wood, one near the garage/cabin off Cheston Combe and the other at the viewpoint at the top of the wood. The hedge close to this point has been laid and a long stretch of fencing renovated to better defend the sheer cliffs beyond.



A plaque recording BET's gratitude to Yanley and North Somerset Environmental Company (YANSEC) as major donors to the purchase of Badgers Wood was set in a naturally occurring stone close to the viewpoint.

In Jubilee Stone Wood the main activity has been coppicing in the lower areas to enhance the habitat for dormice. The car park entrance area has been cleared to some extent to improve access and visibility for exiting vehicles.

In both woods, routine maintenance has continued including bracken pulling and grass cutting by scythe of what are becoming extensive restored meadows.

### 3. Backwell Cave and Adjoining woodland

The owners of Coles Quarry and of the Backwell Cave and surrounding woodland were expected to make a planning application for development of the quarry before Christmas 2011. Their plans, made clear to BET and to the Parish Council, involve the creation of an industrial estate for light industry on the site of the existing quarry buildings and the infilling and landscaping of the lower parts of the quarry with excavated material from their building sites. This infilling and landscaping will allow them to create a three acre playing field to donate to a local school. The rest of the quarry, the cave, woodland and adjoining fields they offered to donate to BET.

In the event, no planning application has yet been made but it is understood that the owner's intentions have not changed and that they are in pre-application discussions with North Somerset Council. We remain hopeful that the Cave will ultimately come to BET.

### 4. Local Greens Spaces in the Neighbourhood Plan

Towards the end of the reporting period some trustees and members have been deeply involved and concerned with the issue of Local Green Spaces in the Neighbourhood Plan. It appeared that the Parish Council was not taking full advantage of the environmental benefits that could be accrued or of the risks of not safeguarding some areas. Accordingly we have been surveying the likely sites of the fields adjoining Moor Lane and Farleigh Fields and looking at historic records of flora and fauna in the areas. This was done in collaboration with Backwell Residents Association and proposals resulting from this work were put to the membership of each organisation in September. Analysis of the results of this consultation was done after the end of the BET annual reporting period but it is appropriate to state that there was massive support in both organisations for the proposals.



### 5. Trust Administration

#### Trustees' meetings

The trustees have met on seven occasions during the reporting period usually on a weekday evening at Backwell School. We are very grateful to the school for providing this pleasant and convenient meeting place free of charge. Note that since its inception the trust has allowed and encouraged all members to attend and participate in trustees' meetings.

#### Bulletins

Three bulletins have been issued in the reporting period (numbers 22, 23 and 24).

#### Membership

On September 30th 2011 there were 220 members compared with 303 in 2011. This is a disappointing reduction which is of concern to the trustees. It may reflect a loss of interest now that BET is maturing as an organisation. Also with the Nature Reserves secure and no new acquisitions in prospect requiring funds we may be seen as not needing special support.

#### Formal reports to the Charity Commission

BET has submitted to the Charity Commission as required formal reports and accounts for the period from Oct 1<sup>st</sup> 2010 to Sep 30<sup>th</sup> 2011.

#### Conclusion

I believe this annual report demonstrates that Backwell Environment Trust continues to achieve its objectives.

## Acknowledgements

BET gratefully acknowledges the help and support of Backwell Parish Council and of our numerous members, supporters and donors.

Bill Charnock ~ 30<sup>th</sup> Sept 2012



# BET Trustees 2012/3



Following the AGM in November 2012, the trustees are now as follows:

Martin Brasher, [martin.brasher@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:martin.brasher@blueyonder.co.uk)

Ian Chambers, [chimpychambs@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:chimpychambs@yahoo.co.uk)

Jenny Greenslade, [indianajen@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:indianajen@tiscali.co.uk)

Caroline Houl, [houltfamily@btinternet.com](mailto:houltfamily@btinternet.com)

Michael Marks, [paintermike@btinternet.com](mailto:paintermike@btinternet.com)

Tony Medland, treasurer, [tonymedland@gmx.de](mailto:tonymedland@gmx.de)

Carrie Riches, [carriches@btopenworld.com](mailto:carriches@btopenworld.com)

Anne-Marie Smith, [anne-marie@electricbubble.co.uk](mailto:anne-marie@electricbubble.co.uk)

Peter Speight, [p.speight@o2.co.uk](mailto:p.speight@o2.co.uk)

Don Steadman, [sarah@s frost4.orangehome.co.uk](mailto:sarah@s frost4.orangehome.co.uk)

Amanda Swannell, [doug.minter@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:doug.minter@blueyonder.co.uk)

Gerald Wilcox



BET would like to sincerely thank the three trustees that are standing down for all their hard work over the years, Chairman Bill Charnock, Treasurer John Tarkanyi and Trustee Andrew Town. You will all be a hard act to follow.



## Woodland Report

### Wildflower Meadow Scything (JSW & BW)

Every year at the end of the summer, BET's wildflower meadows are cut by our volunteers, mainly using traditional hand scythes. In the short term, the annual grass cut removes invading brambles and tree seedlings which would quickly swamp the grassland if left unchecked and, over the long term, the removal of the cut material from the meadows will slowly reduce the soil's fertility. Lower fertility soils are





good news for wildflowers because they can survive quite happily in them whilst the less welcome plants often struggle so, over time, the native wildflowers begin to multiply and dominate once more. To date, BET has restored something like 1½ acres of wildflower meadows which now all have to be cut, so we are especially grateful to our loyal band of volunteers who have been seemingly endlessly swinging their hips, scything our fledgling wildflower grasslands.

### The Community Trail (BW)

The 'Community Trail' in Badgers Wood is now complete so you can now take a woodland trail from any one of the two entrances off Church Town to reach the restored pond. This trail has been designed to be fairly level and only contains just a few steps which should make access easier to this part of the woodland for all. The trail also bypasses the need to walk the dangerous, single track section of road in the narrowest part of Church Town leading down to the recycling centre.

### The BET Cabin (BW)

Plans to refurbish the BET cabin (the old garage) are now well advanced. Some of the trees that somewhat perilously overhang the building are in the process of being removed whilst the task of re-pointing the stonework with new lime mortar has commenced.

### BET Volunteers

Over the past year, the trusty BET volunteers have put in the incredible total of **2391 volunteer hours** into the running of BET and managing our two nature reserves. It is no exaggeration to say that the success of BET is exclusively due to the quality and hard work of our volunteers, so yet another **BIG BET THANK YOU** to you all.

**Volunteer Activity Mornings** - on every **MONDAY** and the **FOURTH SATURDAY** of each month starting at 10am on both days and continuing for about 2 hours - or as long as your energy lasts!

The tasks will change as the woodland year progresses and can vary according to your strength and interests. Please wear stout footwear and suitable old clothes.

We **always** break at about 11am for large amounts of chat, tea, coffee and biscuits.

Meet at the lower entrance to Jubilee Stone Wood outside No17 Church Town just before 10am or telephone in advance to find out where we shall be working (01275 463315)

Jan Chambers



## **The BET Cabin - Update**

A quick glance at the cabin as you approach it from the public footpath may well reveal little change although a second small tree trunk has been put in place inside to give further support to the roof.

Outside, however, things are happening. Three trees that were overhanging the building, one of them actually rubbing against the roof and another one whose trunk is now the additional roof prop mentioned above, have been removed by the BET volunteers. A fourth tree, which would certainly have crashed into the roof if it had simply been cut at the bottom, has been taken down

carefully, piece by piece by a professional tree surgeon. The stumps of the two trees on the east side of the cabin, which were very close to the wall, have also now been removed.

The clearing of vegetation from the front of the cabin has revealed the old tarmac driveway from the cabin's original use as a garage. At the sides and back of the cabin, excavation has been carried out to clear rubbish and undergrowth which was piling up against the walls. This was worst at the back where the debris had built up to a depth of almost four feet, and it is now intended to build a stone wall a few feet away from the building to prevent further accumulations in the future.



Once the walls are fully exposed they can be brushed down, the joints in the stonework examined and re-pointing carried out. A small trial area of wall has been re-pointed using traditional lime mortar and appears to be satisfactory.

Gerald Wilcox

## Dry Stone Walling

In August, a number of enthusiastic BET volunteers took the opportunity to learn the basics of the traditional craft of dry stone walling. A day's taster course was organised with the South West England Dry Stone Walling Association (SWEDSWA). We were very fortunate to have Chris Stephens as lead instructor plus two other members from the SWEDSWA, one of whom was a professional waller!



We had previously identified a derelict stretch of wall at the top of Badgers Wood which was an ideal candidate for restoration, having safe access and being well away from the road. The wall was probably at least 200 years old and much of the stone had fallen down on both sides so that it was half its original height. It was also very distorted by tree roots and ivy.



The Monday volunteer group spent three mornings digging out and removing this fallen stone to well away from the wall, in preparation for the course.



The strenuous work of the taster day began with the rest of the wall being taken right down to ground level. A number of the large foundation stones needed to be excavated and re-laid before the re-building could commence.



The instructors explained how to choose and lay stones so that they were firm and nice and stable for the next course above. Where necessary, stones were 'pinned' behind with small pieces of stone to stop them rocking. With the group working energetically from both sides, the wall rapidly gained height following the guide strings to keep it straight and with the characteristic



upwards taper or 'batter'. Gaps in the middle were filled up with small stones or 'hearting' to help consolidate and strengthen the wall. Unfortunately, the heavens opened mid-afternoon making the heavy muddy stones slippery and conditions underfoot unsafe. The early stop prevented the top course of coping stones being added as the finishing touch. Despite getting quite wet and muddy, the participants were really happy with the results of their hard labours and the fantastic stretch of new walling.



**Finished!**

The SWEDSWA experts were very impressed by the work of the BET volunteers, commenting that far more had been achieved than had been expected! Hopefully the wall will last another 100 years and will inspire the newly-trained volunteers to tackle more stretches of crumbling BET walls.

Peter Speight



# Deck the Halls with Boughs of Holly!

Christmas is almost here again, and for many people, especially those with children, it is a magical time of the year. For a few days our problems are mostly forgotten, and there is a chance to relax for a while after buying presents, doing extra cooking (and eating!), and meeting family and friends. We hang up paper-chains, tinsel garlands, wreaths, and decorate the tree, all of which helps brighten up the gloomiest days of the old year, before the new one, with its promises of hope and better things, comes around.



Even before Christianity arrived, people made garlands and wreaths of holly, ivy, laurel (bay), myrtle and flowers to decorate altars, shrines and temples, which can be seen in Roman mosaics, wall paintings and sculptures. People also wore them at banquets and celebrations, including weddings. Holly (*Ilex Aquifolium*) was not only used medicinally, but also to ward off evil spirits, whilst ivy (*Hedera Helix*) was associated with Bacchus, god of wine and the vine - when ivy grows up a tree, it is an 'ivy wreath of honour for the tree itself'. Laurel (*Laurus Nobilis*) represented peace and victory, so Roman emperors often wore wreaths of it on their heads, (as can be seen on all coins), to symbolise their successes and military power, rather than gold crowns, as they were not kings. Laurel wreaths were also hung on doorways in the New Year to bring good luck.

Mistletoe (*Viscum Album*) was never used as it was a favourite of the Druids (human sacrifices), and poisonous - eating the berries causes severe nausea, and the leaves contain lectin, which kills if it enters the bloodstream. Worship of the domestic gods took place daily at the family meal, with offerings of incense, wine, little cakes, dates or pine nuts placed on the indoor altars (*Lararium*), in exchange for protection of crops from blight, or lambs from disease, for example. 'Good crops and wine' was a common prayer! For the 'Caristia' holiday on February 22<sup>nd</sup>, relatives gathered to celebrate together, and poet Ovid wryly commented - 'dear ones, but only agreeable relatives, not the mother harsh to her children, or father who lives too long'. People are superstitious creatures, and one strange cult, that of Sabazius, was represented by snakes slithering on altars, to warn off evil spirits, whilst another was Mithras, with its followers meeting in mostly underground temples, and their symbol was of Mithras slaying a Bull. Many people felt their world was inhabited by dwarves, goblins and fairies - mythical creatures of folklore and legend - along with witches, wizards and hooded creatures! Nowadays they still exist, but only in stories, like those of J.R.R.Tolkien (*The Hobbit*; *Lord of the Rings*). Other more classical gods who were worshipped included Jupiter, Neptune, Pluto, Mars, Apollo, Hercules and goddesses like Diana, Venus, Flora and Minerva.



At the Roman Temple/Baths complex at Bath, Minerva and god Sul (Sulis) healed many people who flocked there to bathe in the 40-50 degrees hot springs, with over 43 minerals in it. In 1978-9, the basin, which is still lined with Roman lead (and normally filled with 1 million litres of water which drains down from Mendip), was dangerously contaminated and had to be cleaned out.

In the silt was found 6,000 Roman coins and thousands of other objects, including jewellery, brooches, gemstones, cups and bowls inscribed 'To Minerva', offerings to herself and Sul (Sulis). Christianity was merely a mystery cult when it appeared in the 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D. but unlike others it promised personal salvation and life ever after, thus appealing to both rich and poor alike. It offered a glimpse of hope in uncertain times, as the majority of people in all Roman provinces lived in wretched conditions, with an ever-increasing burden of taxation, and fear of sudden barbarian raids by Germans and other northerners. In A.D.313 Roman Emperor Constantine proclaimed that Christianity was now the State religion, and in A.D.341 Constantine II outlawed all the pagan (non-Christian) temples, naturally angering many people. What made it worse was Christians vandalizing or destroying some of them, though others were purified with holy water and filled with Christian relics. Many pagans fled to the countryside, built new temples, worshipped their gods in peace, and paid no taxes!

New churches and baptisteries were built everywhere, and pictures of Christ appeared in paintings and mosaics. Today Christianity is maybe not quite as popular as it used to be, because people have less time in their busy lives for regular worship, but most still get together and enjoy Christmas celebrations, such as singing carols, and sending and receiving cards.

Earlier on I mentioned J.R.R.Tolkien, and would like to finish with an illustration from his 'Father Christmas Letters' which he wrote for his 4 children over a 20-year period from 1920-1940. He described his (pretend) work at the North Pole, 'helped' by the Polar Bear, and later by various snow-elves, goblins, gnomes, snowmen, young Polar and Cave Bears. With his letter of 1934 he drew this wonderful picture of a Norwegian tree planted in a pool of ice, and Father Christmas, Polar and Cave Bears all skating around - or trying to!



Jenny Greenslade



## Green Woodworking

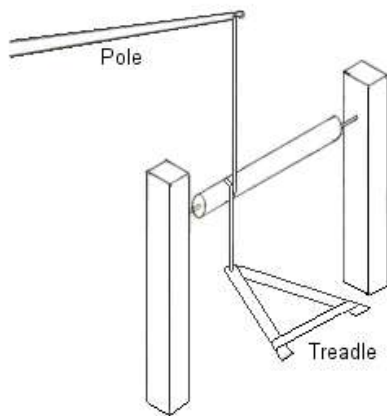
In the last bulletin we looked at how fresh logs can be split or 'cleaved' and then shaved down to make rustic and household items such as tool handles, rakes, and chairs. Items cleaved and shaved in this way follow the grain and the natural curves of the original pieces of wood.

This article looks at woodturning, which produces more regular rounded shapes, and the traditional 'polelathe', as used by the chair-leg maker or 'bodger' to turn legs and spindles.

Woodturning is a traditional craft many centuries old. It is not certain when it really started, but it is thought to go back to the time when the wheel was invented and man first recognized the benefits of rotary motion.



An early record, dating back to 300 BC, is located in an Egyptian tomb and depicts two men turning an object. Turned objects from the late Iron Age may be seen in the British Museum, and there is evidence of woodturning during the Saxon period on display at Jorvic Viking Centre in York.



The polelathe was invented some time before the 13<sup>th</sup> century and used a flexible pole as a spring and a cord or leather strap wrapped around the workpiece, as shown in this simple schematic. The cord was tied to a simple foot-operated treadle, and a reciprocating rotation was generated. A framework raised the lathe bed clear of the ground and a tool rest was added to support the hand-held chisels used to remove ribbons of wood.

From that period on, there are a number of illustrations across Europe depicting woodturning and showing the use of polelathes. This picture from a 13<sup>th</sup> century illuminated manuscript clearly shows a polelathe being used to turn a wooden bowl.



This German illustration from 1395 shows a wood turner using a more robust polelathe to turn what might be the hub of a wheel.

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In England in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, scores of woodturners in the Chilterns area made the components Windsor chairs—the legs, rails, and stretchers—to supply the chair industry

in High Wycombe. 'Windsor' is the generic term to describe a chair composed of a wooden seat into which legs are fitted below, and shaped uprights are fitted above to create the back. A wide variety of designs has developed from this basic style. These chair-leg makers were called 'bodgers'.

Bodgers set up workshops deep in the woods, rather than fell the timber and take it home with them. This meant only finished components left the woods. They used a shavehorse and drawknife to roughly shape the pieces and a polelathe powered by a springy sapling to turn them.



The bodgers were highly skilled and 'turned out' up to a gross of components every day using a few simple handmade tools in primitive surroundings. These turned parts were sent by the cartload to the framing shop where the chairs were assembled. This work continued well into

the last century before dying out in the 1950s with the post-war drive for mass produced furniture.

Polelathe turning and traditional chair making skills are being preserved by a growing number of craft enthusiasts. This photo shows 'The Artful Bodger', Peter Murray, from Cirencester



assembling one of his lovely chairs.

The key to turning wood on the polelathe is to use freshly cut 'green' timber whilst it is still moist. This is softer, easier to cut, kinder to tools, and creates no sawdust. When the wood dries out, the part where the chair-leg joint is made is turned again for an exact fit.

The great and satisfying thing about the foot-powered polelathe is that it can be used and demonstrated anywhere — in traditional woodland surroundings, like our Jubilee Stone Woods, or by Backwell Lake!

It is unfortunate that the term 'bodger' has changed in meaning over the last few generations. Rather than being someone who doesn't produce finished articles, it is now a term applied to doing a job with whatever tools and materials come to hand, the result of which may not be elegant but is still serviceable! Bodge should not be confused with 'botch' which usually refers to shoddy work or a failure.

If you are interested in finding out more about green woodworking, have a look at [www.bodgers.co.uk](http://www.bodgers.co.uk). This is the highly informative website of the Association of Polelathe Turners and Green Woodworkers which was formed in 1990 by a group of enthusiasts determined to keep the tradition of the polelathe alive.

The Somerset Branch of the APT has recently moved into a barn on the magnificent Tyntesfield estate, where we now have several polelathes set up for regular demonstrations. The National Trust will be offering our green woodworking taster courses in 2013.

Peter Speight



## Dormouse Update

As you know, every year from March to November, BET's forty dormouse boxes are inspected for signs of dormouse activity as part of the National Dormouse Monitoring Programme (NDMP). During our October survey, and in spite of the poor summer weather, we managed to record 11 dormice (a BET record) with active dormice now confirmed in both in Jubilee Stone and Badgers Wood. Better still, they have been expanding their range through both woodlands, taking advantage of the newly coppice areas that our volunteers have created over the last few years.

During our October survey, myself and Gill Brown were fortunate to be joined by wildlife film producer and director Nick Upton. Nick has been researching, writing, producing and directing wildlife films in over 20 countries and on four continents for over 20 years and his films have won eleven 'Best of Festival' awards in eight different countries.



After leaving zoological research, his TV career began in 1987 at the BBC as Series Researcher/Assistant Producer on David Attenborough's '*The Trials of Life*' series. From 1991-2001 he was the Producer/Head of Natural History at Green Umbrella Ltd, making wildlife films for the BBC, National Geographic and many Public Service Broadcasters both in the USA and Europe. He has been freelance since 2001, working as a producer, director, writer, consultant for the BBC, Austrian, Finnish and Taiwan Public TV, ARTE, Discovery and the RSPB Film Unit.

However, even with a CV like Nick's, it's still not far short of miraculous that he still managed to capture some absolutely stunning images during the survey under impossibly dark conditions. So here are just a few of my favourites.....



All images copyright  
Nick Upton



# **BET's Autumn Hike around the Seven Wonders of Backwell & Brockley**

If you are going to take a hike in the Autumn probably the best day to pick is the Sunday of the weekend the clocks go back so that you can enjoy the extra hour in bed. Even better if the following week is half term and there is no Monday morning school rush.

Accordingly on October 28<sup>th</sup>, 11 intrepid hikers including the complete Hoults tribe set off at 10 am (ish) from Church Town. The first wonder visited was Backwell's own prehistoric cave where trustee Jenny Greenslade gave us an impromptu tutorial. Next the steady climb up to the viewpoint in Badgers Wood for the second wonder of the view over the Bristol Channel. Visibility could have been better but the prospect was still rewarding.



Crossing Backwell Hill Road and rambling along Tinkers Lane we visited Oatfield Pool with its Everglade-like trees, our third wonder. This is limestone country and there shouldn't really be a pool here at all, but if you study the geological map you will find this part of Backwell Hill is acid and seems to be similar in character to Felton Common. It's said it was used at one time to wash lead ore perhaps mined from our own Jubilee Stone Wood.

## **Yorkhouse Cave**



at Edsons Farm and on to Yorkhouse Cave in Brockley Combe, our fourth and most wonderful wonder with its 39 foot chimney through the solid rock. Here we had lunch in the company of a solitary roosting bat.

Our fifth wonder was the ruined windmill and our sixth the derelict bowling green, both high up on the hill above Brockley Hall thence down to the tunnel under the A370 which links all these wonders with the hall. A possible

eighth wonder, the tunnel under the Chelvey road we decided to leave to another day as the problem with the clocks going back is that it becomes dark earlier than you expect.

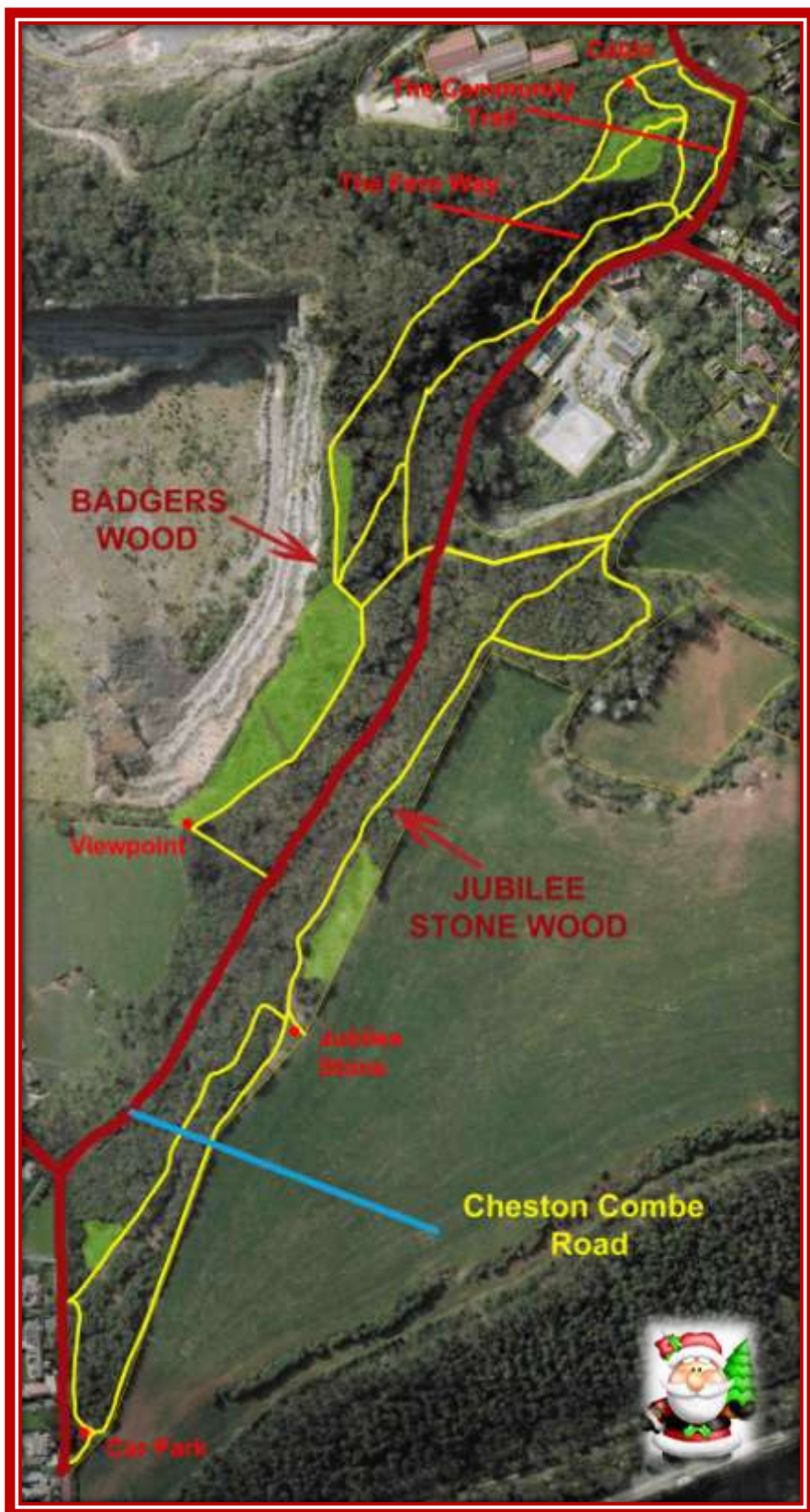
**Bill Charnock** - with thanks to landowner Ken Edis for permission to visit the Yorkhouse Cave and to trustee Carrie Riches for the photographs.

On to the telephone mast and across Hyatts Wood Road to Oatfield Farm, through the barn

## **The Windmill**







A few years ago, if you wanted to visit Jubilee Stone and Badgers Wood, the only real option was to use the public footpath or bridleway that ran the entire length of both reserves. Unfortunately if you stuck to these paths, you tended to miss some of the best bits - so over the last few years, BET has been working hard to create a few more trails through our beautiful woodlands.

With the coming Christmas holidays nearly on us, why not take the opportunity to get out and explore the many new trails that have recently been created, some of which will take you to magical landscapes I suspect you didn't even know existed in Backwell!

With the leaves off the trees now, the woodland floor will also be a lot lighter which is certain to show off the myriad of bright-green ferns along 'The Fern Way' to their best effect. Whilst you're in the woodlands, also pay a visit to the BET cabin before it's refurbishment begins in earnest next year. But wherever you decide to go in 'BETland' over Christmas and the New Year, I'm sure the simple peace and tranquility of the woodlands will revitalise you and give you an appetite to have maybe just one more mince pie.....!



**Happy Christmas**  
**from BET**

