



FOUR SEASONS

The Newsletter of the Friends of Bentley Priory Nature Reserve
Nos. 72 & 73 Winter/Spring, 2014

CHAIRMAN'S CHAT

Master Oak

Let's start with some good news, following many weeks of negotiations we have now secured the funds to start our project to protect our Master Oak. This is a fine example of an old oak, and may be the oldest in Middlesex. It's the very tree that inspired the Friends logo back in 1995 when we formed our group.

This great tree has stood majestically for around 500 years but in recent times has attracted some wholly unwanted attention, and not just the odd bit of graffiti or the occasional rope swing. A couple of years ago a far more serious incident took place.

Damage and Concern

One summer's evening, a bunch of teenagers set up camp near the base of the tree and had the idea to build a camp fire right next to it, badly burning the bark on the northern side and scorching the overhead branches.

This incident was of great concern to all who knew this wonderful tree, particularly the Friends. As reported in previous editions of Four Seasons, following this very close shave, we commissioned Russell Ball an Arboricultural Consultant to assess the damage and make recommendations for the tree's future management. Russell's long term management plan was to erect a high metal fence around the tree and an outer wooden fence with an access point in the outer fence to allow close inspection for visitors. The inner fence would stop direct contact with the tree and the outer would reduce compaction of the soil around the root structure.

Developers to the rescue!

We accepted Russell's recommendations and set about getting an estimate of the cost, thought to be around £5-6,000, far more than the Friends could possibly afford. We looked for any likely sponsors and were delighted when the developers of the former RAF Bentley Priory, City & Country and Barratt Homes approached us with an offer to fund a possible community project on the Reserve. At first they felt the cost of this scheme was rather more than they had in mind. However, after long and drawn out negotiations between



Linda Robinson, Leslie Bolsover and Kitty Reilly checking the girth of the Master's proposed protective fence

our Linda Robinson and their PR companies, our project got the green light. We have now received the promised sum of £2875 from each company and an offer from the Council's BPNR Management Committee to make up any shortfall. Steve Bolsover's research has now obtained firm costs from contractors and we hope to get this scheme up and running before the summer holidays are upon us, when the risk to The Master will be at its greatest.

We express our grateful thanks to City & Country and Barratt Homes for their generous and much appreciated support. We are really indebted to Linda and Steve for all their work and perseverance.

Lottery Project

As you may have seen, phase two of the scheme financed by the Heritage Lottery Fund, to clear back bramble and secondary tree growth from along the margins of the Greensward and Furze Heath has started up again. Progress is well underway to complete the work by next winter. The staff from 'Complete Ecology', carrying out the project, have worked in the wettest of conditions but

have still managed to make good progress. They are doing a great job.

'Water, Water Everywhere . . .'

After all this winter's rain, The Priory is absolutely waterlogged; even the high ground that sits on gravel is soft underfoot. When we see the TV news we can't help



Alan Phillips clearing other people's rubbish. He said there was "An awful mess at the end of Chenduit Way! Far too much for me to handle."

feeling very sorry for the people who have suffered so badly whilst we are relieved to live well above sea level.

Paul Thurman's weather reports on pages 4 and 7 of this Newsletter make interesting reading. But it's not just the rain; we had very strong winds in December that caused quite a lot of structural damage and at least one death locally. Surprisingly very little tree damage took place on the Reserve, mainly broken branches here and there, a couple of Oaks came down at the top of the deer park, one breaking the deer enclosure fence. This was a potential problem with the possibility of escaping deer or dogs getting into their enclosure. We notified the owner of the deer park and he made emergency repairs but asked if the Friends could get the Council to deal with the fallen oak that was across his fence so that it could be properly fixed. The Council must have been up to their eyes with dealing with fallen street trees that day but, to their credit, they came first thing the next morning, cleared the tree and fixed the fence by midday. Who says you have to wait for the Council to get things done?!

Signs were Casualties

Further casualties of the gale were the notice boards at the top of the Deer Path. It seems the worst of the storm passed across this part of the Reserve. One of the notice boards had already been broken off at the base and was just propped up, the wind had also snapped off the posts of the other board. Again the Council came to the rescue and reinstalled the

board facing the Weald Path. The other, older sign that shows the Bentley Priory Circular Walk has been taken away. This concerned me as I am quite fond of these older signs which show historic information such as Suzanne's Riding School that is now no more. I have been told that this older sign is being restored and will be put back, I hope so. In fact I have been working on its partner, the one that stood at the Old Lodge entrance. The Old Lodge board was in poor condition after many years in all weathers, the backing board was rotten and the sign was in need of a serious clean. Last year I removed the rotten backing board by drilling out six very rusty bolts and took the laminated sign away which had come adrift from the backing board.

I am embarrassed to say this project has taken many months to finish. I did make and install the new backing board some time ago and have only recently finished restoring the actual sign which is now ready to go back. As part of my project I have made a new Friends' leaflet box and would like to repaint the posts of the sign and its neighbour with timber preservative before refitting.

I hope the box will be back by the time you are reading these words.

AGM

Our AGM will be on the 29th April, this year we have had to break with tradition, our normal venue at Paxfold lounge is closed for major building works and not available. We have arranged to hold our AGM at what was called the Woodlands Community Hall at the centre of **Binyon Crescent**. Nowadays it is correctly referred to as the **Bede Anandappa Centre**, as this is what the signage actually says. **See the details of the AGM on page 11.**

Our guest speaker, Rosemary Etheridge, will talk on the subject of grasses, for most people grass is all the same, something you cut on a Sunday morning, but this is far from correct. There are a multitude of varieties and it is useful to be able to recognise the most common. In fact the ancient name of our Reserve is taken from a variety that can be found on the Priory to this day. Bentley is corruption of two Saxon words, the *Bent* part of the name is taken from Bayonet and is referring to a type of long bladed course grass, the modern term is Common Bent, *Ley* is a clearing on a hillside. Hence our name:

A clearing in the woods with mainly coarse grass.

I have found all of our past speakers very interesting and I am sure this year will be no exception.

We keep the formal stuff at the AGM to a minimum. Come and listen to the speaker, tell us your thoughts on the Reserve, have a cup of tea, cake and a chat. Put the date in your diary. I do hope to see you there this year.

John Williams, Chairman

WELLIES? ALIENS? INVESTMENTS?

I hadn't been in the mountains for more than 18 months, so, on moving to Stanmore, it seemed like a good idea to renew the wax on my trusty leather boots which I've had and waxed lovingly for 15 years. Perhaps the technology of the wax has improved, perhaps the boots no longer do the distances they used to, but they remain amazingly waterproof. I can walk up the streams and as soon as I move back to the path, they are bone dry, as the saying goes "like water off a ducks' back".

Bentley Priory is a new experience. Given it is very muddy I also invested in a pair of gaiters, they keep the mud off my trouser cuffs. In the Priory, walking off the main concrete path, it becomes impossible not to sink into mud at least to ankle depth and sometimes more. For the last few months, even when there has been no rain for days, the Priory stays muddy. I thought that the incline of 200 or so feet

would provide speedy draining, but very little runs down the slope. It's like an immense sponge that will not dry out without a very long period without rain.

So I had to consider, should I now invest in a pair of Wellington Boots. Not as comfortable as thick leather, not as warm, less grip in slippery ground, but at least waterproof up to my calf. I could also wash the mud off with greater ease than with Leather Boots. There would still be the problem of bringing some mud into the house and risking the wrath of she who is in charge.

So I haven't invested in the Wellies. I spend less time walking off the concrete path. Walking through the streams seems to do quite a thorough job of cleaning my boots.

I see there has been rather a lot of clearing on the Priory, quite a few open spaces, where trees have been felled. Am I right in thinking that most of those felled have been the ubiquitous hornbeam? Also much of the overgrowth of the pathways, much of the open space between trees, as well as large patches of meadow, have been reclaimed from the bramble invasion.

I suppose it seems paradoxical that as an Site of Special Scientific Interest, where we admire the pristine and ancient nature of the meadows and woodlands, we should put effort into keeping it in a 'natural' state. It's almost like the people who want to invent a new thousand year old tradition.

Then again I realise that the Priory is indeed surrounded, by an alien invasion. Urban Humankind. That means that the Priory is missing the upper levels of the ecology that would keep the balance.

When the Priory was not surrounded by this alien species (humankind), many different mammals would have roamed and foraged there. Sheep and goats, would eat most of the invasive flora, so that brambles might still be seen, but not so overwhelming. English Longhorn cattle, would also keep the Priory in its

natural state as it was for many centuries.

Today we could not let cattle free without also investing in better fencing. Think of all the aliens complaining about the local "wildlife" getting into their gardens. Longhorn cattle would also contribute greatly to the mud problem.

Without doubt in our over-regulated Society, there would be demands for on site veterinary and animal husbandry services. Something the current budget available for the



The hardy and docile British Longhorn. The herd we used to enjoy on BPNR in the 1990s sometimes stayed out all winter.

Priory simply could not afford.

So I guess the Wardens have to artificially tend and crop and coppice, to replicate the natural action of the mammals which really should be part of the scene. Without that investment the Priory would descend into the chaos of a neglected overgrown, urban garden.

I'm sure the Wardens do an excellent job, but unlike foraging mammals, they can't attend to new shoots, perhaps brought in as seeds by migrating birds in their stopovers in the Priory. Inevitably the flora and fauna will slowly change.

The Wardens also do a great job, ensuring a small herd of cattle bussed in from Kings Langley spend the summer on the Priory, which helps.

We expect "wilderness" to be open space, but the Priory is an enchanted island completely surrounded, and incapable by itself of defeating the alien invasion.

One can see the issue, walking the tightrope between an area of Special Scientific Interest and providing a facility for the surrounding public.

Somehow a balance is required. Opening the space to a greater number, without requiring them to be ecologists or indeed scientists of any kind, a greater public can come to have a deeper appreciation of the privilege we have to enjoy access to this island of natural beauty that struggles among us.

Roger Eden

HOW DID STANMORE FARE THIS WINTER?

The Overall total rainfall for the winter months were:- 2013 to 2014 13.8ins
1989 to 1990 12.9ins

Nationally, up to 20th February, the U.K. average rainfall has been 19.2ins. compared to 13.3ins. in Stanmore (66%).

We escaped the worst!

The warmest Winter was 1974 to 1975 with a mean temperature of 6.6°C. This past Winter's mean temperature has been 5.7°C making it the sixth mildest Winter since 1968.

The coldest Winters were:

1978 to 1979 with a mean temperature of 2.5°C.
1984 to 1985 was 2.8°C.

The average mean temperature for the past 45 years has been 4.6°C.

Therefore, this Winter was not just the wettest but one of the mildest.

High wind speeds of over 30kph in gusts were recorded in Stanmore on 25 days (December - February) with a maximum of 46kph on the 15th February this year and 54kph on 23rd October 2013.

Up to the end of February no snow had fallen. Will this Spring follow the present unsettled trend or will it be very warm like in 2012? We could get snow. Heavy snow has occurred even in early April in the past and March 2013 was the coldest since 1968.

The British weather keeps us guessing!

Paul Thurman

See also Paul's Weather Report for 2013 on page 7 . . . Ed.

WHO'S BEEN DIGGING MY POTATOES?

There are many issues on which the general public is divided. I will name one: '*badgers*'.

There are those who cry, "Kill, kill!" and those who recognize them as part of nature's struggle for existence. I am a badger person, but my loyalty has been severely strained. This occurred when I visited my brother for a few days in Cornwall.

Whilst there I volunteered to fill a plot of land with seed potatoes. This kept me busy for an afternoon. When finished and exhausted, I had the satisfaction of viewing a job well done.

The next morning I went to gloat over my good work, and horror: The ground was littered with potatoes. I was mystified, but the culprits were named by locals as badgers!

One closer inspection I found that most of the potatoes were damaged but not eaten. I tried to think of a reason for this crime. Why would they all be dug up, if not wanted? I have two theories: first that badgers, on finding soft earth, think that maybe here lies something good to eat. Being supreme optimists they go for the next patch of soft earth and the process is repeated until they have done the whole plot.

The second theory is that they have short memories and each digging is a first for them. I realize that this is all circumstantial evidence as the culprits were not actually caught at the scene of the crime, but if not badgers, then what else?

This gets me wondering, how much proof is there of badger's crimes to humanity? Is it just an excuse to exercise human's lust to destroy anything they do not understand?

The badger cull has become a political issue. While the published view of veterinary authorities is that bovine tuberculosis is primarily promoted through unhealthy, over-bred cattle with low immunity, the government's solution seems to be to scapegoat badgers and create a very visual solution. Deploying heavily armed personnel seems to be the answer to most of the country's woes. The theory no doubt it's better to be seen to be doing something rather than ignoring the problem, even if that solution is at best ineffective or at worst will cause untold suffering to a multitude of animals.

Brian Stubbs

Since Brian sent us this article, Readers will have heard that the official Badger culls proved futile as the target of 70% of the Badgers could not be achieved in the period allowed for the Culls. Only 50% were killed which was too few to enable any resulting scientific findings to be significant enough, or statistically valid.

Secondly, since 5% of the badgers did not die within the specified time period of 5 minutes, the Cull could not be defined as 'humane' and therefore the design of the experiment was faulty and must not be repeated.

. . . Ed.



**THE FRIENDS OF BENTLEY PRIORY
NATURE RESERVE**

36 Sitwell Grove
Stanmore
Middlesex
HA7 3NB

Dear Friend,

Membership Renewal 2013-2014

April, 2014

It is now time to renew your membership of The Friends of Bentley Priory Nature Reserve.

The application form below is similar to the one you completed when you first joined the Friends but we have left room overleaf for any changes you may wish to mention. We also welcome your comments and ideas. Please note the subscription rates are £7 and £5. We should be grateful if you would also give us your e-mail address in the space shown.

Even if you were not able to share in the activities we advertise, the Friends' Committee hopes you have enjoyed the four issues of the attractive and informative 'Four Seasons' which have been delivered to your home.

When you send me your renewal form, please would you make sure you enclose a stamped, addressed envelope for me to return your new Membership Card and any other enclosures?

I know the whole Committee joins me in hoping you will renew your membership and so continue to support the Friends in protecting and improving our Nature Reserve.

Yours sincerely,

Linda Robinson, Secretary. Tel: 020 8954 2174 linda_robinson@lineone.net



2011-12

Application to renew membership of
THE FRIENDS OF BENTLEY PRIORY NATURE RESERVE

1. Surname: _____ Title: ____ Forename: _____ (will receive Newsletters)

E-mail Address: _____

2. Surname: _____ Title: ____ Forename: _____

3. Surname: _____ Title: ____ Forename: _____

Address: _____ Tel: _____

Postal Code: _____

(Subscription Rates: **First person mentioned: £ 7.00 p.a.** **Others in the same household: £ 5.00 each**)

I / We wish to renew membership of the Friends of Bentley Priory Nature Reserve

and enclose a cheque, payable to '**Friends of BPNR**' for:- £ _____

made up as follows :-

*We will put this information onto our computer database for convenience, efficiency, and for the use of Friends only. If you really **do not** want your details stored in this way then please notify us.*

First Sub. £ _____

Other Subs. £ _____

Donation: £ _____

OFFICE USE

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Please detach this form and send it, with the cheque **and an enclosed s.a.e.**, to:

Linda Robinson, Secretary, 36 Sitwell Grove, Stanmore, Middx., HA7 3NB Tel: 8954 2174

Please write your comments and sign overleaf →

RETURN OF THE KINGFISHER

Has anyone seen a Kingfisher recently? Every time I visit Summerhouse Lake I look out for the elusive bird. It was as long ago as 5th September 2011 when I last saw a Kingfisher on the lake. On 27th July 2013 it was back! Since then I have had sightings on ten days.

December has proved to be a good month and on the 3rd a rare sight of two Kingfishers was seen following each other. Was there competition for ownership of Summerhouse Lake? One of them was seen to dive into the lake and catch a fish. Since then only one bird seems to have set up residence. Winter territory is very special and much prized.

On 20th December I was able to get my first dvd in 2013 of one perched on a branch in bright sunshine.



It stayed there obligingly for two minutes for me to obtain clear pictures on my camcorder. As long as the lake does not freeze over, it should remain there all Winter. A pair of adult swans was seen during December with

one of their cygnets on Summerhouse Lake. They stayed with the cygnet a week and then left it to fend for itself. It remained there on its own for a further week and appeared hungry as on one occasion it came out of the water hoping I would give it some food.

Since the storm preceding Christmas, the cygnet has not been seen. Hopefully it has returned to it's parents and not disappeared in some sinister way.

Paul Thurman

RADIO ACTIVITY

Have you heard it on the radio? If you haven't been listening to Harrow Community Radio, you've been missing out on some topical local news and a lot of fun and happy music. You can catch the live broadcasts and listen again to recent shows by local presenters by going online to hcrfm.org.

To find out what happened when our Secretary, Linda Robinson, went on a slot called "All about the Happiness" on 17 February to talk about the Friends and the Master Oak Project, simply visit www.podcasts.canstream.co.uk/harrow/index.php?id=2718, and click to hear the podcast of Linda going radio gaga about our cows, birds, lakes, flowers, dogs, volunteer wardens, problem visitors... and of course the Master Oak. . . . Ed.

The Membership Cards will be the receipt for the subscriptions and a separate receipt will be attached to acknowledge donations.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Give us your own comments and ideas here:-

What other experience, skills or help can you offer?

- 4. Photocopying facilities Friends could use _____
- 3. Franking facilities Friends could use? _____
- 2. Speaking to Groups about BPNR or Friends. _____
- 1. Spreading urgent news by phone _____

Your areas of particular interest _____

7. Writing Newsletter articles? Subjects: _____

6. Heavy Work on BPNR _____

5. Light Work on BPNR _____

Please tick or write on the lines if you can assist us if necessary. We will contact you when appropriate:

- 1 / We would like to be notified if any unscheduled opportunities which arise e.g.: Talks, arranged at short notice _____
- Outings or Visits, Walks or Events not listed in the Newsletter _____
- 1 / We would like the chance to join in, if **emergency help** is needed for: management, maintenance or tidying etc. _____

WEATHER REPORT FOR 2013

BENTLEY PRIORY NATURE RESERVE

MONTH	TEMPERATURE				RAINFALL	
	MAX°C	45 YR AVE	MIN°C	45 YR AVE	RAIN(INS)	38YR AVE
JANUARY	5.4	6.7	2.4	2.6	2.19	2.71
FEBRUARY	5.6	6.9	1.3	2.2	1.92	1.92
MARCH	6.3	10.0	1.3	2.5	2.55	2.05
APRIL	12.8	13.8	4.2	4.7	2.00	2.00
MAY	16.0	17.2	7.2	9.2	2.03	2.38
JUNE	19.1	20.8	9.7	11.7	1.00	2.32
JULY	25.3	22.9	14.5	13.5	1.89	2.26
AUGUST	23.2	22.3	15.3	12.7	2.43	2.27
SEPTEMBER	18.1	18.9	10.3	10.3	2.08	2.40
OCTOBER	15.6	13.9	7.7	4.7	3.94	2.62
NOVEMBER	9.0	10.4	5.0	4.5	2.38	2.62
DECEMBER	8.9	6.9	3.4	2.4	4.03	2.65
YEAR AVE	13.6	14.2	6.9	6.7		
TOTAL YEAR					25.3	28.30

BPNR WEATHER IN YEAR 2013

January was cold with a mean temperature of +1°C maximum and -1.2°C minimum from 13th – 25th. Snow lay for one week and fell on three days (14th, 18th and 20th) with depths of between 1.5" and 3" .

There was no period longer than four days of really cold weather in February, though 3" of snow fell on 11th. The month of March was much colder than average, particularly between 23rd and 26th when the temperature never got above 1.5°C. It was generally a cloudy month, though with prolonged sunshine on only two days. April, too, was colder than average and started with a frost on six out of the first seven days with a very low maximum of only 3.2°C on 4th which was the lowest in April for 45 years!

The first week in May was sunny and warm but then the rest of the month was colder than average. The month of June was a dry month with 20 days without rain but no real warmth apart from the last day when 26°C was recorded.

Summer really commenced in July, which was very warm with an average maximum of 25.3°C (2.5°C above average) and sunshine on every day. There were 15 days with temperatures above 26°C and on the 22nd a high of 32°C was reached. The night temperatures were 1.5°C above average and no rain fell between 4th and 21st.

August was not as hot as July but still 1°C above average. The hottest day in August was on the 1st (32°C). On 24th there was torrential rain with nearly 2" falling and 86% of the month's total rainfall in just three days. September was slightly cooler than average and not very sunny. Over 1" rain fell on 13th and rain fell every day from 6th– 17th. The last 11 days were dry.

October was very wet after a dry start with rain falling most days during the last three weeks. A severe storm occurred on 28th with a maximum wind speed recorded of 53.5 kph at 6.30 a.m. Sadly, two people in Hounslow and one in Watford died from fallen trees. November was cooler than average due to the fact that it was mostly cloudy. The 20th started frosty but was followed by hail and thunder.

December has ended the year with torrential rain and flooding over many parts of the South and South-west of the country. Despite the rain it was a mild month 2°C above average. Nearly all the rain fell in the last 18 days and it was extremely windy.

Last year, 2013, was arguably a better year than the previous one, 2012. We did at least have a summer and rainfall was below average apart from October and December which were wet.

Paul Thurman

DEVELOPERS COME UP TRUNKS!

As you've read on the front page, we're delighted to announce that, at long last we are ready to go ahead with our plans to fence around The Master Oak for its own protection, after the fires, graffiti and vandalism that have threatened it in recent years.

Bentley Priory's developers, City & Country and Barratt Homes, have between them donated a total of £5,750 to the project, which will include a metal inner railing around the tree's trunk and a wooden fence with mesh, enclosing an area underneath the tree's canopy to prevent soil compaction and encourage regeneration.

Don't worry, you will still be able to approach and touch The Master, as there will be a mulched pathway leading up to the inner railing. We'll also be erecting a lectern style 'interpretation board' explaining what we've done and giving some interesting information.

This is where you come in...

For many years the Friends have been debating what information should appear on a plaque or board to celebrate our beloved ancient tree. Some have suggested a timeline of local history, others have wanted to see more general background about oak woodlands and their conservation.

So, what do you think?

On these pages, I've outlined some ideas we've had about the design, layout and wording of the board, which will probably be a steel lectern frame with a sign in Glass Reinforced Plastic, resistant to weathering, damage and graffiti.

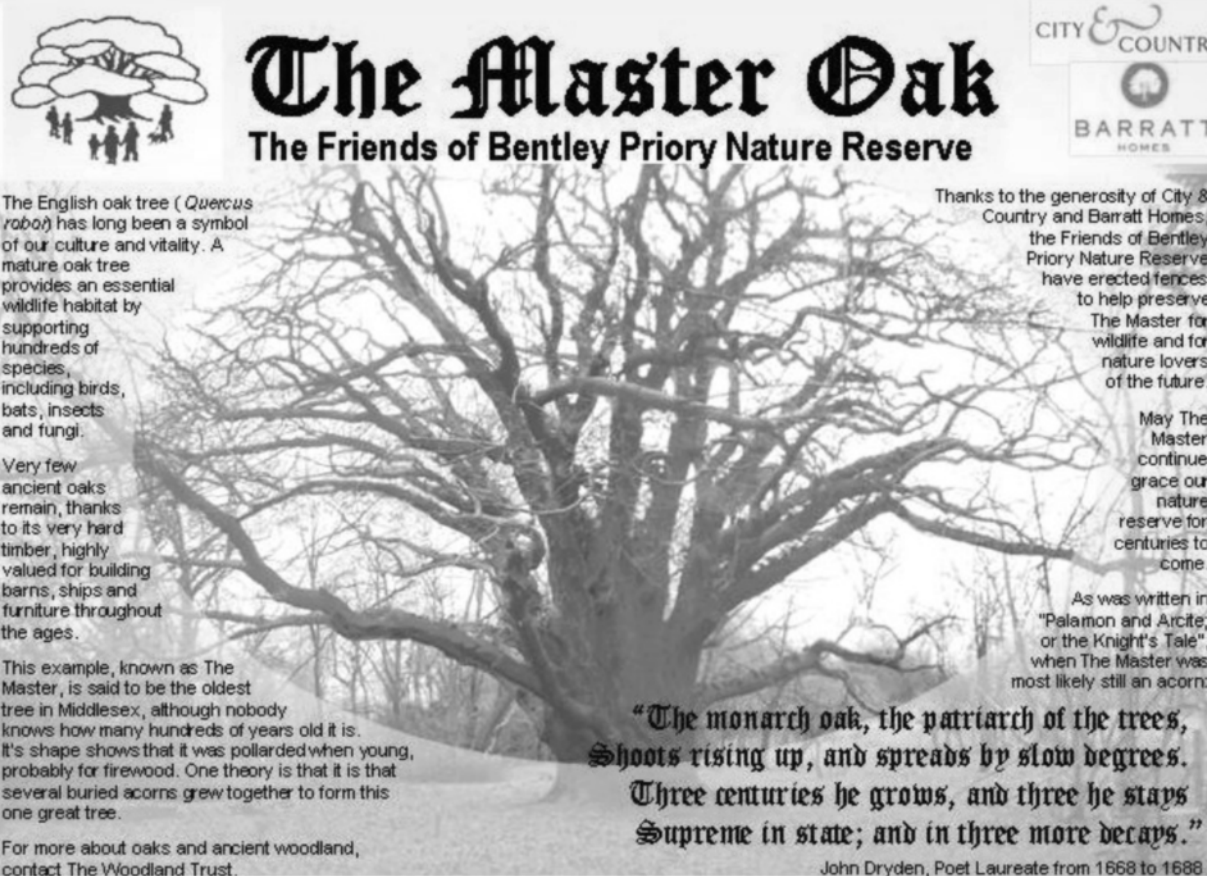
I'd be very grateful for members' input and comments on what could be said and what it should look like. For example, would it be better to have an A1 sized board (landscape flipchart size), or A2 (half as big but not much cheaper)? Which picture(s) do you prefer or have you got a high resolution digital photo of the Master that you think would be better? Would a different font be clearer?


Do you like the literary references, or are they a bit too 'high-faluting' for the general public? Is there extra we should say about oaks in general, about this particular tree, or about local happenings through the ages? Should we include more about the Friends?

Please, please give us your views so that we can consider them as we decide what to put. This sign will be a legacy for all to see, so let's make it as good as it can be. Let me have your feedback.

Linda Robinson


linda_robinson@lineone.net 020 8954 2174





The Master Oak

The Friends of Bentley Priory Nature Reserve



The English oak tree (*Quercus robur*) has long been a symbol of our culture and vitality. A mature oak tree provides an essential wildlife habitat by supporting hundreds of species, including birds, bats, insects and fungi.

Very few ancient oaks remain, thanks to its very hard timber, highly valued for building barns, ships and furniture throughout the ages.

This example, known as The Master, is said to be the oldest tree in Middlesex, although nobody knows how many hundreds of years old it is. Its shape shows that it was pollarded when young, probably for firewood. One theory is that it is that several buried acorns grew together to form this one great tree.

For more about oaks and ancient woodland, contact The Woodland Trust.

Thanks to the generosity of City & Country and Barratt Homes, the Friends of Bentley Priory Nature Reserve have erected fences to help preserve The Master for wildlife and for nature lovers of the future.

May The Master continue grace our nature reserve for centuries to come.

As was written in "Palamon and Arcite, or the Knight's Tale", when The Master was most likely still an acorn:

**"The monarch oak, the patriarch of the trees,
Shoots rising up, and spreads by slow degrees.
Three centuries he grows, and three he stays
Supreme in state; and in three more decays."**

John Dryden, Poet Laureate from 1668 to 1688

1

2



The Master Oak

Nobody knows the age of this big, ancient oak, known as The Master and said to be the oldest tree in Middlesex.

The Master likely began as an acorn in the 17th century, when John Dryden rewrote this verse from Chaucer's Canterbury Tales.



The Friends of Bentley Priory Nature Reserve

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Shoots rising up, and spreads by slow degrees.
Three centuries he grows, and three he stays
Supreme in state; and in three more decays."*

John Dryden, Poet Laureate from 1668 to 1688

In 1808, Dryden's work was edited by Sir Walter Scott, who had just penned his epic poem "Marmion", here on the island in the lake.

The Master, by now a mature oak, perhaps inspired Scott to include these lines.

*"Oft giving way, where still there stood
Some relics of the old oak wood,
That darkly huge did intervene,
And tamed the glaring white with green."*

Sir Walter Scott, 1807

Through hundreds of years, while most big oaks have been felled to build barns and ships, The Master has stood strong and survived.

Thanks to the generosity of City & Country and Barratt Homes, the Friends of Bentley Priory Nature Reserve have erected fences to protect The Master from harm. May this tree live for centuries to come.



3

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The Friends of Bentley Priory Nature Reserve



CLIMATE CHANGE AND BIRDS

Global warming is believed to be due to the increase in the average temperature over the world caused by a rise in the CO₂ in the atmosphere which is due to excessive emissions from fossil fuels and land use such as deforestation particularly in tropical rain forests. The rise in temperature has warmed the oceans which has apparently resulted in more violent storms with strong winds and heavy rain which lead to damage and flooding.

The raised temperatures have resulted in warmer winters and earlier springs which have affected many animals and plants which have moved further north where the conditions suit them with the result that some species are very rare now in their original habitats. In Bentley Priory this is probably the reason why we have lost the willow warbler as a breeding bird as it is still present in more northern parts of England and is plentiful in Scotland. Many of our resident birds (such as robin and blackbird) are nesting very early which can be disastrous as the young birds may die if there is a cold spell when their parents can't find food.

Other birds that have moved north to breed as a result of the rising temperatures are arctic tern, dotterel and Dartford warbler. The arctic tern breeds in colonies on the coast mainly in Scotland and the dotterel breeds on the top of the mountains in Scotland. Both of these species are declining as they are at the southern edge of their breeding ranges and they are leaving Scotland to breed further north. The Dartford warbler which has bred on the heathland in Surrey and Dorset, at the north of its breeding range, has now spread north, extending its range into East Anglia, the Central Midlands and South Wales.

The migration of birds has been affected by the severe weather conditions which are occurring with strong winds and storms. The winter of 12/13 was very long and cold and many of the early migrants were late arriving. I did not hear the chiffchaff, a warbler which usually arrives in Bentley Priory in the middle of March, until 14th April and a few swallows which are usually here by end of March were flying over Summerhouse Lake on the same day.

The winter migrants (mainly redwings and fieldfares in this area) were held up by the strong south-west winds. However the strong winds over the Atlantic have blown some rare American birds to the UK much to the delight of the twitchers.

Other winter visitors from the north are ducks, geese and swans. If the weather is very cold in the north of the UK they will fly south to look for food. One of these birds is the goosander, a fairly large duck, has been coming to Summerhouse Lake since 1997 in small numbers and can usually be seen between January and March. They are easily recognised as the male has a cream coloured body and a dark green head whilst the female has a browner body and a red head. We are lucky to have them as they are not often seen on small lakes.

There are some other birds which have started to breed in the UK which have come from southern Europe. The little egret was first recorded in the south of England in the early 1980s and it first bred on Brownsea Island in Poole Harbour in 1996. It is now widespread in most of England and can be seen locally. Its cousin the great white egret has been present in England since 2000; it bred in 2012 in Somerset.

There are several other similar birds which have only bred once or twice. The purple heron bred in 2010 in Kent, the cattle egret bred in Somerset in 2008 and the little bittern bred in 2010 and 2011 in Somerset. The glossy ibis has been present in the UK since 2007 and there have been several of them recorded. As yet, there have been no records of them having bred.

Elizabeth Stainthorpe

EDITOR'S CORNER

We always welcome new contributions to our pages. Please write to us and send any written articles or pictures you find of interest or relevance to Bentley Priory Nature Reserve. Their contents or some excerpts could well be included in the next issues of *FOUR SEASONS* so everyone can benefit.

Copy for the Summer Issue (No. 72/3)

should be in our

hands as soon as possible (to spread the workload) but by **6 June, 2014**

at the latest.

The Editor, Four Seasons, (020-8954-3060)

26 Bentley Way, Stanmore,

Middx., HA7 3RP

or e-mail it to:

tonywood804@btinternet.com

PRIORY DIARY

'Spring in your Step'

A Wild Flower Walk in conjunction with the Harrow Natural History Society
 Led by Joanne Colthup
 on Friday, 20 June at 2.00pm
 MEET AT OLD LODGE WAY GATE
 bring binoculars and a wild flower book

FRIENDS OF BENTLEY PRIORY NATURE RESERVE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

7.15 for 7.30pm on
 Tuesday, 29th April 2014 in
 The Bede Anandappa Centre,
 (Woodlands Community Hall)
 Binyon Crescent, Stanmore,
 HA7 3NE

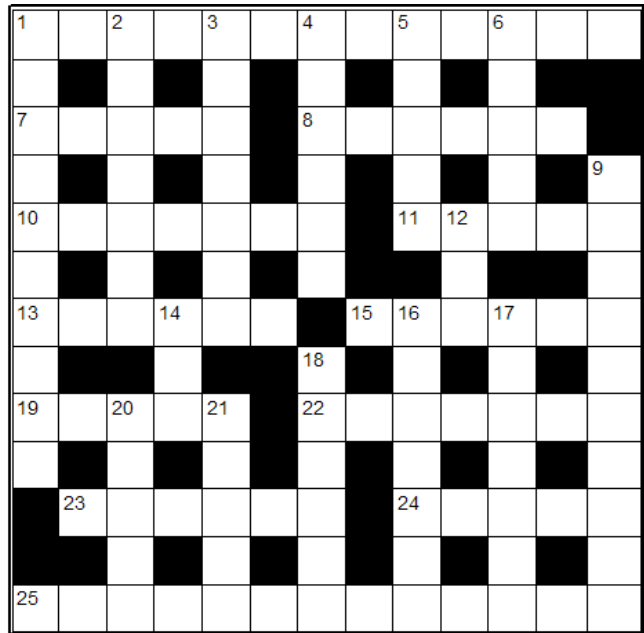
Rosemary Etheridge

will tell us about

"Life at Grass Roots Level"
 or wildlife on your doorstep

This will be followed by light refreshments,
 then The Friends' AGM
 All are welcome, members or not.

CROSSWORD 73



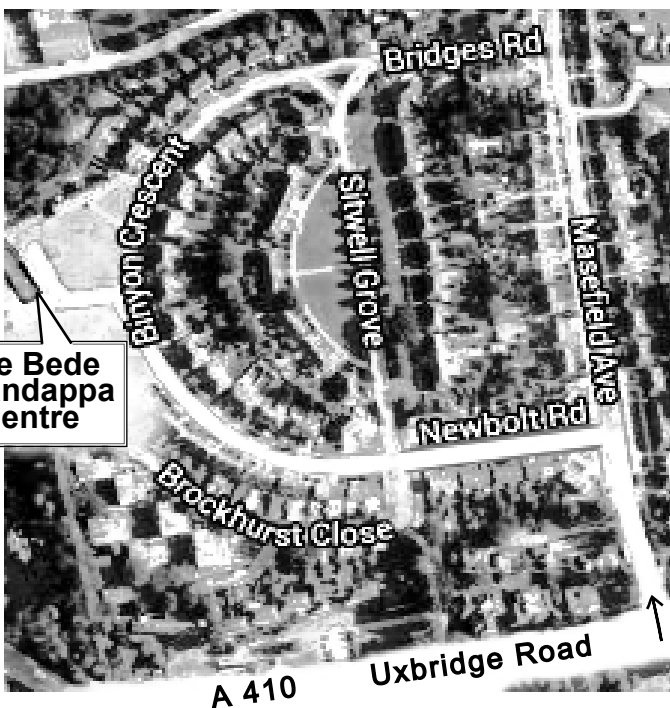
ACROSS

1. A spinach-like, edible, roadside plant. (4,4,5)
7. A long limbed, large eyed monkey. (5)
8. Prolonged watching. (6)
10. To check if all is well. (7)
11. Catch with a looped rope. (5)
13. To fascinate excessively. (6)
15. Fishing birds featured in Four Seasons no. 12. (6)
19. Scavenging birds now common in central Wales.(5)
22. Housing estate for rooks. (7)
23. An animal that suckles its young. (6)
24. Usually a nice smell. (5)
25. Coarse grinding stone from Yorkshire. (9,4)

DOWN

1. Britain's only woodland buttercup. (10)
2. How water can pass from cell to cell. (7)
3. The softer parts of nuts. (7)
4. When nocturnal animals are active. (6)
5. A good tree for coppicing. (5)
6. Nicely dressed to these. (5)
9. A flower capable of growing indoors. (10)
12. Contains the oxygen we need to live. (3)
14. 10 across, but rather suspiciously. (3)
16. Raise up. (7)
17. The sky's your ceiling! (7)
18. His fire is an electric discharge. (2,4)
20. Follow tracks. (5)
21. Hollows collecting waste liquid. (7)

Solution to Puzzle 71



A 410

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Key to Authors:

SB-Stephen Bolsover, CC-Chairman's Chat, PC-Pam Crookbain, DTel-Daily Telegraph, RE-Roger Eden, Ed-Editor (TW), FUN!-Humour/ Wise, MF-Margaret Francis, FF-Fred Freeman, SH-Stephen Hockley, RL-Ross Lynn, PP-Peter Peretti, LR-Linda Robinson, ES-Elizabeth Stainthorpe, PT-Paul Thurman, JW-Judy Walker, JW-John Williams, MW-Margaret Wood, TW-Tony Wood, www-Internet,