

## LAUGHTON PARISH COUNCIL REPORT 15 3 2017

I took on this role about 4 years ago not really knowing what the job entails. It has certainly grown due to various events which I will explain in a moment.

When I first started, I decided that I would try and get to know as many of the woodland owners as possible. Walking the dogs every day gives me the ideal opportunity. Laughton Woods has a huge area of ancient woodland. You may not be aware that, according to the ancient woodland inventory data, we have 225 hectares - of that 194 has been over-planted so that it is designated as PAWS or Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites.

I also involved myself with anything tree-related such as the cutting down of multiple trees at Chelwood, the Oak on the Green, some threatened trees at the old nurses quarters, reported cases of Ash dieback and so forth. This meant that I got to know the tree officers at both Wealden - Ben Rainbow for the TPOs - and Anthony Becvar at East Sussex County Council. About that time I started writing tree-related articles for the local Parish Magazine.

My knowledge of woodland owners came in useful when Jim Smith-Wright of the Woodland Trust came on the scene. He had been appointed Ancient Woodland Restoration Project Officer for the South East as part of the Trust's Nationwide campaign to promote the preservation and restoration of ancient woodland. Which brings us back to the 225 hectares that exists in Laughton and was therefore of great interest to the Woodland Trust.

Then, when the prospect of a Community Woodland, came up, naturally I was interested in getting involved. The Community Woodland is 69 hectares which is 30% of the 225 hectares contained in Laughton Woods. I am on the Steering Group both as Laughton Tree Warden and as a local representative. Marion Kemp is the other local rep.

We are making a particular point of keeping local people informed. I have continued to write for the magazine with that aim in mind and, as you know, we have been speaking to local Parish Councils. We have also taken both our County and District Councillors for walks in the woods. We have been holding various events and our next event is on 1<sup>st</sup> May. Please come!

Incidentally we do include Ripe and Chalvington, Ringmer, East Hoathly, Halland, Whitesmith and Chiddingly under the heading 'local'.

Plumpton College students have been working in the woods and have made great strides towards thinning the Pines to allow in more light. There is a great deal more to be done as is detailed in our Woodland Management Plan, which has recently been approved by the Forestry Commission. We kept John Stafford from the FC informed throughout the process and he has been very supportive. I believe he also advises Wealden District Council on planning matters relating to Forestry. Permitted development is part of the WMP and we have just submitted the formal application to Wealden for some infrastructure to facilitate the work planned for the woodland. No doubt that will be coming your way soon! Please ask if you require clarification on anything contained in this application.

Being a Tree Warden - certainly in Laughton - is quite a full-time job. I do get contacted on tree issues much more these days, so word has got about. No chance of retirement in the foreseeable future!

**Stop Press** announcement - we just heard today that we have had our application to become a Community Benefit Society (CBS) approved.

*Sue Redshaw 15 3 2017*