

Leafy Lane Woodland Management Project



Leafy Lane Woodland June 06

Photo: Fran Brooks

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Abstract

When a local football club acquired land to build a new football pitch and training area, their purchase also included a piece of woodland. The football club naturally focused on their original purpose of creating new sports facilities but had no real idea about what to do with the woodland, and none of the knowledge and skills to manage it. Conflict began to arise between the Ministry of Defence, who owned houses potentially threatened by unmanaged overhanging trees, and the football club, who lacked the resources to look after their woodland. There is also conflict between the local community and the football club: new fences erected by the football club which have excluded a 'meadow area' from the original woodland area have inflamed local walkers and the general neglect of the woodland has caused concern to many local people, broken and missing boundary fences, garden waste tipping and lack of tree management is generally degrading the local environment. By asking for and taking account of the views of the people in the local community, giving them some say in its management and the practical opportunity to become involved with the care of the woodland there can be benefits for all parties as well as the local environment.

Acknowledgements

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Also of course, thanks to my tutors at Lackham over the last two years, in particular Richard Cripps, who has undoubtedly imbued me with his passion for native trees, and Mark Malins, who has both given great support and advice during the project, but also allowed me the freedom to pursue my own ideas.

I would like to dedicate this project to Di Winstanley, my sister-in-law and friend, who died suddenly a few weeks ago.

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Introduction

Currently, Britain's forest cover amounts to almost 12% of our land surface, which is more than twice the area recorded at the beginning of the 19th Century, when the figure was 5%. Though our forest cover is still increasing, it is still lower than that of most European countries and considerably lower than the estimated global coverage of 30%.

John Evelyn was one of the first writers to write with concern about the loss of woodland. In 1664 he wrote

"Truly, the waste and destruction of our woods has been so universal, that I am conceived nothing less than a universal plantation of al the sorts of trees will supply, and will encounter the defect"

When the Forestry Commission was established in 1919, its primary objective was to produce timber; but since the Second World War its objectives have grown, to include not only the value of forestry as an economic resource, but also the value of forestry and woodland as a recreational facility and an important contributor to the landscape and wildlife environment (Hibberd, 1991).

Thus, government policy today describes its vision for our ancient and native woodlands, that they should be "adequately protected, sustainably managed in a wider landscape context, and are providing a wide range of social, environmental and economic benefits to society". Some woodlands today, however have "declined in value, and some have been lost for ever" (Forestry Commission/DEFRA, 1985).

Threats to our native woodland are therefore of great concern; Leafy Lane woodland fits into the category of threatened woodlands in the terms of the policy document "Keepers of Time", in that it is a woodland which is "simply not realising its potential due to lack of basic management".



Fig 1 View of Leafy Lane Woodland from playing fields

Photo: F Brooks

Leafy Lane Woodland in Rudloe sits on the western edge of Rudloe's residential area and is accessed from either Leafy Lane or a footpath from Boxfields Road. It was acquired by Leafy Lane Football Club in 1998, as part of a project to create football pitches and a training area for Corsham Football Club. Though the woodland formed part of the parcel of land bought from a local farmer, the football club are naturally focused on the maintenance of areas relating to football rather than the woodland area; the only management activities which have taken place since the acquisition relate to fencing off areas of the woodland to separate them from the football fields and therefore prevent people from walking across them. This has been ineffective as walkers in the woodland simply step over the fence to walk across the fields, which is the route they had always used before. The attitude of the local community towards the fencing of this area is reflected in the fact that the fencing has been damaged and replaced at least four times since it was erected. Though a new pathway was created to

funnel people down the side of the new playing fields many people do not use it, probably due to the fact that is a very enclosed and narrow path and currently almost inaccessible due to lack of maintenance.

The community has not been included in any decisions regarding changes to the woodland, for example, an area of meadow which used to be part of the woodland is now mown and incorporated into the playing field area thus reducing the area available for public amenity by almost a third, and attitudes to the football club's management of the woodland have been negatively coloured by this. Involving the community in caring for and making decisions about their own woodland is critical for management success. "Working with the community will not only lead to a more rounded understanding of the potential contribution that forestry can make but also in many cases may add to the commercial value for the present owner"(Bills 1996).

The woodland is suffering due to lack of maintenance; many of the trees are drawn up due to lack of thinning including an area of larch plantation which is 70% windblown. Fencing around the boundary of the woodland is broken in many places, branches from trees adjacent to Leafy Lane itself are beginning to obstruct the pavement, trees on the northern boundary are leaning into the gardens of MOD houses and motor cyclists have been using the woodland, accessing it easily through missing gates. These are only some of the issues relating to the management of the woodland which are creating problems within the community and a degree of antipathy towards the football club.

The objectives of this project are to

- Maintain/improve the woodland
- Enhance the wildlife value of the woodland
- Involve local people in the care and management of the woodland

- Create a community resource and thus help bring a fairly disparate community together
- Provide education about the value of woodlands and wildlife

In order to achieve these aims the initial action will be to establish the views of the community regarding the woodland, by means of a community survey.

"Surveys are a means to get a general sense of an average response from a specific section of the population or the whole population of a particular area" (ref. Hislop 2004).

When the football club initially asked for help in managing the woodland, it seemed that what was required was a management plan for the woodland and advice on applying for management grants. However, it soon became apparent that a management plan had previously been produced, shortly after the football club's acquisition of the woodland, though no work had ever been implemented as a result of this plan. Also, a previous approach had been made to the Forestry Commission for funding, though the sum requested was unrealistic and many of the purposes listed for the use of FC grant money were not truly related to the management of the woodland, so the application was turned down (Briscoe, 2006). Clearly a new approach to the management of the woodland was required, people with a real interest in the woodland rather than the football club needed to be involved or the previous inaction regarding the management would continue.

In 'Involving people in Forestry' (Forest Research, 2004) the need to involve the grass-roots of the community is illustrated by the model of 'The pyramid of involvement.'

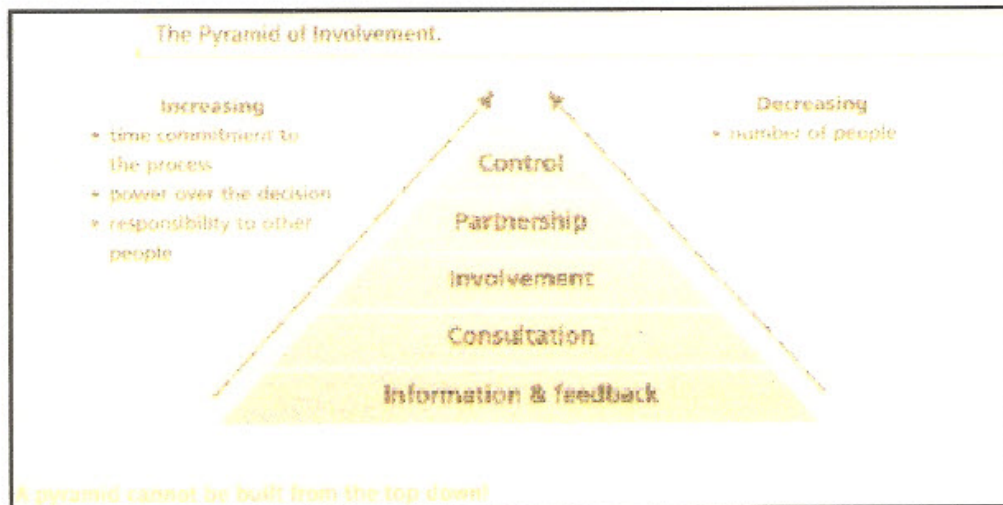


Figure 2 Pyramid of Involvement

Source: Forest Research

“When a new community-focused initiative is launched it is tempting to immediately want to involve people at the higher tiers of the pyramid (e.g. forming a ‘Community Woodland Group’ or a ‘Friends of the Forest’ Group) A more secure way to develop a dialogue and build a relationship with people is to work from the lower tiers of the pyramid and to encourage ‘growth’ into the higher tiers of the pyramid. The lower levels are the ‘foundations’ of the pyramid of involvement’.

Using the results of the survey and a databank of addresses collected from the surveys (as well as press releases and posters) it is anticipated that a ‘Friends of the Woodland’ group will be established, comprising all interested parties. “For local people to gain real benefit from community woodlands, they need to feel part of the process” (Bills, 1996).

The Friends group, with professional advice available to them, will be able to clarify management objectives, set up a practical long term management plan and achieve funding for management tasks, (hopefully involving local people in these tasks) thus improving the woodland for both for the benefit of the wider environment and the local community.

Chapter 2. The Rudloe Community

The Rudloe community is somewhat fragmented, and can be viewed as three different communities within one. There are four main areas of housing, one with Ministry of Defence (MOD) houses for Services personnel, two estate areas of privately owned homes to the north and south of the MOD houses and an area of predominantly housing association properties which has a separate access road to the rest of the community.

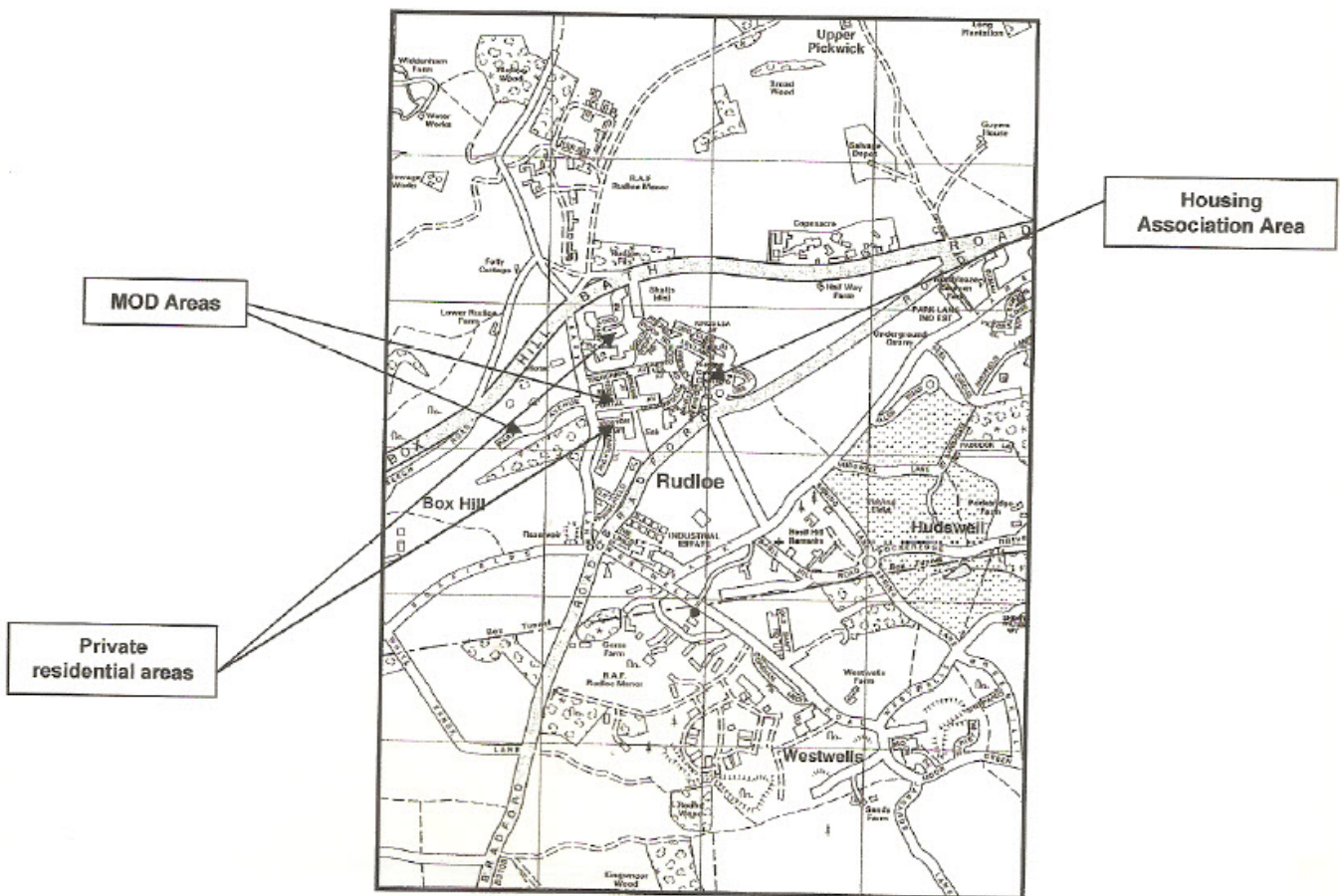


Fig 4 Rudloe Street Map

Source: Corsham Town Council

The aerial photo and map below show the woodland with the joint forces homes at the top right of the picture and immediately north of the woodland and the privately owned homes to the right of the woodland. The housing association area of homes is situated off the map (overleaf) to the right.



Fig 5 Leafy Lane Woodland and immediate surroundings

Source: multimap.com

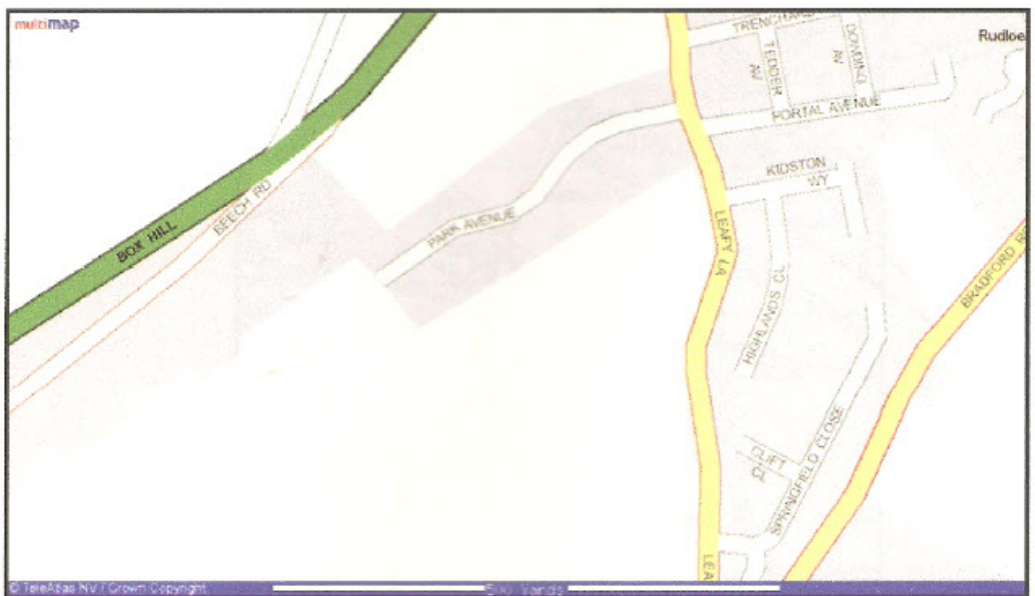


Fig 6 Street Map of area above 1:5000

Source: Multimap.com

Rudloe is also divided into two separate parishes: of its 900 residents approximately 700 are in Box Parish and the other 200 are in Corsham Parish. It has no public house, church or shop which can provide focus for a community. There is a services information centre (Hive) and a small weekday café (which has recently been established) in the MOD area of Rudloe, and a shop and

community centre in the Housing Association area, though each of these seem to provide predominantly for its own area of the community, rather than being a focus for general community activity.



Fig 7 Services Information Centre/Cafe, Rudloe Photo: Fran Brooks

The local school, Box Highlands Primary School, is described in its Ofsted Report to have "a very high level of pupil mobility" which is attributed to some extent to service postings. Margaret Rousell, one of the two Parish Councillors for Rudloe, said that many people in the community 'don't know where they belong' and efforts have been made to try to integrate the Rudloe community into Box, though its geographical location, a mile away from Box village at the top of a steep hill, makes this difficult.

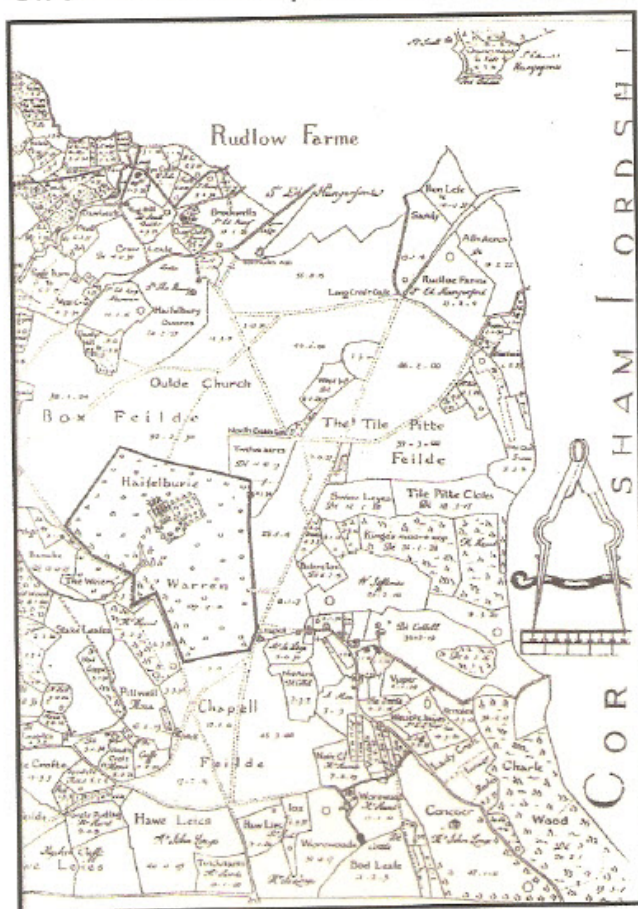
There are however no other areas of community woodland in Box Parish, and opportunities to get involved in woodland management activities at Leafy Lane could be offered to the Box community too, potentially bringing people from Box to Rudloe and thus enhancing a sense of belonging to the wider Box Parish for Rudloe residents and giving them pride in their own community woodland.

Chapter 3. Leafy Lane woodland history

Leafy Lane Woodland (grid ref. ST84698) comprises 2.7 hectares (6.7 acres) of mixed species trees.

Its planting history is currently unclear, though using old maps the northern edge of the woodland and the roadside trees appear to have existed for longer than the rest of the woodland.

On the medieval map below the area which the woodland now occupies is on



the upper part of the map and is unwooded. Andrew and Dury's 1773 map of Wiltshire shows the area to be unplanted even by that time, thus confirming that the main area of woodland is not ancient.

The Box Parish Tithe Map of 1840 shows the land to be part of a field known as 'Ten Acres', which is marked as arable land, farmed by a William Wiltshire, but owned by John Jones. The surrounding fields are also still un-wooded at this time. In the 1838 Schedule, William Wiltshire was shown to be living in Boxfields Farm House

Fig 8 Medieval map of Rudloe provenance unknown

on the eastern side of Leafy Lane, which is now known as Rudloe House. By the time of the First Edition of the Ordnance Survey map County Series for Wiltshire in 1889 however, the woodland areas which existed on either side of today's woodland had been established (though both these areas have now been felled for housing developments). These were most likely to have been planted

by William Wiltshire during his tenancy. The 1871 Census shows that a Robert Pictor was now resident in Boxfields Farm House. His father Job Pictor had been a Quarry-master during the boom in Bath stone quarrying, which had made him very wealthy. According to a local resident Robert Pictor was responsible for the planting of the Lime Avenue which still exists in the woodland which also appears on the 1889 map, apparently it was planted in an attempt to emulate the Elm Avenue at Corsham Court. He was also responsible for building Rudloe Towers (now Rudloe Park Hotel) and the Lime Avenue runs between Boxfields House and Rudloe Towers. He died in 1877, before Rudloe Towers was completed, apparently having had a stroke whilst walking between the two properties.

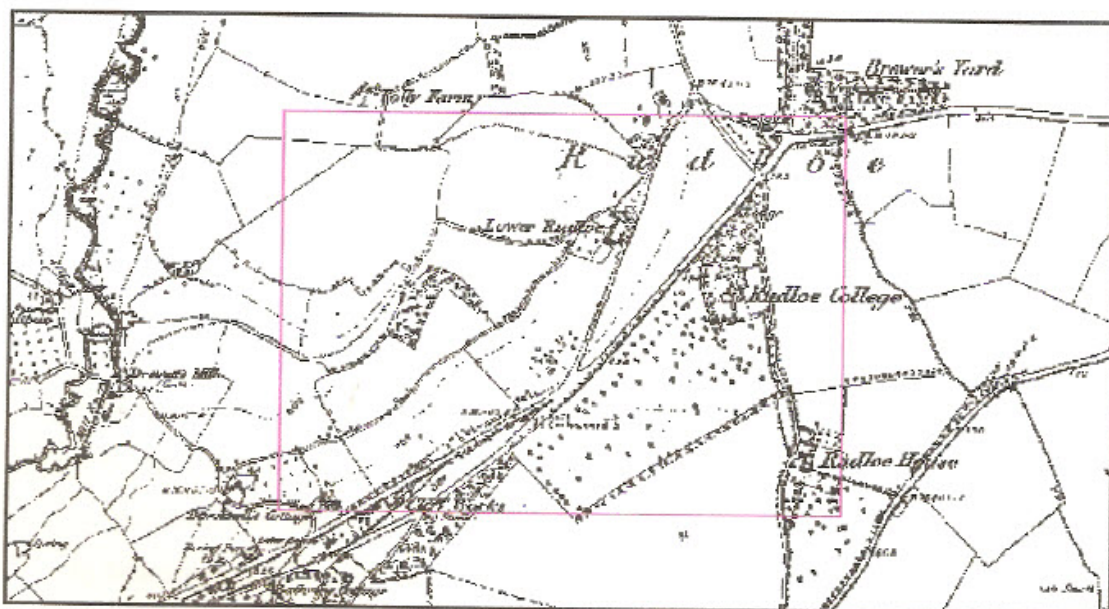


Fig 9 1889 map showing the two pre-existing areas of woodland with Lime Avenue between Rudloe House and Rudloe College (previously known as Rudloe Towers) Source: Old Maps.co.uk

By 1900, the Ordnance Survey Map shows, for the first time, the woodland area relating to that which exists today. This clearly suggests that this area was planted between 1889 and 1900. A local resident believes that it was originally planted for shooting cover (Turner, March 2006).

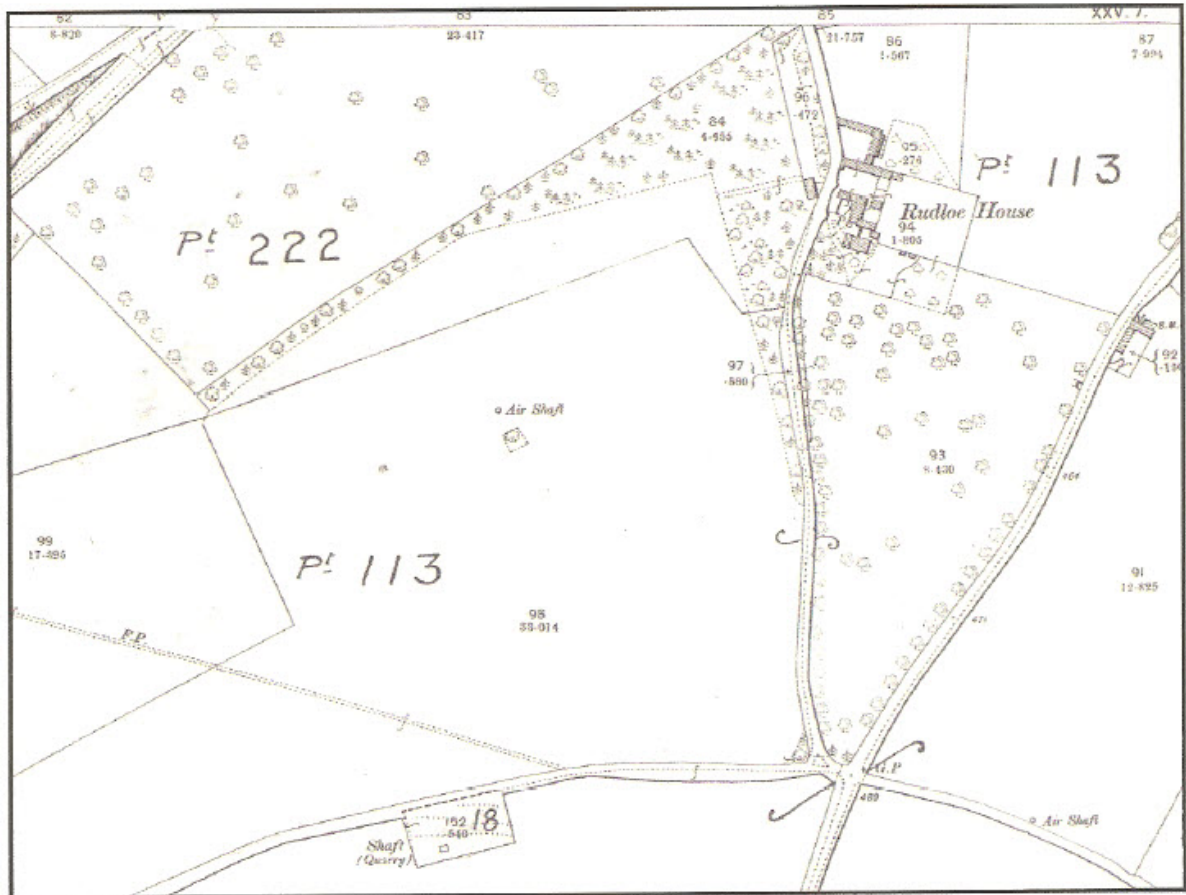


Figure 10 Ordnance Survey map 1900

Source: Wiltshire and Swindon Records Office

This map clearly shows the origins of the woodland area we know today. It is notable that the larger trees which now exist in the centre of the playing field Area and the trees which now border the meadow area (tree area described as G1 in the Tree Preservation order) are not yet in evidence.

Chapter 4. Leafy Lane Woodland Today

Leafy Lane Woodland today covers 2.7 ha (6.7 acres). The map below shows trees subject to a tree preservation order (TPO) instigated in 1995. This area does not include the meadow area which used to be part of the amenity area enjoyed by residents, which is between areas G1 and W1 on the map below.

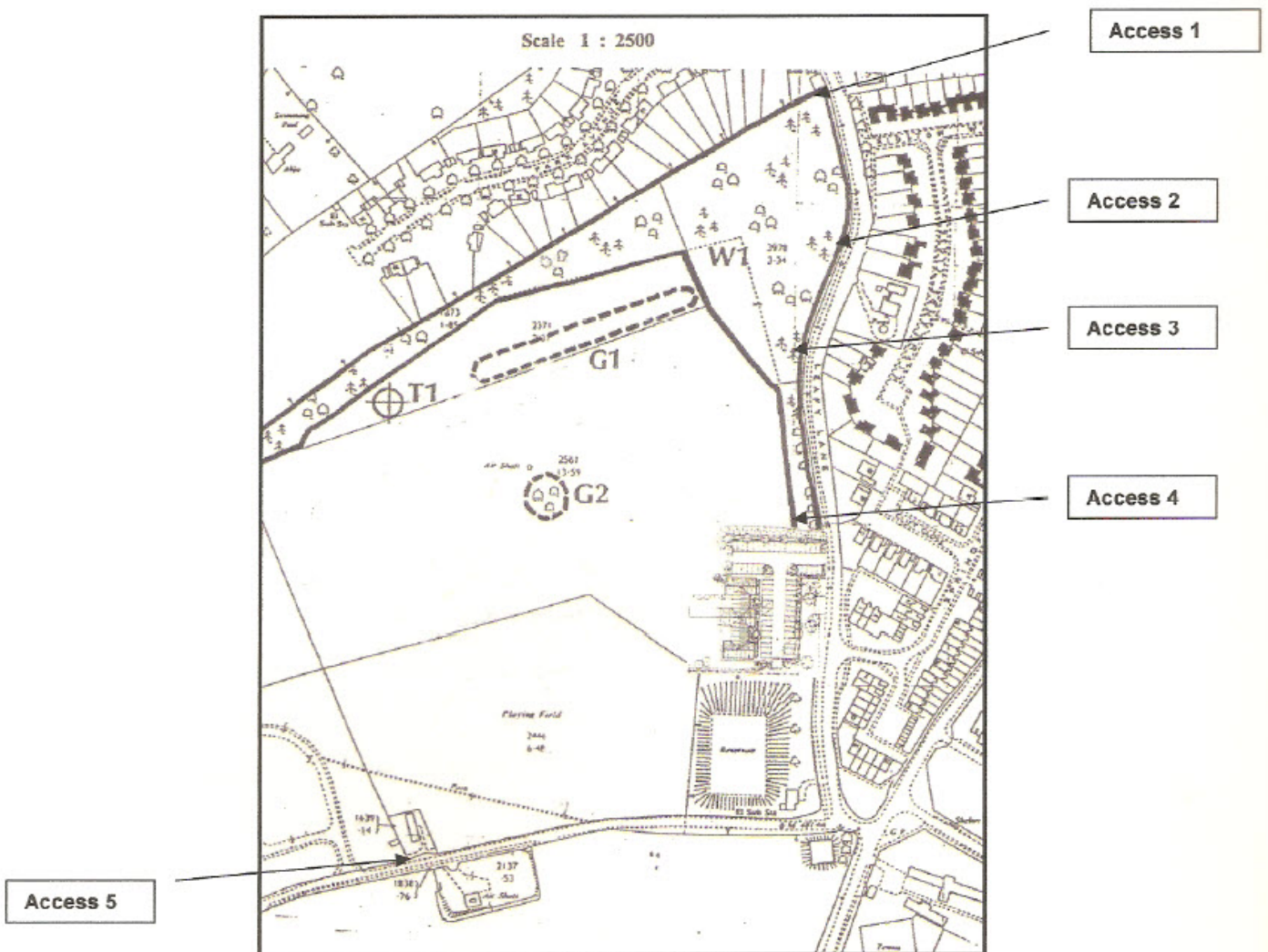


Fig 11 Leafy Lane Woodland Map 1995 Source: North Wilts. District Council

Woodland Survey

The woodland was surveyed for flora on 22nd June 2006.

Species noted were:

Trees/Shrubs:	
Ash	<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>
Beech	<i>Fagus sylvatica</i>
Dogwood	<i>Cornus sanguinea</i>
Elder	<i>Sambucas nigra</i>
Elm spp	<i>Ulmus</i> spp
European Larch	<i>Larix decidua</i>
Hawthorn	<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>
Hazel	<i>Coryllus avellana</i>
Holly	<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>
Hornbeam	<i>Carpinus betulus</i>
Horse Chestnut	<i>Aesculus hippocastanum</i>
Lime spp.	<i>Tilia</i> spp
Norway Maple	<i>Acer platanoides</i>
English Oak	<i>Quercus robur</i>
Scots Pine	<i>Pinus sylvestris</i>
Sycamore	<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>
Whitebeam	<i>Sorbus aria</i>
Wild Privet	<i>Ligustrum vulgare</i>
Ground Flora	
Bittersweet/Woody nightshade	<i>Solanum dulcamara</i>
Bramble	<i>Rubus fruticosus</i>
Broad-leaved dock	<i>Rumex obtusifolius</i>
Cleavers	<i>Galium aparine</i>

Common couch	<i>Elytrigia repens</i>
Cow Parsley	<i>Anthriscus sylvestris</i>
Cock's-foot	<i>Dactylis glomerata</i>
Creeping Buttercup	<i>Ranunculus repens</i>
Creeping Thistle	<i>Cirsium arvense</i>
Dandelion	<i>Taraxacum officianale</i>
Dogs Mercury	<i>Mercurialis perennis</i>
Dog Rose	<i>Rosa Canina</i>
Enchanters nightshade	<i>Circaea lutetiana</i>
False oat grass	<i>Arrhenatherum elatius</i>
Garlic mustard	<i>Alliaria petiolata</i>
Giant bent	<i>Agrostis gigantia</i>
Ground ivy	<i>Glechoma hederacea</i>
Hedge woundwort	<i>Stachys sylvatica</i>
Hedgerow cranesbill	<i>Geranium pyrenaicum</i>
Herb Robert	<i>Geranium robertianum</i>
Hogweed	<i>Heracleum sphondylium</i>
Ivy	<i>Hedera helix</i>
Lesser Burdock	<i>Arcticum minus</i>
Lords and Ladies	<i>Arum maculatum</i>
Male fern	
Meadow buttercup	<i>Ranunculus acris</i>
Nettles	<i>Urticus dioica</i>
Red fescue	<i>Festuca rubra</i>
Rough meadow-grass	<i>Poa trivialis</i>
Sanicle*	<i>Sanicula europaea</i>
Shining cranesbill	<i>Geranium lucidum</i>
Smooth sows thistle	<i>Sonchus oleraceus</i>
Sweet Violet	<i>Viola oderata</i>
Wild clematis	<i>Clematis vitalba</i>

Wild garlic/Ramsoms	<i>Allium ursinum</i>
Wild gooseberry	<i>Ribes uva-crispa</i>
Wood avens	<i>Geum urbanum</i>
Wood dock	<i>Rumex sanguineus</i>
Wood false brome	<i>Brachypodium sylvaticum sylvaticum</i>
Wood sedge*	<i>Carex sylvatica</i>
Wood speedwell*	<i>Veronica montana</i>
Yorkshire fog	<i>Holcus lanatus</i>

Plants marked with a * symbol are good ancient woodland indicators in this area. This suggests the presence of an ancient hedge in the area of the woodland, which has otherwise been identified as non-ancient.

1) Woodland Boundaries

The edges of the woodland are in need of improvement. On the Leafy Lane edge trees are overhanging the footpath, causing an obstruction to pedestrians, and much of the boundary fencing is missing or damaged, in some areas making the boundary unclear. There is no graded woodland edge which would be beneficial to wildlife. Woodland edges are very important to wildlife; many invertebrates, birds, small mammals and reptiles rely on woodland edge or scrub habitat (BTCV, 2000). The northern boundary of the woodland backs on to the gardens of MOD homes in Park Lane and there have been complaints regarding "trees that overhang their gardens, restricting natural light and affecting both terrestrial and satellite television reception" (ref. letter from Defence Estates to Leafy Lane Playing field Project 1st October 2004).



Fig 12 Boundary with Leafy Lane

Photo: F Brooks



Fig 13 Damaged boundary fencing

Photo: F Brooks



Fig 14 Overhanging trees, Leafy Lane

Photo: F Brooks



Fig 15 Boundary with MOD homes Photo: F Brooks

2) Entrances

There are 4 entrances to the woodland along Leafy Lane (marked on map above), including one accessed from the football club car park. Another access point comes off Boxfields Road (Access 5), and is a narrow path hedged on one side and fenced on the other side which is adjacent to farmland. This runs alongside the western boundary of the playing fields and leads to the top left corner of the woodland. Currently, all of the entrances are in need of repair or clearing for access.



Fig 16 Access 1 from Leafy Lane

Photo: F Brooks



Fig 17 Access 4 from car park - overgrown Photo: F Brooks

3) Trees/Flora

The woodland has received no management apart from fence erection and repairs since the football club bought it in 1998. Many of the trees are drawn up through lack of thinning; the biggest danger to the trees is failure due to height. (Green Man Management Plan 1998). Overgrown brambles restrict access to both the footpath at Boxfields Road and the woodland corner with one of the best views from the woodland across the valley to Colerne. Naturally regenerated larch are growing in the middle of the Lime Avenue.



Fig 18 Windblown Larch Photo: F Brooks



Fig 19 View from 'Bramble Corner'

Photo: F Brooks



Fig 10 Lime Avenue with Larch

Photo: F Brooks

4) Footpaths

Main footpaths through the woodland are well used, and become very muddy at times. Many unofficial paths have been created by woodland users which take them over a meadow area which used to be incorporated into the woodland area. The football club is currently mowing this meadow area as a 'training area' though they are not actually using it. Other unofficial paths have been created by users going through the fencing onto the football fields, creating the risk of illness caused by dog excrement to users of the playing fields. These paths enable walkers to avoid the 'official' narrow pathway down the side of the playing fields.



Fig 21 Path through fencing to 'meadow' Photo: F Brooks



Fig 22 Path over fencing to football field Photo: F Brooks



Fig 23 'Official' footpath to Boxfields Road Photo: F Brooks

5) Garden Dumping/Littering

Waste from gardens is being dumped in the woodland, both at the back of some of the MOD gardens on Park Lane and on the Leafy Lane boundary. This can damage the natural ecology of the woodland and lead to the introduction of alien species to the woodland area. There is occasional litter found in the woodland such as crisp wrappers but no fly tipping has been observed.



Fig 24 Garden waste dumping

Photo: F Brooks

6) Signs

Signs with a map of the woodland at each of the access points have either been damaged, removed or are so faded they are illegible.



Fig 25 Faded sign at Access 5

Photo: Fran Brooks



Fig 26 Broken Sign at Access 3

Photo: F Brooks

Leafy Lane woodland has good species diversity and some excellent mature trees, including a Beech tree of approximately 150 years old and an avenue of Lime trees of between 130 and 150 years old. It would definitely benefit from some sensitive management to improve both the environmental and amenity value.

Chapter 5. 1998 Management Plan Review

Woodland management plans are designed to set out long and short term plans and visions for a woodland and the actions to be taken to achieve these, whilst taking note of the restrictions and resources of the existing woodland and the needs of woodland users (Ecotreecare, 2006).

At the inception of this project, when the football club first requested help with the management of Leafy Lane Woodland, it seemed that what was required was a Management Plan, which could be drawn up by professionals with grant funding, then carried out by professionals. However, on receiving all the paperwork related to the woodland from the club, it became apparent that a professional management plan and survey had already been produced, in 1998, though no work was subsequently carried out as a result of this plan.

The survey which took place was very brief; in total it comprised three pages of information relating to trees (only) which need work in the woodland. There is no reference made to boundaries, access points, footpaths, ground flora etc. LatinNames are used without any common tree names by way of explanation and technical terms relating to trees are used e.g. "crown is drawn up forming high canopy", or "Fraxinus has minor deadwood", without any reference to the significance of these features. The survey is therefore likely to be incomprehensible to anyone without a degree of prior knowledge about woodland management.

The entire summary of the survey amounts to five lines.

"The woodland consists of some excellent trees which would benefit from a sensitive management programme. This should be carried out by a fully qualified contractor with this type of specialist amenity forestry background. Timing of the

work should limit disturbance to wildlife and general public. The woodland has a high amenity value and the proposed work should enhance this."

However, management plan itself begins,

"I have been approached to produce a management plan for the woodland. I have not been issued with any ideas or suggestions concerning the area and the management scheme"

This lack of clarity in the brief given to the Tree Surgeons/Woodland Contractors who prepared the plan is probably key to the lack of detail in this survey and management plan. Also, having the management plan drawn up by the contractor who is likely to undertake the work is potentially problematic. The interests of the contractor may not necessarily be those which best serve the woodland and the community.

Having a clear view of the wishes of the community and being able to give clear detail about the management aims for the woodland before having a plan drawn up, as well as having independent advice (e.g. from the Forestry Commission or Woodland Trust) will assist in the production of a management plan which meets a variety of objectives identified by the community with professional help. Wider management recommendations are discussed in Chapter 6.

Chapter 6. Community Survey

Why Survey?

A community survey (see Appendix 1) was developed with dual objectives. The first, most obvious aim was to establish the views of the community towards the woodland to inform management ideas. Surveys are a means to get a general sense of an average response from a specific section of the population or the whole population of a particular area (Hislop et al, 2004). Secondly, disseminating the survey within the community is a means of raising awareness of the woodland project and the possibility for interested parties to get involved with future management decisions.

Surveys can either be formal or informal. Formal surveys are scientifically assembled and administered and aim to obtain information on issues at hand from statistically significant samples of the population, whereas informal surveys tend to reach a self-selected group of people. (Hislop et al. 2004)

As this survey was undertaken by only one individual with restricted resources it was by necessity undertaken in an 'informal' way, although it was distributed as widely as possible within Rudloe in order to achieve as full a picture of the views of all parts of the community as possible. Achieving the widest possible range of opinions is important to get the clearest possible picture of the wishes of the community, and provides a firm foundation for the 'triangle of involvement'.

Survey

Survey questions were designed to be as simple as possible and quick to answer, to prevent people finding the survey too time-consuming and therefore failing to complete it. Also, where answer options were given, a further option of other with space to comment was added to each, to ensure that respondents were not restricted to options suggested by the survey form.

The survey was initially designed to be used as an interview tool in the woodland, to establish the views of the woodland users. Jo Sayers, from Wiltshire Wildlife Trust in Swindon, who has previously run community involvement projects and undertaken community surveys, provided advice on survey design: she also advised that the survey should not be undertaken alone. (Sayers, 2005) Also, interviewing only in the woodland would provide only the views of current users, not those of other members of the community. Therefore, an accompanying letter was devised (Appendix 2) in order that the survey could be distributed by other means, without the need for direct interviews. With hindsight, the wording of the questions ought to have been modified to account for the lack of interviewer, as some of the survey 'questions' were only marked as headings rather than questions, potentially causing confusion to respondents. Contact details for people interested in participating in the woodland management project were also collected using the survey.

As many different links with the community as possible were sought to achieve maximum survey coverage within the community:

- Box Highlands Primary School – 120 surveys were distributed in each of the children's book bags (which they take home each evening), though I was warned that returns would be low, I did receive 6 completed surveys from parents,(a 7.2% return) but awareness of the project will have reached many more Rudloe families than returned the survey.
- Individual contacts within the community distributed surveys to people they knew. Gwen Davies, of Springfield Close, Rudloe distributed 15 surveys and achieved 12 returns (an 80% return).
- Sophie White, Youth Development co-ordinator at the Bridge Centre in Chippenham, asked for the survey to be emailed to her so she could

establish the views of the local youth during her outreach work. She returned 4 surveys.

- Defence Estates – contacted on numerous occasions to see if they would like to be involved, though no calls were responded to, despite the fact that concerns about overhanging trees in MOD gardens had previously been expressed by letter .
- Box Guides, who meet at the football club and use the woodland. One survey form was completed by the Guide Leader on behalf of the group.
- Rudloe Football Club – Andy Cooper, chairman of the club, was also e-mailed the survey and letter for distribution, though he was unable to distribute any surveys due to pressure of work.
- Rudloe Community Centre – Situated in the heart of the Housing Association area of Rudloe. 20 Surveys and letters were left with the stewardess of the club who encouraged visitors to complete surveys. 11 surveys were collected (a 55% return).
- A further 6 surveys were completed in individual interviews with contacts in Rudloe.

40 surveys were returned in total. These were entered into an excel spreadsheet for analysis. Each survey was given a number and addresses of interested people recorded to create a database. A sample section of the spreadsheet used, referring to the question of what aspects of the woodland respondents value, appears below.

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27	31	26	22	22	13	13	1	
67.5%	77.5%	65.0%	55.0%	55.0%	32.5%	32.5%	2.5%	

Fig 27 Sample section of excel spreadsheet used to analyse results

Recreational usage of area by public

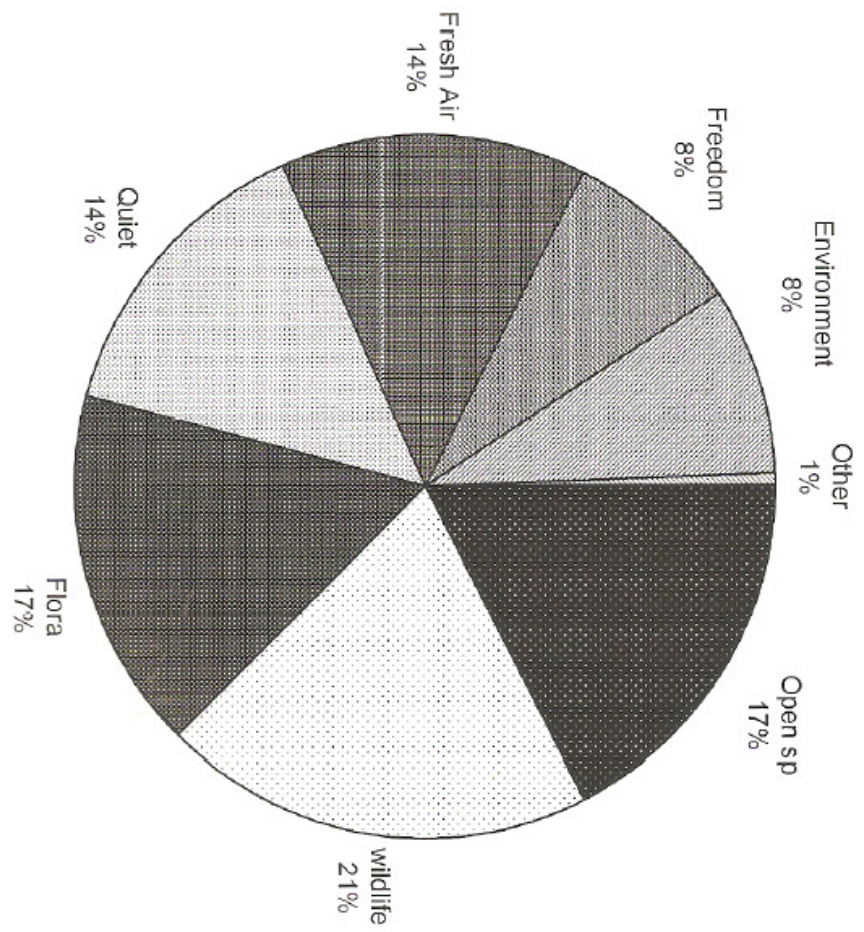


Fig. 27a.

Survey Results Analysis

Question 1. *User/Neighbour*

The vast majority of respondents (75%) were both woodland users and neighbours. This question provided limited useful information, as most respondents would naturally be both, as only people with a direct interest in the woodland, users and neighbours, would be likely to take the time to respond to an informal survey.

Question 2. *Time*

Respondents were able to choose multiple options for times of day when they use the woodland. The highest percentage (57.5%) of respondents said they use the woodland between 6am and 8am and the second highest percentage (25%) use the woodland between 8am and 10am and 6pm and 8pm. The lowest percentage of users (10%) use the woodland between the hours of 12pm and 4 pm.

Question 3. *Family/Individuals*

This question was designed initially for the interview approach to the survey to provide information on whether people in the woodland were in family groups or alone. As a survey answered independently it is more difficult to answer as many people sometimes use the woodland alone and sometimes with others. Also, the option 'family group' should have been changed to 'group' to allow for groups of woodland users who are not actually related to choose this answer. 47.5% of users generally use the woodland with others, 40% walk alone and 12.5% ticked both options, indicating they use the woodland both alone and with others.

Question 4. *Activity*

Respondents were given a range of six options; *dog walker walker (short), walker (long), bird watcher, cyclist, jogger* and allowed to check any number of

these. 'other' was also given as an option with the opportunity to state what other activity was referred to, in order to ensure that activities not anticipated could also be included.

The main activity undertaken in the woodland is *dog walking*, at 40%, followed by *short walking* at 37%. One activity choice which should have been included is '*children playing*', as this was mentioned by a number of respondents under the 'other' option. The next highest activity option was *bird watching*, at 20%. All four youth respondents to the survey stated that their one activity in the woodland was *mini-moto riding*, an issue which a number of other respondents had complained about in the comments section of their survey.

Question 5. *Local/Visitor*

Respondents were asked how far away from the woodland they lived. 67.5% of respondents described themselves as *immediate neighbours*, though this question was originally designed to identify people whose homes were immediately adjacent to the woodland (the MOD homes with gardens backing on to the woodland), but this should have been clarified in the question, as many people who lived within 0-1 mile of the woodland but not directly adjacent described themselves as *immediate neighbours*. Of those who did not describe themselves as immediate neighbours to the woodland, a further 17.5% of users lived within 0-1 mile of the woodland and 5% between 1-2 miles of the woodland. Therefore a very high proportion - 90%, of current use of the woodland is by the immediate local community.

Question 6. *Frequency*

Respondents were asked how frequently they used the woodland. The biggest grouping (35%) said they used the woodland daily. 15% said they used the woodland 2-3 times per week, and people who used the woodland weekly or monthly amounted to 17.5% each.

Question 7. *What do you value about the woodland?*

Respondents were given seven options; *open space, wildlife, flora (trees, flowers etc), quiet, fresh air, freedom, and environmental benefits*, and asked to tick any number of options including 'other'. Of these options the most valued part of the woodland was *wildlife* at 77.5%, followed by *open space* at 67.5%. 55% valued both *fresh air* and *quiet* and 32.5% valued both *freedom* and *environmental benefits*. The 17.5% of respondents who responded 'other' includes the 10% of youth respondents who valued the woodland as a *mini-moto track*.

Question 8. *How you would like to see the woodland improved?*

The important question of how respondents would like to see the woodland improved provided a very clear picture of people's attitudes. Respondents were given seven options; *More wildlife, more woodland flowers, seating areas, species information(signs or leaflets) improved footpaths, improved stiles/gates and litter/vandalism reduction*, and asked to tick any number of options including 'other'. The most important stated issue was that of *litter/vandalism*, which was a concern of 57.5% of respondents. The second most requested improvement was *more woodland flowers* at 55%, followed by *improved footpaths*, requested by 40% of respondents. 35% wanted both *improved wildlife* and *species information*. 30% of respondents thought *seating* would improve the woodland though others noted that seating may encourage vandalism. 12.5% of respondents added other possible improvements; *dog mess* was cited as a problem by some of these, and *dangerous branches* from trees was cited as another issue by two respondents (one woman said she no longer walked in the woodland in windy weather as she had already been hit on the head by a falling branch during one walk!). One keen bird-watcher requested a *bird hide*.

Question 9. *Interested in guided walks?*

Respondents were asked whether they would be interested in guided wildlife or tree walks in the woodland with a simple yes or no answer. A fairly high proportion, 35%, said they would be interested in guided walks. This would be an excellent opportunity to enhance the local community's appreciation and understanding of their local environment.

Question 10. *Would you like to join a 'Friends of Leafy Lane Woodland' group.* Respondents were asked to give a yes or no answer and to give their contact details if they answered positively. 32.5% of respondents said they would be interested in joining and left contact details.

Question 11. *Would you be interested in helping to maintain the woodland?* Respondents were asked to give a yes or no answer and their contact details if they answered positively. 27.5% said they would be interested in helping maintain the woodland and gave contact details. This included the four youth respondents, thus showing that different sectors of the community would be interested in coming together for practical tasks.

Question 12. Any further comments?

The final part of the survey provided a useful insight into community feelings about the woodland: A general sense of enthusiasm that the woodland could be better cared for and improved was reflected in comments such as "Great idea to do this!" However, 15% of respondents specifically commented on the recent loss of the glade or meadow area (when the football club fenced it off from the main woodland area) being of great concern. One respondent stated that he would only wish to be involved in helping maintain the woodland if the football club would return the use of that area to the community. A further 15% specifically mentioned dog mess left in the woodland as a problem. 12.5% of respondents commented further on the need to improve the footpaths. One

described them as "a quagmire" in wet weather. A further 12.5% of respondents commented on the damaged and unsightly fencing on the Leafy Lane boundary. Garden rubbish dumping was also mentioned as a concern, this would also have been included in the large proportion of respondents concerned about littering and vandalism. Mini motos (small motorbikes) being used in the woodland were also cited as a specific concern by 7.5% of respondents. One resident (5%) expressed concern that woodland management would involve 'urbanising' the woodland, and another that they would like the woodland to be 'left alone'.

Finally, 17.5% of respondents offered their professional skills to help set up and run a community woodland management group. Other residents who had heard about the woodland project as a result of the survey contacted the author directly to offer their practical help, including one MOD senior officer who offered army personnel for practical tasks. These people are listed in Appendix III as Community Contacts.

Chapter 7. Management Recommendations

Using the results of the community survey and professional opinion, recommendations can be made on future management of the woodland. All recommendations, however, are subject to further discussions with the owners (the football club), the Rudloe community and other woodland professionals and grant-giving bodies, for example, The Forestry Commission. The agreement of all parties to the recommendations will facilitate implementation of proposals and give strong foundations to the management plan and its application.



Fig 28 Leafy Lane Woodland June 2006

Photo F Brooks

1) Woodland Boundaries

Tree pruning/reduction. On the Leafy Lane edge and the northern boundary with MOD homes on park Lane, some trees need pruning to reduce obstructions to the footpath on Leafy Lane and to prevent trees leaning into the road and gardens. Professional tree surgeons should be employed to undertake this work. In the longer term, any replacement of trees on this northern edge of the woodland should be with smaller native trees and shrubs, creating a more graded woodland edge and alleviating current problems of huge trees overhanging gardens and restricting light and electronic reception.

The glade/meadow area should be re-incorporated into the woodland area. The loss of amenity to the community of this area has caused a great deal of ill-feeling towards the football club and reinstating it would have a range of benefits; the community would be less negative towards the football club (one local man said he would only help with the woodland management if the meadow area was re-incorporated) , the woodland area without the meadow is 2.7ha, with the glade it returns to over 3ha, enabling it to attract grant funding from the Forestry Commission which is only available to woodlands over 3ha. The meadow area already contains some excellent woodland edge habitat, not mowing or treating the area with chemicals will allow the return of meadow flowers to this area, enhancing the biodiversity value of the whole woodland.

Boundary fencing. Much of the boundary fencing is missing or damaged. A native hedged boundary (predominantly hawthorn) would provide a range of benefits. Once hedged the boundary would be clearly marked and aesthetically pleasing and will have a number of other benefits: thorny hedging such as hawthorn also provides a barrier which is more effective than fencing (people cannot just climb over it). Woodland edges are valuable wildlife habitats, they also provide a sheltering effect as wind is drawn up and over this natural barrier. Enclosing the glade area and creating a new hedged edge to the woodland on this southern side will widen the area available for users to walk in ensuring that they have no need to cross the football field. Widening the area for walkers

should counteract any possible negative response to the planting of an impenetrable barrier on the edge of the football playing area.

2) Entrances

The access points to the woodland off Leafy Lane need repairing. At entrance one the gate allowing vehicular access should be replaced and kept locked and a kissing gate access point to the side of this gate would allow access to people with pushchairs or wheelchairs, but would make access more difficult for motorbikes.

Paths at the entrances from both Boxfields Road and the football club car park at Leafy Lane should be cleared and maintained (mown) so that they are accessible and inviting to users, encouraging them to use these entrances and spacing the access points to the woodland to relieve pressure on main access points currently used. Further research needs to be undertaken into whether there is a need for so many access points off Leafy Lane itself or whether these have just developed through lack of clarity about official entrances due to broken fencing and lack of management.

3) Trees/Flora

Mature Trees A professional tree surgeon should be employed to assess the immediate needs of individual trees in the woodland, with a view to maintaining the longevity of individual older trees which have excellent wildlife habitat value as well as heritage value. Dead tree limbs should only be removed where they constitute a potential hazard, as they provide homes for a huge range of species which are fundamental to woodland ecology. As far as possible, all dead wood (including standing dead wood) should be left in the woodland to return its nutrition to the area and provide important invertebrate habitat. All tree work should be undertaken between October and February to protect birds during their breeding season. Old trees also provide important habitat for bats. Before any work is undertaken on any of the larger trees a licensed bat-worker should be

employed before and during operations. Bats are a protected species under The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and advice would have to be sought from English Nature if bats are encountered.

The larch plantation area is in need of urgent work. 95% of the larch trees are at risk of falling. Larch and other conifers do have some wildlife value, particularly for coal tits and goldcrests, but they are not as valuable to wildlife as native trees such as oak and ash. Removal of approximately 60% of the Larch plantation whilst retaining the remaining 40 would benefit conifer-dependant species and help to preserve some of the current character of the woodland. Also, the increase in light to the woodland floor will benefit ground flora. The larch should be removed in two stages, with approximately 4-5 years between each felling. After clearance the area could be replanted with native trees and shrubs such as Oak, Field Maple, Hawthorn and Hazel. These would need to be carefully tended in the early years; once the community are able to see the effects of 4-5 years well-tended new planting, any local concerns about the removal of the rest of the larch trees should be alleviated.

The larch in the centre of the Lime Avenue should be removed. Dead wood from these trees should be cut into long lengths and left in the woodland to rot down and provide valuable dead wood habitat.

Sycamore, despite being much maligned as a non-native tree in the past (it is believed by many to have been introduced to Britain around the time of the Tudors) is valuable to wildlife; it supports a high biomass of insects (Starr, 2005) which in turn is good for birds. However, it reproduces freely and is liable to out-compete other native trees over a period of time and it may be advisable to remove some Sycamore saplings where they compete with other native regeneration, in order to maintain species diversity in the woodland.

Brambles also have excellent wildlife value, but the north-west corner of the woodland has become inaccessible and the path to Boxfields Road is becoming closed in due to the mass of brambles. Some reduction of bramble to keep pathways clear and to enable access to the view from this corner is required. If any seating were to be introduced to the woodland, this may be a suitable site.

Ground flora in the woodland will benefit from the increased light created by necessary thinning and crown reduction in some areas.

Examples of ancient woodland flora such as Sanicle should be mapped and monitored to ensure they are not damaged by any forest operations and are not crowded by more competitive species, to maintain floral diversity.

Gentle management The community survey responses clearly showed that local people do not want to see too many changes to the woodland, so a gentle management approach is appropriate in this case. Some education of the community about the need for some changes i.e. that woodlands do not 'stay the same' if unmanaged, and that the management of the woodland will increase its amenity value in the long term, will be required.

Apart from individual tree management, there are more general management issues to consider. One of the main aims of woodland management is to create, maintain or restore structural diversity where it has been lost or, without management, will decline (BTCV, 2000).

As most of Leafy Lane woodland was planted at the same time and has not been under active management structural diversity needs improving and some thinning would enable light to enable selected regenerated saplings to grow and add age diversity.

4) Footpaths

Bringing the meadow area back into the woodland will relieve some pressure on the main footpaths, which are very well used. The football club (Andy Cooper June, 2006) have agreed to stop having this area mown forthwith. The meadow area should then be mown once annually after its main species have flowered and set seed for the following year. (Species present will not be apparent until the meadow has had a chance to grow back). Once the meadow area is re-incorporated, the community should be involved with any discussions regarding any possible re-routing of paths.

Chippings from any tree operations could be used on the muddier path areas to improve them.

The footpaths from Leafy Lane car park and Boxfields Road should be kept cut back at all times to encourage access at these points.

5) Garden Dumping/Littering

Hedging the boundary adjacent to Leafy Lane will make dumping of waste into the woodland (it is currently been thrown over the parkland fencing more difficult. (Education of the community about the potential negative impacts of garden waste dumping changing the ecological balance of the woodland or introducing alien species is important). MOD residents on Park Lane should also be advised against garden waste dumping. Waste bins should be erected at Access point 1 off Leafy Lane, Access point 5 at Boxfields Road and at Access point 4 (the car park entrance). Dog owners should be encouraged to take dog-waste home or use the bins, as there are many dog-walkers using a comparatively confined area and there have been some complaints about dog mess and smells. If the woodland is obviously cared for, this will also inhibit dumping and littering.

6) Signs

New signs should be erected at each of the official access points (once fully agreed in discussion). These should include a map of the woodland and a welcome and also ask dog walkers not to leave waste in the woodland. A brief intro regarding the woodland's management (by Friends of Leafy Lane Woodland) and a contact number for any queries or information requests would be useful and allow the public to alert 'Friends' to any problems.

Funding and Resource Options

Funding for management of the woodland is potentially available from a variety of sources. Applications for funding will be sought as soon as clear objectives have been agreed with the community management group and the woodland owners, the football club. Other resources in the form of interested locals with relevant skills have been identified as a result of talking to local people and from the completed surveys. Many of the funding resources below are also excellent information sources. All contact details can be found in Appendix IV.

Funding Resources

Forestry Commission

- The Forestry Commission provides a number of grants for woodland management under the English Woodland Grant Scheme (EWGS). EWGS is part of the Defra network of environmental support. The Forestry Commission operates the scheme under the England Rural Development Programme (ERDP). The purpose of the scheme is to develop the co-ordinated delivery of public benefits from England's woodlands. The grant scheme has a regional basis and regional funding. Those relevant to the Leafy Lane project are:
 - Woodland Planning Grant (WPG) – Contributes to the cost of producing management plans for existing woodland of 3 to 30 ha (subject to football club agreeing to reincorporate meadow area to recreate 3 ha plus woodland)
Grant amount £300 total

- Woodland Assessment Grant (WAG) - if the Forestry Commission considers that further information is required before decisions can be made about work to be undertaken in the woodland, contributions to the standard costs of undertaking specified assessments are available. Grant amount min £300
- Woodland Regeneration Grant (WRG) – this grant provides funding for regenerating felled areas. Replacing conifer plantation (the larch in Leafy Lane Woodland) with native species can attract a grant of £1100 per ha.
- Woodland Improvement Grant (WIG) – Funds capital investment in woodlands, over an agreed period, to create, enhance and *sustain an increase in the quantity and quality of public benefits delivered*. There are three WIG funds, two of which are relevant to our woodland, the Woodland Biodiversity Action Plan and the Woodland Access fund. Grant amount. Discretionary and based on priorities set out in individual regional frameworks. Based on a series of standard costs for forestry operations, 50% of costs (SW regional framework) could be granted for a number of management needs which improve either biodiversity or access.
- Woodland Management Grant (WMG) – Devised to protect and secure the delivery of existing benefits to the public and improve the capacity of the woodland to improve those benefits and to encourage and support basic management activities to support woodland sustainability. Grant amount £30 per ha per year.

North Wiltshire District Council – Community Partnership (Contact Vicky Welsh)

Modest funding only available, but Action Teams have been set up to support the implementation of Corsham's community plan, which itself supports

environmental improvements in the community. Support offered with networking and grant sourcing from the Community Partnership's Recycling and Environment Action Team.

North Wiltshire District Council – Community Funding (Contact Vicky Welsh)
Advice and support regarding appropriate and available grants. (Only one NWDC grant can be given for each individual project).

Wiltshire County Council – Biodiversity Action Grant This grant could be available for projects such as planting and management of hedgerows or habitat creation for protected species. (Stag beetles are a protected species and have been photographed in the woodland). However, this grant cannot be awarded if the project does fulfil the criteria for the EWGS.
Maximum grant £1000

Community Woodlands Network (CMW) Offer Membership, Grants, Support and Networking

Set up by the woodland trust, the CMW uses a web-site to act as an interactive network for community woodland groups to share information, ideas and resources. It also hosts an online discussion forum to facilitate communication with others interested in woodlands.

Grants are available to voluntary community groups with a formal constitution and a group bank account, who have formal permission from the woodland owner, where full access to the wood is allowed to the public, and at least 75% of the management activities relate to woodland conservation rather than managing other habitats.

Preference will be given to applications for funding for:

Training courses, for example first aid, leadership skills, fundraising, woodland management, it training

Tools and protective clothing

Promoting the work of the group and attracting new members such as guided walks and public meetings, also help with surveys and production of management plans.

Grant amount. Maximum £1000 for new applicants

National Lottery – Awards for All

This scheme is supported by the Arts Council England, the Big Lottery Fund, the Heritage Lottery Fund and Sport England.

Grants are awarded for people to take part in art, sport, heritage and community activities, and projects that promote education, the environment and health in the local community.

Grant amount. Between £300 and £10,000

Breathing Places (National Lottery Funded)

The BBC is working with wildlife and conservation organisations with the objective of inspiring a million people to get involved in creating and caring for wildlife-friendly green spaces in their local patch. Any voluntary or community sector organisation with experience of working the natural environment, or working in partnership with an organisation with this experience can apply. People who want to get involved with Breathing Places are given contact details of groups in their area they can join. This could also provide more manpower for the woodland group.

Grant amount A total fund of £5 million is available for distribution. £1 million has already been allocated to existing groups. The final £4 million will be distributed in October 2006.

Other Resources

Organisations

BTCV – Contact Simon Penn, Community Project Officer

A woodland group such as 'Friends of Leafy Lane Woodland' can join BTCV as an Associate Community Group at a cost of £30, for which they receive a guidance pack and the opportunity to obtain group insurance which is vital for woodland management operations. BTCV also provide subsidised places on training courses, for example they run a course in how to set up a new community group. Once a woodland management plan has been produced they can either operate as an environmental contractor, or provide trained leaders for working parties, for example hedge or tree planting.

The Woodland Trust – Contact Jamie Needler

Jamie has offered to come out and assess the woodland and provide advice about woodland management.

The Silvanus Trust

The Trust's mission is to regenerate the woodlands in the South West for economic, social and environmental benefits. They provide support for this to anyone with an interest in or working in wood or woodlands and help woodland owners find markets for woodland products.

Wiltshire Wildlife Trust

Can provide a range of advice regarding wildlife friendly woodland management.

Individuals

Brian Gale – North Wiltshire District Council Tree Officer

Available for advice on the woodland and its management. *He commented that the council "would not like to see the woodland urbanised"*

Sophie Morris – Youth Development Co-ordinator for Westlea Housing Association

Keen to encourage local youngsters to get involved in woodland management projects

Jacky Nicholas – Rudloe resident who works as a community development officer. Has offered to advise and help set up the community group.

David Barns – Rudloe resident who works for the Defence Communications Services Agency. He has offered manpower in the form of soldiers who are based in Rudloe. This is an ideal opportunity for the services to get involved with the rest of the community. He also has a contact who works for the Charities Commission who can provide advice.

Sgt Chris Powell – Runs 'The Hive' youth club for both forces and non-forces youth and is keen to get the youngsters involved with practical woodland management.

Vince Cater – Rudloe resident who is a keen ornithologist and has been photographing birds in the woodland for some years. He has recorded 39 different species of bird in the woodland.

Richard Cater – Rudloe resident and keen entomologist. He has been recording and photographing insects in the woodland for many years, including a stag beetle.

Conclusion

Community Woodlands are local woodlands for people to enjoy, where the needs and wishes of local people are important in planning and management. Involving people through community participation is fundamental to creating and managing successful community woodlands; these will improve the environment in which people live and provide opportunities for individual and community development. (Forestry Commission, 1996)

Leafy Lane woodland is a valuable community woodland with a good variety of predominantly native trees. It already provides benefits to the local community, though it is currently in need of management to conserve and improve those benefits.

Current government policy, both national and regional, supports the preservation of ancient and native woodlands, acknowledging their wide-ranging value to society. Grants are thus available to support many aspects of woodland management, in particular where they can be proved to offer amenity value to the general public, so any Leafy Lane management group are well positioned to attract appropriate funding.

Some people within the Rudloe community already have a good degree of appreciation of the value of their local woodland, however, 77.5% of respondents said they valued the wildlife within the woodland, although only 32.5% valued the environmental benefits. Bringing local people together to have a say in the management of their woodland and to get involved in a practical way is a great opportunity to widen its appeal and amenity value to the whole community. Discussions about future management of Leafy Lane woodland and practical management experience, as well as guided walks and provision of species information in leaflets (35% of respondents to the survey requested species

information), provide an excellent opportunity to provide education regarding trees and woodland management and the environment generally.

“Through interpretation, understanding; through understanding, appreciation: through appreciation. protection” (Freeman Tilden, 1957)

Clearly, there is a community will to help look after the woodland, and returning the meadow area to the woodland walking area will help community feeling towards the football club and encourage people to work together. Management recommendations such as native boundary hedging have been designed to fulfil a range of purposes which will benefit ecology of the woodland, provide greater amenity value for the community and improve the aesthetic appeal of the woodland improving the area generally.

A public meeting will be set up to establish the ‘Friends of Leafy Lane Woodland’ group, using the excellent range of professional skills already identified and the database of addresses already collected through the surveys. Press releases will be sent out to the local press and the Box Parish magazine (which covers Rudloe and Box), and posters about the meeting will be displayed in all the Rudloe community facilities to create even wider awareness of the project and the public meeting.

From this starting point, the skills and enthusiasm of the professionals and the communities of Rudloe (and Box) can be used to fulfil the stated objectives of the project; to maintain and improve the woodland, thus enhancing its wildlife value, and to create a community resource which can help bring a fairly disparate community together, in so doing providing the opportunity to educate about the value of woodlands and wildlife and improve the local landscape.

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