

Woodford Community Centre Woodland Project



March 2013

Woodford War Memorial Community Centre (WWMCC)

Woodford Community Centre has been dear to the hearts of the local community since it was built in 1953. It is a registered charity, entirely self-funding and run by local volunteers. In a plot of over 4 acres, two halls, a large car park and a large field provide an excellent venue for a wide range of activities, including sport, amateur dramatics, dancing, shows, car boot sales, meetings, parties, and wedding receptions.

The Woodland Trust

In 2011, the management committee recognised the potential for further tree planting as a green investment for future generations and were successful in an application for a Community Pack of 105 free saplings from the Woodland Trust. The free community tree packs are part of the Woodland Trust's Jubilee Woods project, which succeeded in its aims to plant 6 million trees by the end of February 2013. For the Community Centre, we chose the 'all year round colour' pack for the local community to enjoy, which included Hazel, Birch, Rowan, Hawthorn, Cherry and Dogwood.

Creation of a New Copse

In the autumn of 2011, a rough area of wet grassland at the edge of the field was ploughed and harrowed in preparation for tree planting. On November 20th, members of the community in Woodford planted the saplings donated by the Woodland Trust to form a copse on the field. A special sapling grown from a seed harvested from a tree growing on one of the royal estates was included in the pack.



Tree planting in progress, 20/11/11



Mathew Horrocks planting the Jubilee Tree with his Granddad, Brian Horrocks, member of the Woodford Community Centre management committee

The ground around the saplings was covered in bark to inhibit competition from weeds.

Many of the saplings survived the ravages of a very wet winter, a very dry spring and nibbling rabbits to burst into leaf in the spring of 2012.



Hazel sapling in leaf in May 2012



The Jubilee tree turned out to be an Oak



During the winter of 2013, a few larger saplings were introduced into the copse to replace losses.



Surface drainage channels were created taking flood water away from the new copse.

The Woodland Walk Project

The WWMCC grounds include a pond and small area of woodland in one corner, which had become overgrown with weeds. Between this corner and the new copse lies an area of wet grassland that has been left un-mown and allowed to go wild. Members of the management committee recognised the potential to connect these areas via a woodland walk for public enjoyment. It is a major project for a small number of people, but consistent effort, beginning in April 2012, has produced considerable progress already.

Wet grassland habitat



The wet, rough grassland was left as a wild area but a pathway was mown through it to provide access. Red Campion and Ladies Smock flowers were found among the tall grasses.

Sapling Birches, Alder and Rowans grown from seed in the Chairman's garden were transplanted into this area.



Ladies Smock growing in rough, wet grassland

Foxgloves and Oxeye Daises introduced for extra colour and diversity.

The pond

A pond in the corner of the field had become overgrown with nettles and brambles and was inaccessible. It was also clogged with dead branches from overhanging trees and had been used for fly tipping.



Overgrown pond



The area around the pond was cleared of weeds and dead wood.

The pond was dredged using a chillington hoe to remove rubbish.

The wood



Adjacent to the pond a small woodland area had become overgrown with nettles, brambles and ground elder.

An old willow tree had spread low horizontal branches over a large area.



The willow was pruned and weeds were cleared.

Wood derived from tree pruning has been used to create rustic fencing as a barrier around steep sides of the pond and a rustic bench.



Rustic bench

The pathway



At the other end of the woodland, blackthorn trees were bent over to form an arch over the newly cleared pathway through the wood.



Rubbish from fly tipping is being cleared.

A pathway through the wood is currently under construction to allow safe public access, using earth and branches from the wood.

Hedge laying



Perimeter hedges around the field had become overgrown and choked by brambles and nettles.

The weeds were cleared during the autumn and winter of 2012/2013.



This section of hedge has been laid. Further hedge laying will be undertaken in the autumn of 2013.

More trees from the Woodland Trust

The Community Centre was successful in its applications for a second Woodland Trust Community Pack which arrived in March 2013. This time, a community pack of 30 hedgerow saplings was donated by the Woodland Trust, including Hazel, Holly, Hawthorn, Dog Rose and Dogwood.



Hawthorn, Holly and Hazel saplings were used to fill gaps in the perimeter hedges.



Dogwood and Hazel saplings were planted around the perimeter of the wood. Dog Rose was planted at the base of the Blackthorn arches with the aim of training the roses over the arches.

Future Plans

Work will continue to improve the area, balancing biodiversity and habitats for wildlife with accessibility to allow public enjoyment. When warmer weather arrives, grass and wild flower seed will be sown in the woodland. The pathways will be covered in bark to reduce overgrowth by weeds. There is plenty of scope for further improvement in the hedgerows by laying existing hedges and infilling gaps with new saplings. A few Birch and Rowan saplings grown from seed at the WWMCC Chairman's home are available for transplanting. Further packs of hedgerow saplings from the Woodland Trust could be used to improve the perimeter hedges.