



A Wood for All Seasons

Saving Teazole Wood

Think of Surrey, and you may well think of woodland. Still England's most wooded county, it is defined for many by its beautiful rural scenery of mature trees.

When the men and women of the Olympic Cycling Road Races powered their way through Surrey last summer, spectators commented on the splendour of the countryside. The television coverage, much of it filmed from the air, revealed green, lush, attractive landscapes. One woodland contributing to the leafy backdrop was Teazole Wood, glimpsed as the cyclists made their colourful way through Leatherhead and out towards Oxshott. Those enjoying the race and the general sense of a natural setting would not have guessed that this small wooded stretch was in jeopardy.

Teazole Wood was due to be auctioned in June 2012 as land "with strategic development potential". Choked with discarded rubbish and hooked-up trees, it had not been managed for decades.

One local woman, convinced of the ecological, social and educational worth of this land, saw the sale as a moment of danger, but also as a window of opportunity. Lucy Quinnell passionately believed that numerous features of Teazole Wood justified an urgent community campaign to purchase the woodland and ensure its future protection. The wood features in the Ancient Woodland Inventory, but until later in 2012 was missing, erroneously, from the Ancient Woodland map. A Site of Nature Conservation Importance, Teazole Wood hosts endangered species such as the Great Crested Newt and the unusually-named plant Green Hound's-tongue.

The wood has a rich history of human occupation, from pre-Roman times right up to its use as a Victorian brickyard – members of the Rothschild family, several of whom were keen gardeners, would allegedly come in person to Teazole Wood to buy flowerpots from the Woodbridge Brickfield – the heavy, magnesium-rich London clay was apparently perfect for making pots that 'fed' the contained plants.

Teazole Wood is uniquely placed for its many fascinating aspects to benefit a broad spectrum of people. Adjoining the North Leatherhead

community, two schools back onto it, as does Queen Elizabeth's Foundation for Disabled People. Combat Stress, a charity supporting British Armed Forces Veterans with mental health problems, is close by.

Lucy was overwhelmed when her pleas for help were met with a surge of support. Several hundred individuals, businesses and organisations rallied to join her in championing the saving and nurturing of Teazole Wood.



Against all the odds, donations, loans and inventive fundraising events enabled the newly-formed 'Friends of Teazole Wood' to act just in time. A pre-auction offer was accepted, and, two days after the cycle races, the purchase was completed. Now converting to a charity – the Teazole Wood Trust – the Friends have enlisted expert advice regarding early conservation steps. From archaeology to lichen, surveys are underway, and a programme of gentle improvements has started; supervised by the Lower Mole Countryside Management Project, Wates staff volunteered to clear litter and improve the entrance to Teazole Wood, and fly-tipping is carefully being removed with guidance from Froglife and the Surrey Amphibian and Reptile Group.

"Surrey must cherish its remaining natural spaces," says Lucy. "We are so lucky to live near countryside that revives, inspires and instructs. This was a tough campaign, but a worthwhile one that united people from all walks of life. For the sake of ecology and the well-being of future generations, we cannot let places like Teazole Wood slip away." ■

The "Save Teazole Wood" campaign is still fundraising to finish paying for the acquisition of the wood.

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