



*The trees are in their autumn beauty;
The woodland paths are dry;
Under the October twilight the water
Mirrors a still sky
— William Butler Yeats*

GOLDEN OCTOBER

With nesting season over, autumn is the busiest time of year for the volunteers who saved a Surrey woodland two years ago

Teazle Wood in Leatherhead had not been managed for a century, and, like a scene from a fairytale, the result was a dark, tangled mass of choked thorn trees and swamp-like ponds.

Conservation experts from the Lower Mole Countryside Management Project have led groups from the residential and business communities in gently clearing fly-tipped debris and decades of dead branches to let light back into the landscape and to encourage greater biodiversity.

As this year's work gets underway, last year's efforts are now reaping rewards, with new foliage appearing, and displays of darting dragonflies around open ponds. Surveys have recorded one 'world first' and numerous endangered species, vindicating those who always believed that this precious piece of land deserved protection.

In addition to the ecological work, the mesmerising

history of the wood has been carefully researched and revealed. A well-known folk song describes the tragic murder of an unidentified woman in 1834, and the footprint of a long-lost house has been located under the moss and leaves in one part of Teazle Wood. Scattered fragments of terracotta, old maps and a short 1911 description of the five-bedroom house are all that remain of a once thriving property.

Outside the wood, activity continues to raise funds to finish paying for the community purchase of the woodland. Artists who take their inspiration from nature have joined in, donating artworks to the cause and giving something back to the natural world that motivates them. Neil Lossock, who Royal Horticultural Society fans will know from the Chelsea and Hampton Court Palace Flower Shows, creates teazle sculptures exclusively in support of the Teazle Wood campaign. His striking teazles are available from Fire and Iron Gallery, and each one not only gives great pleasure to its new owner, but also makes a valuable contribution to Surrey's natural heritage. ■



THE DETAILS

Fire and Iron Gallery, Oxshott Road
Leatherhead, Surrey KT22 0EN
www.fireandiron.co.uk

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Open Tuesday to Saturday 10-5
Telephone 01372 386453

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Friends of Teazle Wood
www.teazlewood.org.uk