

# Woodland group is still committed and tyreless

■ Clean-up volunteers are going strong two years on

by Jenni Horn  
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A COMMUNITY group set up to save an area of ancient woodland is celebrating its second birthday.

The Bredhurst Woodland Action Group (BWAG) has been working to stop Bredhurst Hurst and Monkdown Wood being used by fly-tippers and off-road drivers.

After beginning with just six members, in May, 2005, the group now includes more than 200 villagers and parish councillors.

Volunteers have raised £40,000 and organised clean-up days, fence restoration, fun days and sponsored horse rides.

The campaigners have been supported by their MP Hugh Robertson (Con) and Kent County Council.

The 600 acres are designated as a Site of Nature Conservation Interest but residents and councillors felt the area had been ruined by drivers abusing the public byway that runs through the ancient woodland.

The chairman of BWAG, Vanessa Jones, said: "The paths had been ruined by quad bikes and 4x4 vehicles. The earth had been churned up and the paths were waterlogged. The whole site had become a no-go area for pedestrians and horse riders."

BWAG has raised enough money to carry out vital byway repairs and other improvements.

Dumped rubbish has been cleared and fences have been erected to stop further fly-tipping. Kissing gates have been installed and paths restored to encourage walkers to the area.

## Award

In December, 2006, BWAG's hard work was recognised with a Kent Volunteers Award.

Campaigners have also collected 1,500 signatures on a petition asking for the land to become a Site of Special Scientific Interest, which will give it more protection.

Police have been working in the area and seized two unlicensed vehicles, and the Royal Engineers have been helping with repairs and surveying the land. As well as raising its own funds, the group has also received grants from Kent County Council and the Kent Downs Area of Natural Beauty Unit.

Vanessa Jones said: "The support we have had has been incredible.

"Our new community officer, PC Marley, is doing an excellent job and is now a frequent visitor to the village.

"We are all very proud of the achievements we have made in such a short time."

■ Dedicated stalwarts who cleared old tyres that had been dumped in the woodland

Picture: Jim Rantell pd996750



## HOW YOU CAN HELP

TO JOIN BWAG contact Vanessa on 07813785940 or e-mail postmaster@vane ssajones.plus.com

Its next fund-raising event is a Cream Tea and Clarinet afternoon, from 2pm to 5pm, on June 23, in the gardens of Grove House, The Street, Bredhurst. Tickets cost £3.50.

Call Vanessa Jones or Melanie Fooks on 01634 370830.