

THE BRIDFORD TRUST

The First 10 Years



We have lived in Bridford since 1991 and have always been impressed by the high degree of local activity for such a small community. In 1997, we were aware that the millennium was not far off and we (with others) were pleased to be invited to have a meal with Jane Baker and Pip Morrison; the theme was to discuss wide-ranging ideas on how to commemorate the year 2000 in the village. One vague idea was to create a village green.

The following text chronicles the tortuous route, and the people involved, in achieving our Woodland Park and the Rowdon Valley walk via establishing The Bridford Trust. Hopefully, this example of community activity will set a precedent for future groups.

It started with a question.

In March 1997, at the Bridford Parish Council meeting, Ted Clapton asked how the Council was planning to celebrate the Millennium. The Chairman, Gerry Horne, and other Councillors responded positively and agreed to set up a sub-committee to look at ideas. Councillors Steve Sim and Chris Towell together with Dennis Barber, Ted Clapton and John Avery formed the original group.



We had many informal discussions and, by August, we had listed some ideas. These included possible undergrounding of the overhead power lines, churchyard improvements, beating the Parish boundaries, encouragement of sport and recreation in the community and holding a Millennium social event. We welcomed Hilary Mackmurdo into the sub-Committee as Secretary and as a link to the established Bridford ladies' groups.

Bridford Sports and Recreation Group.

In October 1997, the Parish Council meeting formally supported the concept of a combined Recreational and Sports Ground; there was no public open space in Bridford at that time. The Council compiled a questionnaire to test public opinion and Councillor Nick Daysh took the lead in delivering it to all houses in the parish. By February 1998, the result was a big vote in favour (215 for and 80 against) of creating a village green and a sports ground. This vote enabled valuable support from Teignbridge District Council.



The sub-committee, with Steve as chairman and Hilary as secretary, was then re-designated Bridford Sports and Recreation Group (BSRA), to gain financial support from Sport England. David Howell was persuaded to join the group. BSRA met frequently at the Bridford Inn.

The favoured position was near the top of Pound Lane, on the north side. The initial idea was a site of 12 acres for a cricket pitch, football pitch and (possibly) a pavilion; at a total cost of around £250k. Monty Cox was consulted and he thought that it was a suitable location for sports. Several meetings were held with the landowner, Mike Stevens, and it was established that the land could be made available once the project had financial backing.

Although the project had local community support, the cricket and football teams had difficulty gaining the support of their members. Hence it was unlikely to gain the support of Sport England and, in November 1999, BSRA recommended to the Parish Council that the project should be reduced to a two acre recreation ground and BSRA was formally disbanded.

The Millennium

Time had moved on. Bridford celebrated the millennium in other ways. John Avery organised the very successful Millennium Big Bang Dance on December 31. In July, the Bridford History Group set up a well-attended display in the Village Hall, organised by Annette Clapton, Alvary Scott and Diana Wadia. This included a display of local photographs, organised by Jane Baker, with guest speakers on local topics, history and art. Also, Jane arranged and published a memorable book of photographs of Bridford residents. Hilary organised a garden party of the W.I. and Bridford Wives, which was held in the Village Hall because of rain.

Millennium Village Green

In February 2000, the Parish Council approved our proposal for a revised project of a village green style recreation area on a smaller portion of the “sports” field.



The group was re-born as the “Bridford Millennium Green Committee” in April 2000 with Ted as Chair and Hilary as Secretary. Hilary approached the Countryside Commission to include our project in the “Millennium Greens Scheme”; their advice on grants was helpful. Unfortunately, due to a dispute over the circulation of literature about the Oxenpark Gate development, Mike Stevens (the developer) notified Dennis Barber that he was withdrawing the offer of land. All attempts at a reconsideration failed.

Over the following 12 months, Monty and Dennis talked to all the local landowners about purchase of an alternative and suitable plot of land. We had even arranged a final winding up meeting in 2001 when Monty suggested that Dennis contacted John and Michelle Roberts, who had just bought tracts of land from Mike Stevens.

Eureka!

The Roberts offered four acres of land, well located at the edge of the village and they gave us a generous time period to raise funds to buy it. The price of £3000 per acre was considered appropriate by the District Valuer. One of the acres was originally for a Bridford Cemetery but the site was not suitable for this purpose, so we were faced with raising £12000 and all the associated costs, plus design effort and much work.

The Bridford Trust



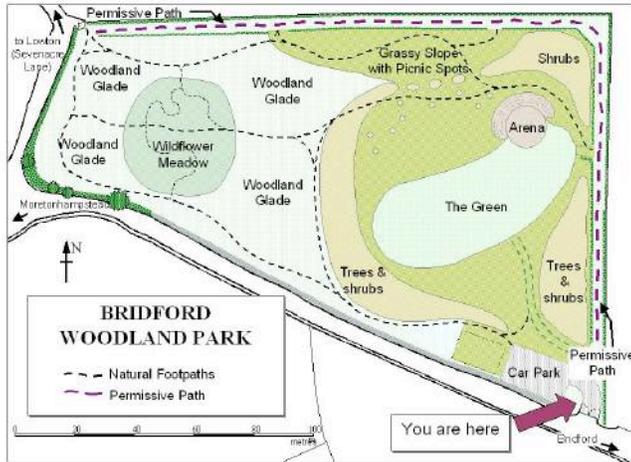
The biggest problem was how to raise the money and the group had no experience of how to do this. We consulted Graham Walker of Teignbridge District Council and decided to form a Trust, which would have the power to seek grants and give security of ownership. Hilary agreed to take the lead in seeking grants.

We agreed on our aims;

1. to create a Woodland Park for the benefit of all
2. to promote other environmental and conservation opportunities within the Parish of Bridford.

We agreed on 10 elected Trustees, both from the committee and the community, plus two parish councillors. We registered as a Company, limited by guarantee (to protect members), on 11 December 2001 and registered as a Charity (to obtain grants) in March 2002.

David Price drew up a detailed plan for the 4 acres, including woodland, footpaths and a level area for recreation. This was agreed and it was designated the Bridford Woodland Park.



From these drawings and a project outline plus cost details provided by Dennis and Monty, David Price produced a well-presented Prospectus for Hilary to use to seek grants.

We drew up a planning application and sent it to the Dartmoor National Park; it was approved in August 2001.

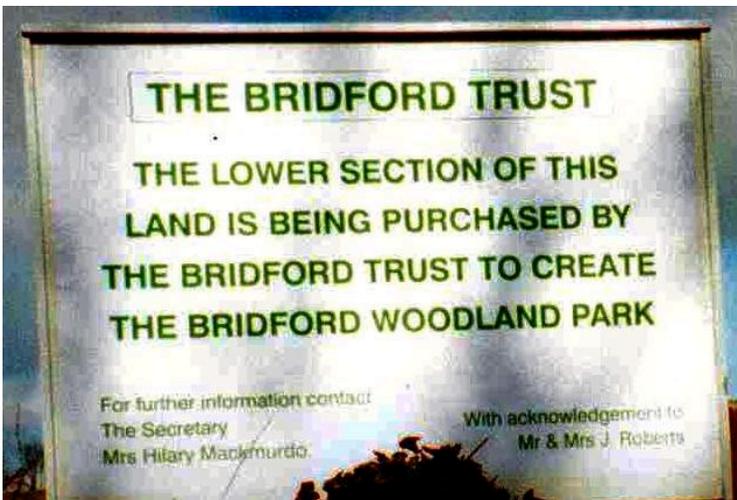
The first **formal** meeting of the Trust was on 19 December 2001.

Initially, we won some relatively small grants. Then, after a meeting at Ugbrooke House, Lord Clifford and Ms Lee

Martin of Ugbrooke Environmental Ltd. (which administered the Landfill Tax Credit Scheme) came to visit the site. They must have been impressed by our enthusiasm and our project organisation because we soon received a grant of £11000 from them! Added to the other grants, we were able to proceed in June with purchase of the land, which was finally registered to us in November 2002.

We needed more capital and an income to sustain the Trust in the long term and Mary Rogers agreed to publicise the work of the Trust. We started a membership scheme and, to demonstrate confidence, we had many "Founder Members" donating £100 each in return for a certificate.

Woodland Park Development



However, the main effort was voluntary with much work done by the enthusiastic members of the Trust. BTCV was very helpful with significant grants for tools and we obtained a new sit-on lawnmower, which we used to establish the grassy footpaths.

By February 2002, David Price had produced a tree planting schedule.

Next came the physical effort. Dennis marked out the boundary but contract work was necessary for the boundary fencing, gates and levelling.





The highlight of the year came in December 2002. There was a mass community effort in tree and hedge planting. This included an area of trees planted by Christow schoolchildren. The Trust appreciated the practical help of the DNPA and their free provision of tree saplings.



Finally, the Woodland Park was officially opened on 10 May 2003 by Lord Clifford.

Subsequently, the Park has matured. Facilities have improved with local people donating wooden seats. Commemorative trees have been added; the local MP, Richard Younger-Ross, planted a tree to celebrate the Queen's Jubilee year and the French Twinning group also donated a tree. In addition, at the end of the level "green" area, voluntary working parties helped to build the semi-circular terraced arena.



The wildflower meadow was created by scraping off the top-soil and spreading hay (for the seeds) from an existing Dartmoor meadow.

Ecological diversity was encouraged in the "bird and butterfly" corner.

The early vision of an open area for everybody's enjoyment has been more than achieved. The trees flourish, the boundary hedges grow and the wild flower meadow thrives.



We established a team of volunteers to keep the grass
There are excellent views from the top and
permissive path for dog walking.



footpaths cut, enabling walkers to explore the Park.
there is a designated

Howmet joined the Trust
activities with enthusiasm,
providing voluntary labour
and money to complete the
arena.



Using the Woodland Park

As well as open public access, the Woodland Park has since been used by Christow School, the Bishop of Exeter, The Travelling Players and for a local wedding.





the Village Fete was again held in the Park with the normal good weather.



The Village Fete took place in the Park in 2007 and 2008. In 2009, bad weather caused the Fete to be held in

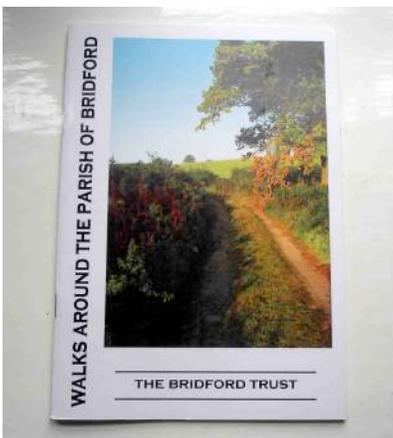
Information Centre



The need for tool storage soon became apparent and in 2003 a garden shed was bought as a temporary measure. The Trustees seriously considered building an innovative underground storage room (the “Bunker”) but that proved too ambitious and costly. In 2004, the Trust decided to complete the Woodland Park with a wooden building (made locally) incorporating a weather shelter and a tool storage area; it would also display information and be big enough to host educational visits.

This was designated the Bridford Information Centre. Again, Trust volunteers spent time on the design, fund raising, planning applications and construction. The Trust was successful in obtaining grants from the Dartmoor Sustainability Fund and Rural Aid to build it. Since completion in 2006, the Centre has had educational displays and it has already proved to be an asset to the community, local schools, ramblers and visitors.

Subsequently, an environment-friendly composting toilet has been built nearby.



Walks Book

Margaret Taylor, a Trust member, prepared a book of walks within the Bridford Parish. This was in line with the Trust objectives and we raised the grants for its publication in 2008. It has sold well and there is a second edition available.



Regular Maintenance

Trust members continue with the maintenance work and keep the Park welcoming to visitors.



Rowdon Valley Project.

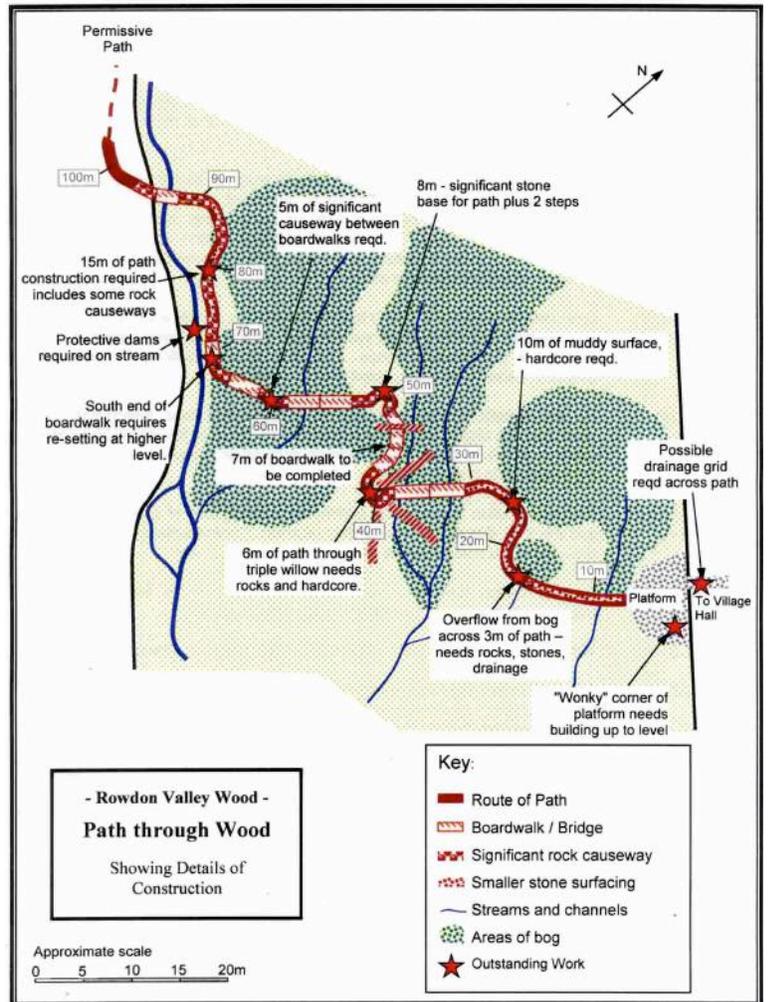
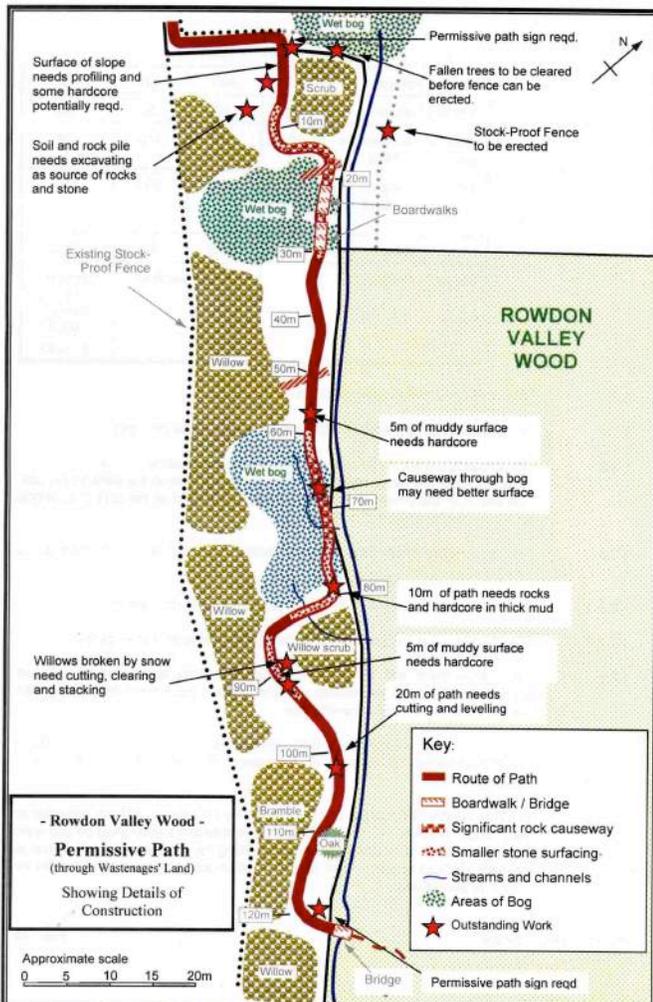
Sue and Monty Cox offered some wet land, which included a pleasant, steep wooded area, through which a footpath could be created. This was in line with our conservation and access objectives so the Trust seized this opportunity to buy it, now designated as the Rowdon Valley Wood walk. David Price devised a route and a permissive deviation was allowed by Mr and Mrs Wastnage to avoid a very boggy area. David organised a series of working parties for the physical challenge of moving stone and building wooden bridges.



The new path was officially opened by Mr Wastenage in May 2009. Subsequent working parties have created an additional scenic walk to link with a seat donated by Mrs Meredith.

At the end of 10 Years

The construction work concluded with the toilet and creating a level seating area. We are well into the permanent



maintenance phase. We can now walk around and enjoy the results of our labours. The trees have grown substantially, wildlife is increasing and the areas are being well used by walkers and the local scouts. But there will always be scope for improvements; there will always be room for more volunteers to join our working parties or to drive the lawn mower.

I end with praise for all the Trustees and for all the other active members (many not named above), for all the unpaid hours they contributed to the work of the Trust. We relied on them for their organisational abilities, for their physical efforts and for their professional expertise. One work measure is that, when Hilary took over again as secretary in 2010, the set of Trust files filled up over 60cm of shelf space, not including the computer files. But we shall also remember the numerous Trust meetings which were invariably friendly and accompanied by many laughs and a few drinks!

Finally, my most significant memory is of the enthusiasm of the community when they helped with the massive initial tree planting, and particularly the efforts of the children from Christow School.

If you want to see what we achieved, look around you!

Compiled by Ted Clapton, with many thanks to Dennis Barber for his major input.
(My apologies for any errors or omissions in the text)