



We hope you have all had a great Christmas and New Year and that your Christmas stockings were full of things you have coveted all year – ours were! For us the most precious gift of all is the time given up by volunteers in all manner of ways trying to take forward the work that BART wants to do. As a very young organisation work often falls to the same people and it is difficult sometimes to accomplish more simply because of the need to put in quality time at work and with the family. It is great therefore that as we approached Christmas we have managed to recruit several new team members who will make a significant impact on what we do in 2014.

The first of these is Ruth Barden who is the Environment and Catchment Strategy Manager at Wessex Water. We are delighted that Ruth has accepted our offer to join our team of Trustees to help guide BART through its early growth by helping develop the sort of plans, strategies and relationships we will need to make a difference for our local rivers.



“ I am really excited to have been invited to become a Trustee of BART as this provides me with the opportunity to make a difference to my local river. As a resident of Bath, I enjoy the wildlife and tranquillity associated with the lower reaches of the river through running and walking with my dog. As an environmental manager for Wessex Water, I am aware of the contribution which the company makes to the water environment and am always looking for different and innovative ways of improving the river and its catchment. This opportunity will give me first-hand experience of working with those who deliver projects on the ground through community groups, angling clubs and wildlife organisations- I can't wait to get started!”

Other team members are Tim Turner, Simon Browning and Ben Fitch who all add key skills to our management team. Tim is in Moldova currently leading a project involving Black-Sea rivers. Tim is going to help us as a team member but primarily as a catchment management consultant. Simon Browning is a Director of Wavelength Environmental and is currently leading our water quality monitoring on the By Brook – with all the rain we have had he is certainly “in at the deep end”. Ben Fitch has agreed to join the team as a project manager and team member so is a very useful practical addition and significantly increases our ability to manage multiple projects. He is currently also working on two EA projects and with Wiltshire Wildlife as a River Monitor. He has a lot of experience in the River Fly monitoring aspects of our work being closely involved in the River Fly Partnership work and will be a great help in rolling out the fly monitoring teams we hope to build across the catchment. He has a wide wildlife interest and knowledge and good contacts.

The By-Brook Project

The last couple of months of 2013 have sped by. Many meetings and discussions have taken place in the dark evenings and the New Year should see options being developed for the future based on all the information which has been obtained. A fuller picture regarding the possibilities for improving fish passage will probably emerge by the next Newsletter so I will leave this aspect hanging for the moment but plenty of work is still ongoing collecting data which we hope will inform any future work.

Water Quality Monitoring.

We have begun a programme of sampling and analysis across a number of sites in the Brook which should help us pin point issues. We have been particularly keen to collect samples in wet conditions as this is very often when issues manifest themselves most readily and we have been “blessed” with some particularly wet conditions. We are looking forward to seeing the results in due course.

River Fly Monitoring.

We have a team of students from Bath Spa University who will be carrying out sampling on the Lidd Brook in addition to that already completed in the main stream. We hope to make this a feature for future years too. In the New Year we hope to run another training event for river fly monitors and a refresher event for those already trained.

Habitat Improvement

Meetings have been held and are ongoing with local angling clubs to identify improvements and we will be helping to get these all consented and planned before the Spring when we hope works will commence after the trout have completed their spawning. Some improvements will depend on the outcome of the fish pass feasibility work but there is still plenty of opportunity for improvement, some of which will involve fencing to protect vulnerable bankside environments.



A fine view looking down at the Wellow Valley above Bath. BART has been carrying out preliminary walkovers and mapping of stretches of the Wellow and Cam in preparation for a project which will start later this year. At this stage we are just collecting data to form an outline plan of needs and possibilities and meeting local people who have the knowledge and contacts we will need to get things done. The shot below is of a post rain Wellow at the village Ford.





More Christmas Presents.

Beautiful baby barbel gifted to the Bristol Avon just below Malmesbury. The fish were stocked into a stretch managed by the Riverside Angling Club by the EA from their fish farm at Calverton. These sturdy fish were introduced just before Christmas in ideal conditions and we hope that they will compliment the habitat improvement work being planned by the club with BART's assistance. Past surveys have revealed that over 80% of these fish will survive their first year in the river which gives them a very realistic chance of appearing in anglers catches in the future and growing on to contribute to existing breeding populations in the river , helping to secure the population for the future. By avoiding the massive mortality rates of egg and fry stages in the natural environment and being introduced as extremely fit and strong fish they have clearly benefitted from their unnatural upbringing but there is no substitute for improving the habitat for these fish as otherwise their own natural reproductive efforts will fall on "silty" ground.



More Christmas Presents.

The final present delivered just before Christmas was our own suite of offices! We have been very fortunate to benefit from a scheme to allow charities to use under-utilised office premises and have a lovely meeting room and an additional room suitable for presentations to 20 or more people. We plan to set this up as a classroom and utilise it for school and community events and perhaps as a base for some river fly monitoring sessions as you can reach the Avon with a good cast from the front door. Most importantly we hope to have a series of evening volunteer events to bring volunteers and beacons together to meet each other and to discuss BART plans and river improvement matters.

Have a great New Year.



BART Beacons are the way we are establishing a community of interest groups across the catchment who feedback news from across the catchment like old fashioned radio masts. They will be the “eyes and ears” of BART identifying problems or opportunities on their local stretch of river or stream. BART will share this information with other Beacons and look for opportunities to bring these together on logical projects to improve the health of the river. Local knowledge and interest is all you need to become a beacon; whether you are an individual who has something to share or a community or interest group we would love to hear from you.

Beacons are not necessarily volunteers but are independent partners with a mutual interest in sharing news about the rivers and streams within our catchment area. If you know of clubs, community groups, walking groups or indeed any groups who care about our rivers and streams and who might wish to become beacons please forward this newsletter to them.

Please take a look at our website – www.bristolavonriverstrust.org and follow us on Facebook and share this Newsletter with any friends who have an interest in the river.

Feedback or questions are welcome – just give me a call on 07411488084. Ian