

Interim Project Report: Explore Wild Woods

July to December 2020



At the start of the project in April 2020 we had purely woodland activities lined up. Because of Covid 19 the plan was changed so that we could deliver a programme within walking distances in Bishop's Castle, as we could not use minibuses. Alison and Gary spent quite a bit of time organising new activities as well as liaising with the college.

We planned to explore trees and the landscape, learn how to fell trees safely, visit a local farm which has market garden, bees and chickens, make dens out of brash, draw trees, and visit the local sawmill to see what happens to harvested wood. We hoped that the children would enjoy these sessions and learn about the environment around them.

We brought young people into woodland and food growing areas to demonstrate the richness and diversity of the environment, whilst helping them to understand and conserve the landscape and to learn about managing and utilising land sustainably.

Having put together a new program it was then managed by Gary Cowell, and delivered by him and other enrichment session leaders (detailed below), with help from Lightfoot volunteers.

Originally there were 2 different activities planned:

1. A full day taster session held in the grounds of the Community College, Bishop's Castle and the neighbouring SpArC centre in order to introduce the autumn enrichment sessions.
2. Enrichment afternoons in the autumn term 2020.

Obviously Covid 19 has had an impact on the programme but the College did agree to go ahead with the project at a meeting on 14th July 2020. The programme is described below (*Italics for cancelled sessions.*)

Full Day Taster Session

This, unfortunately, could not go ahead as the college was closed under the first Covid lockdown.

Bishop's Castle Community College Enrichment Sessions

We planned sessions for all seven Friday afternoon enrichment sessions made available to us by the Community College over the Autumn Term 2020. The planned sessions were:

1. Friday 4th September, **An Eye for Detail** Session Lead: Antonia Pettitt of Branching Out
Location: Grounds of Bishop's Castle Community College, Bishop's Castle, SY9 5AY

*This session was cancelled at short notice by the college who had been unable to allocate pupils to enrichment sessions in the first week of term due to the disruption caused by Covid 19. The session was instead delivered on Friday 2nd October, replacing **The Hawthorn**, wildlife roleplay.*

2. Friday 18th September 2020, **Orchard Labyrinth and 'Treasure' hunt**. Session Lead: Lorraine Waumsley
Location: The Wintles, Bishop's Castle, Shropshire SY9 5AD

The concept of the Wintles Community Gardens and land was described and the students explored the orchard labyrinth and took part in a 'treasure' hunt based on woods, trees and growing food. Six pupils from Years 7 and 10 attended the session.

3. Friday 2nd October 2020

The plan had been to deliver **The Hawthorn**, wildlife roleplay (An interactive take on wildlife in which we learn about the role of the hawthorn tree and the species that rely on it. Scripted interviews with insects, birds and mammals encourage empathy with them and raise awareness of their importance in the grand scheme of things.)

Instead, we delivered the delayed **an Eye for Detail** session originally planned for 4th September 2020. This activity encouraged independent exploring of the natural environment through guided tasks. There were active games to demonstrate the delicate infrastructure of nature and how everything in the ecosystem is connected. Mindfulness

was promoted in participants through tasks that encourage a finer tuned eye and ear to the small details of nature that can often pass us by. Six pupils from Years 7 and 10 attended the session.

4. Friday 16th October 2020 **Little Woodbatch Market Garden visit.** Session Lead: Daphne du Cros
Location: Little Woodbatch Market Garden, Woodbatch, Bishops Castle, SY9 5JT

Little Woodbatch is a family-run business growing fresh, local vegetables on a 1-acre market garden just outside of Bishop's Castle. There was a tour of the land, greenhouses, forest garden, apiary and the chickens and a fun and interactive session on seed saving in the nursery. Six pupils from Years 7 and 10 attended the session.

5. Friday 6th November 2020 **Exploring and Drawing Trees** Session Lead: Angela Martin
Location: Grounds of Bishop's Castle Community College, Bishop's Castle, SY9 5AY

The plan was: This session starts with memory and then looking at the both the small scale the big picture of trees around us. We will use felt tip pens, small sketch books and collage. Observational work - quick line and texture drawings and some sketching will be done.

This session could not take place due to the second lockdown when external parties could not enter the college and the pupils could not take trips out of the college grounds.

6. Friday 20th November 2020 **Visit to Charles Ransford & Son Ltd Sawmill.** Session Lead: Norman Maitland
Location: Station Street, Bishops Castle, Shropshire SY9 5AQ

The plan was: A visit to the office of this local timber mill to find about what the company do and how they do it. This would have been a visit to the timber treatment centre and the biomass energy system. Safety requirements do not allow public access to the working mill so a full site tour was not available.

This session could not take place due to the second lockdown when external parties could not enter the college and the pupils could not take trips out of the college grounds.

7. Friday 4th December 2020 **Forestry Techniques.** Session Lead: Gary Cowell
Location: Woodland to the rear of the sparac centre, Bishop's Castle, Shropshire SY9 5AD

In this session the participants learned how to safely fell and process a small tree using handtools. The pupils spend some time identifying and discussing the safety aspects of working with trees and then selected dieback-infected ash trees to fell. Working in pairs (within their Covid bubbles) the pupils felled the trees using directional felling techniques, snedded the branches and tops, then cut the stems to length. Six pupils from Years 7 and 10 attended the session.

The sessions that we managed to present were very much enjoyed by an enthusiastic group.

We hope to work with BCCC in the new year on one of 2 ideas, using the remainder of the money in the project.

1. Develop a Wildwoods Diary (on the same lines as Lightfoot's Energy Diary, <https://lightfootenterprises.org/energy-diary/>)
2. Work on a collaborative project with BCCC on plans to embed Climate Crisis topics across the curriculum as well as spiralling through the learning experience.